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Reading Matter on Every Page

SHELBY COUNTY MASS CONVENTION.—A mass convention of the people of Shelby county will be held in the city of Memphis, on Saturday, the 27th inst., for the purpose of nominating candidates for the State convention, which assembles at Nashville, on the 28th of February. A full attendance of the people of the county is requested and desired.

SUMMARY

The telegraph announces that on Tuesday the Rhode Island legislature repealed the personal liberty bill of that State.....Thirty cases of measles and a quantity of assafoetida were seized by the New York police on Tuesday, which had been brought by steamer Montreal, which sailed yesterday for Savannah.....In the Louisiana convention yesterday a resolution was adopted appointing a committee of fifteen to consider and report on withdrawing Louisiana from the Federal Union. The ordinance will be reported to-day.....The Louisiana legislature adjourned yesterday till the 4th of February.....Messrs. Green and Polk have been asked to present amendments to the Senate from selfish motives.....It is said that the military and naval commissioners and the committee on ways and means are preparing bills for immediately placing the country on a war footing. These bills will authorize the President to call for the entire guard of volunteers, and order the construction of a number of war steamers.....The report of the commission of thirty-three coming up in the House yesterday, Mr. Bishopine gave notice that, if that body failed to bring public expectation, he should move to refer the matter to the people.....The case of the fugitive slave girl Lucy, on trial at Cleveland, has been decided, and she will be returned to Virginia to-day. Cleveland is in the hot-bed of abolitionism, and this action on the part of the author from there indicates a returning sense of justice.

MR. CRITTENDEN'S RESOLUTIONS AS EXPLAINED.

In the Senate, on the 11th inst., Mr. HARLAN, of Iowa, (a Black-Republican) was discussing the demands made by the South, and said that even Mr. CRITTENDEN proposed a "congressional slave code" for all the Territories south of 36 deg. 30 min. Mr. CRITTENDEN interrupted him as follows:

Mr. Crittenden. I hope I shall be allowed a word. I am surprised to hear the gentleman say there was a slave code in my plan. I thought I had carefully avoided that. I took things as they were, and say that the laws as they now exist shall continue to exist, and what positive thing give shall be established by the other Congress for the territorial government shall legislate upon the subject. This is the congressional code that I propose. The rule is that legislation is prohibited at one stroke, and that is a territorial one; and as we have come to the point where I suppose some settlement should take place, I propose that we shall take the status as it now exists. It relieves us from all legislation. I propose to give what protection the present laws give—nothing more.

Mr. Harlan. I am sorry I did not earlier gratified that the Senator has corrected me. I do not desire to misrepresent his proposition.

Mr. Crittenden. I am sure the gentleman does not.

Mr. Harlan. Here is the language, however, of the printed bill, which I have on my desk:

"In all the Territories south of said line of latitude, slavery (the African race is hereby recognized as existing)"—

Mr. Crittenden. That is all.

Mr. Harlan. It is recognized as existing, "and shall not be interfered with by Congress, but shall be protected as property by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance."

Mr. Crittenden. According to their own laws.

Mr. Harlan. I shall be happy, Mr. President, to find that the proposition submitted is less objectionable than I at first supposed it to be.

Mr. Crittenden. It has been one of my objects to exclude the idea of legislating by Congress. The resolution is silent on the subject.

The amendments proposed by Mr. CRITTENDEN as at first understood and interpreted were never satisfactory even to the moderate men of the border States. They have uniformly been held by southern statesmen to yield too much of our constitutional rights to the North.

They were, without a dissenting voice, proclaimed to be the lowest mark to which the most lukewarm advocates of our rights could be brought, by way of compromise. They were so pronounced both in Kentucky and Congress, and in Maryland whenever popular feeling has had utterance. This was the attitude of southern compromisers, when the resolutions on the territorial questions were regarded as tendering to the restoration of the Missouri compromise line and its extension to after acquired territory. The northern Democracy cheerfully conceded thus much. By the construction thus placed upon his amendment, the territory north of that line would have been forever freesoil, and that south slave soil until its State organization should determine its status on the question of slavery.

This was the ultima Thule, beyond which the most moderate of southern men had not permitted their spirit of concession to wander. But the explanation, as given by Mr. CRITTENDEN, brings his resolutions far below this standard. It emasculates his proposition, so very nearly to nothing. It accomplishes nothing except to prohibit legislation on the subject by Congress. While it declares that African slavery is recognized south of the line, and shall be protected by all the departments of the territorial government, yet he declares that it is not intended that the territorial government shall legislate on the subject. He only proposes to give "what protection the present laws give—nothing more." Perhaps the present laws of New Mexico may give sufficient protection to the institution, yet a Republican court, with their construction of existing laws, would hold the action of the government of New Mexico as a null and void act. In the event that any new territory should be acquired by the United States, south of the line of 36 deg. 30 min., what would be its status? In Mr. CRITTENDEN'S compromise intended to include all territory hereafter acquired south of the partition line? Mr. BARNWELL says that it is so designed. The resolution is silent on the subject. Do the Black-Republicans so interpret it? And are we again called on to trust to their Punic faith? What protection would the "existing laws" give to slave property in territory acquired from Mexico?

The American people have once before had this very question agitated and discussed before them and in Congress, and no definite conclusion has yet been arrived at. The difficulty of deciding the matter lies in the difference of the fundamental theories of the two sections of the country touching the institution of slavery. The North, including both Republicans and Democrats, assert that slavery is a local institution and depends for its existence on local laws. The South holds to the doctrine of Mr. CALHOUN, (as ably expounded by Mr. BENJAMIN) that slavery exists by the common law of the land wherever it is not abolished or excluded by the law-making power; that immediately upon the acquisition of territory, the Constitution which recognizes property in slaves, and the common law by virtue of which it exists, are applied to the territory, and the rights of the slave holder attach and must be protected.

The South occupies the better legal position, but the North has overthrown us by mere numerical majority, and the future action of the Government, and the future decisions of the courts, will be in accordance with their views. Of what avail, then, is the so-called compromise of Mr. CRITTENDEN, when applied to our future acquisitions? It would be a divisive mockery. But it is a useless task to discuss the effect of this amendment. It is wholly unsatisfactory to the southern people, and will be rejected by the Republicans. Emasculate it as Mr. CRITTENDEN has done, strike from it all that looks to a recognition of the rights or equality of the South, and still the malignity of the Republicans would prompt them to reject it. They are determined to humble the pride of the South. They have their feet upon the necks of the native aristocracy, as WILSON of Massachusetts, boasted, "and they will grind them to powder." From SEWARD to LINCOLN the obscure, from SHERMAN to FRED DOUGLASS, they all cry out against any compromise with the hated slave power.

What a humiliating spectacle, to behold a man so venerable and a statesman so distinguished as CRITTENDEN, a supplicant at the feet of WADE, HARRIS, CARPENTER and WILSON! Justice should be demanded, not implored; and equality bestowed as a boon from mercy can never be accepted without the loss of self-respect. Let not Tennessee, at least, degrade herself by longer sufference of tyranny, or humiliating supplications for justice from her aggressors. She has been smitten on one cheek, let her not turn the other; for the lesson of humility taught by the Divine Master was prescribed for individuals, and not for a sovereign people, whose highest virtue finds expression in the maintenance of all their rights.

RECEPTION IS CO-OPERATION.—Who would say that the seceded States were out of the Union? What southern man is there that would not feel humiliated at the idea that they should now retrace their steps and be dishonored and ruin to the South? The cons... In less than ten days, seven Slaveholding States will have withdrawn from the Union. Six Southern States will have withdrawn and have broken and Nebraska act was ... South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, will have declared their independence of the Federal Government, and set up for themselves; and the question will come to us, and the question will be put to us, "Have we any Union?" If we have not, then we, as men, would look that fact in the face and act accordingly.

The Federal Government and the dominant party refuse to take the positive and bold ground that these States have seceded without authority, and that the power of the Government and the Republican party will be used to coerce them back into the Union against their will. Was the object of the framers of our Government to have it a Government based upon the consent of the governed, or by coercion? If the latter be the intention as placed upon that sacred instrument, the Constitution, then these States who have seen proper to assert their rights have no power left them but to submit to the iron rule of a military despotism. To this position I am utterly opposed, believing as I do that the first gun fired by Federal authority to coerce a Southern State, sounds the death knell of this Government, and the hopes of those who expect or desire a reconstruction of it, upon the principles of the present Constitution, with proper constitutional guarantees for the rights and safety of the South and southern institutions.

Having tried in vain through our Representatives in Congress, to get such amendments to the Constitution, or rather such explanations of the present instrument as we deem positively necessary for the protection of our rights under it, and all offers of concession on our part having been indignantly rejected, in the spirit of the resolutions passed November 20th, before quoted, I think the time has arrived when the South should act and speak out, in language that can not be misunderstood, and should Congress fail to pass, or give positive and undoubted assurance that the Crittenden propositions, at least, will be added as an amendment to the Constitution before the meeting of our convention, I see no position left to Tennessee but to take side with the Black-Republicans, or join them and the Government in waging a ruthless and bloody war upon the seceding States, or join those States; repelling such invasion. And I shall not hesitate, nor do I believe the people of Tennessee will, to choose the latter alternative, and go out of the Union and join their southern brethren, and present a united front, in opposition to the doctrine of coercion, and establish a government for themselves, based upon the present Constitution, with such full and undoubted guarantees as will forever settle the slavery question and take it out of politics, and invite such of the Northern States as are willing to secure to us our rights, to join us in establishing such government. If they refuse, we will then be in a condition to act for ourselves, as a united southern people, and concentrate all our strength for any emergency that may arise. This is, I think, the only practicable peace measure, and the only hope of a reconstruction of the Government under its present form.

Practically, the question will be presented to the people of Tennessee before the convention of the southern States, and the delegates will take position with the Republican party, and submit to the rule of the dominant party without any guarantees for the protection of our strength for any emergency that may arise. This is, I think, the only practicable peace measure, and the only hope of a reconstruction of the Government under its present form.

Practically, the question will be presented to the people of Tennessee before the convention of the southern States, and the delegates will take position with the Republican party, and submit to the rule of the dominant party without any guarantees for the protection of our rights under it, and develop all the questions at issue between the two sections, or demand her constitutional rights under a fair construction of that instrument, and guarantees for future peace and safety. Where, then, this issue comes, as come it will, unless the Republican party recede from their present position, which I have no hope of, I do not believe Tennessee will hesitate, and stand by her to any and all emergencies, and let the consequences take care of themselves.

Yours, truly, SAM. TATE.

THE CRISIS—NO. 7.

Can the Free States give any Tangible Assurance Sufficient for the Slave States to Rely on that they will ever take Fulfil Constitutional Obligations and Guarantee that would be Satisfactory to the Slave States?

In glancing at the past and present condition and feeling of the two great divisions of our Union, it is astonishing to note the changes and revolutions which have occurred in the sentiments of the people. Devoted, almost enthusiastic loyalty to the Union has till within a few years characterized the South; it has been the summum bonum of their thoughts, their views, and aspirations. No sordid idea of what it might be worth to them; no mercenary calculation as to whether their section or another profited most under the operation of its laws; no aiming to make the policy of the nation conducive to their peculiar interests; no striving to force another portion to be tributary to their prosperity; but, content with their own progress, satisfied with their social advancement, their institutions and their laws, they were proud to call themselves, as the States, as representing, on a grand scale, that principle of the "capacity of men for self-government," which was the basis of their own freedom, they looked upon the Union as a great permanent good; they regarded it with reverence; they boasted its nationality; they obeyed its laws and behests promptly and cheerfully; they were willing to contribute to extending its power, and exulted in its glory, its grandeur, and its strength. The people of the South, the South as a mass, were eminently conservative in their feelings, and cling to it in the light of that Constitution as interpreted by the fathers, with a tenacity of loyalty, which, to a stranger, would seem almost idolatrous. Such was the South, such was its feeling, such its sentiments, such its devotion to the Union, when, from