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MCMXXXVII

ALVARO

Story of a slave, sold - K.C.

- see p. 12.

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A NARRATIVE
OF THE
TRAVELS, &c.

OF
JOHN ISHMAEL AGUSTUS JAMES,

AN AFRICAN OF THE MANDINGO TRIBE,

*Who was captured, sold into Slavery, and
subsequently liberated by a benevolent
English Gentleman.*

“God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”—PAUL.

“Am I not a man, and a brother.”

T R U R O ;—

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P R E F A C E.

The author of the following pages having for a long time felt an ardent desire to go into some country where he might have an opportunity of proclaiming to his sable brethren, the unsearchable riches of Christ, who has brought *him* out of heathen darkness and slavery (bodily and mental) into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God, a door seemed lately to be opened for him to go to the United States of America, and as soon as he made known his intention to embrace the opportunity thus apparently afforded of getting among his countrymen, many of his friends requested him to leave them a Narrative of his Travels, &c. as a memento, when they might see him no more. And though he was never fond of satisfying a mere idle curiosity, yet gratitude to those friends, and above all to that God, who has hitherto "led him by a way that he knew not of," constrains him to comply with their wishes, and give them a plain narration of the leading events and circumstances connected with his own pilgrimage ; for it is not his intention to give a particular account of his native country, or of the manners and customs of the people, as this has already been done by a variety of travellers, to whose writings he begs to refer his readers, and as their accounts will be found to differ widely on some points, he would state that the Journals of Mr. Campbell, and a simple Narrative by a Native, whose name he has forgotten, have given him most satisfaction.

Mandingo is a country of central Africa, at the sources of the Niger and Senegal. Not only the Inhabitants of this State, but the bulk of the people in many other districts in the western part of Africa, are called *Mandingoes*, probably from having originally emigrated from this country. They, in general, are of a mild, sociable, and obliging disposition: the men are above the middle size, well-shaped, strong, and capable of enduring great labour; the women are good-natured, sprightly, and agreeable. The dress of both sexes is composed of cotton cloth, of their own manufacture; that of the men is a loose frock, with drawers that reach half way down the legs, and a white cap on their heads, with sandals on their feet. The dress of the women consists of two pieces of cloth, 6 feet long, and 3 wide; one put round the waist, and hanging down to the ancles, the other thrown negligently over the bosom and shoulders.

Though existing reasons (as will be seen by the following pages) prevent the author from crossing the Atlantic at present, as he intended, yet as he has not abandoned the hope of visiting his brethren in some country, he feels it a duty to place this sketch in the hands of his friends, and in acceding to their request, he hopes by leading them to reflect on the providence of God, and their own past experience, these pages will be instrumental in promoting their eternal welfare, by inducing them to put their trust in God, through whose gracious providence may both writer and reader be conducted through the wilderness of this world, to the realms of celestial glory.—Amen.

A NARRATIVE, &c.

I was born in a small village called *Haa-Cune*, containing about thirty or forty families, it is situated at the head of a large lake on the Gold Coast, several miles from the sea; this lake (which in some parts is several miles wide) is well supplied with fish, and the banks on each side are exceedingly fruitful, we have also kids, buffaloes, wild and tame fowls in abundance. Our simple mode of living (with the exception of the above mentioned articles of animal food) consists chiefly of roots and vegetables, and our temporal wants are richly supplied by that God "who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm xli. v. 9. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth," Psalm civ. v. 14. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry," Psalm cxlvii. v. 9. Truly we may say, in the language of the Apostles—"He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," Acts xiv. v. 17. Still he suffers us to walk in our own ways; like other tribes (or casts) we have a chief who is chosen by the people for his activity, or the performance of some great exploit in war. Besides the chief there are elders appointed, who assist the priests in the performance of

the religious ceremonies, and settle all disputes among the people; except such cases as are too hard for them, which are decided by the chief, on a plan similar to that recommended by Jethro the priest of Midian, and adopted by Moses, see Exodus xviii. v. 13—26; indeed many of their customs seem obviously of Jewish origin, and they are very particular about their laws; especially such as relate to religion.

They have their seasons for hunting, fishing, celebrating their religious festivals, and for cultivating their grounds; which they do by manual labour, the men going before with their mattocks or spades, singing either martial or religious songs; while the women follow with their rakes, as in harvest, so that though they know but little about *hard* labour (having few wants and a fruitful soil) perhaps they are not more justly charged with laziness and mischief, than their more ingenious *white* brethren, who set the ox, ass, and horse (and black men and women too) to work while they are content to follow with the lash, and reap the reward of others' toil.

The Mandingoes generally assist each other in their labours, for they have no money to pay for assistance rendered, besides they try to get together for mutual safety, and the purposes of Idol worship: and here I must turn the dark side of the picture, they are in a state of gross darkness, and deeply sunk in superstition, having gods many, and lords many: some worship the sun, others the moon, the stars, the sea, &c. others bow down to stocks and stones, more stupid and senseless than their worshippers; some, it is true, believe that there is a great spirit above the sun and sky, whom they ignorantly worship; others, though they acknowledge the great spirit to be good, for that very reason worship him not, but sacrifice to the *evil spirit* to keep him from doing them any harm: but, whatever their particular system may be, they are all in darkness, and "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

“ The pagan wrapt in darkness groans and bows,
 “ O'erwhelm'd in grief and offers awful vows
 “ To gods that hear not : gods that cannot save,
 “ Nor soothe their worshippers when near the grave ;
 “ They hover o'er eternity's dread brink,
 “ And from the awful gulph recoiling shrink
 “ From death's embrace. By conscious guilt oppress,
 “ Conflicting passions rend the lab'ring breast,
 “ There hope and fear alternate sink and rise,
 “ Self torture tried—he lifts his languid eyes,
 “ And offers up with hands embrued in gore,
 Oblations which the ETERNAL must abhor.”

Such is the religion of nature which the Infidel would substitute for the religion of the Bible, well might Heber exclaim, when reflecting on their wretchedness,

“ O'er the gloomy hills of darkness
 “ Look my soul, be still, and gaze.”

In addition to all the miseries engendered by paganism, the different tribes are frequently at war with each other, and as I have seen British and Irish soldiers and sailors very drunk, cursing and swearing, and yet fighting for their religion, the same spirit prompts the African to fight for his, and the religious wars of the Mandingoes, who are well known to be a powerful and warlike race, have been carried on with so much zeal that the women have taken the field with the men, and left the villages to the children and the aged, who were unfit for war. And I am sorry to say, that, though the Whites have styled us Savages, they have done very little to civilize us, (of course I except the missionaries) and what *some* have been doing, *many* have been counteracting, so that the infamous conduct of the Whites has, in many cases, given us a bad opinion of them, and their religion too ; for it is well known that they have frequently visited our coast for the purpose of man-stealing, and when unable to steal they have fomented our strifes, and excited the tribes to war, that they might obtain the prisoners in barter, to carry to the Colonies, and sell them for slaves ; so much blood has been shed in this way that the name of

a White fills the natives with terror, and a fearful apprehension of being separated from their friends for ever.

I well recollect the first time I saw a white man, the villagers were at work for my father, on a plot of ground about two miles from our little hut ; as it was the custom when working for each other, to provide themselves with food, I was appointed by my mother to carry my father's dinner to the field, tied up in a cloth, with a calabash of palm wine. I had taken it to him, and was on my way back, and within sight of home, when turning a corner of the road, I suddenly, and unexpectedly, met the white man. I dropped my things in consternation and terror, and ran as fast as I could till I reached my father's company, where after a deal of uproar, concern, and consultation, it was at last agreed that they should let him go, hoping that he was neither a spy, nor a man-stealer. I have often wondered that they did not murder him, but I have been checked by the thought that there is a God in whose hand are the issues of death, without whose permission even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground; all hearts are in his hand, and he can turn them as the rivers of water : otherwise I should be inclined to ask, would Englishmen have allowed an African to pass as quietly under similar circumstances ? perhaps the reader would answer, with a feeling of indignation, No !

My parents worshipped an Idol called, in the Mandingo tongue, ZUNGOO, in English, " God with us," which, considering their custom, is a very appropriate name ; for whether they go a hunting, fishing, or to labour, at all times, and in all places, they carry their god with them. Well would it be, if those called christians would take a lesson from heathens in this particular, and by prayer and faith secure the precious presence of God with them. My two brothers and three sisters, who were all older than myself, were strictly brought up, and taught to worship the same Deity.

When but a child, I believed the God whom we

served was the greatest and best of all the gods of the nations, that he could do more than all the rest, and could see me when I could not see him: with these ideas and impressions I had many fears, especially whenever I did any thing which I had been taught to believe wrong; at such times my "conscience also bearing witness and *my* thoughts the meanwhile accusing *me*," Rom. ii. v. 15. If out in the village, I would run into the temple, (the doors being always kept open from morning till sun-set, for the accommodation of worshippers) and there with fear and trembling confess my sins, and implore forgiveness with tears: for though there was a god at home for the family to worship, like most of my fellow sinners, I was willing to hide my faults from man; and they would have been known, had I gone home for confession and prayer, my father or mother would then have taken me to task, and given me what I was willing to escape: yet I do not remember that I ever omitted my duty (while there) to that god whom I had been taught to serve. Thus I have been convinced of the insufficiency of conscience without divine light to lead us to the knowledge of the true God, or to direct us how to worship him aright. —See Acts xvii. v. 16—31.

One night when I was nearly eight years old (according to my father's account) we were all in bed asleep when a band of white savages, whose name was sufficient to strike the natives, and especially the children, with terror, entered the village where we lived, and captured above forty men, women, and children. A little cousin of mine slept with me. It is impossible to describe my thoughts and feelings, when on being awaked I saw three or four white faces about me; all was confusion and consternation; cries and screams rent the air, and told the anguish of the heart. The men were handcuffed, and tied together; and the women together in a separate gang; the children were driven after, till we got to the water side; there we were forced into boats, and put on board a ship that lay off the coast. How long she had been there I know

not, and as the people were barbarians to me, I know not to what nation they belonged, but from being taken to a Portuguese port, and delivered to a Portuguese master, I suppose they were Portuguese.

The vessel was very large, though I do not know what rate, as she was the first I was ever in, and my first voyage, and I believe it will be the last that will ever be forgotten by me. There were hundreds in the same situation with myself, some of whom had been taken as prisoners of war by other tribes, and bartered by the conquerors for goods, &c.

The places below deck were crowded to excess. Most of the strong men were put in stocks, I mean long bars of iron with holes for their feet, so that they lie or rather sit row after row, they, with the women, boys, and girls being all placed in separate apartments.

After staying a few days till the cargo was completed, they set sail with their stolen booty of human beings, made of the same blood with themselves.—Acts xvii.v.26. The poor creatures were daily brought on deck (in small parties) by turn, to take the fresh air for an hour or two, which was rendered extremely necessary on account of the sea sickness, fevers, and other diseases occasioned by the close confinement, filthiness, and loathsome smells, of which the reader can form but a faint conception if he has never witnessed the horrors of a slave-ship.

Whenever my mind recurs to the subject my feelings are truly indescribable, and I am glad to turn from the sickening scene. I have seen as many as five thrown overboard at once, before their bodies have been cold, and some before they have been dead; when the murderers have supposed them past recovery. And though unable to speak, the despairing eye has turned towards the butchers, and spoken a language sufficient to melt the hardest human heart that was capable of feeling; but to those monsters in human shape they looked in vain, there was none to save them, they sank as a stone in the waters. Let

that day when the sea shall give up her dead, and the judge of all the earth do right, tell the remainder.

After several weeks tedious sailing, we were brought to a place called Maranham, some call it Maragnan, here we stayed about three weeks amidst new scenes of sorrow, when our owner had us all washed, and oil rubbed on our skin, to make us shine: the men's heads were shaved to keep their temples cool, and promote health. Thus prepared we landed on a great market day, (I mean for slaves and not for cattle,) were driven into the market, and put into pens, similar to those used by the farmers for their cattle, where with thousands more who came from other vessels, we were exposed for sale. While there, to my great surprise, I caught a view of my father, standing in the same situation; and in a pen on the opposite side my mother and three sisters, and in a few minutes after, I discovered my two brothers.

It is easier to conceive than to describe the scene that followed, loud cries and tears expressed the mingled emotions of joy and sorrow felt at this meeting; for it may be observed, that on the night in which we were taken, my cousin and I being taken together, were not aware in our fright, of what was passing in other parts of the house, and therefore knew not if any were taken except ourselves. The rest of the family (as my father afterwards told us) heard our screams; but being under guard could render us no assistance; and having been kept separate till we met in the market, it may easily be supposed that as soon as we could find utterance, each had so many questions to ask that for a time it was as though there was none to answer.

I dare say the reader thinks it was kind in the managers to permit us to converse together, and embrace each other, but I must inform him, that, while we received the indulgence as a favour, it was intended to serve their own purpose, for as purchasers do not like to have different members of the

same family together; perhaps (as guilt is always attended with cowardice) for fear of plots and conspiracies, and I suppose it is on the same principle that the slaves are prohibited from speaking in their own language, or any other, except that of their owners and managers, under the severest punishments. The indulgence mentioned above is therefore granted in order to discover who stand related by blood or friendship, and as soon as this information is gained, the captives are ordered back to their pens. The buyer then goes round, and when he sees one that appears likely to suit his purpose, takes him aside, ties a piece of white or red tape about the neck or arm, examines the limbs, joints, mouth, &c. making him run to and fro, to show his activity, and if after the fullest examination, a bargain is struck, the slave is taken to a place kept on purpose, where the initials of his owner's name are branded on some part of his body with a hot iron; this operation was performed on me five times. But this is not the worst, it would touch any heart that was not hardened in the ungodly traffick, to see (when one of a family is sold) the efforts used by the remainder to exhibit themselves to the best advantage to induce the purchaser of their relative to buy them: and when all their efforts fail, to see them part, perhaps for ever, baffles my powers of description.

At this market my two brothers, being strong and healthy, were sold to one of the same town where the market was held, and those of us who were unsold were put on board another vessel, and taken to Rio de Janeiro, South America, where we were again presented to the public for sale. The first day my father was sold to an English Captain; the next day my three sisters were sold; two to one master, and the third to another. My mother, cousin, and myself, with a few others, some of whom were old, and others like moving skeletons, seemed to be hastening to that place where the wicked cease from troubling, the slave is free from his master, and the weary are at

rest; were all sold to a Spanish jobber, who, I suppose, had no land of his own, and therefore bought to sell and get gain. He mixed us with some others that he had for sale, and at length sold the lot to a Frenchman, who (after a few weeks' doctoring to make us saleable, during which process five died) sold us to a Portuguese master. Here I had to experience new sorrows and feelings of the most painful nature. The spirits of my dear mother, who had been my solace in captivity, began to sink, her once dimpled cheeks became thin, and her countenance hollow, the smile that formerly played there, was *no more*, her food was rejected, or if forced on her, turned over in the mouth as I have seen it in sick persons, when the stomach was about to reject what only offended; and what affected me more, she was frequently tied up and flogged, to cure what her murderers called the sulks, but what I scruple not to call the agonies of a tender heart, and spirit deeply wounded, sinking into despair.

Our master kept us all in a large yard, the men, women, boys, and girls, all in separate apartments; and as we were all brought to the front every morning, where we were exposed for sale: under the fearful apprehension of being separated for ever, I spent all the time I could with my mother, standing by her side when she stood, and when she sat, taking my station at her feet, we frequently mingled our tears together, and though we were not allowed to converse except in the Portuguese language, I was fortunate in that respect, for there is a good deal of what is called the *Pia Portuguese* in our native tongue, so that my mother, cousin, and I soon became able to understand each other in our master's tongue. About this time a gentleman used to pass us frequently who seemed to take particular notice of me, because as he afterwards told me, I used to look earnestly at him and smile, though I was unconscious of smiling. I know I was always glad to see him, I could not tell why. My mother continued to sink gradually, till

at length one morning she was found dead on her bed of plantain leaves, which being strewed on the ground formed the only beds afforded us. Thus she ended her days in sorrow. Though a pagan, she was gentle, free and kind with whom she had to do, affectionate to her husband and children, and strongly attached to her religion. In short, my dear mother was as good as I can conceive it possible for one to be, who is ignorant of the Saviour, having never heard of the name of Jesus Christ, and while I have the power of reflection, she will live in my memory and excite the tenderest feelings of my heart; often are the last scenes of her life acted over again in my mind, often do I follow her through all her sufferings, to the verge of Eternity, and enquire—Is she saved or lost? but I am obliged to wait for an answer till the curtain is drawn from the eternal world, then shall I know even as I am known, and see fully justified “the ways of God to man.”

A day or two after my mother's death, the white gentleman alluded to came past us as usual, as soon as I saw him, I sprung from my seat, ran up to him, crying and telling him that my mother was gone home, and catching hold of him, every attempt he made to go, I held fast and cried the louder, this appeared to affect him, he stood for some minutes in tears and silence, and after making further enquiry respecting my sorrows, he took me by the hand, led me into my master's office, and enquired my price, which was twenty-five dollars, he immediately bought me for that sum, took me to his house had me washed, clothed, and fed. A particular friend of his buying my cousin, we again became neighbours. The next thing my new owner did for me, (instead of branding me with his initials,) was to get me a certificate declaring me a *freeman*, signed by himself and a Magistrate. Besides this, I had a passport allowing me to travel, this was done to prevent me from being again seized, as the owners of slaves keep a sort of patrol to detect runaways, who are frequently trying

to escape from their bondage, and had I been taken as a runaway, I should have been sold again unless I had been owned by my master, or could produce my certificate of freedom.

The reader need not be informed that I ever after regarded my new master, with feelings of gratitude, as my friend and benefactor, and endeavoured to please him, indeed I have often thanked God for giving me such a friend. The next question with my master and his friends was, what I should be called. My parents had given me the long name, or rather names, of Johosea Alea Halee Manchoo, my Portuguese master called me Simplicio, perhaps because I was so much afraid of them, and so simple that when they called me, I would run as far as I could from them; my new friends agreed that for the time I should be called Robert, to which name (finding myself among friends) I answered, and always expecting good from them, I ran to them whenever they called me.

I soon found that my new master was from England, or the White Country, as I then called it, and also that he was a praying man. He now began to teach me English, which I found to be a hard language, and I find it so still; but being constantly with my teacher, and allowed to ask any thing I wanted to know, and he being able to speak the Portuguese, and a little of my native tongue, we were soon able to understand each other. Among other things that excited my surprise was the manner of his devotional exercises, being favored with a sleeping couch in my master's bed room; I frequently saw him before lying down, on rising, and sometimes during the day, go down on his knees, and (as I then supposed) pray and talk to the wall, and I wanted to know where the god was; for in my native land we had him at the temple, and in our houses; but my master seemed to worship a god that I could not see; neither had he any representation of him. To satisfy me he laboured to make me understand that God was a spirit; this I believed, but still thought

that spirit must have some shape or other. My master being very desirous that I should be able to speak English, would make me stand by him at meal times, and endeavour to pronounce words, &c. One day seeing him take out his watch several times while at dinner, I said to him, "Sir, does that thing tell you when you have eaten enough?" this enquiry, which shewed my ignorance, threw him into a fit of laughter, he then told me the use of the watch. In Africa we tell the time by sun-dials, and where we have none, guess the time by our own shadow. After being about twelve months with my good master, he took my cousin and me, and sailed for England. The voyage was a long one, especially to me, who felt a strong desire to see the White Country, where so good a man came from, expecting to find all the Inhabitants like him. For several days a large shark was seen astern, and a rope, with a large hook and 5 or 6 pounds of pork at the end of it, was put out to catch him; one day I got pulling this line up and down for sport, when the shark made but one snap at the bait, and overboard I went, but holding fast of the line I was mercifully saved. The cold soon told me when we were getting near the White Country. About fourteen days before we landed, being in my cabin, I heard something falling with great force on the deck, I ran up, and to my surprize saw hard white stones falling in abundance; I immediately filled my hat with the white rain, as I called it, intending to preserve it as a curiosity, and by the advice of the sailors I locked it up in my box with great care; two or three days after they advised me to give it the air as they said without doing so I should never be able to take it back to my countrymen; I went and opened my box, but my clothes were wet and my rain gone, and as I had kept the key, and found the box locked as I left it, the disappearance of my white rain was a mystery which I could not comprehend. Let the more enlightened European smile, but when the mysteries of divine reve-

lation are presented to his mind, should he feel inclined to reject them on account of their incomprehensibility, perhaps my ignorance might afford him a useful lesson. In January 1819, we got into Liverpool between three and four in the morning, daylight soon opened fresh wonders to our astonished view, the houses and streets being all covered with snow my cousin George (which was the name given him) and I soon entered into a discussion respecting it, he contending that it must be sugar, while I maintained it was salt, on the ground, that sugar could not be so plentiful, and because I had seen the rocks within tide mark in a warm climate encrusted with saline particles by the heat of the sun. On landing we had enough to look at, every thing being new we were in a world of wonders; but the sailors having cautioned us to take care of the whites who would be ready to run away with us (strange as it may appear) we were more afraid in Liverpool than in Rio de Janeiro, and for three weeks after landing would not venture into the streets, and when we did, we held fast by the ship steward, one on each side, for fear of being carried off. The climate and diet soon laid me up, and my master going to London, we were left in the care of W. Harris, Esq. where we had plenty of good kitchen physic. After eight weeks severe affliction I was mercifully raised from the gates of death to health and strength, and by order from our master, we were booked as inside passengers to go by coach to London. Our fare was paid, and a five pound bill, and fifteen shillings in silver, wrapped up in it, given us to pay our expences. I being better able to speak English than George, was made treasurer, but my English was very little, and not being acquainted with the value of money, whenever a demand was made on me, I pulled out the whole, and holding it in my hands, allowed them to take what they wanted. The silver was soon exhausted, and when the last half-crown was taken out, the five pound bill which had served for a wrapper was carelessly thrown down in the coach as useless, a gentleman observing it, took it up, and

giving it to me, endeavoured to convince me, that I could get silver for it, I strongly suspected he was deceiving me for sport, I was therefore afraid to offer it; but as a last resource determined to try, and the next demand being made by the guard and coachman, I gave the paper, and they gave me *nine* pieces of silver, which I afterwards understood were *shillings*, being mightily pleased with the exchange, I related the circumstance to my master when I reached London, he was highly displeas'd at their conduct, and I believe could I have given him sufficient information to detect them, they would not have been allowed to pass so easily.

We were then both put to school at Camberwell, but though favoured with a good teacher, and an opportunity of acquiring what would have prepared me for greater usefulness in the world, like too many boys of my age, I was very naughty and neglected my book, for this, and other misdeeds, I was often punished. Neither servants nor schoolmaster were allowed to beat me; but a list of my crimes was to be laid on the breakfast table three mornings in the week, at which times I was called to answer to the charges, and receive punishment according to the nature of my crimes. I had also charge of the whip or cane, which according to my master's law, it was my place to fetch when he intended to use it on me, and then put it up again; sometimes I was punished by solitary confinement, and sometimes by being put on bread and water for two or three days; before punishment I was always made to kneel, while he read, and explained the nature of my offence, whether against God or man, then laying both hands on my head, he first prayed that God would enable him to correct me in a right spirit, then recapitulating my crimes, praying that the punishment might be effectual, and then followed the infliction. I soon became pretty well known in the circle of my master's acquaintances, among whom was Lord Keith, who after obtaining my master's consent, had me baptized John Ishmael Augustus James :

(this ceremony was performed in St. George's, Hanover Square, London.) His lordship then took me to be his own valet, ordered me many clothes, among the rest a Turkish dress with a rich Turban, showing me much kindness, and giving me many presents, my heart now began to swell with pride, and to thirst after the gaities of life, and having plenty of money I began to buy rings, seals, snuff-boxes, &c. till after I had been a year with his Lordship, Mr. Copeland my old master was taken ill, and having told me that whatever part of the world he might be in, his house should be my home while he lived, whenever I chose to return to him, and having left him only to oblige Lord Keith, contrary to his Lordship's entreaties, I returned to the house of my afflicted friend and benefactor, whose illness made a deep impression on my mind. Dr. Watts's hymns for children (particularly the first in that collection) deepened the impression. Mr. C's example, and the faithful admonitions he had given me, rushed on my mind, with a fear of death, and future punishment, and I promised that if God would spare me and my master, I would be a very good boy in future. It pleased God to restore Mr. C's health, and for six months I remembered my promise, and was outwardly good, but inwardly bad; about this time W. Harris Esq. begged that my master would let George and me go abroad with him and his family, though Mr. C. did not seem very willing, yet at the earnest request of his friend, he said he might have us, if we chose to go with him, adding you know they are freemen, the question being put to us, George readily consented, I did not till after three weeks, and then it was only to oblige them, and in hope of seeing some of my relatives.

In March, 1821, we sailed from Liverpool for Rio de Janeiro, nothing particular occurred during the voyage, but I may record a few instances of the mercies of God vouchsafed to such a rebel while there. One day I was out bathing with some boys, and trying our speed, when about two hundred yards from

land, I being second was gaining fast on the first, when a shark took him off, I saw him go down, and was swimming in the water red with blood before I knew what it meant, and had hard work to reach the land. The fright at the time made a deep impression on my mind, and renewed my convictions—

“ But ah ! I steel’d my stubborn heart,
 “ And still shook off my guilty fears.”

Sometime after this, I was playing at a well, 140 feet from the ground to the surface of the water, the rope went through a block or pulley, fixed in the centre of a beam over the well, I was pulling the bucket partly up, and then letting it fall to the bottom, delighted with the sound which I thought resembled great guns, at last while pulling down the loose end of the rope, the bucket suddenly dropped from the other, and down I went to the bottom, but strange as it may appear without any injury except having a little skin taken from my elbow, and as the knot at the other end of the rope could not pass through the block, I was able to climb up again. About 4 months after this, I and 14 or 15 boys more took our bows and arrows, and went into the woods one Sunday to hunt, before we had strung our bows, (not expecting any thing so soon,) a she-bear suddenly rushed on us, every one began to shift for himself, I being the second boy on entering the wood, of course when we turned I was the last but one; the bear soon caught the last and tore him in pieces; in running from the bear, I nearly ran into the mouth of a large black snake, and had just time to dart behind a tree, when he made his spring and missed me. As soon as we had recovered from our fright we strung our bows, pursued the bear and killed it, we then returned and killed the snake, but little remained of the poor boy except his head, hands, and feet. This deeply affected me, for I thought had I been taken instead of him, who had never been taught to keep holy the Sabbath day, my doom would have been awful; so that this day’s sport cost me many uneasy hours, and sleepless nights of terror and deep

convictions ; my conscience was as though I had committed murder, my flesh wasted, and they doctored me to no purpose, nothing would satisfy me but a return to England. Mr. Harris wrote home to my old friend, Mr. Copeland, and I was put on board the *Mary Jane* of London, being the first vessel that sailed for England. After a stormy passage I landed in London, Nov. 22nd, 1822, shortly after landing I was seized with the flux, and before this left me, with the typhus fever ; Mr. C. being in Bath at the time, I was placed in St. Thomas's Hospital in a state of delirium ; when reason resumed her office, about a week after, I found myself attended by a very cheerful, pious, motherly nurse, who often exhorted me in the most encouraging manner to give my heart to the Lord. One day seeing me in a very low state of mind, she told me there was a black in the next ward so ill, that I was a king compared to him. When permitted to see him, though time and his illness had greatly disfigured him, I thought I could perceive a resemblance of my Father's countenance in his, a little conversation soon convinced us that we had both come from the same place, on further enquiry I found it was my *Father*. This meeting as may be supposed, deeply affected us, both, the shock to my enfeebled frame rendered my recovery doubtful for some time, but through the mercy of God, after some weeks, we were both restored to health, and have corresponded personally or by letter ever since. During this time, Mr. Copeland received information that Mr. Harris and his family had left Rio de Janeiro, and on their way to France, the Ship was lost and all hands perished, my cousin being among them, surely I may say,

“ God moves in a mysterious way

“ His wonders to perform.”

A little after this event my master (having been a widower many years) married a young lady of the name of Gilbert, of whom the Lord saw fit to deprive him in four months and three days—her end was peace. Mrs. C's death had a great effect on

my master's spirits, and being recommended by the physicians to travel, according to their directions he sailed for the Cape of Good Hope on the 9th of June, 1823, taking me and three other servants with him. Leaving the Cape in the Spring of 1824, we went to Jamaica, from thence to Cuba, and from Cuba to St. Domingo or Hayti. In 1825—6 we visited Calcutta, that golgotha of superstition—Juggernaut, and other places; after travelling some hundreds of miles in India, we sailed to Demerara in 1827. It was here that the Lord (to whose warnings I had so often turned a deaf ear) in mercy plucked me as a brand from the burning. Hearing Mr. Rogers, an occasional Preacher of the London Missionary Society, preach from Jer. viii. 20. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved;" I had no need to search for proof whether I was saved or not, I was self condemned, and nothing appeared for me but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to devour me. This was followed by a sermon delivered by Mr. Young, on Rom. viii. 5: and that by another from Jonah i. 6. all these subjects tended to deepen my convictions, I became restless, and enquired of my fellow servants (who I had supposed were acquainted with the plan of salvation) what I must do to be saved, but they seemed to be ignorant of my state, and of the way to obtain that "favour which is better than life." It is true they told me to believe, but not explaining the nature of faith, they might as well have told me to make a world. In short I believe they were strangers to the saving knowledge of the truth themselves, and consequently unable to direct an enquirer properly: I believe they were serious, and convinced they were sinners, and perhaps enjoyed such a degree of light and grace as, under the drawings of the Father, to produce a degree of peace, but not converted. I next commenced searching the scriptures, but it appeared to little purpose, I only seemed to be in a worse state than before, I found many passages that seemed

to deprive me of all hope of obtaining pardon from God ; and knew not what to make of them, and as we were travellers, and sometimes did not stay above a day or two in one place, my acquaintance with the ministers of religion was not sufficient to give me boldness to lay my case before them. Despair now seizing me, I resolved to make my case known to my master, and embraced the first opportunity, but had scarcely begun my tale of woe, when observing him smiling, I stopped short, quite astonished to see him, as I supposed, laughing at my misery, he soon urged me in a serious tone to proceed, and I told him my state as well as I could ; he then took the bible and explained to me first, The nature and attributes of God ; 2nd, The fall and depravity of man ; 3rd, Salvation through Jesus Christ ; and lastly, The nature and effects of true faith in Christ : and I can truly say, that my heart burned within me while he talked to me and opened to me the Scriptures ; he then kneeled down and prayed with me, while my heart was melted under the influences of God's Holy Spirit, who gave me power at the time to believe to the saving of my soul ; previous to this, my good resolutions and consequent changes of deportment, were the result of a fear of punishment, and would last a few weeks, and then vanish as "the morning cloud or the early dew," which soon passes away, but now I could say "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications, because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live." Psm. cxvi, v. 1, 2. This occurred August 29th, 1827, a period I have reason to remember, being the first time I could ever (rising from my knees) say, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. v. 1. Having now tasted the liberty of God's dear children, I began to feel much for my fellow creatures, and especially for my coloured brethren in slavery, of whom it may be said (comparatively speaking,) "no man cared for their

souls," many times have I wept over their miseries, and longed to deliver them from bondage. This I could not do temporally, but I had many opportunities of reading to, and praying with them, and God was pleased to bless my weak efforts by bringing many of them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. I need not say that my master was thankful for the change wrought in my rebellious heart, and though before my conversion he had said to others that he could trust me for truth and honesty, he now more fully committed to my care and management his temporal concerns, and would jocularly call me his Joseph. We next left Demerara for Sierra Leone, on the Western coast of Africa. Here I first began to feel an interest in my voyages and travels, having just had my eyes opened to see the glories of redemption, I was better prepared to admire the wonders of creation, and say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints." We remained in Africa about two years, during which time we travelled up the river *Ritomsa*, or the *Togrin*, and some hundreds of miles in the country, amidst dangers and difficulties caused by wild beasts and hostile tribes. It would swell this narrative beyond the intended size, to give the particulars of these rambles, suffice it to say, that the awful state of my heathen countrymen confirmed my mind in the truth of the sacred scriptures respecting the fall of man, and the wretchedness of the pagan world, many of their customs, such as washings, purifications, sacrifices, sprinkling the blood of human victims on the people, circumcision, &c., made me ask have these people ever had the scriptures of truth? or does the light of nature tell them that without blood there is no remission of sins? does it also dimly show them that the blood must be *human* and the sacrifice bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, in all things like unto his brethren? I am strongly

inclined to think many of their customs are derived from the Bible, and corrupted by superstition.

Thank God our attempts to point these pagans to the blood of Christ when an opportunity occurred were not all in vain; some of them being able to read, we had portions of the Bible and some religious tracts to give them; on one occasion we met a man who had lost his cast, and being deprived of his gods, he had subsequently done penance by walking a certain distance with a box containing a hot iron in each hand, till the sinews were contracted with the burning parts, being now entitled to have his religious privileges restored, he had been a long journey to the high priest's for gods, and returning with them in a basket, to ease his arm, he had attached the basket to a stick, and slung it over his shoulder, when the stick broke, down fell the basket, and the gods being made of clay were broken in pieces; here we found him weeping over his broken gods that could not save themselves, we seized the opportunity to point him to that "God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Acts xvii. 24-5. we then gave him some tracts, commended him to God, and left him.

About a fortnight afterwards as we were returning, (having found it dangerous to go further, two tribes being at war,) after travelling a long journey under a sultry sun, my master became exceedingly thirsty, and seeing a small village in a valley, sent me to get him a drink, when I came to the door of a hut I was surprised to hear a man praying to Jesus; it was the man who had broken his gods, the tract entitled "The Brazen Serpent," had led him to renounce idolatry, and cast himself on the atonement of Jesus Christ alone for salvation. I was so delighted to hear him, that I was in no haste to return

to my master, who coming to meet me and finding out the cause of my delay, we all praised God and rejoiced together. After giving the man some more books, and commending him to God in prayer, we pursued our journey, and had walked above a mile when my master suddenly stopped, exclaiming "dear me John! I have not had a drink now?" so that the joy over one sinner converted so filled his pious heart, that he forgot his own temporal wants.

My master's health declining, we left Sierra Leone, and returned to Demerara, in the fall of 1829, where he was arrested by the black fever 14 days before the time he had fixed for sailing to England. He was insensible for several days, two days before his death he became sensible, he seemed to be conscious of his approaching dissolution, having settled his temporal affairs, his mind seemed to be fixed on eternal things, he spoke with confidence and satisfaction of the sufferings and blood of Christ, and of the hope he had of seeing him in glory; and on the third of March, 1830, he left this vale of tears for the realms of immortality, leaving me to lament the loss of a benevolent deliverer—a kind master—and a faithful christian friend—

"O may I tread like him the heav'nly road,
 "And meet my friend before the throne of God,
 "There to recount the wonders of His grace,
 "And view without a veil Jehovah's face."

According to my master's will, I was left to the charge of his brother-in-law, a respectable merchant in London, who was either to allow me to remain in the family, or give a sufficient maintenance for life; but when I came to England in March, 1830, he offered me a situation as under overseer on one of his estates in the West Indies; but my acquaintance with Slavery, and its effects on the minds of some young men, who had entered this employment with fine feelings, and soon became like savages, rendered it impossible for me to accept this offer with a clear conscience, and when I told him so, he said, as I had

refused his offer I should have to repent it, for he would never make me another, and he kept his word, and also withheld what he ought to have allowed me according to the will of a dying Christian, and what he would no more have missed out of his abundance than his Majesty King William. Thus was I left to shift for myself as well as I could, but that God, who had brought me out of the wilds of Africa, enabled me to trust in him, and I have never trusted in vain. A gentleman of West Teignmouth (J. Syngé, Esq. of Buckeridge House, Devon,) took me into his service, where I lived till he left England. I believe it was in mercy I was directed to this place, for when I came first to England, and began to attend the different places of worship, I found christians differing about points of doctrine, each affirming his own view of the word of God to be right, and supporting that view by different passages of scripture. This greatly surprised me, for while moving about since my conversion, I had only heard Christ preached, and sinners invited to come to him for full salvation. But here the learned were differing about the Bible. My master was a Church Calvinist, and I believe a good man, some of the servants were Independents, others Baptists, others Wesleyans, and others made no profession. My master was a great writer, and kept a printing press; my employment being chiefly to go where my mind, or the spirit of God, directed me, to give away such books as he published to the poor, to point them to the Lamb of God, and to attend my master, when he went from town to town preaching Christ, sometimes for a week or month at a time. One of the Printers was a converted Jew, the son of a Rabbi from Poland, and being of no party we often searched the scriptures together, he with his Greck and Hebrew Testaments, and I with my English Bible, searching for truth at the fountain, and whenever I heard a sermon, however high the preacher stood in public opinion, my soul being at stake, I made it a point of conscience

to hear and examine for myself, and would often say within myself, which among all these is right, till after hearing two Wesleyans, I cast in my lot among them, while I remained in that place; during this period the workings of the spirit on my mind were very powerful, and my pity for perishing sinners increased night and day; still I did not understand the voice of the Lord, "For God speaketh once, yea twice, *yet man* perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." Job xxxiii. 14—17. At least I thought myself too unholy, and too ignorant, and deficient of language, to preach to others, though I understood the plan of salvation for myself; but after long and hard struggles against those impressions, I sought direction from the Lord by prayer, promising that if he had called me, and would open the door, I would go wherever he might send me, but I would not attempt to open the door myself, lest I should go astray. The following Saturday, an Elder came by authority to request my labours on the Sunday, I was not disobedient to the heavenly call, but went, and one door opened after another, till the family I was with removed to Ireland, when with regret we parted. Convinced of my duty to labour for souls, and hearing that my father was in the West, I hastened to take leave of him, intending, if possible, to get on board a vessel carrying the Bethel Flag to the West Indies, for my heart yearned over my countrymen in bondage; as I could have been recommended, I intended to work out my passage, and then my zeal would have been far beneath that of the two Moravians I have read of, who offered themselves to be sold for slaves to the Island of St. Thomas, that they might have the opportunity of preaching Christ to them.

I had found my father in the west, and returned as far as Great Torrington, where (having a little

time to spare, as I did not intend to leave England till the spring, it being now in the fall of the year) I staid seven or eight weeks preaching Jesus in my simple way; many flocked to hear, and whenever I proposed to go I had two or three pressing invitations to speak one place or other; but as the people had been imposed on by a black some years ago, perhaps when I was thousands of miles off, suspicion and evil surmising arose in the minds of some, who said he is an imposter, and a bad man, others said he is a good man, &c., but the high priests, scribes, and pharisees, seemed to be my greatest enemies; this conduct affected me and drove me to the throne of grace. One night after retiring, I gave myself afresh to God, and solicited his direction, whether to go or stay, and went to bed a little comforted, believing God could, and would, direct my steps: during the night, I dreamed that I was taken to the mouth of hell, where I stood trembling to see the spirits of the damned in awful torments, a man then seemed to call me away to preach the gospel, on which I awoke. The next day a preacher belonging to the people called Arminian Bible Christians (N. G.) entered the house, (while my mind was in a state of perplexity) and said he had been praying to God that if it was his will I might enter the work with them; I told him the Apostle said, "lay hands suddenly on no man," after a little more conversation, as we were strangers to each other, we agreed to have a fortnight's consideration. After speaking in a few of their meetings, I left Torrington December 24th, 1832, and attended a quarterly meeting at Kilkhampton, on the 25th; I then attended their Missionary Meetings, and assisted them in this way about three months, and then laboured as an Itinerant preacher in the Shebbear Circuit, till the conference of 1833, when I was received as a candidate for the work; from that period I laboured in the Kilkhampton, Breague, and St. Columb circuits, and their Torrington Mission, occasionally assisting

in holding Missionary Meetings till the Conference of 1835.—When the people I was with, and the people called Bible Christians re-uniting, Mr. O'Bryan persuaded me, and I consented, to accompany him to the United States of America, hoping to have the privilege of preaching to the blacks there; but as he did not intend to go immediately, I consented to labour in the united body for a time, and was appointed to the Chatham Circuit, in Kent, where I married an European.

While in Chatham, I received a certificate, of which the following is a copy.

“ This is to certify that John
 “ Ishmael Augustus James, has travelled two years
 “ and half as a preacher with us in the connexion or
 “ church called Arminian Bible Christians, to the
 “ satisfaction of the people in our Societies.”

“ *Signed,*

“ WM. O'BRYAN, President

“ WM. PERKIN, Treasurer

“ JOHN O. ROBERTS, Secretary.”

“ St. Columb, Cornwall, England,
 “ January 15th, 1836.”

In the same letter which contains the above, Mr. O'Bryan writes—

“ I wrote my wife concerning
 “ your coming with me &c., and yesterday Mr. O's
 “ letter came to hand (he is one of the elder preach-
 “ ers in the city, belonging to the Reformed
 “ Methodists,) he says we do not receive coloured

“ preachers among us, and I would advise you to
 “ persuade him not to come. There is a violent
 “ opposition to the marrying of blacks and whites
 “ in this country. In this case you must judge for
 “ yourself.

“ With much regard I remain,
 “ As ever your friend,
 “ W. O'BRYAN.”

Another friend writes me as follows—

“ My dear brother James,

“ I see by the papers, as well
 “ as letters from America, that the Southern States
 “ are uncommonly desperate against coloured people
 “ at present, but I hope the time is not far distant
 “ when they will be all free men in that country.
 “ Mrs. O'B. says that if you were to come there with
 “ a white woman as your wife, she questions much
 “ if you or she would not be killed, as the people are
 “ so averse to the blacks and whites intermarrying.”

But the reader must be reminded that in America there is supposed to be nearly three millions of the colored people in slavery, and a great number free. Even those who are free are not allowed to sit with the whites at the worship of God, no, nor are they to come together at the Lord's table; and yet this is the country which boasts much of freedom, and of great revivals. I think they need greater revivals of true religion among them. I think, if I under-

stand the congress aright, they are looking on the colored people in America with a jealous eye, as Pharaoh looked on the children of Israel.—Exodus
CHAP. I. VERSE—

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we.

10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

And to this end they have established a society, calling it the “The Colonization Society,” for the forming of a colony in Liberia, into which they are sending all the free negroes they can get to go. Although the Americans have sent to England, and have represented their object in raising such a Society, which seemed to wear a good face; and Britons, whom I have ever considered the Negro’s friends, have been contributing largely to the support of it, thinking it was a good institution for the poor Africans—but they begin to see different. Nor do I see or hear that they succeed so well in liberating slaves, and sending them to this colony, as they do in picking up the free, and sending them over. I wish them success in a better cause.

From these extracts, and the accounts lately contained in the public papers (judging for myself) I think it would be useless, and therefore foolish in me to think of going to that land of liberty (as it is frequently, though falsely, called) under present circumstances; I still feel the same desires respecting my countrymen, but until a door opens I must be content to pray, “Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power

preserve thou those that are appointed to die." During the time I have laboured in England, I have had many painful conflicts of mind. When introduced to the work, I soon felt the greatness of my charge, and like Moses began to murmur at it; and when called to stand before large congregations was often tempted to think they would not profit, because they only came to see me, &c., I also felt the need of a deeper work of grace, and never read a passage of scripture on sanctification without feeling condemned, and would often ask what sort of a preacher am I? And though I felt an ardent desire for full salvation, through unbelief I could not inherit the blessing. One day while mentioning my distress, and thoughts of giving up preaching, to a friend of mine, on account of my state, he told me to pray and preach for sanctification till I got it. I continued to labour for a clean heart, till on Sunday night after filling my three appointments for the day, in the Breague Circuit, I retired to my room, where after taking my medicine, (for my constitution was in a shattered state, and I had been spitting blood for several weeks) I sat down exhausted, and while thinking of giving up the work on account of ill health, and because I thought I might as well go to hell without preaching, as preach myself into it, for "without holiness no man can see the Lord." This passage was powerfully applied to my mind—"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss," and especially the declaration of the Saviour—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22. My doubts were soon gone, the heavenly light broke in upon my soul, and I obtained that, for which I had mourned and thirsted; I went to bed with a joy I had never felt before, my bodily complaint was removed, I spat blood no more, but began to amend from that very hour. To God be all the praise. Of the success of my feeble efforts in those circuits, I shall say nothing, but leave this to my friends, and the judgment of the great day to declare.

Hitherto the Lord has helped me, may I still acknowledge Him in all my ways, and may He in future direct my steps, guide me by his counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.— *Amen.*

JOHN ISHMAEL AGUSTUS JAMES.

Mitchell, 16th September, 1836

Autor: JAMES, JOHN ISHMAEL AGUSTUS .

Obra: A Narrative / of the / TRAVELS? &c. /
of / JOHN ISHMAEL AGUSTUS JAMES? /
an african of the mandingo tribe /
who was captured, sold into Slavery,
and subsequently liberated by a benev
volent English Gentleman. / God
Hath made of one blood all nations pl
men for te dwell on ald the face of t
the earth" Paul. "am I not a man, and
a brother." / Truro / Printed by J.
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