

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, Philadelphia and New York became important *entrepôts* for receiving and forwarding fugitive slaves. These arrived both by rail and coastwise vessels and were sent by way of Albany, Syracuse and Rochester, or by Harrisburg and Elmira to Upper Canada. A few escaped by way of New England, but the chief routes were through Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Cleveland, Sandusky, Toledo, Detroit and other border towns became important stations of the Underground Railway.

The abolitionists and the helpers of the slaves were not sustained by public sympathy or applause. They were under ban and social disabilities, the subjects of insult and injury. "Niggerites," and "amalgamationists" were among the epithets hurled at them, and "nigger-thief" was the inappropriate designation given men who restored the negro to his ownership of himself. They were subject to suspicion, espionage and persecution; their cattle were injured; their persons were menaced; their houses in some cases were burned. Professor Siebert quotes the offers of as much as \$2,500 for the abduction or assassination of the Rev. John S. Mahon, of Brown County, Ohio, for his offence in aiding the escape of slaves. The slave hunter took the law in his own hands. One such assaulted and injured for life a free citizen and was amerced in a fine of \$10,000 for his crime. A Kentucky slave holder assumed Quaker garb to worm out the secrets of the Friends, but he could not quite adopt their phraseology, and was detected as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

From the need of secrecy most of the travel was done by night, and also because many of the slaves had no other guide but the north star.¹ Professor Siebert thus dramatically described the process at a station of the Underground Railway: "The faltering step, and the light, uncertain rapping of the fugitive at the door, was quickly recognized by the family within, and the stranger was admitted with a welcome at once sincere and subdued. There was a suppressed stir in the house while the fire was building and food preparing; and after the hunger and chill of the wayfarer had been dispelled, he was provided with a bed in some out-of-the-way part of the house,

¹ Readers of Lowell's "Biglow Papers" will remember how Birdofredum Sawin undertook to capture a slave "runnin'." But Pomp captured him and made him work all spring. This is Birdofredum's account of it:

"He made me larn him readin', tu, (although the critter saw How much it hut my morril sense to act agin the law), So'st he could read a Bible he'd gut; an' axed ef I could pint The North Star out; but there I put his nose some out o' jint, For I wheeled roun' about sou'west, an', lookin' up a bit, Picked out a middlin' shiny one an' tole him thet wuz it."