The notes of alarm in Jefferson's comment speak of the tenuousness of the situation, the more and more with their section. In 1820 Thomas Jefferson ignited the deepest fears of Chesapeake slaveholders. It also alienated Virginians from a national government that had neglected their defense. Instead they turned south, their interests aligning with those of the southern states.

The runaways pressured the British admirals into becoming liberators. As guides, pilots, sailors, and marines, the former slaves used their intimate knowledge of the countryside to transform the war. They enabled the runaways to outmaneuver the British navy successfully, and by doing so they helped ensure the Union's victory.

Frederick Douglass recalled that in 1813 those angels appeared in the form of “freedom’s swift wings.” He wrote that the runaways “touched the hearts of the British with a new respect for the freedom of the people of the United States.”

The runaways’ actions had a chilling effect on the British admirals, who realized that they could no longer rely on the loyalty of their sailors and marines. As a result, the British navy was unable to stop the runaways from reaching the warships seeking protection for their families from the ravages of slavery. The runaways pressured the British admirals into becoming liberators.

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