

Harriet Tubman

A Courageous Hero

“An Autobiographical Adaptation”

Before the American Civil War [1861-1865], many Black slaves escaped from the South to the North and to Canada. Once they crossed that line into the North, they never went back. No way! Too dangerous! They would have been beaten or killed if they were caught. Besides, why would they want to go back? They left slavery and found freedom—there was no reason for them to go back!

That is, none of them ever went back except a few brave souls who went to find their families and bring them out. Fewer still went back for a second or third rescue mission. A very few went back many times, and almost all of them were caught or killed or jailed at sometime. But there was one who made 19 trips back to the South after her escape, brought out over 300 slaves during those 19 trips, was never caught, and never lost a single traveling companion: Harriet Tubman. (The South had over four million Negroes in those days. Less than 100,000 escaped.)

Harriet knew the dangers that she was facing when she went back—had she been caught, she would probably have been killed. Yet, to help her friends and family escape, she snuck back across the border into the South. What bravery or courage! Never again would Harriet be in the South, or be in slavery, or be hunted like an animal—so everyone said. They didn't know Harriet! She went back again to find and lead out more of her people. Each trip had tremendous dangers, but when Harriet faced danger, she trusted in God, and he never let her down. Desperately needy people were in the South, and she knew the route of the underground railroad; she knew the



Harriet Tubman
undated photo

contacts; she knew the danger points; she knew her job and knew it well! Harriet never lost a single passenger on her “underground railroad.” She once said, “I never let my train get off track or lost a single passenger!” There were a few who rescued more slaves than Harriet did, but there were hardly any who were never caught, or killed or imprisoned or lost passengers to the slave catchers. Probably Harriet Tubman was the only one.

In considering the bravery of this Black lady, it must be remembered that each trip was more dangerous than the last. After she had made only a few trips into the South, there were Wanted posters for her throughout the parts of Maryland where she grew up. Rewards for her capture went up to \$12,000 (back in days when top field hands were selling for \$1000)! Also it must be remembered that this lady never learned to read or write. When she saw the Wanted posters about herself, she sometimes had slaves with her who could read. They read the posters to her—and tore them up!

Was there ever a braver lady—or man? Was Harriet Tubman the epitome of courage? Only God can answer that question.

Harriet was not only Black, illiterate, but she also had a physical ailment that she suffered all of her life. While she was a teenager, she was hit in the head by a two-pound weight and knocked unconscious. After that, she suffered fainting spells several times a day because of the pressure in her brain, or every few days later in her life—fainting spells that sometimes lasted a few minutes, but sometimes several hours. Frequently she had fainting spells while she was leading slaves through extremely dangerous districts. Her traveling companions always watched over her body and waited for her. During those fainting spells, she sometimes had dreams in which she was shown danger points to avoid in her trip. These signs always proved true and she always clung to God as her helper.

During the election of 1860, William Seward was a leading contender for the presidential nomination, but pro-slavery forces attacked him for his friendship with Harriet Tubman. He lost the nomination to Lincoln.

Even after making 19 trips into the South, Harriet Tubman did not sit down and retire. She was over 40 years old when the Civil War started, but she became a scout, nurse, and spy for the Union Army—without pay or pension, and again, she worked under the most dangerous conditions possible—in the South where if she had ever been caught, she would surely have been put to death. She was never caught.

Let's let this Harriet Tubman tell her own story:

Harriet:

It is true that I made 19 trips into the tidewater region of Maryland where I was born and lived till my escape. But I had to do it. I hated slavery and wanted to bring out everyone I could. Something in me compelled me to go. I had to go. I couldn't sit in comfort and freedom while my own people were suffering. Besides, I knew the way, I knew the contacts, and I was very strong physically. I always did men's work outdoors. I hated house work—that was for “women.”

Though I had a hard life, I had a very interesting life. During my 19 escapes from Maryland, I saw many extremely interesting things and had many exciting escapades. I want to tell what I can of these; I'll start when I was a little child:

The plantation I was born in was owned by Edward Brodas near Bucktown in Dorchester County. That was about 1821. I had ten brothers and sisters.

There were slave revolts while I was a child, and the slave owners were paranoid. They tightened down restrictions and didn't even want us talking to each other, but word flew through the slave grapevine faster than through the mail and the newspapers. We knew all about Nat Turner and all of the other slave rebellions. Our masters wouldn't even allow us to sing songs about freedom, but we sang them all the time:

Go down, Moses
Way down in Egypt's land.
Tell old Pharaoh,
Let my people go.

My dad was a tree cutter, and he was the biggest and toughest and best. Master made him overseer over the other tree cutters. He was also a woodsman with a keen sense for survival. He could walk through the woods without making a sound, he could distinguish edible and non-edible plants in the woods, and plants that could be used for healing. He was able to forecast weather and when the first frost would come. He did this by noticing the arrival of the wild ducks, the thickness of the winter coat of muskrats and rabbits. Dad also taught me how to pick out the northern star—and told me that that was the direction that a person had to go to get to

the place where slaves were free. He taught me all of these things, but I did not know then that many years later I would need all of those survival skills to lead over 300 slaves to freedom. I now know that God, my heavenly father, had all of these things planned out, and was watching over me. I also learned to wield an ax just about as well as my dad. I did men's work and was stronger than most men.

My dad was also absolutely honest, and our master respected him for that. Years later, he had a chance to help some escaped slaves, but he did so with his eyes closed so that he could say to the master that he had not seen a single escaped slave. He did not tell a lie.

My mom also told a lot of stories, but they were mostly from the Bible—especially about how Moses led the Hebrew slaves to freedom and the Red Sea parted for them. Eventually most of the Southern states passed laws against Blacks learning to read and going to church. We did go to a slave church when I was a young girl. One Bible verse that I learned and thought a lot about was: *Hide the outcast, don't betray the one who is wandering*. I thought about this verse when I heard about a slave who ran away.

Starting when I was about six years old, I was hired out several times, and my masters made me do house work. I hated it and did not get along with them. At one place, I was fed table scraps just as dogs are. I slept in the kitchen next to the fireplace on cold nights. By morning I was so cold that I put my feet in the warm ashes to warm them up. One of my masters trapped muskrats. I was assigned to check the traps, and I liked that work. I was alone in the woods and I loved being alone in the woods.

One time my mistress tried to beat me for stealing a sugar cube. I ran away and the only place I could find refuge was in a pig pen. I fought the pigs for potato peelings and other scraps of food. I lived in the mud just like they did for about four days.

When I was ten years old, I was given the same work as full-grown men, and I did it just as well as most of them. It seems that I was being prepared for my future work which would require a very strong body.

I was about 15 years old when I received my injury. One day while we were husking corn, a slave ran away, the overseer ran after him, and I ran after them to see what would happen. It was during the chase that the overseer picked up a two-pound weight and threw it at the run-a-way slave. That weight hit me on the left temple, and knocked me out. I lost so much

blood that most were sure that I would die. I was unconscious for many days, and it was many months before I got well. That injury caused me to start having fainting spells every few days for the rest of my life. Sometimes I would be unconscious for a few minutes and sometimes for several hours. Sometimes while I was unconscious during the escapes, I had dreams that were a warning of danger and directions as to which path I should take. I am thankful for this guidance, but who can understand God's way. Did I have to suffer those fainting spells all of my life just to have that guidance? Again I say, who can understand God's way?

While I was recuperating, I prayed all of the time. I prayed about everything I did, about my work, while I was walking around. When I went to the horse-trough to wash my face, and took up the water in my hands, I said, "Oh, Lord, wash me, make me clean." When I took up the towel to wipe my face and hands, I cried, "Oh, Lord, for Jesus' sake, wipe away all my sins!"

Master Brodas had promised us that we would be freed in his will. During this long period of recuperation, I started praying for Master Edward Brodas. I prayed, "Change his heart, Lord, convert him." However, a few months later (while still recuperating), I heard that Master Brodas was planning to sell me and my brothers into the deep South. Then I changed my prayer: "Lord, if you're never going to change that man's heart, kill him. Lord, take him out of the way." I kept praying, "Kill him, Lord," because I knew I could not survive the long trip South. It was only a few days later that we heard that he was sick, and his doctor said that he would die! When I heard that he was dead, I knew that my prayers had killed him. My conscience struck me with horror and I fell on the floor too astonished to move. After that, I would have given anything to bring him back. I would have given the world full of silver and gold; and if I had to, I would have given myself to bring his poor soul back. However, we were not freed in his will.

About a year after my injury, I was back to working hard manual labor in the fields—with my dad and other men. I was able to wield an ax just like a man, and that was while I was still a teenage girl. While working in the woods with my dad, he taught me wood lore. I could name birds, learned which berries were good to eat and which were poisonous, where to look for water lilies, how to identify the hemlocks, the cranebill plant, and wild geranium. These things had medicinal value. We slaves used them

to heal all sorts of ailments, fevers and intestinal disorders. These things came natural to me. It seemed that my hands went right to the root or herb I was looking for before I actually saw it. At the time, I did not understand that someday I would use all of these skills to deliver over 300 people on 19 escape trips. It seems that my heavenly father had all of these things planned out though at the time I didn't know anything about it.

When I was 23 years old, I met John Tubman, fell in love with him, and married him. He was a free man. Often I talked to John about freedom and the possibility of escape, but John was not interested. He liked Maryland, the beautiful country, and mild climate. Gradually I began to feel that he didn't care about me. I was a slave and wanted to escape to freedom, but he wasn't interested in leaving Maryland. He even told me that if I tried to escape, he would tell master on me, and I would surely be caught and whipped—maybe sold into the deep South. I couldn't believe that my own husband would betray me; nevertheless, I really loved him and wanted to be with him.

Despite the disappointments in my marriage, God was still with me, and it was at this time in my life that I began feeling the divine presence with me all of the time. At this time in my life, I started having visions and more dreams. At times I heard heavenly music fill the air. Frequently I dreamed that I was flying over fields and streams till I got to a kind of fence that was the dividing line between free country and slave territory. At the fence, I did not think I had the ability to cross it, but when I tried, I went right over. On the other side, ladies in white dresses met me and welcomed me. At the time I did not understand the dream.

After John and I had lived together for five years, conditions started becoming worse. The master was having financial problems, and many slaves were being sold. One day I was working in a field when a white lady came by, stopped and talked to me. After asking my name and how I got the scare on my head, she said, "If you ever need any help, let me know." During the next few weeks, I saw her several times, and she always said, "If you ever need any help, let me know."

I also had nightmares of horsemen coming in the night and taking me away. But the dream about flying across a line into freedom kept coming back to me. I knew that if I did nothing, I would be sold South (the horsemen). If I made my escape, I would make it into free territory and I would be taken care of. I knew that I couldn't do nothing, I would have to

act soon—make my escape.

My father had visionary powers. He predicted the Mexican War before it started. I believe that I inherited his visionary powers. Frequently I heard voices in visions saying to me, “Come, Arise. Flee for your life.” Many times I heard God's voice speaking plainly and directly to me. He always addressed me by my childhood name: Araminta. When I was a young child, folks called me Minta for short. My name was changed to Harriet later, but when I heard God's voice, he never used that name. He always called me Araminta.

When I knew that my own sale was only days away, I knew I had to do something, and I had to do it without John knowing anything. I had to move quickly and shrewdly. I wanted to tell my friends and family about my plans, but I knew that would be dangerous. I did what many slaves did, I sang my plans:

When that ol' chariot comes,
I'm going to leave you,
I'm bound for the promised land,
Friends, I'm going to leave you.

I'm sorry I'm going to leave you,
Farewell, oh farewell;
But I'll meet you in the morning.
Farewell, oh farewell.

I'll meet you in the morning.
I'm bound for the promised land.
On that other side of Jordan,
Bound for the promised land.

I'm sure that everyone understood that “the promised land” was the North, and “Jordan” was the Mason-Dixon line. And I'm sure some of family and friends understood what I was trying to tell them. But when the master asked my parents if they heard me say anything about escaping, they could honestly say No.

One night when John was asleep, three of my brothers and I left, but we had not gone more than an hour when they got scared. We went back.

It was two days later that we heard that a slave trader was in town and I knew I would have to go alone—that night. I prayed, “Lord, I'm going to hold on steady to you, and you're going to see me through.” Again, when John was asleep, I got some food and left. I went straight to the home of the white lady that offered me help. It was about two miles. She invited me in, sat down, wrote two names on a piece of paper, handed it to me, and gave me directions how to find them. She said, “They will help you and give you directions to your next stop.” This was my first time on the underground railroad. I always thought that the underground railroad was a railroad that ran underground. Now I found out what the underground railroad was, and I was a passenger on the train!

Yes, I did find the first station on the underground railroad. A farmer and his wife took me in, fed me, and hid me. I slept all day and at night, he took me to the next station. When the farmer let me out, he gave me more directions. During the next few days I slept on the ground outdoors, I was rowed up a river by a man I had never seen before, I hid in a haycock, spent a week hiding in a potato hole belonging to some free Negroes, was hidden in an attic belonging to some Quakers, and was harbored by some German farmers.

While walking alone through the woods at night, I sensed the presence of a pillar of fire guiding me—that is, God was using a pillar of fire to guide me. In the daytime, I sensed a pillar of cloud. I was conscious that God was with me. His presence developed an uncanny sense for danger around me. I learned to trust God more and more for everything and not depend on my own ability.

I arrived in Pennsylvania at sunrise. It was a new day and it was a new day in my life. I had traveled 90 miles from home. I was free! I felt that I was in heaven. I looked at my hands to see if I were still the same person now that I was free. There was such a *glory* on everything! As the sun came like gold through the trees and over the fields, I felt that I was in heaven. That was 1849. I was about 28 years old.

But it wasn't long before the reality of my situation hit me. I may have been free, but there I was in a strange land with no money, no friends, no job, no home, and my clothes were ragged, torn, and dirty. Also, the ladies in white dresses that I saw in my dream, were not there to welcome me with open arms. Neither could I be happy knowing that all of my friends and family were still under the master's whip.

I made my way to Philadelphia and found a job. It was astonishing to me to be able to find a job, and to quit my job anytime I wanted to, and to go find another one—and keep all of the money I made. I immediately started saving money and planning a trip back to rescue some of my own people.

In Philadelphia I found that there were people who helped escaped slaves. They were called Vigilance Committee. A Quaker was the president and a Negro was the secretary. I went there many times and got encouragement and advice. I also met escapees there from Maryland and got some third-hand information about my parents.

—*First Journey*—

The next year (1850) I was in the office of the Vigilance Committee one day when someone brought a message from a Negro couple in Maryland who wanted to escape. We were told the man's name is John Bowley from Cambridge, Maryland. “John Bowley!” I exclaimed, “Why that's my brother-in-law!” So it was that my first assignment on the Underground Railroad was to lead my own sister, her husband, and their two babies to freedom. The committee didn't want me to go, because I was wanted as a fugitive. They wanted a white person or a free Negro to go, but I insisted, and they relented.

The same day that we received the message, John's wife and two children were placed on the auction block—nobody bought them! John used some forged legal papers to persuade a guard at a holding pen to release her while the auctioneer was gone to lunch. A Quaker took them to Baltimore and I met them there. How surprised they were to see me! (I was expecting them, but they were not expecting me.) Through several stations along the Underground Railroad, I got them to Philadelphia.

It was about that time that the Fugitive Slave Law was passed. Of course that was some concern to us, but very few fugitives in the North were ever caught and returned to the South.

—*Second Journey*—

Though it was doubly dangerous now that the Fugitive Slave Law had been passed, I went back in the spring of 1851 and got my brother John and a couple of other men and brought them to Philadelphia.

—*Third Journey*—

After working all summer in a hotel in Cape May, New Jersey, the next fall I went back to Dorchester County, Maryland with only one purpose: to get my husband, John Tubman, to come North. I knew that he did not want to come North; my intention was to go South and persuade him to come with me. I was then about 30 years old, and we had been apart for two years. I really missed him, I really loved my husband.

When I arrived back at the plantation, I waited till late at night to go meet him face to face. When I knocked on his cabin door, I had one of the biggest heartbreaks of my life. John had married another lady. He showed no love or concern for me. I only got a glimpse of his wife, but I noticed that she was younger and much prettier than me. I said, “I came back for you, John,” but when I did, they both laughed at me. Thinking of the tremendous sacrifice that I had made just to be with him, I was overwhelmed with grief. But I determined to remain strong and refused to allow heartache or grief to keep me down.

When I remembered John's previous threat to betray me, I left hurriedly. I found ten slaves who wanted to go North, and we left immediately for Philadelphia.

At that time, I came to understand that because of the Fugitive Slave Law, from then on I would have to take my passengers to Canada.

—*Fourth Journey*—

December 1851 I was back in Dorchester County. When I presented myself to the slaves, they spread the word that “Moses is here.” They had heard about Moses setting a slave nation free, and some considered me another Moses.

This time there were 11 slaves who went with me—including my brother James and his wife. I knew that a lot of responsibility rested on me and how dangerous this trip would be, but I was determined to get as many slaves out to freedom as possible. Also, I would have to take them all the way to Canada, and I had never been there.

We had to walk three days to reach the first station on the Underground Railroad. We were afraid, tired, and hungry, but I kept them going by telling them that they would be welcome and fed at this home

owned by a man named Sanderson. When we got there, I knocked on the door and a white man came to the door and said, "It's not safe here. This place was searched last week."

When I asked him where Mr. Sanderson was, he said, "He was forced to leave for 'harboring niggers,'" and he slammed the door in my face. Going back to my band of refugees, I had to boost their morale—though I too was discouraged—as well as find directions and food. Also, I knew that he might report us to the authorities, and I had to move quickly. Then I remembered a spot outside of town where there was an island in a swamp. I decided to hide my band of refugees there and pray for help. I waded through the swamp with two babies in bags on either side of my body and ordered the whole band to follow me and lie down in the tall, wet grass. We were all cold, wet, sleepy, hungry, and getting desperate, and we dared not start a fire.

I did the only thing I knew to do. I went apart from the rest of the group and prayed for help. I prayed a long time—it may have been several hours. About sunset, God heard my prayer, and as we watched, we saw a Quaker walk by on the other side of the swamp. He was talking loudly, as if he were talking to himself, saying, "My wagon stands in the barnyard of the next farm across the way. The horse is in the stable; the harness hangs on a nail." I waited till dark, and we started out to look for the wagon, horse, and harness. We found them and we found the wagon stocked with food. Once again our heavenly father had heard our prayer, supplied our need, and took care of us.

We got to the next home that night and were welcomed by a German couple—all eleven of us. We were all fed and we all slept in a warm home that day. It was hard to leave, but leave we must. After walking two more nights, we were again hungry. My passengers were slowing down. I was afraid some would mutiny. Again I started talking about the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, but they looked at me suspiciously.

Finally one cried out, "Let me go back. It is better to be a slave than to suffer like this in order to be free." He turned around, started walking back, and said, "I'm going back." I knew the time had come to take action. I reached into my knap sack and pulled out a gun and said, "Go on with us or die!" I explained to everyone why we had to keep going. If one went back, the slave owners would force him to betray each of the station owners along the way who helped us. It would make it almost impossible for any

slave in the future to escape using that route. I said to them, "These people have risked their lives to help us. Can I allow anyone to go back and betray them? We will all be free, or we will all die." We all went on together.

Would I really have shot anybody? Yes, I certainly would have. I reasoned it would be better to lose one, than to endanger many. However, I hated violence, and it would not have been an easy decision, but I never had to make that decision.

On this trip I also had one of my fainting spells in the woods. All of the fugitives sat around me and watched over my body and waited for me. Nobody stole my gun and nobody went back. They all came to understand what we all had to be free or we all had to die!

Finally we all reached Thomas Garrett's house in Wilmington, Delaware. Just as I promised them, Tom Garrett gave them all new shoes. In a few days we were in Philadelphia where William Still recorded the names of every slave who escaped. He also gave us money and sent us on our way to Canada. We were of course much safer in the North. The hardest part of the journey was over.

However, the further North we went, the colder it got. In Rochester, we stayed with Frederick Douglas, an escaped slave who got an education, wrote several books, and later became a foreign ambassador. He collected enough money to get us to Canada.

We arrived at St. Catharines in Canada at the end of December, 1851—about one month after we left Maryland. It was terribly cold in Canada. None of us were used to such cold weather, and we suffered terribly that winter—but no one wanted to go back to Maryland.

In St. Catharines, I found a house and many of the men got work cutting trees. Also, I was astonished to find in St. Catharines that Black men voted and sat on juries. Some of them were elected to positions on the city council and the school board. Most of them had nice homes and sent their children to schools. I was astonished. I had never known Black people who lived like that. St. Catharines became my home.

—*Fifth Journey*—

The next spring (1852), I went back to Cape May, New Jersey and worked and saved enough money to go back to Maryland the next fall. I had nine passengers in my train that time, and I took them all the way to St. Catharines in Canada.

—*Sixth Journey*—

The next fall (1854) I began feeling uneasy about my three brothers in Maryland. I kept having dreams about them being sold and taken to the South in chains. I sent a cryptic message to them through a free Negro, and they were waiting for me when I arrived on December 23. We planned to leave the next night. On each of my trips, I left on a Saturday night, the reason being that I knew that the slave owners would get some Wanted posters printed up as soon as they realized that their slaves were gone—only they couldn't get any posters on Sunday!

One of my brother's wife gave birth to their baby just as we were about to leave. I'm sure it was the most difficult decision of his life, but my brother decided to leave and not tell his wife where he was going. But she could tell from his actions. "Oh, John, you're going to leave me. I know it. But wherever you go, don't forget me and the children." Then he decided it best to tell her and he said, "I'll send 'Moses' back for you next year." Another brother took his fiancée with him. They planned to be married when they got to Canada. We also had two others with us—six in all. The couple who were engaged, were so happy together that I had strong feelings of envy when I looked at them—remembering my own failed marriage. I avoided looking at them.

However, it rained so hard that we postponed our departure for one day. That night we stayed in a fodder house within sight of my parents' cabin. I knew better than to let them know that I was there, mom was too emotional. However, we decided to let my dad know. We sent a message to him without letting mom know. He brought us food, but he refused to look at us. Because my dad was such an honest man, he did not want to lie. He knew that the very next day, his master would question him if he had seen us. He wanted to be able to say honestly, "I haven't seen a one of my children this Christmas,"—and that's why he kept his eyes shut or tied a bandanna around them. However, I slipped down to my parent's cabin and took a peek at my mother. She never knew it.

We were in Wilmington in only one week. I sent them on to Canada by themselves.

—*Later Journeys*—

It was about that time that I started the routine of going South twice a year: once in the spring and once in the fall. I did this for the next six years. One spring I made two trips to Maryland.

In November of 1856, I rescued Joe Bailey. Joe and several others were with me on the road when I had one of my fainting spells. Everyone sat beside me and waited patiently until I woke up. I don't know how long I was unconscious, but I was warned in a dream that we were in danger. I was directed in the dream to cut across the woods and wade across a river. When we got close to the river, some of my passengers looked at me like I was crazy and asked, "Are you going to wade that?" and "Have you ever crossed it before?" I told them that the Lord showed me this river in a dream and that we would be safe on the other side. Besides, bloodhounds cannot follow our trail across a river.

One man said, "I'll wade no freezing river for no crazy woman," and he started back.

Once again I pulled out my gun and said, "Stand still. You try to go back, try to run, and you'll never run again. You go with me or you die." I didn't like it. I didn't like the threat of violence one bit. I felt desperate, unsure, and afraid, but my dreams or visions had never failed me. We went on.

At the water's edge, I stepped right in that icy water and started wading. Only Joe followed me. I was no Moses. The waters did not part for me as it did for Moses and the Hebrew at the Red Sea. At the deepest part, the water got up to my chin and I held the gun out of the water. When the others saw that I made it, they too entered the icy waters and waded across. I went on only because I trusted God. I had asked him for directions, and he directed me to go this way. I knew we would make it. I never went without his consent or approbation. It was cold and we were all shivering in our wet clothes. However, I had been shown in a dream that I must do this, and I believed that the dream was from God.

On the other side of the river, we went through some more woods and in an open field, I saw the same cabin I had seen in my dream. I knew we would be safe there. Some free Negroes lived there and they took us in and dried our clothes in front of an open fire. After a good night's sleep, our host showed us a long route around the river. We did not have to wade across.

When we got back to the road, we saw a Wanted poster with the names of three of my passengers: Josiah and William Bailey, and Peter Pennington. The poster had a good description of all three men. That was the very spot there I had fainted and had the dream that saved all of us from a life of slavery, chains, and beatings. God was on our side. There were a few times that I paid people to follow the men who put up Wanted posters, and tear them down.

I “smelled” danger all around and we hurried on stealthily. When we got to Wilmington, I hid the slaves in the woods and snuck up close to the bridge that would take us to freedom. I saw two more Wanted posters, and, at great danger to myself, tore them down. I took them back and showed them to Joe who could read. One was for Joe, but his reward was increased to \$2000. The other one was for me. My reward was for \$12,000. It said: Her name is Harriet Tubman, sometimes she is called Moses.

My friend Garritt on the other side of the bridge knew about the posters, and sent a man to look for us. When I saw him, I signaled him and we held a conference in the tall grass by the road. He reported back to Garritt and within two hours returned with a message.

I led the fugitives to a wagon that Garritt had provided. The drivers pretended to be brick merchants, and we lay in the bottom of the wagon. A board was placed on top of us, and bricks on top of the boards. On the bridge, an officer stopped them and asked the driver if he had seen any run-a-way slaves. “No,” he answered, “But with the kind of reward they are offering, I going out hunting for them right after supper.” We went to Tom Garritt's house in Wilmington who welcomed us with open arms. Garritt sent us to William Still in Philadelphia who sent us to the Anti-Slavery Society in New York, who put us on a train to Canada. We were hidden in a baggage car. When we crossed the line into Canada, what a shout went up from all of us!

—Bring Mom and Dad Out—

In June of 1857, I was again working in Cape May, New Jersey. I kept having dreams about my parents—they were about to be sold. I knew I would have to do something, but I didn't know what to do. They were so old that they couldn't possibly walk the great distances we had to walk. I had taken babies with me and carried them almost as fast as the groups that I

took without babies, but old people? In my dreams there was an urgency. I knew I had to hurry. I did not know how I would get them out, but I knew that my heavenly father would help me once again as he had done so many times. I rode south on a train—assuming that no one would suspect a run-a-way slave to be going south. When I got to Bucktown, Maryland, my hometown, I knew that plenty of people would recognize me. I disguised myself as an old woman, hunched over, and bought two chickens tied to a string. I walked down the street making all of the actions and noises of a crazy old woman, the chickens fluttering and squawking.

My former master came along and I plainly recognized him. Immediately I loosed the chickens and started chasing them down the street making some high-pitched quavering, screeching sounds. The master watched me chasing the chickens and shouted, “Go for it, granny. I'll bet on the chickens, but go for it anyway, Granny!” He laughed and went on his way. How many times would he have kicked himself if he had known who he had let slip out of his fingers!

When I got to my parents' cabin, my dad was up at the big house being questioned about the time he brought food to us at in the barn. Of course he said that he did not see us, and of course he did not because it was dark, or because his eyes were closed, and part of the time he covered his eyes with a bandanna. I knew that I had to get them away from there that night.

When he came home, I asked dad where we could get a horse, and he told me about an old one that had already been put out to pasture—it was about a mile away. I told my parents to get ready and I would be right back with the horse. Also I “borrowed” or “expropriated” a wagon and harness from our master. A Black man saw me, but apparently he did not tell on me.

Traveling nights and sleeping days, we got to Tom Garritt's place in three days. The rest of the trip was relatively easy. Because it was so cold in Canada, and because my parents were so old, we decided to settle in New York. We were fairly safe in New York state. I bought a small house from William H. Seward, then U.S. Senator, later a part of President Lincoln's cabinet. The house had a large mortgage on it.

Not long after that, I was staying in the home of a Reverend Henry H. Garnet in New York City when I had a vision of the emancipation of my people. When I woke up, I was surprised to find myself singing, “My people are free! My people are free!”

—*Next Journey*—

In the fall of that same year, 1857, I was back in Maryland and this time I brought out the largest group of fugitives that I ever brought out: I had sixty fugitives with me. Also that same year, a donation came to me from Scotland: a five-pound British note sent to the Quaker Tom Garritt to hold for me.

—*John Brown*—

Also, I want you to recruit a small army among the Blacks in Canada for this enterprise.

Harriet, I'm planning to establish a stronghold in the mountains of Virginia and free the slaves on a large scale. We will start a slave rebellion, and when we do, the slaves will flock to me. I will arm them and we will free many more.

I need information about the route that you followed on the way North from Maryland, to know where the hiding places are that you used in the swamps, in the forests, and all the secrets that you learned in all of your trips during the last eight years.

Not long after that, I was gathering fire-wood in the woods when I saw a man approaching me. When he was close enough so that I could see his face, I drew in my breath—it was the face of the old man in my dreams—the same white beard, the piercing gray-blue eyes. Then I found out that this was John Brown, and he had come a long way just to meet me and talk with me. This is what he said:

Reverend Garnet admonished me, “Oh Harriet, you've come to torment us before the time.” He said, “My grandchildren might see emancipation, but I never will.” I told him that we would see emancipation and see it soon

That winter I had a recurring dream that was very disturbing. Night after night I saw a wilderness area full of rocks and bushes. Slowly the head of a snake appeared on the rocks, and the face turned into the face of an old man with a long white beard and piercing eyes. He looked like he wanted to speak to me. Then two other heads appeared beside his. They were smaller and younger. Suddenly, a crowd of men came swarming over the rocks and

struck down the heads of the two young men and then the head of the old man. All this time he kept looking at me as though he wanted to say something to me and couldn't.

In the fall of that same year, 1857, I was back in Maryland and this time I brought out the largest group of fugitives that I ever brought out: I had sixty fugitives with me. Also that same year, a donation came to me from Scotland: a five-pound British note sent to the Quaker Tom Garritt to hold for me.

As he spoke, I remembered Nat Turner's rebellion and I cringed at the thought of bloodshed. I understood that John Brown worshiped a God of wrath or vengeance. I worshiped a God of infinite mercy and gentleness.

Yet his sincerity made a deep impression on me. He was so earnest. He shared my hatred for slavery and my belief that freedom was a right all men should enjoy. I told him that I would help him, and even suggested a date for the beginning of his actions: July 4th—but all the time, I felt a hesitancy in me.

I returned to St. Catharines and waited, but I never heard from John Brown again.

—*The Anti-Slavery Rallies*—

The next winter I was invited to speak at an anti-slavery rally in Boston. I became quite well known as an anti-slavery speaker, and received many more invitations. I spent most of the winter traveling across the North making anti-slavery speeches. I became acquainted with many distinguished citizens and political leaders.

Many people helped me and gave me money in those days. Sometimes, people in England heard about me and sent me money. There were times that God directed me to go and ask certain abolitionists for money to pay for one of my trips. When God directed me, I boldly went to them, told them how much I needed, and refused to take No for an answer. The ones I asked always gave me, but sometimes they were a little hesitant.

On October 17, 1859, I was at a meeting when suddenly I felt a fluttering in my heart. I told my hostess, “Something is dreadfully wrong, I do not know what!” Then I knew and continued talking to my hostess, “It was Captain Brown. Something is happening to him. Something dreadful has happened to him.”

The next day, the newspapers had the details: John Brown and his “army” had attacked the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Ten of Brown's men had been killed including two of his sons.” Brown had been taken prisoner. When I heard that two of his sons had been killed, I remembered my dreams, how the two younger men with the old man had been killed first—then the old man. Brown was tried a week later and sentenced to be hanged a month later. I wept for Captain John Brown.

—Charles Nalle—

On April 27, 1860, I was in Troy, New York. One day while walking down the street, I saw a rather large crowd making a lot of noise. I got close, started asking questions, and learned that a run-a-way slave had been captured. The officials wanted to return him to the South, but many in the crowd were demanding that he be freed. When I got close enough to see his face, a fury rose up in me—fury against a system that would send a man back into slavery when they themselves were free. I knew I had to act. I forced my way through the crowd and stood right next to Nalle. I saw a young boy standing close by and grabbed him by the collar and shouted into his ear, “Run out to the edge of the crowd and shout “FIRE, FIRE,” as loud as you can.

After I waited a few minutes for him to get to the edge of the crowd, I jumped up, shouted, “DON'T LET THEM TAKE HIM, DON'T LET THEM TAKE HIM,” pushed a policeman down, grabbed Nalle, pulled him through the crowd shouting, “MAKE WAY, MAKE WAY.” Though we were beaten with police batons and our clothes torn, enough people in the crowd held back the police so that I could get Nalle into a boat and across the river. All this time Nalle was manacled [hand-cuffed]. On the other side of the river, the officials seized Nalle again, but the crowd once again rescued him from the third story of a building. When I got him to the street, I saw a man coming by in a wagon. He stopped and asked, “What's going on here?” I explained the situation, and he said, “Here, take my wagon and horse, and I don't care if I ever get them back, just so he gets away.” He got away, but I had to go into hiding for a few days—for I too was a fugitive just like Nalle.

After that I went back to the lecture circuit.

—The Final Journey—

In November 1860, after Lincoln's election, I was back in Maryland looking for my sister, but I found out that she was already dead. I brought out a married couple with three children, one only three months old. Also, one or two others joined us—one a run-a-way slave who joined us in Wilmington.

—With the Army—

I was in Massachusetts when the first contingent of soldiers were sent by the governor to fight in the South. Governor Andrew also sent me to the army in South Carolina. I worked as a nurse, spy, and scout.

In the hospital I used some of the herbal medicinal knowledge that my father had taught me. Many people were dying of dysentery. I went out in the wood looking for water lily and crane's bill. I boiled the roots and leaves and made a dark tea that I gave to the men who were suffering from dysentery. Slowly they got better.

I was allowed to draw rations or pay while in the army, but the other Negroes were jealous of me so I gave up my rations. To support myself, I baked pies at night and got one of the Negroes to sell them during the day.

In those days I saw a sight that overwhelmed me: I saw a whole regiment of Negro soldiers, 1000 of them, men who had escaped from South Carolina, marching in unison—and wearing the Northern Uniforms. I was so thrilled that I thought I was ready to leave this world. They were so happy that at night I could hear them singing, clapping, and beating drums.

About a month later I went with Colonel Montgomery on a boat expedition up the Combahee River. When the slaves working in the rice fields saw us, they ran to join us. They came with nothing but rags on. Women came with naked babies and even pigs. We took on 750 slaves on the boat. Colonel Montgomery asked me to sing to them. By the time I finished my song, hundreds of the Negroes were singing with me. A few days later, a Boston newspaper had a front page article about this raid. Editor Franklin Sanborn of the *Boston Commonwealth* wrote:

Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 Black soldiers, under the guidance of a Black woman, dashed into the enemy's country, struck a bold and effective blow ...and brought off near 800 slaves...

Since the rebellion, she [meaning me] has devoted herself to her great work of delivering the bondman with an energy and sagacity that cannot be exceeded. Many and many times she has penetrated the enemy's lines and discovered their situation and condition, and escaped without injury, but not without extreme hazard...

Another article appeared in the *New York Herald*:

Colonel Montgomery and his gallant band of three hundred Black soldiers, under the guidance of a Black woman, dashed into the enemy's country, struck a bold and effective blow... [About the celebration in Beaufort, he wrote:] ...the Colonel was followed by a speech from the Black woman, who led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted.

Someone said, "This was probably the only military engagement in American history led by a woman. She certainly gained the respect of the Union officers, who gave her the title *General* and never failed to tip their caps when meeting her."

In 1863 I was asked to organize a scouting party. I picked seven former slaves who knew the area and the location of food storage and ammunition dumps. Also, I recruited two Black river pilots who knew that area. In effect, I was in charge of an intelligence service under the directions and orders of several generals and the secretary of war, Edwin Stanton. We surveyed the countryside in preparation for a series of raids led by Higginson and Montgomery. General Saxton wrote Secretary Stanton on March 6:

I have reliable information that there are large numbers of able-bodied Negroes in that vicinity who are watching for an opportunity to join us.

The "reliable information" that he mentioned was the information that our scouting party had gathered. I could hardly believe that I, a Negro woman, was having such an influence on some of our governments top officials.

—*Later Years*—

In the spring of 1864, after spending two years with Colonel Montgomery, I went back to Auburn, New York, to rest, to visit with my parents.

In 1867, I heard that my husband, John Tubman, had been murdered.

In 1868, one of the ladies in Auburn, New York, Sarah Bradford, offered to write an account of my life. She also offered to let me have the profits that the book would earn. It was published the next year. I received \$1200 from the sale of the book and paid off the mortgage on my house to Senator Seward. My parents did not live long enough to enjoy the privilege of living in a house that was paid for.

Later that year (1869) I met Nelson Davis, a handsome young Negro. I fell in love with him and we were married later that year. I was almost 50 and he was still in his twenties. However, though he was young and handsome, Nelson had tuberculosis and he lived only 14 more years. He was a veteran, and I got a widow's pension for his service in the war—about \$20 a month. I did not get anything for my services in the army.

In 1886, Sarah Bradford came to me again and offered to write another book, and let me have the profits of the sale. In 1888, my second husband died. I was about 65 years old then. I spent the rest of my life in that little house in Auburn, New York. I supported myself by selling vegetables from door to door, but I spent most of my time talking to anybody that would listen about my past life.

In 1897, I was invited to a birthday party for Victoria, Queen of England. What an honor for a lady who once spent four days living in a pig pen and fought with pigs for scraps of food to eat. I did not go.

Finally I knew the end of my life was near. I turned my house over to a Negro church in Auburn with the instructions that it would be used to house the sick, poor, and homeless. However, it was not long after I turned the house over to the church, that the church started charging people to live there. The whole purpose was defeated, but I was not able to do anything.

Now I am about 90 years old as I dictate this story to my friend, for I still cannot read or write. I know I will be leaving this world soon, and I have the assurance that I will be going to another world that is infinitely better. To all my friends and readers, I say, may God's peace and blessings be with you, and I am looking forward to seeing you in that other place!

A Final Word

The above story is an autobiographical adaptation of a few of the facts that are known about the life of Harriet Tubman. Having read Harriet Tubman's story several times, I am astonished at the courage or bravery of this lady. Is it possible that she is the bravest or most courageous lady that ever lived? Only God can answer that question. Also it is thrilling to read how God prepared her and raised her up to be such a leader—even leading strong men.

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*You gotta read about the bravest
woman on the face of the Land
or, at lease in my opinion she was.
So brave was Harriet that
she led about 10 groups of slaves
to the local gentry*