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**A True and Inspiring Story of Emancipation,  
Spiritual Growth and Forgiveness**

## **FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT** by Peter Randolph

Although much has been written about the peculiar institution of slavery, questions still remain about this manifestly cruel system. How could such brutality be tolerated by a modern, civilized society? Perhaps even more importantly, how could the victims cope with the numerous physical and spiritual challenges? Out of print for over 100 years, **FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT** (Bylany Press) shows the power of faith, of how one man, Peter Randolph (1825-1897), born into miserable poverty and ignorance, after an almost miraculous release from slavery, attained a position of respect and authority in white society. Reminiscent of Frederick Douglass' own narrative, this work provides a carefully written, detailed, and fair portrayal of life in slavery, and the life after it for those fortunate enough to have survived. Randolph traces his growth from illiterate laborer to church minister, all the while unselfishly pointing out that his progress was made largely possible by the care and understanding of people uncontaminated by the sins of the age. He also praises the men and women who helped destroy slavery, but notes that racism still had to be eliminated. Despite his savage mistreatment, he does not seek revenge, nor does he see former slave-holders as beyond redemption.

An interesting historical facet — Randolph did not have to await the Emancipation Proclamation in order to achieve his freedom. He was freed after his owner's death through the stipulations of his Will. A substantial sum of money was provided to the slaves from the estate, so that they could make a journey North, if they chose to do so. This was truly remarkable for the time, for the family who issued such "private" emancipation often fell into disrepute. However, men of conscience desired to give their slaves liberty, and they found a system in place that could facilitate such a transaction. This book provides the entire text of the Will, and excerpts from related legal proceedings, which illustrate how this process functioned. A small excerpt is presented here:

I desire that my estate shall be kept together and cultivated to the best advantage, until a sufficient sum can be raised to pay my debts, should there be any deficiency in the amount of money on hand and debts due to me, and to raise a sufficient sum to pay for the transportation of my Slaves to any Free State or Colony which they may prefer . . . It is not my wish to force them away without their consent. In the event of any of them preferring to remain in slavery, they must take the disposition hereinafter directed.

Although the Will was contested, the final settlement definitively gave the slaves their coveted freedom.

**FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT** is a book full of hope and optimism, courage and forgiveness. Nonetheless, all important aspects of a modern slave society are presented; there is little that is held back. By describing the workings of institutionalized, democratically sanctioned exploitation, Randolph hoped to assist the courageous people of future generations with their own struggle for justice. One aspect of the memoir focuses on the dependence that the freed slaves had on the generous assistance of whites in their new home in the North, and the great feeling of gratitude they had towards those who were doing all that they could to end slavery and help blacks achieve a better life. As in any story that has as its central themes

liberty and justice, there are a variety of memorable characters: the cowards, the sadists, the dissenters, the healers, the thinkers, and the fighters. Randolph praises those who refuse to accept society's conventions when they are morally and ethically wrong. How much of the themes in **FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT** are pertinent today in America? There is still hypocrisy and exploitation perpetrated by common people upon each other. People still defend ignoble social systems. Churches still ignore many forms of oppression. Military units still violate international laws and engage in brutality. Governments still do not consistently and fairly protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

There is an overriding theme of simplicity in **FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT**. Many of the social improvements that Randolph recommends are indeed straightforward, if only people had the courage to do so. Although hardly a romantic, Randolph wrote with sincerity about his hopes for the future, and he had a dream that all oppressed peoples would see their burden lifted, just as he had seen it happen in his own life. We might not entirely agree with Randolph's somewhat optimistic assessments of society and human nature. We might find his sentiment that 'wheels of progress never go backward, but forward' somewhat naïve. But clearly he wrote with sincerity about his hopes for the future, his dream that all forms of injustice would be conquered, just as he had seen in his own life.

An uplifting theme that Randolph hopes to convey is how the power of will, with timely help from God, can overcome all limitations and restrictions. Randolph said in reference to his autobiography: "These sketches of my life, since Emancipation, given in a simple style, illustrate, I think, some phases of the 'Southern Question'. They consist mainly of my own experience and observation in the South and North, as a slave and freeman." The main reason this type of work should be read is to give the modern reader a full understanding of the workings of slavery, especially at the basic level. Randolph said: "Slavery, we say, is dead; but the rising generations will ask: What was it?"

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family; and Equal but Different*. He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*; by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace*, by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **FROM SLAVE CABIN TO PULPIT**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, please contact Cassandra Foxton, [inform\\_at\\_anzapublishing.com](mailto:inform_at_anzapublishing.com). The publisher's website address is [AnzaPublishing.com](http://AnzaPublishing.com).

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