



White Slavery In The Barbary States

Charles Sumner

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"The author of this little work, the Hon. Charles Sumner, was one of the few senators of the United States who had the manliness to oppose the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act as unconstitutional, as well as unjust and cruel....Mr. Sumner's speech in the senate was one of great ability, as well as of much benevolence, and the same spirit is apparent in the present volume. A sketch is given of the history of slavery in the Barbary States, containing many events of historical interest, and the incidents of particular cases on record. There are some stirring narratives of captivity among the Algerines, and of the adventures and escapes of European and of American captives. The work is valuable as a historical sketch, and it cannot fail to exert a favorable influence on American readers, in calling forth generous sympathies, and awakening the sense of justice and humanity towards the oppressed - feelings which, in the case of Negro slavery, are overborne by motives of self-interest and of political expediency. Some remarkable extracts are contained in the work from the writings and speeches of many of the founders of the American Republic, denouncing the crimes and deploring the evils of slavery, and giving counsel for its speedy abolition." -The Literary Gazette, January 1, 1853

"'White Slavery' was originally delivered as a lecture in various places, and depicts the woes and barbarities which conquered and captured Christians have suffered in the north of Africa. Many have listened to unwelcome truths from Mr. Sumner's lips, charmed by the eloquence and Christian spirit which inspired them. They will probably read this volume with more pleasure - the wrong depicted not being our own." - The Freewill Baptist Quarterly

The revolting custom of White Slavery in the Barbary States was, for many years, the shame of modern civilization. The nations of Europe made constant efforts, continued through successive centuries, to procure its abolition, and also to rescue their subjects from its fearful doom. These may be traced in the diversified pages of history, and in the authentic memoirs of the times. Literature also affords illustrations, which must not be neglected. At one period, the French, the Italians, and the Spaniards borrowed the plots of their stories mostly from this source. The adventures of Robinson Crusoe make our childhood familiar with one of its forms. Among his early trials, he was piratically captured by a rover from Salle, a port of Morocco, on the Atlantic Ocean, and reduced to slavery. "At this surprising change of circumstances," he says, "from a merchant to a miserable slave, I was perfectly overwhelmed; and now I looked back upon my father's prophetic discourse to me, that I should be miserable, and have none to relieve me, which I thought was so effectually brought to pass, that I could not be worse." And Cervantes, in the story of Don Quixote, over which so many generations have shaken with laughter, turns aside from its genial current to give the narrative of a Spanish captive who had escaped from Algiers. The author is supposed to have drawn from his own experience; for during five years and a half he endured the horrors of Algerine slavery, from which he was finally liberated by a ransom of about six hundred dollars. This inconsiderable sum of money—less than the price of an intelligent African slave in our own Southern States—gave to freedom, to his country, and to mankind the author of Don Quixote.

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