

room, and a number of times he came very slyly to see what I was about. But at such times I was always so fortunate as to hear his tread or see his shadow on the wall in time to hide away my book.

When I had got along to words of five syllables, I went to see a colored friend, Ned Cowan, whom I knew I could trust. I told him I was trying to learn to read, and asked him to help me a little. He said he did not dare to give me any instruction, but he heard me read a few words, and then told me I should learn if I would only persevere as nobly as I had done thus far. I told him *how* I had got along, and what difficulties I had met with. He encouraged me, and spoke very kindly of my efforts to improve my condition by getting learning. He told me I had got along far enough to get another book, in which I could learn to write the letters, as well as to read. He told me where and how to procure this book. I followed his directions, and obtained another spelling-book at Worcester's store, in Wilmington. Jacob showed me a little about writing. He set me a copy, first of straight marks. I now got me a box which I could hide under my bed, some ink, pens, and a bit of candle. So, when I went to bed, I pulled my box out from under my cot, turned it up on end, and began my first attempt at writing. I worked away till my candle was burned out, and then laid down to sleep. Jacob next set me a copy, which he called pot-hooks; then, the letters of the alphabet. These letters were also in my new spelling-book, and according to Jacob's directions, I set them before me for a copy, and wrote on these exercises till I could form all the letters and call them by name. One evening I wrote out my name in large letters—THOMAS JONES. This I carried to Jacob, in a great excitement of happiness, and he warmly commended me for my perseverance and diligence.

About this time, I was at the store early one morning, and, thinking I was safe from all danger for a few minutes, had seated myself in the back store, on one of the barrels, to study in my precious spelling-book. While I was absorbed in this happy enterprize, my