

acknowledge that they owed any regard to slavery or were bound to look on fleeing bondmen as the property of the slaveholders, no matter how the laws read. It was also a practical means of bringing anti-slavery principles to the attention of the lukewarm or pro-slavery people in free states; and of convincing the South that the abolitionist movement was sincere and effective. Above all, the Underground Railroad was the opportunity for the bold and adventurous; it had the excitement of piracy, the secrecy of burglary, the daring of insurrection; to the pleasure of relieving the poor negro's sufferings it added the triumph of snapping one's fingers at the slave-catcher; it developed coolness, indifference to danger, and quickness of resource.

The first task of the historian of the Underground Railroad is to gather his material, and the characteristic of this book is to consider the whole question on a basis of established facts. The effort is timely; for there are still living, or were living when the work began, many hundreds of persons who knew the intimate history of parts of the former secret system of transportation; the book is most timely, for these invaluable details are now fast disappearing with the death of the actors in the drama. Professor Siebert has rescued and put on record events which in a few years will have ceased to be in the memory of living men. He has done for the history of slavery what the students of ballad and folk-lore have done for literature; he has collected perishing materials.

Reminiscence is of course, standing alone, an insufficient basis for historical generalization. On that point Professor Siebert has been careful to explain his principle: he does not attempt to generalize from single memories not otherwise substantiated, but to use reminiscences which confirm each other, to search out telling illustrations, and to discover what the tendencies were from numerous contrasted testimonies. Actual contemporary records are scanty; a few are here preserved, such as David Putnam's memorandum, and Campbell's letter; and the crispness which they give to the