

herself in the morning "right whar she started from." Another was told the grotesque story "that in Canada the British would put out their eyes and send them to lifelong labour in mines underground."

But the slaves were too shrewd to be deceived by these calumnies. "The rumour gradually spread," says Professor Siebert, "among the slaves of the Southern States, that there was, far away under the north star, a land where the flag of the Union did not float; where the law declared all men free and equal; where the people respected the law, and the government, if need be, enforced it. The rumour widened; the fugitives so increased, that a secret pathway, afterward called the Underground Railroad, was soon formed, which ran by the huts of the blacks in the slave states, and the houses of the good Samaritans in the free states. Before the year 1817 it is said that a single group of abolitionists in southern Ohio had forwarded to Canada by this secret path more than a thousand fugitive slaves."

Henry Clay, Secretary of State in 1828, described the escape of slaves as a growing evil which menaced the peaceful relations between the United States and Canada, and urged an extradition treaty for their return; but the British Government staunchly and steadily refused to depart from the principle that every man is free who reaches British ground.

The Underground Railway came in time to cover with a network of routes, not found in the railway maps, the territory embraced by the middle and northern states from the Mississippi to the Atlantic. The greater number, however, were in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and other states contiguous to the frontier of central Canada. Windsor, Sandwich, Amherstburgh, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Sarnia, and the Niagara frontier were the principal points of entry for this contraband commerce. "The untrodden wilds of Canada, as well as her populous places, seemed hospitable to a people for whom the hardships of the new life were fully compensated by the consciousness of their possession of the rights of freedom, rights vouchsafed them by a government that exemplified the proud boast of the poet Cowper:—

'Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free!
They touch our country and their shackles fall.'"

The chief agents of the Underground Railway were found, as we have said, among the quiet and peace-loving Quakers. The members of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Methodist churches, which were strongly anti-slavery in their sympathies, were very good seconds in this law-breaking practical Christianity.