

## Sarah H. Bradford

# Harriet, the Moses of Her People

EAN 8596547175018

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: <u>DigiCat@okpublishing.info</u>



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRFFA( F	
	ı

**By PROFESSOR HOPKINS** 

**HARRIET**,

SOME ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF "HARRIET."

**APPENDIX.** 

**FUGITIVE SLAVE RESCUE IN TROY.** 

### PREFACE.

#### Table of Contents

The title I have given my black heroine, in this second edition of her story, viz.: THE MOSES OF HER PEOPLE, may seem a little ambitious, considering that this Moses was a woman, and that she succeeded in piloting only three or four hundred slaves from the land of bondage to the land of freedom.

But I only give her here the name by which she was familiarly known, both at the North and the South, during the years of terror of the Fugitive Slave Law, and during our last Civil War, in both of which she took so prominent a part.

And though the results of her unexampled heroism were not to free a whole nation of bond-men and bond-women, yet this object was as much the desire of her heart, as it was of that of the great leader of Israel. Her cry to the slave-holders, was ever like his to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" and not even he imperiled life and limb more willingly, than did our courageous and self-sacrificing friend.

Her name deserves to be handed down to posterity, side by side with the names of Jeanne D'Arc, Grace Darling, and Florence Nightingale, for not one of these women, noble and brave as they were, has shown more courage, and power of endurance, in facing danger and death to relieve human suffering, than this poor black woman, whose story I am endeavoring in a most imperfect way to give you.

Would that Mrs. Stowe had carried out the plan she once projected, of being the historian of our sable friend; by her graphic pen, the incidents of such a life might have been wrought up into a tale of thrilling interest, equaling, if not exceeding her world renowned "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The work fell to humbler hands, and the first edition of this story, under the title of "Harriet Tubman," was written in the greatest possible haste, while the writer was preparing for a voyage to Europe. There was pressing need for this book, to save the poor woman's little home from being sold under a mortgage, and letters and facts were penned down rapidly, as they came in. The book has now been in part rewritten and the letters and testimonials placed in an appendix.

For the satisfaction of the incredulous (and there will naturally be many such, when so strange a tale is repeated to them), I will here state that so far as it has been possible, I have received corroboration of every incident related to me by my heroic friend. I did this for the satisfaction of others, not for my own. No one can hear Harriet talk, and not believe every word she says. As Mr. Sanborn says of her, "she is too *real* a person, not to be true."

Many incidents quite as wonderful as those related in the story, I have rejected, because I had no way in finding the persons who could speak to their truth.

This woman was the friend of William H. Seward, of Gerritt Smith, of Wendell Phillips, of William Lloyd Garrison, and of many other distinguished philanthropists before the War, as of very many officers of the Union Army during the conflict.

After her almost superhuman efforts in making her own escape from slavery, and then returning to the South *nineteen times*, and bringing away with her over three

hundred fugitives, she was sent by Governor Andrew of Massachusetts to the South at the beginning of the War, to act as spy and scout for our armies, and to be employed as hospital nurse when needed.

Here for four years she labored without any remuneration, and during the time she was acting as nurse, never drew but twenty days' rations from our Government. She managed to support herself, as well as to take care of the suffering soldiers.

Secretary Seward exerted himself in every possible way to procure her a pension from Congress, but red-tape proved too strong even for him, and her case was rejected, because it did not come under any recognized law.

The first edition of this little story was published through the liberality of Gerritt Smith, Wendell Phillips, and prominent men in Auburn, and the object for which it was written was accomplished. But that book has long been out of print, and the facts stated there are all unknown to the present generation. There have, I am told, often been calls for the book, which could not be answered, and I have been urged by many friends as well as by Harriet herself, to prepare another edition. For another necessity has arisen and she needs help again not for herself, but for certain helpless ones of her people.

Her own sands are nearly run, but she hopes, 'ere she goes home, to see this work, a hospital, well under way. Her last breath and her last efforts will be spent in the cause of those for whom she has already risked so much.

For them her tears will fall, For them her prayers ascend;

To them her toils and cares be given, Till toils and cares shall end. S.H.B.

# Letter from Mr. Oliver Johnson for the second edition:

NEW YORK, March 6, 1886.

### MY DEAR MADAM:

I am very glad to learn that you are about to publish a revised edition of your life of that heroic woman, Harriet Tubman, by whose assistance so many American slaves were enabled to break their bonds.

During the period of my official connection with the Anti-Slavery office in New York, I saw her frequently, when she came there with the companies of slaves, whom she had successfully piloted away from the South; and often listened with wonder to the story of her adventures and hair-breadth escapes.

She always told her tale with a modesty which showed how unconscious she was of having done anything more than her simple duty. No one who listened to her could doubt her perfect truthfulness and integrity.

Her shrewdness in planning the escape of slaves, her skill in avoiding arrest, her courage in every emergency, and her willingness to endure hardship and face any danger for the sake of her poor followers was phenomenal. I regret to hear that she is poor and ill, and hope the sale of your book will give her the relief she so much needs and so well deserves.

Yours truly,

OLIVER JOHNSON.

AUBURN THEOL. SEMINARY, *March* 16, 1886.

# By PROFESSOR HOPKINS

Table of Contents

The remarkable person who is the subject of the following sketch, has been residing mostly ever since the close of the war in the outskirts of the City of Auburn, during all which time I have been well acquainted with her. She has all the characteristics of the pure African race strongly marked upon her, though from which one of the various tribes that once fed the Barracoons, on the Guinea coast, she derived her indomitable courage and her passionate love of freedom I know not; perhaps from the Fellatas, in whom those traits were predominant.

Harriet lives upon a farm which the twelve hundred dollars given her by Mrs. Bradford from the proceeds of the first edition of this little book, enabled her to redeem from a mortgage held by the late Secretary Seward.

Her household is very likely to consist of several old black people, "bad with the rheumatize," some forlorn wandering woman, and a couple of small images of God cut in ebony. How she manages to feed and clothe herself and them, the Lord best knows. She has too much pride and too much faith to beg. She takes thankfully, but without any great effusiveness of gratitude, whatever God's messengers bring her.

I have never heard that she absolutely lacked. There are some good people in various parts of the country, into whose hearts God sends the thought, from time to time, that Harriet may be at the bottom of the flour sack, or of the potatoes, and the "help in time of need" comes to her.

Harriet's simplicity and ignorance have, in some cases, been imposed upon, very signally in one instance in Auburn, a few years ago; but nobody who knows her has the slightest doubt of her perfect integrity.

The following sketch taken by Mrs. Bradford, chiefly from Harriet's own recollections, which are wonderfully distinct and minute, but also from other corroborative sources, gives but a very imperfect account of what this woman has been.

Her color, and the servile condition in which she was born and reared, have doomed her to obscurity, but a more heroic soul did not breathe in the bosom of Judith or of Jeanne D'Arc.

No fear of the lash, the blood-hound, or the fiery stake, could divert her from her self-imposed task of leading as many as possible of her people "from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

The book is good literature for the black race, or the white race, and though no similar conditions may arise, to test the possibilities that are in any of them, yet the example of this poor slave woman may well stand out before them, and before all people, black or white, to show what a lofty and martyr spirit may accomplish, struggling against overwhelming obstacles.

# HARRIET,

Table of Contents

### THE MOSES OF HER PEOPLE.

On a hot summer's day, perhaps sixty years ago, a group of merry little darkies were rolling and tumbling in the sand in front of the large house of a Southern planter. Their shining skins gleamed in the sun, as they rolled over each other in their play, and their voices, as they chattered together, or shouted in glee, reached even to the cabins of the negro quarter, where the old people groaned in spirit, as they thought of the future of those unconscious young revelers; and their cry went up, "O, Lord, how long!"

Apart from the rest of the children, on the top rail of a fence, holding tight on to the tall gate post, sat a little girl of perhaps thirteen years of age; darker than any of the others, and with a more decided *woolliness* in the hair; a pure unmitigated African. She was not so entirely in a state of nature as the rollers in the dust beneath her; but her only garment was a short woolen skirt, which was tied around her waist, and reached about to her knees. She seemed a dazed and stupid child, and as her head hung upon her breast, she looked up with dull blood-shot eyes towards her

young brothers and sisters, without seeming to see them. Bye and bye the eyes closed, and still clinging to the post, she slept. The other children looked up and said to each other, "Look at Hatt, she's done gone off agin!" Tired of their present play ground they trooped off in another direction, but the girl slept on heavily, never losing her hold on the post, or her seat on her perch. Behold here, in the stupid little negro girl, the future deliverer of hundreds of her people; the spy and scout of the Union armies; the devoted hospital nurse; the protector of hunted fugitives; the eloquent speaker in public meetings; the cunning eluder of pursuing man-hunters; the heaven guided pioneer through dangers seen and unseen; in short, as she has well been called, "The Moses of her People."

Here in her thirteenth year she is just recovering from the first terrible effects of an injury inflicted by her master, who in an ungovernable fit of rage threw a heavy weight at the unoffending child, breaking in her skull, and causing a pressure upon her brain, from which in her old age she is suffering still. This pressure it was which caused the fits of somnolency so frequently to come upon her, and which gave her the appearance of being stupid and half-witted in those early years. But that brain which seemed so dull was full of busy thoughts, and her life problem was already trying to work itself out there.

She had heard the shrieks and cries of women who were being flogged in the negro quarter; she had listened to the groaned out prayer, "Oh, Lord, have mercy!" She had already seen two older sisters taken away as part of a chain gang, and they had gone no one knew whither; she had seen the agonized expression on their faces as they turned to take a last look at their "Old Cabin Home;" and had watched them from the top of the fence, as they went off weeping and lamenting, till they were hidden from her sight forever. She saw the hopeless grief of the poor old mother, and the silent despair of the aged father, and already she began to revolve in her mind the question, "Why should such things be?" "Is there no deliverance for my people?"

The sun shone on, and Harriet still slept seated on the fence rail. They, those others, had no anxious dreams of the future, and even the occasional sufferings of the present time caused them but a temporary grief. Plenty to eat, and warm sunshine to bask in, were enough to constitute their happiness; Harriet, however, was not one of these. God had a great work for her to do in the world, and the discipline and hardship through which she passed in her early years, were only preparing her for her after life of adventure and trial; and through these to come out as the Savior and Deliverer of her people, when she came to years of womanhood.

As yet she had seen no "visions," and heard no "voices;" no foreshadowing of her life of toil and privation, of flight before human blood-hounds, of watchings, and hidings, of perils by land, and perils by sea, yea, and of perils by false brethren, or of miraculous deliverance had yet come to her. No hint of the great mission of her life, to guide her people from the land of bondage to the land of freedom. But, "Why should such things be?" and "Is there no help?" These were the guestions of her waking hours.