

# THE TRIAL OF W. L. CHAPLIN.

The case of W. L. Chaplin came up for trial on the 12th at Rockville, Montgomery county Maryland, in the County Court. Present, Judge Brewer, absent, Judge Dorsey, and William There appeared for the prosecution, G. E. Richardson, Attorney General for the State and E. Bowie, for the prisoner, Charles H. Pitts of Baltimore, D. K. Hall of Washington, and J. Brewer of Montgomery county.

"Mr Pitts remarked to the Court that there were seven indictments against William L. Chaplin, three, charging an assault and battery, and an attempt to kill Messrs J. H. Gallah, William Smith, and Richard Batts, two boys of the slaves of Messrs Stephens and Tandy and two others, charging the prisoner with assisting the slaves to escape from their masters contrary to the act of Assembly of 1811. The object of the counsel of the prisoner at this time was to ask that he be bailed, and that the amount be fixed. All the cases, except the two last, were simply misdemeanors. The indictments, he believed, were returned to-day, the prisoner had no time to prepare for his defense, and he asked that bail be allowed as a matter of right and that the court would, in granting it, take into consideration all the circumstances of the case, including those of the accused."

After some remarks from the counsel on his side, Judge Brewer said that as the application for bail required some consideration, his decision would be made known on the following morning.

"On the meeting of the court on Wednesday Judge Brewer said that he had considered the application for bail made by the counsel of W. L. Chaplin on Tuesday. According to the practice of the court, bail could be allowed in any such case where the cases are ready for trial. It was however discretionary. But indictments have been returned against the prisoner, and unless some reason could be assigned, the court could not overrule the application at present. The court would however, as was customary, allow time to the counsel of the accused to prepare for trial. He having asserted that they were not now ready, he was willing to listen to any suggestion that there should be postponement or delay."

"There was a large number of persons in attendance. Excitement to the degree anticipated was not prevalent."

"During the trial of an appeal case—"

"The prisoner, Mr. Chaplin, was brought to the court-room, accompanied by a Mr. Smith, of the Society of Friends, from New York and by Mr. Cameron and Miss Gilbert. There was much confusion at this stage, the prisoner rushing forward to get a view of the prisoner who advanced to the desk of the clerk and reported with that officer seven several declarations in the following words, viz:

"STATE OF MARYLAND vs. W. L. CHAPLIN  
"In Montgomery County Court, Nov. 12th 1851  
"In Petition for ———"

"And the said William L. Chaplin came to the court and suggests to the court that he desires to have a fair and impartial trial of the case in this court. He therefore prays the court to order and direct the record of its proceedings in the said case to be transmitted to the court of an adjoining county for trial."

"On this 12th day of November 1851 personally appeared in court the said Wm. L. Chaplin and solemnly and sincerely declared and affirmed that the matters set forth in the foregoing declaration are true, to the best of his knowledge and belief. A. L. STUBBS, Clerk."

"The prisoner likewise asked for a change of venue on the other six cases, which was granted and then he retired with his friends."

"Mr Pitts, of counsel for William L. Chaplin said that the trial could not take place until the next spring term, and he again made application to the Court to fix the amount of bail."

Mr Richardson endeavored to show that the Court, in fixing the amount of bail, should have respect to the peculiarities of the case, and the deep interest felt in it by the South.

"Mr. Pitts said that the case stands precisely as other cases stand under the laws of Maryland and the prosecution on the part of the State has no right to bring into the consideration of the case conjectural circumstances elsewhere to which

for the position which this man occupied. The  
prisoner has been indicted for three misdemeanors—  
assault committed on persons who attempted  
to escape, for two other misdemeanors—alleged  
contact rendered slaves to escape, and for two  
years of the negroes. He would say to his  
counsel on the other side, and with due deference  
to the court, that the question is, what amount of  
bail looking to the circumstances of the party,  
and these misdemeanors under the Laws of Mary-  
land shall be demanded to secure the attendance  
of the accused for trial. There was no evidence  
which would lead the court to believe that the  
venue for bail is made in bad faith.

The Court suggested that the venue be  
moved to Howard District in the adjoining  
county.

The counsel for the prisoner expressed them-  
selves perfectly satisfied. Therefore the trial of  
this plea is designed to take place (not earlier  
than the next March term) in the Howard Dis-  
trict Court, at Ed-ward's Mills.

The witnesses for the State gave bail, \$1,000  
each for their appearance at the March term of  
the court.

We did not remain in Rockville until the  
Judge announced the amount of bail required to  
be given for the appearance of the prisoner, but  
learned from a friend that it was fixed at nineteen  
hundred dollars and that there was no inter-  
est that bondsmen were in attendance. They  
were however procured at an early day.

For the foregoing account we are indebted to