

FROM WILLIAM STILL'S *THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD* - 1871

That William Penn who worked so faithfully for two years for the deliverance of Ann Maria may not appear to have been devoting all his time and sympathy towards this single object it seems expedient that two or three additional letters, proposing certain grand Underground Rail Road plans, should have a place here. For this purpose, therefore, the following letters are subjoined.

LETTERS FROM WILLIAM PENN.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Oct. 3, 1854.

DEAR SIR:-I address you today chiefly at the suggestion of the Lady who will hand you my letter, and who is a resident of your city. After stating to you, that the case about which I have previously written, remains just as it was when I wrote last-full of difficulty-I thought I would call your attention to another enterprise; it is this: to find a man with a large heart for doing good to the oppressed, who will come to Washington to live, and who will walk out to Penn's, or a part of the way there, once or twice a week. He will find parties who will pay him for doing so. Parties of say, two, three, five or so, who will pay him at least \$5 each, for the privilege of following him, but will never speak to him; but will keep just in sight of him and obey any sign he may give; say, he takes off his hat and scratches his head as a sign for them to go to some barn or wood to rest, &c. No living being shall be found to say he ever spoke to them. A white man would be best, and then even parties led out by him could not, if they would, testify to any understanding or anything else against a white man. I think he might make a good living at it. Can it not be done? If one or two safe stopping-places could be found on the way-such as a barn or shed, they could walk quite safely all night and then sleep all day-about two, or easily three nights would convey them to a place of safety. The traveler might be a peddler or huckster, with an old horse and cart, and bring us in eggs and butter if he pleases. Let him once plan out his route, and he might then take ten or a dozen at a time, and they are often able and willing to pay \$10 a piece. I have a hard case now on hand; a brother and sister 23 to 25 years old, whose mother lives in your city. They are cruelly treated; they want to go, they ought to go; but they are utterly destitute. Can nothing be done for such cases? If you can think of anything let me know it. I suppose you know me?

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 3, 1856.

DEAR SIR:-I sent you the recent law of Virginia, under which all vessels are to be searched for fugitives within the waters of that State. It was long ago sug-

gested by a sagacious friend, that the "powder boy" might find a better port in the Chesapeake Bay, or in the Patuxent river to communicate with this vicinity, than by entering the Potomac River, even were there no such law.

Suppose he opens a trade with some place southwest of Annapolis, 25 or 30 miles from here, or less. He might carry wood, oysters, &c., and all his customers from this vicinity might travel in that direction without any of the suspicions that might attend their journeyings towards this city. In this way, doubtless, a good business might be carried on without interruption or competition, and provided the plan was conducted without affecting the inhabitants along that shore, no suspicion would arise as to the manner or magnitude of his business operations. How does this strike you? What does the "powder boy" think of it?

I heretofore intimated a pressing necessity on the part of several females-they are va-riously situated-two have children, say a couple each; some have none-of the latter, one can raise \$50, another, say 30 or 40 dollars-another who was gazetted last August (a copy sent you), can raise, through her friends, 20 or 30 dollars, &c., &c. None of these can walk so far or so fast as scores of men that are constantly leaving. I cannot shake off my anxiety for these poor creatures. Can you think of anything for any of these? Address your other correspondent in answer to this at your leisure. Yours, WM. PENN.

P. S. -April 3rd. Since writing the above, I have received yours of 31st. I am rejoiced to hear that business is so successful and prosperous-may it continue till the article shall cease to be merchandize.

I spoke in my last letter of the departure of a "few friends." I have since heard of their good health in Penn's. Probably you may have seen them.

In reference to the expedition of which you think you can "hold out some little encouragement," I will barely remark, that I shall be glad, if it is undertaken, to have all the notice of the time and manner that is possible, so as to make ready.

A friend of mine says, anthracite coal will always pay here from Philadelphia, and thinks a small vessel might run often-that she never would be searched in the Potomac, Sinless she went outside.

You advise caution towards Mr. P. I am precisely of your opinion about him, that he is a "queer stick," and while I advised him carefully in reference to his own undertakings, I took no counsel of him concerning mine. Yours,

W. P.

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 23d, 1856.

DEAR SIR: -I have to thank you for your last two encouraging letters of 31st of March and 7th April. I have seen nothing in the papers to interest you, and having bad health and a press of other engagements, I have neglected to write you.

Enclosed is a list of persons referred to in my last letter, all most anxious to travel-all meritorious. In some of these I feel an especial interest for what they have done to help others in distress.

I suggest for yours and the "powder boy's" consideration the following plan: that he shall take in coal for Washington and come directly here-sell his coal and go to Georgetown for freight, and wait for it. If any fancy articles are sent on board, I understand he has a place to put them in, and if he has I suggest that he lies still, still waiting for freight till the first anxiety is over. Vessels that have just left are the ones that will be inquired after, and perhaps chased. If he lays still a day or two all suspicion will be pre-vented. If there shall be occasion to refer to any of them hereafter, it may be by their numbers in the list/

The family-5 to 11-will be missed and inquired after soon and urgently; 12 and 13 will also be soon missed, but none of the others.

If all this can be done, some little time or notice must be had to get them all ready. They tell me they can pay the sums marked to their names. The aggregate is small, but as 1 told you, they are poor. Let me hear from you when convenient.

Truly Yours, WM. PENN.

LETTER FROM E. L. STEVENS, ESQ.

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 11th, 1858.

(The reader will interpret for himself.)

MY DEAR SIR:---Susan Bell left here yesterday with the child of her relative, and since leaving I have thought, perhaps, you had not the address of the gentleman in Syracuse where the child is to be taken for medical treatment, etc. His name is Dr. H. B. Wilbur. A woman living with him is a most excellent nurse and will take a deep interest in the child, which, no doubt, will under Providence be the means of its complete restoration to health. Be kind enough to inform me whether Susan is with you, and if she is give her the proper direction. Ten packages were sent to your address last evening one of them belongs to Susan, and she had better remain with you till she gets it, as it may not have come to hand.

Susan thought she would go to Harrisburg when she left here and stay over Sunday, if so, she would not get to Philadelphia till, Monday or Tuesday. Please acknowledge the receipt of this, and inform me of her arrival, also when the packages came safe to hand, inform me especially if Susan's came safely.

Truly Yours, E. L. STEVENS.

LETTER FROM REV. H. WILSON (U. G. R. R. AG'T).

ST. CATHARINE, C. W., July 2d, 1855.

MY DEAR FRIEND, WM. STILL: - Mr. Elias Jasper and Miss Lucy Bell having arrived here safely on Saturday last, and found their "companions in tribulation," who had arrived before them, I am induced to write and let you know the fact. They are a cheerful, happy company, and very grateful for their freedom. I have done the best I could for their comfort, but they are about to proceed across the lake to Toronto, thinking they can do better there than here, which is not unlikely. They all remember you as their friend and benefactor, and return to you their sincere thanks. My means of support are so scanty, that I am obliged to write without paying postage, or not write at all. I hope you are not moneyless, as I am. In attending to the wants of numerous strangers, I am much of the time perplexed from lack of means; but send on as many as you can and I will divide with them to the last crumb.

Yours truly, HIRAM WILSON.

LETTER FROM E. F. PENNYPACKER (U. G. R. R. DEPOT).

SCHUYLKILL, 11th mo., 7th day, 1857.

WM. STILL: -Respected Friend-There are three colored friends at my house now, who will reach the city by the Phil. & Reading train this evening. Please meet them.

Thine, &c., E. F. PENNYPACKER.

We have within the past 2 mos, passed 43 through our hands, transported most of them to Norristown in our own conveyance. E. F. P.