



## CHAPTER IV.

### AT WORK IN KENTUCKY.

**A** FEW months after the death of John Brown, I felt impelled to go again into the land of darkness and slavery, and make another effort to help the oppressed to freedom. This time I decided to make Kentucky my field of labour. I consequently went to Louisville, where I remained for a few days looking about for a suitable locality for my work. I finally decided, to go down to Harrodsburg, in the character of one in search of a farm. Securing a few letters from land agents in Louisville, introducing me as Mr. Hawkins, of Canada, I reached Harrodsburg in due time. After a little enquiry, I learned that a Mr. B——, five miles from that place, had a very desirable farm for sale. Securing a conveyance, I was driven out to Mr. B——'s, who received me in a friendly manner, when he learned that I was in search of a farm, and invited me

to remain with him while I was in the neighbourhood. I accepted his invitation, and sent the conveyance back to Harrodsburg. Mr. B——'s family consisted of himself, wife, and three small children. He was the owner of the farm on which he lived, consisting of three hundred acres. He also owned eleven slave men and women, and several slave children. He informed me that he had concluded to sell his farm and stock, except the human chattels, and remove to Texas. During our frequent conversations upon the subject of land, stock, climate, soil, etc., I seized every opportunity, especially if any of the slaves were near, to allude to Canada in favourable terms. I did not fail to observe the quiet but deep interest evinced by the slaves in our conversations. On the third day of my visit, our negotiations about the farm were approaching—what Mr. B—— considered—a favourable conclusion, when he casually informed me that his title-deeds were in Frankfort, and that, if I was in other respects pleased with the farm, he would go to Frankfort and bring the deeds for my inspection. I expressed my satisfaction with the farm, and told him I thought he had better bring the deeds that I might look them over. On the following morning he left for Frankfort. Before leaving, I asked him to allow one of the slaves

to accompany me to the woods, while I amused myself gunning. He replied that I might take any of them I pleased. I selected a bright, intelligent looking mulatto, whom I had frequently noticed listening most attentively to my conversation with his master. When we reached the woods, he begged and implored me to buy him and take him to Canada.

#### A WIFE TORN FROM HER HUSBAND AND SOLD.

He told me that his master had sold his wife, to whom he had been married only a month, to a hotel-keeper in Covington, he spoke of his deep love for her; that his master was going to take him to Texas, and that he should never see her again. The tears rolled down the poor fellow's cheeks in streams. I told him to cheer up; that I would do my best to liberate him. I then confided to him the object that brought me there; and told him that if liberty was precious to him he must prepare to make great efforts and sacrifices for it. I explained to him that if he could reach Cincinnati, Ohio, he would be safe from his pursuers, and that he would be sheltered and protected until he reached Canada. I then gave him the address of a friend in Cincinnati on whom he could rely for protection, and also furnished him with some money, a pistol, and pocket-compass for the journey

to the Ohio. When he took the pistol in his hand, I charged him not to use it except to prevent his capture. He grasped the pistol like a vice, and said, "Massa, I'll get to Cincinnati, if I am not killed." I then asked him if any of the other slaves were capable of undertaking the journey. For a moment he was silent, thinking, then he replied, "No, massa; they are bad niggers; don't you trust dem." I advised him to work on faithfully until Saturday night—it was now Wednesday—and to make every preparation to leave at midnight on that day, and to travel by night only. I told him I should go direct to Covington on Friday, and would endeavour to liberate his wife; that, if I succeeded, he would find her at the house of the same friend in Cincinnati, whose address I had given him. I advised him to carry with him as much food as possible, so as to avoid exposure while on his journey. Poor Peter was nearly wild with his prospects; so much so, indeed, that I urged him to repress his feelings, for fear his conduct would be noticed by his mistress, who had imbibed a particular dislike to Peter since his separation from his wife. Mrs. B—— told me he was a wicked nigger; that ever since Mr. B—— had sold the *gal*, Peter had looked gloomy and revengeful; that she hated him. Mrs. B—— could not understand that Peter had any right,

not even the right to sorrow, when his wife was torn from him and sold to a stranger.

On Thursday, Mr. B— returned. He had been unsuccessful in obtaining the deeds, and told me that his lawyers in Louisville, were willing I should have every facility to examine them in their office, if I pleased; but, as they held a small mortgage on the property, they were unwilling to permit the deeds to go out of their possession. This was very satisfactory, and afforded me an opportunity to get away without creating suspicion. During the night, previous to my departure, I obtained an interview with Peter, and reiterated my injunctions to be brave, cautious, and persevering, while on the journey, and again impressed upon his memory my instructions. Poor fellow! his eyes filled with tears when I told him I was going direct to Covington next day, and should try and free his wife. When I bid him good-bye, he frantically kissed my hand, saying, "Tell Polly I'll be dere, sure. Tell her to wait for me."

Oh! what a vile, wicked institution was that which could make merchandise of such a man as stood before me! Yet, monstrous and cruel as it was, it had its apologists and abettors in the North; while from every pulpit in the

Slave States went forth the declaration, that "slavery was a wise and beneficent institution, devised by God for the protection of an inferior race."

On Friday morning I left, ostensibly for Louisville, but went to Covington, which place I reached on the following day. I had no difficulty in finding the hotel, having got the name of Polly's owner from Peter. It was a poorly kept hostelry; the proprietor evidently had no knowledge of hotel-keeping. I however took quarters with him, and found him a very communicative man. He informed me he had been a farmer until within a year past, but finding that farming on a small scale was unprofitable, he had sold out, and bought this hotel. He was the owner of two negroes, a man and woman; "the gal was *likely*, but mighty spunky." He had paid twelve hundred dollars for her to Mr. B—, near Harrodsburg. He wanted her to "take up" with his negro boy, but she refused. He had threatened to send her to New Orleans for sale, if she would not obey him. He *reckoned* she would be glad to "take up" with him before long; a good whipping generally brought them to their senses. He knew how to manage *such*. The gal would bring sixteen hundred or two thousand dollars in New Orleans, because she was *likely*.

Before retiring that night, I requested the landlord to send to my room some warm water for a bath. He said he would send the girl up with it as soon as it was ready. In less than half an hour, the water was placed in my room by a bright, intelligent, straight-haired mulatto girl, apparently twenty years of age. As soon as she entered the room, I directed her to close the door, and said in a whisper, "Are you Polly, from Harrodsburg?" She looked at me with a frightened look, "Yes, massa, I is," she said. I told her I had seen her husband, Peter, and that he was going to run away from his master on Sunday night; that I had friends in Cincinnati where he was going, who would secrete him until she could join him, when they would both be sent to Canada. She stood like a statue, while I was talking. I directed her to get ready to meet me on the following night, at twelve o'clock, in front of the post office; that I should leave the hotel in the morning and make preparations to have her taken across the river to the Ohio shore. She was so much amazed that for a moment she was unable to speak; at last she said, "Please, massa, tell me it over again." I repeated my instructions as rapidly as possible for fear I should be interrupted; and warned her against betraying herself by any outward expression of her feelings. When I concluded, she

said, "Oh, massa, I'll pray to God for you—I'll be dere sure." She then left the room. Next morning I delayed coming down to breakfast until after the regular breakfast was over, hoping to obtain another opportunity of charging her memory with the instructions already given. I was fortunate—she served the table. When I was leaving the table, I said to her, "*To-night, at twelve o'clock, sure.*" She replied in a whisper, "God will help me, massa, I'll try to." After breakfast, I went to Cincinnati and with the aid of friends, made arrangements to cross to Covington at eleven o'clock that night.

#### LIBERATION OF THE WIFE.

Before dark on Sunday evening, I had completed all my arrangements. A short time before midnight, I crossed the river in a small boat with two good assistants. Leaving them in charge of the boat, I went up to the post office, which I reached a few minutes before twelve. I waited patiently for nearly half an hour, when I observed a dark object approaching rapidly at a distance of several hundred yards from where I stood. As soon as I recognized the form, I went toward her, and, telling her to follow me, I turned down a dark street, and went toward the river. We had made but little progress

before we were stopped by a night watchman, who said, "Where are you going?" I replied by putting a dollar in his hand and saying, it's all right. He became oblivious, and passed on his beat, greatly to my peace of mind. We soon reached the boat; she crouched down in the bow, and we left the Kentucky shore.

#### CROSSING THE OHIO.

In a short time we were safe across the river, and placing my charge in a cab which I had ready at the shore, we drove rapidly up into the city within a few blocks of my friend's residence. I then dismissed the cab, and we wended our way through several streets, until I reached the rear entrance to the house of my friend. We were admitted, and received the kind attention of our generous and liberty-loving host. Poor Polly, who had never before been treated with such kindness, said to me: "Massa, is I free now?" I told her she was now free from her master; and that, as soon as her husband arrived, they both would be sent to Cleveland, where I would meet them, and help them across to Canada, where they would be as free as the whites. Bidding her and my noble hearted friend good-by, I took the first train on Monday morning for Cleveland. On my arrival there, I drove a few

miles into the country to the house of a friend of the cause, where I remained waiting for news of Peter's arrival in Cincinnati. On Friday morning I received a letter informing me that Peter had arrived safely, though his feet were torn and sore. The meeting between husband and wife was described as most affecting. On Monday evening following, I received another letter stating that freight car No. 705, had been hired to convey a box containing one "package of hardware," and one of "dry goods," to Cleveland. The letter also contained the key of the car. The train containing this particular car was to leave Cincinnati on Tuesday morning, and would reach Cleveland, sometime during the evening of the same day. I had but a short time consequently to make preparations to convey the fugitives across the lake.

#### A KENTUCKIAN IN SEARCH OF HIS CHATTEL.

On Tuesday morning, my good friend with whom I had been stopping, drove me into Cleveland. As we passed the American House, I caught sight of my Kentucky host standing in front of the hotel. He did not observe me, however, and we continued on our way to the lake shore. I then sent my friend back to make the acquaintance of the Kentuckian, and learn

the object of his visit to Cleveland. After a long search, I found a schooner loading for Port Stanley, Canada. The skipper said they would be ready to sail on the following day if the wind was favourable. I soon learned that the captain was a Freemason, and confided to him my secret. The result was, his agreement to stow my freight away safely as soon as they came on board, and carry them to Canada. I then returned to a locality agreed upon with my friend, whom I found waiting for me, and was then driven to the country. On the way out, my friend informed me that he had made the acquaintance of the Kentuckian, who felt very sore over the loss of his slave ; but he did not express any suspicion of me. He said he was having posters printed, offering a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of the girl. Toward night, I again went into the city, and my friend made enquiry at the freight office of the railroad, and ascertained that the train containing car 705, would be in at 10 p.m. We then went to a hotel near the depot, and remained until the train came. I found the car, and my faithful friend brought his carriage as near as he could safely, without attracting attention. I unlocked the door of the car, went in, and closed the door after me. Listening carefully, I could not detect the slightest signs

of life in the car. I called in a low voice : "Peter." A reply came at once : "Yes, massa, shall I open the box?" The two poor creatures were in a dry-goods box, sufficiently large to permit them to sit upright. I helped them out of the box, and making sure that no stranger was near, opened the door of the car, and led them quickly to the carriage. We then drove rapidly away to the boat, and secreted the fugitives in the cabin. I then bid my friend farewell, as I had decided not to leave the two faithful creatures until they were safe in Canada.

#### SAFE ARRIVAL OF MAN AND WIFE IN CANADA.

After midnight the breeze freshened up, and we made sail for the land of freedom. We had a rough and tedious voyage, and did not reach Canada until near night on the following day. When our little vessel was safely moored alongside the pier, I led my two companions on shore, and told them they were now in a land where freedom was guaranteed to all. And we knelt together on the soil of Canada, and thanked the Almighty Father for his aid and protection. Two happier beings I never saw. Next day I took them to London, and obtained situations for both Peter and his wife. I succeeded

also in enlisting the kind interest of several prominent persons in their behalf, to whom I related their experience.

#### NET RESULTS.

The next three months I spent in Canada, visiting those refugees in whom I had taken a personal interest. I found six in Chatham, two in London, four in Hamilton, two in Amherstburg, and one in Toronto—fifteen in all; while several others had gone from Canada to New England.

It afforded me great satisfaction to find them sober, industrious members of society. It has often been remarked by both Canadians and visitors from the States, that the negro refugees in Canada were superior specimens of their race. The observation is true, for none but superior specimens could hope to reach Canada. The difficulties and dangers of the route, and the fact that they were often closely followed for weeks, not only by human foes, but by bloodhounds as well, required the exercise of rare qualities of mind and body. Their route would often lay through dismal swamps inhabited only by wild animals and poisonous reptiles. Sometimes the distance between the land of bondage and freedom was several hundreds of miles, every

mile of which had to be traversed on foot. It is, indeed, surprising that so large a number of fugitives succeeded in reaching Canada, considering the obstacles they had to contend with on their long and dangerous journey.

When I reflect upon the dangers that surrounded me during that stormy period, I acknowledge my indebtedness to God for His protection and support during my labours in behalf of the oppressed people of the Southern States; and, although the results of my efforts were insignificant in comparison to what I hoped to accomplish when I began the work in 1855, I still rejoice that I was enabled to do what little I did for the poor and despised coloured people of the Slave States.

#### NUMBER OF REFUGEE NEGROES IN CANADA.

The number of refugee negroes living in Canada, at the outbreak of the slaveholder's rebellion, was not far short of forty thousand. Probably more than half of them were manumitted slaves who, in consequence of unjust laws, were compelled to leave the States where they were manumitted. Many of these negroes settled in the Northern States, but the greater portion of them came to Canada.