

NO MORE SLAVE-HUNTING.

In the U. S. Senate on the 7th ultimo, Mr. Sumner submitted an elaborate report from the Select Committee on Slavery and the treatment of Freedmen, to whom were referred sundry petitions asking for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850; and, also; asking for the repeal of all acts for the rendition of fugitive slaves. In its spirit and purpose, and the general treatment of the subject, it is worthy of the highest commendation. We regard that portion of it, however, which attempts to prove that Article IV. Section 2 does not and was not intended to apply to fugitive slaves as fallacious, and contradicted by the uniform action of the nation in regard to it from the adoption of the Constitution to the present hour. It can do nothing towards effecting the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law to attempt, by any interpretation however ingenious, to turn back the current of history and of popular feeling for seventy years. The "covenant with death" was made, and the "agreement with hell" ratified; and therefore our present terrible visitation as a nation.

The following extract from Mr. Sumner's Report is touchingly expressed:—

THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT.

And, first, as to its consequences. In the history of the African race these can never be forgotten. Since the first authorization of the slave trade, nothing so terrible had fallen upon this unhappy people, whether we contemplate its cruelty to individuals or the wide-spread proscription which it launched against all who were "guilty of a skin not colored as our own."

It is sad to know of suffering anywhere, even by a single lowly person. But our feelings are enhanced when individual sorrows are multiplied, and the blow descends upon a whole race. History, too, takes up the grief. The Jews expelled from Spain by merciless decrees; the Huguenots driven from France by the revocation of the edict of Nantes; our own Puritan fathers compelled to exile for religious freedom; all these receive a gushing sympathy, and we detest the tyrants. These were persecutions for religion in days of religious bigotry and darkness. But an American Congress, in this age of Christian light, not in the fanaticism of Slavery, did an act which can find companionship only with these enormities of the past. The fugitive slave act carried distress and terror to every person of African blood in the free States. All were fluttered, as the arbitrary edict commenced its swoop over the land. The very rumor that a slave-hunter was in town so shook the nerves of a sensitive freeman, on whom was the ban of color, that he died. To large numbers this act was a decree of instantaneous expulsion from the Republic, under the penalties of Slavery to them and their heirs forever. Stung with despair, as many as 6,000 Christian men and women, meritorious persons—a larger band than that of the escaping Puritans—precipitately fled from homes which they had established, opportunities of usefulness which they had found, and the regard of fellow-citizens, until at last, in an unwelcome northern climate, beneath the British flag, with glad voices of freedom on their lips, though with the yearnings of exile in their hearts, they were happy in swelling the chant, "God save the Queen."

But such an injustice cannot be restrained in its influence. Wherever it shows itself, it is an extension of Slavery, with all the wrong, violence, and brutality which are the natural outgrowth of Slavery. The free States became little better than a huge outlying plantation, quivering under the lash of the overseer; or, rather, they were a diversified hunting-ground for the flying bondman, resounding always with the "halloo" of the huntsman. There seemed to be no rest. The chase was hardly finished at Boston before it broke out at Philadelphia, Syracuse, or Buffalo, and then again raged furiously over the prairies of the west. Not a case occurred which did not shock the conscience of the country, and sting it with anger. The records of the time attest the accuracy of this statement. Perhaps there is no instance in history where human passion showed itself in grander forms of expression, or where eloquence lent all her gifts more completely to the demands of liberty, than the speech of an eminent character now dead and buried in a foreign land, denouncing the capture of Thomas Simms, at Boston, and invoking the judgment of God and man upon the agents in this wickedness. The great effort cannot be forgotten in the history of humanity. But every case pleaded with an eloquence of its own, until, at last, one of those tragedies occurred which darken the heavens, and cry out with a voice that will be heard. It was the voice of a mother standing over her murdered child. Margaret Garner had escaped from Slavery with three children, but she was overtaken at Cincinnati. Unwilling to see her offspring returned to the shambles of the south, this unhappy person, described in the testimony as "a womanly, amiable, affectionate mother," determined to save them in the only way within her power. With a butcher knife, coolly and deliberately, she took the life of one of the children, described as "almost white, and a little girl of rare beauty," and attempted, without success, to take the life of the other two. To the preacher who interrogated her, she exclaimed: "The child was my own given me of God to do the best a mother could in its behalf. I have done the best I could; I would have done more and better for the rest; I knew it was better for them to go home to God than back to slavery." But she was restrained in her purpose. The fugitive slave act triumphed; and after the determination of sundry questions of jurisdiction, this devoted historic mother, with the two children that remained to her, and the dead body of the little one just emancipated, was escorted by a national guard of armed men to the doom of Slavery. But her case did not end with this revolting sacrifice. So long as the human heart is moved by human suffering, the story of this mother will be read with alternate anger and grief, while it is studied as a perpetual witness to the slaveholding tyranny which then ruled the Republic with execrable exactions, destined at last to break out in war, as the sacrifice of Virginia by her father is a perpetual witness to the decemviral tyranny which ruled Rome.

But liberty is always priceless. There are other instances less known, in which kindred wrong has been done. Every case was a tragedy—under the forms of law. Worse than poisoned bowl or dagger was the certificate of a commissioner—who was allowed, without interruption, to continue his dreadful trade. Even since the rebellion for Slavery has been raging in blood, the pretension of returning slaves to their masters has not been abandoned. The piety of Abraham, who offered up Isaac as a sacrifice to Jehovah, has been imitated, and the country has continued to offer up its fugitive slaves as a sacrifice to Slavery. It is reported, on good authority, that among the slaves thus offered up was one who, by his communications to the government, had been the means of saving upwards of one hundred thousand dollars. And here in Washington, since the beneficent act of emancipation, even in sight of the flag floating from the national Capitol, the fugitive slave act has been made a scourge and a terror to innocent men and women.

If all these pains and sorrows had redounded in any respect to the honor of the country, or had contributed in any respect to the strength of the Union, then we might confess, perhaps, that something at least had been gained. But, alas! there has been nothing but unmixed evil. The country has suffered in its good name, while foreign nations have pointed with scorn to a republic which could sanction such indecencies. Not a case occurred which was not greedily chronicled in Europe, and circulated there by the enemies of liberal institutions. Even since the rebellion began, in the name of Slavery, the existence of this odious enactment unrepealed on our statute-book has been quoted abroad to show that the supporters of the Union are as little deserving of sympathy as the rebel slavemongers. But from the enforcement of this enactment the Union has suffered; or not a slave was thrust back into bondage without weakening those patriotic sympathies, north and south, which are its best support. The natural irritation of the north as it beheld all the safeguards of freedom overthrown, and Slavery triumphant in its very streets, was encountered by a savage exultation in the south, which seemed to dance about its victims. Each instance was the occasion of new exasperations on both sides, which were skillfully employed by wicked conspirators "to fire the southern heart."

The Report concludes in the following words:—

"Unhappily, the statute must always remain in the pages of our history. But every day of delay in its repeal is hurtful to the national cause, and to the national name. Would you put down the rebellion? Would you uphold our fame abroad? Would you save the Constitution from outrage? Would you extinguish slavery? Above all, would you follow the Constitution and establish justice? Then repeal this statute at once."