

Title: The Nelson Hackett Case

Subtitle: Historical Inquiry

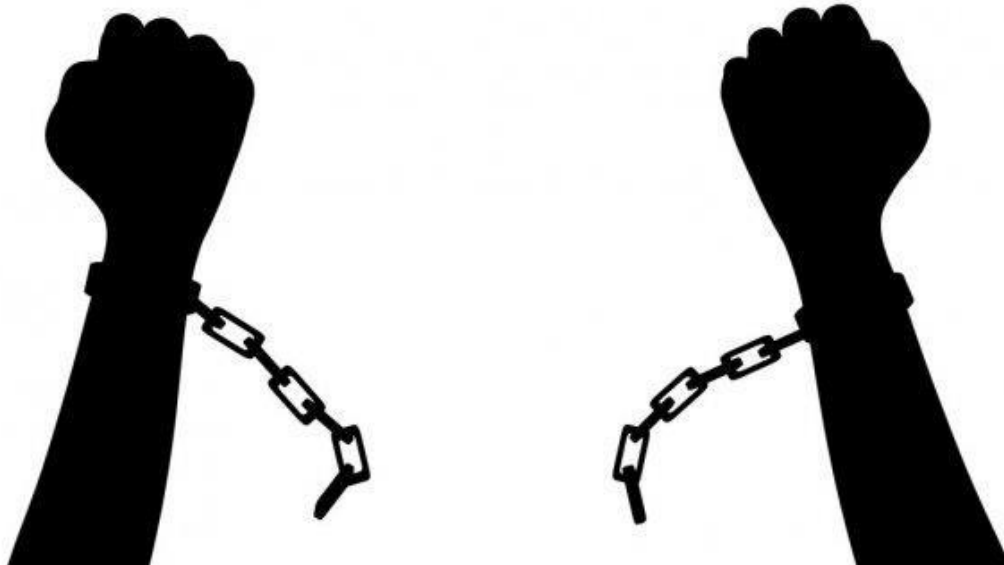
Duration: 5 classes

Best Courses Fit: Law, History, Canada: History, Identity, and Culture, Grade 12

Central Historical Question: Should Nelson Hackett have been extradited to Arkansas?

Background Knowledge

The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 received Royal Assent on August 28, 1833 and took effect on August 1, 1834, abolishing slavery throughout most of the British Empire. This Act freed over 800,000 enslaved Africans. As a result, an increasing number of courageous freedom seekers fled oppression and slavery in the United States and made the journey to Canada since it was a British subject. Nelson Hackett was one of them. Tragically, he would become the first and only fugitive slave ever returned to slavery in the United States.



Tasks

1. Read the Background Knowledge section.
2. Read the documents.
3. Respond to the questions in complete sentences.
4. Complete the organizer by answering the central historical question. Share your responses with your class.
5. Complete the synthesizing activity.

Document A: 1840 Bill of Sale for Nelson Hackett

“Know all men by these presents that I Willis Shepherd Wallace of the Town of Fayetteville County of Washington and State of Arkansas have this day bargained, sold, **conveyed** and delivered unto Alfred Wallace of the Town, County, & State **aforesaid** a certain Negro Boy named Nelson about twenty four years of age. Which boy Nelson I warrant to be sound both in body & mind, a slave for life and free from the claim or claims of all & every person whatsoever lawfully claiming the same for the sum of one thousand to me in hand paid, the receipt is hereby full acknowledged. As witness my hand this sixteenth day of June AD 1840.
W S Wallace [seal]
State of Arkansas
County of Washington

VOCABULARY

conveyed – changed ownership
aforesaid – said or named before

Document B: Report from Charles Stewart

Background Knowledge

Charles Stewart was an abolitionist and an attorney who had been one of the founding officers of the Detroit Anti-Slavery Society. He interviewed Nelson Hackett while in jail.

Hackett was a slave in Arkansas. In the spring or summer of 1841, he was at a race course with his *legal* master, and desired to take home a race-horse. Hackett, finding himself well mounted under circumstances that permitted absence, directed his course towards liberty. At this time, he had in his care the outside coat of the master, and he also had his gold watch. After many **perils**, he succeeded in finding his way from Arkansas to Canada: he passed through Detroit, in the state of Michigan, and took up his abode at London, or somewhere in the vicinity of Windsor, opposite to Detroit. In the summer or fall he was followed. A person on behalf of his alleged owner consulted a lawyer, Mr. George F. Porter, whether there was any mode by which Hackett could be recaptured into slavery. The application to him shows the motive of the master, and that he desired to repossess himself of the person of Hackett, not so much on account of his actual value, as that his recaption, and the dreadful punishment that awaits might deter others from a like attempt.

The next thing known is that the agent went to Canada and had Hackett arrested for theft – stealing a coat, gold watch, and horse of Alfred Wallace (the master). He was jailed at the Sandwich **gaol**.

The arrest was in the fall of 1841. His claimant had him indicted for **larceny**; and **procured** from the governor of Arkansas a demand on the governor of Canada for the surrender of Hackett.

I made application and was admitted to see him. Hackett candidly **avowed** the fact, that he had used the horse as the means of procuring freedom.

(Signed) C.H. STEWART, Attorney and Counsellor at Law
New York, August 9th, 1842.
Detroit, State of Michigan

VOCABULARY

peril – danger

larceny – theft

gaol - jail

procure – to obtain

avowed – confessed

Document C: The Petition of Nelson Hackett

Background Knowledge

While jailed at Sandwich, a petition from Nelson Hackett was drawn up by Windsor lawyer Charles Baby and sent to the Governor-General of Canada, Charles Thompson, who died before making a decision about Nelson Hackett. It was signed with a mark, indicating that Hackett was likely unable to read or write.

I fled to Canada because I believed that the humanity of the British law made me a free man as soon as I touched the shores of the country. I did not steal the items, they belonged to me and I only confessed to stealing them because of the severe beating I received when arrested. I want to stay in Canada. If I return to Arkansas, I will be tortured in a manner that to hang me at once would be mercy.

Signed Nelson Hackett, mark.

Document D: Despatch from the Governor-General of Canada
to the Secretary of State for the Colonies

Background Knowledge

Sir Charles Bagot was the Governor-General of Canada during the Nelson Hackett case.

After fully considering the subject, there was no doubt of the guilt of this individual, the stolen property having been found on him on his arrival in the province; nor could it be said that the stolen property had been taken solely to assist him in escaping from slavery. It could not be said that the property was not taken with a **felonious** intent. I felt therefore that to refuse to surrender him would establish a principle that no slave escaping to this province should ever be given up, whatever offence, except for murder; a principle which would have been **repugnant** to the common sense of justice of the civilized world, would have involved us in disputes of the most inconvenient nature with the neighboring states, and would have converted this province into an asylum for the worst characters, as long as they claim to have been slaves before arriving here. I therefore ordered Nelson Hackett to be delivered up to the authorities of Arkansas, to be dealt with according to law.

(signed) *Charles Bagot.*

VOCABULARY

felonious – corrupt/evil

repugnant – disgusting/repulsive

Source: Excerpt adapted from *Canada: Copies of a Despatch sent from the Governor-General of Canada to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, of the 20th of January Last, Relative to the Surrender of Nelson Hackett, a Person of Colour, on the Demand of the Authorities of the United States, as a Fugitive from Justice* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1842).

Document E: The Detroit Jail

Background Knowledge

Here is a sketch of the Detroit jail where Nelson Hackett awaited his forced return to Arkansas.



OLD JAIL, ON THE SITE NOW OCCUPIED BY PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Document F: The Extraordinary Conduct of the Governor of Canada

Background Knowledge

In February 1842, a large meeting of the colored citizens of Detroit met at the Second Baptist Church, following the Governor-General of Canada's decision to extradite Nelson Hackett.

On Monday evening, Feb. 14, 1842, a large meeting of the colored citizens of Detroit met at the second Baptist church, to take into consideration the situation of Nelson Hackett, now in prison in this city having been surrendered by the Governor of Canada. Mr. Lightfoot reported that he consulted with counsel to determine if the papers ordering Hackett's extradition were genuine and to learn if it were possible to have him released from jail. After examining the papers, it was revealed that they were genuine and correctly made out; and there was no point or flaw in them, on which they could institute a suit on Hackett's behalf.

The committee reported the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

*Whereas, we have always viewed the British Province of Canada as an asylum for the unfortunate and oppressed slaves of the United States and fondly believed the moment they touched those shores, that moment they were free; and whereas the Governor General did surrender one Nelson Hackett to be given up to the authorities of Arkansas, as a fugitive from justice. And whereas, it is a settled principle in the slave code, that every slave who **absconds** from bondage is a fugitive from justice, — a principle well understood by the British authorities, and, of course, familiar to His Excellency the Governor General: and whereas, the said Hackett was not demanded by the Executive of Arkansas, for the purpose of punishing him for larceny, but to punish and make an example of him for the unpardonable offence of absconding from slavery.*

Resolved, that if this precedent is established, then Canada will no longer be a safe asylum for our unfortunate brethren who are fleeing from bondage. They will be just as safe in the States of New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine.

WILLIAM C MUNRO, *Chairman.*

ROBERT BANKS, *Secretary.*

VOCABULARY

absconds – escapes secretly

Source: Excerpt adapted from “The Extraordinary Conduct of the Governor of Canada.” *Emancipator and Free American*, Detroit, April 28, 1842.

Document G: The Colored People of Hamilton to Sir Allan Napier MacNab

Background Knowledge

The colored citizens of Hamilton (located between Windsor and Toronto) and surrounding area sent a letter to Sir Allan Napier MacNab, their representative in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada. Their hope was that he would be able to intervene on behalf of Nelson Hackett while he sat in a Detroit jail awaiting his return to Arkansas.

To the Hon. Sir A. Macnab:

Sir, —We, the colored inhabitants of Hamilton and Vicinity, bear a continual remembrance of your protection and liberty of the colored people. We unite in giving thanks for your safe protection, also for the favor for being received in the land of the noble and free. We have grateful hearts.

We cannot refrain, however, from bringing to your attention one circumstance which has recently occurred of an unhappy kind to us as a people, one of our own, Nelson Hackett, has been taken from the Sandwich jail by night and given up to the injustice of slave claimers. The correspondence and papers are enclosed, and we shall be glad of an early opportunity to discuss them with you. Hoping that you may long be continued in the enjoyment of your health, your family, your friends. We pledge to you our confidence and support.

Signed by 178 persons.

Document H – Joshua Leavitt to John Scoble

Background Knowledge

Joshua Leavitt was an abolitionist. John Scoble was a British abolitionist and editor of the *British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter*.

TO JOHN SCOBLE, ESQ., SECRETARY OF THE BRITISH AND
FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Washington City, Dec. 27, 1842.

DEAR SIR, — I wish to communicate to you an interesting piece of information I have just obtained from the Hon. Mr. Cross, Representative to Congress from Arkansas. It is, that Nelson Hackett, the colored man who was surrendered by the Governor of Canada on a requisition from the Governor of Arkansas, to answer to a charge of stealing, was taken to Arkansas, and without trial restored to the possession of his former master as a slave; that he escaped again, and was retaken; but finally escaped the third time, and has not been heard of since; and whether he has gone clear, or is destroyed, is not known.

The Canadian authorities ought to be expressly instructed to give up no colored man to the slave states, on any pretext whatever. There is no other security.

(Signed,) JOSHUA LEAVITT.

Document I: Letter from Lewis Tappan to Edward Cross

Background Knowledge

Lewis Tappan was an American abolitionist. He was deeply concerned about Nelson Hackett's status after his return to Fayetteville. Edward Cross represented Arkansas in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Sir,

Mr. Giddings writes to me, in reply to a letter I addressed to him, that you will give me any information of which you are or may be possessed in relation to Nelson Hackett, the person who was delivered by the governor of Canada.

I wrote to my brother, at the time that I wrote to Mr. Giddings, and he has replied that N. H. was taken to Arkansas—tried for stealing & publicly whipped—then delivered to his master by whom he was sold to someone in Texas.

Very respectfully, [illegible]

Lewis Tappan

Source: Excerpt adapted from *Lewis Tappan to Edward Cross* in the *Edward Cross Papers* (Texas: James C. Jernigan Library, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 1842). Retrieved from: <https://nelsonhackettproject.uark.edu/lewis-tappan-to-edward-cross/>

Document A – 1840 Bill of Sale for Nelson Hackett

Sourcing

What makes this document good evidence that Alfred Wallace was the owner of Nelson Hackett?

Contextualization

What does this document suggest about Nelson Hackett?

Close Reading

According to this document, how did Alfred Wallace come to own Nelson Hackett?

What does this Bill of Sale reveal about slavery?

Document B – Report from Charles Stewart

Sourcing
Who wrote this source?
What biases do you think the author may have had? Why might this be important?
Contextualization
What was happening in the economy in states such as Arkansas at that time?
Why might Nelson Hackett have stolen a horse, a gold watch, and his owner's outside coat?

Close Reading

How does this source provide evidence that Nelson Hackett's crime was connected to his pursuit of liberty?

According to the author, were the motives of Nelson Hackett's former owner? Why did he *really* want him returned to Arkansas?

Given this article, how do you know that Nelson Hackett's escape was well-planned and organized?

Document C – Petition of Nelson Hackett

Sourcing

Who is the intended audience? How might that influence the content and tone of the document?

Contextualization

Given this document, do you agree or disagree with the following statement, “Nelson Hackett committed a crime”? Explain your position.

Close Reading

What were Nelson Hackett’s reasons that justified remaining in Canada?

**Document D – Despatch from the Governor-General of Canada
to the Secretary of State for the Colonies**

Sourcing

What are the strengths of this document?

What are the limitations of this document?

Contextualization

What do you think may have influenced Sir Charles Bagot's decision?

Corroboration

Explain what information about Canada this source supports or contests. Write a quotation that led to this conclusion.

Close Reading

The document states, “*nor could it be said that this property had been taken solely to assist him in escaping from slavery, and not with a felonious intent.*” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Use evidence to explain your position.

According to this document, how does Sir Charles Bagot generally feel about Nelson Hackett? Provide evidence from the source.

Document E – The Detroit Jail

Why is this image historically significant?
What historical event is connected to the image?

According to SHEG, an image is historically significant if it:

- was important or influential at the time an event occurred
- had lasting effects on people and/or society
- was a moment of change or transition in history,
- was representative of broader trends or changes in society

Source: <https://sheg.stanford.edu>

Document F – The Extraordinary Conduct of the Governor of Canada

Sourcing

Where was this document written? Why is that important?

How much time elapsed between Nelson Hackett's extradition to the United States and the creation of this document? What does this reveal about Black abolitionists in Detroit?

Contextualization

Why did the gentlemen view *“the British Province of Canada as an asylum for the unfortunate and oppressed slaves of the United States?”*

How did the authors generally feel about the decision to extradite Nelson Hackett? How does the phrase *“Canada will no longer be a safe asylum for our unfortunate brethren who are fleeing bondage”* capture those feelings?

Corroboration

What do Document C and Document F agree upon?

Close Reading

How does this document provide evidence of the agency, resistance, and organizing that took place among Black Detroiters?

Document G – The Colored People of Hamilton to Sir Allan Napier MacNab

Sourcing
Who are the authors? What biases do you think they had?
Contextualization
Why might Nelson Hackett have had supporters as far away as Hamilton? Consider the events of the time.
Close Reading
Why did the authors express their gratitude?
What did the authors hope to achieve?

Document H – Joshua Leavitt to John Scoble

Sourcing

What does the author tell us about himself?

Contextualization

What does this document suggest about Nelson Hackett?

Corroboration

What is similar about Document G and Document H?

Close Reading

According to this document, what happened to Nelson Hackett upon his return to Arkansas?

Document I – Letter from Lewis Tappan to Edward Cross

Sourcing
Why did the author produce this document?
Contextualization
What does this document suggest about the importance of protecting freedom-seekers?
Corroboration
How does information in Document H differ from information in Document I?
Close Reading
According to this document, what happened to Nelson Hackett once he returned to Arkansas?

Should Nelson Hackett have been extradited to Arkansas?

Position:

You must include evidence from at least four documents to support your position.

Document	Evidence

Notes

Synthesizing Activity

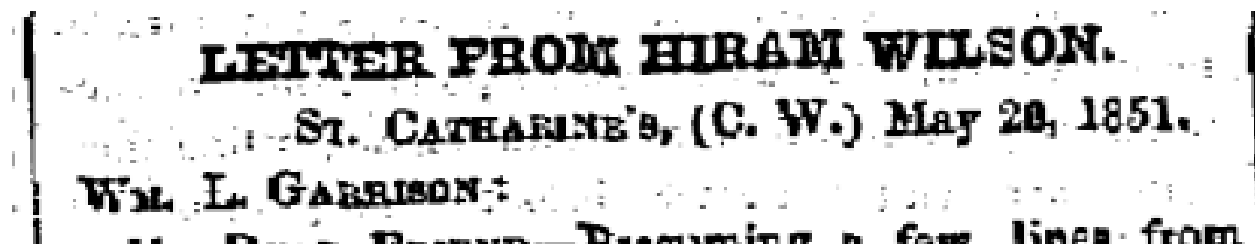
<p>Sources (list the name and date of each source; choose at least three different sources)</p>	<p>What information from the document demonstrates the agency of Nelson Hackett?</p>	<p>What information from the document demonstrates the collaborative resistance to slavery that was taking place on both sides of the Detroit River?</p>	<p>What information from the document illustrates efforts made to ensure that Canada remained a safe refuge for those escaping slavery in the United States?</p>

Life After Extradition

The most detailed account of Nelson Hackett's June 1842 return to Fayetteville appeared nine years later in the June 6, 1851 edition of the *Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper. It came from William Murdock, another enslaved man from Fayetteville who was owned by Alfred Wallace (the same man who owned Nelson Hackett), after he escaped and made his way to Canada in the early 1850s. There, Murdock recounted to abolitionist Hiram Wilson what happened to Hackett: *"William informs me that Nelson Hackett was brought back by [Alfred] Wallace, his master, who had four hundred and fifty slaves on his plantation—that he was kept in handcuffs and fetters for some time, and closely watched besides—that he was flogged with great severity five or six times, and then sold off to the interior of Texas—that the first whipping, which was done in the presence of all the slaves, consisted of 150 lashes upon his naked body. His whippings afterward varied from 39 to 50 to 60. So much for the punishment, by savage barbarians, of a human chattel, for running off with a horse chattel for freedom!"*

*** Wallace certainly did not hold 450 people in bondage, but Wilson most likely confused the number of enslaved people owned by Wallace with the entire population of the Fayetteville community.**

The rest of the account, though, is consistent with information that an Arkansas official—probably one of the state's U.S. senators—supplied to abolitionists Arthur Tappan and his brother Lewis Tappan in late 1842: *"N. H. was taken to Arkansas—tried for stealing & publicly whipped—then delivered to his master by whom was sold to someone in Texas."*



Source: "Letter from Hiram Wilson," *Liberator*, June 6, 1851

* See full article after the newspaper clippings below

If you would like to learn more about Nelson Hackett, please visit:

<https://nelsonhackettproject.uark.edu/>

Sources

Document A – 1840 Bill of Sale

23

Know all men by these presents that I Jacob Cartwright
of the County of Washington & State of Arkansas have
this day bargained, sold, conveyed & delivered to
Walter Wallace of the County & State aforesaid a
certain negro boy named Nelson about twenty four
years of age, for the consideration of a boy named
Rice and a gray mule in exchange as full
consideration to me for the said boy Nelson. And
I warrant the said Nelson to be sound both in body &
mind, a slave for life and free from the claim
or claims of all and every person whatsoever
lawfully claiming the same, to witness whereof I have this
fiftenth day of June A.D. 1840, set my hand and af-
fixed my seal.

Jacob Cartwright

at
Selt

Alfred Wallace
Augustus Ward.

State of Arkansas
County of Washington

This thirty first day of July 1841 personally came
Alfred Wallace and Augustus Ward, subscribing witnesses
to the annexed bill of sale from Jacob Cartwright to Walter
Wallace for a negro man named Nelson, before me
an acting Justice of the Peace, and being duly sworn accord-
ing to law, depose and say that the said Jacob Cartwright
signed sealed and acknowledged & delivered said
bill of sale as his act and deed in their presence on the
day that the same bears date.

Alfred Wallace
Augustus Ward

Sworn to & subscribed before me
J. B. Oldham J.P.

Document B – Report from Charles Stewart

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THE ANTI-SLAVERY REPORTER.

[WEDNESDAY,

We must say a few words ere we close in reply to the sensible and good-spirited letter of Mr. Laird. This gentleman falls into an error when he says that we expressed "great doubt that any benefit would arise from the contact of Africans with Europeans, and civilized men of their own race" in the West Indies. What we questioned was the attainment of such an amount of benefit as would qualify them to become the civilizers of Africa. This Mr. Laird's scheme implies, and this he was bound to show. What is his reply? They will acquire, he tells us, "some knowledge of tropical agriculture;" 2, "some knowledge of the law they were under;" 3, "some idea of the decencies of life;" and 4, "some notion of a purer faith than paganism." That these elements will be adequate to the regeneration of Africa he does not affirm; and we think he will hesitate long before he does affirm it. Till then our argument remains untouched.

In reply to our suspicions respecting the numbers of Africans, who "might be got for food and protection" Mr. Laird says:—
I will state a case which will show that in that unhappy country it is to be done. In June 1833, I was on the Niger a few miles below the confluence of the Tchadda. The Felatals made a slaving excursion, and swept the West Bank of the Niger from Habbah downwards. From the deck of my steamer, I counted six towns in flames at one time; the miserable inhabitants that escaped across the stream, there about 1800 yards wide, encamped under my guns on the eastern bank; the decks of my vessel were crowded with suppliants for "food and protection." Here was a case where I might have saved thousands of lives, if I could have offered them a permanent refuge. In the same year a chief on the Calabar river died: his war canoe was pulled by forty men: a few days after his death, the canoe came down the river with the skulls of those men placed on the thwarts where in life they had sat, the whole having been sacrificed at his funeral.

These are just such cases as we imagined. Not for a single moment should we deprecate the extension of British "protection" to such sufferers, and "food" follows of course. But what we have objected to is the offering of such protection *with the view of shipping off the parties to the West Indies*. If we could protect them in their homes, or if we had a home in Africa to offer them, we should have nothing to say against it: but to offer protection for the purpose of shipping off the parties to the West Indies, is only doing ourselves under the plea of kindness, what the slave-traders are doing by open hostility.

To our opinion that an extensive "re-emigration to Africa is a fallacy," Mr. Laird replies,—"I am not aware that it has commenced!" And he quotes the return of "sixty-eight Africans, principally captured slaves, originally taken into the Bahamas, and afterwards removed to Demerara," together with that of "seventeen emancipated slaves," who "bought up the time of their apprenticeship" in the same colony. But these cases prove nothing to the purpose. Mr. Laird relies on the return of large numbers, and on large numbers of those who left their native shores, not by force, but voluntarily. That "mysterious sympathy" in the mind of the negro with his country, which draws him back to it when he had been torn from it by violence, cannot surely be reckoned upon as existing powerfully in those who desert it from choice.

CASE OF NELSON HACKETT.

From the *American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter*.

[Application having been made by Mr. Scoble, on behalf of the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, for the facts in connection with this important case, which was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry, we lost no time in communicating such information as was at hand, promising to make further inquiry, and communicate the result. Charles H. Stewart, Esq., of Detroit, being on a visit to this city, and knowing he was in possession of the material facts, we immediately applied to him on the subject. He very promptly wrote out a narrative of the facts for publication, and we have great pleasure in laying it before our readers. Mr. Stewart is an Irishman by birth, is a lawyer of high respectability in Michigan, and President of the Anti-Slavery Society of that state. The most implicit confidence may be placed in his statements. The circumstances attending this case are of a most important character.—Sir Charles Bagot has probably been most ingloriously imposed upon—and the British government will, we doubt not, provide against the recurrence of a similar event.]

Hackett was a slave in Arkansas. In the spring or summer of 1841, he was at a race course with his legal master, and was desired to take home a race-horse. The horse was at a considerable distance, and Hackett, finding himself well mounted under circumstances that permitted absence, directed his course towards liberty—the incessant subject of solicitude with this unfortunate class. At this time he had in care the outside coat of the master, and he also had his gold watch: in what manner this last was obtained is not known. After many perils, he succeeded in finding and effecting his way through the long route intervening between Arkansas, in the remote south-west, and Canada, at its northern frontier: he passed through Detroit, in the state of Michigan, and took up his abode at London, or somewhere in the vicinity of Windsor, opposite to Detroit. In the course of the summer or fall he was followed. A person on behalf of his alleged owner consulted a lawyer of much respectability, Mr. George F. Porter, whether there was any mode by which Hackett could be recaptured into slavery. Mr. Porter, being an abolitionist, gave no encouragement. The application to him shows the governing motive of the master, and that he desired to repossess himself of the person of Hackett, not so much perhaps on account of his actual value, as

that his recaption, and the dreadful punishment that awaits the failing aspirant of liberty, might deter others from a like attempt.

The next thing known is that the agent went to Canada, and there had Hackett arrested for theft—stealing a coat, gold watch, and horse of A. B. (the master). Considerable interest was excited among the coloured people, by a proceeding which they well knew to be but a vindictive persecution for daring to assert self-liberty; but they found that Hackett was in custody, like any other alleged criminal upon informations sworn in Canada, and that he must abide the due trial of the charge at the ensuing assizes or circuit, to be held at Sandwich, in February or March, 1842. Nothing could be done until then, and Hackett and friends abided patiently the arrival of court.

The arrest was in the fall, probably October or November, 1841. It appears that Hackett was kept a very close prisoner—a lawyer, Mr. Baby, alone was permitted access to him during his confinement. After Hackett was thus arrested, his claimant had him indicted before a grand jury of Arkansas, for larceny; and procured from the governor of that state a demand on the governor of Canada for the surrender of Hackett. These papers were sent to the colonial government, and were received by Sir Charles Bagot about the time of his arrival in Canada. It is not known what kind of private applications or representations were made to Sir Charles, but it is probable, nay almost certain, that he was altogether imposed upon—that Hackett was represented as a great criminal, and that British sense of right was appealed to, to know if their government would screen villainy, and reward with impunity the robber—that Hackett's colour, and the strongly extenuating circumstances of his case, were altogether suppressed. That misrepresentation was freely made I know, from the fact that his captors alleged in Detroit that Hackett had committed a rape, under aggravating circumstances, on his master's daughter—a charge not only without evidence of any kind, but which I ascertained to be false, and to have been suggested for the mere purpose of creating feeling against Hackett. Sufficient discredit is at once given to it, by the fact that it was not the subject of indictment. Had so aggravated an offence existed, it would readily have been seized on as the ground of demand on a foreign government not bound by treaty or usage to surrender, in place of the light one of larceny. It may also have been represented to Sir Charles, that, along the borders, the magistrates give up to each other those petty criminals who seek by flight across our dividing line an impunity from crime. Such is the fact. The surrender is unauthorized by law; it is the exercise of force—the exchange of neighbourly courtesy, and is winked at all round. There is a great difference between this border surrender of hen-roost pilferers, and the deliberate official action of the British nation, in its highest and most solemn sanction, forming a precedent in the usage of nations. The American slave-owner had also so managed as to secure the co-operation of those possessed of influence on the Canadian frontier, and poor Hackett became a miserable victim to combined power, skill, and wealth, while he lay a captive in British confinement, trusting with implicit confidence to the accused's sacred palladium—that boast of Britain's constitution—a trial by his peers. Neither himself nor a single friend were aware of the measures pursuing: they were prepared for trial, and for nothing else.

At any rate Sir Charles Bagot, deceived or not, ordered the surrender of Hackett, and gave warrant to the jailor at Sandwich to surrender him, and a letter to Colonel John Prince, of Sandwich, her Majesty's Consul (a kind of local attorney-general) and to all British authorities, to aid and assist in the delivery of Hackett to a man of the name of Davenport, who runs the ferry between Detroit and Windsor.

The mode of executing this warrant showed the parties' own consciousness of impropriety. It was not done in that open, fearless manner which imparts dignity to the law, and proclaims its sovereignty; but at nine or ten o'clock of a winter's night in the Canadas, when the severity of the season had housed every person and animal, during the month of February last, a party of men were collected, a boat was prepared, Hackett was seized without a moment's intimation, and hurried across the Detroit river amid masses of floating ice, and incarcerated in the Detroit goal. Whether or not the demand on the Sandwich jailor had been previously made, is not known; but it probably was, and every arrangement had doubtless been leisurely made, though secretly.

In Detroit, Hackett was immured in a private cell. He was some days there before the fact was known, but it leaked out. I made application to see him: his being there at all was denied. I finally made application to our Supreme Court, and obtained a *habeas corpus*. I was then admitted to see Hackett, and shown the papers connected with his arrest. Hackett candidly avowed the fact, that he had used the horse as the means of procuring freedom. He had no way of restoring either it, watch, or coat; no demand was made for any of them. At his arrest he still had all of them, and all were received and used by his captors, as they admitted.

The papers then consisted only of the letter of Sir Charles Bagot's secretary, in official form, to Colonel Prince and other authorities, and an authenticated copy of the warrant of surrender. The indictment had been left with the colonial government, and its contents were stated to me by the agent and counsel of the captors. Sufficient evidence, however, was afforded, that the colonial government, whether rightly or discreetly, yet, in fact, had duly surrendered Hackett. The question then was—should we, of Detroit contest the matter? We could have done so: a foreign warrant was of no validity with us. Hackett was illegally in

custody, and being brought by force within our jurisdiction, the federal laws made for recapture of fugitives from justice, or from labour, were alike inoperative, inasmuch as they require voluntary residence as the ground of jurisdiction. On consultation, we deemed it improper to interfere. Great Britain had taken the lead in the assertion of human rights; she had struck the fetters from her own slaves, and was pioneer among the nations of the world in abolishing slavery. She had formally thought proper to surrender an alleged criminal; she had deemed the offence so serious as to justify the exercise of that prerogative about which nations are so jealous that they have oft refused the surrender of even murderers. She had done so on mature deliberation. Would it become us to assume a standard higher than hers! to become the patrons of a crime she had thus markedly denounced as atrocious! We thought not: we were trustees seeking to carry out a great and sacred principle confided to us, and were bound to do so wisely and discreetly. Had we interfered in this case, we would have fought the battle of liberty, not on its own sacred principles, but as protectors of crime; for the prisoner was in custody as a criminal, not as a slave; and that he was an aggravated criminal, Britain's unusual surrender nationally avowed. To fight this contest, then, would but have weakened us for those that await us on the broad platform of man's inalienable rights; have added to existing prejudices that which would have arisen from our asserting a standard of morals higher than that of Great Britain. In Detroit we had begun to turn public sympathy in favour of the fugitive slave, and we dared not to weaken that sympathy for the many unfortunates who need it, by an exertion in behalf of a single individual.

We therefore reluctantly and with grief crushed down our own feelings, and sorrowing committed the hapless Hackett to the dire fate that awaited him—a fate, not as Sir Charles Bagot doubtless anticipated to be measured by the impartial majesty of law—but to be doomed by an incensed master, an infuriated overseer, and the vindictive passion of a slave-ocracy, daily smarting under the assertion of their captive's right to freedom. What that fate was we shuddered to think. May humanity never learn it; but let ignorance shroud it, along with many a deed of kindred horror, beneath its impenetrable veil.

I only add, that the project of recovering fugitive slaves, even from within the heretofore sacred palladium of British protection, by the cunning device of alleged crime, is becoming a matter of frequent occurrence, and is stimulated to increasing perfection by every successful issue. It is the duty of Great Britain, if she desires the protection of her national honour, to refuse the surrender, even of the petty foreign criminal, to that country which has denied to her the British murderer; and if she seeks consistency in her anti-slavery principles, she should avoid being deluded by a pretence of the slave interest that can procure larceny indictments for each fugitive, who, as a piece of locomotive property, commits a high theft in the eye of the slave-holding law, the moment he dares to steal himself from the tender mercies of avaricious power.

When Hackett was, as mentioned, rushed across the Detroit river under secret haste, and amid the darkness of a winter's night, the Canadian court which had cognizance of his offence was near at hand. What return was made of the informations, or what by the jailor of his charge, is not known. It will be recollected that Hackett was not at large, the legal subject of surrender by British authorities, but a prisoner under British law, for an offence it claimed to be in its jurisdiction, and the person of the alleged criminal was at the control only of that law. The justice who arrested Hackett was bound to have returned the informations to the court, and the jailor who had his custody was responsible for his person. The governor's warrant was controlled by the higher power of the law, and could have taken effect only when that law had performed its duty.

(Signed)

C. H. STEWART,
Attorney and Counsellor at Law,
Detroit, State of Michigan.

New York, August 9th, 1842.

REMARKS.

The writer of the above has carefully restricted his allegations within the bounds of stern fact, and excluded surmises, or ought that on inquiry might prove a mis-statement. There are however, we are assured, matters connected with the case, that aggravate its dark features. It is feared that Hackett was a victim of conspiracy among the Canadians and his pursuers. His restoration to captivity, and the recovery of the horse, watch and coat, were alone sufficient to stimulate cupidity, but the advantage of his capture from the very clutches of England was invaluable to men so affected by the escape of slaves, and who would thus be enabled to exhibit their power at overreaching even British protection. Their poor victims are too ignorant to understand the "modus operandi"—it is sufficient that they see within their masters' power one of themselves taken from soil heretofore deemed inaccessible to the slave-holder. This, of course, paralyzes all effort at escape, as proving that there is safety in no place. Thus the captors had every inducement to great exertion and pecuniary sacrifice. There is reason to fear that the whole proceeding was a concerted movement between the pursuers and the Canadian authorities, that the plan was arranged between them, that Hackett was to be arrested and held to bail until an indictment was found in Arkansas—a demand made, and the prisoner surrendered—that there never was any intention of trying the man in Canada—that the contrary was alleged only to deceive his

friends, and blind them as to the movement in Toronto—that the frontier authorities were to use, and did use their influence with Sir Charles Bagot—that they were to be well paid provided the surrender was made. The names of several official and private individuals, who it is confidently believed were engaged in this dark plot, have been given to us. Of course, much that they took place sleeps in the parties own bosoms, and, however plausible or strong conjectures may bear to their guilt, it would be improper to make it a matter of direct charge. The jailor undoubtedly required the sanction of the crown presiding officer before he gave up a prisoner for whom he was responsible, and some curious considerations must have governed that officer in departing so very far from his duty, and the law of the British empire. If the governor be properly applied to on this subject, he will, we presume, disclose the representations made to him, and bring to light the amount of fees paid to subordinate officers in the matter. We trust that the never tiring vigilance of the Committee in London will so conduct the inquiry, that the British governor and all his subordinates will be made to feel their responsibility, and that quietude may be given to the thousands of coloured American citizens who have sought an asylum in her Britannic Majesty's dominions.

THE RIOT IN PHILADELPHIA.

From the American and Foreign Anti-slavery Reporter.

On the 1st of August this city was disgraced by one of the most unprovoked and cruel outbreaks against the people of colour that has ever occurred in this country. The facts are substantially as follows:

The people of colour, especially the members of the coloured temperance societies, had made arrangements for the celebration of the 1st of August, the day when the shackles of slavery fell from 800,000 of their fellow men in the British West Indies, by a public procession, &c. We take the following account from the Philadelphia Daily Chronicle of August 2nd. After the procession had moved through several of the principal streets, and when it had reached Fourth and Plum streets, in the district of Southwark, it was attacked by a volley of stones, thrown by the whites, and a white boy brutally attacked a coloured lad who was in the procession. A black man then struck the white boy over the head, when a general fight, in which thousands took part, ensued, and continued during the whole day. The blacks were seriously beaten at the onset, but rallied and thrashed the whites.

From Fourth and Plum streets, the crowd of both colours ran to Fifth and Shippen, then up to Sixth and South, fighting with clubs, sticks, stones, brickbats, and whatever missiles they could obtain, until they reached the corner of Sixth and Lombard streets, within the precincts of the city. Some of the blacks took refuge in their own meeting houses in that neighbourhood, and their procession having been dispersed, the whites went to work and destroyed houses and property indiscriminately, so that they belonged to or were occupied by blacks.

During the fight we have attempted to describe, several persons engaged in it were very seriously hurt. One white man had his arm broken from a blow inflicted by a huge club in the hands of a black; another white man was stabbed with a knife or dirk in the eye: a black man named Metcalf had his right eye laid open by a blow from the weapon of a white, and some fifteen or twenty others were more or less seriously injured. The most desperate of the blacks was a deaf and dumb man, who did much mischief, and seriously injured several whites ere he was arrested by the police. The destruction of property was serious in several parts. In Lombard street below Sixth, a small court adjoining the African Wesleyan meeting house was filled with whites, who dashed bricks through the windows, smashing the glass, frame, and sashes of all in three or four houses. Other buildings in the same neighbourhood were treated in like manner. The frame house on the corner of South and Hirst-streets, presented the appearance of a fort after a fight with musketry; pieces of brick were sticking in the boards where they had been thrown by the whites, two of the window shutters were smashed in, the door broken, and windows shattered to atoms. In Mary-street, from Sixth to Eighth, a similar state of things was visible, as it was in most of the alleys and by-ways, in that section; so also in Bedford (Small) street. The police arrived on the ground during the skirmish, arrested several, and succeeded in restoring something like order, although thousands still remained standing about discussing the propriety of the farther destruction of property. All remained apparently quiet for two or three hours, the police having perfect mastery over the mob. About three o'clock, some few of the ring-leaders (whites) had a skirmish with a small party of blacks, and the interference of the police was found necessary. One of the special constables in an attempt to arrest a lad, was mobbed, and a beautiful black cloth coat torn from his back. All this time there were several thousand people in Lombard-street, below Sixth, looking at the Wesleyan meeting house.

Being on the ground about four o'clock, we noticed the movements of some who appeared to be acting as ring-leaders, when a boy, certainly not over sixteen years old, set up a screeching howl, with waving of his hands to follow. In "less than no time" one-half the large crowd were imitating him, and off they started, running and howling like mad Indians, down Sixth to Mary street, discharging missiles at every house that had been inhabited by blacks (at this time most of them had moved off); through Mary street to Eighth, the mob continued their work of destruction, not increasing the damage much, however, as they had been all injured previously. The crowd now proceeded down Eighth to the county; they entered Bedford street, where all halted before some small frame houses, and shower upon shower of destructive missiles were hurled at them; the attention of the mob was then directed to a one-story meeting-house or school-room in the rear, the doors and windows of which were soon demolished; just at this moment, and when we were standing directly opposite the meeting house, a black discharged a loaded gun from one of the windows at the crowd, but did no damage. This added fuel to the flames, fences were torn down, the boards broken into strips, and a regular onslaught was made. A portion of the mob seeing the black who fired the

Document D – Despatch from the Governor-General of Canada
to the Secretary of State for the Colonies

187.000 Parliament

CANADA.

RETURN to an ADDRESS of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 29 June 1842;—for,

COPIES of a DESPATCH from the Governor-General of *Canada* to the
Secretary of State for the Colonies, of the 20th of January last, relative to
the Surrender of *Nelson Hackett*, a Person of Colour, on the Demand of the
Authorities of the *United States*, as a Fugitive from Justice; and of the
COLONIAL ACT, 3 Will. 4, "An Act for the Apprehension of Fugitive
Offenders from Foreign Countries, and delivering them up to Justice."

Colonial Office, Downing-Street, }
25 July 1842. G. W. HOPE.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 25 July 1842.

(No. 10.) — No. 1. —

Copy of a DESPATCH from the Right Honourable Sir *Charles Bagot*, G. C. B. to Lord *Stanley*; dated Government House, Kingston, 20 January 1842.

The Right Hon.
Sir C. Bagot to
Lord Stanley.
20 Jan. 1842.

My Lord,

IN the month of September last an application was addressed to this Govern-
ment by the acting Governor of Michigan, for the surrender of one *Nelson*
Hackett, a slave who had escaped from Arkansas, after having committed
a robbery in that state. This application was at the time refused; first, because
it was not made by the government of the state in which the offence had been
committed; and, secondly, because it was not based on proceedings commenced
before some competent criminal jurisdiction.

Shortly before I reached Canada a second requisition was addressed to Sir
Richard Jackson, in which both these objections were obviated, the requisition
proceeding on an indictment found by the grand jury of the county in which
the offence had been committed, and being made by the Governor of Arkansas.
I accordingly referred the papers connected with it to my executive council, in
conformity with the provincial statute 3 Will. 4, c. 7, and I enclose for your
Lordship's information a copy of their Report, as well as of the papers on which
it is founded.

After fully considering the subject, I concurred in the recommendation of the
council. There was no doubt of the guilt of this individual, the stolen property
having been found on him on his arrival in the province; nor could it be said
that this property had been taken solely to assist him in escaping from slavery,
and not with a felonious intent. I felt therefore that to refuse to surrender him
would be to establish as a principle that no slave escaping to this province should
be given up, whatever offence, short perhaps of murder, he might have com-
mitted; a principle which would have been repugnant to the common sense of
justice of the civilised world, would have involved us in disputes of the most
inconvenient nature with the neighbouring states, and would have converted

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Report.
3 January 1842.

Document F – Extraordinary Conduct of the Governor of Canada

EXTRAORDINARY CONDUCT OF THE GOVERNOR OF CANADA

Detroit, Feb. 23, 1842.

The editor of the *Liberator* will confer a favor upon the colored citizens of this city, by giving the following preamble and resolutions a place in his columns, and preface it with such comments as he may deem necessary.

On Monday evening, Feb. 14, 1842, a large meeting of the colored citizens of Detroit met at the second Baptist church, to take into consideration the situation of Nelson Hacket, now in prison in this city, having been surrendered by the Governor of Canada to Lewis Davenport, on the requisition of the Executive of Arkansas, as a fugitive from justice. Mr. Lightfoot, the chairman, stated that this meeting had been called to raise funds to employ counsel, in order to ascertain if the papers sanctioning the surrender of the said Hacket were genuine, and to learn if it were possible to relieve him from his present confinement. Mr. Lightfoot said he had, in company with Messrs. Banks, Hall and Bibbs, consulted with counsel, who gave it as their opinion, after examining the papers, that they were genuine, and correctly made out; and there was no point or flaw in them, on which they could institute a suit in his behalf. Mr. Munro then introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee be appointed by this meeting, to draw up a preamble and resolutions, setting forth the dangerous precedent of the Government of Canada, in surrendering the said Hacket to the Executive of Arkansas, as a fugitive from justice, when at the same time he was a refugee from slavery.

Mr. Munro urged the adoption of this resolution, after considerable discussion, it was adopted. The meeting then adjourned. On Tuesday evening, Feb. 22d, a large meeting assembled at the same place. Mr. French fervently addressed the throne of grace. The committee who were appointed at the previous meeting reported the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, we have always viewed the British Province of Canada as an asylum for the unfortunate and oppressed slaves of the United States, and fondly believed the moment they touched those shores, that moment they were free; and whereas the Governor General did, on the 17th January, 1842, surrender one Nelson Hacket to Lewis Davenport, of the city of Detroit, State of Michigan, to be by him given up to the authorities of Arkansas, as a fugitive from justice, (the said Hacket having been confined several

months which seem to me so obvious, acknowledges them by carefully treating persons held in involuntary bondage, not as property, but as men; while the Declaration of Independence, expounding what to my mind may seem obscure in the Constitution, declares that all men are born equal, and have the inalienable right to enjoy life and pursue the way to human happiness. In view of the crisis at which our relations with other States have arrived, and of the close of the Legislative session, it seems my duty to make no delay in submitting these views to the Legislature.

I am requested by that body to communicate the preamble and resolution to the Executive of Virginia. The Constitution of this State declares that it shall be the duty of the Governor to expedite all measures which shall be resolved upon by the Legislature, and to take care that the laws are faithfully executed. But the Legislature cannot effectually resolve upon any measure, or impose a duty on the Executive, except by bills passed by both Houses, and becoming laws by the Executive approval, or by a Constitutional majority, notwithstanding his objections. In proper cases, I cheerfully comply with the requests of the Senate and Assembly—but I cannot do so when a request conflicts with Constitutional duties. I could not transmit the resolution in the present case without silently acquiescing therein, and thus waving a decision to which I adhere, or without accompanying the communication to Virginia with a protest of my dissent. The former course would be a plain, palpable dereliction of Constitutional duty.—The proceeding, if the latter alternative were adopted, would not tend to enhance the respect in which this State is held by her sister States and by the civilized world.

Cherished principles of civil liberty forbid me equally from recognizing such a natural inequality among men as the resolution of the Legislature seems to me to assume, and from contributing in any way to perpetuate the inequalities of political condition, from which results a large portion of the evils of human life.

The Senate and Assembly will therefore excuse me from assuming the duty which an assent to their request would impose, and will, if it be proper, select some other organ of communication with the Executive authority of our sister Commonwealth.

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

For the Emancipator and Free American.

CONNECTICUT ABOLITIONISTS ON THE OLD PLEDGE.

It cannot be denied that in the earlier stages of the abolition movement, a considerable num-

Document G – The Colored People of Hamilton to Sir Allan Napier MacNab

Marched with confidence under your command
in times of danger, and having ever found you the
advocate and friend of Man in the Legislature, we
hail your return with grateful hearts.
We cannot refrain however from intimating to you
one circumstance which has recently occurred, of an
unhappy kind, ^{to us as a people} one of our number, Nelson Bacht,
has been taken from Sandwich by night and given
up to the injustice of Slave claimers, the correspondence
and papers connected herewith, we shall be glad of an
early opportunity of laying before you
Hoping that you may long be continued in the
enjoyment of your health, your family, your friends
and your usefulness both public and private, we
pledge to you our confidence and support in every
position in which they can be rendered

1/18/41

P Paola Brown,
Benjamin Harris
W W B Harris
Benjamin Harris

William Williamson
William Willson
Reginald Willson Sr
James Hooper
George W. Brown
George Washington
Isaac Freeman
Leharah Harris
John Thompson
Samuel J. Webb
Abrian
George Hoff
George H. Williams
Henry Woods
David Jamieson
Samuel W. Williams
Benjamin Smith
John Howard
Samuel Hollis
Alfred Fiddler
J. Anderson
Frederick Miles
Joseph Figg
William Patterson
George Brown
The Rev. A. Graham
John Brown
Dawson Moton
Henry Field
London Harris
C. Taylor
Peter Harris
Levi Hobbie
Joseph Harrison
David Harrison
William Tolker
James D. Walker Jr.
John R. Cowley
Richard Young
Henry Colt
John Carey
John Carey
Samuel Barnes
Charles MacLoy
Abraham Mason
G. H. Carey
George Mead
Jacob Stephens
John Haughton
George Washington
Arthur Pope
Wm. Robinson
George Clarke
James Thomas
Abraham Jones
John Smith
Thomas Shorter
Joseph Smith
Levi Thomas
J. M. Brown
Isaac Abbe
J. M. Brown
Samuel Brown
Samuel Brown
George Mathison
J. M. Roberts
J. M. Webb
Solomon Brown
George Brown

Document H

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THE ANTI-SLAVERY REPORTER.

[WEDNESDAY,

THE CASE OF NELSON HACKET.

TO JOHN SCORELLE, ESQ., SECRETARY OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Washington City, Dec. 27, 1842.

DEAR SIR,—I hasten to communicate to you an interesting piece of information I have just obtained from the Hon. Mr. Cross, Representative in Congress from Arkansas. It is, that Nelson Hacket, the coloured man who was surrendered by the Governor of Canada on a requisition from the Governor of Arkansas, to answer to a charge of stealing, was taken to Arkansas, and without trial restored to the possession of his former master as a slave; that he escaped again, and was retaken; but finally escaped the third time, and has not been heard of since; and whether he has gone clear, or is destroyed, is not known.

As it is reported that systematic measures have been adopted here for the recovery of the vast number of slaves that are escaping, by claiming them as felons, the exasperation and dismay that exist here are indescribable; and if they should recover even one man, they would hope, by making him an example, to deter those that remain.

The Canadian authorities ought to be expressly instructed to give up no coloured man to the slave states, on any pretext whatever. There is no other security.

From a perusal of Mr. Benton's speech in the Senate, against the ratification of the Ashburton treaty, I have no doubt the idea was seriously entertained that the 10th Article would secure the surrender of slaves from Canada. He exposes its insufficiency for that purpose, and makes it a main ground of objection to the treaty itself, that it abandons the South. He says, "The South, left alone by the separate treaty, now made for the Northern States, and with the sympathies of half the Union and all the rest of the world against her, must now expect greater outrages than ever in all that relates to slave property." None of the slaves that have escaped from this neighbourhood have been recovered. Probably the loss in value is at least a hundred thousand dollars in the last six months.

We are expecting some exciting debates on the subject whenever the treaty shall come before Congress. I have no doubt the London Committee will exercise due vigilance in regard to the legislation of Parliament to carry the treaty into effect. Mr. Benton, in his speech, recites the proviso of Article 10, and proceeds to say—

"This reduces the engagement to the merest hoax. The offence is to be one for which the fugitive could be arrested and tried, if committed at the place of apprehension. And who supposes that in the abolition dominions of Great Britain, the murder or robbery of a master by his slave, will be admitted to be a crime for which the perpetrator should be delivered up to justice? Even admitting that, under the common law of England, there may be a killing of a master by his slave, under circumstances which would amount to murder, yet who would expect, in the present state of British feeling, that the law would be executed by a British Judge? Who would expect even such a murderer to be given up, much less when the killing takes the form of defence against violence, or escape from oppression?" We are beginning to flatter ourselves that the plot for annexing Texas to the United States has been defeated, by exposure, for this year.

(Signed,) JOSHUA LEAVITT.

Document I – Lewis Tappan to Edward Cross

New York, Dec. 2^d 1842.

Hon. Edward Cross,
M. of C.
Sir,

Mr Giddings writes to me, in reply to a letter I addressed to him, that you will give any information of which you are or may be possessed in relation to Nelson Hackett, the person who was delivered by the governor of Canada.

I wrote to my brother, at the same time that I wrote to Mr Giddings, and he has replied that N. H. was taken to Arkansas - tried for stealing, & heavily whipped - then delivered to his master by whom he was sold to some one in Texas. Your remarks to Mr Giddings, as he has reported them to me, show that you are not cognizant of the facts - as stated (I presume by one of the Senators of your State) to my brother, or that there is some mistake. I will be greatly obliged to you if you will ascertain beyond a question the facts, and inform me of the same. In all such matters I am desirous of procuring authentic statements & from the best sources.

Very respectfully, Sir, your obt. S^t
Lewis Tappan.

Extended Reading

The following article appeared in *The Liberator* in May 1851 and it provides a glimpse into what happened to Nelson Hackett after his return to Arkansas.

LETTER FROM HIRAM WILSON.

ST. CATHARINE'S, (C. W.) May 20, 1851.

WM. L. GARRISON :

MY DEAR FRIEND—Presuming a few lines from my pen will be acceptable to your readers, I take the liberty to write, though I must confess that it is more congenial with my feelings to labor silently in the cause of philanthropy, than to report progress. This is mainly the reason why you hear from me so unfrequently. I am aware that neither the dejected slave in his chains, nor the more favored yet desolate, homeless fugitive from slavery, have truer-hearted friends on earth, than are many, VERY MANY, of the readers of your paper.

It is proper that such, whether American or trans-Atlantic, should be well informed as to the nature of this asylum for the oppressed—its government and laws—its climate, soil, productions, &c., and the present state and prospects of its now numerous and rapidly increasing colored population. The time has never been when reliable information respecting Canada was more needed than at present. The atrocious Fugitive Slave Law is doing a desperate work. It has already disturbed the peace of thousands, and driven them to this country, and many more are yet to come. It has been executed at the East with a sort of fiendish infatuation, which brands with infamy and covers with deep and damning guilt, those who aided or abetted in its execution. Had poor Sims been taken to the Great Elm on Boston Common, and put to death by hanging upon the first limb, and his agony and death-struggles, as an innocent sufferer, been witnessed by a horrified multitude covering the whole Common, it could not have caused a greater stigma upon the good name of Boston, or caused the infliction of a deeper wound upon Christianity and civilization, than the giving him up to the Georgia claimant.

If such scenes occur in the heart of New England, where the highest professions of regard for law and order are emblazoned to the world, what hope is there for trembling thousands in the nominally free States, but in flight to civilized countries?

The colored people of the North are bound to regard liberty as dearer than life, and shun slavery rather than death; their professed friends are sacredly bound to make common cause with them in their afflictions, and sooner sacrifice their own lives than suffer a brother, of whatever hue, to be dragged into slavery.

Every abolitionist, who deserves the name, should, with a martyr zeal, maintain this position at the peril of life or of being called an anarchist or an infidel. But with respect to Canada, as an asylum, let me say; this is the land of hope and promise—not for the vagrant—not for the idler—not for the vicious or intemperate—but for the hard-handed, noble-hearted sons and daughters of toil, who will cheerfully give themselves to industry, and be content with the ample rewards of industry. The face of the country is gene-

rally level, or moderately undulating; the soil is fertile and productive; when properly cultivated, it yields, in great abundance, all kinds of grain, fruits, vegetables, &c., such as are common in the Northern and Western States. The great lakes, which almost encircle the upper province, afford the best of facilities for navigation, and abound with fish. The resources of our everlasting forests, which are among the finest in the world, have not yet been half developed; pioneer settlers have frequently made a profitable use of their valuable timber while preparing to stir the rich soil which produced it. The forests abound with oak, elm, chesnut, black walnut, white walnut, hickory, poplar or white wood, basawood, button wood, beach, mable, ash, (black and white,) cherry, &c., and, in certain parts, vast forests of pine. I have travelled nearly twenty miles upon a stretch through the midst of lofty pines, many of which were 150 feet high.

The government and laws of this country are so well known that it is hardly necessary to speak of them. The government knows no man by the color of his skin, and the laws are equitable and impartial. Colored men are eligible to office, if educated and competent to fill offices, yet the prejudices of color are strong with the majority of the people. Fortunately for the colored population, the British Constitution and laws, which prevail in Canada, are better than the white people would make them. They are subject to many grievances on account of prejudices, but if their rights are infringed upon, they can as readily have redress by recourse to law, as any other people. A large share of the Canadian population, including the most wealthy and influential, government officers, &c., possess kindly sympathy towards them, and doubtless rejoice to see them prosperous and happy; but, with many, that same malevolent feeling, which is the main basis of colonization, prevails. Here, if they would have such respect from others as would be worth having, they must first respect themselves. Their condition varies with their

variation of character, disposition, habits, &c. With regard to worldly substance, many of them are prospering; many more of them are able barely to live in what is, to them, a comfortable state; others, again, are in a deplorably destitute condition, partly on account of intemperate and idle habits, and partly owing to causes which were unavoidable, such as honest leanness, attendant upon emigration to Canada, loss of health, &c. They are generally a vigorous, healthy people in this country, and can find employment, if they have a mind to work. Very few need be idle, either in summer or winter, for lack of employment; and if less prosperous in the winter from want of employment, they have more time and better advantage for the cultivation and discipline of the mind. Though much has been done to enlighten them and improve their condition, they are still, to a great extent, an ignorant and degraded people. Their degradation is mainly the fault of others, but partly their own. Their prospect of becoming an intelligent, useful and happy people is hopeful. They need, however, to be more docile, and to receive and appreciate good wholesome advice upon various points, upon which they have already had 'line upon line, precept upon precept.' With regard to their religious meetings, educational advantages, social habits of life, &c., they are too clanish, and quite too exclusive for their own good. Their clanish tendencies incline them to perform low, menial services in cities and towns; whereas they should scatter, for the purpose of breathing the wholesome air of the country, and becoming enrolled with Nature's nobility as independent tillers of the soil. I frequently advise them to go back into the country among farmers, and those who do are respected, and most of them are doing well. I have had much to do this winter to preserve the poorer class of the refugees in this quarter from suffering. It is to be hoped that they will never again have to encounter so rigorous a winter as the last, the first part of which was more severe than I have known in Canada for fifteen years.

I notice that some minister of the gospel has written from Jamaica in favor of emigration of colored people to the West Indies instead of coming to Canada, and has referred to a letter of mine in the American Missionary, descriptive of the intense cold and consequent suffering of a few of the sable refugees. My letter was truthful at the time, as describing what then existed, but having relation to that which was an exception, of extremely rare occurrence, and of course an unsuitable data upon which to found an argument in favor of emancipation to the West Indies. There are serious evils, attendant upon emigration to the West Indies, unknown to the liberty-loving emigrants, who plant themselves in Canada, and which far outweigh the evil of our brief wintry chills.

I was called on yesterday by a fine-appearing man, a refugee from Arkansas, who was a fellow-slave with poor Nelson Hackett, prior to his (Hackett's) escape to Canada. This man found his wife at Hamilton, she having escaped to this country a few months before him. The circumstances of their escape and reunion in Canada were remarkable. He was held near the Western limit of Arkansas by Alfred Wallace, from whom Hackett had fled; his wife was held upon a neighboring plantation. But a few months ago she was sold, and brought, by her purchaser, with her two small children, on their way to the State of Kentucky. On coming up the river, she left her master, and secreted herself on a boat, freighted with cotton. This brought her and her children part of the way, when, in the night, she took another boat to Cincinnati. She there found friends who soon conveyed her Northward. At length, she found herself safe in a free country. She was not long in this province till she wrote back to her former master and family in Arkansas, dating her letter in Canada, but not in any particular place. She wrote that she was well, and free, and happy, and if she should never see her husband again on earth, she hoped to meet him in heaven. He, however, soon became aware that his wife had been heard from. This he learned providentially, through a little girl in the family, but four or five years old, who, in her childish simplicity, told him that they had been talking about his wife—that she was in Canada, and that her father had a letter

from her. The bereft husband's anxiety was great, and his curiosity excited to the highest pitch. It was strange news to him, and he knew not what to make of it. At length, he cautiously inquired of an elder sister of the little girl, about 16 years old, who got the letter, in the absence of her parents, and privately read it to him, but charged him not to let it be known that she had done so. This encouraged him to seek for liberty, and at the same time for his absent wife and children, and he was soon missing. He came down the Arkansas river some three or four hundred miles to the Mississippi, and over to Canada West. Not knowing where to find his wife, he looked first about Sandwich and Malden, came thence to Chatham, thence to London. Not content to stop in either of those places, he came down to Hamilton. There he knew not that his wife was in the place, till happily he met her in the street—and indescribably joyful must have been the meeting! She soon conducted him to her humble cot, where he renewed the happy greetings of liberty, with his children. His name is Wm. Murdock. The poor fellow is in need of a little assistance, which it is not at present in my power to render him. William informs me that Nelson Hackett was brought back by Wallace, his master, who had four hundred and fifty slaves on his plantation—that he was kept in handcuffs and fetters for some time, and closely watched besides—that he was flogged with great severity five or six times, and then sold off to the interior of Texas—that the first whipping, which was done in the presence of all the slaves, consisted of 150 lashes upon his naked body. His whippings afterward varied from 39 to 50 or 60 lashes at a time. So much for the punishment, by

savage barbarians, of a human chattel, for running off
with a horse chattel for freedom!

I have in possession other interesting narratives,
but no time at present to communicate them.

Yours, for God and humanity,

HIRAM WILSON.
