

HARRIET TUBMAN DAVIS

NOTED NEGRO WOMAN WHO DIED RECENTLY.

Harriet Tubman Davis, an ex-slave known as "The Moses of Her People," and regarded as one of the most remarkable women of the age, died last Monday night at the Harriet Tubman Home for Indigent Aged Negroes, at Auburn, N. Y. As nearly as she could tell she was ninety-eight years of age. For the past year she had been in feeble health, and had been confined to her room. Recently she contracted pneumonia, which caused her death.

Harriet Tubman Davis, of Harriet Tubman, as she was better known, was known and held in high esteem by Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Phillips Brooks, Horace Mann, Frederick Douglass, Gerrit Smith, and John Brown. Of pure Ashantee blood, she was born on a plantation in Dorchester County, Maryland. At the early age of thirteen her instinctive antagonism against the tyranny of master over slave caused her to protest at the brutality of an overseer who pursued a slave with a club. The overseer knocked her down.

The injuries she received on that occasion brought on fits of somnolency with which she suffered until long after the war, when she obtained relief at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Perhaps it was this injury that gave her the wonderful cunning rising at times to the cleverest strategy, which was so remarkable in one of her apparent intellectual attainments.

She fell ill, and while confined to her cabin became very religious, developing an almost fanatic faith that carried her through dangers where strong men of her race faltered.

Her master died, and word went around the quarters that the slaves were to be "sold South," the thing most dreaded by Negroes of the upper tier of Southern States. Harriet counselled the Negroes to run away, but none had the courage to follow her. She knew only that if she followed the north star it would lead her to freedom, and one night she stole away.

Of the terrible journey north she remembered little; her instinct guided her and her great strength enabled her to stand the privation.

She obtained employment and saved all she earned. Then she disappeared and was not seen for months. She had dared to go back to the land of bondage to show others the path to freedom.

It wasn't long before throughout the plantations of Maryland and Virginia were spread rewards for a Negro woman who was luring the slaves away from their masters. The price for the capture, dead or alive, of Harriet Tubman rose to over \$40,000, but she was never taken. She made over nineteen trips into the very heart of the country where the head money was offered. She continued this work until the beginning of the civil war.

When the abolition movement became active she went into it heart and soul. Whenever she could get to a meeting she went and inspired others with her great faith. It was while on her way to attend a meeting in Boston at the invitation of Gerrit Smith that she fought the greatest single battle of her career.

She had stopped off at Troy, and while there learned that a fugitive slave, Charles Nalle, a half-brother of the master who followed him, and as white as his owner, had been taken and was in the hands of the officers, having been remanded back to Virginia. She went at once to the office of the United States Commissioner, collecting on the way a large crowd.

The crowd held back the officers, who were about to convey the slave to a wagon, and bids for the slave's purchase began. The owner offered to sell for \$1,200, but when that was bid he raised his price to \$1,500. A man across the street raised a window and shouted:

"Two hundred dollars for his rescue but not one cent to his master!"

That fired the crowd, and when the officers tried to bring the slave out the crowd surged around the wagon. Harriet, who had kept her position at the door of the Commissioner's office, shouted: "Here he comes! Take him!" and led the assault.

Her enormous physical strength has been spoken of. Breaking through the police line she seized the prisoner under the armpits and began to drag him down the street.

"Drag us out!" she shouted to her friends. "Drag him to the river! Drown him, but don't let dem have him!"

A policeman hit her on the head

with his club, and, freeing one hand, she knocked him back into the crowd. Another jumped for her, but she caught him about the neck, throttled him, and threw him over her shoulder.

She was dragged down, but kept her hold on the slave. Aroused to fighting pitch by her splendid courage, the crowd massed around her, and dragged her and the slave to the river, where the fugitive was thrown into a boat, which pulled out.

As the slave-owners had paid agents in Philadelphia, she decided to establish her free slaves elsewhere, and started a settlement at Cape May, N. J., in 1852. This place was successfully managed by her with the aid of Thomas Garrett, the Quaker abolitionist, of Wilmington, Del. She personally escorted 300 Negroes to freedom in parties of one to nine.

The Fugitive Slave law enforcement made her work more difficult each year. Driven from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, she came to New York. The Dred Scott decision in 1857 forced her to establish her last station on the underground in Canada. At this time Auburn came into prominence as one of the underground stations, and William H. Seward, later Lincoln's Secretary of State, was one of Harriet's best supporters, giving liberally from his private funds to pay carfare for fugitives from Auburn to Suspension Bridge, whence they got into Canada.

When, in 1863, it was decided to use Negro troops, Harriet pleaded to be appointed an army nurse. When the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers marched away from camp at Readville, Mass., under command of Col. Robert Gould Shaw, Harriet left for the South with a commission in her dress pocket from Gov. Andrew. Down at Port Royal, she cooked for Col. Shaw, and dined with him, too, on occasions, when she had important information to impart.

When she was not acting as cook, she scouted around the enemy's lines, where she listened, and returned to repeat many things to the Union officers that they were glad to know. On one occasion, she informed Maj.-Gen. Hunter at Hilton Head of mines planted in the river, and several gunboats sent to the scene removed a lot of torpedoes that would have smashed an expedition that was about to pass over this dangerous ground.

Harriet lived for a time at the home of Emerson, in Concord, and spent some time visiting the family of William Lloyd Garrison, the Alcotts, the Whitneys, Mrs. Horace Mann, and Phillips Brooks. Wendell Phillips wrote of her, on June 16, 1868:

Illustrative of Harriet's hold upon the officers of the North and their confidence in her, one of her many wartime passes may be quoted showing the privileges she enjoyed. It was issued to her by Major-Gen. David Hunter at Port Royal, near Hilton Head, headquarters of the Department of the South in 1863. It reads:

"Pass the bearer, Harriet Tubman, to Beaufort and back to this place, and wherever she wishes to go; and give her free passage at all times on all Government transports. Harriet was sent to me by Gov. Andrew, of Massachusetts, and is a valuable woman. She has permission, as a servant of the Government, to purchase such provisions from the Commissary as she may need.

David Hunter,
Major-General Commanding."

After the war Harriet located in Auburn, N. Y., permanently. She was the widow of a man named Tubman, who died in the South and later she married Nelson Davis.

In 1896 she bought a portion of what was known as the Beardsley estate north of her property, and founded in that year the Harriet Tubman home, converting the former dwelling into the home.—N. Y. Evening Post.