

The recent Riots in Philadelphia.

The city of Philadelphia has lost its former reputation for quietness and order. More disgraceful scenes have never been enacted in the United States, than those which attended its late riots. Nor are they to be charged upon the low-minded rabble alone; the city government, that wants force, be it moral or physical, to quell such an outrage before it has spent itself, is deeply dishonored. The burning of Pennsylvania Hall, three years ago, was permitted by the city authorities. A writer in the Recorder says he was within a stone's throw of that conflagration, and it was obvious that a very little efficiency on the part of the mayor would have prevented it. The same thing is said, by some of the Philadelphia papers, to be true of this outrage. How deep then the disgrace! Is it true that the higher classes of Philadelphia cherish such a feeling toward their colored population, a large part of which is far more moral and intelligent than the lower class of whites, that they will countenance an unprovoked attack of the populace upon them, when peaceably assembled to celebrate the emancipation of 800,000 of their kindred? We suppose it is even so. Said a Philadelphian, who was in this city at the time of the riots, when the news came, "Good enough for them!—what right had the niggers to get up a celebration?" What right! Surely, the dark shadows of slavery still hang like the pall of night over our devoted country. The colored people of the North are not yet free. They never will be, while oppression is sanctioned by law, and defended from the Bible, anywhere within our boundary lines.

We rejoice however to see that a redeeming spirit is abroad in the land,—there is liberty for the press, if not for the colored man; and thank Heaven! that liberty is sometimes used in virtue's cause. Even the Philadelphia papers very generally condemn the conduct of the rioters, though some indicate an entire want of sympathy with the blacks. We believe they all admit that the attack was utterly unprovoked, and they confess that the Brethren refused to play on the Beneficent Hall, and the Presbyterian church, which, because they were owned by the blacks, were burnt by the mob. This is one of the many facts, which illustrate the character of public opinion and feeling in Philadelphia. The cool, almost silent rebuke, of many presses, in every part of the North, shows but too plainly how little of moral sense or moral courage there is in many of these "guardians of the public weal." But the tone of a large portion of the secular, as well as religious press, is exceedingly gratifying. We have not room for quotations. It is enough to say, that many of the secular papers, not only condemn mobocracy, but defend the equal rights of colored men; and in so doing, they have set a good example to certain of our brethren who write and utter for the Christian community. The reports of the causes and prominent characteristics of the riot, have been somewhat contradictory. We therefore copy from the Philadelphia Ledger the following statement, on the authenticity of which we suppose we may safely rely.

THE LATE RIOTS.

The undersigned respectfully request the attention of the public to the following statement respecting the alleged origin of the late riots:

Arrangements were made by two Temperance Societies, composed of people of color, with a view to a joint procession, to be held on the 1st of August. As Pennsylvania has passed laws for abolishing slavery within her limits; as her citizens generally declare that they are not concerned in, nor responsible for the existence of slavery elsewhere; and as they generally profess, both those who are termed abolitionists and those who are not, a desire for the moral and intellectual improvement of the colored population, it was presumed that no one could find reasonable or even plausible grounds of exception to the proceeding. As it was the anniversary of the liberation of nearly a million of their brethren from slavery in the West Indies, the occasion was deemed favorable for exciting in their breasts a zeal for self-government, and an increased determination to avoid the degrading vice of intemperance. And as a similar procession was held in Wilmington on the 1st of August, 1841, in a slaveholding State, without the least interruption or apparent displeasure, it was not anticipated that the citizens of Philadelphia would be found less tolerant or reasonable.*

The formation of the processions has been attributed to the advice of the white abolitionists of the city. This is so far from correct, that none of that class are known to have been consulted on the subject, and very few of them are believed to have known that the processions were in contemplation, until they heard that one of them had been dispersed by the mob.

Those proceedings were intended principally for the members of Temperance Societies, and especially for those who had become reformed from the habit of intoxication. The great mass of the people of color who were disposed to solemnize the day, had made arrangements for doing so, one portion by going to Snow Hill, in New Jersey, to partake of an entertainment, another portion by religious services and addresses in the churches in the city and surrounding districts; which arrangements were quietly carried into effect.

In consequence of a difference of opinion, which arose between the two Temperance Societies above mentioned, as to the most suitable place for dining, their proposed union did not take place. The Northern Society held its procession through various streets in the Northern Liberties, Spring Garden and the City, and, crossing over to Camden, dined at one of the public gardens there without either molestation or manifestation of dislike on the part of the public.

The Moyamensing procession, which was composed, in a great measure, of reformed inebriates, chose its route through that part of the southern districts where it was believed it would be most useful by reason of the greater proportion of objects needing a temperance reformation. It proceeded from the Temperance Hall, in Bedford-street, up Eighth to Lombard, up Lombard, to Tenth, down Tenth to Carpenter, down Carpenter to Fourth-street, without interruption; thence up Fourth to Shippen-street, in which street it was attacked and broken up by a mob.

It has been pretended that the banners carried by the procession were the cause of the attack. This was not the fact. There were two banners, both of which are now in the hands of the Mayor. Neither of them contained any thing calculated to give offence to a just or reasonable mind. That which it has pretended caused the riot, did not contain any words such as have been reported. It was carried in the latter part of the procession, while it was the fore part of it that was attacked, and that too, it is believed, by persons who had not at the time even seen the banner which has since been set forth as the cause of disturbance. This banner has been publicly exhibited by the Mayor, and its pacific character plainly proved.

From various information received, there is strong reason to believe that plots had been laid, preparations made, and cudgels obtained, for the purpose of breaking up the procession.

If not further violence, before the arrival of the day on which it was to take place.

It was thought the chief instigators of the mob were found among the enemies of the temperance cause, and that their principal object was to impede the progress of that cause; at least so far as relates to the colored population of Moyamensing and its vicinity.

The subsequent occurrences are generally known to the public,—how unoffending colored women were attacked in the streets, their furniture broken, destroyed, or stolen; how colored men and boys, having given no offence, except that of wearing the skin which their Creator had given them, were assaulted when quietly walking the streets, engaged in their usual business, and were beaten until their persecutors believed them to be dead; how it was publicly announced in the streets during the day, that a hall, which was building exclusively for purposes of education, and of literary, moral, and religious instruction, should be burned in the evening, and how it actually was burned; and how a church was consumed, with fire engines surrounding it, and none of them permitted to save it from destruction.

We submit this brief statement of facts to an intelligent community, leaving to them the decision how far such proceedings are to meet with their sanction and encouragement.

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* The day was also celebrated the present year in Wilmington, by a procession and an address, without any interruption, from S. H. Gloucester, whose disclaimer has recently appeared in the Ledger.