

Sam Greene and Uncle Tom's Cabin.

One hundred and fourteen "Ministers of the Black River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church" in New York, have addressed a petition to his Excellency Governor Hicks, of Maryland, praying for the pardon of Sam. Green, the free negro preacher who was convicted at the April term, 1857, of the Circuit Court for this county, and sentenced to ten years imprisonment in the penitentiary, for having in his possession a copy of that well known book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." From this fact, and from the numerous articles published in Northern journals upon the subject, it would seem that there has been considerable feeling awakened in the free States by reason of Green's conviction. We have, ourselves, seen some of the articles alluded to, and perceiving from their tenor that they are calculated to mislead the public mind, and create a prejudice against the people of the State of Maryland, the tribunal before which the trial was had, as well as further to inflame the feelings of the opponents of Southern slavery, we have thought it proper to set forth the facts of the case, in order that it may be apparent to every individual that a more righteous verdict was never rendered in the trial of any cause.

For some time antecedent to the arrest of Green, which occurred just before the sitting of the Court at which he was convicted, there had been much excitement amongst the citizens of Dorchester county, in relation to the absconding of slaves. In former years for a slave to flee from the service of his master was a thing of rare occurrence; then, as now, there was no portion of the entire South where slaves met with more humane treatment than upon the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and there existed between master and slave that feeling of mutual confidence which is always to be found in those

communities where the evil influence of abolitionism or its emissaries does not make itself felt. But, about the period alluded to, a different state of things sprang up. Suddenly and without apparent cause the slaves of the citizens of Dorchester county began to abscond. Not singly and at long intervals as before, but in gangs collected together from various parts of the county, with a concert of action and celerity of movement that defied all attempts at recapture. Citizens living upon their farms, ten, fifteen or twenty miles apart, would retire to their beds at night, all their negroes being at home, and upon rising in the morning to call their servants out to their daily labor, not a single slave out of frequently a large number, would be found. Upon a single Saturday night, and in a single gang, twenty seven negroes ran off from the immediate neighborhood of Cambridge; and upon the two succeeding Saturday nights thirteen others followed them, even their bedding and all their clothes, &c., were taken with them. One gentleman owning a large plantation near town, awoke one morning and found himself without a single slave of all he possessed the night before, to cultivate his land, and he was one of the kindest of masters. This state of things continued for a year or more. The people were confounded. The confidence between master and slave was totally destroyed. The former knew not which of his negroes to trust, the latter feared that his master would sell him lest he might abscond.

In one or two of the isolated instances referred to, before matters grew suddenly worse as we have stated, Sam. Green had been suspected of aiding the negroes to escape, but as no positive proof could be had, and his character in other respects was good, he was not arrested.— When the absconding increased to such an alarming extent, persons were satisfied that some agent of abolitionism was in the county, furnishing assistance to the runaways, who could not else have escaped with such impunity; but

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they could not divine who or where was the guilty persons, for at this time the suspicions formerly held against Green had died away.— But it being suddenly discovered, by some means, that all the fugitives had passed in their flight immediately by his house, which stands near the road leading from Cambridge to the State of Delaware, the idea arose that he was the party implicated, and the feeling was stronger because the fact revived the suspicions of which he had previously been the object. It was also discovered that Green had been to Canada, and returned a short time before this stampede began. That these suspicions were well founded subsequent developments clearly showed.

Under these circumstances his house was searched, and there were found therein a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin, a map of Canada, letters from numerous runaway slaves in Canada to their relatives here, six or eight schedules of a rail road route through New Jersey, and a letter from Green's son, himself a runaway in Canada, to his father, directing him to tell two slaves belonging to citizens of this county to abscond, describing the route, and stating what kind of treatment they would meet with on the way. The two slaves referred to had both absconded at the time of Green's arrest. It may be well hereto add that Green is an intelligent negro, reading and writing well.

These facts were communicated to the State's Attorney for the county, and the papers, &c., found as above stated, placed in his hands, coupled with the remark that the people were about to notify Green to leave the State, and to lynch him if he failed to depart. From this course they were dissuaded, and the State's officer having examined the papers, ordered the arrest of Green for a violation of the provisions of the Act of 1841, chapter 272 of the laws of Maryland. He was accordingly arrested and

lodged in jail to await the action of the Grand Jury:

The Act of 1841, chapter 272, provides, in that portion under which Green was indicted, that "if any free negro or mulatto shall knowingly receive or have in his or her possession any abolition handbill, pamphlet, newspaper, pictorial representation or other paper of an inflammatory character, having a tendency to create discontent amongst or stir up to insurrection the people of color in this State, he or she shall be deemed guilty of felony, and upon conviction shall be sentenced to undergo a confinement in the Penitentiary of this State for a period of not less than ten nor more than twenty years, from the time of sentence pronounced on such offender."

Under this law there were two indictments framed—one setting forth in three counts, in due form, the possession by the prisoner, of the letter from his son, the "pictorial representations of Canada, and the railroad schedules—the other, charging the possession of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Upon the former the party was first tried, the counsel for the State contending that the word "discontent" used in the Act applied to anything calculated to render the slave dissatisfied with his condition, whether that discontent was manifested by absconding, or otherwise — The counsel for the defence contended, that the object of the Act, as shown by the wording, was to prevent the possession of such papers as had a tendency to create discontent of an insurrectionary character. The case was fully argued by C. F. Goldsborough and Elias Griswold Esqs., for the State, and Daniel M. Henry, Esq., for the traverser, and the Judge acquitted the prisoner; holding the view of the law entertained by the prisoner's counsel was correct, and that papers which would be likely to induce slaves to abscond or give them information which

would aid them in their route northward, did not come within the purview of the law. The prisoner was immediately tried upon the other indictment, the State arguing that the pamphlet, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, came up to the view of the law taken by the Court in the previous case, and the prisoner's counsel, Mr. Wallace, holding the reverse.

The court decided that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" was an abolition pamphlet such as is contemplated by the law, and that its possession by Green, under the circumstances, was a clear violation of the Act of 1841, chapter 272. Both cases were tried without a jury, as there could be no question about the finding of the papers in Green's possession, and the prisoner's counsel elected to go before the Court on the construction of the Act of Assembly.

That Green was convicted simply and solely for having "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" in his possession is certainly true,—but it is equally as true that he never would have been arrested upon that charge but for his well ascertained agency in the escape of our slaves. We say never would have been arrested because no case ever had been tried in this county under the Act of 1841, and the book in question might have been openly kept and read by Green with impunity, from the simple reason that no one would ever have suspected that it was a violation of law for him to possess it. It was only when the State's Attorney came to examine the case closely, and found that sufficient local evidence could not be had to convict him under the Act of 1849 for *aiding slaves to escape*, that he determined to test the applicability of the Act of 1841, chapter 272, to such works as "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*."—The result is a practical commentary upon the insane efforts of abolition writers. Where can an instance be found of real benefit having accrued to any slave by reason of the production of Mrs. Stowe's book? Until he was wrought upon by such publications, and by the more direct appeals of abolition emissaries, Green had lived quietly and contentedly in the community

in which he was born and had the respect and confidence of all who knew him. Now he is the inmate of a States prison, and even after his term of service expires, if he lives to see that time, he is by law banished from the State of his nativity, under penalty if he remains of being arrested and sold as a slave for ten years. We wish that Mrs. Stowe could have stood, as we did, in the crowded court room, and listened to the trial of the *negro* whom she, herself, had caused to be placed in the criminal box. It might perhaps have induced her to devote the efforts of her pen to some other purpose than that of decrying the Constitution of her country, and endeavoring to array one portion of her fellow citizens against the other.

There is no doubt of the fact that Green was instrumental, and had been for a long time, in the escape of slaves from this county. When he was arrested and committed, he was not aware of the nature of the charge against him, but thought it was for the offence just mentioned.—A white man, who for years had been his neighbor and felt kindly towards him, visited him in jail before his trial, and asked him why he did not employ counsel to defend him. Green's reply was, "it is no use, I am guilty." This statement was kept a secret, and was not divulged until after the prisoner was convicted. The Counsel for the defence were appointed by the Court and most ably discharged their duty, contesting the case closely, step by step, from its beginning to its end.

It was a most proper and righteous conviction, and has had a salutary effect in restraining the efforts of abolitionism in our county. The prisoner was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in the penitentiary, a term which we venture to say, if he lives, he will serve to the end; all the petitions of Black river clergymen for executive clemency, to the contrary, notwithstanding.—
Cambridge Eagle.