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NEGRO SLAVERY IN WISCONSIN

AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

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NEGRO SLAVERY IN WISCONSIN

AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.

What there was in Wisconsin of the actual holding of Negroes as slaves was merely an incidental rather than a purposed extension of a system that had its strength elsewhere. Slavery had triumphed in Missouri, and as some of her citizens became emigrants northward, it was almost a matter of course that at least a few of them would take their Negroes, and that the old relation of master and slave would continue for a time in practical, though not legal, existence. However, when slavery exists because the enslaved do not assert rights which the community wherein they live will help them to maintain, we may be sure that it will not last long. So that, as related to the first Negroes brought to Wisconsin, we have a story of liberation rather than one of continuance in bondage.

And yet the history of Negro slavery in Wisconsin is not fully told in the preceding Parkman Club paper of that name. Not only have we additional facts in regard to certain individual masters and slaves therein mentioned; we have also some other instances of slavery and several of emancipation. Let one case of doubt—that in regard to William Horner¹ and his Negroes—be made clear by Mrs. George H. Cox of Lancaster, Wisconsin:

"Mr. Horner brought four grown-up persons and two children with him from Virginia, and when Mr. Horner left here to

¹ Of whom Mrs. Cox, writing under date of 1896, December 8th, says: "He told me that Governor Horner was a very distant relative."

return to Virginia, he left those colored people in comfortable circumstances, and now some of them are well off.

"A few years after Mr. Horner's arrival, a gentleman from Missouri, a Mr. Ross, came with several colored people that used to be his slaves. He settled them all [so that they were] quite comfortable, and now there is quite a colony of colored people near Lancaster, well behaved and industrious. [They] attend schools and churches."

Of the emancipation of slaves by Ross and Horner, and of the compulsory liberation of a woman held as a slave at Potosi, we have an interesting account by Mr. John Lewis, also of Lancaster.

"I came to Grant County," he writes, "in 1842 as a permanent citizen; had been in the Territory in 1840; moved from Missouri.

"In reply to your first question as to holding slaves, I would say that a man by the name of Woolfolk² moved from Missouri to Potosi (Snake Hollow it was called then), and brought a Negro woman with his family, who served him as a servant for many years. On his removal back to Missouri, he was going to take the woman back, and the opposition of the citizens prevented the taking her back.

"Horner brought some blacks from Virginia. They were the property of his wife. They were given homes in lands deeded to them. Some of the younger stock are hereabout yet.

"At about the commencement of the war, Mr. Ross, an old and highly respected citizen of Lincoln County, Missouri, brought to the neighborhood a family³ of blacks consisting of about ten or fifteen grown persons, for whom he bought land and located them on it, and made his home near them and died

² According to Mr. Seaton, the name should be spelled Wolfolk.

³ The term "family" seems to be used here as meaning all the slaves belonging to one man.

there. He was buried in Lancaster graveyard. His wife, who died in Missouri, made a wish that their blacks should be liberated, and he religiously carried out her wish. These are the people you allude to when you mention Slabtown inhabitants, I suppose."

It would seem that no one now among the living has a wider knowledge of persons once held as slaves in Wisconsin than has J. W. Seaton, Esq., of Potosi. "I knew General Jones's niggers well," he wrote me;⁴ "Paul Jones, who sued for wages and died here of cholera in 1851 [or] 1852; Lex (or Alexis) Jones Godar; Rachel, his wife, called then 'Aunt Rachel' (I wrote her obituary some years ago, and have a copy; she came from Kaskaskia, Illinois; she was chambermaid on a steamboat); 'Jule' Godar, Lex's brother; he died at the poor farm.

"Ross and Cobb brought their slaves here at the opening of the war—some twenty or thirty of them, large and small. He settled them on a farm west of Lancaster, and gave them their freedom. They were owned by Ross. He lived with them till he died. I knew them well, and see some of the younger ones now occasionally. Simpson Oldham, an early settler, came from Missouri here and brought a slave with him, which he kept till he died; and [Asa Edgerton] Hough, I think, had a boy which Ben Wood took to California in '49 and, report says, brought back to Missouri and sold."

Indirectly a dead hand contributes to our paper—that of General Jones himself. In a letter addressed to Edward Pol-

⁴ Under date of 1896, December 7th, when he wrote also of the foreman of the jury in the Paul Jones vs. G. W. Jones case: "The Christian name of Williams was Freeman, though everybody called him 'Free' Williams. * * * The name Freeman Williams would scarcely be known by his old friends and acquaintances. He died at Ellenboro, this county, in the spring of 1891. This I get direct from a member of the family. He was a hard drinker most of his life, that is, took sprees; and was rough, uncouth character, but sharp-witted and wild."

In connection with this subject, Mr. Lewis has a remark in regard to the man who furnished the wolf that brought the jury so hastily to an agreement: "I * * * personally knew Mr. Graham, the wolf-catcher, and bought skins from him; have passed his farm many times. He died on his farm near Platteville. I do not remember his Christian name."

lock, editor of *The Teller*, Lancaster, Wisconsin, the old gentleman revived memories of the time when, by order of Secretary Seward, he was confined for a time in Fort LaFayette, and added: "Seward knew that, although I was politically an anti-abolition Democrat, I had liberated Paul, who sued me at Lancaster for his freedom (in 1842, about),⁵ by persuasion of Doty, Burnett, Wilson (General James) *et al.*,—although I had liberated Paul, his three nephews, his sister Charlotte, and some seven or eight other slaves whom I brought from the South, at their own request, to Sinsinawa Mound."

One of General Jones's former slaves continued to make his home for a time near Sinsinawa Mound. He had a large infusion of Caucasian blood, and bore the name of Proctor. He was respectable in appearance and occupation, and is remembered distinctly by former residents of Fairplay.⁶ He afterward removed to Dubuque, Iowa.

It is pleasant to close this part of our narrative with these words from Alonzo Cragin, Esq.,⁷ of Joplin, Missouri, formerly of Dubuque: "It was stated that the General was a kind master, and I believe it."

⁵ In the former paper on this subject, I gave the date as 1838. In so doing I followed the statement of the editor—to me unknown—of the *History of Grant County* (Western Historical Company, Chicago). The year as given by General Jones is much more probable.

⁶ Among others, by my mother, Mrs. Mary Leavitt, lately and for sixteen years matron of Doane College, Crete, Nebraska; and her brother, Mr. John Nelson of Oakland, California.

"I remember not only Proctor," writes another brother, Mr. James Nelson, of Bullard's Bar, California, "but many other slaves, as two men, one with a wife and family, owned by Gregoire, who had a furnace for smelting galena, on the Menomonee, on the road from Fairplay to Dubuque; also the Heaths, who lived at Elk Grove, had slaves. In fact, the early emigrants were from the South in large excess, and brought their slave property with them as any other property, not deeming it 'peculiar' or different from their other possessions. Of course, this was before the anti-slavery agitation had assumed much force or had become the issue which very soon it was in the politics of the country."

It was probably Augustus L. Gregoire, a brother of General Jones's wife, who owned the furnace and may have owned the slaves. Yet I think it more possible that these belonged to General Jones. In neither of my two interviews with General Jones did he speak of Gregoire's holding slaves, though he made mention of him. The omission that I mention may, however, have been merely a lapse of memory—General Jones was then a very aged man—or there may have been failure on my part to make inquiry.

⁷ Who also wrote in regard to Proctor.

General Jones died 1896, July 22d. *Requiescat in pace.* In an historical sense, he belonged, while yet living, to the world of the dead. A digression may be pardoned that will give us a vivid idea of the part of Michigan that is now Wisconsin, as it was almost seventy years ago. At nearly eighty years of age, the old gentleman was still a lover, and in his letter to Mr. Pollock was mourning the then recent death of his wife, to whom he had been devoted from his young manhood:

"I brought her to Sinsinawa Mound in the spring of 1831, and * * * took her into the log cabins (two) which I built there in March, 1828, on the claim (squatter's or smelter's) which I made the year before, I carrying up two of the corners thereof myself, putting on the clapboard roofs and the plank floor of the yellow pine boards which I brought from Ste. Genevieve; also making the one door and [the one] window in same. These two cabins were built from the stump, and I went into them to sleep, with my hired French boys, and to live, on the second night after they were commenced, two nights having the blue sky as our covering. I had never done work before, except to chop wood and to mine at the New Diggings, near the present town of Potosi; then mine at Burton, in Washington County, Missouri, where I built a sawmill about six feet long for my amusement, I being a natural mechanic.

"My father was the first supreme judge elected in the State of Missouri; was the owner of slaves, and never in his life asked me to do work. So it was with my beautiful young wife; but we were pioneers in reality, and were more happy in our log cabin than when occupying splendid brick buildings whilst I was a senator in Congress or as minister to Bogota, or when we lived here* in our beautiful residence.

"My wife received and entertained my friends in our log hut with as much pleasure [as] and more than when we lived in

* In Dubuque. This is part of the letter addressed to Mr. Pollock.

affluence, taking the mattress and feather bed off her own bed and making pallets on the floor for Gov. Henry Dodge, Judges J. D. Doty, David Irwin, Jefferson Davis, Judge Charles Dunn, Henry L. and A. C. Dodge,—the latter my colleague in after years in the United States Senate; these boys *et id omne*, etc., etc.”

It is to be seen from what General Jones has written above that the surmise in the preceding paper on this subject was a correct one, namely, that there were men in Wisconsin in 1842 who knew that Negroes were held here as slaves, and were determined that the legal freedom of these people should be practically recognized. General Jones's implied condemnation of these men for this action has given them an honor which, so far as I know, has never been claimed for them by those who have written of their lives.

An act of justice on the part of one man has rescued his name from forgetfulness in connection with our subject. A narrative of his life would be, in part, a history of emigration in the United States. He, too, has been added to the silent majority since the preceding paper on this subject was published. His death gives us occasion to speak again of Henry Barnes Graves, of whom his son, J. Walter Graves, of Lathrop, California, wrote: “He had Judge Mills draw up papers for freeing a negro. My father was born in Virginia, but was raised in Kentucky. He moved from there to Missouri, from thence to Wisconsin, and lived between Lancaster and the Hurricane Grove, on Boice Prairie.” From Wisconsin Mr. Graves removed many years ago to California, where he died 1896, November 10th. His place in Wisconsin history may be a very small one, but it is altogether his own, and is most honorable.

• Another case that, so far as I know, is *sui generis* in Wisconsin history is one of which I was told by Deacon Thomas

* Under date of 1896, December 17th.

Davies, of British Hollow, near Potosi. His wife, Elizabeth Lyons Davies, did me the favor to put the narrative into written form:¹⁰

"The name of the ex-slave Mr. Davies told you about was Mark. His master was Mr. Firman, of Marion County, Missouri. Mr. F. had mortgaged Mark for debt, and to keep him from falling into the hands of the mortgagee, whose name we can not now recall, Mr. F. gave Mark his free papers, and brought him to Wisconsin. When Mark had made money enough, as he supposed, to buy his wife, who was still in slavery, he went back to Missouri to buy his wife's freedom, and was seized by the mortgagee for the debt. But a lawyer named Anderson, and a brother of Mr. Firman, took an interest in poor Mark's case, and somehow they rescued Mark, but could not get back his money. So he did not get his wife. After that he came to Galena, Illinois, where he married and lived till his death."

A second letter¹¹ from Mrs. Davies adds these interesting particulars:

"Mr. Davies says that Mark Firman came to Wisconsin before the year 1850; but he does not remember just the date. What he does remember is that in the year 1843 a constable went to the farm of Mr. Firman, in Missouri, to sell at auction all his chattel-mortgaged property (Mark with the rest), and Mr. Davies was one of about three hundred men of that vicinity, each armed with a rifle, ready to fire on the first man who should bid on any of the things offered for sale. So the sale was put off.

"Mr. Davies came to Wisconsin in 1844, and the next year or so heard of a negro man living about three miles from Potosi, who had come from Missouri; this man was Mark Firman. In 1856 Mr. D. went South, and then heard about poor

¹⁰ Under date of 1897, September 29th.

¹¹ Written 1896, October 6th.

Mark's trouble. So it all happened between the years 1843 and 1856."

To the above narrative Mrs. Davies adds another of painful interest. The Captain Hough of whom she speaks is Asa Edgerton Hough, a native of New Hampshire, who, after residence in Washington, D. C., and in St. Louis, Missouri, came to Galena in 1827, and thence to what is now Grant County, perhaps in the same year. Mrs. Davies tells her story vividly:¹²

"Captain Hough, of Potosi, who owned a slave woman and several children, came with his family and his slaves from Virginia¹³ about the year 1837 or 1838, and is not yet forgotten by Potosi people, I think! Captain H.'s youngest daughter, Mrs. Mary McBride, now lives in Washington, D. C. Captain Hough was a leading Freemason; his wife was a Catholic. She claimed to be a descendant of Pocahontas, and her complexion would substantiate the claim. They had two sons and two daughters. America, the bondwoman, had several children, but no husband; that is, none with her; and her children were of various complexions. Two of them went to the same school with us white folks. Our teacher was Mr. [C. C.] Drake. The oldest boy, Felix, was dark and homely, like his mother, America. The second (I can not think of his name) was not very dark and really handsome. One dark night a little Potosi girl heard a woman sobbing and moaning bitterly, and the voices of children crying, as they were being driven rapidly down the valley towards the [Mississippi] river! That midnight cry is not yet forgotten; it helped to make my father, mother and myself abolitionists!

"The next morning we heard that poor 'Merica and her children had been taken South.

¹² In her first letter.

¹³ Before Mr. Hough himself came to what was then the West, a fire in Washington had reduced him to bankruptcy. Did he buy these slaves in Virginia while he himself, a native of New England, was a citizen of a free Territory? Perhaps, however, they were his wife's property. If not, I think it possible that Mr. Hough bought them in St. Louis.

"That is all I remember of Negro slavery in Wisconsin.

"There, now, I do remember one other, 'Black Tom,' a wretchedly deformed boy; the property of old Mr. Oldham, who came from Missouri. Old Mrs. Oldham was one of the first members of our church [Presbyterian, now Congregational, of Potosi]. We children used to call her Aunt Polly; she was so kind and good to us all. But Tom the Negro was a poor deformed boy, and very black.

"I remember Mark Firman very well; he used to come to our cabin-home and tell mother his troubles. But when we were eating, he would take his plate and sit away from the table; and treat my mother and father with so much respect."

In her second letter, Mrs. Davies leads me to infer that the Oldhams' relation to Black Tom, even if, at one time, it was ownership, became, rather, guardianship and care.

"Mrs. Polly Oldham was the stepmother of Simpson Oldham. I do not know her husband's name; he was a very old man. I do not know what became of Black Tom. Mr. and Mrs. Oldham had a mulatto girl living with them, but whether she was a slave or not I can not say; I was a very little girl then.¹⁴

"My recollections of Aunt Polly are very pleasant. I was very ambitious about going to school, and had to pass their cabin on my way.

"I was often distressed at seeing Black Tom sitting on the ground, chopping wood with one hand; I think he was partially paralyzed. But, though he had to work hard and was not treated like white folks, they were otherwise kind to him. Our school house was a cabin belonging to Simpson Oldham and close to his dwelling house, which was quite a pretentious building for those days. Simpson O. had no slaves. My favorite companion was Simpson's second daughter, Margaret.

¹⁴ It may be that this woman or Black Tom himself is the one whom Mr. Seaton thinks of as being the slave of Simpson Oldham, of whom Mrs. Davies expressly states that he "had no slaves."

From Mr. Seaton, also, I had the favor of a second letter:¹⁵

"I regret to state that I am unable to add anything to Mrs. Davies' pleasing reminiscences. She was here in an early day and well knew all the early settlers, and has a tenacious memory as well as a ready pen to describe them. I have heard of all the parties she describes, and knew some of them, especially 'Merica, and General Jones's family.¹⁶ They all lived in Potosi in my time. Also remember when Ross and Cobb came here. Think their names were William Ross and John Cobb. Am of the opinion Cobb had no interest in the slaves. He went to Farmington, Missouri, soon after the war, where he died. Ross bought a farm west of Lancaster, some five miles, where he took his family (slaves) and lived with them till he died, some fifteen or twenty years since. He was very much attached to them and they to him. One of the boys, Alph, went into the army and became a preacher. They were all intelligent. Some of them still reside on the place. * * *

"Allen Wolfolk brought the slave woman here. He built a house in the village. James A. Wolfolk was a young man, and came afterwards and engaged as a clerk. He was a protégé of his uncle, Allen Wolfolk.

"Asa Edgerton Hough is the correct name. They [the Houghs] had a mulatto named 'Bart' that B. F. Wood, Hough's son-in-law, took to California with him in 1849, *via* the isthmus, and it was reported at the time that Wood sold him. I do not vouch for this. Bart was a very likely boy, and not very black. George C. Hough, son of Asa E. Hough, is a lawyer, and still living.

"As I said in the outset, I cannot add much to Mrs. Davies's information. She is the better posted, being an early settler, and raised here; and can be relied upon."

¹⁵ Under date of 1897, October 9th.

¹⁶ By "General Jones's family," Mr. Seaton doubtless means some of the negroes who had been Jones's slaves. I do not think that the General himself ever made his home in Potosi.

"No slavery can be admitted here." These words were written in regard to what is now Wisconsin by a son of Tennessee,¹⁷ and published in Nashville,—a paper that by its name, *The Revivalist*, represented the mighty religious impulse that beautified with salvation the region lying between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi; between the Gulf states and the Great Lakes. Some of the men whose souls had been heated in the fervor of that time came to hate slavery with the intensity of religious conviction. And unless we give heed to their feelings and principles, we can not well understand their actions.

We have already noticed the fact that Wisconsin was settled by two currents of emigration distinct in origin and in course. One was from the East, and came, for the most part, by way of the Great Lakes or on lines of travel parallel, in a general way, thereto. With this came the pioneers of the southeastern part of the State. The other, chiefly from the states that are situate, in greater part or less, within the valley of the Ohio, and from Missouri, followed hither the route of the Great—more strictly speaking, the Everywhere—River, the Indian Mese Zeebi, or traced ill-defined roads leading northward and westward over the broad prairies of Indiana and Illinois. This stream of emigration spread from Galena as a center over the entire lead region. It was the first of the two in point of time, and, for years, in numbers also and commercial importance. In large part it came from the states in which there was legal slavery,—states that thus paid part of the penalty of their sin in the loss of many of their best citizens, who preferred to find for themselves and for their children homes where there was neither master nor slave. With some of these emigrants dislike of slavery was due to their perception of the fact that it degraded labor, and that, though it was profitable to individuals of a favored class, it was a loss to the com-

¹⁷ That state was then regarded as Western rather than Southern. Moreover, the strange frenzy which later sought to stifle all expression of anti-slavery opinion did not then fully prevail even in the South itself.

munity as a whole. With others who sought Northern homes, abhorrence of slavery was a religious principle. Some of these men were among the founders of Wisconsin,¹⁸ and to them for no small part of the anti-slavery sentiment which has so honorably distinguished our state, she owes a debt of gratitude not yet fully acknowledged. These men were not disunionists like the overpraised Garrison. And when, in the dark days of the pro-slavery rebellion, the second really great President of the United States needed the sympathy and help of every loyal man, they did not, like Wendell Phillips, speak of him as "the slave-hunting bloodhound from Illinois."¹⁹

But others came to Wisconsin besides those who hated slavery. The spirit of intolerance and bitterness which slavery necessarily produces came North with many even of those who did not wish to live where the "peculiar institution," as it was sometimes absurdly called, had legal existence. "Why do you stay at that abolition hole?" asked Judge Dunn of General Jones, speaking of an hotel at Lancaster, and prefixing to "abolition" a word of cursing. And General Jones, perhaps to be near his friend, did not stay there any longer. "The niggers will get a pull now!" said the wife of a petty politician of Fairplay, Grant County, standing on an election day in the doorway of her home, and purposely speaking so as to be heard by some anti-slavery voters who were passing by. "Trials of mockings" like these were, for some, very hard to bear. At the semi-centennial celebration of the Platteville Congregational Church, Rev. Truman Orville Douglass, secretary of the Iowa Home Missionary Society, recalled the fact that in his boyhood

¹⁸ The writer is glad to make mention here of a man of this class, a native of Kentucky, Benjamin Kilbourn, a resident for more than sixty years of the Wisconsin lead region (died 1890, March 8th). Honorable, generous and devout, his memory is one to be cherished by all who knew him.

¹⁹ Let no one think that I fail to honor these men. Notwithstanding their errors,—and these were many and great,—they did a work that helped to save our nation. But one reason, perhaps, why they had so much to do was because they created rather than disarmed opposition.

he and others of his grandfather's family, on coming into the village, were often greeted with the doggerel refrain:

"Abolition holler,
Three feet wide;
A nigger in the middle,
A McCord on each side!"

Deacon James Bennett McCord, of the Platteville Congregational Church, a native of Georgia, was the son of a man who, because of his hatred of slavery, found a home on Northern soil. The son settled near Platteville, in a neighborhood which, from him and others like-minded, came to be known as "Abolition Hollow."

Another McCord, whom naturally we know better by his surname Dixon,—Alvin McCord Dixon,—was, more than any other, the founder of the Platteville Academy, now the Platteville Normal School. "He was the first student to enter Illinois College. While living in Quincy, after his graduation, he served as conductor on the underground railway.

"Where no one heard the whistle
Or the rumble of the cars,
As the darkeys rode to freedom
Beyond the stripes and stars." ²⁰

But if the men who by personal contact with slavery had learned to hate it, were the first in what is now Wisconsin to bear testimony against the sin of human bondage, immigrants from the East settled a larger portion of the state and had a wider influence. Thus with both tides of immigration into Wisconsin came a flood of anti-slavery conviction that overspread the forming commonwealth.

Of these early settlers, New York furnished a larger number than any other state. Many of these, to be sure, in coming hither, made a second removal from their New England home. Yet it was from New York more than from any other State that there came to Wisconsin so vital a union of abolitionism, with

²⁰ Rev. Julian H. Dixon in *Fiftieth Anniversary, Bloomington and Blake's Prairie Churches*.

the evangelistic spirit that the Church was the best friend to be found by either slave or sinner. For this we, as a State, owe to New York a greater debt than for shaping, as she undoubtedly did through her sons, our political institutions.

Of all those whose labors, under God, produced the effect which was thus projected at so early a time into our embryo state, none wrought more powerfully and effectively than Charles Grandison Finney. It was fitting that the sermons of this great abolition evangelist should be read, as was probably the case, to the little company of Christian believers who afterward formed the First Presbyterian, now Immanuel, Church of Milwaukee. Later, the same thing occurred when the First Congregational Bethel Church (now Plymouth) of Milwaukee was organized. It was one of the spiritual sons of the great movement in which Mr. Finney was a leader to whom the thought came to found a Congregational Church in that city. "The Lord told me," was the way in which the good man himself, Deacon Robert Love, expressed it. There are those who will smile and those who will sneer at what will seem to them a fancy. But we shall not understand history,—or anything else,—unless we bear in mind not only the great truth that God does guide men, but also the important fact that some men believe themselves to be especially conscious of this guidance. And the men who made Wisconsin an abolition state believed themselves to be agents to do a revealed will of God.

Among the reasons for organizing this then new church,²¹ now Plymouth, was the belief of some of its founders that the church previously established in Milwaukee by themselves and others of substantially the same religious views was too conservative on the subject of slavery. In time the same reproach, brought against Plymouth itself, was one of the causes that led to the organization of the Free Congregational, now Grand

²¹ As given me nearly half a century afterward by Deacon Daniel Brown, then of Sheboygan, who with his brother Samuel and the wives of both helped found both the First Presbyterian and Plymouth churches.

Avenue. But it is not likely that any other claimant will ever displace Plymouth from its position as the first church in Wisconsin the organization of which was, in part, a protest against slavery. But this is not saying that it was the first anti-slavery church.

What people really believe finds expression, commonly, in their religion before it does in their politics. Certainly the anti-slavery feeling in Wisconsin found utterance through some of her churches before it did through any political convention. This priority in time, as well as the comparative neglect hitherto given to the religious aspect of our subject, justify us in giving here special attention to it. Whatever may be true of other parts of our country, most of the early churches of Wisconsin are free from the reproach of moral cowardice in dealing with the subject of slavery.

"Resolved, That it is high time for Christians to arise and give their testimony against the soul-destroying sin of slavery, and to refuse fellowship with all slaveholders who have named the name of Christ and those who abet the cause!" To our Baptist friends belongs the honor of having adopted this resolution, the first of its kind, so far as I have been able to determine, in the history of our commonwealth. It was in the radical atmosphere of Waukesha, at the session in that place of the First Baptist Association of Wisconsin, held 1840, September 24th and 25th, that this action was taken.

In 1839 (January 17th) there was organized at Milwaukee the Presbytery of Wisconsin. Notwithstanding its name, it was not, strictly, a Presbyterian body. It soon became the Presbytery of Milwaukee, and in October of 1840 it was merged into the Presbyterian and Congregational Convention of Wisconsin.²² At the formation of this convention the thought of union between Congregational and Presbyterian

²² Now officially styled "the General Congregational Convention of Wisconsin."

churches and ministers seems to have excluded almost everything else. That accomplished, the fathers and founders of those churches in Wisconsin expressed their anti-slavery convictions most unmistakably. "Resolved," they said in their meeting at Beloit in October, 1841, "that in the view of this convention, American slavery is a sin; that it is a sin of such magnitude that all who practice it or knowingly promote it should be excluded from our pulpits and the fellowship of our churches; that while we deprecate all harsh language and rash measures in the destruction of this evil, we will nevertheless avail ourselves of all suitable measures to enlighten and correct the public mind, in regard to the sin of slavery." The adoption of these resolutions probably followed an address on the subject by Rev. Moses Ordway, who had been appointed to this service when the convention was in session the preceding June at Prairieville (Waukesha). Even at a meeting before that, the subject had been brought forward, and thus the way made ready for some action of a significant character such as was, most certainly, the choosing of Mr. Ordway as the one to give the address. Think of this son of thunder with human slavery for a subject! For he was one who, in rebuking iniquity—as well as in doing a number of other things—did not fear the face of man.

Deeds followed words. In the summer of 1842, a slave girl named Caroline escaped from St. Louis. She was so white that she went openly by steamboat to Alton, Illinois, mingling freely and unsuspectedly with some white girls who were on their way to an academy or school of some kind in Alton. There a colored man suspected her of being a fugitive, told her it was not safe to stay in Alton, and got her started by stage for Milwaukee. Before leaving her master's home Caroline became possessed—honorably, let us hope, but not take the trouble to ask—of \$100. A silver key unlocks many doors, and she got to Milwaukee. Here she found friends. Her pur-

suers also found helpers, one of whom was a Negro barber who, for a time, sheltered Caroline, but agreed to betray her. His treachery was baffled by a colored boy. An attorney, H. N. Wells, who had been approached by Caroline's pursuers, gave warning that they were in town. At night Asabel Finch, for many years a prominent attorney of Milwaukee, and a leading man in Plymouth Church, took the girl across the Milwaukee River. She was hidden all the next day under a hogshead, or something of the sort, near (what is now) Grand Avenue. Thence she was taken to the home²³ of Samuel Brown. He took her to the home of Samuel Daugherty, a Baptist brother, living northward of Pewaukee. Thence she was taken by Ezra Mendall to Deacon Allen Clinton's, near Prairieville. All this time a reward of \$300, a great sum for those days, was hanging over her head. So sure were her pursuers that she was somewhere in Prairieville that they had watched the house of Rev. O. F. Curtis all one night.

Prairieville was then, in pro-slavery parlance, an "abolition hole." Of those who gave it that character none was more determined than Deacon Ezra Mendall of the Congregational Church. In something more than slang, though the words sound like it, he might be described as a "holy terror." He was a man of fervent piety, unflinching courage, and great physical strength. Before his conversion he had been, it is said, something of a pugilistic fighter. To him and to Lyman Goodnow, of the same church, was entrusted the duty of taking Caroline to a place of safety. They did not know where their journey would end. It proved to be one of thirty miles, and was made, of course, in the night. Conscientious scruples about keeping the Sabbath did not prevent these men from starting on a Sunday evening. At the first place to which they took Caroline, the home of a farmer, it was impossible to keep her, for the threshers were expected during the coming day.

²³ At part of the old family residence, 1614 Fond du Lac avenue.

Thereupon she was taken to the home of Rev. Solomon Ashley Dwinell, who thus tells part of our story:

"Early of an August morning in the year 1842,²⁴ a loud rap was heard at our door at Spring Prairie, Walworth County. I at once arose, and, upon opening the door, was accosted by Deacon Ezra Mendall, of Waukesha, and two associates,²⁵ with a slave girl, apparently about eighteen years old, of fine figure and light yellow complexion. They said to me: 'We have work here for you. This girl is hotly pursued,²⁶ and a large reward is offered, and many are out hunting for her. We wish you to conceal her to-day, and to-night remove her to another place so that she cannot be tracked. We will come in a few days and take her. We must leave at once to avoid being seen here by daylight.'

"As they arose to leave, the poor girl, looking at them anxiously, and with an expression of terror that I can never forget, inquired: 'Are you leaving me with friends? Am I safe here?' Giving her an affirmative answer, they took leave."

This done, they were returning homeward when Mr. Goodnow, moving his feet in the straw with which the bottom of the wagon bed was covered, found therein a big butcher-knife.²⁷ "Deacon, what's this?" "Oh," was the answer, "it's something I brought along to pick my teeth with." "You can guess," adds Mr. Goodnow, "what he intended to do if any one had attempted to capture us."

²⁴ Mr. Dwinell's pamphlet, *Wisconsin as It Was and Is*, says "1843," but this is doubtless a typographical or other error. All other printed authorities give 1842 as the year, as did also Mr. W. D. Bacon, an early resident of Prairieville, in a private letter to the writer of this note.

²⁵ "On the way we stopped and got James Rossman to accompany us," says Mr. Goodnow.

²⁶ Those engaged in this shameful work were a lawyer from St. Louis named Spencer, Jonathan B. Arnold, Alexander F. Pratt and perhaps others. Some men who are well known in the history of Wisconsin would have been glad, doubtless, could their part in this affair have been forgotten.

²⁷ Deacon Mendall was, to use Mr. Goodnow's words, "a famous butcher." But that was among farmers who had to kill their own pigs.

"The girl was concealed during the day," continues Mr. Dwinnell, "and the following night was placed in care of Deacon J. C. P., at Gardner's Prairie."

But in Wisconsin or in the United States there was no lasting safety for the fugitive. Accordingly, the Abolitionists who knew of the case made up a purse for traveling expenses, and sent Mr. Goodnow to take the fugitive to Canada. Others besides the friends at Waukesha interested themselves effectively in the same way. Among these were Dr. Edward G. Dyer²⁸ and Rev. W. R. Manning, a Baptist clergyman. A minister of the Disciple denomination named Fitch accompanied Goodnow and Caroline into Illinois. "I was steering," says Mr. Goodnow, "for the house of a man named Russell, who was a Methodist, though not an Abolitionist. * * * Mr. Russell said he had never been an Abolitionist, but he was more than willing to assist any human being to freedom. If that was being an Abolitionist, he was one. * * * I made him a station-keeper on the underground railroad which I established along the route." The underground railway ran in somewhat zigzag lines, and usually had Quakers for station-agents. Mr. Goodnow also bears testimony to the kindness of such Germans as had not become "Yankeeified." The first money that he had to pay was the cost of rowing Caroline across the Detroit River.

Thus it was that the first fugitive from slavery,—the first so far as I know,—who sought safety by way of Wisconsin, was conveyed to what was then,—in contrast to the United States, we are ashamed to say,—"the land of the free; the dominions of the British Queen."²⁹

Incidents like these seem to belong to another age and land. "The better years," to quote from Bryant's *Death of Slavery*,

²⁸ Dr. Dyer removed from Cicero, Onondaga County, New York, to the neighborhood of Burlington, Racine County, Wisconsin, in 1839. He was the first practicing physician settled in that vicinity. For this information, and for other favors, I am indebted to his son, Judge Charles E. Dyer, and to Mr. John Goadby Gregory.

²⁹ I adapt the expression from Mr. Dwinnell's narrative.

have already carried the "great wrong into the shadowy past." We realize now, better than our fathers and elder brothers did, that in a very true sense the master as well as the slave was under the heel of a system that, if it would live at all, must needs be pitiless and inexorable. These characteristics were especially manifest in the pursuit of fugitive slaves. And when, as in the case above mentioned, the one sought for was a woman fleeing from what would likely prove to be a life of shame;—a woman white, almost, as were or might have been the sisters and daughters of the man who claimed her as property, what wonder that the blood burned hot in the veins of these sturdy Abolitionists of the generation the last of whose number are now passing away?

"Peace to the dead!" said Father Clary,⁵⁰ speaking of President William Henry Harrison, in a Fourth of July address at Rockford, Illinois. But he did not speak either to mourn or to praise the dead. His words were to the living, and of their present duty. "Proclaim liberty throughout the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and set at liberty them that are bruised." These were the texts from which this prophet of our modern time delivered his message. The guilt of slavery, he argued, lay upon the North as well as upon the South. This having been proved, he cries out: "Does not the sin of slavery lie at our door, defile our consciences, obstruct our entrance to the presence of a most holy God? And must it not be repented of before we can meet the colored man at the bar of eternal justice in peace?"

As his discourse proceeds, he has another question to

⁵⁰ Rev. Dexter Clary, then pastor of what is now the First Congregational Church of Beloit; and afterward, for many years, superintendent of work in Wisconsin under the auspices of the American (now Congregational) Home Missionary Society. This address was published in the *Liberty Tree* of February 1st, 1844.

answer: "What must we do to save ourselves and our country from the sin and curse of slavery? I would observe:

"First, we must stop supporting it,

"By not cherishing in our hearts an unholy prejudice against our colored brethren, whether bond or free.

"By not returning to his master him that is escaped from his master. See Deuteronomy xxiii., 15.

"By not apologizing for the sin of it in others.

"As a last desperate effort to prop up this system of wickedness, the slaveholder and his Northern apologists go to the Bible. To such I will only quote from John Randolph, who said: 'I neither envy [envy neither] the head or [nor] the heart of that man who rises up to defend slavery from principle.' And from Patrick Henry: 'It is a debt we owe to the purity of our religion to show that it is at variance with the law which warrants slavery;' and he adds: 'A serious view of this subject gives a gloomy perspective to future times.' He was a slaveholder, yet he had a conscience, and it was not blunted and seared as are the consciences of slaveholders and their apologists in these times, which, like the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, is a sad presage of coming wrath.

"Neither must we fellowship it in our churches, at our communion tables, or in our pulpits; nor vote for pro-slavery men, either of the North or the South, to make or maintain slave laws.

"We must stop admitting States with slavery in their constitutions. All these things, and such as these, we must stop doing. Moreover, if we would be saved, and save our country from the sin and curse of slavery, we must,

"Second, exert what moral influence we have for its overthrow.

"Our pulpits must not be muzzled, but speak out, open their moral batteries, and echo the thunders of heaven. The ministers of the Cross must cry aloud and spare not, but show the

people their transgressions and the churches this sin, this great sin, against God and man.

"The press, and especially the religious press, must scatter the light of truth over all the land.

"The voice of churches and ecclesiastical bodies must be uttered, and uttered so distinctly that none will misunderstand it.

"The agents and boards of missionary and other benevolent societies must refuse to receive knowingly the 'wages of oppression,' 'the price of blood,' into the treasury of the Lord.

"These and all other means of exerting a moral influence must be used, and used faithfully and perseveringly, yet kindly, in the spirit of love and the spirit of prayer to the God of the oppressed, until the conscience of the nation shall be brought to life on this subject; until the heart of philanthropy, and benevolence, and true patriotism shall again beat; and our avaricious, power-loving, lust-indulging, self-seeking, God-forgetting, prodigal nation shall 'come to itself,' and with deep contrition return to the God of our fathers, to become His servants, and obey His voice, bidding us 'let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke; to proclaim liberty throughout the land, unto *all* the inhabitants thereof.' "

Mr. Clary next pleads for the right use of political influence, and speaks so frankly that we know how he used his own. "While I regret the necessity there is that Abolitionists should organize a distinct party in politics in order that they may exert their influence at the polls to save their country from the sin and curse of slavery, I must say I rejoice that a political party is organized where[in] not only Abolitionists as such, but where[in] Christians can exert their political influence conscientiously. For I regard the spirit and principles of the politics of the day as being anti-Christian. I view them as being rank poison to the spirituality of Christians; and it is a simple matter of fact that in exact proportion as these have

entered into the spirit of politics they have lost their spirituality as Christians. The spirit of political abolition is not so. It is based upon different moral principles from those which lie at the foundation of the politics of the day. These are selfishness, love of power, avarice, lust, oppression. Those are benevolence, love to God and to man, a regard for human, inalienable rights; in a word, the golden rule. Hence Christianity and pure abolition principles are one in moral character; so are slavery and the political principles of the day. Hence, also, the principles of moral and political abolition and the principles of the fathers of the Revolution are the same; while the spirit and principles which now oppose abolition are one with those of England who opposed the liberty of our country. The men who fought for the liberties of their country carried their religion into their politics; so do Abolitionists. England carried her politics into religion, and corrupted both; so do slaveholders and the politicians of the day."

In holding and expressing opinions like these, Mr. Clary was not alone. In the year of this address, 1843, the state convention (of churches) of which he was a member passed the following resolutions:

"That we regard the anti-slavery enterprise as being based on the principle of the gospel which requires that we do good unto all men; and as such it commends itself to the sympathies, prayers and exertions of the wise and the good.

"That the ministers and the Church of Christ are bound in consistency with their profession to rebuke all sin, to labor earnestly for the removal of oppression, and to withhold Christian fellowship from all those who persist in enslaving or holding in slavery their fellowmen."

As already stated, Mr. Clary was then pastor of the Congregational Church of Beloit, now the First Congregational. This church put itself on record in condemnation of slavery by resolution passed in March, 1844. This action was of especial sig-

nificance in view of the fact that in the bosom of this church, Beloit Seminary was developing the life that was afterwards absorbed by Beloit College. Incidentally, I may remark that one of the early gifts to Beloit College was a tract of one hundred and sixty acres of land given on condition that no student should ever be denied admission on account of his color.

But of all places in Wisconsin, Prairieville seems to have been most intense in its opposition to slavery, and the Congregational Church there the very furnace of the abolition fire. Moulded in such heat were the resolutions hereto subjoined. They were adopted by the church 1845, March 1st:

"Whereas, Slavery thrusts a man down from the rank assigned him by his Creator, denies the attributes of his nature, and all the rights growing out of them, annihilates the distinction which God has made between men and things, denies to its victims the freedom of their will, and subjects them to the absolute and arbitrary control of depraved and selfish beings, thus excluding the moral government of God from the empire of the soul, uproots all the domestic relations and sweeps with a desolating stroke over all the cords of social life, withholds from millions in this Christian land the lamp of life, tramples down the great Christian law which requires all men to do to others as they would have others do to them; therefore,

"Resolved, That American slavery was rightly named by the pious John Wesley 'the sum of all villanies.'

"Second, That we will not admit to our pulpit or communion, or have any Christian fellowship with any person who practices, upholds or justifies this gross system of iniquity.

"Third, That we regard it a solemn duty to pray and labor in every righteous way to effect a speedy, peaceful and entire overthrow of this great sin.

"Voted, That the clerk prepare a copy and send to the New York *Evangelist* for publication.

"Meeting adjourned two weeks.

"E. A. PURPLE, Clerk."

A church that, in 1845, would take such a stand as this possessed a spirit that was ready to lead it into very independent and radical action. It invited a colored man to sit as member of a council called to aid the church in ordaining and installing a pastor. And the Negro thus invited was not a clergyman, but a blacksmith. Such action was surely radical enough. And yet this church and others that shared, possibly in less degree, its feelings in regard to slavery, were in practice and doctrine exceedingly conservative. They were ready to resent any imputation upon their orthodoxy. In order to understand these men and their principles, we must put ourselves into a Wisconsin that has passed away as surely as the Boston of Winthrop's time has passed away. In 1845 the part of Wisconsin—except Milwaukee—with which our narrative is dealing was a group of communities possessing a homogeneous population lately come from regions that, not long before, had been permeated by a deep religious fervor. Leading laymen as well as ministers accepted as a matter of course methods of Christian work in which they had been trained,—methods such as won for Finney, Nettleton and others that intensity of approval or of condemnation which is likely to be roused when men feel deeply in regard to great interests.

This is no place for a dissertation on revivals. It is enough to say that they are mental and spiritual phenomena of the most profound interest. In them is the belief that moved the prophets, the fear of judgment that found voice in the *Dies Irae*, and the glad yet solemn trust of those majestic hymns, *Rock of Ages* and *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*. So long as men hear the voice of God speaking to the soul, there will be revivals. But they will never be understood by those who insist upon reducing all knowledge of God to formulæ, whether of mere ritual or of the intellect.

It was with this revival fervor that some of the men of the Wisconsin of half a century ago fought against slavery. When

the resolutions that appear above were adopted by the Waukesha church, its pastor was Otis Freeman Curtis. Evidence of some of these things that I have written is found in the fact that in March, 1840, when Southport (Kenosha) contained fifty-seven families, Mr. Curtis aided in revival meetings which so affected the community that "after the close of the meetings there were one or more professions of religion in every family except two."³¹ Later, at Waukesha, he led in a notable movement of the same sort, and this, no doubt, as well as the rescue of Caroline which followed soon after, helped to put upon Waukesha the anti-slavery impress that can never wear away.³²

To the most prominent member of the Presbyterian and Congregational Convention of Wisconsin, Rev. Stephen Peet, there came at the New School General Assembly of 1849, a sharp and painful test. Among the few slaveholders in that body was the Rev. James H. C. Leach, D. D., of Farmville, Virginia. As Dr. Leach was chosen to be one of those who officiated at the Lord's table in the communion service, Mr. Peet declined to receive the sacred emblems. This action on his part called forth at the next session of the Convention a formal vote of approval.

To the strengthening of the anti-slavery cause came, in the early years of the decade before the war, the efficient hosts of

³¹ Colonel Michael Frank.

³² This sturdy Abolitionist was born 1804, July 6th, in a farmhouse almost under the shadow of Dartmouth College. After ordination to the ministry, 1828, October 23d, he labored for some years in Vermont in the Congregational ministry. Then he entered the Methodist Episcopal Church, "for the sake of greater freedom in revival work," and remained in connection therewith apparently about seven years. During this time, in 1835, a journey of 2,300 miles, by way of the Ohio, the Mississippi and the Illinois—a journey beginning in September and ending the 28th of October—brought him to Canton, Illinois, whence, after a winter's, or, more likely, a year's faithful service, he removed to Chicago. There an incident occurred that shows in what condition were then the streets of that city. In the spring of 1837, he had gone one Sabbath to the little church where is now located the Clark Street Methodist Episcopal Church, opposite the court house, and, looking through the open door, he saw the overturning of the wagon in which were his wife and children. They were thrown into mud so thin and deep that a four-year-old boy, now Rev. A. W. Curtis of Raleigh, North Carolina, went down in it entirely out of sight, and but for prompt help would have been smothered.

It is worthy of note that two sons of this anti-slavery champion are now at work for or among our ex-slave population. Another son and a grandson are missionaries in Japan.

the Methodist Episcopal Church. In September, 1852, the Wisconsin Conference resolved that "we are more than ever convinced of the great evil of American slavery, and hereby solemnly pledge to each other our best efforts and ardent prayers for its total abolishment."²⁵

The greater proportion in their churches of members from the South made anti-slavery action on the part of the Methodist Episcopal people more difficult than it was to the Baptists, the Congregationalists and the (new school) Presbyterians. But the Methodist abolitionists were no less determined and persistent than were those of the other churches that have been named.

It can not be denied that in the struggle against the fugitive slave law and against the effort to make Kansas a slave state, some of our good men acted like fanatics. For one, because it is true and was inevitable, I do not wish to deny it. The cause, says Dr. E. H. Chapin, that never produced a fanatic never produced a martyr. As it is hard to be always temperate while fighting intemperance, so it is sometimes hard to be just while opposing injustice. Doubtless anti-slavery zeal burned in some of our churches and communities until it reached the red-heat of intolerance. "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad," thought the late Father Clapp of Wauwatosa, when, having come, as a young man, into the membership of the Milwaukee Convention, he found himself confronted by resolutions so radical that he, though a disciple of the Joshua Leavitt school of Abolitionists, could not endorse them. Those were the days when even such men as the late President Chapin were accused of undue conservatism. No doubt, Wisconsin needed at that time some men who incurred such a charge, and who did not

²⁵ This was better than the Rock River Conference,—to which the Wisconsin churches at first belonged,—did in 1841, when, "goaded by petitions from the laymen, it appointed a committee on slavery, but responded to the petitioners thus:

"Resolved, That it is inexpedient for this Conference to take any action on the subject of slavery."—*Bennett's History of Methodism in Wisconsin*.

deserve it. We could wish that, in our anti-slavery struggle in Wisconsin, no legal process had ever been disobeyed. We wish yet more, that none had been of such sort as to make it seem like an obligation of humanity that they should be disobeyed. We wish that no Wisconsin prison had ever been entered unlawfully. We wish yet more, that no man had ever been detained in one for no offense save that of fleeing from slavery. Yet the very things thus suggested have been done. A man, Joshua Glover of Missouri, a man, though colored and a slave, was thrust into the Milwaukee county jail. Thither an enraged master had brought him from Racine. As if he desired that nothing should be wanting to rouse against himself a storm of righteous wrath, the brutal claimant, it is said, struck and kicked the Negro even after he had been made a helpless captive. And we are told that the unhappy fugitive surrendered without resistance. What wonder that sons of free Wisconsin felt that it was right for them to burst open the prison-house of the slave? It was on the 11th of March, 1854, that this was done. As might be expected, the Negro was taken to Waukesha. There, of course, he found friends, none more active and helpful than those of the little church that has won so honorable a place in this narrative. One of these took him back to Racine, whence he escaped to Canada.

Then followed an attempt to enforce upon his rescuers, or at least upon the more prominent of them, the penalties of the fugitive slave law. From the legal point of view the men who helped Glover to escape were undoubtedly guilty. Judge Andrew Galbraith Miller, of the United States District Court for Wisconsin, had certainly reason for thinking that if the law was to be anything but a dead letter, these men must be punished. But their case was really that of the people of Wisconsin, and a people can neither be indicted nor put on formal trial. These offenders against a United States statute sought the protection of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, and received all

that could constitutionally be given,—and perhaps a little more. But the state court stopped just on the verge of attempted nullification of the fugitive slave law in Wisconsin.

In justice to Judge Miller, it ought to be said that his aim does not appear to have been the infliction of penalty upon all those who had offended,—if their act may rightly be called an offense,—but only upon one or two of the leaders. Of these none was more prominent,—and none, perhaps, more willing to be so,—than Sherman Miller Booth, a man who suffered loss, fine and imprisonment because of his connection with the Glover case, and who thus came to represent a cause so great and so good that no man could be wholly worthy of it. The story has been often told, and Mr. Booth yet abides among the living.

Less dramatic than the Glover case, but of thrilling interest, is one the story of which was told me by the late Rev. Jeremiah Porter, D. D., of Beloit. "It was secret service before the Lord," wrote his wife in regard to the hiding of some fugitives. "From what place in the South they came I do not know, nor how they escaped. It was a father who started with three children. But death was the unwelcome companion of his journey, and one of the children died at St. Louis. I wish that some one might tell the story of their journey thence to Chilton and Stockbridge. This was while Stockbridge was still, in part, an Indian settlement. At Chilton the fugitives received kindness from one of the leading Democratic politicians of the State, and from others. One of these, we may hope, will yet give us an account of the fugitives' life there. At Stockbridge they were befriended by Mr. Lemuel Goodell,—no doubt by others also,—who sent his team with the fugitives to Mr. Roswell Norris's, at Green Bay. Mr. Norris brought them to Mr. Porter's. "At midnight," wrote Mrs. Porter, "we were awakened by a knock at our window, and there stood the poor, trembling father and his cold, hungry children. Where can we

hide them? was a practical question, for the boat which would take them to Canada had been delayed. I asked the God of all wisdom and truth and love to direct, and during the act of prayer a text of Scripture came to mind which suggested the church. 'Yes, that is the place,' Mr. Porter replied, 'the belfry.' There they stayed during the day, but at night they slept in the church." Mr. Porter brought them food, supplied in part from his own table. Part of our story is thus pleasantly told by a son of Deacon Alonzo Kimball, Mr. M. D. Kimball, of Milwaukee, who thus wrote under date of 1897, October 5th:

"My father's part [in the rescue] was in furnishing food to the fugitives, and in engaging their passage by steamer to Canada."

Another family that had part in supplying the bodily needs of the fugitives was that of the parents of Mrs. Alma Robb, of Green Bay, who wrote of her father:³⁴ "I know that he was active in the underground railroad work, as it was called. * * The family that was secreted in the church I helped to cook for, but did not know at the time why mother was having so many pies and doughnuts made, but later learned all about it."

Another whose reminiscences have aided me, especially in making it probable that 1854 was the year of the escape, is Mrs. Mary Catherine Mitchell (born Irwin), of Terra Cotta, Illinois. Her daughters, on going to the church to practice music, were frightened at unusual sounds proceeding from the belfry, and left the building.

The day following the arrival of the fugitives was Thursday, and the boat was due that afternoon. That day of anxiety passed, and Friday; and still, like Poe's ghouls, the unhappy fugitives were dwelling in the steeple. But on the last day of the week came the steamer Michigan, with her abolition captain. No pursuers had appeared, and so it was safe to lead the fugitives in open daylight to the river, where Mr. Frederick

³⁴ Under date of 1897, October 1st.

Lathrop rowed the father and his two children to the steamer. When the captain put them ashore at Sarnia, they fell upon the earth and kissed the land that made them free.

Another story of escape from slavery through Wisconsin is told by the widow of the late Deacon Russell Cheney, of Emerald Grove. The year of the occurrence is a matter of doubt. A son, Rev. Russell Lea Cheney, judging from his age and childish recollection, thinks it was about 1855 or 1856; the mother would put it in 1860 or 1861. But in the latter year there was no attempt at enforcing the fugitive slave law in Wisconsin. Here is Mrs. Cheney's narrative:³⁵

"As nearly as I can recollect, it was in the fall of '60 or '61, as we were seated at the supper table, there came to our door, near the close of a beautiful Sabbath day, a closely closed covered carriage, in which were seated a family of escaped slaves, consisting of a husband, wife and four children. They were brought by Mr. Leonard, a stanch anti-slavery man of Beloit, who said the slave hunter was closely on their track. He wished Russell Cheney of Emerald Grove to take charge of them. He immediately took them to Simeon Reynolds (who, if living, is in Wichita, Kansas). Starting as soon as possible, Mr. Reynolds drove rapidly to Racine, a distance of sixty miles, arriving there just in time to catch the outgoing steamer, before the arrival of the dreaded slave hunter. Soon after, Mr. R. received the glad news that they were safely landed on the soil of liberty and freedom.

"Have written from memory the facts as I remember them; the dates are gone entirely from memory."

Rev. R. L. Cheney writes: "I can remember the curiosity with which we went out and peeked into the carriage at the children. * * * Father conducted the party to Deacon Simeon Reynolds, who lived a few miles northeast of the [Emerald] Grove. He went with them to Racine or Kenosha,

³⁵ Her letter is dated at Janesville, 1897, October 6th.

I think it was Racine. Father recommended them to one of his friends, who called out, as Mr. Reynolds reported to him, 'Do you want any firearms?' But in my mind the event is present only in barest outline."

If there was any thought of firearms, it would tend to prove that the time was still one of danger to fugitive slaves and to any who might be found helping them.

"There were at least four agents of the Underground Railroad in Kenosha," writes Mr. Frank H. Lyman of that city. "They were Charles Durkee (afterwards member of Congress and United States senator), Reuben H. Deming, John B. Jilson and William H. Smith, all now dead."

From Beloit, Hon. S. T. Merrill, the last preceptor of Beloit Seminary, writes of three families that were helped to freedom, two of them by the late Dr. H. P. Strong, a son-in-law of Father Clary. As the fugitives remained in Beloit, it is probable that their escape dates only from the time of the war.

The story that has been told in these two papers might indeed end without confession of its incompleteness, for that is manifest. But mention should be made of some of those whose memory gave us a great part of our narrative, and upon whom death has put the seal of silence. John Myers died 1895, April 16th. So writes his pastor, Rev. C. A. Wight, of Platteville. The venerable Lemuel Goodell of Stockbridge was added to the silent majority in 1897, April 9th. "My good, esteemed friend, Mr. John Lewis, died last Sunday" [1897, October 24th], is the sad word in a letter received from Mrs. George H. Cox of Lancaster. And in the God's-acre of that little city there has been laid to its rest the body of Judge Mills, who died at the home of his son in Denver, Colorado, 1897, November 22nd.

For us it is well that these men told so much of a story that but for them might have been forgotten.

After the manuscript of the foregoing narrative had been made ready for the printer, a letter of exceeding interest was received from Almira Henshaw Daugherty (Mrs. J. W. Woodruff), of Avon Park, Florida. She tells us that Caroline was concealed in her father's house for two weeks, and that the hundred dollars with which the poor girl started from St. Louis was the gift of a grandmother who was a free woman.

Mrs. Woodruff pays a beautiful and deserved tribute to the memory of her father, whom she justly regards as one of those who impressed upon Wisconsin its strongly anti-slavery character. He was one of the choicest gifts of New England to the West. His fine sense of honor sacrificed his Massachusetts home to the payment of another's debts. When he was born (Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, 1770), his father was a subject of George III. Perhaps it would not do to say a loyal one, for he served in the Continental army from the beginning of the Revolutionary war until its close. The best part of his pay, apparently, was a land-warrant. He went to seek a "location," but dying, probably on his return, his friends saw his face no more. Nor did his family ever learn where the property was that he had secured. His son Samuel, that he might do all he could for himself, left home, with his mother's consent, before he was eleven years old, and went to live with a man who treated the boy almost as if he were a slave. Regard for his pledged word kept Samuel from that ready resource of a lively boy,—running away. Naturally, the young man came to sympathize deeply with those who were wronged, and this feeling was deepened during a time spent in Virginia, when "he first saw a slave auction of women and children, and separation of families. One dear babe was held by the auctioneer, the child's little leg in right hand and his plump, bare shoulder in the other, while the auctioneer shouted, 'How much is bid for this little nigger?' pinching and turning him the while. The baby's poor mother stood near, saying, 'Massa, let me buy him; I will get the

money! I will, for sure, make it nights,' the manager telling her to 'shut up.' All this so wrought upon Mr. Daugherty that he then and there resolved to fight this gigantic and cruel evil while life lasted. He said, the last day of his life, 'I think, perhaps, the Lord is going to let me live to see a Republican President.' But he died March 2nd, 1861, two days before the inauguration of President Lincoln." Surely Mrs. Woodruff has made us her debtors for the story of the life of such a man as Samuel Daugherty.

General Harrison Carroll Hobart, of Milwaukee, has interesting recollections of fugitives who sought shelter at Stockbridge. The man with the two children he probably befriended, though he does not say so, and his recollections of the matter are indistinct. But he distinctly remembers another man who came to Stantonville (now Calumet), put up a shanty, and lived there for a time. Thither came his master after him and the darkey fled to Stockbridge. The master followed him. Among the Indians then living at Stockbridge there is an admixture of Negro blood. The fugitive found friends among the Indians and others, who joined in telling the master that he would better leave the settlement. He did as they wished, and the darkey got off safe.

Another who came to Stantonville and lived for a time in the shanty built by the one who made his escape was not so fortunate. He went to Sheboygan, shipped there for Chicago, and there was taken and presumably sent South. At any rate, he was never seen again in the place where he once found shelter and freedom.

JOHN NELSON DAVIDSON.

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