Fugitive slaves escaping into Pennsylvania from their masters living farther south, were a source of trouble in the earliest colonial days. In 1702, William Faussitt, of Somerset County, Maryland, sued Joseph Booth, of Sussex County, now in Delaware, because of "one Nigroe man Stollen and Carried away" whom the defendant had harbored. Faussitt was awarded thirty pounds. Frequently, thereafter, the colonial newspapers contained advertisements for negro slaves who had escaped to the north, and offered rewards for their apprehension. "RUN away," says the Maryland Gazette of May 27, 1729, "from Samuel Peel's Quarter, call'd Turkey-Island in Anne-Arundel County, on Sunday the 27th of APRIL last, a Negroe Fellow call'd Limehouse, about Thirty Years old. He had on when he went away, a new felt Hat, a new grey Fear-nothing Coat, one new and one old Cotton Jacket, a new brown Osnabrig Shirt, a pair of newish light Fustian Breeches, and a pair of old Cotten Breeches, a pair of white Country made Yarn Stockings, a pair of good Negroe Shoes. Whoever will secure the above Negroe, so as to deliver him to his Overseer Nicholas Aldridge, at the said Quarter, or to the Subscriber at London-Town, shall be paid Twenty Shillings more than the Law allows, by me Samuel Pelle." On both sides of the Maryland line the journals have many such notices.

There is little doubt, that this fleeing from service was a cause of much trouble to masters of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, and it is probable that many of the negroes were never recovered. Nevertheless, during the colonial period, there was much less difficulty
than there was later on, since the local authorities in Pennsylvania were willing to give as much assistance as they possibly could. During this time many people in Pennsylvania themselves owned slaves who ran away, and therefore the authorities made laws to provide for their apprehension and return. All suspicious and wandering negroes were taken up and lodged in the jails and advertised and held until the masters came to get them. A runaway might cause a Southern owner a great deal of trouble and loss, but the owner could usually get him again if he tried; at least the people of Pennsylvania interposed no obstacle.

After 1780, and particularly after 1800, there was a great change. Gradually the people of Pennsylvania became hostile to slavery and unwilling to assist slave-owners in any way. As time went on many persons were glad to hinder the masters and help the fugitives as much as they could.

There were many reasons for this. Because of economic conditions, and because of the early opposition of the Germans and the Friends, slavery had never assumed large proportions in Pennsylvania. Between 1730 and 1780 the Quakers set all their slaves free, while in the latter year the legislature approved the first abolition act ever passed in any of the states. Meanwhile the first and greatest of all the abolition societies had been founded in Philadelphia, and many people, particularly the Friends, desired to bring slavery to an end in Pennsylvania and elsewhere as soon as they could. Therefore, it was that when runaway negroes got across the line, they now received far more assistance than the pursuing masters.

For some time this was not clearly realized in the South, and the Pennsylvania papers continued to have numerous advertisements about slaves who had escaped from Virginia and Maryland. The border newspapers have a great many of them. A Maryland owner offered
$50 reward in the York Pennsylvania Herald of June 7, 1797, while a Virginian promised $30 in the Lancaster Intelligencer of October 16, 1799. A Maryland man advertised $400 for three runaways in the Harrisburg Chronicle of October 17, 1831; and as late as 1836, the Chambersburg Whig announced $100 from a resident of the District of Columbia. After this time such notices became exceedingly rare.

In Pennsylvania sympathy for fugitives and hostility towards the slave-owners who claimed them, were first shown by individuals and private organizations; later on by the majority of the people of the state; and finally by the state itself.

Early in the nineteenth century Sutcliff, the traveller, speaks of a tailor living in Philadelphia, who used to sit at his window as he worked. Whenever he saw a negro who looked like a runaway, he would go out to offer him assistance, and would help him to elude his pursuers and get to the interior parts of the state. At the same time the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery used to give legal assistance to negroes who were claimed as fugitives, and would try to have the courts set them free on the strength of some legal technicality. In 1819, the Journal of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives states that “Mr. Purdon presented a petition from sundry inhabitants of the city of Philadelphia . . . that in consequence of the difficulty of recovering slaves who are runaways from the southern states, the number of blacks has increased to an alarming extent in the said city, and praying legislative interference.”

There now came to be many people, especially among the Friends, who would incur any risk in helping and concealing fugitives. These men were particularly active along the borders, and nowhere more so than in the southeastern part of the state. Columbia in Lancaster County was notorious because of the difficulty which Southerners encountered there in recovering runaway
slaves. Negroes could frequently be traced to the neighborhood of this place, after which every clue was lost. It was often a matter of wonder how the negro could thus manage to drop out of sight. One day a disappointed slave-owner is said to have exclaimed, "There must be an underground railroad somewhere." Such, according to Smedley, the historian, was the origin of the term which afterwards became so celebrated throughout the United States.

The workings of the Underground Railroad were various, but they are not easily described, since for the most part we know of them only by tradition. Before the Civil War those who assisted runaway slaves to elude their masters, did so in defiance of Federal laws. After 1850, particularly, they were liable to heavy penalties. Accordingly the operators of the shadowy road seldom wrote down at the time what they were doing, and gave accounts only under pledge of secrecy. A diary long in the possession of Grace Anna Lewis, of Media, contains many blank spaces where names and incidents relating to the railroad were omitted. Such accounts as are extant were usually written long after the occurrences which they relate.

At first the greater number of the Underground Railroad operators were peaceful and law-abiding men, and many of them always were so. They were moved simply by pity for the slave. They believed that slavery was wicked, and that the fugitive slave law of 1793 was wrong, even though it was the law. Hence they believed it right to help the negro, and frustrate or outwit the master whenever they could. They seldom did more than feed and hide the slave, and carry him over the next stage of his journey. Masters were received courteously, but given no information and no assistance. These were the methods of the Quakers, who took such an active part in all of this work.

John and Hannah Cox, of Longwood, in Chester County,
The Underground Railroad in Penna.

frequently helped negroes. One night, a man, a woman, and a child came to their farm. The runaways had left their master in Maryland because they feared that he would sell them south. The Coxes gave them food and clothing, and at the first opportunity helped them on their way. On one occasion a runaway negro jumped from a train and injured his leg. If he were sent to a hospital, his master would certainly recover him; therefore some Underground Railroad people of West Chester cared for him the whole winter. In 1843, sixteen negroes got to York. They went to Joel Fisher's house, whence they were taken to a corn-field nearby and hidden under the shocks. During the next night they were carried a stage farther to Lewisburg, on the Conewago, where they were concealed several days. When the pursuers had ceased hunting for them, William Wright and one of his friends chose a gloomy November night to ferry them across the swollen stream. On the other side the negroes hid in the woods, and a little later got safely to Canada. The Gause family who lived near Kennett Square, kept what might be termed a signal station on the Underground Railroad. Their place was a centre of activity. On one occasion, Harlan Gause drove a family of negroes through the woods at night. Later on he loaned his horses and wagon to a Massachusetts man who planned to carry a number of slaves out of Maryland. The invader was caught and sentenced to life imprisonment. Sometimes the fugitives reached the Underground stations in deplorable condition, starved, exhausted, and nearly destitute of clothing. In 1851, four slaves came to William Wright's house almost naked. At times the women would be dressed in only one garment.

As the years went on this activity of the Underground Railroad operators was carefully organized and became very effective. A large correspondence was carried on, and secret information could be transmitted very rapidly. The following is one of the letters written:
The Underground Railroad in Penna.

"WILLIAM STILL, Respected Friend:—

There are three colored friends at my house now, who will reach the city by the Philadelphia and Reading train this evening. Please meet them.

"Thine &c.,

"E. F. PENNYPACKER.

"We have within the past two months, passed forty-three through our hands, transported most of them to Norristown in our conveyance.

"E. F. P."

But these peaceful methods were not the only ones employed. From assisting runaways it was only a step to resisting the masters. In the end even the Quakers became more aggressive, while other people had been so almost from the first.

After 1820, the new methods were more and more in evidence, and the pursuit of a fugitive slave in Pennsylvania became increasingly dangerous. The colored people of the State now began to take an active part. In January, 1821, a respectable citizen of Baltimore pursued his runaway negro into Pennsylvania, and entered at night the house where the negro was staying. He was shot dead, and his assistant beaten so dreadfully that he died a short while afterward. In this instance the master had made the mistake of entering the house without a warrant; therefore, says Niles's Register, the negro will probably be acquitted. Three years later, the court ordered an accused runaway to be lodged in jail. At once a large crowd of armed negroes attempted to rescue him, so that the court was compelled to adjourn. On this occasion the ringleaders were severely punished.

As a rule, the negroes received all the sympathy no matter what might be the merits of the master's case. In 1825, says the Greensburg Gazette, a gentleman, who was taking his two slaves back to Maryland, stopped at York for the night. When morning came, he found that his carriage had been cut to pieces. In this locality there was a great deal of indignation at the manner in which captured fugitives were taken back. The same paper denounces two men who tied a slave to the gig-shaft, and then drove off at full trot.
All sorts of expedients were employed to outwit the masters. Sometimes the Quakers gave the pursuer an excellent meal, and read long chapters from the Bible, while the negro was being taken to the next farm. In 1835, two citizens of Virginia, having caught their two negroes, were passing through western Pennsylvania on their way home. At one place where they halted they placed the negroes in jail for safe keeping. A large crowd then collected, and there was angry remonstrance. Only a small pretext was necessary, so the masters were arrested for travelling on Sunday. Volunteer lawyers at once appeared to defend them, and did their part by making speeches of prodigious length. Meanwhile the negroes were set at large, and long before the farcical trial was over had disappeared. They were never re-captured, but the United States court awarded $600 and $830 to the masters respectively.

After a while the recovery of a fugitive became dangerous in the extreme. In 1842, there was much excitement at Harrisburg when two fugitives were arrested. The magistrates quickly discharged them on a technicality, but the slave-catchers not yet dismayed, tied them with ropes and tried to bring them before the court a second time. On the way a great mob of negroes attacked the captors with sticks and stones. It is said that there was at Harrisburg, at this time, a band of negroes who had united to resist and punish slave-hunters. In 1860, a fugitive was remanded to the custody of his masters at Lancaster. Immediately a crowd of negroes attempted his rescue and a riot ensued.

One reason why the master encountered so much abhorrence and detestation, was that kidnappers sometimes got possession of free negroes by asserting that they were fugitive slaves, and kidnapping was hated as much as any crime in Pennsylvania. In 1852, a police officer, a certain Ridgly, came from Baltimore to Columbia. He procured a warrant, and along with a United States
marshal arrested an alleged fugitive who had been living there for several years as a free man. The captors then started for Harrisburg, but were soon followed by the inevitable crowd of negroes. In the excitement which ensued the officer was severely bitten, whereupon, losing his presence of mind, he shot the captive dead. By travelling all day and all night he just managed to get across the Maryland line. The local newspaper comment was one of unqualified condemnation. "It makes one shudder," said the Harrisburg *Whig State Journal*, "to think that slave-hunters from other States can, and do, enter our borders, seize our citizens, and without provocation or proof that they are slaves, coolly shoot them down like beasts of prey."

Sometimes even the public officials resisted the recovery of a slave. Lydia Maria Child, writing of Robert Wharton, says: "To the honor of this worthy magistrate be it recorded, that during forty years whilst he was alderman in Philadelphia, and twenty years that he was mayor, he never once surrendered a fugitive slave to his claimant, though frequently called upon to do so. He used to tell Friend Hopper, that he could not conscientiously do it."

Last of all the government of the state of Pennsylvania gradually reflected the opinions of the mass of its people, and although it could not itself assist the men of the Underground Railroad, began to interpose legislative obstacles to the recovery of fugitive slaves.

In the beginning the state had not been unfriendly to the interests of Southern masters: indeed in 1826, a law was passed which guaranteed a certain amount of assistance. But as public sentiment changed the existence of this law upon the statute books became more and more irksome. Accordingly, when in the case of Prigg *v* Pennsylvania the Supreme Court of the United States declared the law unconstitutional, the legislature not only repealed it, but in 1847, passed another law exceedingly hostile.
This statute forbade the people of the state to give any help whatever to pursuing masters, and denied them the privilege of lodging in Pennsylvania jails the slaves whom they had captured. Furthermore, it made the entire process a hazardous one, since the burden of proof rested upon the slave-catcher, who could easily be accused of kidnapping. This action of Pennsylvania was undoubtedly one of the things which made necessary the Federal legislation of 1850.

The United States Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was designed to redress the grievances of Southern masters. In accordance with its provisions, people of Pennsylvania might be summoned to assist in capturing a negro, and most drastic penalties were denounced upon those who obstructed the return of a runaway. For a while the local newspapers record considerable activity in the securing of negro fugitives, but after a short time people were found willing to defy even the law of the United States. This was shown in the terrible Christiana riot of 1851, when Edward Gorsuch of Maryland was beaten to death by a mob of infuriated blacks, while the white people of the neighborhood did nothing to assist the Federal officials.

Many persons at last besought the state legislature to do that which twenty years before had caused such bitter condemnation of South Carolina. Pennsylvania was virtually asked to nullify a law of the Federal government. There were some who had sought to do this indirectly in 1838, when a convention had assembled to draft a new constitution for the state. On February 3, Mr. Biddle asked that jury trial “be granted to all persons who may be arrested as fugitives from labor, and who shall claim to be freemen.” This would have been in defiance of the Federal statute of 1793; but although the proposition was defeated, it was supported by a huge number of petitions from all over the state. The matter went much further than this, however. In 1858, the Pennsylvania
Anti-Slavery Society circulated a petition intended for the legislature. "We the undersigned, inhabitants of the State of Pennsylvania, respectfully ask that you will pass a Law prohibiting the surrender of any human being claimed as a Slave upon the soil of Pennsylvania." Had such a law been passed, it would have been nullification pure and simple. Numerous petitions of this kind actually came to the legislature.

All of this was not done without arousing great opposition on the part of the business interests of Philadelphia and of conservative people throughout the state, who hesitated to offend the South. That Pennsylvania's actions had awakened hostility became very clear about 1860. Therefore, not a few persons urged the legislature to repeal hostile enactments, and pass laws assisting Southern masters. The Public Ledger of January 3, 1861, notices a petition 500 feet long, signed by numerous business men, and containing altogether nearly 11,000 signatures. Probably nothing would have been done, but in any event it was too late, for the South was now resolved neither to ask nor endure anything more, but to seek redress by leaving those who had become hateful to her.

Such was the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania, and such were the feelings of the people of the state towards the questions of slavery and fugitive slaves. When these feelings are understood, it becomes evident that the Underground Railroad was but one of the instruments used by the state in her long warfare against slavery, a warfare so aggressive as to distinguish her above all of her sister commonwealths.