

"THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT."

We gave recently on our outside page, an article with this heading, from one of the most esteemed ministers of the South. We hope it was generally read, for it deserved attention as embodying the sentiments of a large body of the most intelligent and conscientious southern Christians. We have read it a second and third time, we hope with candor, but it has not convinced us. What seems to our brother too clear to be called in question, seems to us accordant neither with reason, nor Scripture, nor fact. He may reasonably doubt our ability to discuss matters with which we have little practical acquaintance. We must doubt, in turn, the clear-sighted impartiality of a southern mind in discerning moral issues which involve so many pecuniary and social interests. If the northern conscience tends to fanaticism, from want of a thorough knowledge of slavery as it is, the southern conscience must *tend* to blindness and insensibility, from the bias of personal interests. The vender of opium, or of intoxicating drinks, who is accumulating a fortune, does not readily discern the unlawful nature of the traffic. Our brethren at the South have a fuller and more accurate knowledge of the facts of slavery, but the judgment of northern Christians on its moral and social influence is likely to be wiser and more impartial.

Our brother thinks there is no conflict between free and slave labor at the South. Collisions sometimes happen there, but they are rare, and are penalties of "*the violation of equitable law.*" Of course there can be no conflict where free labor does not assert its rights, and assume some form of antagonism to slavery. But when any who hold sentiments adverse to slavery, express their views temperately in social circles or at public meetings; when they seek to spread their opinions by circulating anti-slavery books and tracts, then the irrepressible conflict begins in earnest, and if the slave power is dominant, the obnoxious offenders are subjected to Lynch law, or driven from their homes. Such demonstrations have been frequent during the last few months. Our brother may call this a just penalty for "*the violation of equitable law,*" but that has always been the plea of despotism. So said the Ephesian rioters, when they rose against Paul; so say Romish persecutors, when they burn Protestant preachers; so said the Puritan fathers, when they drove the incorrigible Roger Williams into exile. If a zeal to overturn established institutions, believed to be pernicious, is "*a violation of equitable law,*" and justifies the southern treatment of supposed abolitionists, then our brother must be consistent, and grant that Romish and Puritan persecutions were right and just. We assert the fact of an irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery, because where the latter exists, it will not and cannot permit free discussion. The inquisition over the post-office, and the press, and over individual utterances in the family or the social circle; the violent expulsion of a free colony from Kentucky, and the sad history of Kansas, are evidences to us of a conflict in the southern States which cannot be repressed till either free or slave labor is extinguished. The two cannot flourish side by side.

Our brother thinks, too, the North commenced the fratricidal strife which has alienated the two sections, and stirred bitter blood. We have not read history on this wise. In early Congressional debates, southern orators were accustomed frequently to use harsh and odious terms in alluding to the northern States. The taunts and sarcasms of John Randolph are not yet out of memory. Col. Hayne poured forth a vehement torrent of abuse against New England, in his famous speech, while Mr. Webster, in his crushing reply, uttered not one disparaging word against a southern State. On our religious boards, our southern brethren, if we mistake not, commenced the work of proscription, by dropping the names of confessed abolitionists. In the United States Senate, they refused to confirm men like Mr. Everett to foreign embassies, because they were suspected of anti-slavery sentiments. They would not tolerate in northern men opinions adverse to the perpetuity of slavery. Our brother will remember that the dissolution of the Triennial Convention was owing to the persistence of Alabama Baptists, in forcing on the Board the decision of a *theoretical* question which might never have become practical. More recently, when the sectional strife seemed lulled to rest, and the series of compromises unwillingly accepted by the North, had taken from Congress all vexed questions, it was southern eagerness to possess Kansas, in violation of a compact of thirty years' standing, which led to the re-opening of the whole strife. If ex-Gov. Atchison had not organized the Missouri borderers for the invasion of Kansas, there would have been no John Brown raid into Virginia. We have condemned the latter without hesitation, as a violation of all law, human and Divine, but we have never seen in a southern religious exchange any censure on the Missouri invaders, who committed more numerous and grosser outrages. Authentic history has settled the fact that secret lodges were formed in Missouri to force slavery into Kansas, months before the formation of the Emigrant Aid societies of the North to transplant freedom. Were northern men the aggressors in the fratricidal strife?

Our brother, too, ought to know that we at the North, and Mr. Spurgeon and Englishmen in general, look on the character of John Brown in quite another light from his. If we accepted Romish testimony against Luther, we must regard him as a lying, profane and licentious reprobate. So some of their most judicious writers picture him. If we accepted Walter Scott's testimony against the Covenanters, we must believe them narrow-minded, self-willed, and often hypocritical sectaries. If we accepted Puritan testimony against Roger Williams and Obadiah Holmes, we must believe them heretics of the darkest dye. And, if we accepted the testimony of one or two southern men (who reported conversations held in his cell,) against John Brown, we should be compelled to believe him an infidel. But we have learned to distrust the testimony of inimical parties, and have no more faith

in the assertions of these men, than in the assertions of the Romish traducers of Luther. He had been for years a member of a Christian church; had been known by hundreds at the North as a straightforward and unswerving disciple; and though led by excess of zeal into fanaticism and bloodshed, his heroism in prison and on the scaffold was true to his early character. If Mr. Spurgeon believed that John Brown ever used such language as our brother quotes, (taken, we believe from the report of a Methodist clergyman,) he would have no kind words to say of his Christian character. But he believes them as little as he credits Mary's account of her interviews with John Knox.

There are other points in the article of our brother, to which we might take exception with equal justice. But it is a thankless task, and we do not care to pursue it. We esteem his Christian spirit, and honor his candor, and have great respect for his wise and cautious judgment. And the very divergence of our views from his only impresses on us more forcibly the fact of an *irrepressible conflict* between freedom and slavery. Can there be any more conclusive proof of its reality, than that Christian men, seeking to know the right and do it, differ so widely in their impressions, their opinions and their practices?
