

THE FREEDOM PROCLAMATION.

The deed is done. The assurance is given that an atrocious war, inaugurated for the aggrandizement of negro slavery, is to "plague the inventors" by ending in the virtual annihilation of the institution. The National Government has recourse to an emancipation decree as the most effective weapon of war for the suppression of rebellion. It not only proclaims the freedom of the negro serfs, but announces its purpose to seek recruits among them for its garrisons and its ships of war. A few States and parts of States in which slavery exists are excepted from the operation of the edict, but these are chiefly regions in which the institution cannot be maintained, save with the advantage of a Southern market, and the loyal portion of their people will soon seek relief in compensative emancipation. All that portion of the South in which slavery is a vital, growing institution, is covered by the decree of freedom, while thousands of rebellious citizens in Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the excepted portions of Louisiana and Virginia, lose their slaves under the operation of the Confiscation Act. We are justified, therefore, in asserting that this proclamation is the death warrant of slavery in America.

It is natural that there should be inquiry as to the probable effect of the proclamation. Among the innumerable contradictory objections urged by the opponents of the measure, was the assertion that it would be an idle declaration, never reaching beyond the Union lines. It would be a sufficient answer to say that we intend to extend the Union lines over all the South, and with this proclamation, our armies will carry freedom wherever they go. But the rebels and their allies do not regard the measure as quite so barren of immediate consequence. Who told the slaves who swarmed down to the beach at Port Royal, with their bundles prepared for departure, that Dupont's fleet was manned by their friends? Why have the slaves flocked around the Union camp-fires in every military department in the South? Every Union army that has marched through the regions of rebellion, East or West, has been affectionately followed by fugitives from bondage. It was well enough years ago, in political contests, for the defenders of the brute theory of the negro to talk of the slave's attachment to his master and ignorance of all things beyond his daily toil on a plantation; but the stubborn facts of this war have confirmed what perilous flights to Canada led intelligent men to suspect before, that the desire for freedom cannot be extinguished in the slave, and that if afforded a reasonable chance, he will strive to secure the

boon. We know by recent experience that, if not repelled by military orders, the slaves will swarm into the Union lines. If the first flocks are protected others will follow, until the stampede becomes general. Now the Government has decided that the fugitives shall not only be protected, but received into the national service. Thousands of black men will be armed and drilled for garrison duty on the Southern coast. Others will be employed as teamsters, laborers on intrenchments and as servants for officers. Still another class will be engaged in raising forage and other supplies for the army on the plantations that are now beneath our flag, thus saving an immense amount of money now expended for the purchase and transportation of these necessaries from the North. Thus we shall gain soldiers without drafting, and supplies at a greatly reduced cost. These are the most obvious of the immediate effects of this measure. But it is equally plain that the shock given to the whole Southern system by which the rebellion is supported must be tremendous. Will servile insurrection result? That is the business of those in rebellion. Governor Pierrepont, of Western Virginia, in a brief, but cogent argument published soon after the September proclamation was issued, remarked upon this point:

It is also objected that the proclamation will produce insurrection, and the helpless will fall victims to slave violence. This is equally a fallacy; and the objecter should remember that the rebel soldier would be better engaged in protecting his wife and children from servile insurrection at home than in slaughtering his brethren upon the battle field. The only question for the President to decide was, whether he could hasten the close of the rebellion, re-establish the integrity of the Union, and save the lives of Union soldiers, by issuing the proclamation or withholding it. It was his business to look after the saving of the lives of the soldiers who had patriotically gone to the battle field to put down the rebellion—to return them speedily to their parents, wives and children.

If the slaves, now declared free, seek to gain the Union lines and are resisted, the rebels will doubtless call such attempts "servile insurrections," and exhibit their usual ferocity in hanging or burning those negroes who may be captured. There is more to be apprehended on this score than from the demonstrations of unarmed men who have been subdued by the lash. If the fear of outrage at home compels the rebels to return to their plantations and to stop slaughtering our white brethren, that is so much additional gain for the Union cause.

We do not now take into consideration the moral effect of the decree of emancipation. Necessary as a war measure, it is radiant with intrinsic justice. Potent, crushing as a weapon for the suppression of rebellion, complete and appropriate as the punishment of a guilty and bloodthirsty aristocracy, it is also a noble guarantee of a future for the country in which Liberty and Union will be one and inseparable.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands