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The People's Press,

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BY L. V. BLUM.

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FIRE IN WILLIAMSBURG

A fire broke out in the city of Williamsburg (Va.) on Saturday night, the 10th December, which consumed the old Raleigh tavern. The Norfolk Day Book says:

"The old Raleigh tavern is memorable in history and is associated with many of the reminiscences of the early days of the Revolution. It is also famous as the place where many important committees of the Colonial Legislature met, and where some of our most distinguished patriots assembled to concert measures for aiding in the arduous struggle for liberty. It is also famous as the place where Richard Henry Lee and other of his contemporaries originated the plan for establishing corresponding committees throughout many of the Colonies. It was also famous for its life-size bust of Sir Walter Raleigh, which, from its construction, adorned its front, and which, we are glad to say, was not consumed with the house. The old Raleigh was also famous as the place where Patrick Henry stopped when he made his debut in the House of Burgesses, and it was in his chamber in this old tavern that he concocted those speeches which 'astonished and entranced all who heard him.' It was under the roof of this old tavern that the great and patriotic of Virginia's sons met in committee to deliberate in the darker period of the nation's birth; and it was from this house that those resolves emanated which made Virginia foremost in opposition to the arbitrary movements of Great Britain."

THE WESTERN EXTENSION.

We are gratified in being able to state that this important State work is now in a fair way of being rapidly pushed forward. The requisite amount of stock has been subscribed for constructing the second Section of the road, which extends from Morganton west about 43 miles, and contracts have been awarded accordingly for the entire section.

The mountain portion of this section has been awarded to Messrs. Crockford & Malone, gentlemen of long and successful experience in work of that character.

The remainder of the work has been awarded to citizen contractors, among whom are Messrs. Avery, McKesson, Patton and others, whose character for energy and perseverance needs no comment.

The contractors will enter upon the prosecution of the work immediately.

We congratulate all interests involved in this great work, but more especially do we congratulate our brethren of the "far West." Day is beginning to dawn upon them after a long and cheerless night. Much credit is due to Mr. Pearson, President of the Company, and to Maj. Turner, Chief Engineer, for the energy they have exhibited in this matter. And we may safely say that the spirit thrown into the work by the enterprize of Chas. F. Fisher, Esq., has stimulated the stockholders to engage in the enterprize. If we had more work and less croaking and straining after office and political capital, our State would be much the better for it.—Salisbury Banner.

INCENDIARY PUBLICATIONS BY MAIL.—Mr. Holt, the Postmaster General, has decided that the statute of Virginia in relation to the distribution of incendiary publications by mail, does not conflict with the postal laws of the United States.—He says:

The question thus presented was fully decided by Attorney General Cushing in the case of the Yazoo city post office. He there held that a statute of Mississippi, in all respects analogous to that of Virginia as cited, was not inconsistent with the act of Congress, prescribing the duties of postmasters in regard to the delivery of mail matter, and that the latter, as good citizens, were bound to yield obedience to such State laws. You are referred to the luminous discussion of the case for the arguments urged by that distinguished civilian in support of the conclusion at which he arrived. The judgment thus pronounced has been cheerfully acquiesced in by this Department, and is now recognized as one of the guides of its administration. The authority of Virginia to enact such a law rests upon that right of self-preservation which belongs to every government and people, and which has never been surrendered, nor indeed can it be.

MR. VAN BUREN.—No Ex-President has ever lived in more studied retirement than Martin Van Buren. He is seldom away from his home, and never seems to covet attentions of any kind. On the 5th inst., he passed his seventy seventh year. He is said to be writing a memoir of his times. It will, if truthful, reveal a great many curious chapters in the political history of the country.

GREAT UNION DEMONSTRATION IN BOSTON.

Speech of Mr. Everett.

Mr. Everett, in his usual strain of eloquence, proceeded to address the immense audience, referring to the fact that he had withdrawn altogether from Politics; having found a more congenial, and, as he thought, a more useful occupation in seeking to rally the affections of his countrymen North and South to that great name and precious memory which is left almost alone of all the numerous kindly associations which once bound the different sections of the country together, [Applause.] The value of the Union and the danger of its dissolution were descanted upon at length, and the opinion expressed that we are on the very verge of a convulsion which will shake the Union to its foundation; and that a few more steps forward, in the direction in which affairs have moved for a few years past, will bring us to the catastrophe.

Mr. Everett next proceeded to point out the enormity of John Brown's Harper's Ferry raid, and the terrible consequences that would have ensued had he been successful. The people of the North who treated the affair with levity, did so from a want of reflection as to the terrible consequences. To talk of the pikes and rifles not being intended for offensive purposes is simply absurd. [Applause.] The first act almost of the party was to shoot down a free colored man, whom they were attempting to impress, and who fled from them. One might as well say that the rifled ordnance of Louis Napoleon was intended only for self defence, to be used only in case the Austrians should undertake to arrest his march. [Loud applause.]

No, sir, it was an attempt to do on a vast scale, what was done in St. Domingo in 1791, where the colored population was about equal to that of Virginia; and if any one would form a distinct idea what such an operation is, let him see it—not as a matter of vague conception—a cruel project—in the mind of a heated fanatic, but as it should in the sober pages of history, that record the revolt in that Island; the midnight burnings, and wholesale massacres, the merciless tortures, the abominations not to be named by Christian lips in the hearing of Christian ears—some of which, too unutterably atrocious for the English language are of necessity veiled in the obscurity of the Latin tongue.

Mr. Everett here read from history a short account of the horrors attending the servile insurrection in St. Domingo, and then proceeded to address the assemblage as follows:

Now let us take a glance at the state of things in the Southern States, comembers, as they are, with us in the great republican confederacy. Let us consider over what sort of a population it is that some persons among us think that it is not only right and commendable, but in the highest degree heroic, saint like, god like to extend the awful calamity which turned St. Domingo into a heap of bloody ashes in 1791. There are between three and four millions of the colored race scattered through the Southern and Southwestern States, in small groups, in cities, towns, villages, and in large bodies on isolated plantations; in the house, the factory and the field; mingled together with the dominant race in the various pursuits of life; the latter amounting in the aggregate, to eight or nine millions, if I rightly recollect the numbers. Upon this community, thus composed, it was the design of Brown to let loose the hell-hounds of a servile insurrection, and to bring on a struggle which, for magnitude, atrocity and horror, would have stood alone in the history of the world.

And these eight or nine millions, against whom this frightful war was levied, are our fellow citizens, entitled with us to the protection of that compact government, which recognizes their relation to the colored race—a compact which every sworn officer of the Union of the States is bound by his oath to support! Among them, sir, is a fair proportion of men and women of education and culture—of moral and religious lives and characters—virtuous fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, persons who would adorn any station of society in any country—men who read the same Bible that we do, and in the name of the same Master kneel at the throne of the same God—forming a class of men from which have gone forth some of the greatest and purest characters which adorn our history—Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Marshall. These are the men, the women, for whose bosoms pikes and rifles are manufactured in New England, to be placed in the hands of an ignorant subject race, supposed most wrongfully, as recent events have shown, to be waiting only for an opportunity to use them.

Sir, I have on three or four different occasions in early life and more recently, visited all the Southern and Southwestern States, with the exception of Arkansas and Alabama. I have enjoyed the hospitality of the city and the country; I have had the privilege before crowded and favoring audiences, to hold up the character of the father of his country, and to inculcate the blessings of the Union in the same precise terms in which I have done it here at home and in the other portions of the land.

I have been admitted to the confidence of the domestic circle, and I have seen there touching manifestations of the kindest feelings by which that circle in all its members, high and low, master and servant, can be bound together; and when I contemplate the horrors that would have ensued had the tragedy on which the curtain rose at Harper's Ferry, been acted out, through all its scenes of fire and sword, of lust and murder, of rapine and desolation, to the final catastrophe, I am filled with emotions to which no words can do justice.

There could of course be but one result, and that well deserving the thoughtful meditation of those, if any such there be, who think that the welfare of the colored race could by any possibility be promoted by the success of such a movement, and who are willing to purchase that result by so costly a sacrifice. The colored population of St. Domingo amounted to but little short of half a million, while the whites amounted to about 30,000.

[illegible] of the Southern States alone, in the aggregate, outnumber the colored in the ratio of two to one; in the Union at large in the ratio of seven to one, and if [which Heaven avert] they should be brought into conflict, it could end only in the extermination of the latter after scenes of woe for which language is too faint, and for which the liveliest fancy has no adequate images of horror.

Such being the case, some one may ask, why does not the South fortify herself against the possible occurrence of such a catastrophe, by doing away with the one great source from which it alone can spring? This is a question easily asked, and I am not aware that it is our duty at the North to answer it; but it may be observed that great and radical changes in the frame work of society, involving the relations of twenty millions of men, will not wait on the bidding of an impatient philanthropy. They can only be brought about in the lapse of time, by the steady operation of physical, economical and moral causes.—Have those who rebuke the South for the continuance of slavery considered that neither the present generation nor the preceding one is responsible for its existence?—The African slave trade was prohibited by act of Congress fifty-one years ago, and many years earlier by the separate Southern States. The entire colored population, with the exception, perhaps, of a few hundred surreptitiously introduced, is native to the soil. Their ancestors were conveyed from Africa in the ships of Old England and New England. They now number between three and four millions. Has any person, of any party or opinion, proposed, in sober earnest, a practical method of wholesale emancipation?

I believe most persons, in all parts of the country, are of opinion that free labor is steadily gaining ground. It would, in my judgment, have already prevailed in the two Northern tiers of the slaveholding States had its advances not been unhappily retarded by the irritating agitations of the day. But has any person, whose opinion is entitled to the slightest respect, ever undertaken to sketch out the details of a plan for affecting the change at once, by any legislative measure that could be adopted? Consider, only, I pray you, that it would be to ask the South to give up one thousand millions of property, which she holds by a title satisfactory to herself, as the first step. Then estimate the cost of an adequate outfit for the self-support of the emancipated millions; then reflect on the derangement of the entire industrial system of the South, and all the branches of commerce and manufactures that depend on its great staples; then the necessity of conferring equal political privileges on the emancipated race, who, being free, would be content with nothing less, if anything less were consistent with our political system; then the consequent organization of two great political parties on the basis of color, and the eternal feud which would rage between them; and finally, the overflow into the free States of a vast multitude of needy and helpless emigrants, who being excluded from many of them (and among others from Kansas) would prove doubly burdensome where they are admitted. Should we, sir, with all our sympathy for the colored race, give a very cordial reception to two or three hundred thousand destitute emancipated slaves? Does not every candid man see that every one of these steps present difficulties of the most formidable character—difficulties for which, as far as I know, no man and no party has proposed a solution. And is it, sir, for the attainment of objects so manifestly impracticable, pursued too by the bloody pathways of treason and murder, that we will allow the stupendous evil which now threatens us to come upon the country? Shall we permit this curiously compacted body politic, the nicest adjustment of human wisdom to go to pieces?—will we blast this beautiful symmetric form; paralyze this arm of public strength; smite with imbecility this great national intellect? Where sir, O where, will be the flag of the United States? Where our rapidly increasing influence in the family of nations?—Already they are rejoicing in our divisions. The last foreign journal which I have read, in commenting upon the event at Harper's Ferry, dwells upon it as something that "will compel us to keep the peace with the powers of Europe," and that means to take the law from them in our own international relations.

I meant to have spoken of the wreck of that magnificent and mutually beneficial commercial intercourse which now exists between the producing and manufacturing States,—on the hostile tariffs in time of peace and the habitually recurring border [illegible] annihilated, I [illegible] the navy of [illegible] inheritance of its [illegible] give up this!—[illegible] of those hap- [illegible] North and [illegible] country, on [illegible] the South sent [illegible] Massachusetts, and New [illegible] Carolina—is [illegible] all the counsel that [illegible] all the joint labors [illegible] republic;—is this *all* [illegible] permit this last [illegible] republican- [illegible] and a by word to [illegible] No, no, no. This [illegible] shall not perish. Precious [illegible] erations unborn shall enjoy its privileges as we have done, and if we leave them poor in all besides, we will transmit to them the boundless wealth of its blessings.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Hon. Edward Everett's emphatic and eloquent denunciation of every tendency to disunion, the immense assembly broke forth into the most rapturous and vehement applause. Nine vociferous cheers were given for the honorable gentleman, followed by the clapping of hands, waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and every demonstration a sincere people could give of satisfaction and delight.

FLIGHT OF JEWS FROM MOROCCO

We have heretofore stated that, owing to the threatened war between Spain and Morocco, the Jews resident in the latter country are flying to Gibraltar and seeking the protection of the British flag to avoid a repetition of the brutal outrages to which they were exposed in 1844, when the wild Kabyle tribe came down to the coast and committed the most barbarous acts of murder and plunder. At last accounts nearly three thousand Jews had arrived at Gibraltar from Tangier, and it was probable that they would be followed by many thousands others from other parts of Morocco. Most of the fugitives are in destitute circumstances, being obliged in their sudden flight to leave behind them whatever little property they possessed. Very many of the sufferers, including young women and children, could find no resting place upon reaching Gibraltar but the bare ground. An appeal has therefore been made in their behalf to their co-religionists in England and the United States, and to the benevolent of all persuasions. In New York city the Rev. S. M. ISAACS, of 694 Houston street, has undertaken to receive donations.

DISCOVERY OF SILVER MINES IN CALIFORNIA.

The New York Courier says that late letters from San Francisco state that large quantities of very rich silver ore have begun to come in from the eastern slope of the Sierra. The ore is described as of far superior richness to any ever obtained from Mexico or Peru, and improving in quality as it is dug from a greater depth. A specimen of the ore received in New York shows that the mines are very finely granulated and intermingled with iron pyrites. The silver is not visible to the eye; but yet, as is well known, that is no argument against its abundance. The ore is said to abound on the surface, dropping out in rocks over a considerable extent of country. The place is only three or four days' journey eastward from San Francisco, at Washoe, and a great excitement is expected to be the result of the discovery.

Distressing Accident.—Mrs. Haselwood, of Franklin county, (N. C.) was instantly killed on Friday morning by the accidental discharge of a shot gun in the hands of her husband. He rose from bed about 5 o'clock in the morning for the purpose of going turkey hunting, and, after dressing himself, on attempting to take his gun from behind a bureau which stood near the bed, it was discharged, the whole load entering his wife's head, near the crown, causing instant death. Mr. H. is almost insane from mental distress. He is one of the best citizens of the county, and much sympathy is felt for him.—*Raleigh Register.*

Abolitionist Hung in Kentucky.—The New York Day Book has received information from a private source, that a few days ago an Ohio abolitionist named Day was arrested by the Vigilance Committee in a certain county in Kentucky. He had incendiary papers on his person. As he had been caught in the attempt to circulate these documents previously, and warned that he should be hanged if caught at it again, he was this time swung up without further ado.

SETTLED.—It is said that the noted Forrest divorce case, which has been in the New York Superior Court for the last nine years, is about to be settled. The Reference on the question of alimony reported that Edwin Forrest pay Mrs. Forrest $4,000 per annum from the commencement of the suit and all costs, amounting, up to date, to about $100,000.

A Northern editor says: "We don't mind recording the deaths of people without being paid for our trouble, though that is not fair; but panegyrics on the dead must be paid for. We positively cannot send people to heaven for nothing."

SEWARD BASKING IN ROYAL SUNSHINE.—Mr Seward is taking a rapid tour through Belgium and Holland. He will return to Paris about the 10th of December, and sail in the Arago from Havre on the 13th. He was the guest of the Emperor and Empress, at Compeigne, for a week, a compliment which very naturally has made a sensation, not only in American but even in French circles.

President's Message.

Fellow-citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

Our deep and heartfelt gratitude is due to this Almighty Power which has bestowed upon us such varied and numerous blessings throughout the past year. The general health of the country has been excellent; our harvests have been unusually plentiful, and prosperity smiles throughout the land—indeed, notwithstanding our demerits, we have much reason to believe from the past events in our history, that we have enjoyed the special protection of Divine Providence ever since our origin as a nation. We have been exposed to many threatening and alarming difficulties in our progress but on each successive occasion the impending cloud has been dissipated at the head, and the danger to our institutions has passed away. May we ever be under the divine guidance and protection.

Whilst it is the duty of the President "from time to time to give to Congress information of the state of the Union," I shall not refer in detail to the recent sad and bloody occurrences at Harper's Ferry. Still, it is proper to observe that these events, however bad and cruel in themselves, derive their chief importance from the apprehension that they are but symptoms of an incurable disease in the public mind, which may break out in still more dangerous outrages and terminate at last in an open war by the North to abolish slavery in the South. Whilst, for myself, I entertain no such apprehension, they ought to afford a solemn warning to us all to beware of the approach of danger. Our Union is a stake of such inestimable value as to demand our constant and watchful vigilance for its preservation. In this view, let me implore my countrymen, North and South, to cultivate the ancient feelings of mutual forbearance and good will towards each other, and strive to allay the demon spirit of sectional hatred and strife now alive in the land. This advice proceeds from the heart of an old public functionary whose service commenced in the last generation, among the wise and conservative statesmen of that day, now nearly all passed away, and whose first and dearest earthly wish is to leave his country tranquil, prosperous, united, and powerful.

We ought to reflect that in this age, and especially in this country, there is an incessant flux and reflux of public opinion. Questions which in their day assumed a most threatening aspect, have now nearly gone from the memory of men. They are "volcanoes burnt out, and on the lava and ashes and squalid scoriæ of old eruptions grow the peaceful olive, the cheering vine, and the sustaining corn." Such, in my opinion, will prove to be the fate of the present sectional excitement, should those who wisely seek to apply the remedy, continue always to confine their efforts within the pale of the constitution. If this course be pursued, the existing agitation on the subject of domestic slavery, like everything human, will have its day and give place to other and less threatening controversies. Public opinion in this country is all powerful, and when it reaches a dangerous excess upon any question, the good sense of the people will furnish the corrective and bring it back within safe limits. Still, to hasten this auspicious result, at the present crisis, we ought to remember that every rational creature must be presumed to intend the natural consequences of his own teachings. Those who announce abstract doctrines subversive of the Constitution and the Union, must not be surprised should their heated partisans advance one step further, and attempt by violence to carry these doctrines into practical effect. In this view of the subject it ought never to be forgotten that, however great may have been the political advantages resulting from the Union to every portion of our common country, these would all prove to be as nothing should the time ever arrive when they cannot be enjoyed without serious danger to the personal safety of the people of fifteen members of the confederacy. If the peace of the domestic fireside throughout these States should ever be invaded—if the mothers of families within this extensive region should not be able to retire to rest at night without suffering dreadful apprehensions of what may be their own fate and that of their children before the morning—it would be vain to recount to such a people the political benefits which result to them from the Union. Self preservation is the first instinct of nature; and therefore any state of society in which the sword is all the time suspended over the heads of the people, must at last become intolerable. But I indulge in no such gloomy forebodings. On the contrary, I firmly believe that the events at Harper's Ferry, by causing the people to pause and reflect upon the possible peril to their cherished institutions, will be the means, under Providence, of allaying the existing excitement and preventing future outbreaks of a similar character. They will resolve that the Constitution and the Union shall not be endangered by rash counsels, knowing that, should "the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken * * at the fountain," human power could never reunite the scattered and hostile fragments.

I cordially congratulate you upon the final settlement by the Supreme Court of the United States of the question of slavery in the Territories, which had presented an aspect so truly formidable at the commencement of my administration. The right has been established of every citizen to take his property of any kind, including slaves, into the common Territories belonging equally to all the States of the Confederacy, and to have it protected there under the Federal Constitution. Neither Congress nor a territorial legislature, nor any human power, has any authority to annul or impair this vested right. The supreme judicial tribunal of the country, which is a co-ordinate branch of the Government, has sanctioned and affirmed these principles of constitutional law, so manifestly just in themselves, and so well calculated to promote peace and harmony among the States. It is a striking proof of the sense of justice which is inherent in our people, that the property in slaves has never been disturbed to my knowledge, in any of the Territories.—Even throughout the late troubles in Kansas there has not been any attempt, as I am credibly informed, to interfere, in a single instance, with the right of the master. Had any such attempt been made, the judiciary would doubtless have afforded an adequate remedy.—Should they fail to do this hereafter, it will then be time enough for strengthening their hands by further legislation. Had it been decided that either Congress or the territorial legislature possess the power to exclude or impair the right of property in slaves, the evil would be intolerable. In the latter event, there would be a struggle for a majority of the members of the legislature at each successive election, and the sacred rights of property held under the Federal Constitution would depend for the time being on the result. The agitation would thus be rendered incessant whilst the territorial condition remained, and its baneful influence would keep alive a dangerous excitement among the people of the states.

Thus has the status of a Territory, during the intermediate period from its first settlement until it shall become a State, been irrevocably fixed by the final decision of the Supreme Court. Fortunate has this been for the prosperity of the Territories, as well as the tranquility of the States. Now, emigrants from the North and the South, the East and the West, will meet in the Territories on a common platform, having brought with them that species of property best adapted, in their own opinion, to promote their welfare. From natural causes the slavery question will in each case soon virtually settle itself; and before the Territory is prepared for admission as a State into the Union this decision one way or the other, will have been a foregone conclusion.—Meanwhile the settlement of the new Territory will proceed without serious interruption, and its progress and prosperity will not be endangered or retarded by violent political struggles.

When in the progress of events the inhabitants of any Territory shall have reached the number required to form a State, they will then proceed, in a regular manner, and in the exercise of the rights of popular sovereignty, to form a constitution preparatory to admission into the Union. After this has been done, to employ the language of the Kansas and Nebraska act, they "shall be received into the Union with or without slavery, as their constitution may prescribe at the time of their admission." This sound principle has happily been recognized, in some form or other, by an almost unanimous vote of both houses of the last Congress.

All lawful means at my command have been employed, and shall continue to be employed, to execute the laws against the African slave trade. After a most careful and rigorous examination of our coasts and a thorough investigation of the subject, we have not been able to discover that any slaves have been imported into the United States except the cargo by the Wanderer, numbering between three and four hundred. Those engaged in this unlawful enterprise have been rigorously prosecuted; but not with as much success as their crimes have deserved. A number of them are still under prosecution.

Our history proves that the Fathers of the Republic, in advance of all other nations, condemned the African slave-trade. It was, notwithstanding, deemed expedient by the framers of the Constitution to deprive Congress of the power to prohibit "the migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit" "prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight."

It will be seen that this restriction on the power of Congress was confined to such States only as might think proper to admit the importation of slaves. It did not extend to other States or to the trade carried on abroad. Accordingly, we find that so early as the 22nd March, 1794, Congress passed an act imposing severe penalties and punishments upon citizens and residents of the U. S. who should engage in this trade between foreign nations. The provisions of this act were extended and enforced by the act of 10th May, 1800.

Again: The States themselves had a clear right to waive the constitutional privilege intended for their benefit, and to prohibit, by their own laws, this trade at any time they thought proper, previous to 1808. Several of them exercised this right before that period, and among them some containing the greatest number of slaves. This gave to Congress the immediate power to act in regard to all such States, because they themselves had removed the constitutional barrier. Congress accordingly passed an act on 28th February, 1803, "to prevent the importation of certain persons into States where, by the laws thereof, their admission is prohibited." In this manner the importation of African slaves into the United States was, to a great extent, prohibited some years in advance of 1808.

As the year 1808 approached, Congress determined not to suffer this trade to exist even for a single day after they had the power to abolish it. On the 2d of March, 1807, they passed an act to take effect "from and after the 1st day of January, 1808," prohibiting the importation of African slaves into the Un. States. This was followed by subsequent acts of a similar character, to which I need not specially refer. Such were the principles and such the practice of our ancestors more than fifty years ago in regard to the African slave-trade.

It did not occur to the revered patriots who had been delegates to the convention, and afterwards became members of Congress, that in passing these laws they had violated the Constitution which they had framed with so much care and deliberation. They supposed that to prohibit Congress, in express terms, from exercising a specified power before an appointed day necessarily involved the right to exercise this power after that day had arrived.

If this were not the case, the framers of the Constitution had expended much labor in vain. Had they imagined that Congress would possess no power to prohibit the trade either before or after 1808, they would not have taken so much care to protect the States against the exercise of this power before that period. Nay more, they would not have attached such vast importance to this provision as to have excluded it