

***Extraordinary Life of Great Slave  
Harriet Jacobs***



***Avneet Kumar Singla***

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## **Brief Introduction**

*During the past seventeen years, Harriet Jacobs has lived most of the time with a respected family in New York, and has deported herself in a way that she is held in high esteem by them. This fact is sufficient, without further features of their character. I think those who know her will not be inclined to doubt her veracity, although some incidents in her story are more romantic than fiction.*

*It will be surprising, of course, that a woman who was raised in slavery can write so well. But circumstances will explain this. First and foremost, nature endowed them with quick perceptions. Secondly, the beloved, with whom she lived until the age of twelve, was a kind, considerate friend who taught her to read and spell. Thirdly, she was placed in favourable circumstances after coming to the North; frequent intercourse with intelligent people who felt a friendly interest in her well-being, and were ready to give her opportunities for self-improvement. The story is written in the feeling that Harriet Jacobs herself tells her story.*

*In this story, I, my or I should be considered Harriet Jacobs.*

## **I. Childhood**

*I was born a slave, but I never knew until six years of happy childhood had passed. My father was a carpenter and was considered so intelligent and skilful in his craft that when buildings were to be erected outside the common line, he was sent here from a great distance as a main worker. On condition of paying his beloved two hundred dollars a year and feeding himself, he was allowed to work in his trade and manage his own affairs. His greatest desire was to buy his children; but although he several times offered his hard income for this purpose, he never succeeded. In complexion, my parents were a light shade of brownish yellow and were called mulattoes. They lived together in a*

comfortable home; and although we were all slaves, I was so lovingly shielded that I never dreamed of being a piece of goods entrusted to them for safekeeping and could be demanded of them at any time. I had a brother, William, who was two years younger than me—a bright, loving child. I also had a great treasure in my maternal grandmother, who was a remarkable woman in many ways. She was the daughter of a gardener in South Carolina, who at his death released her mother and three children, with money to go to St. Augustine, where they had relatives. It was during the War of Independence, and they were captured on their passage, carried back and sold to various buyers. That was the story my grandmother told me, but I don't remember all the details. She was a little girl when she was captured and sold to a the keeper of a large hotel. I have often heard her tell how hard she was in her childhood. But as she grew older, she showed so much intelligence and was so faithful that her master and mistress could not help but see that it was in her interest to take care of such a valuable piece of property. She became an indispensable personality in the household, officiating in all functions, from the cook and nurse to the seamstress. She was widely praised for her cooking, and her cute crackers became so famous in the neighbourhood that many people had a desire to preserve them. In consequence of numerous inquiries of this kind, she asked her mistress for permission to bake crackers at night, after all the household chores were done; and she received permission to do so, provided that she would dress herself and her children from the profits. According to these conditions, after working hard for her beloved all day, she began midnight baking, supported by her two eldest children. The business turned out to be profitable; and every year she replenished a little, which was saved for a fund to buy her children. Their master died, and the property was divided among his heirs. The widow had her dowry in the hotel, which she continued to keep open. My grandmother

*remained in her service as a slave, but her children were divided among the children of her master. Since she had five, Benjamin, the youngest, was sold so that each heir had an equal share of dollars and cents. There was so little difference in our age that he seemed more like my brother than my uncle. He was a bright, handsome boy, almost white; for he inherited the complexion that my grandmother had from Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Although only ten years old, seven hundred and twenty dollars were paid for him. His sale was a terrible blow to my grandmother, but she, of course, was hopeful, and she went to work with renewed energy, trusting in the time to be able to buy some of her children. She had invested three hundred dollars, which her beloved one day begged as a loan and promised to pay it soon. The reader probably knows that no promise or letter given to a slave is legally binding; for under southern laws a slave who is property cannot hold property. When my grandmother lent her hard income to her beloved, she trusted only her honour. The honour of a slaveholder to a slave!*

*To this good grandmother I was indebted for many amenities. My brother Willie and I often received portions of the crackers, cakes, and preserves she made for sale; and after we ceased to be children we were indebted to her for many more important services.*

*These were the unusually happy circumstances of my early childhood. When I was six years old, my mother died; and then I learned for the first time from the conversation around me that I was a slave. My mother's mistress was the daughter of my grandmother's mistress. She was my mother's foster sister; they were both nursed at my grandmother's breast. In fact, my mother had been weaned at the age of three months so that the mistress's baby could receive enough food. They played together as children; and when they became wives, my mother was a most faithful*



*servant of her whiter foster sister. On her deathbed, her beloved promised that her children should never suffer for anything, and during her lifetime she kept her word. They all spoke kindly of my dead mother, who had been a slave in name only, but was noble and feminine by nature. I grieved for her, and my young mind was troubled by the thought of who would take care of me and my little brother now. I was told that my home should be with her mistress now; and I found it happy. No burdensome or unpleasant duties were imposed on me. My mistress was so kind to me that I was always glad to do her bidding and proud to work for her as much as my young years would allow. I sat by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as carefree as that of a free-born white child. When she thought I was tired, she sent me out to run and jump; and away I bounded to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days - too happy to last. The slave child had no thought for the morning; but there came this plague, which waits too surely for every man born to be a chattel.*

*When I was almost twelve years old, my kind mistress fell ill and died. When I saw the cheek grow paler and the eye glassy, how earnestly I prayed in my heart that she might live! I loved her, for she had been almost like a mother to me. My prayers were not answered. She died, and they buried her in the small cemetery, where day after day my tears fell on her grave.*

*I was sent to spend a week with my grandmother. I was now old enough to think about the future; and again and again I wondered what they would do to me. I was sure that I should never find another mistress who was as kind as the one who had left. She had promised my dying mother that her children should never suffer for anything; and as I remembered and remembered her many evidences of attachment to me, I could not help but have some hopes that she had set me free. My friends were almost sure that it*

would be so. They thought she would do it safely, because of my mother's love and faithful service. But alas! we all know that the memory of a faithful slave does not do much good to save her children from the auction block.

After a short period of suspense, my mistress's will be read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister's daughter, a five-year-old child. So our hopes disappeared. My mistress had taught me the commandments of the Word of God: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. "Whatever you want people to do to you, do the same to them. "But I was her slave, and I suppose she didn't recognize me as her neighbour. I would give much to erase this one great wrong from my memory. As a child, I loved my beloved; and when I look back on the happy days I spent with her, I try to think of this act of injustice with less bitterness. While I was with her, she taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, which so rarely falls to the lot of a slave, I bless her memory.

She had only a few slaves; and at her death these were all distributed among her relatives. Five of them were my grandmother's children and had shared the same milk that fed their mother's children. Despite my grandmother's long and faithful service to her owners, none of her children escaped the auction block. In the eyes of their masters, these God-breathing machines are no more than the cotton they plant or the horses they care for.

## **II. The new master and mistress.**

Dr. Flint, a doctor in the neighbourhood, had married my mistress's sister, and I was now the property of her little daughter. It was not without grumbling that I prepared for my new home; and what added to my misfortune was the fact that my brother William was bought by the same family. My father, by nature and by the habit of doing business as a skillful mechanic, had more of the feelings of a free man

than is common among slaves. My brother was a temperamental boy; and being brought up under such influences, he daily detested the name of master and beloved. One day, when his father and his mistress happened to call him both at the same time, he hesitated between the two; puzzled to know which had the strongest claim to his obedience. He finally decided to go to his beloved. When my father rebuked him for this, he said, "You both called me, and I didn't know where to go first."

"You are my child," answered our father, "and when I call you, you should come immediately if you have to go through fire and water."

Poor Willie! He should now learn his first lesson of obedience to a master. Grandmother tried to cheer us up with hopeful words, and they found an echo in the gullible hearts of youth.

When we entered our new home, we encountered cold looks, cold words and cold treatment. We were glad when night came. On my narrow bed I groaned and cried, I felt so desolate and alone.

I was there almost a year when a dear little friend of mine was buried. I heard her mother sobbing as the lumps fell on the coffin of her only child, and I turned away from the grave, grateful that I still had something to love. I met my grandmother, who said: "Come with me, Harriet;" and from her tone I knew that something sad had happened. She led me away from the people and then said, "My child, your father is dead." Dead! How could I believe it? He had died so suddenly that I hadn't even heard he was sick. I went home with my grandmother. My heart rebelled against God, who had taken from me mother, father, lover and friend. The good grandmother tried to comfort me. "Who knows the ways of God? she said. "Perhaps they were kindly taken by the coming evil days." Years later, I often thought about it.

*She promised to be a mother to her grandchildren as far as she was permitted; and strengthened by her love, I returned to my Lord. I thought I should be allowed to go to my father's house the next morning; but I was ordered to get flowers so that my mistress's house could be decorated for an evening party. I spent the day collecting flowers and weaving them into garlands while my father's body lay just a mile away from me. What did my owners take care of? he was just a piece of property. In addition, they thought that he spoiled his children by teaching them to feel human. This was a blasphemous doctrine for a slave to teach; presumptuous in him and dangerous to the masters.*

*The next day I followed his remains to a modest grave next to my dear mother's. There were those who knew the value of my father and respected his memory.*

*My home seemed more desolate than ever. The laughter of the little slave children sounded harsh and cruel. It was selfish to feel so about the joy of others. My brother moved with a very serious face. I tried to comfort him by saying, "Take courage, Willie; brighter days will come."*

*"You don't know anything about it, Harriet," he replied. "We will have to stay here all our days; we will never be free."*

*I argued that we were getting older and stronger and that maybe soon we could set our own time, and then we could make money to buy our freedom. William stated that this was much easier to say than to do; moreover, he did not intend to buy his freedom. We have caused controversy on this issue on a daily basis.*

*Little attention was paid to the meals of the slaves in Dr. Flint's house. If you could catch a bit of food while it went, well and good. I did not bother in this regard, because on my various errands I passed my grandmother's house, where there was always something left for me. I was often*

*threatened with punishment if I stopped there; and my grandmother often stood at the gate with something for breakfast or dinner so as not to arrest me. I was indebted to her for all my spiritual or temporal comforts. It was her work that supplied my scanty wardrobe. I have a vivid memory of the Linsey Woolsey dress that was given to me every winter by Mrs. Flint. How I hated it! It was one of the badges of slavery.*

*While my grandmother thus helped to support me from her hard income, the three hundred dollars she had lent to her lover were never repaid. When her lover died, her son-in-law, Dr. Flint, was appointed executor. When the grandmother asked him for payment, he said that the estate was insolvent, and the law forbade payment. However, it did not forbid him to keep the silver candelabra bought with this money. I suppose they are passed down in the family, from generation to generation.*

*My grandmother's mistress had always promised her that she should be free at her death; and it was said that in her will she fulfilled the promise. But when the estate was settled, Dr. Flint told the faithful old servant that under the circumstances it was necessary to sell them.*

*On the appointed day the usual advertisement was published announcing that there would be a "public sale of Negroes, horses, & c." Dr. Flint called to tell my grandmother that he was not willing to hurt her feelings by auctioning them, and that he would prefer to dispose of them at a private sale. My grandmother saw through his hypocrisy; she understood very well that he was ashamed of the job. She was a very temperamental woman, and if he was smart enough to sell her when her lover intended that she should be free, she was determined that the public should know. She had long provided many families with crackers and canned food; consequently, "Aunt Marthy", as*

she was called, was widely known, and every body who knew her respected her intelligence and good character. Her long and faithful service in the family was also known, and the intention of her beloved to release her. When the day of the sale came, she took her place among the chattels, and at the first call she jumped on the auction block. Many voices shouted: "Shame! Shame! Who's gonna sell you, Aunt Marthy? Don't stand there! This is no place for you." Without saying a word, she quietly waited for her fate. No one bid for them. At last a faint voice said, "Fifty dollars." It came from a maiden lady, seventy years old, the sister of my grandmother's deceased lover. She had lived under the same roof with my grandmother for forty years; she knew how faithfully she had served her owners and how cruelly she had been betrayed for her rights; and she decided to protect them. The auctioneer was waiting for a higher bid; but her wishes were respected; no one commanded above her. She could neither read nor write; and when the contract of sale was drawn up, she signed it with a cross. But what was the consequence when she had a great heart overflowing with human kindness? She gave the old servant her freedom.

At that time, my grandmother was just fifty years old. Laborious years had passed since then; and now my brother and I were slaves to the man who had cheated them for their money and tried to cheat them for their freedom. One of my mother's sisters, called Aunt Nancy, was also a slave in his family. She was a kind, good aunt to me; and provided the place of her mistress's housekeeper and waiting maid. She was indeed at the beginning and at the end of everything.

Mrs. Flint, like many women from the South, had a complete lack of energy. She did not have the strength to supervise her household affairs; but her nerves were so strong that she could sit in her chair and watch a woman whip until the



*blood dripped from every blink of an eye. She was a member of the church, but participation in the sacrament did not seem to put her in a Christian mood. If dinner was not served at the exact time that Sunday, she would stand in the kitchen and wait until it was dished up, and then spit out all the kettles and pans that had been used for cooking. She did this to prevent the cook and her children from boiling out their meager fare with the remnants of the sauce and other scratches. The slaves could not get anything to eat except what she gave them. Stocks were weighed three times a day with pounds and ounces. I can assure you that she did not give you a chance to eat wheat bread from her flour barrel. She knew how many cookies a liter of flour would make, and exactly what size they should be.*

*Dr. Flint was a connoisseur. The cook never sent a dinner to his table without fear and trembling; for if there was a dish that he did not like, he either ordered her to be flogged, or forced her to eat every mouthful of it in his presence. The poor hungry creature might not have minded eating it; but she did mind her master stuffing it down her throat until she choked.*

*They had a dog, which was a nuisance in the house. The cook was ordered to make some Indian porridge for him. He refused to eat, and when his head was held over it, the foam from his mouth flowed into the basin. He died a few minutes later. When Dr. Flint came in, he said that the porridge was not well cooked, and that was the reason why the animal would not eat it. He sent for the cook and forced her to eat it. He thought the woman's stomach was stronger than the dog's; but her sufferings afterwards proved that he was mistaken. This poor woman endured many cruelties from her master and mistress; sometimes she was imprisoned for a whole day and a whole night, away from her nursing baby.*

*When I was in the family for a couple of weeks, one of the plantation slaves was taken to the city on the orders of his master. It was near night when he arrived, and Dr. Flint ordered him to be taken to the workhouse and tied to the beam so that his feet would only escape the ground. In this situation, he should wait until the doctor had taken his tea. I'll never forget that night. Never before in my life had I heard hundreds of blows fall; one after another on a human being. His pitiful moans and his "O, do not pray, Massa" rang in my ear for months afterwards. There were many guesses about the cause of this terrible punishment. Some said that the master accused him of stealing corn; others said that the slave quarreled with his wife in the presence of the overseer and accused his master of being the father of their child. They were both black, and the child was very fair.*

*I went to the workhouse the next morning and saw the cowhide still wet with blood and the boards all covered with blood. The poor man continued to live and argue with his wife. A few months later, Dr. Flint handed them over to a slave trader. The culprit put their value in his pocket and had the satisfaction of knowing that they were out of sight and hearing. When the mother was handed over into the hands of the trader, she said. "You promised to treat me well." To which he replied: "You let your tongue run too far; goddamn it!" She had forgotten that it was a crime for a slave to say who the father of her child was.*

*From other than the Master persecution also comes in such cases. I once saw a young slave die shortly after the birth of a child almost white. In her agony she cried out: "O Lord, come and take me!" Her mistress stood by and mocked her like an incarnate fiend. "You're suffering, aren't you?" she exclaimed. "I'm glad about that. You deserve everything and more."*

*The girl's mother said, " The baby is dead, thank God; and I hope that soon my poor child will also be in heaven."*

*"Jesus!", replied the mistress. "There is no such place for you and your bastard."*

*The poor mother turned away sobbing. Her dying daughter called her weak, and as she bent over her, I heard her say: "Do not grieve so, Mother; God knows all about it; and He will have mercy on me."*

*Her sufferings, after that, became so intense that her mistress felt unable to stay; but when she left the room, the scornful smile was still on her lips. Seven children called their mother. The poor black woman had only the one child whose eyes she saw close in death while thanking God for taking her away from the greater bitterness of life.*

### ***III. The New Year's Day of Slaves.***

*Dr. Flint owned a fine residence in the town, several farms, and about fifty slaves, besides hiring a number from year to year.*

*The hiring day in the south will take place on January 1. On the 2d, the slaves are expected to go to their new masters. On a farm they work until corn and cotton are laid. You then have two holidays. Some masters will give you a good dinner under the trees. That's over, they work until Christmas Eve. If no serious charges are brought against them, they are given four or five holidays, depending on what the master or overseer sees fit. Then comes New Year's Eve; and they gather together their little everything, or more correctly, their little nothing, and eagerly await the dawn of the day. At the appointed hour, men, women and children crowd the grounds, waiting like criminals for their fate to be pronounced. The slave is sure to know who is the most humane or cruel master within forty miles of him.*

*It is easy to find out on this day who dresses and feeds his slaves well; for he is surrounded by a crowd of people and asks: "Please, Massa, hire me this year. I'll work very hard, massa."*

*If a slave is not ready to go with his new master, he will be flogged or imprisoned in prison until he agrees and promises not to run away during the year. Should he change his mind and find it justified to violate a blackmailed promise, woe betide him if he is caught! The whip is used until the blood flows at his feet; and his stiffened limbs are put in chains to be dragged into the field for days!*

*If he lives until next year, perhaps the same man will re-hire him without giving him the opportunity to go to the hiring place. After the ones to be rented are sold, the ones to be sold are called up.*

*Oh, you cheerful free women, contrast your New Year's Day with that of the poor servant's wife! With you it is a pleasant season, and the light of day is blessed. Kind wishes will meet you everywhere, and gifts will be showered on you. Even hearts that have become estranged from you become softer at this time of year, and lips that have been silent sound back: "I wish you a happy New Year." Children make their little sacrifices and raise their rosy lips for a caress. They are your own, and no hand but that of death can take them from you.*

*But for the slave mother, New Year's Day comes loaded with special worries. She sits on her cold cabin floor and watches the children, who may all be torn from her the next morning. and often she wishes that she and she die before the day dawns. She may be an ignorant creature degraded by the system that has made her brutal from childhood a; but she has the instinct of a mother and is able to feel the torments of a mother.*

*On one of these days of sales, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction block. She knew that some of them would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own city. Before night, their children were all far away. She asked the merchant to tell her where he wanted to take her; he refused. How could he, knowing that he would sell them individually, wherever he could get the highest price? I met this mother on the street, and her wild, haggard face lives in my head today. She wrung her hands in fear and exclaimed, " Away! All gone! Why doesn't God kill me?" I had no words to comfort her. Cases of this kind are of daily, even hourly occurrence.*

*Slaveholders have a method peculiar to their institution of getting rid of old slaves whose lives have been worn out in their service. I knew an old woman who served her Lord faithfully for seventy years. She had become almost helpless, from hard work and illness. Her owners moved to Alabama, and the old black woman had to be sold to any body that would give her twenty dollars.*

#### ***IV. The slave who dared to feel like a man.***

*Two years had passed since I had entered Dr. Flint's family, and those years had brought much of the knowledge that came from experience, though they had afforded little opportunity for other kinds of knowledge.*

*My grandmother had to be as much as possible a mother to her orphaned grandchildren. By perseverance and tireless work, she was now the mistress of a cozy little house, surrounded by the necessities of life. She would have been happy if her children had shared them with her. There remained only three children and two grandchildren, all slaves. Very earnestly she tried to make us feel that it was the will of God: that He had thought it right to put us in such*

*circumstances; and although it seemed hard, we should pray for satisfaction.*

*It was a beautiful faith that came from a mother who could not call her children her own. But me and Benjamin, her youngest boy, condemned it. We thought that it was much more the will of God that we should be set up as it was. We longed for a home like yours. There we always found sweet balm for our problems. She was so loving, so sympathetic! She always met us with a smile and patiently listened to all our worries. She spoke so hopefully that unconsciously the clouds gave way to the sunshine. There was also a big big oven there that baked bread and nice things for the city, and we knew there was always a choice for us.*

*But alas! Even the charm of the old stove did not reconcile us with our hard lot. Benjamin was now a tall, handsome boy, strong and gracefully made, and with a spirit too bold and daring for a slave. My brother William, now twelve years old, had the same aversion to the word master that he had when he was an urchin of seven years. I was his confidant. He came to me with all his problems. I especially remember one case. It was on a beautiful spring morning, and when I saw the sunlight dancing here and there, its beauty seemed to mock my sadness. For my master, whose restless, eager, malignant nature wandered day and night, seeking whom to devour, had just left me, with piercing, scorching words; words that scattered ear and brain like fire. Oh, how I despised him! I thought how glad I should be if one day, when he walked the earth, it would open up and devour him and rid the world of a plague.*

*When he told me that I was made for his use, to obey his command in everything; that I was nothing but a slave whose will had and should submit to his, my puny arm had never felt half so strong.*



*So deeply was I absorbed in painful reflections that I neither saw nor heard the entrance of anyone until the voice of William sounded close beside me. "Harriet," he said, " why do you look so sad? I love you. Oh, Harriet, isn't this a bad world? Everyone seems so cross and unhappy. I wish I had died when poor father did."*

*I told him that everyone was not happy or unhappy; that those who had a pleasant home and friendly friends and were not afraid to love them were happy. But we, who were slave children, without a father or mother, could not expect to be happy. We must be good; perhaps that would bring us satisfaction.*

*"Yes," he said, " I try to be good; but what good is it? They worry me all the time." Then he told the difficulties of his afternoon with the young master Nicholas. It seemed that the brother of Master Nicholas was content to invent stories about William. Master Nicholas said he should be flogged, and he would do it. Whereupon he went to work; but Wilhelm fought bravely, and the young master, finding that he was getting better, undertook to tie his hands behind him. He failed in this regard. By kicks and punches William came out of the fray for a few scratches.*

*He continued to discuss the meanness of his young master; how he flogged the little boys, but was a perfect coward when a quarrel arose between him and white boys of his own size. On such occasions, he always took his legs. William had other allegations to make against him. One was how he rubbed pennies with mercury and passed them for a quarter of a dollar to an old man who had a fruit stand. William was often sent to buy fruit, and he seriously asked me what to do under such circumstances. I told him that it was certainly wrong to deceive the old man, and that it was his duty to tell him about the imposition of his young master. I assured him that the old man would not slowly*

*comprehend the whole thing, and there the matter would end. William thought it might be with the old man, but not with him. He said he didn't mind whipping the whip, but he didn't like the idea of being flogged.*

*While I advised him to be good and forgiving, I was unaware of the ray in my own eye. It was the knowledge of my own shortcomings that pushed me to keep, if possible, some sparks of my brother's God-given nature. I had not lived fourteen years in slavery for anything. I had felt, seen and heard enough to read the characters and question the motives of those around me. The war of my life had begun; and although I was one of God's most powerless creatures, I chose never to be defeated. Oh, for me!*

*If there was a pure, sunny spot for me, I believed it was in Benjamin's heart and in that of another whom I loved with all the passion of a girl's first love. My owner knew about this and tried in every way to make me unhappy. He resorted not to corporal punishment, but to all the small, tyrannical ways that human ingenuity could develop.*

*I remember the first time I was punished. It was in the month of February. My grandmother had taken my old shoes and replaced them with a new pair. I needed them; for several inches of snow had fallen, and it was still falling. As I walked through Mrs. Flint's room, her creak rubbed hard on her refined nerves. She called me to her and asked what I had about me that made such a terrible noise. I told her it was my new shoes. "Take them off," she said; "and when you put them on again, I will throw them into the fire."*

*I took them off, and so did my stockings. She then sent me a long distance, on an errand. As I walked through the snow, my bare feet tingled. That night I was very hoarse; and I went to bed thinking that the next day would find me sick, perhaps dead. What was my grief when I woke up to find myself quite well!*

*I had imagined, if I was going to die, or was laid for some time, that my mistress would feel a twinge of remorse that she had hated "the little Imp" the way she had styled me. It was my ignorance of this mistress that led to such extravagant notions.*

*Dr. Flint had occasionally offered high prices for me; but he always said, " She does not belong to me. She's my daughter's property, and I have no right to sell her. "Good, honest man! My young mistress was still a child, and I could not seek protection from her. I loved her, and she reciprocated my affection. I once heard her father allude to her attachment to me, and his wife promptly replied that she was walking out of fear. This brought unpleasant doubts to my mind. Did the child pretend that he did not feel? or was her mother jealous of the mite of love she gave me? I came to the conclusion that it must be the latter. I said to myself, "Sure, little children are true."*

*One afternoon I sat at my table and felt an unusual depression of spirits. My mistress had accused me of an offence of which I assured her I was perfectly innocent; but I saw, by the contemptuous curl of her lip, that she believed I was lying.*

*I wondered for what wise purpose God led me through such thorny paths, and whether even darker days awaited me. As I mused, the door opened softly, and William came in. "Well, brother," I said, " what's going on this time?"*

*"O Harriet, Ben and his master had a terrible time!"he said.*

*My first thought was that Benjamin was killed. "Fear not, Harriet," said William; " I will tell you all about it."*

*It seemed that Benjamin's master had sent after him, and he did not immediately obey the summons. When he did, his master was furious and began to whip him. He resisted. Master and slave fought, and finally the master was thrown.*