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relatives, or with requests for help of one kind or another. It was in this office, upstairs in Lebanon Seminary, that she learned the extent of the network of stops on the Underground Railroad. By 1850 the road was doing a tremendous volume of business. Philadelphia was its principal center in the East.

William Still, a Negro, was the secretary of the Vigilance Committee. J. Miller McKim, a Quaker, was the president. The Committee and its members were prepared to offer assistance to fugitives at any hour of the day or night; it might be in the form of food, clothing, money, railroad tickets, or a place to hide.

Again and again Harriet went back to the office of the Vigilance Committee. As she listened to the stories that Still told, she came to the conclusion that almost any slave who had the courage to run away was certain to reach his destination—the North. But the slaves did not know this. She decided that she would spread the word through Maryland. She herself, by accident, or intuition, or the grace of God, had come all the way from Dorchester County on the Underground Railroad—and on her own two feet. As soon as she had saved money enough to take care of any emergencies that might arise, she would go back there for her family—and anyone else who wanted to be free.

In December, 1850, she arranged for the escape of her

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sister, her sister's husband, John Bowley, and their two children, one of them a baby. Though John Bowley was free, his wife and children were slaves. He had learned that his family was to be sold. When he received this information, he went to a Quaker friend of his for advice and help. This man was an agent of the Underground Railroad who lived in Cambridge, Maryland.

The Quaker agent in Cambridge, knowing, as all such people did, that he was watched constantly, and that his mail might be censored, sent a message to William Still in Philadelphia. The message, which was passed along the underground route, from one person to another, said that there were two large bales of wool and two small ones that would have to be transported from Baltimore to Philadelphia. The Cambridge agent said that a small boat would be available for the shipment from Cambridge to Baltimore but he was worried about the trip from there to Philadelphia. He would, however, rely on the ingenuity of the Vigilance Committee to take care of the matter after the merchandise reached Baltimore. He pointed out that speed was absolutely essential in this undertaking.

In Philadelphia, almost every evening after work, Harriet climbed the long flight of stairs which led to a loft in the building which housed Lebanon Seminary. This

served as the office for the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. She was fascinated by the stories she heard told in that big bare room. Quite often a party of fugitive slaves arrived while she was there, and she watched William Still write their names in the big notebook that he kept, not only their names but something of their history, too.

On several occasions she had seen runaways who came from the Eastern Shore. Thus she was able to get a little thirdhand information about her father and mother, Ben and Old Rit, or about one of her brothers or sisters.

Whenever she saw any of these newly escaped slaves, she never failed to think how miraculous it was that a group of people, sometimes only one, sometimes two or three, or four, should have had the courage to start for an unknown destination without food or money or friends, with only the burning desire for freedom to keep them going. Anyone who saw them would know they were fugitives. Their clothes were torn and snagged by briars, burrs were clinging to them. They were either barefoot or their shoes were literally worn out from walking, the soles flapping, the uppers held on by string. They were startled by any unexpected sound. If there were footsteps on the long flight of stairs, or a door closed suddenly, they jumped up, trembling, nostrils distended, eyes wide open.

One night, a quiet night there, in the loft, William Still was talking to J. Miller McKim, and to Harriet, when a stranger entered the office. He nodded to Harriet and then went over to the desk where he carried on a low-voiced conversation with Still and McKim.

Suddenly Still beckoned to Harriet. "Maybe you can help us find a woman to—" Then he interrupted himself. "There's a man named—" Even though no outsider could have overheard him, he lowered his voice, "Named John Bowley—"

"Bowley?" Harriet said. "John Bowley? Where's he from?"

"From Cambridge, Maryland. And—"

"Why that's my brother-in-law," she said, excitement in her voice. "He's married to my sister Mary—and—why he's a free man. What's the trouble?"

"Yes, he's free," said Still. "But his wife and children are slaves. And they are about to be sold. We know how to get them to Baltimore. But we've got to find someone to guide them from Baltimore to Philadelphia, preferably a woman, because there's a baby and another child. We thought you might know of a woman who would—"

"I will," she said promptly.

But Mr. Still shook his head. He said that it was difficult for free Negroes with all their papers in order to leave Baltimore. For her to attempt to bring them out when she

was a fugitive herself would be an impossibility. They would be weighed, measured, at the railroad station or at the dock, and this information would be compared with the descriptions of all other known runaways. Even if this family bore no resemblance to any other fugitives, they still could not leave until they had obtained a bond signed by two well-known residents.

Harriet laughed. "Mr. Still, you're trying to scare me. And I don't scare easy. Besides, I know enough about the Underground Railroad now so that I know you don't have to go through any weighing and measuring to get a group of people out of Baltimore. That's my sister and her husband and her children and I'm the one that's going to Baltimore to get them."

William Still threw up his hands. "All right," he said, "but please, please, be careful."

On the morning that a message arrived saying that all the necessary, careful arrangements had been completed, John Bowley's wife and two children had been already picked up with a group of slaves and placed in the slave pen at the Courthouse in Cambridge. The auction had started that morning with the sale of prime field hands. No one showed any interest in purchasing the women and children in the lot.

At noon the auctioneer called a recess. He said that he

would put the females on the block later on in the day, and went off to the inn to get his dinner. He paused a moment in the doorway and grumbled to the guard, "Much good it will do to put 'em up. Not much interest in 'em."

Meanwhile John Bowley and his Quaker friend had evolved a plan, a bold and desperate plan, which might or might not work.

Shortly after the auctioneer went to the inn, John entered the courthouse, carrying a large white official-looking envelope. He handed it to the guard who stood near the slave pen, and said, "It's a message from my master, the auctioneer. He wants me to bring that woman and the two children over to the inn." He gestured toward his family. "He thinks he's got a buyer for them."

The guard opened the envelope, read the message, nodded his head. Then because John extended his hand, he handed the envelope and the note back to him. Opening the gate of the pen, he went inside, "Get along there now," he said, pushing the woman and her two children out, separating them from the others.

John walked down the street beside them, still holding the envelope as though it were a talisman. They moved slowly. His wife was carrying the baby and the small child walked beside her, holding on to her skirts. It seemed to him they crawled along the street, and he

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wanted to run, to urge them to run, and, of course, dared not. He ignored his wife's questions.

There was despair in her voice as she said, "What does it mean? Why are *you* taking us to be sold? Oh, John. How could you?"

"Hush," he said, sternly. "Don't talk. You've just got to trust me."

It was noon so there was no one on the street. The town seemed asleep in the cold sunlight. He supposed folks were all in their houses eating, even the children. He kept thinking that it ought to take the auctioneer about two hours to eat and drink and talk up the afternoon's sale. He crossed the street with his family, still moving slowly, breathing hard, appalled at his own daring. But it was either this—doing what he had done—or lose his wife and children, for good.

Halfway down the street, he paused, looked back. The street was empty. "Quick, now!" he said. He opened the gate of a picket fence in front of one of the big houses. "Hurry, hurry!" he said, urging them to go faster, around the side of the house, to the back door. As they approached the door it opened for them.

His Quaker friend said, "Thee made it, John, with the help of the Lord, as I knew thee would."

They stayed in the attic of the house until dark. Then they went downstairs to the kitchen where they were fed. After they finished eating, the Quaker led them out

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of the house. There was a farmer's wagon in the doorway. They climbed in, lay on the floor of the wagon. Blankets were thrown over them.

It was not a long ride but it was a jouncy one. When the wagon stopped and the driver got down and threw the blankets back, John knew he was near the river, he could smell it.

All of them got in a rowboat at the edge of the river. The driver of the wagon rowed them out to a small fishing boat where John Bowley and his family embarked for Baltimore.

There was food on the boat and blankets, and he knew where he was going, knew how to sail a boat, knew that he would be met by someone, and yet he was vaguely uneasy. The children went to sleep quickly. He and his wife talked, not a lot, just now and then. If it weren't for the feeling of uncertainty, pinprick of fear, he would have enjoyed sailing up the Chesapeake on this cold starry night. He was sailing without lights, and so was more aware of the night than he had ever been. He could smell fish from the boat, could see lights from other boats.

He had been told that when he got near Baltimore, he was to watch for two lights, close together, a yellow one and a blue one. When he saw them he was to get in the dinghy and row to them. He kept worrying about it. Suppose he missed the lights, suppose—

Toward morning there was faint color in the sky, not

really daylight, a lifting of the darkness. He kept peering at the shore. Suddenly he saw the lights, a yellow one and a blue one, and sailed toward them. He got his wife and children in the dinghy and rowed shoreward.

As he drew nearer he saw where the lights came from—two barn lanterns, the shades tinted, one blue and the other yellow. There was a wagon quite close to the shore in a wooded area, a bent-over figure on the seat. To his surprise he saw that it was a woman, a white woman, tremendously fat, who turned and watched him as he got out of the boat.

"Who are you?" she asked.

At first he could only whisper. For he did not know what to expect. Then he said, "A friend with friends." That was the password he had been told to use.

"God bless you, you made it," she said. "I've been watching for two mornings straight."

Then she started moving quickly for so large a woman. The wagon held potatoes and onions, not many of them, but quite a few. She rearranged the load. John and his wife lay down in the back of the wagon with the small child, and the fat woman took the baby and held it in her arms, then wrapped it loosely under the shawl she wore over her coat.

John thought, She's so big nobody'd know that the baby was there.

The woman said, "I got to cover you up," and threw blankets over them.

Again it was a long jouncy ride. When the wagon stopped they were in the yard of a stable, and it was broad daylight. They stayed inside the stable all that day. The fat woman said she'd be back for them that night, and she gave them a package of food. They ate quickly, hungrily. Then they just sat waiting for night.

When it was dark the woman came for them. They climbed in the wagon again. This time they only went a short distance. The fat woman helped them out of the wagon, guided them toward the back door of a brick house. She tapped lightly at the door. Someone opened it. They all went inside.

John looked at the short stocky figure standing in the middle of the big warm kitchen. It was a man, a stranger, and yet—he thought the face was familiar. Then his wife said, laughing, "Harriet! It's Harriet!"

"A friend with friends," she said and chuckled.

They stayed in the house in Baltimore for a week. After that Harriet, fearless, self-assured, guided them from one station stop to the next. At each house, word was sent on to the next stop to be on the alert, to watch for this party of fugitives. Thus Harriet became aware of a new undercurrent of fear all along the route.

When she reached Philadelphia with her passengers,

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she took them straight to the office of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. There the talk was about the new Fugitive Slave Law, now three months old, and what it would mean to people like herself and to the people who offered them shelter. People convicted of harboring slaves could be imprisoned or fined so heavily that they would lose everything they owned. As for the runaways, they might be shot out of hand, or whipped and sold to the deep South, where they would die anyway. It was this that had created the undercurrent of fear.

The Fugitive Slave Law was one of the concessions made to the South as part of the Compromise of 1850. Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster believed that this compromise would heal the rapidly growing breach between the North and the South. Actually it only served to widen it, primarily because of the terms of the new law covering fugitive slaves.

In the North, men who had been indifferent to slavery, men who had been openly hostile toward the Abolitionists, men who hated Garrison and his newspaper, The Liberator, with a deep and abiding hatred, were stirred to anger. They said that the new law turned them into slave catchers. They said they would not lift so much as a finger to help Southern slaveowners catch their runaways. Even more important, they began to question the

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logic of the Southern apologists for slavery. They said that if enslaved Negroes enjoyed all the good things of life that their masters said they did, there would be no runaway slaves. Why, then, were they taking to their heels in such numbers that it was necessary to pass a law to compel them to enjoy the benefits they derived from slavery?

12.

Freedom's Clothes

LIKE OTHER runaway slaves, Harriet Tubman was no longer safe in Philadelphia. Because of the Fugitive Slave Law she was liable to be arrested at any moment even though she was living in a free state. It was now doubly dangerous for her to return to slave territory, yet in the spring of 1851 she went back to Dorchester County. She brought away one of her brothers and two other men, and got them safely through to Philadelphia.

That summer she worked in Cape May, New Jersey, in a hotel. She saved practically all of her earnings, living like a miser, hoarding each penny. She planned to go back to Maryland in the fall and she would need money to finance the trip.

This was to be a special trip with only one purpose behind it: to persuade John Tubman to go North with her. It had been two years since she had seen him. During that time she had not only forgiven him for his threat to

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betray her, but she had begun to remember all the things about him that had made her fall in love with him: his easy laughter, his sense of humor, the tall broad-shouldered build of him.

And so one night, in the fall of 1851, she arrived at the plantation again. She lingered in the woods, on the edge of the fields, impatiently anticipating the moment when she would see John face to face. The Big House was mellow with light, and in a sense, so were the cabins in the quarter, for the flickering light from the fireplaces showed through the doorways—soft, yellowish.

She was wearing a man's suit, a man's felt hat on her head. She felt perfectly safe, confident. She knew that the master, Dr. Thompson, would not expect her to return to the plantation from which she had once managed to escape. Besides, she had been back here before.

Her knowledge of the route was so sure that she could go North rapidly now, knowing all the stops along the way, where it was safe to spend the night, which houses would provide a warm welcome. With this knowledge she could easily refute all of John's arguments about the dangers involved for those who ran away.

Late that night she went toward the cabin where she had lived with John Tubman, knocked softly. She heard the murmur of voices. Then John opened the door. At first she saw only his face, the familiar beloved face that

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she had for weeks now longed to see again. She had forgotten how tall he was—how broad his shoulders.

She held out her hands, smiling at him. He simply stared at her. She remembered the man's suit, the old felt hat, and she said, chuckling, "It's Harriet."

For the first time she noticed that he was not alone in the cabin. A woman got up from a stool near the fireplace, and came and stood beside him. She was young, slender, infinitely more attractive than Harriet.

Harriet tried to explain why she had come back but the words did not come easily. She felt like an outsider, a stranger. She was terribly aware of the man's suit, the burrs clinging to it, the material old and worn and snagged by briars, the man's shoes on her feet, the battered old hat. These two people standing there, side by side, silhouetted in the doorway, light from the fireplace behind them, seemed to belong in the cabin. Something in their posture suggested that she did not, that she was an intruder.

She spoke of the North, and how they could live there together, and possibly have children. There was a yearning tenderness in her voice. She said, "I came back for you, John."

"Me?" he said, and put his arm around the young woman. "This is Caroline," he said. "Caroline is my wife now. I'm not going North or anywhere else. I wouldn't

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leave here for nothing in the world." Then he laughed.

Harriet had wanted to hear him laugh again, hear that happy carefree laughter of his. But not this way. She hated the sound of it. It was mocking laughter, and the woman standing there beside him was laughing, too.

She lifted her head proudly. She would never let either of them know that a world had collapsed for her, a dream had been destroyed.

"John!" she said. "Oh, John—" pleading, desperate.

How wrong she had been to make plans for him. Why had she assumed that he would be willing to go North with her when he had refused before? She had forgotten that she had always been imbued with the idea of freedom, magic in the very sound of the word, and he had always been indifferent to it, perhaps because he possessed it himself. She thought with something like contempt he should have been a slave—he deserves to be one. She compared him with John Bowley, her brother-in-law, who was willing to risk his own life and safety, though he was a free man, in order that his wife and children should not be slaves.

She remembered how she had dreamed of living in Philadelphia with John Tubman. She wanted to plead with him. Then she knew a moment of anger and wanted to shout at them because she felt they had cheated her out of her dream, defrauded her. She hated this young woman

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who was now leaning against John, the look of puzzlement now replaced by disdain.

She thought, If only she had been wearing fine clothes, silk or satin instead of the torn shabby suit. Not silk or velvet, just a simple calico dress, a dress that would have immediately revealed that she was a woman. Then she shook her head. How could she sleep on the ground in a dress, climb in and out of a potato hole in long skirts? Besides, clothes did not change a person, did not really matter. Love and devotion should not depend on the kind of clothes one wore. A man's suit or a woman's dress would not have made one whit of difference. Neither the one nor the other could alter or change the kind of person that she was. Her mind, her soul, would always wear freedom's clothes. John's never would.

And yet—"I came back for you, John," she said again.

John and the woman laughed. Harriet stood there for a moment, wanting to cry. She thought of the long way she had come, of the money she had earned doing the housework that she hated, remembered how for months she had condemned him in her mind as worthless, and how that judgment had been softened by time, until she had remembered only the good in him, re-experiencing in retrospect the moments of warmth, of understanding, remembering how she had made the colorful quilt, dreaming about him like any young engaged girl. When she

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made the quilt, she was transformed. The field hand felling trees, cutting half a cord of wood a day, lifting barrels of flour, pulling loaded boats along the edge of the river like a horse, had been turned into a girl in love, melting with tenderness.

Even now she found it impossible to hate him. She was too much in love with him. But there was an emptiness, vast, unfillable, inside of her. It would stay with her forever.

Suddenly she remembered his previous threat. It wasn't safe to stay here. He might betray her. He had always said that he would.

She turned away, taking with her the memory of John Tubman and the young woman, Caroline, who had replaced her in his life.

By midnight she had collected a small group of slaves, all of whom wanted to be free, and started North with them, heading for Philadelphia.

The Reverend Theodore Parker, who when a boy bought a Latin dictionary with the first money he ever earned, was chairman of the Executive Committee of the Boston Vigilance Committee. On November 21, 1850, he wrote a letter to Millard Fillmore, who was then President of the United States. In the letter he not only expressed his own conviction that the Fugitive Slave Law

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was wrong, but he eloquently expressed the refusal of the Abolitionists to obey the law:

" . . . I am not a man who loves violence; I respect the sacredness of human life, but this I say, solemnly, that I will do all in my power to rescue any fugitive slave from the hands of any officer who attempts to return him to bondage. . . . I will do it as readily as I would lift a man out of the water, or pluck him from the teeth of a wolf, or snatch him from the hands of a murderer. What is a fine of a thousand dollars, and gaoling for six months, to the liberty of a man? My money perish with me if it stand between me and the eternal law of God!"

13.

The Legend of Moses

UP UNTIL the time of Harriet's discovery of John Tubman's infidelity, she had been guiding escaping slaves to the North and freedom largely because she wanted to rescue members of her own family. It is true that in each group she had conducted there were people who were not related to her, but the motive that had inspired the trips was always the same: to guide her own relatives into the free state of Pennsylvania.

After she discovered that John had found happiness with another woman, she brought a group of slaves North with her, none of whom was related to her. This was an unplanned, spur-of-the-moment project for she had gone back to the plantation in order to persuade her husband to go North with her. This was in keeping with the purpose behind the other trips—freedom for herself, then for her family, and, as her longing for John grew, a happy life for both of them in the North.

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During the next few months, she developed a much broader purpose. She pondered over the shocking contrast between the life of a field hand in Dorchester County, Maryland, and the life she had known and enjoyed in Philadelphia and in Cape May, New Jersey. The work she had done in hotels was play compared to the terrible labors she had performed as a slave. She was free to change jobs for any reason—or for no reason at all. She could go anywhere in Philadelphia, without a pass, and no one would question her. The money that she earned was hers—all of it, to spend as she pleased or to save. To a woman who had been a slave, these were some of the great, incredible wonders of freedom. She felt that all men should enjoy these same rights and privileges.

Like the Abolitionists, she believed slavery to be morally wrong—for masters and slaves alike. She knew that she could not hope to end this evil by herself but she thought she might help make the ownership of slaves unprofitable in the area she knew so well, the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She was certain that even timid, frightened slaves would run away if someone they could trust offered to guide them to the North. She decided to keep going back to “the land of Egypt” as she called Maryland, bringing more and more away. She would leave directions for the bold, self-assured ones, drawing maps for them on the dirt floor of the cabins, carefully

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describing the stopping places on the route, so that they could make the trip North without a conductor. Thus she could slowly, steadily, increase the number of runaways from that one area.

Up until 1851, she was either unaware of the danger posed by the Fugitive Slave Law, or else she ignored it. But that year the significance of the new law was brought home to her, in terms of people. In Philadelphia, she heard stories about three different runaways who had run afoul of the law, for these stories were being told everywhere—North and South.

The first alarming story she heard was about a runaway named Shadrach. He was arrested in Boston, on February 15, 1851, charged with being a fugitive slave. He was taken before a Federal Commissioner in the United States Courtroom for a hearing. A great crowd collected to hear the case, for this was the first test of the new law in Boston. The hearing had barely started when the Commissioner adjourned the court, to the great surprise of the people who were present.

The crowd began to leave the courtroom, moving slowly. Suddenly a group of colored men came into the room, walked over to Shadrach, and surrounded him. One of them said to him, “Follow me.” Shadrach, the runaway slave, was outside the courthouse before the police officers, who were guarding him, were aware that

they had just watched an impromptu and wonderfully effective rescue party at work.

Shadrach was hidden in Boston. When the search for him had ended, the Boston Vigilance Committee sent him on to Canada via the Underground Railroad.

Harriet was upset by this story, in spite of its happy ending. She had always thought of Boston as a safe place, a haven, for runaway slaves, just like Philadelphia.

Then in April, of that same year, she heard talk about a boy named Thomas Sims. He was walking along a street in Boston on the night of April 3, 1851, when he was arrested. George Ticknor Curtis, the United States Commissioner, who presided at the hearing, decided that Sims, who was a fugitive slave, must be returned to his owner in Georgia. The pro-slavery crowd in the courtroom cheered, pleased with the decision. But the Abolitionists were appalled, and talked of rescuing Sims.

But rescue was impossible. The courthouse was surrounded by a heavy chain and patrolled by a strong police force.

Sims was the first slave to be sent back into slavery by Massachusetts since the Revolution. He reached Savannah, Georgia, on the 19th, aboard the brig *Acorn*, which was owned in Boston, and had been chartered by the United States Government for the express purpose of returning the fugitive to his master.

Harriet kept hearing about Thomas Sims: That when he reached Savannah he was publicly whipped and then imprisoned for two months. After that he was sold and resold, first in Savannah, then in Charleston, then in New Orleans. He was finally taken to Vicksburg. (In 1863 when the Federal Army was besieging Vicksburg, Thomas Sims was one of the slaves who managed to reach the Federal forces. He was shipped North where he was hailed as a hero and as a prize of war.)

At first Harriet could not believe it possible that anyone could be taken out of the free state of Massachusetts and sent back to a slave state. The more she thought about it, the more it disturbed her.

The third story that Harriet Tubman heard about in Philadelphia that year concerned the slave Jerry, who was arrested in Syracuse, New York, on October 1, 1851. On that same day the Liberty Party was holding a convention in Syracuse. The delegates, having attended the morning session of the convention, had adjourned for dinner. While they were eating, they heard the slow tolling of the big bell on a nearby Congregational church.

Syracuse was an Abolitionist stronghold, and the church bells were used to give the alarm whenever a fugitive was in danger. The news spread quickly that Jerry had been arrested and was being held in the courthouse for a hearing. The streets were soon filled with

men, women, children, dogs, all excited, all heading for the place where Jerry was held.

That night a group of men battered down the door of the courthouse, using a twenty-foot log. Men armed with axes and crowbars forced their way to the second floor. The Marshal fired at them, and then jumped out of a window, his arm broken. The deputies left just as hastily. Jerry was taken out of his cell by his rescuers and finally sent to Canada and freedom, via the Underground Railroad.

Harriet Tubman heard the stories about the rescue of Shadrach, and of Jerry, about the return of Thomas Sims to Georgia, talked about, told and retold. These stories showed her exactly what the new law meant to runaway slaves living anywhere in the United States, and that, of course, included her. Yet she decided that she would not permit this new and stringent law to interfere with her plan to keep guiding slaves out of Dorchester County. It was now a well-known way. She recognized every creek and cove and inlet, every neck of land, every hiding place, every curve in the roads, every potential source of danger, every potential source of safety. She knew the people who lived in the farmhouses, knew which ones would welcome her and offer food and a night's lodging, knew which ones would set after her with guns and hounds.

But the next trip she made could not end in Philadel-

phia. Her passengers, as she called the fugitives who would travel with her, would not be safe there, would not be safe in Boston or in Syracuse—or anywhere else in the United States. She would have to take them all the way to Canada. It would be a long trip, longer than any she had ever made, through territory that was strange and new to her, with the known hazard of the Fugitive Slave Law pacing her every footstep.

Though she was not aware of it, she had become a legend in the slave cabins along the Eastern Shore. She had always had the makings of a legend in her: the prodigious strength, the fearlessness, the religious ardor, the visions she had in which she experienced moments of prescience. Stories about her would be handed down from one generation to the next, embroidered, embellished, until it would be impossible to say which part was truth, which part was fiction. But each one who heard the stories, each one who told all of them, or only parts of them, would feel stronger because of her existence. Pride in her would linger on in the teller of the story as well as the listener. Their faith in a living God would be strengthened, their faith in themselves would be renewed.

The slaves said she could see in the dark like a mule, that she could smell danger down the wind like a fox, that she could move through thick underbrush without making a sound, like a field mouse. They said she was

so strong she could pick up a grown man, sling him over her shoulder and walk with him for miles.

They said, voices muted, awed, that she talked with God every day, just like Moses. They said there was some strange power in her so that no one could die when she was with them. She enveloped the sick and the dying with her strength, sending it from her body to theirs, sustaining them.

They changed her name again. At first she had been called Minta or Minty. After her defiance of the overseer, they called her Harriet, because the pet names, the diminutives, were no longer fitting for a girl who had displayed such courage.

Now they called her Moses.

As a result of what would always be known as the Jerry rescue, twenty-four eminently respectable citizens of Syracuse (including Reverend J. W. Loguen, Samuel May, Charles Wheaton) and Gerrit Smith, who was visiting the city, were arrested and charged with "constructive treason." The district attorney ordered them to Auburn for questioning. In Auburn, William H. Seward, later Lincoln's Secretary of State, was one of the first men to sign the bond that had to be posted. The case dragged along for a year, and the charge was finally dropped.

The Railroad Runs to Canada

ALONG THE Eastern Shore of Maryland, in Dorchester County, in Caroline County, the masters kept hearing whispers about the man named Moses, who was running off slaves. At first they did not believe in his existence. The stories about him were fantastic, unbelievable. Yet they watched for him. They offered rewards for his capture.

They never saw him. Now and then they heard whispered rumors to the effect that he was in the neighborhood. The woods were searched. The roads were watched. There was never anything to indicate his whereabouts. But a few days afterward, a goodly number of slaves would be gone from the plantation. Neither the master nor the overseer had heard or seen anything unusual in the quarter. Sometimes one or the other would vaguely remember having heard a whippoorwill call somewhere in the woods, close by, late at night. Though it was the wrong season for whippoorwills.

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Sometimes the masters thought they had heard the cry of a hoot owl, repeated, and would remember having thought that the intervals between the low moaning cry were wrong, that it had been repeated four times in succession instead of three. There was never anything more than that to suggest that all was not well in the quarter. Yet when morning came, they invariably discovered that a group of the finest slaves had taken to their heels.

Unfortunately, the discovery was almost always made on a Sunday. Thus a whole day was lost before the machinery of pursuit could be set in motion. The posters offering rewards for the fugitives could not be printed until Monday. The men who made a living hunting for runaway slaves were out of reach, off in the woods with their dogs and their guns, in pursuit of four-footed game, or they were in camp meetings saying their prayers with their wives and families beside them.

Harriet Tubman could have told them that there was far more involved in this matter of running off slaves than signaling the would-be runaways by imitating the call of a whippoorwill, or a hoot owl, far more involved than a matter of waiting for a clear night when the North Star was visible.

In December, 1851, when she started out with the band of fugitives that she planned to take to Canada, she

THE RAILROAD RUNS TO CANADA

had been in the vicinity of the plantation for days, planning the trip, carefully selecting the slaves that she would take with her.

She had announced her arrival in the quarter by singing the forbidden spiritual—"Go down, Moses, 'way down to Egypt Land"—singing it softly outside the door of a slave cabin, late at night. The husky voice was beautiful even when it was barely more than a murmur borne on the wind.

Once she had made her presence known, word of her coming spread from cabin to cabin. The slaves whispered to each other, ear to mouth, mouth to ear, "Moses is here." "Moses has come." "Get ready. Moses is back again." The ones who had agreed to go North with her put ash-cake and salt herring in an old bandanna, hastily tied it into a bundle, and then waited patiently for the signal that meant it was time to start.

There were eleven in this party, including one of her brothers and his wife. It was the largest group that she had ever conducted, but she was determined that more and more slaves should know what freedom was like.

She had to take them all the way to Canada. The Fugitive Slave Law was no longer a great many incomprehensible words written down on the country's lawbooks. The new law had become a reality. It was Thomas Sims,

a boy, picked up on the streets of Boston at night and shipped back to Georgia. It was Jerry and Shadrach, arrested and jailed with no warning.

She had never been in Canada. The route beyond Philadelphia was strange to her. But she could not let the runaways who accompanied her know this. As they walked along she told them stories of her own first flight, she kept painting vivid word pictures of what it would be like to be free.

But there were so many of them this time. She knew moments of doubt when she was half-afraid, and kept looking back over her shoulder, imagining that she heard the sound of pursuit. They would certainly be pursued. Eleven of them. Eleven thousand dollars' worth of flesh and bone and muscle that belonged to Maryland planters. If they were caught, the eleven runaways would be whipped and sold South, but she—she would probably be hanged.

They tried to sleep during the day but they never could wholly relax into sleep. She could tell by the positions they assumed, by their restless movements. And they walked at night. Their progress was slow. It took them three nights of walking to reach the first stop. She had told them about the place where they would stay, promising warmth and good food, holding these things out to them as an incentive to keep going.

When she knocked on the door of a farmhouse, a place where she and her parties of runaways had always been welcome, always been given shelter and plenty to eat, there was no answer. She knocked again, softly. A voice from within said, "Who is it?" There was fear in the voice.

She knew instantly from the sound of the voice that there was something wrong. She said, "A friend with friends," the password on the Underground Railroad.

The door opened, slowly. The man who stood in the doorway looked at her coldly, looked with unconcealed astonishment and fear at the eleven disheveled runaways who were standing near her. Then he shouted, "Too many, too many. It's not safe. My place was searched last week. It's not safe!" and slammed the door in her face.

She turned away from the house, frowning. She had promised her passengers food and rest and warmth, and instead of that, there would be hunger and cold and more walking over the frozen ground. Somehow she would have to instill courage into these eleven people, most of them strangers, would have to feed them on hope and bright dreams of freedom instead of the fried pork and corn bread and milk she had promised them.

They stumbled along behind her, half-dead for sleep, and she urged them on, though she was as tired and as discouraged as they were. She had never been in Canada

but she kept painting wondrous word pictures of what it would be like. She managed to dispel their fear of pursuit, so that they would not become hysterical, panic-stricken. Then she had to bring some of the fear back, so that they would stay awake and keep walking though they drooped with sleep.

Yet during the day, when they lay down deep in a thicket, they never really slept, because if a twig snapped or the wind sighed in the branches of a pine tree, they jumped to their feet, afraid of their own shadows, shivering and shaking. It was very cold, but they dared not make fires because someone would see the smoke and wonder about it.

She kept thinking, eleven of them. Eleven thousand dollars' worth of slaves. And she had to take them all the way to Canada. Sometimes she told them about Thomas Garrett, in Wilmington. She said he was their friend even though he did not know them. He was the friend of all fugitives. He called them God's poor. He was a Quaker and his speech was a little different from that of other people. His clothing was different, too. He wore the wide-brimmed hat that the Quakers wear.

She said that he had thick white hair, soft, almost like a baby's, and the kindest eyes she had ever seen. He was a big man and strong, but he had never used his strength to harm anyone, always to help people. He would give

all of them a new pair of shoes. Everybody. He always did. Once they reached his house in Wilmington, they would be safe. He would see to it that they were.

She described the house where he lived, told them about the store where he sold shoes. She said he kept a pail of milk and a loaf of bread in the drawer of his desk so that he would have food ready at hand for any of God's poor who should suddenly appear before him, fainting with hunger. There was a hidden room in the store. A whole wall swung open, and behind it was a room where he could hide fugitives. On the wall there were shelves filled with small boxes—boxes of shoes—so that you would never guess that the wall actually opened.

While she talked, she kept watching them. They did not believe her. She could tell by their expressions. They were thinking, New shoes, Thomas Garrett, Quaker, Wilmington—what foolishness was this? Who knew if she told the truth? Where was she taking them anyway?

That night they reached the next stop—a farm that belonged to a German. She made the runaways take shelter behind trees at the edge of the fields before she knocked at the door. She hesitated before she approached the door, thinking, suppose that he, too, should refuse shelter, suppose— Then she thought, Lord, I'm going to hold steady on to You and You've got to see me through—and knocked softly.

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She heard the familiar guttural voice say, "Who's there?"

She answered quickly, "A friend with friends."

He opened the door and greeted her warmly. "How many this time?" he asked.

"Eleven," she said and waited, doubting, wondering.

He said, "Good. Bring them in."

He and his wife fed them in the lamplit kitchen, their faces glowing, as they offered food and more food, urging them to eat, saying there was plenty for everybody, have more milk, have more bread, have more meat.

They spent the night in the warm kitchen. They really slept, all that night and until dusk the next day. When they left, it was with reluctance. They had all been warm and safe and well-fed. It was hard to exchange the security offered by that clean warm kitchen for the darkness and the cold of a December night.

"Go On or Die"

HARRIET HAD FOUND it hard to leave the warmth and friendliness, too. But she urged them on. For a while, as they walked, they seemed to carry in them a measure of contentment; some of the serenity and the cleanliness of that big warm kitchen lingered on inside them. But as they walked farther and farther away from the warmth and the light, the cold and the darkness entered into them. They fell silent, sullen, suspicious. She waited for the moment when some one of them would turn mutinous. It did not happen that night.

Two nights later she was aware that the feet behind her were moving slower and slower. She heard the irritability in their voices, knew that soon someone would refuse to go on.

She started talking about William Still and the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee. No one commented. No one asked any questions. She told them the story of