

5 Excerpt from *The Social Contract*

9 By Jean-Jacques Rousseau

10 Slavery

25 Even if we grant this terrible right of killing everybody, I say that a slave
41 made in war, or a conquered nation, is under no obligation at all to a master,
57 except to obey him so far as compelled. In taking an equivalent for his life the
71 victor has conferred no favor on the slave; instead of killing him unprofitably, he
84 has destroyed him for his own advantage. Far, then, from having acquired over
99 him any authority in addition to that of force, the state of war subsists between
116 them as before, their relation even is the effect of it; and the exercise of the rights
131 of war supposes that there is no treaty of peace. They have made a convention.
146 Be it so; but this convention, far from terminating the state of war, supposes its
147 continuance.

161 Thus, in whatever way we regard things, the right of slavery is invalid, not
174 only because it is illegitimate, but because it is absurd and meaningless. These
184 terms, slavery and right, are contradictory and mutually exclusive. Whether
204 addressed by a man to a man, or by a man to a nation, such a speech as this will
217 always be equally foolish: 'I make an agreement with you wholly at your
233 expense and wholly for my benefit, and I shall observe it as long as I please,
244 while you also shall observe it as long as I please.'