will not have her storage chest.Thee wants mama to have her bureau,doesn't thee?"

Ellen knew there was only one answer. She nodded her head,unhappily. Nonetheless when she went to bed that night her world was a little less warm, a little less loving, a little less secure.

The cherry chest still remains with a descendant of the Smith family. First, it belonged to mother Orpah and then to Ellen when she was grown and mama didn't need it any more. After that it became Orpah Taber Greene's and, later, it added dignity and luster to Lillian Greene Bitcon's lovely homes. Now it has crossed the continent to California where it is in the keeping of Penelope Greene Kammerer. After one hundred and thirty years ,its polished wood still holds the gleam of the amber suns that gave it life. Does it still remember a little girl with dolls and the sound of wind shaking,shaking a canopy of leaves?

O

We do not know how old grandma Ellen was when she lost her cherry tree. We do know her age when the black man and the federal marshall came into her life. She was five. Grandma was always very specific about that when she told the tale to her grandchildren.

Ellen was at grandma Smith's again when it happened and it happened because grandpa Barak was an abolitionist. That was a long word that Ellen may have heard but one,certainly, she did not quite understand. She knew,because she had heard big people talking about it, something of what it meant.It meant there were black folks that belonged to white folks and grandpa Barak thought that was sinful .In quiet Quakerly talk around the subject her sharp little listening ears had somehow gathered that grandpa had something to do with these black people. What she did not know. She thought about that belonging sometimes. It was different than Ellen belonging to papa and mama and to grandma Mary and grandpa Barak... and Edwin... and William... Still it was all very far away and she didn't think about it much , not until the day she saw the black eye.

Why did Ellen go into the barn that special day. We will never know. Was there a nest of brand new kittens in the manger or did grandma send her

to look for an egg.Yes, I rather think that was it. Grandma Mary had a chicken cooking in the pot and she needed an egg for dumplings. No one could find a stray egg faster than Ellen. Especially if grandma bragged on her.

Ellen looked in the hen house. Chickens were scratching in the straw and looked as though they had no interest in nests and egg lay - ing. She searched under the big burdock by the rail fence where Speckle-dee hen had hidden out to hatch a brood . Speckaldee was nowhere about and her half-grown chicks had fled. It was then she heard the clucking noise., insistent, half-singing, broody.

Oh,oh ! Old Speckeldy was at it again!

She stood in the doorway of the barn, blinking a little against the half-darkness. A shaft of sun light from the mow window touched a cone of green corn stalks, shaped like an Indian wigwam . That was strange. Even Ellen knew it was not time to harvest fodder. The stalks were green and gold, not brown. She might have puzzled about that more but she remembered the egg. Beyond the corn shock the light picked out the ladder to the mow itself,which she was never to climb unless a big person was about , and then Brindle, the cow's,feed box . In the box, mixed with a scattering of corn and husks was an egg, still warm from Speckledy's nesting.

She was turning ,egg cupped in one hand,when she saw it... the eye, black and unblinking, in the corn shock. A strange hard tightness grip-ped her throat. She couldn't scream but she found she could run... run... run ... She didn't hear the soft,black voice behind her coaxing,"L'le Missy,l'le Missy. Don' e be askeered.Ole Sam won' hurt ye." She was head-ing for the lilac in the dooryard, only stopping when she reached the kitchen stepping stone. Behind her she felt the barn, its open door dark and menacing.

"Child, thee is all flushed." Grandma Mary stooped to gather up the egg. "Thee has been running too hard . Do thee sit until I have settled the dumplings in the stew and I will fetch thee a cool drink."

Obediently Ellen sat, facing the barn door. Nothing stirred in that

mysterious dark. Behind her came the comforting sounds of the kitchen , scraping of a spoon on a crock, the lifting of a pot lid,mingled with the rich smell of chicken and simmering vegetables. She could breathe again by the time grandma put the tin cup in her hands .

"Here's a taste of switchel, Rhody. There's more than the men in the wood lot will need. A good batch,if I do say so myself."

It was good...raspberry,ginger, the tang of vinegar and the cool, dark sweetness of molasses. With the first tingle on her tongue,Ellen found she could talk. "Gramma,gramma, there's an eye in the barn and it looked at me."

"Oh,my!" Mary Smith sat down hurriedly on a hickory bottom chair. She had forgotten they had a "contraband" in the barn when she sent Rhody for the egg. She hoped the good Lord would forgive her.

Barak and Mary Smith were Quakers who not only believed that African slavery was wrong, they did something about it. The Smith place was a station on the Underground Railway. Mary had long ago lost track of how many black people they had harbored. Living as they did so close to the lake with Canada and freedom a boat lift away, it seemed they were seldom without some fugitive. The hole under the barn floor was as comfortable as they could make it : a straw tick filled fresh every few weeks, a quilt patched but warm, a jug of cold spring water. When it was safe hereabouts - safe from the United States marshall, that is - the slaves came out of the hole to sun themselves in the hay loft or climbed the white pine on the rise behind the house to look north where freedom lay. They couldn't see the lake or Canada from the pine but they knew ... oh, they knew.

Being Quakers the Barak Smithsnever actually lied to the federsls when they came looking for runaway slaves and usually they were extremely careful about putting their children or grandchildren in possession of facts that would endanger the fugitives or force the young ones to try to evade telling what they knew. Grandma Mary was in a quandary. What could she safely tell a five year old? More than she wanted to,certainly. But Ellen was not to be afraid of the black man in the barn. She must see to that.

Mary was busy after that. The men folks washed up and came in to their dinner of chicken and dumplings and raspberry cobbler.The Seth Thomas clock had chimed one before they finished and started back to the wood lot. Grandma Mary prepared to fill a tin plate for the man in the barn but laid it down suddenly on the buttery shelf.

"Rhody, does thee know what a slave is?"

Ellen nodded tentatively. There was a vast deal of talk about slavery in Quaker meeting and at home. Some there were who spoke out against grandpa Barak taking the law in his own hands. Ellen wasn't sure what that meant.

Grandma Mary reached for the plate again and began to dish up chicken and dumplings .

"What thee saw in th barn ,child, was a black slave. Thee is to go with me when I take these vittles and meet Samson . " Mary covered the plate with a pie tin and wrapped it in a dish wiping towel to keep warm. Ellen tried shaking her head.To no avail. Grandma was firm. "Come,Rhody," and started down the path leading to the barn.

Once in the barn grandma Mary wasted no time. "Samson, here is thy vittles. Come and eat while it is still warm." Ellen shut her eyes and clung for security to a fold of grandma's apron. She heard a rustling, a crackle and when she opened her eyes again, there he was - very large, very black, very frightening. He was holding something in his hands .

"Don' 'e be askeered,l'le Missy." His voice was as warm and smooth as golden molasses ."I'se got a l'le gal jes'yore size. See what I conjured up for 'e." He held out a thing of magic, a doll, made of corn stalks, a corn husk face, hair of brown and gold corn silk, a slim green body with arms and legs that could move . Ellen caught her breath and looked at grandma Mary for consent. Grandma nodded .

"What does thee say to Samson, child?"

Intent on the strange and wonderful thing in her hands, Ellen could only whisper, "I'm right obliged,Samson." After that ,if she had been listening she would have heard the scraping of a spoon on the tin plate,

the black man's own "oblige" to his benefactors and and grandma's instructions that two sharp taps of the dinner bell was a warning.Samson was to get into the hidey hole and stay because there were federal agents about.

On the way back to the house grandma Mary had some other things to say to Ellen. What Ellen had seen was not to be spoken of unless it was to papa Ryal or mother Orpah when she was alone with them . If she told about it to anyone the marshalls might come and take Samson away...

Rounding the lilac bush at the corner, grandma ,as she always did, took a quick look toward Lizzie Wilbur's clothes line. Two white dish towels! It was the signal!

"Quick,child. Run... run to the kitchen." Ellen felt a firm shove against her back and she ran, she wasn't sure why. Grandma reached for the rope of the dinner bell. Clang! Clang! A warning to Samson or any man hereabouts that the federal marshall was on his way. Lizzie and John Wilbur lived down by the cross roads and by this time were well acquainted with the bob-tailed bay Marshall Simpson drove .

What to do about Ellen? The clothes press? No, that would be too airless, too frightening. The trundle ? Rhody often hid when she was sulky in the trundle at home. No , there was a mouse about they had not been able to catch . Mary tucked the telltale pie tin in the oven and remembered the medicine shelf, reading it over in her mind: arnica for sprains, senna leaves, chamomile for Barak's tea, dandelion root, dock root, castor beans,cloverleaf salve, ipecac... ipecac .She stopped there, reaching for a spoon and hurrying Ellen ahead of her into the bed chamber.

"Forgive me, child. This will make thee sick but it's to save thy friend Samson." The spoon tipped.Ellens mouth was floodness with horridness, She coughed;she strangled... A peremptory thumping at the kitchen door and grandma Mary, with a comforting pat, hurried away. On the bed the small figure crumpled into a knot, trying to ease the strange heavings under her pinafore . Without,there was a tangle of voices but she didn't hear what was said. She didn't care what was said.

Standing at the kitchen door, Marshall Simpson must have felt a familiar frustration. He eyed the small,bent woman, the gray sprigged calico,

the crisp tie-around apron, the eyes calm and serene. It was always like this. He could never get beyond that face. But this time he would, by Godfrey . He knew these plaguey Quakers had blacks hidden somewhere hereabouts. This time...

"Ma'am, there's talk around that a runaway slave came this way. "

So there was talk, was there? Mary Smith was careful to look full in the eyes of the federal agent. Barak would have to counsel with the with the conductor on the Underground. Someone was spying.

"Thee is free to search, as always, Friend Simpson," she was saying aloud. "The spring house - there's a pitcher of fresh buttermilk if thee is thirsty - the cheese cave , the work shop ".. Was there a slight hesitation? ..."the barn. If thee wishes to speak with the men, they're in the wood lot beyond the sugar grove."

On the bed in the room beyond, the heaving became a retching, the retching welled up hot and frightening in Ellen's throat . She tried to call for grandma and strangled. On the steps outside the Marshall stiffened. "Madam", he said, " I will speak to whoever is in that next room." His feet thudded on the pine floor.

Mary Smith had thought her swift-moving years were long past but now, strangely, she was standing in the doorway of the bed chamber, her back slowly straightening, her eyes no long calm but fiery.

"Thee goes no farther, Marshall. Can't thee see this is a sick child."

The government agent reddened, angry and baffled. He knew, though he couldn't tell how, he had been done in again by this mite of a woman . By Godfrey, there had to be a slave here somewhere. This time...

Within grandma Mary was bending over the little figure on the bed. "There, there, child." And suddenly Ellen was sick, very sick, indeed, all over grandma Mary's favorite Whig Rose coverlet.

O

When the men came in from the wood lot for supper, Ellen , still clutching the corn stalk doll, was tucked into a quilt cocoon in grandpa

Barak's rocking chair.Grandma Mary, busy about the hearth warming milk that would have a spoonful of sugar and a dash of cinnamon to tempt the appetite of a small invalid, was waiting for the question she knew her husband was turning around in his mind as he looked from her to their grandchild.

Mary cut a thick slice of light bread, fresh baked yesterday, to crumble into the savory mixture and, turning it into a bowl, set it, with a spoon,in fold of the cocoon where Rhoda Ellen could reach it.She wasn't sure whether Rhody was ready yet for her favorite supper of bread and sugar milk.

Grandpa Barak, his rocking chair preempted, settled himself on a hickory-bottomed stool and cleared his throat . "Thee had a visitor this afternoon?" Mary felt a flash of unQuakerly exasperation. He knows Marshall Simpson was here . And went about setting the vittlss on the table. Fresh clabbered cheese, Indian pudding warm from the oven, maple sugar sweeting, a pot of clover honey, a pitcher of milk and cream. If anyone favored cold raspberry pudding they could have it.

"Would thee have thy cup of chamomile tea tonight, hsuband?" ignoring the question purposefully. "If thee does,I'll set on the kettle."

" No tea tonight, wife.And will thee answer my question?"

"We did" said Mary calmly, keeping an eye on Rhoda Ellen who was beginning on her supper and snatching up a tea cloth to tie under her chin. "We did. Marshall Simpson came by. Again."

The "Ahhh!" from Barak was involuntary. He was looking at Ellen again and the green corn stalk trinket she was holding . It was not like his favorite grandchild to be sitting quietly in a chair, her grandpa's chair, when he came in for supper. He tried again. "Did thee and Rhody make him welcome?" He caught the flicker of mischief in Mary's eyes. " We did, husband, we did. Rhody was a great help."

There was a story here but Barak knew he would have to wait for it. John Wilbur and Gilbert came in then from washing up in the summer kitchen and Mary settled the men to table. It had been a long afternoon and Mary was not ready to eat yet. She needed to quieten her spirit. She settled

herself on the deacon's bench by the fireplace ."Oh,Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations..." Ellen was finishing her bowl of bread and sweet milk, the pink coming back in her cheeks. Suddenly, Mary Smith felt such an upsurge of thankfulness for this child, it washed clean away the guilt she had been feeling about administering ipecac. She must put the Whig Rose coverlet to soak and wash out Rhody's dress and apron. Tomorrow she would find a swatch of calico and cover the green nakedness of that corn stalk doll!

O

We are missing other stories from this period in Ellen's life but a part of those days came to Iowa along with the wagons and family furnishings the winter of '54. Ellen's Friendship quilt,passed down to daughter Orpah and on to Lillian Greene Barker, has the names of some of the Smiths and kin who were left behind in Erie county,New York.

It was customary in those days for girls to learn stitchery at a very early age. Usually it was nine patch, alternate white and colored blocks, that could be set together for a first quilt. A little later it was a Friendship cover, with pieces of goods garnered from relatives and friends and the names of donors stitched tidily in the center of each block.

Whether the Friendship patchwork with ties to New York was made while Ellen was still there, we cannot be certain, but we may be sure the names and even the old fashioned prints , were forever a part of that small girl's memory.

O

Why did Barak and Mary Smith come to Iowa? We do not know. Perhapes it was because the Smith family was bursting at the seams of their farms, their work shops, their dwellings in New York state. Quakers were moving west from the east and south. There was land in Iowa, good land that could be bought cheap and there were grandsons and great grandsons who needed room to spread out.

Barak Smith bought land in Cedar county, Iowa. There had been Quakers before him who bought land and raised a meeting. The summer before their removal to Iowa ,Barak and son Gilbert came to the new state