

<https://stampedes.dickinson.edu/document/rochester-ny-douglass-monthly-insurrectionary-movements-texas-september-1860>

INSURRECTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN TEXAS.

Since the publication of our last *Monthly*—if letter-writers and newspaper reports from that quarter of the country may be credited—a most alarming and dangerous plot has been discovered in the northern counties of Texas among the 'contented and happy' slaves in that region, the alleged parties to which have been visited by a vengeance as summary and sanguinary as the half-savage slaveholders in that country well know how to inflict. The accounts thus far published bear unmistakable marks of having been inspired by alarm and terror. The events which they describe are doubtless grossly exaggerated, and are more intended to spread alarm among the interested slaveholders, and to put them on their guard against possible surprise, than to tell the exact truth of what has been discovered. The wicked flee when no man pursueth, and the thief thinks each bush an officer. Most of the evidence of the existence of these alleged insurrectionary movements in Texas, according to the Texas papers themselves, was wrung out by the terror-stricken tyrants under the most heart-rending torture, the application of the whip, and amid the shrieks and agony of their helpless victims. Determined to find their slaves guilty, any assertion of their innocence only protracted and intensified the torture, and the only hope of a moment's relief was found in confession.

Preposterous and shocking and uncertain as this barbarous method is of obtaining evidence, it is the natural and prime necessity of slavery above all systems of tyranny. The relation of master and slave, so often defended as a Bible institution, domestic and patriarchal in its character, makes the slave nothing short of a sullen and ever contriving foe of his master, divested of every motive, except fear, to respect either his life or his property. It is a relation of reciprocal hate, fraud and cruelty, in which each party is put under the strongest temptations to injure and ruin the other. This is the inherent quality of slavery; the luxury of robbing the laborer of his hire, and giving him naught for his work, carries with it ever and always the social poison of settled and gloomy malignity. Eternal justice has decreed a heavy heart, transient sleep, restless apprehension, frightful forebodings to all those who seek to purchase ease and luxury at the expense of the unpaid toil of men and women, robbed of their liberty. They who sow to the wind must expect to reap the whirlwind. Slavery is a standing invitation to violence, and one of the most hopeful indications which slavery is now giving of its speedy fall in this country, is to be found in the frequent stampedes of slaves and the desperate insurrectionary movements among them. Every such uprising, however unsuccessful, is of startling significance, striking through and through all the flimsy logic and learning flung up, like Chinese forts of paper and paint, to conceal and protect the weak and unnatural slave system.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

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

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SEPTEMBER, 1860.

The insurrectionary movements in Texas, though far less extensive and formidable than is represented, are not without foundation.— From the newspaper reports we gather that on the eighth day of July the town of Dallas was fired, and the whole business portion entirely consumed; that the dwelling houses of Messrs. KAKINS & NICHOLSON were also fired; that large amounts of grain and oats were consumed; that the loss in Dallas by these fires is estimated at \$400,000; that in Belknap eight large store houses were destroyed; that Milford, Ellis Co., was totally destroyed; that in Black Jack Grove one large mercantile house was destroyed—loss \$300,000; that destruction to the amount of \$100,000 was perpetrated in Denton; and that similar destruction of property occurred at Pilot Point, Fort Worth, Ladonia, and at Jefferson.— These losses by fire have been corroborated by the testimony of different newspapers, from the middle of July down to the middle of August. We may, therefore, assume their substantial truth, though the value of the property lost may not be quite so great as these papers allege it to have been.

The theory upon which these incendiary operations are explained, is, that they were the result of preconcerted arrangements set on foot by the Abolitionists who had heretofore been expelled from the country. Two white preachers are specified—Messrs. BLUNT and MCKINNEY—as the instigators of the plot. No evidence is given in these prints that these men had anything to do with it.— Slavery ever finds it imprudent to publish evidence. In the midst of their panic, they first suspicion and then resort to torture to confirm it. The *Houston Telegraph* says that

several negroes (this is very vague—no names) belonging to Mr. MILLER, were taken up and examined, and developments of the most startling character elicited. A plot to destroy the country was revealed; nearly or quite a hundred negroes have been examined apart from each other, and they deposed to the existence of a plot to waste the country by fire and assassination; that this work was to begin on the first Monday in August, on the day of election of State officers. Negroes, it is said, never before suspected, are implicated; the jail of Dallas (that edifice, it seems, was not burned) is said to be filled with the conspirators, who will soon be hanged. A white man was found hung in Fort Worth, and the writer in the paper above named says he is *believed* to have been one of the scoundrels engaged in this work. Here we have no judge, no jury, no trial, no evidence, but a man is hanged, *believed* to be an incendiary.— The same paper of the 31st of July has the following:

‘Some of the papers affect to ridicule the idea that this has been an outbreak planned and controlled by Abolitionists. We think there can be no earthly doubt of the fact. The plot seems to have been deep laid and wide spread. A large amount of imported arms and ammunition have been discovered in negroes’ hands, and in one instance (Fort Worth) an arsenal was seized, having fifty shot guns and fifty revolvers, ready for distribution to the negroes by a white man. The white man was, of course, hung to the nearest tree. The plan was to be executed simultaneously in several counties, and in the same way in all. Stores and dwelling houses were burned, and others were to have been burned. The people were to have been attacked on election day, and killed by poison, by shooting, &c., and the whole band was to rendezvous for fifty miles around, and march in a body to Kansas or Mexico.

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us, The negroes from all parts of Dallas, Ellis, and Denton Counties have confessed, sometimes voluntarily, and sometimes under the lash, but all to the same effect, and all reporting at the same features of the plot. The investigations as of the committee have necessarily been carried on with closed doors, and it has been deemed prudent to make no publication of the names of parties implicated until they shall be able to establish their guilt, and above all, till they shall be able to arrest them.

re It seems that outside of these counties the plot was not so well laid, and attempts to carry it out have thus far failed. It is very doubtful to our mind whether it extended as far as some think, though the patrols established in many of the counties will be apt to bring to light all the facts in the case. We believe, however, that the plot was only perfected in Dallas and Denton, but had it not been discovered then it would have been extended to half the counties in the State.

ly We shall endeavor to keep our readers advised of whatever may transpire in these movements, as fast as information is received.

ly An alarming state of facts, truly, if facts they be; and yet they are the legitimate and necessary concomitants of slavery. Let slaveholders beware! There is an energy in the arm and heart of the negro, which cannot sleep forever. A spirit of freedom is abroad. JOHN BROWN, though dead, has yet a voice more piercing and far reaching than the trum-

pet, careering over all the hills and valleys of the South, summoning the long entombed sable millions to arise and to assert their liberty, and to vindicate their manhood before and against the adverse judgments and disparaging opinions of the world. While men rejoice in the freedom of the serfs of Russia—while they mourn for broken-hearted Hungary, and glory in the victories of GARIBALDI—they cannot be indifferent to the struggles, however desperate and hopeless, of the goaded and mutilated bondmen of America. Twenty years ago the report of such an outbreak as that described in Texas, would have brought a savage scowl to the face of nearly every white man in the country; but now the general feeling at the North, if not one of sympathy with the slaves, is far from one of sympathy with the slaveholders. The judgment of most men here is, that for all their troubles, dangers and panics, the guilty traffickers in human flesh have themselves to thank for it.

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