

## Truth Crushed to Earth: The Legacy of Will Parker

**Harry W. Kendall**

Harry W. Kendall Publishing

(409pp)

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*A young man escapes his enslaver to become an abolitionist hero in the harrowing historical novel Truth Crushed to Earth.*

A self-emancipated man starts a rebellion when he stops an enslaver from reclaiming runaways in Harry W. Kendall's historical novel *Truth Crushed to Earth*.

On September 13, 1851, Edward Gorsuch went to Maryland to reclaim runaways. He was met with heavy resistance by abolitionists led by William Parker. This novelization of that story begins with the birth of Parker, known herein as Will, on the plantation where his family has been enslaved for generations.

Will's grandmother is a driving force within the book; she expresses an earnest desire for him to run away and be free. She plants seeds in his mind about the Underground Railroad, hoping that Will is the answer to her prayers—and that he will one day avenge her for all she suffered at the hands of her enslaver. Will's own heroic status is also established early on, as he echoes his grandmother's yearning for freedom. His despair and fury regarding slavery are palpable throughout.

But while Will expresses disgust over the injustices perpetuated by those in positions of power, he is also sometimes distracted from his ultimate goal, leading to narrative lulls. It is not until the woman he loves is sold that his passion to escape truly ignites, refreshing the story's momentum. Indeed, the book is at its most engaging when it is focused on the hurdles that Will overcomes as he seeks freedom and avoids capture.

Through brief flashbacks, Will's family history is detailed. His grandmother often reminisces about her late husband, a defiant African chief who was killed. In subtle ways, Will reminds her of him. But beyond Will's family, the cast is too vast to be thoroughly developed. A few secondary characters, including the family's fearful enslaver and his jealous wife, have deeper characterizations, though.

The worldbuilding focuses on interpersonal relations, including the devaluing of Black lives and discrimination against Black people. Will's family's enslaver believes that it is his God-given right to own people and treat them how he wishes; elsewhere, a white man works with abolitionists because he wants to get rid of Black people in the US. When Will is whipped as a six-year-old for a crime he didn't commit and begins to cry, his enslaver's wife suggests that he be quieted with yet more violence for his natural response. Slurs are used in a casual manner too. But other white people express sincere beliefs that slavery is wrong, and the horrors of slavery and racism are made clear throughout the book.

*Truth Crushed to Earth* is an insightful historical novel based on the real antislavery efforts of William Parker.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (August 8, 2024)

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