

Lesson 15, Worksheet 2

The Case of James Hamlet

CIVIL LIBERTY OUTRAGED.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE COMPROMISE!

THE FIRST UNITED STATES OFFICIAL SLAVE-CATCHER IN NEW-YORK!

THE FIRST OUTRAGE UPON CIVIL LIBERTY ON FREE SOIL IN A FREE STATE!

Let the following plain statement of facts be read by every American citizen, and the public judgment be passed upon the authors of the law under which they took place, and their aiders, abettors, and approvers.

On the 26th day of September last, one THOMAS J. CLARE came to the city of New-York from Baltimore, with a power of attorney, purporting to be executed by one Mary Brown--not by her signature, but by her mark--authorizing him to take and carry to Baltimore a man represented to be her slave. Bringing with him a copy of the Fugitive Slave Law, just passed by Congress, as one of the heralded measures of peace in which that body has been engaged for the last ten months, certified to be authentic by Daniel Webster, Secretary of State, Clare appeared before Alexander Gardiner, Clerk of the Circuit Court of the United States for the Southern District of New-York, and Commissioner under the Fugitive Slave Law, and in virtue of this law, constituted a slave-catcher, and made an affidavit that George Hamlet, a mulatto man, about 30 years of age, who has resided in the neighborhood of this city for the last two or three years, and who has a wife and children there, was the slave of Mrs. Brown, and that he escaped from her in Baltimore about the year 1848, and asked for a warrant to arrest him.

RESTORATION OF JAMES HAMLET

The sum of eight hundred dollars having been subscribed in this city and neighborhood, (\$100 by a colored man, Isaac Hollenbeck,) a benevolent individual kindly volunteered to go to Baltimore, redeem James Hamlet, and accompany him back to New-York. He went in fetters, but returned a free man.

A great demonstration was made in the Park, on Saturday, the 5th October, on the arrival of Mr. Hamlet. Four or five thousand citizens, white and colored, assembled at noon, to welcome him back to his family and chosen residence. Mr. JOHN P. THOMPSON was called to the chair. Addresses were made by Messrs John J. Raymond, Robert Hamilton, Charles B. Ray, and Wm. P. Powell. Much joy and enthusiasm was manifested. The speakers were heard with the deepest attention, and were frequently cheered while depicting the unjust and cruel privations to which the people of color are subjected in this boasted land of liberty, and in being obliged to seek shelter from persecution and slavery under a monarchical government, which once oppressed this nation, and now affords an asylum to its citizens fleeing from the oppression of the government of the model Republic! Hamlet stood at the right of the chairman, and tears ran down his cheeks while the speakers described the horrors of slavery. The following resolutions were passed, when the ransomed MAN was escorted to his home, amidst great cheering, shouting and rejoicing.

Source: Tappan, Lewis. *The Fugitive Slave Bill, Its History and Unconstitutionality: With an Account of the Seizure and Enslavement of James Hamlet, and His Subsequent Restoration to Liberty.* New York: William Harned, 1850. Print.