

THE PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, AND THE DISSEMINATION OF MORALITY, LITERATURE, AND NEWS.

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From the N. Y. Tribune. THE SLAVE MOTHER.

The case of the fugitives at Cincinnati is likely to incite more questions than those which have been argued so ably before the Court of the United States Commissioner. These are in themselves sufficient to arouse the attention of every man who is interested in an impartial administration of law; but beyond these is a moral question, addressing itself to the sympathies of all human and noble hearts. The former we shall discuss in due time, and, therefore, confine our remarks for the present to the latter.

Our readers are aware that among the slaves arrested at Cincinnati was a mother, who preferred to put one of her children to death rather than it should be returned to the grips of the slave-catchers. Her case is a remarkable one. We have heard a great deal of the beneficent influences of Slavery, and of the wonderful tenacity with which even the slaves themselves cling to its benefits. Every time that a poor negro, disappointed with the experience of free life, or longing for the flesh-pots of Virginia, returns to his original condition, the fact is trumpeted to the four winds of heaven. We are called upon to admire the beautiful effects of the institution which causes its very victims to fall in love with it, and to denounce that insane philanthropy which seeks to interfere with so happy a condition.

But what have such reasoners to say of the recent incident in Ohio? How do they account for the fact that a mother, fresh from the blessings of bondage, and with all a mother's sensibility and tenderness—will yet draw the knife across the throat of her innocent babe in preference to restoring him to the state from which she has just escaped? They will denounce the deed as a crime—they will ascribe it to a sudden and bewildering frenzy—they will say that the woman was demented—that she was overcome by a panic of fear, and that she knew not what she did.

Well, we will admit the crime, and granting the intense excitement under which she labored, ask how it was that she was thrown into such a madness of feeling? If Slavery is so agreeable a condition to the slaves; if they are well nurtured and cared for under it, how comes it that this woman was crazed by the thought of being returned to it? How comes it that she could forget all the dictates of a mother's heart, and condemn her child to death by her own hands, rather than relinquish the possession of it to its pretended owner? How comes it that her companions, who are arrested as accomplices in this crime of murder, say that they would rather be tried for their lives, and afterward marched to the gallows, than be sent back to Kentucky? They know what Slavery is, and they know what death is, and, with many that have gone before them in this world, they cry, "Death before Slavery."

Our Southern friends who extol the delights of servitude will have to revise their theory, or leave events like these out of the account. These slaves, it seems to us, are, after all, men, with all the feelings, instincts and aspirations of men. There is something in

them which tells of higher objects of life to a human being than "pussum-fat and hominy," or the most delectable external relations. There is something which whispers to them that the body is more than raiment, and the freedom of the soul infinitely greater than the comforts of the body. Like the rest of us, they yearn for freedom, and having achieved freedom, though but for a few days, they welcome the grave as the alternative to bondage.

But, in doing this, they have in history some pertinent and illustrious examples. The annals of man are filled with similar incidents. There are names that have been rescued from that mortality which follows all human affairs, solely on the ground of such exhibitions as we have seen in Cincinnati. Not to mention the thousand occurrences in rule barbarian times—where fathers and brothers despairing of safety have destroyed those who were most dear to them—let us recall one or two from the pages of more civilized story. When Mithridates was defeated by Lucullus he ordered the sacrifice of his wife and sister to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy; and the writers who narrate the tale are accustomed to dilate upon the act as a proof of the dignity and grandeur of his soul. When Virginius, summoned by Appius Claudius to surrender his daughter as a slave, plunges the dagger into her bosom rather than yield to the demand, the pen of the historian warns into eloquence as he describes the heroic virtue of the Roman father, and the imaginations of the poets are kindled into tragic sublimity.

The finest of the Lays of Rome, written by Macaulay, is decidedly that in which he tells the tale of the hapless Virginia; one of the most touching and effective of recent tragedies is founded upon the same pathetic subject. We have seen the latter, indeed, as enacted upon the stage, melt the eyes and stir the inmost depths of emotion in large audiences, in whose quivering sympathy with the child was always mingled a lurking admiration for the stern heroism of the parent. Yet in what respect does the act of the Roman Virginius differ from that of the poor slave-mother on the banks of the Ohio? In the one case the daughter was claimed as a slave, under an infamous law of Rome, trumped up for the occasion, and the father, rather than submit to it, plunged his knife in the heart of that daughter. In the other case the child is claimed as a slave, under an infamous law of the Union, passed in a moment of political fanaticism, and the mother, rather than yield to it, draws the knife across the throat of the child. In the former, however, the crime becomes classic; history celebrates it; artists spread it upon their canvases; poets embalm the memory of it in undying lines; and the world does not cease to admire it, while it shudders, as a manifestation of the sternness and grandeur of Roman courage. But, in the latter case, where there is even more to excuse the criminal aspect of the transaction, and more to lighten its pathetic interest, because the perpetrator is a woman and a mother, the poor creature is hurled to prison as a murderer, either to suffer the penalties of the law, in that character, or to be restored to a bondage which she regards as infinitely worse than death.

Whatever may become of her—and we trust that the issue will be left to a Jury of the free citizens of Ohio, who have hearts in their bodies, rather than to the tender mercies of those who drove the wretched one to so dreadful an alternative—let no one hereafter talk of the love of slaves for their servile condition. A great many of them, no doubt, who know no better, are contented with their lot, just as a great many white men here at the North are satisfied to live in ignorance; but the instinct of Freedom is in a majority of them an irrepressible one, which will assert itself when it has an opportunity. How strong and mighty it is in some, we behold in the incident be-

fore us, where the most powerful dictates of nature and affection were overcome by it, and a mother was made to imbue her hands in the blood of her own offspring rather than consent to its return to the subjection from which she fondly thought she had delivered it forever. Ah no! "Disguise thyself as then wilt, Slavery, still thou art a bitter draught."

From the Congressional Herald. THE WORK IN VIRGINIA.

CABIN CREEK, Lewis Co., Ky.,
Dec. 23, 1855.

Eighteen years ago George Rye, a member of the German Reformed Church, a mechanic of small means, industrious habits, and excellent reputation, a man twenty-seven years of age, prepared a manuscript article of some length, on the subject of slavery, and showed it to a friend, requesting him to hand it to another, supposing the perusal would be confined to these two. But a charge was soon made that Mr. Rye had prepared and was circulating "an incendiary document." Great excitement followed; Mr. Rye was arrested, thrown into prison, and the matter laid over till the sitting of Court. The article intended for but few persons, was read to a crowded court-room; its meaning and tendency thoroughly discussed by lawyers on each side; the whole matter considered by a jury of men who had, when challenged by the prosecution, stated their belief that the Bible sanctioned slavery; and the verdict was "not guilty."

I was permitted to see this article. It condemns Slavery in the abstract and the concrete; examines the pro-slavery Bible argument, and exposes its fallacies; and is, on the whole, a remarkable production.

For eighteen years this man has avowed himself an Abolitionist, and has maintained the right of free discussion. Yet he has not, in this contest, struck a single blow, nor carried any deadly weapon. May God spare his life in many years, to do much service for Christ.

Were a man now on the ground, he might do well. The members of the German Reformed Church, are generally, in that region, Shenandoah, Paige, and Rockingham counties, anti-slavery men. So are the United Brethren. And I was gratified to observe the apparent conscientiousness of the people. Those among whom I was thrown, are of German extraction, and have not lost the stability so characteristic of that nation. Attention is paid to the training of children. There is a seriousness among the young people which gives promise of good success to an earnest minister.

The thinking portion of the community are beginning to feel that something is wrong. It does not seem to them right to hold men in such a condition that they cannot worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. Yet the ministers are silent, or else they apologize for oppression. The new papers abuse and vilify the Abolitionists. The books are expurgated. The politicians represent Slavery as the bond which holds the Union together. The families which become enlightened move to the free States, and many of them being unable to write, but little is heard from them save the more personal items. Besides the people do not read much. They must have the living speaker; a man who will go from house to house preaching the Gospel; a man whose crowning evidence of divine anointing is the same as was that of the Messiah—that "the poor hear glad tidings."

A LIBERAL SLAVEHOLDER.—A gentleman in Shenandoah county reminded me much of C. M. Clay. He has slaves whom he purchased out of compassion, and expressed his willingness to give them to any one who would do better with them than he. He is a gentleman of much information and intelligence, yet many a Sabbath-school scholar at the North is better informed on the Rights of Man.

Some years since, he purchased a large tract of land, much of which he disposed of to mechanics; and others in lots of from three acres to sixty. Before purchasing, some of these men were not, to use the gentleman's own expression, worth "three flips."

On the whole, that portion of Virginia is an interesting field; half a dozen school teachers could find constant employment, and an opportunity of advancing the cause of righteousness. They would encounter opposition. The number of pupils would not for a while be near so large as if the teacher was not an Abolitionist; but his influence would be felt; the respect and confidence of the people would after a time be won; and best of all, God would be well pleased. Who will go? Who will come here, when the way is opened, and let your correspondent go to a new place!"

J. S. D.

Some of the papers opposed to the Congressman from the Clinton district, are distressing themselves and trying to distress others, unnecessarily, in reference to him, and, having inflicted self-torture to the utmost extent without any effect, now cry out in the anguish of their souls, *Wont Mr. Pearce resign?* From all appearances, he will not resign—however much it may horrify his heart-bleeding foes—so long as there is a Kansas party to oppose; and in his course on that great Question of the Day he breathes the voice of his constituents, and should not for a day desert his post. Yet there is a certain OTHER *Pierce* at Washington, who does not represent the popular will on the Great Question, and who has basely violated the sacred promises by which he obtained his seat. Now it is possible that a "Compromise" might be effected, and Congressman Pearce may resign if President Pierce will, and make way for the people to choose a new Member, and Congress to put Speaker Banks in the White House. What say our up-river Jeremiahs to such an equitable arrangement, under which they might get all sleep's nights? *Pierce* for *Pierce*—it for fat—surely, "a fair exchange is no robbery!"—*Lewisburg Chronicle*.

THE PRESIDENT ON KANSAS.

On the 24th ult. President Pierce sent a Message to Congress declaratory of his opinions on the Kansas question. It will be recollected that in his annual Message he made but a casual allusion to it. The present Message however, gives a complete view of his opinions, a synopsis of which we clip from the *Tribune* as follows:

SUBSTANCE OF THE MESSAGE.

- About Kansas:
 1. Eulogizes the Kansas-Nebraska law.
 2. Assails Gov. Reeder as guilty of misconduct.
 3. Abuses the people of the Free States who avoted Anti-Slavery emigration to Kansas.
 4. Admits the "irregularities" committed by the Border Ruffians in the elections of Kansas, but tries to cloak them by asserting that they were approved by Gov. Reeder.
 5. Insists that the transfer of the seat of government by the Legislature in defiance of Governor Reeder's veto does not invalidate the acts of said Legislature.
 6. Recognizes the election of Whitfield as Delegate, and ignores that of Reeder.
 7. Denounces the Free-State movement in Kansas as rebellion, and goes in for dealing with the actors therein as traitors.
 8. Promises to put down the Free-State organization by arms if necessary.
 9. Assails those who circulate through the States accounts of the Border-Ruffian outrages in Kansas.
 10. Proposes an Act looking to an early organization of the State Government in Kansas.

We are not surprised at these opinions, in fact we have ceased to be surprised at any act of perfidy which *Pierce & Co.* have committed, or may commit. The *Ecc. Post* comments on this Message as follows:

MR. PIERCE'S KANSAS MESSAGE.

The mails of this morning gave us an agreeable surprise. We have a message from Mr. Pierce on the subject of the troubles in Kansas—part of them, we mean; for though the condition of that territory is made the occasion of sending it to Congress, the lawless inroad of the Missourians is left out of consideration. We wanted just such a message as this to give new ardor and determination to those who are now occupied with certain broad and comprehensive plans for giving a character to the western settlements.

It is remarkable that we cannot get rid of the Kansas question. It rides on our shoulders like the Old Man of the Sea, whether we will or not. Mr. Pierce at one time would gladly have put it out of the way, as his annual message showed, in which he dismissed it with the briefest mention, and at the same time threw out the threat of a war with England, as a tub to amuse that heavy whale, the public. The public occupied itself awhile with the war schemes of Mr. Pierce, and did not seem to like them. The article which we copied a day or two since from the *Charleston Mercury* showed pretty clearly that he had not taken the true course to get the support of the South Carolina politicians for the Presidency. He therefore returns to the Kansas question, and in a sort of desperation offers new proposals for the support of the South, in the shape of a promise to stand by the Missourians in their usurpation of the government of Kansas, and enforce the detestable ordinances which they pretended to enact, at the cannon's mouth.

The President finds many things done in Kansas which do not please him, but he makes a most extraordinary selection for the purpose of censure. The calling of a convention by the people to frame a constitution for Kansas as a state, he declares to be contrary to the public law and the rule of right. He denies the doctrine of popular sovereignty in that application; the people of Kansas have no right to make a constitution in that manner. But though this convention had no authority, and though the constitution just adopted is void in Mr. Pierce's opinion, for want of the proper formalities, another body has been sitting in Kansas whose authority and whose proceedings he thinks to be possible informalities could vitiate. This is the legislature appointed by strangers from Missouri. Of this body Mr. Pierce says, that "whatever may have been the informalities of its election, it was for all practical purposes a lawful body." Informalities! Where did Mr. Pierce learn English? Bring into the territory armed borderers from Missouri, with guns on their shoulders, and cannon in their train stolen from the United States arsenal, and driving the voters from the polls, is an informality. Electing members of the Kansas legislature by the votes of persons who lived in Missouri, was an informality. These are but trifles; they do not affect the authority of the legislature, which has still power, according to Mr. Pierce, to pass any law it pleases, just or unjust. If they resist an unjust law passed by a legislature never elected by the people, but imposed upon them by strangers, it will be his duty to call out the United States troops, and shoot them down. This, he tells them, is "protecting them in the full enjoyment of self-government." The President is a great wag as well as a great statesman.

In the midst of this ferocious jesting he takes occasion to reprimand those who have promoted emigration to Kansas with a view of making it a free state. While he has no censure

for them who marched into Kansas with arms in their hands, and usurped the functions of a legislature, he denounces those who simply exercise the right of peaceful emigration. An armed inroad is well enough, though perhaps a little informal; a quiet emigration is an unpardonable offense. What insolence in this! By what authority does this man, who has got into the executive chair, presume to tell us who may settle in Kansas, and who must stay at home—who may help their neighbors to emigrate, and who may not? What warrant has he for occupying the two Houses with his denunciations, of those whose only offense is that they have become residents of Kansas, where they have as perfect a right to be as he has to be at Washington? Did we elect him for this!

We have spoken of the message as an opportune one, and yet, if Mr. Pierce were not so proverbially faithful to his pledges, we should have some misgiving as to the use which the slave party might make of it in driving him to extreme measures. The ordinance of the mock legislature which sat at the Shawnee Mission will never be obeyed; the penalties enacted against the discussion of the slavery question will not be submitted to; the citizens of Kansas will never take the test-oath for the support of slavery prescribed by the spurious code, and yet they will vote at the elections. All the other barbarous and tyrannical edicts promulgated by that body will assuredly be disregarded and trodden under foot—they cannot be obeyed by freemen. Mr. Pierce will then have to consider whether he will execute his measure of enforcing them upon a people for whose right of self-government he indulges in the dreary joke of professing such profound respect. We are certain that he will not fulfil his bloody threat unless he is forced to it by the violent urgency of the slaveholders; and let them press him as violently they may, we can scarce bring ourselves to believe that he will venture upon such an act of madness.

Meanwhile, this message will have the effect of encouraging those who meditate new attacks upon the rights and liberties of the settlers of Kansas. The President is on their side; he promises them the assistance of the government; and thus incited, it will not be strange if we soon hear of preparations for new outrages. The people of the free States must step in between settlers of Kansas and their ruffian enemies, and give them the protection which the government denies. Let the associations which smoothe the passage of the emigrant to that country, and remove the hardships of a border life, be endowed with a capital commensurate to their object, and the work is done. They will then be able to direct the course of that vast stream of emigration which is continually flowing to the West. They will then be able to pour their hundreds of thousands into regions where the champions of slavery vote to establish their unhappy institution. These will overrun Kansas, secure New Mexico for freedom, and occupy Western Texas.

It was a saying of a great divine, that he had found more good in people called bad, and more bad in people usually considered good, than he expected.

The Merchants of St. Louis are about to build an Exchange in that city.

A doctor down South, says there is nothing to fear from yellow fever, if you can keep the patient alive long enough to get over it.

Buy the best agricultural implements.

Some one says that politeness is like an air cushion. There may be nothing in it, but it eases our joints wonderfully.