“The Man [and Woman] at the Other End of the Lever”: Douglass, Stowe, and the Perils and Promise of Living in a Global Village

ROBERT J. SCHOLNICK
College of William and Mary

In a lecture delivered at Finsbury Chapel in London on 12 May 1846, Frederick Douglass (1818–95) spoke of slavery “as such a gigantic evil, so strong, so overwhelming in its power, that no one nation is equal to its removal.” As he would continue to do throughout his two-year tour of Britain, Douglass told his audience, “[Y]ou have an influence on America that no other nation can have.” Through what he called “the power of steam,” the globe was shrinking, so that “denunciations against slavery, uttered in London this week, may be heard in a fortnight in the streets of Boston” and then throughout the country (My Bondage 243–44). How did attacks on slavery reach Boston and what was their effect? Conversely, what was the effect of expressions of support for the South and slavery that came from such British conservatives as Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), especially after 1850?

It would be hard to find more compelling denunciations of American slavery than the British reviews of Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845). Exemplifying Douglass’s claim that denunciations of slavery from Great Britain resounded “in the streets of Boston” and then throughout the country, two powerful reviews—one from the Spectator in November 1845 and the other from Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal in January 1846—appeared in full in Littell’s Living Age, a national weekly based in Boston. Each of these reviews quotes extensively from the Narrative, so that both Douglass’s voice and that of the reviewer resonate powerfully together. Founded in 1844, the Living Age specialized in reprinting a range of articles from the British press, with a particular focus on articles dealing with America and the Anglo-American relationship. Over the course of the antebellum period, the paper’s proprietor, Eliakim Littell (1797–1870), published numerous pieces on slavery—perhaps averaging one piece a week. This essay is part of a larger project exploring the developing alliance between antislavery and progressive forces on both sides of the Atlantic, an alliance that

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Robert J. Scholnick

The absence of international copyright, along with the "power of steam," facilitated communication between the two countries. Further, as Douglass noted in a speech of 25 March 1847 in Sheffield, the ever-increasing "reciprocity and interchange" between the countries had been prompted by tariff reductions and the "great influx of British labourers into America," the combination of which provided all the more reason for Britons to remind Americans that their nation "maintains a high moral sentiment upon the subject of American slavery" (Douglass Papers: Speeches, Debates 16-17).

In the months before he returned to America in May 1847, Douglass maintained an exhausting schedule, speaking as often as seven nights a week. Perhaps he sensed a lessening in commitment to the abolitionist cause. As the historian C. Douglass Rice has observed, the publication of Carlyle's notorious "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" in Fraser's in December 1849 "signalized the appearance of a new and particularly ugly form of racism" (330). Picturing the recently freed blacks in the West Indies lying lazily about the pumpkin patch while valuable crops were rotting in the fields, Carlyle called for the reinstitution of something very much like slavery. His "Occasional Discourse" was widely republished in the United States. It played directly into the hands of slavery's American apologists, who claimed that British opinion was coming around to their side, as I point out in "Emancipation and the Atlantic Triangle," my introduction to John Bigelow's Jamaica in 1850 (xxi–xiii). Just who controlled the powerful lever of British opinion?

Following the appearance of Carlyle's essay—published in expanded form in 1853 as Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question—it became possible in Britain to make demeaning statements about blacks that would have been unthinkable but a few years earlier. As Thomas C. Holt has noted, even John Stuart Mill (1806–73), who responded to Carlyle in Fraser's in January 1850, "did not directly dispute much of Carlyle's vicious caricature of blacks" (283). Rather than pursue a global anti-slavery crusade, many Britons felt that it was time to look inward. Charles Dickens's (1812–70) Bleak House (1853), with its criticism of Mrs. Jellyby for caring more about the Negroes in far-off Niger than about her own squalid household, reflected a changing national mood (Rice 330–31).

The reactionary strain within British opinion surfaced in the London Times review of Harriet Beecher Stowe's (1811–96) Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), published on 3 September 1852. The review argues that since "the blacks of America are [not] prepared for sudden emancipation," slavery must be accounted "a positive blessing to every negro who would receive nothing but liberty from his owner" (qtd. in Ammons 31). Widely republished in America—Bunce and Brother released it as a pamphlet under the title Uncle Tom in England (1852)—the Times review did great damage to the anti-slavery cause, as Stowe explained to Lord Carlisle (George William Frederick Howard, 1820–64); "Instantly, as by a preconcerted [sic] signal, all papers of a certain class began to abuse; and some who had at first issued articles entirely commendatory, now issued others equally depreciatory." This reversal brought home to Stowe the global dimensions of the anti-slavery campaign: "It is so far from being irrelevant for England to notice slavery that I already see indications that this subject, on both sides, is yet to be presented there, and the battle fought out on English ground. . . . The article in the London Times was eagerly reprinted in this country, was issued as a tract and sold by the hundred" (qtd. in C. Stowe 167–68).
Drawing particularly from *Littell's Living Age*, this essay begins by considering the profound significance of British reviews of Douglass's *Narrative* and other accounts of his doings in England. Then, again, drawing from *Littell's* and other sources, including a number of pointed pieces from the New York *Evening Post*, it considers the American response to the London *Times* essay, which was written, I will show, by Samuel Phillips (1814–54). Activists on all sides of the slavery question both countries understood that, in the transatlantic battle over the meaning of such texts as Douglass's *Narrative*, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse*, the stakes could not be higher.

Frederick Douglass in Britain and in *Littell's Living Age*

Douglass's visit to Britain, Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford have written, "can be seen as one of the key events in Douglass's life, as pivotal to his educational and spiritual development as his victory over the Negro Breaker;" Edward Covey, or his conversion to Garrisonian abolitionism" (4). He collected funds to purchase his freedom and to support his projected paper, the *North Star*, and published editions of the *Narrative* in Dublin, Leeds, and London. I turn to a consideration of the views in which *Littell's* brought to American readers the significance of Douglass's British reception and the meaning of his story.

The *Narrative*, Douglass reports in the preface to the Dublin edition (1845), sold some 4,500 copies in the first four months and was praised in the antislavery press (Narrative 150–51). However, it was not reviewed in mainstream periodicals. According to William Andrews, the "most widely read and important review that the *Narrative* received" (2) was Margaret Fuller's (1810–50) in Horace Greeley's *Tribune* on 10 June 1845. In later editions of the *Narrative*, Douglass included as an appendix excerpts from this and other reviews from American newspapers, including the Boston *Transcript*, Philadelphia *Elevator*, and Boston *Courier* (Narrative 161–204). If the book had been reviewed by prominent American periodicals, Douglass would have included excerpts. The general absence of reviews of the *Narrative* in such periodicals is one reason that the reviews from *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* and *Spectator* are particularly important. Each of these reviews offers a much fuller picture of the *Narrative* than does Fuller's review. Through both their independent circulation within reprints of the two weeklies and the agency of *Littell's*, they brought Douglass's work to the attention of American readers outside the ranks of those who regularly read antislavery publications.

The first mention of Douglass in *Littell's* comes with its reprinting, on 10 January 1846, of the *Spectator's* review of the first Dublin edition of the *Narrative*, which appeared on 29 November 1845. The editors of *The Frederick Douglass Paper* note that the review, "The Life of Frederick Douglass," was "reprinted in (London) *Littell's Living Age* (Narrative 180)." By not recognizing that *Littell's* was a Boston periodical, they miss the significance of the reprinting. The text of the review as it appeared in *Littell's Living Age* is reproduced as follows:

The Life of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass appears as a Maryland slave, who escaped from his master in 1838, and, after working as a free laborer in the Northeastern States till 1841, was engaged by an American Anti-Slavery Society as itinerant lecturer. Having a natural force and fluency of language, and dealing with things within his experience, he appears to have spoken with so much acceptance as to have been stimulated to commit to paper the autobiographical portion of his addresses, which is before us in a Dublin reprint.

In his life there is not much of hairbreadth escape. He is a mulatto, and supposes that his first owner was his father. Time, to a slave, is not known in its particulars, such as birthdays and exact dates; so that he does not know his own age, but supposes it now to be about seven-and-twenty. According to this reckoning, he was sent in his sixth year from the estate where he was born to wait upon a little boy in Baltimore. Here he was treated kindly; and his mistress began to teach him to read, till his master forbade it; but Frederick, having, as he says, had his mind a little opened, persevered in teaching himself, and succeeded by dint of casual assistance from poor white boys in the street: and to reading, at a subsequent period, he added writing. When about fifteen, his owner in the country took him from his master in town, in consequence of a family quarrel; and Frederick was transformed from a sort of page or footman to a field-laborer. His first two country masters were religious men, but very cruel and excelling; so that he had no time to think of anything but work. His third master was more liberal; and, having time to meditate, he planned an escape, with some fellow-slaves; but it was detected; and Frederick, after being imprisoned and threatened with sale, was sent back to his old quarters in Baltimore, whence he finally managed to escape in reality. Up to this point his narrative is pretty full; but he designedly suppresses the particulars of his escape, lest he should expose others to danger, and prevent some unfortunate from attaining their freedom. In plain English, he was assisted by those secret agents who are scattered through some of
the Southern States for the especial purpose of aiding the escape of runaway slaves.

We assume that Frederick Douglass really is what he professes, and not a colored free man in masquerade, upon the Jesuit's principle that the end justifies the means. On the other hand, we note the very extraordinary manner in which he taught himself to read; some contentions with different masters, in one case proceeding to a fight—which seems an improbable insubordination in a slave country, though it may have been heightened to add dignity to Douglass; and a precocious air in the more youthful part of his career, but which also may have been unconscious affection of his feelings at the period of composition. On the other hand, the facts and incidents have a strong character of truth. Frederick deals a little in atrocities, though he admits them to be exceptions; but they do not make the greatest impression on the reader as to the horrors of slavery. This appears rather in the brutish degradation to which the mind of the slave is reduced, the destruction of all family ties which is systematically aimed at, and the reaction of the "institution" upon the whites themselves, lowering their character, and often, according to Douglass, wringing their affections, in the case of their colored children.

"It is worthy of remark, that such slaves [children of the planter] invariably suffer greater hardships, and have more to contend with than others. They are, in the first place, a constant offence to their mistress. She is ever disposed to find fault with them; they can seldom do anything to please her; she is never better pleased than when she sees them under the lash, especially when she suspects her husband of showing to his mulatto [sic] children favors which he withholds from his black slaves. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike any one to be for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so; for unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back; and if he lisp one word of disapproval, it is set down to his parental partiality, and only makes a bad matter worse both for himself and the slave whom he would protect and defend."

There is something natural and touching in this instance of maternal feeling.

"My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant—before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off; and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field-labor. For what this separation is done I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result.

"I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journey to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave have special permission from his or her master to the contrary; a permission which they seldom get, and one that gives to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. I do not recollect ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep; but long before I waked she was gone."

According to Frederick, slaveholders professing religion are a great deal worse than others; more gravely cruel, more exacting, and very mean—not even giving their people enough to eat, which in Maryland is very contrary to public opinion. "Not to give a slave enough to eat, is regarded as the most aggravated development of meanness even among slaveholders. The rule is, no matter how coarse the food, only let there be enough of it." This meanness the professors seem to carry into punishment; assigning scriptural reasons for it.

"I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—'He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'"

If this narrative is really true in its basis, and untouched by any one save Douglass himself, it is a singular book, and he is a more singular man. Even if it is of the nature of the stories of De Foe, it is curious as a picture of slavery, and worth reading.—Spectator.
Littell drew frequently from the *Spectator*, which in 1857 the *Newspaper Press Directory* praised as a paper that was "excelled by none, and approached by very few" (Fulton 187). The liberal *Spectator* would "distinguish itself by its support of the North in the American Civil War" (Jump 42). Here the reviewer seizes the opportunity to bear witness to slavery's human cruelty—for blacks and whites alike—and to affirm the exceptional qualities of the book's author. Through the well-chosen excerpts as well as its own comments, the periodical gets at the human meaning of the institution, particularly the ways in which slavery undermines the family and perverts religion. More than does Margaret Fuller, who devotes much of the space in her review of the *Narrative* to subjects that are only tangentially related, such as the innate talents of the Negro race for melody and the relative merits of Garrison's and Wendell Phillips's prefaces, the review in the *Spectator* enables Douglass to be heard in his own voice. The questions that it raises about the authenticity of the *Narrative* are resolved in Douglass's favor. Regardless of whether the book is literally true or an imaginative reconstruction, it is authentic.

Some four months later, on 4 April 1846, Littell republished an extraordinary review, "Narrative of Frederick Douglass," from Chambers' *Edinburgh Journal*, a low-cost (three halfpence) weekly. Chambers' then was arguably the most popular periodical in Britain, with a circulation approaching 87,000 (Frye 86). That figure does not include pirated copies that circulated in America. Established in 1832, Chambers' was one of Littell's regular sources. He shared the commitment of its editors, the brothers William (1800–1883) and Robert Chambers (1802–71), to make high-quality, low-cost reading matter widely available. I have pointed out elsewhere that as writers, editors, and proprietors of a thriving publishing enterprise, the Chambers brothers did more in nineteenth-century Britain than any of their peers to promote literacy ("Fiery Cross"). But literacy alone, they argued, could not relieve the desperate living conditions in Britain, and so they recommended emigration, especially to the United States, which they praised as a kind of middle-class paradise, despite the glaring problem of slavery (Scholnick, "Intersecting Empires"). On 23 May 1843, they asked,

> Are we really to suppose, then, from all this, that a body of civilized men, of the Anglo-Saxon race, have something inherently vicious in their constitution, that they thus could perpetrate deeds which in Europe could only occur in cases of temporary fury? No! There is a reign of terror in southern states, and a reign of terror implies terror on the part of those that rule as well as those that are governed. As humanity grows and makes itself better understood, it is evident that the fabric of slavery totters to its fall, and the war against abolitionists is the last desperate struggle of a dying cause. Unwilling to concede anything, the slaveholder sustains the old system, trembling lest reaction could suddenly come, and rightful retribution be rewarded. ("Slavery in America")

In Douglass's great demonstration of personal liberation through literacy, the Chambers brothers found the most moving possible confirmation of the cause to which they were devoting their lives. And in Douglass's rise from slavery in the feudal South to freedom and prosperity in the progressive, industrialized North, they saw a confirmation of their vision of the opportunities that a modern, knowledge-based nation could make available. Of the many reviews of the *Narrative*, this one from *Chambers'* would seem to have reached the largest number of readers. Along with Mary Howitt's (1799–1888) discussion, published in *People's Journal* in London in 1847 (*Narrative* 192–99), the long review from *Chambers' is* the most thorough. The reviewer most likely is William Chambers, the elder of the two brothers, who would twice visit America during the next decade and write perceptively about the contradictions of the country in *Things as They Are in America* (1854) and *American Slavery and Color* (1857).

Littell introduced the review from *Chambers' with the following comment, which reveals just how powerful an impact Douglass was making: "Independently of all interest in the story itself, whether truly given or not, it is important for us to know what kind of narratives about America are spread through Europe. This article we copy from Chambers' Journal. Other notices of the book have appeared in papers of less circulation. Taking all together, not less than one million of persons in Great Britain and Ireland have been excited by the book and its commentators" (Littell, Untitled Headnote). I do not know where Littell learned that some one million people were "excited" by Douglass, but he would have had no reason to exaggerate. Here is the review as it appeared in Littell's:

**Narrative of Frederick Douglass**

We have been much interested in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, a person of color, lately a slave in the United States, and now a lecturer in the cause of abolition. The account he gives of his early life, and the condition from which he was able to relieve himself, bears all the appearance of truth, and must, we conceive, help considerably to disseminate correct ideas respecting slavery and its attendant evils. Some of the passages present a dismal picture of what is endured by the negro race in the slave-holding states of the union.

Douglass was born on a plantation in Talbot county, Maryland, about the year 1808 [sic] his mother being a negro slave, and his
father a white man—the proprietor of the estate, he has reason to believe. Soon after his birth he was placed under the charge of a
negress too old for field labor, and his mother was hired out to a
planter at twelve miles' distance. He then only saw her occasionally
at night, when she could steal away to visit him for a brief space, in
order to be back before sunrise, whipping being the penalty of any
such unauthorized absence. The strength of the maternal feelings
may be judged of from the fact of these visits to see her child. She
would lie down and clasp him to her bosom for an hour or two,
and then depart long ere daybreak to renew her labor in the fields.
The poor woman died when her boy was seven years old, and it was
long before he knew anything about it.

On the plantation of his uncompromising proprietor, the young
slave passed the first years of his life. The principal products were
tobacco, maize, and wheat, the labor of cultivating which was per-
formed by bands of negroes under overseers, who strictly enforced
every regulation with the whip. Having been put to attend on one
of his master's sons, young Frederick escaped the more severe
labor of the fields, and he had the satisfaction of being seldom
whipped; but he tells us that he suffered much from hunger, cold,
and other miseries. In hottest summer and coldest winter he was
kept almost naked; no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers—
nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to the knees.
Neither had he any bed; he lay on an earthen floor, on a sack or
on any other article he could conveniently secure. Along with the
negro children, his companions, he fed at a trough placed on
the ground; at these meals of boiled corn-meal, some used oyster
shells, others pieces of shingle, and some only their hands, in place
of spoons; and he that ate fastest got most—the whole affair being
like a scramble of monkeys.

When between seven and eight years of age, our hero was
selected to act as a servant to a daughter of his master, who was
married to a captain Thomas Auld in Baltimore. This was a joyous
rise in his condition. Being duly washed and scrubbed, he was
installed for the first time in a pair of trousers, and felt himself
already a new man. At Baltimore, he was treated with unlooked-for
kindness, and his duty was so far from being irksome, that it con-
stituted only in taking care of his master’s son, little Thomas
Auld. Mrs. Auld did not entertain the usual notions respecting slavery,
and was disposed to lighten the condition of the dark-skinned boy—she even began to teach him to read.

"Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she kindly
commenced to teach me the A B C. After I had learned this, she
assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just
at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on,
and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her,
among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach
a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, 'If you give
a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing
but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would
spoil the best nigger in the world. Now,' said he, 'if you teach that
nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keep-
ing him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once
become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to him-
self, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would
make him discontented and unhappy. These words sank deep into
my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and
called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new
and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with
which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in
vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing dif-
ficulty—namely, the white man's power to enslave the black man.
It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that
moment I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was
just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I least expected it.
Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind
mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by
the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though con-
scious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with
high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to
learn how to read."

Inspired with this ardent wish, young Frederick took every
opportunity to learn not only to read, but to write; and only suc-
cceeded by dint of many stratagems and much patience. "The plan
which I adopted, (says he,) and the one by which I was most suc-
cessful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom
I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into
teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in
different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was
sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one
part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my
return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was
always in the house, and to which I was always welcome—for I was
much better off in this regard than many of the poor white chil-
dren in the neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow on the hun-
gry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable
bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them, for it is almost an unpardonable offense to teach slaves to read in this Christian country!"

Being now able to read, he had obtained a key by which he could open the treasures of knowledge hidden to the poor unlettered negro population. But the gift of learning brought with it depressing considerations. The thought of being a slave for life bore heavily on his heart; and while yet only twelve years of age, he began to inquire of himself how it should be the fate of some men to be slaves and others freemen. This very puzzling question was at length cleared up by his perusal of a book entitled "the Columbian orator," which he chanced to get a hold of. At every opportunity he read this book, in which, says he, "I found among much interesting matter, a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue exhibited the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect, for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master. In the same book I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than as a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold that very discontentment which master had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to utterable anguish."

While in this state of mind, he heard something of the abolition movement in the northern states. "I went one day down to the wharf; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went unasked and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, 'Are you a slave for life?' I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. Thay both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away."

Meanwhile he learned to write, beginning by imitating the letters chalked on the timber in a ship-building yard. "After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, 'I don't believe you. Let me see you try it.' I would then make the letters I had been so fortunate as to learn, and asked him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time my copy-book was the board-fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink a lump of chalk. With these I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time my little master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copybooks. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near-neighbors, and then laid aside. By copying these, I finally succeeded in learning how to write."

After various turns in his condition, he was, by the death of his owner, in 1832, transferred to Mr. Thomas Auld in St. Michael's, where he was exposed to much harsh treatment. This new proprietor affected to be more than usually devout; but this, to the surprise of Frederick, neither made him more humane to his slaves, nor led him to emancipate them. "Prior to his conversion,
he relied on his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slave-holding cruelty. He made the greatest pretensions to piety. His house was the house of prayer. He prayed morning, noon, and night. He very soon distinguished himself among his brethren, and was soon made a class-leader and exhorter. His activity in revivals was great, and he proved himself an instrument in the hands of the church in converting many souls. His house was the preachers’ home. They used to take great pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed us."

Neither the religious nor the intellectual culture of the slaves on the establishment troubled this set of worthies; they in fact set their faces against any improvement in the condition of these unfortunate beings. A young man having collected the negroes together on the Sunday evenings to teach them to read the New Testament, the school was broken up by an insurrection of the leaders of the class-meetings armed with sticks and other missiles. "I have said that my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cow-skin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—’He that knoweth his master’s will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.’ Master would keep this lacerated young woman tied up in this horrid situation four or five hours at a time. I have known him to tie her up early in the morning and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to his store, return at dinner-time, and whip her again, cutting her in the places already made raw with his cruel lash."

Frederick did not please his master, who alleged he had been spoiled by a city life; and, to bring him in as a good field hand, he was transferred for a term to Mr. Covey, a great professor of religion, and a person reputed for his abilities as a "nigger-breaker." He had been at this new home only a week, when he committed the unpardonable crime of allowing a team of oxen with a dray to break away from him in the woods. Catching the animals after several hours’ toil, and returning home, he tells Mr. Covey what had happened. "He ordered me to return to the woods again immediately. I did so, and he followed on after me. Just as I got into the woods, he came up and told me to stop my cart, and that he would teach me how to trifle away my time, and break gates. He then went to a large gum-tree, and with his axe cut three large switches, and, after trimming them up neatly with his pocket-knife, he ordered me to take off my clothes. I made him no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He repeated his order, I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after. This whipping was the first of a number just like it, and for similar offences. I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back. My awkwardness was almost always my excuse for whipping me. We were worked fully up to the point of endurance. Long before day we were up, our horses fed, and by the first approach of day we were off to the field with our hoes and ploughing teams. Mr. Covey gave us enough to eat, but scarce time to eat it. We were often less than five minutes taking our meals. We were often in the field from the first approach of day till its last lingering ray had left us; and at saving foorder-time, midnight often caught us in the field binding blades. Made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery, Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died, the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute! Sunday was my only leisure time. I spent this in a sort of beast-like stupor between sleeping and waking under some large tree. At times I would rise up, a flash of energetic freedom would dart through my soul, accompanied with a faint gleam of hope that flickered for a moment and then vanished. I sank down again, mourning over my wretched condition. I was sometimes prompted to take my life and that of Covey, but was prevented by a combination of hope and fear. My sufferings on this plantation seem now like a dream rather than a stern reality."

We must pass over some distressing details which follow, and take up the narrative of our hero in January, 1824, on his removal from Mr. Covey to the establishment of Mr. Freeland, a person of a more generous disposition, and without any pretensions on the score of religion. "This in my opinion (says Frederick,) was truly a great advantage. I assert most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes, a justifier for the most appalling barbarities, a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds, and a dark shelter under which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest pro-
tection. Were I to be again reduced to the chains of slavery, next
to that enslavement I would regard being the slave of a religious
master the greatest calamity that ever could befall me. For of all
the slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders
are the worst. I have ever found them the meaniest and basest, the
most cruel and cowardly of all others." Of course, in making these
observations, our author wishes to guard his readers against the
notion that true piety is an enemy of freedom and justice; he only
means to show how religion is employed as a cloak for every iniquity
in the southern states of the union.

Freeland was a humane master, and at the end of the year 1834,
Frederick had the satisfaction of being hired by him from his pro-
necipitor for one year longer. This permitted him to devote some lit-
tle leisure time to the cultivation of his mind, and the instruction
of the negroes with whom he lived. Along with two of these he con-
tinued a plan of escape, to be aided by a slave, which he had the
ability to write. The runaways were, however, taken; and after con-
fine ment in jail, our hero, very much downcast, was sent to labor
in a ship-builder's yard in Baltimore. Here he was shockingly
abused by the white workmen, and on one occasion, he was so
much beaten that he had to be removed; and, after this, for some
time was permitted to hire himself out, on the condition that all
he made by his labor should be paid over weekly to his owner. "In
the early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see
no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward
of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my
weekly wages, he would, after counting the money, look at me in the
face with a robber-like fierceness, and ask, 'Is this all?' He was sat-
ished with nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when
I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents to encourage
me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission
of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my
wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the
whole of them. I always felt worse for having received anything, for
I feared that the giving me of a few cents would ease his con-
science, and make him feel himself to be a pretty honorable sort of
robber." Discontent at this as well as every other mode of coer-
cion, at length, in September, 1838, induced Frederick to attempt
once more his escape, in which if he failed, he might reckon on
the severest punishment, besides being placed effectually beyond
the means of any fresh effort at freedom. Fortunately he laid his
plans so well that he succeeded in reaching New York without inter-
ruption. The more effectually to escape detection, he changed his
name. Hitherto, he had borne his mother's name Bailey, which he
changed to Johnson on leaving Baltimore; and this he afterwards
dropped, to take that of Douglass. At New York he was joined by a
young woman from Baltimore, to whom he was united in marriage.
This newly-married pair, not thinking themselves safe in this great
city, went to New Bedford, a sea-port in Massachusetts. Here the
extent of shipping and proofs of wealth astonished him. "Added to
this, almost everybody seemed to be at work, but noiselessly so,
compared with what I had been accustomed to in Baltimore. There
were no loud songs heard from those engaged in loading and un-
loading ships. I heard no deep oaths or horrid curses on the
laborer. I saw no whipping of men; but all seemed to go smoothly
on. Every man appeared to understand his work, and went at it
with a sober yet cheerful earnestness, which betokened the deep
interest which he felt in what he was doing, as well as a sense of his
own dignity as a man. To me this looked exceedingly strange. From
the wharfs I strolled around over the town, gazing with wonder and
admiration at the splendid churches, beautiful dwellings, and
finely-cultivated gardens; evincing an amount of wealth, comfort,
taste, and refinement, such as I had never seen in any part of slave-
holding Maryland."

On the third day after his arrival he procured employment on the
wharfs, there being no work too hard or too dirty which he did
not gladly undertake. "I was ready to saw wood, shovel coal, carry
the hod, sweep the chimney, or roll oil casks, all of which I did for
nearly three years in New Bedford before I became known to the
anti-slavery world." Having accidentally been led to speak of slave-
ry at a meeting of abolitionists, he seemed to have at length
alighted on his proper vocation; and from that time until now he
has been engaged in publicly pleading the cause of his unfortunate
brethren.

On his quitting America for Europe, a meeting of persons
friendly to emancipation took place at Lynn, Massachusetts, where
he had resided for the last two years, and unanimously passed the
following resolution in his favor:—"That we are especially desirous
that Frederick Douglass, who came to this town a fugitive from slave-
ery, should bear with him to the shores of the old world, our unan-
imous testimony to the fidelity with which he has sustained the
various relations of life, and to the deep respect with which he is
now regarded by every friend of liberty throughout our borders." Mr.
Douglass is now, we believe, in Great Britain, lecturing on the
subject of slavery, and we should suppose few could be more capa-
ble of depicting the horrors of that great national iniquity.
With the exception of the last sentence, the concluding paragraph comes from the preface to the Dublin edition of the Narrative. Douglass included an excerpt from the Chambers’ review, composed of the first paragraph and that last sentence, in two English editions of the Narrative, that is, the one published late in 1846 by Joseph Barker of Leeds and the one that appeared in 1847, which was published by R. Yorke Clarke and Company of London. I suspect that one or both of the Chambers brothers met Douglass during his visit to Edinburgh in May 1846, just four months after this review appeared. As Alasdair Pettinger shows in “Send Back the Money: Douglass and the Free Church of Scotland,” Douglass campaigned in Edinburgh against the alliance between the Reverend Thomas Chalmers’s (1780–1847) Free Church and the Southern branch of the Presbyterian church in America (31–55). Similarly, the brothers opposed the efforts of religious conservatives such as Chalmers to control social policy in Scotland and adamantly resisted pressure from the Church that they include in Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal regular expressions of piety. In 1844, Robert Chambers had shocked religious conservatives with the anonymous Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, the first fully worked-out exposition of evolutionary theory in English. It is understandable, then, that the brothers would quote extensively from Douglass’s attacks on the hypocrisy of self-professedly religious slaveholders. On this point, as on so many others, the “agendas” of the Chambers brothers and of Douglass were aligned. This powerful indictment of American slavery may well have been the most important reason that the book received. It helps us to see why working-class Britons would support the North during the Civil War.

Two additional references to Douglass in Littell’s Living Age served to contrast British tolerance with American prejudice. In April 1847, on entering the Cunard ship Cambria (the same vessel on which he had traveled to Britain) for the return trip to America, Douglass discovered that, as he wrote in My Bondage, My Freedom (1855), the berth that he had purchased had been “given to another” and the ship’s captain had “forbidden my entering the saloon!” Realizing that “[s]o good an opportunity for calling out a full expression of British sentiment on the subject, had not before occurred,” Douglass exposed this “contemptible conduct” by sending a letter to the Times. He reports that the Times “and other leading journals throughout the United Kingdom, held up the outrage to unmitigated condemnation.” Douglass further reports that, in apologizing, Mr. Cunard publicly promised that “the like should never occur again on board his steamers” (My Bondage 225).

Among the British periodicals that publicized the incident was the Spectator from which Littell published two items—“Inviolability of

Personal Freedom Under British Authority” and an untitled paragraph. Both appeared in Littell’s on 29 May 1847 (“Miscellaneous”), after Douglass had returned home. The first contrasts the attitudes toward race in the two countries:

Inviolability of Personal Freedom Under British Authority

The officers of the company to whom the mail-steamer Cambria belongs are charged with a gross violation of propriety. Mr. Frederick Douglass, an emancipated American slave, has been over to this country on a visit of anti-slavery agitation. Wishing to return to the United States, he went to the London office of the company and secured a berth in the Cambria. He applied for a second-class place; but was told that all distinctions were abolished, and that his color would be no impediment to him; and he paid first-class fare. When he went on board, however, he found that his berth had been given away to some one else; and as a condition of his going on board, he was obliged to promise that he would not take his meals or associate with the other passengers. The object of this stipulation, it needs not be explained, was to protect the American passengers against the company of a person of color.

For the maintenance of the bad feeling which so disgraces republicans, the anti-slavery agitators are in part blamable. They have invoked religious bigotry; they have used violent and coarse language; they have threatened servile war and social revolution. They have attempted to meet dogma with dogma, intolerance with intolerance. There are, no doubt, grave inconveniences in the practice of “fraternizing” and it would be just, as well as judicious, to smooth rather than to exasperate those difficulties.

But Englishmen will not consent to adopt or sanction the opposite practice, that of social oppression. In England we do not recognize the Yankee dogma that the negro is an inferior animal. Even if he were of a different species—which is at least an assumption not borne out by clear evidence—even if his natural powers were not equal to those of the Caucasian, it does not follow that it is justifiable to oppress him. He is at all events a fellow-creature. If he is a different animal, he is an animal that speaks: at least anthropomorphous, he merits the sympathy and respect of man. The negro and the Caucasian have children in common, even in the United States: now such a commerce is either lawful on the score of that common humanity, and is a fortiori an acknowledgement of companionship, or it is a crime. In England we regard the oppression of the negro with pain; we repudiate it as inconsistent
with Christian doctrine and civilized morals. If the citizens of the United States cannot abide the negro to come between the wind and their nobility, let them keep aloof. In this country we do not admit of that compulsory association which seems to be tolerated in America—we leave individuals free to do as they please towards individuals; and persons engaged in the public service of this country ought to know that they will not be permitted to degrade the British authority by violating the national sense of moral rectitude. No ministry would so disgrace itself as to continue its countenance to any commercial body acting in that way. *Spectator*, 10 April.

The *Spectator’s* criticism of American “anti-slavery agitators” in Britain for provoking “bad feeling” seems to be directed at William Lloyd Garrison (1805–79), whose visit to Britain at this time, according to Howard Temperley, had turned into “something of a farce. His attacks on the monarchy and sabbath observance and his hobnobbing with radical leaders like Henry Vincent [1813–78] and William Lovett [1800–1877] offended middle class sensibilities.” Nevertheless, “Frederick Douglass was a good deal more successful in winning the hearts of his British hosts, some of whom joined together before his departure to purchase his freedom and also to put up the money for him to start his newspaper, the *North Star*” (217–18).

The second item, taken from the *Spectator*’s “Miscellaneous” section, reports on the incident’s conclusion:

The case of Mr. Frederick Douglass has given rise to a very multifarious set of letters in the papers. Mr. Charles M’Iver, the Liverpool agent of the Cunard steamers, writes to assume the whole responsibility of what was done; and explains that the reason for obliging Mr. Douglass to keep separate was that he had “created a disturbance” on the voyage to England. Mr. Peter Bolton explains this away, quoting a statement by Mr. Douglass himself. It appears that on the eastward voyage he came as a steerage passenger and kept aloof; he was sought by English passengers, and requested by the master of the vessel to make a speech; he began, was coarsely and violently stopped by Americans on board, and desisted. A letter signed “Charles A. Burrup,” of some place in Virginia, “head manager of the Cunard Company of Liners,” next appeared; very coarsely alluding to the sources of disgust which white people feel for “blackamoors,” and declaring that it is shared by the English; in proof of which, it is stated that on one occasion several English persons threw up their berths rather than voyage with a black couple. One “Fair Play” recounts how the agents of the Great Western refused to exclude a colored clergyman from *their* ship in 1840; and how his decorous manners eventually won the esteem of all on board. Finally, Mr. Camard himself appears. He denies that Mr. Burrup has anything to do with the Halifax steamers, characterizes that person’s statement as untrue, expresses great regret at the unpleasant occurrence in Mr. Douglass’ case, and promises that it shall never occur again.—*Spectator*.

The appearance of such items in *Litell’s* exemplifies Douglass’s claim that anti-slavery statements from Britain reached Boston within a fortnight and then circulated throughout the country.

Already, however, the national mood was beginning to change. The tremendous enthusiasm for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in both England and America raised anew for many Britons the question of the potential costs for the nation of the antislavery battle. The novel’s surprising success forced them to confront some difficult issues of self-interest: while Britain was the world’s leading antislavery nation, it was also the world’s largest importer of slave-grown products, including cotton from the American South. Reflecting the retreat from the cause that the nation had long championed, the *Economist* would write in 1853 that, while “our reason and our hearts call on us to abhor [slavery] and to strive against it,” the fact is we have no “business, as a nation, to take up the cause of the abolitionist in the United States, and to declare a war of opinion against the southern planters.” Rejecting the demand that the nation give up the use of slave-grown cotton, the *Economist* declared, “That immediate and unconditional emancipation” is simply an impossibility (“*Can Slavery Be Abolished?*” as reprinted in *Litell’s* 223). The “reason” and “hearts” of Britons had been stirred by such writers as Stowe and Douglass, and so defenders of the status quo sought to provide plausible reasons for tolerating slavery. One apology that, according to Eliakim Litell, came to have “a wide circulation, both in England and the United States,” was *Slavery in the Southern States*, by South Carolinian Edward J. Pringle (*Litell*, “New Books”). It appeared in *Fraser’s* and was quite popular as a pamphlet. Similarly, Samuel Phillips’s review of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the *London Times* was aimed precisely at reversing the antislavery enthusiasm provoked by the novel by claiming that attempts to end slavery would be counterproductive.

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in England and in America

In a letter to Lord Carlisle, Stowe expressed gratitude that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had elicited such a powerful response in Britain because she understood “with what daily increasing power England’s opinion is to
act on this country." Condemnation of American slavery from abroad was essential because, as Stowe confessed, even citizens of good will could become inured to slavery: "Nobody can tell the thousand ways in which by trade, by family affinity, or by political expediency, the free part of our country is constantly tempted to complicity with the slave-holding part. It is a terrible thing to become used to hearing the enormities of slavery, to hear of things day after day that one would think the sun should hide his face from, and yet, to get used to them, to discuss them coolly, to dismiss them coolly" (qtd. in C. Stowe 165).

Because anti-slavery pressure from England remained so essential, the appearance of Phillips's review in the London Times was quite distressing. Not surprisingly, when the review first appeared, it did so anonymously, and its later inclusion in Essays from the London Times (1852)—the first volume in Murray's series "Reading for the Rail"—was also anonymous. Indeed, the review's authorship may have remained anonymous for decades; Phillips's name was added to the title page when the book and a companion, A Second Series of Essays from "The Times" (1855), were reprinted by Murray in 1871. In short, the editors of the Times could not have selected a more reactionary writer to review Uncle Tom's Cabin. The entry on Phillips in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography reports that he was "as conservative in his literary tastes as in his politics. He disliked the pre-Raphaelites, and it was said of him that he could see nothing in Uncle Tom's Cabin but a violation of the rights of property" (Courtney 137).

What Phillips did see in the novel, however, seems to have been influenced by his reading of such texts as Charles Lyell's (1797–1875) Second Visit to the United States of America (1849), which paints a rather benign view of American slavery, and what Phillips refers to as "a remarkable article, 'Slavery in the United States: Its Evils, Alleviations, and Remedies,' published in the North American Review." The latter piece appeared in October 1851. As indicated by the title, the North American Review is willing to term slavery an "evil," but it cannot envisage an America in which whites and blacks live together harmoniously—so far inferior are the blacks and so hostile are the whites. Until the blacks are returned to Africa or transported to the West Indies, slavery is the only acceptable condition. As the North American Review put it,

The moment the slave is liberated, the lines of caste will be more rigidly drawn; and living in the presence of their former masters, and amidst the associations of servitude, they will always continue to be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. This is the best fate for which they can look. There is another result, of whose possibility history gives us warning. It is, a war of races, in which the feeblest race will be crushed down into a more hopeless state, till, losing all courage and energy, it gradually perishes out of existence. ("Slavery in the United States" 363)

The North American Review seems to echo Thomas Jefferson's (1743–1826) famous prediction in "Query XIV" of Notes on the State of Virginia (1784): "Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race" (Jefferson 186). This and much more of the same hand-wringing racism is what Phillips found so convincing in the North American Review, an organ of the Boston "Cotton Whigs" and the "Unitarian moralists" who dominated Harvard at that time. As would be true of other religious groups, these conflicted Unitarians, Daniel Walker Howe noted, "shattered themselves upon the rock of slavery" (270).

Flawed as Uncle Tom's Cabin is as a novel, Phillips writes, its most serious failing is that it will antagonize the South, and so render slavery more difficult than ever of abolition. Its popularity constitutes its greatest difficulty. It will keep ill-blood at boiling point, and irritate instead of pacifying those whose proceedings Mrs. Stowe is anxious to influence on behalf of humanity... There is no federal law which can compel the slave States to resign the 'property' which they hold... Let the attempt be made imperiously and violently to dictate to the South, and from that hour the Union is at an end.

Here the most powerful newspaper in Britain sides with the South, denouncing all attempts to interfere with slavery: "Would Mrs. Stowe have liberty proclaimed throughout the States at the present moment? For her own sake, and the sake of her countrymen, we hope not. We do not believe the blacks in America are prepared for sudden emancipation; and, if they are, we are certain the whites are wholly incapable of appreciating the blessing" (qtd. in Ammons 30–31).

The Phillips review of Uncle Tom's Cabin was bound to have a profound impact, given the unparalleled power of the London Times. As James Buchanan (1791–1868), American Minister (Ambassador) at the time, wrote to William L. Marcy on 23 December 1853, "Every person whom I meet abuses that Journal, and yet everybody reads it. It is the great paper of the world, and yet it is unprincipled" (qtd. in Crawford 15).

Similarly, the liberal British leader Richard Cobden (1804–65) lamented: "What an absurd position we are in, so completely dictated to and domineered over by one newspaper" (qtd. in Crawford 15).
Phillips's review was reprinted on 18 September at least three New York papers, the *Times*, the *Evening Post*, and the proslavery *Journal of Commerce*. The very different responses of these dailies reflect national divisions and the way British opinion came to register with Americans.

By way of introducing its reprinting, the New York *Times* remarks that the very fact that it comes from the London *Times* and that it "created a great sensation in England" are reasons enough to pay close attention: "It is written with that consummate ability by which every department of the *Times* is habitually characterized, and presents in a very striking style views and sentiments of decided importance upon the general subject." Talk about cultural hegemony reaching across the water! But here the author—most likely the paper’s founding editor, Henry Raymond (1820–69)—calls the London *Times* essay

an elaborate and exceedingly able defense of the slave-holding class, in the United States, from the sweeping and indiscriminate warfare that is waged against them. Without seeking to justify Slavery, to excuse its wrongs or to deny its essential and gigantic evils, it looks also at the difficulties which surround it, at the utter impossibility of its sudden and violent abolition without involving infinitely greater evils than those which now exist, and at the propriety and necessity of considering the subject candidly and with reference to feasible and practical results.

The New York *Times* agreed with its London namesake and the *North American Review* that abolition “can only be brought about by the voluntary efforts of the slave-holders themselves; and that it cannot be forced by extraneous and violent pressure." Further, “[T]his fact is beginning to impress itself upon the public mind in this country; and that, without destroying or weakening the interest felt in the removal of Slavery, it will lead to more rational discussions of the subject, and to the presentation of arguments and plans at once safer and more efficacious. . . . We commend the review of the *Times* to special attention” ([Raymond]).

On 18 September 1852, the *Evening Post* might just as well have been responding to the *Times* of both London and New York, as will be seen from this hitherto unknown essay, which, on the basis of internal evidence (to be discussed below), I have ascribed to John Bigelow:

In another part of this sheet, our readers will find an elaborate criticism from the London *Times* on Mrs. Stowe’s very popular work entitled "Uncle Tom’s Cabin." That work is so universally read, that we gratify an almost universal curiosity in giving the criticism. Not only what it says of the work, but its reasonings in regard to the question of slavery—that question which was never again to be agi-
tated—will be read with some interest.

At the same time, we cannot, in many respects, commend the rectitude of the judgments it passes upon Mrs. Stowe’s book. That the plot wants unity is no objection. If it be interesting, that is enough—if it fix the attention of the reader, if it present occasions for striking delineations of character and for powerfully moving the feelings, that is all that is wanted. This fancy that “a compact, well-jointed whole,” is necessary to constitute a good work of fiction—that a manifest progress toward a catastrophe must be always observable, was, we thought, exploded long ago. Uncle Tom’s Cabin has as regular a plot as any of Dickens’ novels, and a more regular plot, we think, than any of Thackeray’s.

It is objected that Uncle Tom is made too good for a person in his station, and exercises too remarkable an influence upon those with whom he comes in contact. The goodness of Uncle Tom consists in governing his conduct by the simple rule which constitutes the basis of Christian morality, a rule which we need not repeat here; and this we believe is possible to men of the humblest intellect and lowest condition. His strong feelings and deep religious sensibility give him a certain rude eloquence, and this, in conjunction with his patient, forgiving character, his inflexible conscientiousness, and his faithful, intelligent services, inspire respect and give him a certain influence over the minds of others. The *Times* has found it convenient to exaggerate a little in this part of its criticism. Tom does not convert his master St. Clare, but if he did, it would be nothing very remarkable. The writer in the *Times* has not observed the power of religious motives, presented on favorable occasions, if he has not perceived the most striking and immediate effects sometimes produced by them. He will find plenty of instances in the memoirs of any Methodist clergyman. We may remark here, that Tom does not seem to be a much more signal example of goodness than a person of his color mentioned in a proslavery print—the *Journal of Commerce* of this morning. It lays before its readers the case of Simon Harrison, a slave belonging to a white owner of the county of Chickasaw, who desires to go to Liberia. This negro, a ruling elder in a Presbyterian church, is represented as a man of great piety and sound judgment, and likely to exercise a great and wholesome influence in Liberia. The Rev. Cyrus Byington says of him:

"In a peculiar manner he enjoyed the confidence of his former master, and after his death, became the actual guardian of his only child, a daughter. Simon, faithful to his trust, put her into a school, first at one missionary station and then at another, and paid for her
board and her clothes. He has long held religious meetings among people of his own color, and sometimes at the request of the Chickasaw, he has preached to them. He used to pay his own horse hire by the sale of bread-troughs [wooden bowls for bread], which he dug out in the night in his cabin.

If circumstances of this kind had been related of Uncle Tom, the Times would have put them in its list of the improbabilities of his character and history.

But again, it is objected by the critic of the Times, that the author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin paints all her negroes white, and her whites in the blackest possible hues. This assertion is as far from the truth as can well be. The Shelby family, in which Tom first appears a slave, are very good people; Shelby himself [is] a little imperfect, but his wife and son [are] among the excellent of the earth. Evangeline is almost superhuman in goodness; St. Clare, her father, is generous, humane, and just. All these are slaveholders; and there are other instances which contradict the critic’s assertion almost as flatly. As to the dealers in slaves, if they are coarse, brutal and unfeeling, it is not Mrs. Stowe’s fault. She simply describes them as she finds them, and as they are believed to be by the people of the south, as well as the north. The planter Legree, a man of New England birth, settled at the south, by whose cruelties Tom at length loses his life, is a monster of cruelty, it is true; but he only uses Tom as a man of a cruel nature, upon whose passions there is no restraint, sometimes use their cattle, and therefore there is nothing in the picture essentially improbable. If there should seem to be, let our readers look at the following paragraph, which we cut from a paper lying before us, the Philadelphia Sun, and the improbability will disappear:

“A negro named Fleming, had a quarrel with Mr. and Mrs. Poe, at Richmond, about some trifling money matters, and Fleming becoming excited, acted very outrageously. He was arrested, and the Mayor directed that the prisoner should have thirty-nine stripes well laid on, one day, and thirty-nine more the next, and then ordered his commitment for twelve months in default of $500 security to keep the peace and be of good behavior. The Richmond Republican says: ‘Our only regret is, that his Honor could not have assessed the punishment at three hundred lashings, well laid on with a hot rod, to be repeated twice a week for twelve months. Such a desperado should no more be permitted to go at large than a mad dog.’”

As to the blacks, some of them, we are sure, are painted black enough. Sam, one of Shelby’s gang, is a rogue and hypocrite, and there are others of the same sort. Some of Legree’s negroes are as savage and remorseless as Legree himself.

The gravest objection made by the Times to the book is, that it will retard the abolition of slavery. It will do this, according to the Times, by strengthening public opinion against it,—by deepening their feeling that it is wrong,—by widening the sphere of that disapprobation with which it is now regarded.

When we consider that there are but two causes to which we can look for the extinction of slavery, first, the interest, of the planters, and, secondly, the power of public opinion; and when we consider the vast influence of the latter of these causes, this objection will, we think, appear simply absurd.

I have ascribed the comment to Bigelow because it has all the hallmarks of his pointed, slashing style and because he was intimately familiar with the events mentioned. He is referred to in the London Times review as “the American who visited Jamaica in 1850” and who commented on the relatively harmonious relationships between whites and blacks that were developing there since emancipation. By way of contrast, the London Times refers to what it calls “the democratic horror of black blood in the United States,” which is so deeply ingrained that if the slaves are not protected by slavery, they are doomed (qtd. in Ammons 31). Bigelow was angered by the London Times’ twisting of his argument that, just as the former slaves of Jamaica are acting responsibly as free men and women, so too would the American slaves, once they were released from bondage. Freedom and equal opportunity are essential for both whites and blacks. It is “aburd” to think that Uncle Tom’s Cabin would retard the antislavery cause by inflaming public opinion.

Most importantly, Bigelow draws from recent newspapers to give factual support to the essential truth of Stow’s characterization. In dismissing Tom as too good to be true, critics of the novel were in effect charging that all blacks are inferior, incapable of achieving such levels of understanding, noble action, and generosity. But Bigelow argues that Tom is simply a human being who does what is expected of each person: follow the Golden Rule, the most basic of religious teachings. Further, in a brilliant stroke, Bigelow refers to a story, “Simon Harrison, Wife and Three Sons,” in that day’s Journal of Commerce about another slave, Simon Harrison, who displays just such qualities by seeing to the education of the orphan daughter of his former master. That article reports that Harrison, who wants to go to Liberia with his wife and three sons, frequently preaches to the Chickasaw Indians. However, only some $750 has been raised toward the $2,000 needed to purchase the family’s freedom. Trained as a lawyer, Bigelow knows how to use facts to support his argument. And in citing a story of gratuitous cruelty in Richmond, he reveals just how the system brutalizes slaveholders. In her
A Key to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," published in 1854, Stowe would take a similar approach, showing how her novel is based on a careful analysis of the actual working of the slave system.

Under the leadership of Bigelow and William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), the Evening Post was highly regarded by antislavery forces. It was from its pages on 13 August 1852, for instance, that Frederick Douglass' paper published a letter from a New Orleans slaveholder who testified to the power of Stowe's novel. The correspondent—he signed his name "Republican"—claims that he had "long since been dissatisfied with the slave system; particularly since I made the Bible my criterion in judging it." However, his reading of Uncle Tom's Cabin had crystallized these thoughts and led him to offer his own "testimony to [the novel's] just delineation of the position the slave occupies" ("Light in the South").

The Evening Post continued to cite British response to Uncle Tom's Cabin as a way of solidifying the alliance between antislavery forces on both sides of the Atlantic. On 4 October 1852, it quoted from an item in the London Athenaeum speaking on what the Evening Post called the "universal popularity of Uncle Tom's Cabin in England": "This success is not altogether personal; it is a national response to an appeal powerfully made in a great cause" ("Universal Popularity"). And the Evening Post quoted a leader, "Alliance between England and the United States," from the London Sun of 20 October 1852 that cites the popularity of the book in both countries to assert that the Americans "and we are in heart one. There was more soundness at the core than was supposed—more disposition to welcome a book which rebuked the slave-catchers as well as the slave-holders, but spoke kindly of all, and most kindly of the negro, than we had supposed. 'Uncle Tom' will cement good fellowship between" the two countries. After reaching across the water symbolically to "shake hands with the Americans over" the moral power of the novel, the Sun predicts a "noble future" for the country—provided, of course, that it eliminates "the plague-spot of slavery." The moving experience of reading Uncle Tom's Cabin had brought the two nations together. As the London paper put it,

With a country that commands both oceans, rivers, and lakes without parallel; a climate suited to almost every product of the earth; a population as yet nearly free of pauperism; no national debt, and entire self-government; and a thorough-going religious freedom, which Lord Carlisle himself said he quite envied—what could hinder the advance of such a country, but the crippling, enfeebling disease of slavery? It is this which paralyzes all her political principle, which utterly destroys all her moral weight as a nation, and which prostrates half her states, before any enemy who could put a few thousand muskets into the hands of her slaves. ("Alliance between England and the United States")

This was but one of many such statements from the British press on Uncle Tom's Cabin that the Evening Post chose to reprint.

It is hard to think of an American novel that sold as well as Uncle Tom's Cabin in the face of generally negative, even hostile reviews. On 10 July 1852, Littell published two negative notices, one from the Boston Morning Post and the other from the Southern Press (a paper that the Evening Post regularly attacked and whose demise it reported on 10 August 1852 in "A Slavery Pulpit Closed"). However, Littell countered his reprinting of these two negative reviews by including a highly laudatory paragraph from Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, which praises the novel as

the most singular and absorbing specimen of American literature which has ever come to our shores. It is of a class which could have been produced in no other clime, though it will be read, and must be read, by everybody everywhere. Wherever there is a love of liberty and a hatred of oppression, there will this book be read, often with shouts of laughter, often with irrepressible tears, and oftener still, we trust, with a thrill of burning indignation, from which the reader shall arise sternly resolved to do, henceforth, all that in him lies, not to abate or to modify, but utterly to annihilate the accursed system which has supplied, and still continues to supply, materials for such narratives as these. ("Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly") 63

Littell used a similar strategy in dealing with the London Times review, which he republished on 16 October 1852. He paired the review from the Times with an eloquent, passionate and extended notice from the progressive British weekly Examiner. The Examiner opens with a lyrical tribute:

This is not only the most effective exposition that has yet been made by any one person of the wrongs that are inherent in the slave system, but as a work of imagination it is to be welcomed as the best that has hitherto contributed to what may hereafter form a large part of the reading of the world—the literature of America. It is thoroughly genuine. It is not founded on reminiscences of Addison or Goldsmith, or of any of the lights of other days. It is a genuine work of an American mind, wherein all the great and sacred feelings common to humanity are uttered in that kind of English which is spoken only in America; and wherein they are represented as they show themselves—with all the small and unholy feelings too—in distinct phases of American society.

Regarded purely as a novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin is a work of the very highest literary merit. But it is further to be considered that
there is not a chapter in it which does not adduce fresh evidence in accusation of the worst crime that is committed in our own day among the nations. Mrs. Stowe pleads as an American among the Americans.

The reviewer justifies his decision to quote at length from the novel because “we are not only desirous that a work in every respect so remarkable should through our pages recommend itself to the utmost, but we are glad also to transfer to our columns protests against slavery so genuine as those of Mrs. Stowe” (“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”). It is as if Littell seeks to counter the London *Times* with as powerful a review as possible, and it is hard to think that he could have done much better than in drawing from the *Examiner*.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of this essay, I quoted Douglass’s statement at Finsbury Chapel that the “power I now exert is something like the power that is exerted by the man at the other end of the lever; my influence is now just in proportion to the distance that I am from the United States” (*My Bondage 244*). After Douglass’s return to America, British newspapers and periodicals remained interested in him and carried stories about his antislavery campaigning. The London *Times*, in a leader on “The Slavery Compromise” quoted by the *Evening Post* on 5 November 1852, referred to the “vividness of perception and freedom of speech” with which Douglass, “the great advocate of his race,” addressed an antislavery meeting in Syracuse. That is, given the strong interest of Britain in the American slavery question and the importance of British opinion, Douglass—like Stowe—now pulled at the “lever” of British public opinion from America, even as he had exerted his influence on America from Britain.

Still, when in 1859 Frederick Douglass returned to Britain for a lecture tour, he was dismayed, as R. J. M. Blackett put it, by what he saw as a retreat from “those grand traditions of internationalism on which the abolitionist and other philanthropic movements had been founded.” Instead, Douglass found a “limiting nationalism” and the emergence of a racist sentiment that had been absent during his first visit some fifteen years before. “He would have been even more surprised had he remained in England during the war, for what Douglass worried was a growing sense of ‘non-intervention’ in 1859 had by the middle of the war been transmuted in some quarters into a call for support for the Confederacy,” Blackett notes (36–37). But Douglass’s own antislavery campaigning during both visits helped solidify support for the antislav-