

"The Slave Exodus - The future of Kentucky and Virginia,"

Sandusky (OH) Register, March 13, 1856

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The Slave Exodus.—The future of Kentucky and Virginia.

In a late article on the Slave Hegua we took occasion to show, by figures gleaned from accurate statistics, that, at the rate of depopulation going on in Virginia and Kentucky, owing to the almost nightly stampede of slaves, these States eventually must become free. In the course of that argument but one view of the question was taken, viz.: the escape of the "property" to the Free States and the Canadas, and the consequent loss in capital entailing to the owners in particular, and to the two States, in general. This loss, reckoning the number already escaped as 50,000—chiefly drawn from Kentucky and Virginia—was estimated at \$24,000,000, already beyond the reach of reclamation. The rate of escape for 1856, fixed at 30 per day, along the whole frontier—and it is thought to be a moderate estimate—would give, for this year's stampede, over 10,000 slaves, which, at \$200 each—the value of the first class slave, that chiefly escapes—would give \$2,000,000 as the actual loss to accrue to the States named, for this year. But, assume *half* of this in order to be entirely within bounds, and we have \$1,000,000 which the Slave owners are to place to the debit side of their ledgers.

Such depletion, it must be seen, will entail insolvency, and bankrupt the State. Nor do we see how any regulation, National or State, can bind the sweet influence of the Pleaides of Freedom or stay the loosening of the bands of the Orion of Servitude:—so surely as the Free States and Canada offer asylums to the fugitive—so long will he risk all, in his effort to escape, and that effort, guided by the intuitions of the man hunted for life, is pretty sure of success.

What, then, is to be done by these Slave States, in their own defence? We have all heard of the fellow who set his house on fire to kill the vermin.—so, it seems to us, is the remedy proposed, and now being acted upon by the slave owners in the two above named States, viz.: the sending of their property down the river, for a Southern market, and the organization of a river patrol.

These news extracts will explain.

The Virginia Legislature is considering several bills

designed to prevent the escape of fugitive slaves. In the course of the debate on Tuesday, it was stated that the people of Norfolk have lost slave property to the value of \$50,000 within the last twelve months. One of the bills provides for the inspection of vessels, to see that no fugitive is on board; steam packets paying the officer \$5 for each inspection, other vessels \$10.

A scheme has been entertained by the Kentucky Legislature to establish a patrol along the south bank of the Ohio to keep the negroes from running away. This patrol to be appointed by the County Judge and Justices.—All water craft not in charge of the owner to be chained and locked. To pay for this patrol, a tax is to be levied upon the property of the whole State,—free as well as slave. As in Kentucky there are only 2,400 slave owners and 722,957 non-slave owners, it may be conceived that such a tax to preserve property will not long be submitted to by the already grievously taxed people of that slave-ridden state.

"NEGRO STAMPEDE.—We noticed yesterday a string of six furniture cars full of negroes, amounting to *one hundred and twenty*, large and small, all destined for New Orleans, on the Ben Franklin. They were from one of the border counties of this State."—*Louisville Courier, March 1.*

These extracts will serve partially to inform the reader of the present condition of things, "over the line."—And the comment they furnish upon our previous argument must be apparent. If, as asserted, the loss is \$4,000,000 per year from the stampede of, say 5000 slaves, what will it not be with the added depletion of sending negroes south at the rate of 120 per week, as is estimated will be for the coming summer? What else, indeed, but the actual slave depopulation of all the border counties of the two states, as well as the gradual decrease of the number of slaves in the interior and southern counties? And then, what follows? Kentucky has an area of 37,650 square miles, devoted chiefly to the raising of cattle, corn, wheat, rye, &c. It now has an estimated force of 210,000 slaves to do the work. By the schemes on foot for sending the slaves away, and from the stampede, and from the number buying their freedom, this population or working force bids fair to become rapidly reduced, and relief alone will be found in white, or free labor;—lands *must* be tilled, cattle *must* be raised, and *none* can do it so well, so economically, as free white men. Introduction of such help must necessarily serve to weaken the slave sentiment;—to depreciate slave labor—to increase the free element; and, ere two decades are passed, KENTUCKY, and probably VIRGINIA, will be written as FREE STATES!

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

National Park Service Network to Freedom / House Divided Project at Dickinson College

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The *morale* of Slavery has been too often set forth in these columns to need repetition, but a few statistics may not be uninteresting, as bearing upon the above.

By the census of 1850 we find that Virginia has a population of 993,442 free whites, and 423,219 slaves; owned by about 62,000 land holders. Kentucky has 791,424 free whites, and 210,391 slaves owned by 33,546 land holders. Here we have, then, two states containing 2,354,066 inhabitants, controlled by 100,000 men (slave owners), whose property, in human flesh and blood is their grant of nobility by which they dictate the laws and institutions of the States. In what an abject condition must these 2,200,000 persons be, thus to submit to the rule of such a fraction! Of these 2,200,000, 633,200 are "slaves" but what better than the bonded blacks are the remaining 1,500,000 free whites, since they bow their necks to the rule of the 100,000 dealers in human "chattels!" Abject, indeed, are they, and deserving of pity for their *servitude*.

But, it is not possible that this vast majority will submit to the rule of masters much longer. When the proposition comes to tax the whole property of the State, to keep up a "patrol" for catching runaway slaves, we surmise there will be such an emphatic "no" from the non-slaveholders as shall kill the scheme and compel slave owners to care for their own property as best they may. This will induce the greater shipment of negroes south, and thus the slave influence, and slave possession, will fast die out from the circumstances of a home influence. Add these facts to those referred to above and it seems to us that our prophecy of Free States to the South of Ohio is not a dream, nor a fiction.

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