

The Underground Railroad.

Not the least important of all the great railroad enterprises which are rapidly, but almost imperceptibly, effecting great changes in the condition of the country and in the social and political relations of the States toward each other, is that mysterious organization called the "Underground Railroad." As its managers publish an annual or quarterly statement of its operations, and its stock not being recognized by the bulls and bears of Wall-street, it is not half so much talked about as many other roads which are not, in truth, of half so much importance.

Who is the president of the underground railroad, who its secretary, and who compose its board of managers, what is the value of the stock, or the actual extent of its operations, we do not know, and have no means of learning. We only know that it confines itself solely to the passenger business, that, whatever may be thought of its character, it was never doing better than at present, as we are assured, and that its operations must be much more sensibly felt and appreciated in the slave States which border on free territory than they can be here.

The silent operations of the "underground road" must, in time, tell with powerful effect in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Kentucky, and render the "peculiar Institution" in those States so unprofitable that it will hardly be worth preserving, for, since this subterranean arrangement for the conveyance of that peculiar kind of property, which has the power of walking off with itself, was established, stampedes have become more frequent than ever, and the border counties of the slave States are fast losing their laboring population.

We happened, by the merest accident a short time ago, to drop in upon the depot of the Subterranean Road, not having any suspicion of the uses to which it was put; and seeing a "lot of likely young negroes" sitting there, who looked as though they had but recently come from a plantation, we inquired who and what they were, and found that they had just arrived by the Underground Road, and were only stopping a few hours for refreshment.

They were a fine, hearty-looking set of men, very black, and seemingly well pleased with their prospects. We questioned them as to the manner in which they found their way, and how they came to know there was such an institution as that which had enabled them to escape from bondage; but they were not disposed to be communicative. Some of them were from Virginia, some from Maryland, and one from North Carolina. One of the men, a very intelligent-looking mulatto, said that he had just been sold for \$1,300, and not liking his new master, he thought he would try to take care of himself. One of the women was very sad at the thought of the little child she had left behind, and planned a scheme for going back to "fotch him."

We were informed that the weekly arrivals by the Underground Road, at this season of the year, average eight to ten persons, now and then one of their number being a woman with an infant. A short time since there arrived one day a Virginia matron with six black jewels and one at the breast, and it generally happens that when the husband comes first the wife soon follows after him. The most active season for the operation of the Underground Road, as we understand, is during the holidays, when the plantation slaves are indulged with more freedom than at other times. Christmas week is the season, too, for hiring slaves for the year, and a change of masters offers favorable opportunities for escape.

If the railroads afford facilities for the escape of slaves, they also, afford increased facilities for their pursuit and recovery; so it would be unwise in our Southern brethren to raise any objections to these iron bands which are binding our States more closely together, on the score of the aid they render to their absconding property. The greater part of the passengers by the Underground Road make directly to Canada, and, while *in transitu*, stop so short a time in any one place, that their owners have but slender chances of their recovery.—*New York Times*.