

Tuesday, January 23, 844.

Justice in Tennessee.

Some time since, there came to our residence a young colored woman; whose husband had been arrested in Nashville, and cast into jail, on suspicion of being a runaway slave. She showed us a letter which she had received, dated Nov. 12th, from which we extract the following.

"I remain in prison yet and don't know when I shall get out. The people of this place took me up, on suspicion of being a runaway from some person in the lower country. But they have not found any one to claim me, and never will.

* * * My lawyer came to see me three times, and offered to attend my case for fifty dollars, but I had no money to offer: so I have not seen him since. I have been in prison so long, that my prison fees amount to a hundred dollars or more, and they say that if I am in prison twelve months, I will be sold out for jail fees."

His name is Alfred Peelett—married only a few months—had been running on the river the last ten years. His wife was much distressed, and wanted to know what could be done. We advised her to get a copy of his "free papers" from the Clerk in Cincinnati, and we would do all we could. We opened at once a correspondence with highly respectable lawyers in Nashville, and forwarded the papers. Their answer was, that they had examined Peelet, and did not believe he was free—that his story was contradictory—that some person there said that he once belonged to a lady in Louisiana. They therefore thought him not worthy of the attention bestowed on him. His jail fees they said amounted to \$98, and he would soon be sold to pay them.—*No claimant had appeared*—and it was clear that he was still retained on mere suspicion. We forwarded another letter, asking them whether by the payment of his jail fees he could be released; and if so, whether the business could be transacted by correspondence. In answer they say—that "there seems to be no doubt that he can be proved a slave, but he cannot be sold before the month of April next. The fees will amount to something like \$200; but he cannot be released by paying them, as our laws require that he should be sold for what he will bring, and if he sells for more than the jail fees, the remainder goes to the county."

The facts then, are these: Alfred Peelett, a man who has been running on the Western waters the last ten years, and has his free papers recorded in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, was seized last April in Nashville, on suspicion of being a runaway, and cast into jail, where he has lain ever since: "there *seems* to be no doubt that he can be proven a slave," though no person has appeared to claim him, during the eight or nine months he has been incarcerated, and no proof on this point has been offered: he is to be kept in jail till next April, when his fees will amount to \$200, and when he is to be sold for the highest price he will bring, the surplus above \$200, going to the county; and all this, in the teeth of the free papers, bearing the broad seal of Ohio—without a claimant—without a single particle of evidence to prove that he is a slave, but on a bare suspicion, and because, it *seems* that he is!

Such are the atrocities of slaveholding law, such its cool disregard of the authority of the free State of Ohio. This colored man was a resident in this state, and has the certificate of his freedom, stamped with its seal. And yet, mere hearsay, and suspicion, and an *it seems so*, are to weigh more with the slaveholders of Nashville, than the official act of the sovereign state of Ohio; and the man whom she is bound by every regard to her own honor to protect, "is to be sold into eternal slavery, to pay his jail fees, and to pay the county a bonus for depriving him of his Liberty!

The case of Alfred Peelett, is but one of many of the same kind.