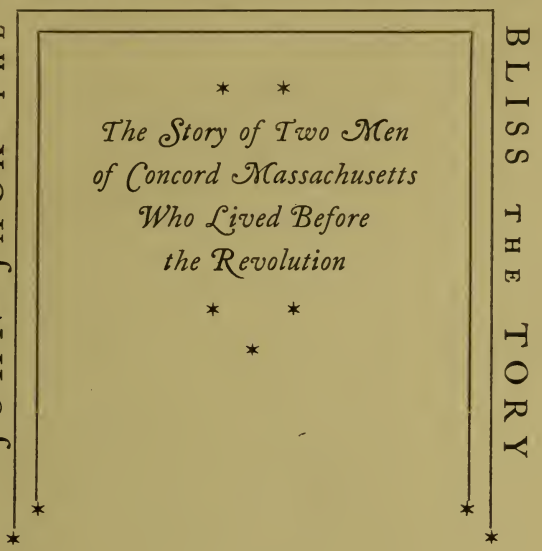
Tolman

SLAVE AND DANIEL



The Story of Two Men
of Concord Massachusetts
Who Lived Before
the Revolution

THE STORY OF TWO MEN
OF CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS
WHO LIVED
BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

JOHN JACK, *The* SLAVE
AND
DANIEL BLISS, *The* TORY

The Story of Two Men
of Concord, Massachusetts
Who Lived Before
the Revolution

A PAPER PREPARED
AND PRESENTED BEFORE THE
CONCORD ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
BY GEORGE TOLMAN
MCMII

Anonymous Gift

JOHN JACK, *The* SLAVE
AND
DANIEL BLISS, *The* TORY

God wills us free; man wills us slaves.
I will as God wills; God's will be done.

Here lies the body of
JOHN JACK
A native of Africa who died
March 1773, aged about 60 years.

Tho' born in a land of slavery,
He was born free.
Tho' he lived in a land of liberty,
He lived a slave.
Till by his honest, tho' stolen, labors,
He acquired the source of slavery,
Which gave him his freedom;
Tho' not long before
Death, the grand tyrant,
Gave him his final emancipation,
And set him on a footing with kings.
Tho' a slave to vice,
He practised those virtues
Without which kings are but slaves.

The Story of Two Men of Concord Massachusetts Who Lived Before the Revolution

ON the rearward or northern slope of Concord's old Hill "Burying Ground," somewhat apart from other stones, as if to show that even the equality of the grave were but a figure of speech, and that the quiet sleeper who lies below were in some way to be kept separate from "the rude forefathers of the hamlet," who, "each in his narrow cell forever laid," repose near by, stands the plain monumental slab of gray slate that is the starting point of this desultory paper.

Upon this stone is graven the striking epitaph on the opposite page.

The reason, then, why this monument stands comparatively isolated, is not far to seek:—Jack was a negro. True, at the time of his death he was a substantial citizen, a land holder, with an estate to be devised and bequeathed and administered upon; a member of the church in good standing, with a soul to be saved or damned; and thus, both from a worldly and from the spiritual point of view, entitled to rank along with his "even Christians." But I have noticed, as if in order to mark and emphasize the natural distinction between white and black, that in every old burying place that I have visited, (and my acquaintance with such places is an extensive one,) I have always found the graves of negroes carefully relegated to the obscure corners of the ground, along with those of paupers and criminals, as though our pious ancestors had taken care that when should take place that opening of the graves and literal bodily resurrection of the dead, which was

to them the one future occurrence of which they were confidently sure, these lower ranks of human kind should come up in their proper place,—in the rear of the great procession.

But be that as it may, John Jack's epitaph has made him immortal. Poets and philosophers, scholars and soldiers, learned jurists, eloquent divines and saintly women lie buried in Concord, who had won in life a valid title to immortality, and who need not that any tombstone should record their virtues or that any epitaph should keep their memories green. These are secure, for they have joined

> "* * * the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence; live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge men's search
> To vaster issues."

Others there are, of the undistinguished crowd, who yet have left their mark for good or ill upon our ancient town, or whose homely virtues are still cherished by their own posterity, and so have earned their immortality,—because

> "To live in hearts we leave behind
> Is not to die."

But for this poor slave, without ancestry, without posterity, without kindred, of a despised and alien race, a social pariah, his title to immortality is found only in his epitaph, which has made him, to his own race, the prophet of that great deliverance that was to come to them in blood and fire, a century after he had worked out his own emancipation.

God wills us free; man wills us slaves.
I will as God wills; God's will be done.

Of the inscription itself, Shattuck, the historian of Concord, writing more than half a century ago, remarks that even then it had been extensively copied. The same writer, in a communication in the local newspaper in 1838, narrates that one of the British officers who were sent by General Gage to Concord in search of information as to the resources and operations of the patriots in the early spring of 1775*, found time from his other duties to copy this inscription, and include it in a letter home, which was published in a London newspaper. This must have been within two years after the stone was first set up. Did the writer of the epitaph himself imagine, or did the Briton who read and copied it even suspect that the grand exordium, "God wills us free; God's will be done," was as truly prophetic of the fast approaching liberty of the Colonies, as of the freedom, that, in the more distant future, was, by the will of God, to descend upon the American Negro? Perhaps not, for the author of the epitaph was Daniel Bliss, the oldest son of the Rev. Daniel Bliss, and a brother-in-law of Concord's patriot pastor the Rev. William Emerson, but himself so hostile to the patriot cause that he was soon obliged to flee from his home, to which he never returned, but spent the rest of his life in British land, and died, as he had lived, a faithful and conscientious subject of the English crown.

Since that first publication of John Jack's epitaph, it has been copied and printed times without number both in this country and abroad. I have met with it translated into German and French, and quite recently a Norwegian acquaintance showed me a newspaper he had just received from home, containing a letter from one of our local Scandinavian colonists describing old Concord and quoting this same epitaph. From peculiarities of its grammatical,

* Brown and De Berniere? They were visitors of Bliss, but appear to have had little opportunity to wander in graveyards. Perhaps Bliss supplied the copy.

or rather rhetorical, construction, and from the fact that it almost translates itself into Latin, I am inclined to think that Mr. Bliss, who was a scholar, and a Latinist, wrote it originally in that tongue. It turns up every little while in some newspaper, sometimes with the addition of circumstances of place, etc., and sometimes merely as a literary curiosity, but always without the least bit of appreciative criticism of its real literary quality, or of recognition of its real point, and significance. I think I am not extravagant in calling it the most famous epitaph in America, and in saying that no other one, whether of statesman, scholar or soldier, artist, or poet or philanthropist, has been so widely copied, or read by so many people, as has this that marks the grave of an obscure and nameless negro.

The stone that bears this famous inscription is not the one originally erected. That had been broken and overthrown, and lay for some years on the ground beside the grave, until some time about the year 1830, the Hon. Rufus Hosmer of Stow, a native of Concord, whose extensive practice at the bar called him here at every session of the County Courts, recognizing perhaps that here was one of the most perfect epitaphs ever written, in danger of becoming utterly lost, started a subscription among the members of the Middlesex bar, to procure the present stone, which is as nearly as possible a *fac-simile* of the original. For many years during the anti-slavery times, which began about the time this second stone was erected and which ended with the emancipation, this grave, almost alone of all the graves in the Hill Burying Ground, was carefully tended and looked after; lilies were planted upon it, the clinging lichens were not permitted to gather upon the stone, and the long rank grass that might have hidden it was kept shorn and trimmed to a decorous smoothness. This was the self-appointed work of Mary Rice, a little old gentlewoman who lived hard by; quaint in dress and blunt of speech, and with the kindest heart that ever beat; eccentric to a marked degree even among the eccentric

people that Concord has always been popularly considered to abound in. She was devoted to all the "reform" causes of the day, and particularly to the anti-slavery movement, and was an active and enthusiastic agent of the "Underground Railway," an institution by the way, of which Concord was one of the principal stations. Many a fugitive found refuge, and, if needed, concealment, in her cottage or from her scanty purse was furnished the means to help him onward toward a free county. To her the epitaph of John Jack had a meaning; it was more than a mere series of brilliant antitheses; it was a prophecy and a promise. The humble grave upon the hillside was a holy sepulchre; its nameless tenant was the prophet and Messiah of the gospel of freedom. She has been dead for more than thirty years, but the grave she tended so carefully still shows the traces of her care, and the successors of the lilies she planted upon it still bloom scantily there in the summer days, and keep her memory green.

I wonder, when Rufus Hosmer set about the restoration of this tombstone, if he was moved thereto in any degree by the story which he must have heard often repeated in his childhood, of his father's encounter with Daniel Bliss on the last occasion that gentleman participated in a public meeting in his native town. Mr. Bliss was, as I have said, a Royalist, and had taken a wife from a leading Tory family of Worcester county. At a convention held in December 1774 in Concord's old meeting-house, (a building doubly sacred to us on account of the many patriotic meetings of the Sons of Liberty that were held within its hallowed walls,) for the consideration of the Boston Port Bill, Mr. Bliss, who had been one of the Counsellors and Barristers that had given their advice to Gov. Hutchinson as to the condition of the country, made an earnest and powerful speech in opposition to the ideas and purposes of the patriots. A fine scholar, a well-trained lawyer, eloquent, logical, witty, sarcastic, a son of the recently deceased and highly esteemed pastor of the village, and brother-in-law to the young and

eloquent divine who had succeeded to the pastoral office and by his enthusiastic and powerful espousal of the people's cause had become almost the idol of the patriots, Mr. Bliss was personally a very popular man among his neighbors, in spite of his fidelity to the royal cause. His speech on this occasion had great effect, and at its close the hearts of the whole assembly sank in discouragement, so powerfully had he portrayed the apparent hopelessness of the struggle between the weakness of the provincials and the mighty power of Britain, then mistress of the world. For a time there was a moody and despairing silence, but at length a plainly dressed citizen, like Mr. Bliss a young man and a native of Concord, arose to reply, speaking at first with hesitating diffidence, as one unused to any higher flights of oratory than were demanded by the narrow exigencies of the town meeting, but gradually warming with his subject, as his own sense of the rights of the provincials and the usurpations of the British ministry pressed more and more strongly upon him, and finally breaking out into a strain of untaught eloquence that carried all before it, and changed, as if by magic, the disheartened temper of his auditors to one of stern and high resolve that the rights of the people should be maintained at whatever cost.

Mr. Bliss, who had carefully noted the effect of his own speech, was greatly disconcerted, and in reply to the question of a Worcester county delegate as to who was the young man who had spoken so forcibly, said that it was Joseph Hosmer, a Concord mechanic, who had learned his English at his mother's knee, and was the most dangerous rebel in Concord, for the young men were all with him, and would surely follow where he led. It was not many weeks afterward that the young men, gathered in arms on Punkatasset hill, were formed in battalion by Joseph Hosmer, acting as adjutant, and were again inspired by his words to raise those arms against the soldiers of their King, and along with him to take the one irrevocable step, — the first, — in the long march that ended years later at York Town. At this December meeting was the last pub-

lic appearance of Mr. Bliss among his townsmen of Concord, but exactly as they threw themselves with increasing ardor into the cause of revolution, so did he more and more earnestly attempt to counteract their plans, and identify himself more thoroughly with the ministerial party, until, even before the actual beginning of the war, he found himself obliged to seek his personal safety by fleeing to the protection of the British soldiery.

Can we not imagine that Joseph Hosmer's son, more than fifty years afterwards, was moved by some chivalric impulse to preserve the only relic that remained here of his father's old friend and enemy, — the inscription that prophesied liberty even to the humblest, in the name of God?

Daniel Bliss was born in Concord in the year 1740, and graduated at Harvard College in 1760. In 1765 he was admitted to the Worcester county bar, and began practice immediately thereafter at Rutland, where he married Isabella, the daughter of Col. John Murray. Murray was a firm and outspoken supporter of the royal cause, and a rich and influential man. His neighbors, who were mostly patriots, at length became very much incensed against him, and sent him word that on a certain day a committee of one thousand persons, headed by Major Willard Moore who a few months later fell at Bunker Hill, would call upon him to remonstrate with him. Col. Murray, distrustful of the nature of the remonstrance that might be offered by so large a committee, and deeming the odds of one thousand to one too great for even his masterful spirit to encounter, prudently left home the day before the remonstrants were to call, and never returned. His estate was afterward confiscated by the government. Mr. Shattuck and others represent that Daniel Bliss imbibed his toryism from Col. Murray. Perhaps so; but his father, the Rev. Daniel Bliss, who was living when the storm of rebellion first began to gather, was a staunch royalist, and in many public utterances showed his devotion to the cause of the King. The younger Daniel, then just coming to man's

estate, very naturally took the side that his father espoused. When he came to set himself down to the practice of law at Rutland, his political predilections and his business interests as well, attracted him to the side of established law and settled institutions, and the connection with Murray was inevitable. Rutland, it may be remarked, was largely a colony of Concord, and many of our oldest Concord names are still prevalent there.

Mr. Bliss did not remain many years at Rutland; in the year 1772 he purchased from John Barrett a house in the centre of the village of Concord, on what is now Walden street, the second house from the corner of Main street, which has been torn down within the last thirty years. It was at this house that Capt. Brown and Ens. De Berniere of the British army were entertained by Mr. Bliss, when they visited Concord on the 20th of March 1775, in obedience to the orders of Gen. Gage, "to examine the roads and situation of the town, and also to get what information they could relative to what quantity of artillery and provisions" had been collected there. Situated in the very centre of the town, it was an admirable "coign of vantage" from which to observe a good part of what was going on. Capt. Timothy Wheeler's mill, where flour was being steadily manufactured for the use of the rebels, was not two hundred feet away; Reuben Brown's saddlery shop, where harnesses and cartridge boxes and accoutrements were making, was but a little further; the storehouse where the collected material for war was deposited was close by; Mr. Bliss was thoroughly alive to all that was going on about him, and knew every foot of the territory, in which he had lived almost all his life. The spies had hardly need to step outside his door to find material for the report they made to Gen. Gage a few days after, which convinced that experienced commander that decisive measures must be taken without delay.

But if Mr. Bliss's house was an easy place to watch from, it was equally an easy place to watch, and the officers had not been there

many minutes before their presence was known, and their errand more than suspected. Doubtless this visit was a great advantage to the patriots as well as to Gen. Gage, for it was an unmistakable hint to them that an armed expedition might soon be looked for, and that it behooved them to be in readiness to meet it. Thus far Mr. Bliss's family connections, and his own personal popularity, (which, apart from political considerations, was very great,) had shielded him from personal violence, but this last offence, of harboring spies in his own house, broke down the patience of the people, and they threatened to kill both him and his visitors. The two officers remained until late at night when the vigilance of the patriots was somewhat relaxed, and then accompanied by their host as a guide, went out of the town by a circuitous and unwatched road. His wife and children and all his personal possessions were left behind, but a few weeks later he sent his brother Samuel to Concord to make arrangements for saving what could be saved of his household effects, and for getting his family safely away. Like Daniel, Samuel was a loyalist, but he had been living for several years in Worcester county, and although Concord people knew him well, both personally and politically, they were not so much exasperated against him as against his brother. Still they were suspicious of him, and when the rumour had at length obtained credence that he had helped to pilot the British force to Concord on the 19th of April, and had given them suggestions as to where to search for contraband of war, and had even pointed out the dwelling places of the leading rebels, the townspeople arrested him, and brought him before Esquire Duncan Ingraham for examination, on the 12th of May. Ingraham himself was strongly suspected of being a royalist at heart, but he was not only the wealthiest citizen of the town, but also the one most gifted with worldly wisdom, for he had been a successful merchant and sea-captain, and had travelled all over the world with his eyes open. His influence was great, and he knew enough, moreover, to keep his usually rough tongue in check, and to wait until he

knew which side was coming out ahead, before he committed himself. After the war was over he became a full-fledged patriot and talked much about the independence of his country. I may mention in passing, that he was the grandfather of that Capt. Ingraham of the U. S. Navy who attained some celebrity in the Martin Koszta affair a generation ago. Before this worthy magistrate, as I have said, Samuel Bliss was brought, but proved by the testimony of four witnesses that he had been in Boston all day on the 19th of April, and was therefore discharged from custody. He was fully persuaded, however, that the people would watch their opportunity to arrest him on some other charge, and so retreated immediately to Boston. Shortly afterward he received a commission as Lieutenant in the British army, and served with considerable distinction during the war, retiring after the war was over, with the rank of Captain, and settling in New Brunswick, where he passed the rest of his life. Daniel Bliss also joined the British army, in which he held the rank of Colonel and was attached to the commissary department and stationed at Quebec.

Thus it will be seen that two sons of the Rev. Daniel Bliss were in the British army. The other two joined the patriot army, and both held commissions. Of the latter two, Thomas Theodore, the one of whom his brother Daniel said to the English officers that he "would fight them in blood up to his knees," was a brave and efficient officer, but was unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner early in the war, and was not released until the British forces evacuated New York after the peace. It has been surmised that his brother Daniel used his personal influence to prevent his earlier release or exchange, in order to keep him out of harm's way, or restrain him from doing mischief to the royal cause. The other brother, Joseph, was a clerk in Knox's book-store in Boston, and when his employer abandoned business in order to become Washington's Chief of Artillery, the boy accompanied him to the field,

and served with credit in the successive grades of Ensign, Lieutenant and Captain.

Daniel Bliss's estate was the only one in Concord confiscated by the General Court, and on the 6th of March 1781, "Commissioners for the sale of the estates of Conspirators and Absentees lying within the county of Middlesex," of which Commission Joseph Hosmer of Concord was a member, disposed of his house and lands by auction, for £278: 2: 10. The estates of his brother Samuel, and his father-in-law, Col. Murray in Worcester county came under the same Act of Sequestration.

In one of the Rev. William Emerson's letters to his wife from Ticonderoga in the summer of 1776, he speaks of his inability to forward a letter to her brother Daniel in Quebec, all communication through the lines being strictly forbidden. But I do not find that Col. Bliss kept up any communication with his relatives here after the peace. Indeed, so thoroughly had he expatriated himself, that even the portraits of his parents, specially bequeathed to him by his father, were never claimed, but remain to this day in Concord. The war being over, he resigned his commission in the Army, and settled at Fredericton, New Brunswick, where he entered upon the practice of the law. There was a large colony of refugees from New England there in New Brunswick, men who had been wealthy at home, but who had lost everything by their espousal of the royal cause. Many of them, like Col. Bliss, were men of culture and ability, graduates of Harvard College, or (less frequently) of Yale, representatives of what Dr. Holmes calls "The Brahmin Caste of New England." Among them all, there was not one who in natural force of character and in the ability that comes from education and training was the superior of Daniel Bliss, and he very quickly built up a large and lucrative practice, by which he not only repaired his shattered fortune, but also gained a position at the head of the New Brunswick bar, and was in a few years appointed a member of His Majesty's Council for that Province. Later in life

he was raised to the Bench, and became Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He died at his country residence of Belmont in 1806. His sons inherited the family characteristics. The elder, who bore the name of his father and grandfather, entered the British army, and settled in Ireland, where his descendants still live. John Murray Bliss, the younger son, succeeded to his father's estate of Belmont. He was a lawyer, and became successively Solicitor General and Judge, and during an interregnum consequent upon the death of the royal Governor, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief and Administrator of the Province. Just before the war of 1812, and in anticipation of trouble with the United States, he was put in command of the provincial militia, there being at that time no English regular troops in the Province. Both these sons of Daniel Bliss were natives of Massachusetts. The descendants of the younger still remain in New Brunswick, and the family have been especially prominent there in the Church and at the Bar.

Col. Bliss is described as a man of fine presence, and engaging, though somewhat aristocratic manners; brilliant and witty in conversation, and a powerful public speaker; a fine scholar, a clear and logical thinker, a sound lawyer, an eloquent pleader, and a man of spotless integrity. We may well believe all this of him, when we consider his birth and his early training, and the high position he attained at the bar and on the bench, and we may well regret that his high qualities and brilliant talents were not devoted to the service of his native land.

As I have already said, a large proportion of the loyalists of the American Revolution were men of learning and culture, or men of wealth. I think it would surprise one who has not looked into the matter, to compare the list of those proscribed by the General Court in 1779 with the list of graduates of Harvard College for the twenty years immediately preceding the war. The ministers of the New England church were for the most part ranged on the

side of the people, but the Episcopal clergy, and the laity too, were, almost to a man, royalists, and so were nearly all the lawyers, and a large proportion of the physicians. These were men whom the infant State could ill afford to lose, and doubtless if the same course had been taken with them after the war, that was adopted by the United States toward her disloyal sons eighty-five years later, it would have been a wise and prudent policy, that would have strengthened rather than weakened the new and then experimental government. That these men were honest in their political convictions, and courageous in the maintenance of them, we cannot doubt, now that we look upon them with clearer eyes and less impassioned judgment through the long perspective of more than a hundred years. Who shall say that Daniel and Samuel Bliss were less brave or less conscientious than their brothers Thomas and Joseph? They were all of one blood and lineage. If the younger two risked "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour," so did the elder two, equally, and as the event turned out, still more hopelessly. I fancy it required as much courage, and exactly the same kind of courage, to be a loyalist in Massachusetts in 1775, as it did to be a Union man in South Carolina in 1861; — the courage to stand up for one's own conviction of right, in the face of a whole community filled with a burning sense of wrong, and fully determined to appeal to the last resort of armed rebellion.

Do not imagine that I think it would have been better had the war of independence failed. No: — God willed us free; God's will had to be done; and we cannot for a moment doubt that not America alone, but the whole world as well, was beyond all measure the gainer, by the failure of the cause for which Daniel Bliss fought, and for which he suffered exile. I have only tried to give you some faint glimpse of the real character of the gentleman, scholar, soldier and jurist whom his native town remembers only by the opprobrious epithet of "Tory."

BUT we have wandered far from our starting point, the humble grave upon our hillside. Let us get back to it, and see how much we can reconstruct of John Jack's individuality from the materials accessible to us. It is not much, for a life so unimportant as that of a negro slave leaves but few traces, even in village annals. Of his life as a slave we know nothing except that his master was Benjamin Barron. Slavery in New England was a very mild form of servitude, and Barron like most of his neighbors was a yeoman or farmer, so we may fairly imagine that Jack's life was not much harder or more laborious than that of a hired farm hand, or even than that of his master, in those days, when farming meant hard work, long hours and plain living for both master and man. That he was a good servant and a good Christian we may infer from the brief eulogy graven upon his tombstone, — that "he practised those virtues without which kings are but slaves," — a lofty testimonial indeed, that even the best of men might be proud to deserve.

Benjamin Barron, who was by trade a cordwainer, but had apparently been driven by advancing age to abandon that business, and devote himself entirely to his farm, lived half a mile east of the village, on the Boston road, in a little cottage known in our day as "the old Dutch house," destroyed but a few years ago, and in a back room of which the marks of its use as a shoemaker's shop were visible up to the time of its destruction, — the four holes worn in the floor by the feet of the bench, and the deeper and wider hollow channelled out by the feet of the workman himself. He died in 1754; — is there another man of his time whose very footprints we of to-day have seen? His estate, which was a considerable one for those days, was administered by his daughter Susanna. In the inventory, after the customary list of household furniture and the like, appear these items: —

"One Negro servant named Jack. £120: 0: 0
"One Negro maid named Vilot, being of no vallue."

So we see what was the money value, to our revered forefathers, of a very superior article of human property (in the very best years of his life, for he was then about forty two years old,) endowed with much more than the customary allowance of virtues. I hope our women's rights friends will not take it hard that poor Violet, who was only four years older, was considered as not only of no value, but even as an encumbrance upon the estate; for when fifteen years later an agreement was made among the Barron heirs for the partition of the property, after the death of the widow, I find written upon the petition, in the handwriting of S. Danforth, Judge of Probate, — "Quaere: about the negro, — whether the portions ought not to be made payable only on condition that the several heirs do their parts toward her support, or give security to do it;" and when a final settlement was made, Susanna, who took the homestead, agreed "that she would take the negro woman belonging to the estate as her own, and that she would support her in sickness and health, she having the benefit of her labor." But, after all, Violet outlived her mistress, and died in 1789, aged 80 years.

But to get back to John Jack: the first thing to be said about him is, — that that was not his name, except as he may have assumed it after becoming free. He stands on the church records as "Jack, Negro." Our good ancestors would admit negroes, free or slaves, to the full communion of their churches, (though they did not allow them to sit among the white people,) the ministers would baptize the colored babies and give them their proper start in the way of life, but as for family names — what did the negro want of a family name? One name was enough, if you simply added the word Negro to it. We have seen that in the inventory of the Barron estate he is named Jack. He must have been very industrious in "his honest tho' stolen labors," and in a very few years ac-

quired the £120 of "the source of slavery" which was the price of his freedom; for by the year 1761 he had not only done that, but had also bought for £16 from Susanna Barron, his old master's daughter, "four acres of plow land in the great or common fields so-called," and from another party, at about the same time, for £6: 13: 4, two acres more, in the same locality. In the deed of the first of these purchases he is called "a certain Negro man called John, a Free man, now resident at said Concord, a laborer." The second deed runs to "Jack, a free Negro man, late servant to Benjamin Barron, deceased." The great fields, where this property lay, were then, and until quite a recent period, held in common by the associated proprietors, and in their records, from that time until his death, I find him set down as Jack Barron. Later he bought a lot of two and a half acres in the great meadow, upon which he built his house, and the spot has been occupied by negro families ever since, until a very few years ago.

He supported himself by working out for the farmers at odd jobs, haying, pig-killing and the like, and by going around among the farms in the winter cobbling shoes. In December, 1772, being sick and weak in body, he made his will, by which he bequeathed "to Violet, a negro woman, commonly called Violet Barnes, and now dwelling with Susanna Barron of said Concord," all his lands, and also all of his "personal estate, with residue and remainder of all his worldly goods and effects whatsoever, his funeral charges and just debts being first paid." Beside his real estate the inventory comprises, among other things, a cow and calf, a good pair of oxen, some farming tools, a bible and psalm book and seven barrels of cider. His will appoints Daniel Bliss Esq. as executor, and is signed John Jack, in the writing of the person who drafted it, and a tremulous and straggling cross, his mark. Perhaps he was too weak to write, perhaps he did not know how, though the bible and psalm book would seem to indicate the ability to read, unless indeed he kept these books, as so many of our more modern Chris-

tians do, for exhibition purposes, rather than for practical use. The seven barrels of cider looks like a large allowance for the private use of a man without family, and gives confirmation to the tradition that the vice to which his gravestone tells us he was a slave, was one which he shared in common with a good many of his white neighbors, in those days when "the temperance cause" had not been invented. Whether his old fellow-servant Violet benefited anything from his estate I know not, but being still in law and in fact the slave of Susanna Barron, it was not possible for her to own real estate, a circumstance that seems to have been overlooked both by Jack himself, and the person who drafted his will. Probably neither Violet nor her mistress, nor any one else, remembered that Violet was a slave; but when the title came to be transferred to the negro woman, that fact had to be considered, and Jack's small holding became again the property of Susanna Barron. Here Jack's record stops, and we know no more of him. His old mistress survived him, and died in 1784, still unmarried. Her grave and the graves of her parents are unmarked and unknown, while by the irony of fate their old slave rests beneath a stone that bears an epitaph that will never be forgotten.

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AND this epitaph: — is it not also an epigram? Can we not read in it something more than what it says? It appears to me that there is in it the suggestion of a caustic satire upon the ideas of our revolutionary forefathers, who were clamoring for liberty for themselves, while they held in servitude and bought and sold the natives of Africa, who were born free in a land of slavery. "Liberty" was the one word of all others that Daniel Bliss heard the oftenest, among his neighbors; the one subject that took precedence of all others in every public meeting and in every private conversation. Can we not find in the

words, "a land of liberty" where a freeborn man could be compelled to live a slave, a sneer at what he felt was the hollowness and insincerity of the popular craze of the day? Is not the same idea further carried out in the suggestion that the slave could honestly steal from him by whom he was himself stolen? To Mr. Bliss and his fellow royalists, the struggle that the patriots were making was simply a resistance to taxation; merely a question of pounds, shillings and pence; the rebels were determined that they would not put out any of their hardly won cash for the support of a royal government, whose protection they still enjoyed. Can we not see this idea in the allusion to "the source of slavery"? Does not the very opening line, "God wills US free," and the solemn aspiration that follows it, "God's will be done," at once convey a sneer at the liberty-loving slave-holders, a rebuke of slavery itself as morally a sin, and a prophecy that that sin should yet be expiated?

This epitaph of an American slave, by an American tory, is the oldest of anti-slavery utterances; the first statement that I have been able to find anywhere, of the fundamental thesis of the later abolitionists, that slavery is in itself a sin, contrary to the will of God. It must be borne in mind that in 1773 slavery was a state recognized by every country in the world, as a part of the law of the land; an established feature of society everywhere. It was not until twenty years after John Jack's gravestone was set up, that any nation abolished slavery by law, and then it was France that did so, in the hysterical fury of her great revolution. In the year of grace 1773, not the state only, but the church as well, sustained slavery; it was part not alone of political constitutions and social institutions, but of religious systems also: a necessary and fundamental part of the divine economy; a feature of God's eternal purpose. Christianity was the bulwark and defence of slavery. It was not until the year 1775 that any body of Christian believers proclaimed its sinfulness; in that year the Quakers resolved that no member of their faith should hold slaves. But the Quakers were

heretics, (if not lunatics) in the eyes of all branches of the Christian church. In 1773 it was seditious to doubt the political lawfulness of slavery, and blasphemous to call in question its moral rightfulness. Daniel Bliss's bold thesis, — God wills us free, — was as shocking to the political and moral ideas of his time as was Wendell Phillips's "God damn the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" to the political and moral ideas of some eighty years later.

In the public square at Concord stands a monument to the memory of her sons who, in the late civil war, gave up their lives in defence of the principle of national freedom and unity; by the side of her quiet river her noble Minute-man keeps his unceasing watch over the spot where her sons stood to defend the principle of national independence. Both of these monuments are typical of political, and, in a sense, local and restricted ideas, narrow principles touching merely institutions and policies. But earlier than either, over the grave of a nameless slave in her ancient burying ground, stands the plain gray slab of slate that typifies the far higher idea which is of the constitution of humanity itself, — the principle of individual personal liberty.

We look in vain in the writings or speeches of our patriot fathers for any enunciation of this principle, for any condemnation of slavery as a sin against the moral government of the world. *That* was reserved for the man they called a Tory, — the man who believed that personal freedom was the God-given birthright of humanity, and whose clear and intelligent vision pierced through the mists of future years to the glorious time when that birthright should be everywhere acknowledged.

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