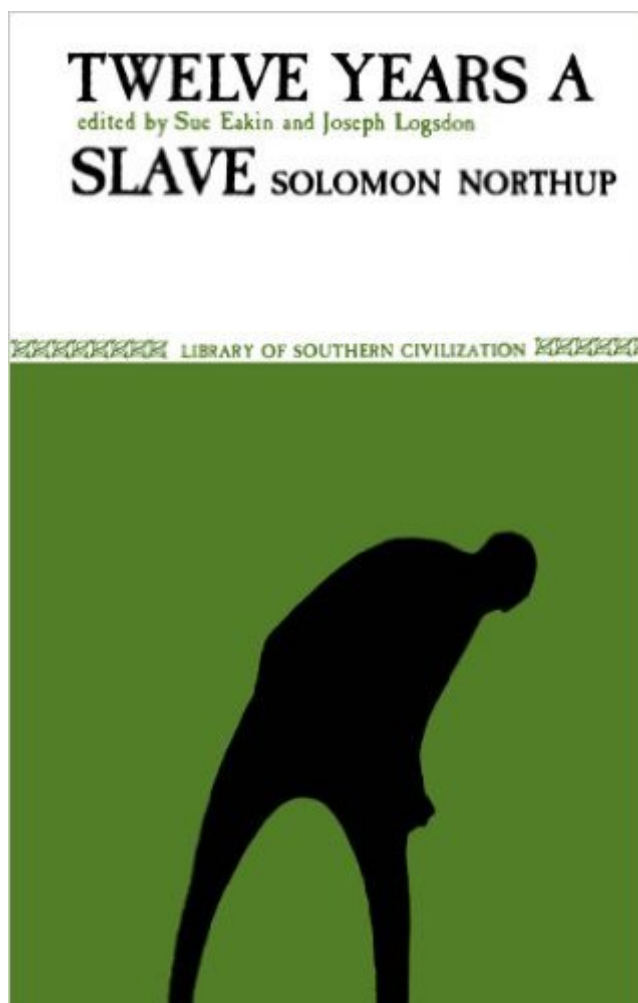


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Twelve Years A Slave (Library Of Southern Civilization)



Synopsis

Solomon Northup was a free man, the son of an emancipated Negro Slave. Until the spring of 1841 he lived a simple, uneventful life with his wife and three children in Upstate New York. Then, suddenly, he fell victim to a series of bizarre events that make this one of the most amazing autobiographies ever written. Northup accepted an offer from two strangers in Saratoga, New York, to catch up with their traveling circus and play in its band. But when the chase ended, Northup had been drugged, beaten, and sold to a slave trader in Washington, D.C. Subsequently, he was shipped to New Orleans, where he was purchased by a planter in the Red River region of Louisiana. For the next twelve years Northup lived as a chattel slave under several masters. He might well have died a slave, except for another set of bizarre circumstances which enabled him to get word to his family and finally regain his freedom. These elements alone -- the kidnapping, enslavement, and rescue -- are sufficient for a sensational story. But Northup provides more. He was a shrewd observer of people and events. His memory was remarkable. He described cultivation of cotton and sugar in the Deep South. He detailed the daily routine and general life of the Negro slave. Indeed, he vividly portrayed the world of slavery -- from the underside. Originally published in 1853, Northup's autobiography is regarded as one of the best accounts of American Negro slavery ever written by a slave. It is reprinted in full here for the first time, as the initial volume in The Library of Southern Civilization. Northup's account has been carefully checked by the editors and has been found to be remarkably accurate. To his own narrative of a long and tragic adventure, Professors Eakin and Logsdon have added significant new details about Northup and the plantation country where he spent most of his time as a slave. Heretofore unknown information about the capture and trial of Northup's kidnappers has been included, adding still another fascinating episode to an already astounding story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As slave stories go, this one is, in my view, without peer. Northup's s captivating tale -- which has gained attention because of the movie that shares the book's title -- is told in exacting detail with an easy prose. He sets the stage masterfully, describing people and places before proceeding into the narrative. Unlike works of fiction, this book is so compelling because, by all accounts, it is true. There is no polemical axe to grind, as with Uncle Tom (a novel at one point wryly referenced by Northup). Here you see both the brutality of slavery and the moments of kindness by slaves and even some slave owners. Solomon tells the story with clarity and intelligence. The free versions on other sites I found were pretty poorly formatted, so spending a dollar for a polished version on is worthwhile, but this one is not the best of them. Granted, the book is formatted adequately, and any typographical errors in this version seem to be simple reproductions of the original. However, the supporting material is a letdown. I read the version that includes the introduction by novelist Dolen Perkins-Valdez. That introduction is borderline insulting, as it makes only a weak attempt to separate accounts with fictional elements like *Roots* from an authentic account like this one. Worse still, Perkins-Valdez can't resist indulging in repeatedly referencing her own recently released slave novel, even going so far as to quote herself. There are almost no historical elements to this version beyond the main book -- no mention of Northup after the book, no mention of the writer who helped him pen the book, nothing. There is more information on the writer of the introduction than there is the author.

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