# The Feliciana Democrat.

## THE ECHO PRISONERS.

The Circuit Court of the United States convened at eleven o'clock, Thursday, when *tales* Grand Jurors were in attendance, and the full number of twenty-three were sworn in.

His Honor Judge Wayne charged, them at length, and more especially upon the act of May, 1820, making twelve o'clock. The witnesses in the Echo cases were called, and after some time spent in deliberation, two bills of indictment were found, one against the sixteen prisoners now in jail, and the other against the one sent to Africa on board of the Niagara. This finding of the Grand Jury will raise the question of availability in the law in a case as marked and decided as could well occur; and that our readers may have a clear conception of the matter, we will give a brief statement of the facts of the case and the proceedings.

The facts and circumstances of the arrest will be more *fully* seen from a brief abstract of the testimony of Lieut. Chas. C. Carpenter, which was taken before the Commissioner of the United States, upon the question of commitment. He says that he is the Third Lieutenant of the United States brig Dolphin, Capt. Maffit, which vessel, on the morning of the 21st of August, 1858, stood out from the port of Sagua La Grande, and down along the coast towards Cardenas; that upon coming out of the port, they saw another vessel steering in nealy the same course until near three o'clock, when the Dolphin, keeping away to run into port, the other vessel stood off from the coast. The fact was reported to the Captain, who directed chase, and when within a mile-and-a-half of her he ordered English colors to be hoisted and blank cartrages to be fired, that she might show her colors. Not doing so, shots were fired across her bow, when she hoisted American colors. The dolphin then hauled down her English colors and hoisted American, and firing at the main-top-sail the fugitive vessel hove to. An armed boat's crew, Lieutenant Bradford in command, went on board. The hold was found to be full of negroes; they took possession; sent all but three of the persons found, on board the Dolphin; received thence a prize crew, and sailing in the company with the Dolphin for a time, in the direction of Key West, they were ultimately ordered on to Charleston, and delivered the negroes to the Marshal of the District. On board the vessel when captured, which had the name of Echo upon the stern, there were no papers nor log book to indicate her character. The men found on board, and who had been sent to the Dolphin, were subsequently brought back; and being released from confinement and sent forward to work, they worked cheerfully and well for the balance of the voyage.

It was mentioned a few days since, that the prisoners were taken for trial to Columbia, at which place occurred the first session of the District Court after arrest. Then there was a decided feeling in opposition to the law; and the Grand Jury, to whom bills were submitted, fail to find them. A motion was then made for their discharge, which was pressed with great zeal, the argument upon which was published the in Mercury about a month ago. The motion was successful, however, and the prisoners were ordered back to Charleston for trial at the present term. The United States will be represented by James Conner, Esq., District Attorney, and the prisoners by L. W. Spratt and R. De Treville, Esq., of Charleston, and Maxcy Gregg, Esq., of Columbia.—*Charleston Mercury.*

We have copied from the Charleston Mercury the foregoing minute details of judicial proceeding in that city, because they relate to a subject which is deservedly attracting a large share of public attention.

A despatch received since the article was put in type announces that the persons who were indicted, as above, for violating the laws of the United States forbidding the slave trade, have been acquitted.

In the language of Judge Campbell, "the act of Congress of May, 1820, denounces as pirates those citizens of the United States, of a ship's company of a vessel engaged in the slave trade, who shall land from such a vessel and forcibly seize, or decoy, or bring, or carry away from any foreign shore, or any who forcibly detains or confines on such a vessel any negro or mulatto who is not a slave under the laws of any of the States; or who attempts to sell at sea as a slave such a person; or lands him from the sea, or transfers him to another vessel to be landed and disposed of as a slave." But, says the judge, "the laws of the United States do not stop at providing punishment against the immediate agents and instruments" of the trade. (We have chosen to omit the coarse abuse and vulgar expletives of the learned functionary.) "No citizen of the United States, as owner, master, factor, can build, equip, fit, load, or otherwise prepare any ship or vessel, or engage one to sail from the United States for the purpose of engaging in this trade; nor can any citizen of the U. States take on board, receive, or transport from any of the coasts of Africa, or other foreign place or country, any negro, mulatto, or person of color, not an inhabitant nor held to labor under the laws of any of the States, for the purpose of holding, selling, or disposing of such a person as a slave. The ships so employed are forfeited, and the persons concerned in any of these acts are exposed to a fine and imprisonment.

Under these enactment the Echo prisoners have been indicted, tried and found *not guilty.*

We rejoice at this result. It establishes the unavailability of the laws interdicting the African slave trade, so far as their enforcement depends upon the public sentiment of the South. It shows what that sentiment is. While the result is not to be accepted as undoubted evidence that a revival of the traffic is desired, it discovers a determination on the part of the Southern people to treat with becoming leniency those those who choose to embark in it. It shows that they abhor the spirit of pseudo philanthropy out of which the laws originated; that by no act of theirs will they endorse a traffic as "piracy" which finds its sanction in the Code of Laws that has emanated from a higher authority than man, and which was not only tolerated but vigorously prosecuted by Christian people, even our own ancestors among the rest, until a late day, when the dogmas of Exeter Hall and the teaching of Wilberforce were substituted as guides for mankind.

The African slave traffic ought never to have been treated in the United States, as a question of morals or religion; but of political economy, to be regulated according to the necessities of the country.

In the proceedings at Charleston, we behold a glimmering of the rebound which is always sooner or later destined to follow extreme measures. In the system of management wisely ordered by the Dispenser of human events, as sure as day follows night, the excesses of which vain man under the impulses of blind passion is guilty, provides, in due time, their proper remedy. Not content with prohibiting the slave trade for economical reasons, the philanthropists of the past generation were impelled by a strange delusion to class it among infamous crimes, and to brand as pirates those, who, following the example of wiser and better men, might think proper to engage in it. It was not to have been supposed that the people of the slaveholding States would by silent acquiescence seemingly consent long to endorse this stigma upon themselves; this arrogant claim to a wisdom and goodness not taught by the Good Book itself; and this cruel reproach upon the memory of their ancestors. The conclusion is irresistable that if it is a heinous crime to purchase the African from his heathen master in his native country, it is equally wrong to purchase from his enlightened master in one of the States of the Union; and if it is radically wrong to import the black man for slavery, it is equally wrong so to hold him anywhere. The principle involved is the same in each case; and the ingenuity of casuists can not change it.

We will venture to say that the result of the judicial proceedings in Charleston are precisely what it would have been in almost any other community in the South. The enterprising trader who runs the gauntlet of the ocean police, need have no fears of the serious molestation after he succeeds in landing his cargoes upon the *terra firma* of a Southern State.

Under circumstances not of an extraordinary nature, no good citizen can look with favor upon the manifest disregard of law by communities, and their deliberate determination not to enforce the punishment prescribed for its violation. But the facts attending such cases as the one under consideration, are peculiar. The law of self protection has claims to the observance of the Southern people, paramount to all others. They cannot without a willful neglect of the obligations which they owe to themselves, resign to the dominant Northern majority, their blind, infatuated, remorseless Northern enemies, the regulation of labor system upon which rests the foundations of their social and political organizations. The rules of demand and supply ought to be determined by themselves. Surely they cannot be trusted to the control of a people who have formed a powerful sectional party having for its creation no other object, no higher motive, than the destruction of the system. As a people, therefore, who have the capacity to perceive their interests and the boldnes to defend them, their path of duty is plain. But apart from this consideration—apart from the reflection that the laws prohibiting the slave trade, to the extent, at least, that it is stigmatized as "piracy"—are founded in error—why should the people of the Southern States stickle about the requirements of good faith and honor, with the North in their conduct upon any question which involves their well-being? What right have the controlling majority in that section to expect the South to make sacrifices? Why should she bend her energies to enforce the observance of the laws prohibiting the slave trade, to satisfy the demands of Northern fanaticism, when laws passed for her protection in pursuance of the constitution, are constantly and presistently violated? Why should she make a point of carrying out the law which would prevent her from supplying from Africa the necessities created in her labor system, by the Northern robbers who steal her slaves and murder her citizen when they go to recover their property? The Constitution expresly provides for the rendition of fugitive slaves. But for that clause in the compact, the Union would never have been formed. It was an indispensable condition of its creation. And yet to the injury of the Southern States, it is continually violated by the North. Northern communities hunt down with blood-hound ferocity the southern man who seeks the slave that has been enticed away from him. His blood is often the penalty of his temerity in venturing to claim the rights which the constitution was designed to secure him. Northern Legislatures enact laws to nullify the Constitution. Northern courts construe the laws so as not only to let crime go unwhipt, but connive at the plunder and murder of citizens of the South. Are we in view of such facts, expected to cultivate so tender a regard for Northern sensitiveness to the African slave trade, as willfully to disregard the urgent necessities of our own condition, and the demands of self preservation which a wise and prudent people will heed when all others are treated with indifference? The proceedings at Charleston have furnished an answer to this question;, and they are but the beginning of the end.—*Mississippian.*

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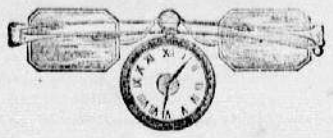

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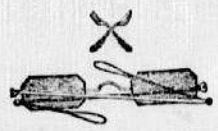

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