

# *Canada's Part in Freeing the Slave*

**Fred Landon**

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# Canada's Part in Freeing the Slave.

By Fred Landon

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Historians of the anti-slavery movement in the United States have, for the most part overlooked the very great measure of assistance that came to that cause from the geographical location of the free British provinces to the north and from the attitude of mind of the people of those provinces with regard to the blacks escaping out of bondage. To those in this country who lived during the years immediately preceding the Civil War, or who since that period have had anything to do with older coloured people, the term "Underground Railroad" is not the mysterious term that it is to a younger generation. When Prof. Siebert, of Ohio State University, one of the eminent historians of the United States, can make the statement that "the underground railroad was one of the greatest forces which brought on the Civil War and destroyed slavery," we on this side of the border may properly add that during a large part of the period of its activity Canada was practically essential to the success of the underground system.

Though slavery was legal in all the thirteen original states of the union at some time or another, it was natural that in the group of northern states it should die out quickly. It was excluded by Congress from the old northwest territory by the ordinance of 1787, thus creating a group of states around the Great Lakes that were never to know slavery. By 1820 the republic had been divided by a more or less irregular geographical line, north of which were the free states and south of it the slave states. It was in that year that the first state was created west of the Mississippi River, Missouri, and though lying as far north as southern Illinois, free, it came in as a slave state. From that time until the end of the Civil War one of the great issues in the nation's politics was control of the new west, should it be free or slave. Prior to 1830 or 1835 there had been many in the south to whom the evils of slavery were something to be rid of and abolition societies actually existed in the south before they did in the north. But from 1830 on there came a new teaching in the south, the doctrine that slavery is a positive good, ordained of God, for the benefit of the black race. Economic conditions were changed, too, by the spread of cotton growing. The old domestic slavery, bad though it might be,

was a mild evil compared with the conditions that came when huge cotton plantations demanded vast hordes of slaves and there grew up the domestic slave trade. Virginia, the mother of Presidents, became a vast breeding ground and her aristocratic families made fortunes in the selling of men, women and children to the far southern plantations.

From the very earliest days slave owners had experienced severe losses by their slaves running away. As early as the first half of the seventeenth century there are found laws and regulations for the return from one colony to another of fugitives. In the Federal constitution adopted at Philadelphia in 1787 there is a clause which reads:—

“No person held to service or labour in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labour, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service of labour may be due.”

The first federal law providing for the return of a runaway slave was passed in 1793. The law was none too effective from the southern standpoint was amended at various times until the passage of the famous Fugitive Recovery Bill of 1850 which proved a powerful influence in creating anti-slavery sentiment in the north. Under this act the question of ownership was determined by the simple affidavit of the person claiming the slave. The testimony of the slave himself was not to be received. There were heavy penalties for harbouring or interfering with the arrest of a runaway. Federal commissioners were paid ten dollars for every slave returned and only five dollars if the fugitive was discharged. Thus a direct premium was paid to convict fugitives. But the clause that particularly irritated the north was that which declared that the federal commissioners might call “all good citizens” to aid and assist in the execution of the law. It was at once pointed out that this made every northern citizen liable to be a slave-catcher. Added were such other injustices as denying jury trial, resting liberty on *ex-parte* evidence, making *habeas corpus* ineffective and offering a bribe to the federal commissioner to return the fugitive to slavery.

“The passage of the new law,” says one writer, “probably increased the number of anti-slavery people more than anything else that had occurred during the whole agitation.”

The period from 1850 to 1861 is filled with incidents arising out of this fugitive slave law. The most famous probably is the case of Anthony Burns,

who was arrested in Boston on May 24, 1854. Boston blazed with indignation and a riot broke out in which blood was shed. On the 2nd of June Burns was formally remanded to slavery. The authorities felt it necessary to line the streets with troops and place cannon in the squares on the day that Burns was taken from jail to the boat that was to carry him south. Fifty thousand people standing with bared heads watched the grim military procession pass. Business houses for blocks were draped with black cloth and at one prominent corner a coffin hung suspended over the street. It is not to be wondered at that the *Richmond Examiner* commented: "A few more such victories and the south is undone."

The later life of Burns has a Canadian interest. His stay in the south was brief, money being subscribed to purchase his freedom and provide him an education. He became a clergyman, came to Canada and lived for many years at St. Catharines as a missionary among his own people.

Canada had known slavery at an earlier date but had long since cleared herself of the blot. The French introduced slavery into Canada in an effort to meet the ever prevalent shortage of labour. It existed all through the Old Regime and was not changed by the passing of the country into the hands of the English. Indeed it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that slavery disappeared, though at no time and in no locality was it ever existent on a large scale. The early disappearance of slavery in Canada had the effect of creating an anti-slavery sentiment at an early date. In 1829, when the Negroes of Cincinnati were threatened with ruin by the enforcement of the Black Laws, they sent a deputation to York to interview the governor, Sir John Colborne, and find out if they would be allowed to take refuge in Canada. "Tell the republicans on your side of the line" replied the governor "that we royalists do not know men by their colour. Should you come to us you will be entitled to all the privileges of the rest of His Majesty's subjects."<sup>[1]</sup> This position was taken by all of the later governors and on the very eve of the Civil War Sir Edmond Walker Head declared that "Canada could still afford homes to the fugitives."<sup>[2]</sup>

From a very early period there had been those in the northern free states who felt it their duty to give aid and comfort to the blacks making their way north. This was particularly true of the Quakers who at all times were friends of freedom. Gradually there grew up a strangely organized system of aiding the fugitives and to this was given the name of the Underground Railroad. As the slave owners remarked, the slave disappeared at some point in the south and reappeared only in Canada as if he had gone through a long tunnel. The underground is the most romantic highway this new world has

known. It followed certain definite routes that have been charted by Prof. Siebert, and the small army of people that were engaged in its operations formed a sort of freemasonry of freedom that brings them the tribute of all who love liberty and hate oppression. A railroad “jargon” grew up. The places where fugitives making their way north could obtain temporary shelter, food and clothing were known as the “stations.” Those living there and aiding the runaways were “station agents.” More daring individuals travelling with the runaways and guiding them to freedom were “conductors,” while in Canada, ready to receive the newcomers were “freight agents.” A code for messages was used. An innocent telegram, stating that two cases of hardware were being forwarded, meant to the recipient that two slave men were on the way, while reference to cases of dry goods referred to women. Sometimes these phrases had very special meaning, for there are instances where men and women were actually boxed up and shipped in freight cars to the north.<sup>[3]</sup>

With a Fugitive Slave Law that made freedom impossible even in Boston there was danger for the fugitive after 1850 except in Canada. From 1850 to 1860, therefore, the negro immigration that had been a trickling stream ever since the war of 1812 became a regular torrent and thousands of coloured people crossed the border every year. Prof. Siebert has charted the main routes by which the fugitives made their way to Canada and his map shows most clearly the important influence which the free British provinces exerted upon slavery through their geographical location. Along the northern boundaries of the states of New York and Pennsylvania there were ten main points from which the runaways crossed into Canada, the more important of these being on the Niagara frontier. On Lake Erie and the Detroit River there were eight points at which entry was made into Canada, the Detroit River, of course taking first place. At Fort Malden (Amherstburg) as many as thirty a day entered in the period after 1850.<sup>[4]</sup> On Lake Erie proper, a considerable number seem to have come in by Kettle Creek (Port Stanley), thence making their way to London or Ingersoll.

Slavery had scarcely disappeared in Canada before runaways from the southern states began to make their appearance, and that in considerable numbers. Isolated instances of negroes reaching Canada can be found, of course, at a very early date. As early as 1705 an act was passed in New York and renewed in 1715, to prevent slaves running away to Canada from frontier towns like Albany,<sup>[5]</sup> and there was also frequent trouble<sup>[5]</sup> between the French and the English or the French and the Dutch over the runaways who came to Canada. It was not, however, until the beginning of the 19th century

that Canada began to be known to any degree among the negroes in the southern states. It was really the period of the discovery of Canada to the negro mind. The War of 1812 exercised powerful influence in directing negro thought to the free country to the north. Kentuckians and others who fought in the War of 1812 must have been surprised to encounter negroes among the Canadian forces opposed to them. But back in the south, when the news of the war began to penetrate there, the negro might fairly conclude that his master's enemy was likely to be his friend, and it was not long before the fact that Canada offered real asylum to the runaway had permeated the slave population throughout the border states at least. As early as 1815 negroes were reported crossing the western reserve in Ohio in large numbers, and one group of underground railroad workers in Southern Ohio is stated to have passed on more than 1000 fugitives before 1817.<sup>[6]</sup> Dr. S. G. Howe, who made one of the best investigations of the condition of the refugees in Canada, states that the arrivals, few in number at the start, increased rapidly early in the century, with special activity between 1830 and 1840, and greatest activity of all between 1850 and 1860, when the drastic Fugitive Slave Law was in operation.<sup>[7]</sup>

There were many ways in which the reputation of Canada was spread abroad among the negroes. The effect of the war of 1812 has already been noted. In this connection the slaveholders themselves probably helped to make Canada known by spreading the most foolish stories with regard to its cold climate and the hardships that were endured by the people there.<sup>[8]</sup> The shrewd negro mind saw through this, and was the more determined to reach the place that his master derided. Black men from Canada were a second influence in making the country known. Many a refugee slave, successful in his break for liberty, would afterwards return to the slave states to assist relatives or friends to freedom. Such a one would serve to plant the germ of freedom in the minds of those with whom he came in contact and thereby increase the number of runaways. White men, too, went from Canada to spread the news of freedom and to aid slaves in reaching their Canaan. James Redpath, the biographer of John Brown, writing in 1860, said that five hundred men went south from Canada annually to assist others in securing their freedom.<sup>[9]</sup> Slaves who were sent from the south into the border states to work would likely hear of Canada there and so in many and devious ways there was a certain amount of acquaintance with Canada all through the slavery area.

By 1826 the South was feeling the loss of its human property to such an extent that an effort was made to reach an agreement with Great Britain on

the subject. But Britain was not responsive. In the troubles of 1837-8 the citizens of the U.S. who tried to create trouble along the border received another shock like that of their compatriots of 1812, for again negroes were found defending their new home. All through the forties there was a steady influx of negroes into Canada, the *Western Citizen* of Chicago stating in its issue of Sept. 23, 1842, "there are over \$400,000 worth of southern slaves in a town near Malden, Canada."

"It (slave abduction) threatens to subvert the institution in this state," said a Missouri newspaper of the period,<sup>[10]</sup> while another authority estimated that between 1810 and 1850 no less than 100,000 slaves valued at \$30,000,000 were abducted from the south.<sup>[11]</sup> After 1850 the situation, from the southern standpoint grew worse and worse. Senator Polk, of Missouri, said in 1861: "Underground railroads are established stretching from the remotest slaveholding states clear up to Canada."<sup>[12]</sup> The *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* of Dec. 19, 1860, estimated that 1500 slaves had escaped annually for 50 years past, a loss to the slaveholders of \$40,000,000.<sup>[13]</sup> A vigilance committee at Detroit is stated to have assisted 1200 negroes to freedom in one year.<sup>[14]</sup> A similar committee at Cleveland is stated to have assisted over 100 a month.

Estimates of the number of refugees in Canada on the eve of the Civil War vary greatly. The Canadian census figures have been shown to be quite unreliable and, the estimates made by contemporary observers range all the way from 20,000 to 75,000. The bulk of the refugee population in Canada was located in the western part of the province of Upper Canada, where many of their descendants are to be found to-day.

The fugitives who came into Canada during the half century before the Civil War were a continual object lesson to the people of Canada of what slavery meant in the degradation of the black race. Homeless, friendless, destitute, their bodies marked with the lash and the still more brutal punishment of the "paddle," their feet torn, bleeding, frozen often as the result of a flight north in the dead of winter, these products of the slavery system made their own mute appeal to the compassion of a free people. Older people in Canada to-day still speak with emotion of the impression that was made upon their minds sixty years ago by the coming into their community of negro fugitives. The escaped negro was himself one of the powerful influences operating to create in Canada, as in the free states of the North, a sentiment hostile to slavery. The Canadian newspapers of the fifties contain many narratives of fugitives reaching Canada, so that those who did



not come into actual contact with the negroes were made acquainted with their condition. The negroes themselves also published newspapers at Chatham and at Sandwich that were agencies in creating anti-slavery sentiment in Canada.

Another influence that was powerful in creating anti-slavery sentiment in Canada, as it did on a tremendous scale in the northern states, was the publication of Mrs. Stowe's famous novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin." First published serially in the *National Era*, an anti-slavery paper printed at Washington, it was issued in book form in March, 1852, the first Canadian edition appearing in the same year and having a large sale. Above all else the book brought home the conviction that slavery was injustice, opposed both to the law of God and the best interests of mankind. Many who were careless of the issue were brought to a consciousness of the evils of the slavery system by the reading of this book, or by the dramatic presentations of it that soon followed its first publication. Even to-day, with the issue it presented settled half a century ago, Uncle Tom's Cabin remains one of the most widely read books in Canada, as it is also one of the most widely read books in the United States.

Towards the enslaved race the Canadian people performed remarkable service during the years 1815 to 1860. The Canadian hatred of slavery found its most spectacular outlet in abduction of slaves from the south, both by native Canadians and by Negroes who had settled in the country. Dr. Alexander Milton Ross tells in his memoirs<sup>[15]</sup> of more than 30 blacks whom he assisted to freedom. Josiah Henson, himself a fugitive, claims that he brought out 118 slaves.<sup>[16]</sup> William Wells Brown says he took 69 over Lake Erie in six months;<sup>[17]</sup> and the famous woman, Harriet Tubman, is credited with having assisted more than 300 fugitives to liberty, making repeated trips into the slave states for that purpose.<sup>[18]</sup>

A second work that was performed by Canadians was that of receiving the fugitives at the end of their flight and assisting them to get on their feet in the new country. Missions were established at Malden, Sandwich, Toronto, and elsewhere, and the material as well as the moral side of the Negro was cared for. Rev. Isaac Rice, a graduate of Hamilton College, laboured for many years at Malden. He had been well situated in Ohio as the pastor of a Presbyterian church, and with fine prospects, but he gave it up in order to aid the helpless blacks who crowded over the Canadian border. At his missionary house in Malden he sheltered hundreds of the fugitives until homes could be found for them elsewhere.<sup>[19]</sup>

Of another character was the work done by men like Rev. Wm. King, Henry Bibb and Josiah Henson in the founding of distinctly Negro colonies, with schools and churches and effort directed to improving the whole social status of the race. Interesting observations have been recorded in connection with these colonies. The constant violation of domestic relations, under a slave system was bound to react on home life and take away the incentive to constancy, yet one of the first things married slaves did on arriving in Canada was to have their plantation union reaffirmed by the form of marriage legal in Canada. It was observed that the refugees tended to settle in families and to hallow marriage, and that sensuality lessened in freedom. Their religious instincts were manifested in charity to the sick and to newcomers and in their attitude towards women. The general improvement was well summed up by one competent observer, who wrote: "The refugees in Canada earn a living and gather property; they build churches and send their children to school; they improve in manners and morals—not because they are picked men, but, because they are free men."<sup>[20]</sup>

Here then was a most important truth that Canada was showing forth to the people of the United States, namely that slavery was not necessary to the welfare of the black race, as the south claimed. Canada was also showing that, though brutalized by slavery, the best instincts of the Negro race were reasserted in freedom and the degraded bondsman developed morality and intelligence. In short Canada steadily gave the lie to the plea that slavery was the state best suited to the Negro, and the one best calculated to raise him intellectually and morally.

But Canadians were not satisfied to be merely passive agents in the larger phases of the long struggle against slavery. Early in 1851 there was organized in the city of Toronto the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada which continued active until the Emancipation Proclamation had been made effective and the United States had itself removed the blot from its fair name. The objects of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada were declared to be "to aid in the extinction of slavery all over the world by means exclusively lawful and peaceable, moral and religious." Rev. Dr. Willis, principal of Knox College, Toronto, was president of the Society all through its history and among others who associated themselves with its work were George Brown, the editor of *The Globe*, and Oliver Mowat, afterwards premier of this province. From Toronto the work of the Society was spread out to the leading centres of Negro population, branches being formed and a steady campaign carried on. *The Globe* under Brown proved a stout ally, and gave much attention to the Society's work. Working relations were entered into with the Anti-Slavery societies in Great Britain and in the United States

and a large amount of relief work was looked after by the Women's Auxiliaries. Though the churches generally, with the exception of the Presbyterians, held somewhat aloof from the work of the Society, recruits in plenty were drawn from the clergy. It was a Presbyterian clergyman who was president of the Society all through its history; the first secretary was a Methodist minister, and on the committees appointed from year to year there was always to be found a good representation of the clergy.<sup>[21]</sup>

The Canadian law gave the Negro fugitive all the rights of citizenship and protected him in their enjoyment. The Negro was encouraged to take up land and it gave him the franchise the same as his white neighbour. Negroes were enrolled in the Canadian militia and bore their share of service during the troubles of 1837-8. "The colored men," says Josiah Henson, "were willing to defend the Government that had given them a home when they had fled from slavery."<sup>[22]</sup> Under the Canadian law the fugitives were allowed to send their children to the common schools or to have separate schools provided for them out of their share of the school funds.<sup>[23]</sup> Separate schools were established in some places where prejudice existed and religious agencies also established schools at a number of points. Visitors noted that a surprisingly large number of the Negroes learned to read and write after coming to Canada and in the University of Toronto a number of prizes were taken by coloured youths. Principal McCullum of the Hamilton Collegiate Institute was quoted as saying that his teachers agreed that the blacks were the equal of the whites in mentality. The best educational work seems to have been done by the schools which were established by the Negroes themselves, the mission schools and those located in the Negro colonies.<sup>[24]</sup> Government interest was shown by the incorporation in 1859 of the "Association for the Education of the Coloured People of Canada," the object of which was to secure educational advantages for the younger people of the race.<sup>[25]</sup>

The attempts at planting distinctly Negro settlements in Western Ontario form one of the interesting phases of Canada's relation to the slavery issue. Most interesting of all probably was the work of Rev. William King, who was the founder of the Elgin Association or Buxton Settlement. King was an Irishman, a graduate of Glasgow College, who came to America and was made rector of a college in the state of Louisiana. There, by marriage, he became the owner of fifteen slaves of an estimated value of \$9,000. For a time he placed them on a neighbouring plantation and gave them the proceeds of their labour, but that did not satisfy his conscience, and in 1848 he brought them to Canada, thereby, giving them their freedom. But his

work did not end there, for he felt it his duty to look after them, to educate them and make of them useful citizens. With some prominent Canadians he organized what was known as the Elgin Association which was legally incorporated “for the settlement and moral improvement of the coloured population of Canada, for the purpose of purchasing crown or clergy reserve lands in the township of Raleigh and settling the same with coloured families resident in Canada of approved moral character.” The aims were met with decided opposition from certain elements in Kent County, but this did not impede the progress of the Association, a tract of about 9000 acres south of Chatham being purchased. This was surveyed into small farms of 50 acres each, which were sold to the colonists at \$2.50 an acre, payable in ten annual instalments. Each settler bound himself within a certain period to build a house, at least as good as the model house set up by the Association, to provide himself with necessary implements and to proceed with the work of clearing land. Roads were soon cut through the forest, and the work of clearing up the country began. The slaves who had been freed by Rev. Mr. King formed the nucleus of the colony, but others came as soon as the land was offered, so that within four years there were 400 people located, and in 1857 it had 800 population. Dr. Samuel Howe gave the warmest praise to what he saw at the Elgin Settlement:

“Buxton is certainly a very interesting place,” he wrote. “Sixteen years ago it was a wilderness. Now good highways are laid out in all directions through the forest and by their side, standing back 33 feet from the road, are about 200 cottages, all built in the same pattern, all looking neat and comfortable; around each one is a cleared place of several acres which is well cultivated. The fences are in good order, the barns seem well filled, and cattle and horses, and pigs and poultry, abound. There are signs of industry and thrift and comfort everywhere; signs of intemperance, of idleness, of want, nowhere. There is no tavern and no groggery; but there is a chapel and a schoolhouse. Most interesting of all are the inhabitants. Twenty years ago most of them were slaves, who owned nothing, not even their children. Now they own themselves; they own their houses and farms; and they have their wives and children about them. They are enfranchised citizens of a government which protects their rights. The present condition of all these colonists, as compared with their former one, is remarkable. The settlement is a perfect success. Here are men who were bred in slavery, who came here and purchased land at the government price, cleared it, bought their own implements, built their own houses after a model and have supported themselves in all material circumstances and now support their schools in

part. I consider that this settlement has done as well as a white settlement would have done under the same circumstances.”<sup>[26]</sup>

Interchange of effort between the abolitionists of Canada and those of the United States was noticeable all through the course of the movement. The Canadian negroes did their part, of course, chiefly by going south and helping relatives and friends to escape to freedom. In this they were given the active assistance of a few white Canadians, Dr. Alex Milton Ross being the most noteworthy example of this daring kind of work. From the United States there came in workers on behalf of the fugitives whose efforts deserve every tribute that has ever been paid to them. Hiram Wilson and Isaac Bice, missionaries to the negroes, are names that should never be forgotten by the coloured race and like tribute might be paid to the work of such black men as Rev. S. R. Ward, Austin Steward, Rev. J. W. Loguen, Fred Douglass and Henry Bibb. Bibb was a worker on both sides of the line, putting in several years as a speaker for the anti-slavery forces in Michigan before coming to Canada to attempt a colonization venture in what is now Essex County. Benjamin Lundy, the most prominent of the pioneer abolitionists, was an early visitor to Canada and wrote an account of his trip in *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. Noticeable, too, is the fact that the American abolitionists took deep interest in the condition of the fugitives in Canada. Men like Levi Coffin, and more particularly Benjamin Drew, made careful investigations of the results that had attended emancipation by coming to Canada.

Abolition was a common cause for Canadians and their neighbours. Boundary lines did not separate in this fight for the freedom of a race that went on during half a century. The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada entered into working relations with the American Anti-Slavery Society at its inception. Newspaper comment interpreted the movement in the United States to Canadian readers and few American editors had a surer grasp of the direction in which events were heading after 1850 than did George Brown of *The Globe*. His paper not only reported the activities of the Canadian abolitionists but as well kept them in close touch with what was going on across the line. Perusal of *Globe* files, particularly in the fifties, shows that newspaper always aggressive in the support of the cause of the slave. It is quite true that not all the Canadian press was of like mind, but a pro-slavery attitude, or scornful indifference, was never quite so marked as Brown's ceaseless anti-slavery agitation through the columns of his newspaper. The actual attitude of the Canadian parties was quite clearly indicated by their newspapers. The Tory press was usually scornful of the abolitionist movement in the United States and treated the Canadian effort with more or

less contempt. The Reformer in Canada naturally fitted abolition into his programme and gave to it some of the same enthusiasm that he directed to the curing of distinctly Canadian abuses. Prof. A. B. Hart has drawn attention to the fact that the thirties and forties in the United States were a period in which religious life had as its characteristic the sincere effort to make religion effective, "to make individual and community correspond to the principles of Christianity." This ideal led to the organization of various reform movements, "causes," each of which took the form of a national society, with newspaper organs, frequent meetings and appeals to the public. Some of this same spirit was manifest in Canada at the same period and the anti-slavery cause gathered to its support a few people who practically devoted their whole lives to its ends, while many others contributed of their time and money as opportunity afforded. The anti-slavery movement had about it an atmosphere of crusade that gave it a spiritual power with many people. Nor must it be overlooked that to some Canadians of the time, there was a secret pleasure in striking a blow at the institution that seemed to be the chief power at Washington. Not that the average Canadian loved the northerner or despised the southern slaver. The opposite would be nearer the truth, but, when the north permitted its laws to be used to arrest runaways in the streets of northern cities and to drag them back to slavery, the Canadian of the time was not far out when he associated the north with south in the guilt of slavery. That belief was nurtured by the constant attempts at compromise, and it was not until towards the end of the fifties that there was a clear understanding in Canada as to where sympathies should lie. To Thomas D'Arcy McGee is due in part the credit for setting Canadian opinion aright in this respect. He saw and described the southern Confederacy as a "pagan oligarchy" and strongly championed the cause of the north.

John Quincy Adams wrote in his diary in 1820: "If slavery be the destined sword in the hand of the destroying angel, which is to sever the ties of this Union, the same sword will cut in sunder the bonds of slavery itself." It took forty years for that prophetic utterance to be fulfilled, and there were many agencies at work during that long period working to the one end of destroying the system of human bondage that had been planted in the new lands of the western hemisphere, and that sapped its life for so many years. Not all these agencies working for the destruction of slavery were apparent on the surface. A contrast of conditions as between 1830 and 1860 might have seemed to indicate that the future of the Negro was darker than ever before on the eve of the Civil war. The area given up to slavery in 1860 was larger than at any previous time, the slaves were more numerous and the

slave codes and Fugitive Slave Law the most rigorous the country had ever known. Steps were even being taken to revive the African slave trade.

All this existed after 30 years of debate on the issue. It is doubtful if either side made converts to its own particular views. Indeed, by 1860, the South had reached the point where denunciation of slavery had ceased, when no further efforts were being made to ameliorate the slave's condition, when justification of slavery had become praise of the system, and to speak ill of the institution was regarded as treason. Naturally, the South desired to see the area of slave territory increased and never ceased its demands for expansion: but as individuals, the slaveholders were more powerfully affected by two other considerations, both related, to their property, namely, the constant fear that the slaves would rise up and murder them, and the constant loss suffered by the slaves running away or being spirited away. In a sense the Civil War began when the first Negro slave was abducted, and every loss added to the steadily growing division in the country. The climax came when the people of the North rebelled against being made slave catchers by a Fugitive Slave Law, and instead gave assistance, as never before, to aiding the slaves to gain their liberty. There was a war raging between North and South for ten years before the first gun was fired at Sumter, and in that conflict Canada had become an ally of the free states. With the opening of the Civil War the Canadian Government assumed an attitude of neutrality, but of her citizens at least 35,000 joined the Northern armies and played their part in war, as they had already played it in peace, to the end of making the Negro race free.

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[1] Drew. North Side View of History, pp. 244-245.

[2] Mitchell, Underground Railroad, pp. 150-151.

[3] The best account of the workings of the underground system is Prof. W. H. Siebert's "Underground Railroad," New York, 1899. He has an excellent chapter on the life of the negro refugees in Canada before the outbreak of the Civil War.

[4] Siebert: Underground Railroad, p. 194.

[5] Northrup: Slavery in New York, pp. 258-259.

- [6] Birney: James G. Birney and His Times, p. 435.
- [7] Howe: Refugees from Slavery In Canada West, pp. 11-12.
- [8] In a speech in the U.S. Senate on May 5, 1858, Senator Mason, of Virginia, said of the fugitives, "They perish with cold in Canada." See also Ward: Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro, p. 151.
- [9] Redpath: Public Life of Captain John Brown, p. 229.
- [10] *Independent*, Jan. 18, 1855, quoted in Siebert, *Underground Railroad*, p. 194.
- [11] Claiborne: Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman, vol. II, p. 28.
- [12] *Cong. Globe*, XXXVI Cong., 2nd sess., 356.
- [13] Quoted in American Anti-Slavery Society annual report for 1861, p. 158.
- [14] Mitchell: *Underground Railroad*, p. 113.
- [15] Ross: *Recollections and Experiences of an Abolitionist*.
- [16] Henson: *Father Henson's Story of His Own Life*, pp. 149-150.
- [17] Brown: *Narrative of William Wells Brown*, p. 109.
- [18] Bradford: *Harriet, the Moses of Her People*, p. 88.
- [19] Coffin: *Reminiscences*, pp. 249-250.
- [20] Howe: *Refugees from Slavery in Canada West*, p. iv. For Howe's general conclusions with regard to the improvement of the race in Canada, see pp. 101-110 of his report.
- [21] For a fuller account of the Anti-Slavery Society of



Canada see Landon: The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, *Journal of Negro History*, vol. IV, No. 1, January. 1919, pp. 33-40.

[22] Henson: An Autobiography, p, 176.

[23] Howe: Refugees from Slavery in Canada West, pp. 77-78: also, Woodson: Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, pp. 248-255.

[24] Howe: Refugees from Slavery in Canada West, pp. 79-81.

[25] Statutes of Canada, 1859, cap. XXIV.

[26] For a fuller account of the Buxton Colony, see Landon: The Buxton Settlement in Canada, *Journal of Negro History*, vol. III, No. 4, October, 1918, pp. 360-367. An unpublished history of the colony, based on the papers of Rev. William King, is by Mrs. Annie Straith Jamieson, of Montreal.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

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[The end of *Canada's Part in Freeing the Slave* by Fred Landon]