

### IMPRISONMENT OF W. L. CHAPLIN.

We publish in another column an account of the arrest and imprisonment of Mr Chaplin, formerly editor of the *Albany Patriot*, for assisting the escape of the slaves of Messrs. Toombs and Stephens from Washington city. The *National Era* is out in condemnation of his conduct. We have no heart to join in this censure. The slaveholder is simply a pirate holding by a thief's title his fellow man in bondage, who has precisely the same right to be free as himself. This being the case, it is not only the right, but the duty of the slave to get free whenever he can by lawful means. The only lawful means in his power is to run away. It is therefore his right and duty, whenever a chance of escape is presented, to embrace it. If it be right for him to make his escape, it is of necessity right to assist him. Therefore the act of Mr Chaplin, for which he has been arrested and committed to prison, was, we honestly believe, pleasing in the sight of God.

The *Era* quotes in condemnation of this act, from an article written by the editor, in Cincinnati, commencing thus: "The human mind is so constituted, that it will attach something dishonorable to that which has to be done in the dark or by stratagem."

On this principle, the editor would condemn the primitive Christians, who assembled "in the dark" in the "caves and dens of the earth," to worship their Saviour. He would condemn the Waldenses and the Albigenses of France, the Covenanters of Scotland, and the Puritans of England, whose only "freedom to worship God" was obtained by meeting "in the dark and by stratagem." Would it be "dishonorable" for a man taken captive by Algerine pirates to escape "in the dark or by stratagem?" Then why is it wrong for the captives of Toombs and Stephens, and other *Congressional* pirates, to do the same thing? Was it "dishonorable" for the persons taken prisoners by the Indians, during the first settlement of this country, to avail themselves of "stratagem and darkness" to escape? Yet slavery is more intolerable than Indian captivity for who does not know that one object of the Seminole and Florida wars was to recover the slaves who had escaped from the "tender mercies" of Christian civilized slavery, to the "horrors of life in the wigwam?" We fancy that if Dr Bailey's wife and children were reduced to slavery, and he had a chance to recover them "in the dark or by stratagem," his scruples would vanish marvellously soon. If Mr Chaplin shall be doomed to follow the lamented Torrey, it will be for an act on which we have no doubt Jesus and Angels will smile with approbation—*Free Presbyterian*.

We have not censured the slaves of Messrs. Toombs and Stephens, or any others, for attempting to escape from slavery. They are bound by no moral obligation, no compact, no law to which they or their ancestors have ever given their assent, except the law of physical necessity. In attempting to achieve their freedom, they have only done what every man with an honest impulse in his breast will say promptly, that he would have done. We have not and shall not condemn them.

But the case is different with an American citizen who assists them in escaping. He has incurred political and social obligations which forbid all efforts, open or covert, direct or indirect, the object of which is, to help a slave in running away from his master. He cannot free himself from these obligations by any mental resolves he may make, by saying to himself, the law is unjust, and therefore I will not obey it, because, if such a doctrine were allowed, there could be no such thing as organized society. Every man would be his own lawgiver, and universal anarchy prevail. Every citizen is protected by the laws, and therefore he is bound by them. His liberty, civil and religious, is protected, as well as his right to enjoy and dispose of whatever property he may possess. He is therefore morally, socially, and politically bound to obey the laws of the land, whether he believes them to be just or not. He is further bound to obey what he believes to be unjust laws, because he is privileged to remonstrate, petition, and vote against their continuance.

In all these respects the condition of the slave is different. He is unprotected, debarred the right of petition and complaint, and therefore he is not morally bound to continue under a government which thus tramples on his rights.

The only way for an American citizen to throw off the obligations of the Constitution and laws of the land, is to leave the country. Or, if he chooses to disregard those laws while he remains within the territory of the United States, he should by all means, if he would maintain a character for good faith and honor, make a declaration of war. He should not skulk about as a law-abiding citizen, claiming and enjoying the protection of the laws, while the business of his life is to violate them.

The *Free Presbyterian* remarks, that "on this principle the editor (of the *National Era*) would condemn the primitive Christians, who assembled "in the dark" in the "caves and dens of the earth" to worship their Saviour. He would condemn the Waldenses and the Albigenses of France, the Covenanters of Scotland, and the Puritans of England whose only "freedom to worship God" was obtained by meeting "in the dark and by stratagem." Not at all. They were not protected by the laws in a most sacred, natural right—therefore they were justifiable in exercising that right in violation of the law and these, by the way, are the strongest possible examples which we could desire for illustrating and enforcing what we have said, in regard to the right of slaves to recover their liberties.

We have spoken of the duties of the American citizen towards the slaves of the South. Claiming and exercising the largest liberty of discussion upon the merits of slavery, and holding it to be our right and duty to assist in bringing about a state of public feeling favorable to the peaceful and legitimate extinction of that institution, we at the same time, while the law of slavery exists, feel bound to acquiesce in its enforcement, and disclaim any purpose or right to violate it. To the *extremity* of all efforts at its violation, we have expressed as decided objections. The effect of more than half the efforts that have been made to run off slaves from the border States, where the institution is comparatively mild, is to precipitate them and their posterity into the hopeless and cruel bondage of the sugar plantations of the South, while the whole community in the vicinity of the transaction becomes alarmed for the security of their "property" and ships off a dozen or twenty more. So much for the philanthropy of such transactions. Their effect upon the public mind is evil, and only evil. They cause the name of abolition to become a bugbear through the whole Southern country, where it is most desirable to disseminate right views upon the subject of slavery. Men in that region, who would otherwise freely and gladly

bear testimony against the institution, are deterred from doing so for fear of being suspected of having affinities with those men of the free States who are engaged in this business. The masses of mankind are not in the habit of making nice distinctions, and they are too frequently obtuse to such as are obvious upon a moment's examination. If a man is understood to be opposed to slavery, to have a conscience on that subject, he naturally becomes an object of suspicion to the Southern people. It is for this reason that too many Southern men who have expressed sentiments unfriendly to slavery have taken great pains to disclaim all sympathy for the slaves. It is only the interests of the whites that they care for, they would have us believe, but we are disposed to give them credit for a little humanity, even at the expense of their candor. This state of things—the bitter prejudice against everything which looks to the abolition of slavery, which causes the friends of the slave, like Peter, to deny the truth that is in them, is in a great degree owing to the excesses, in word and deed, of the Northern enemies of slavery.

We respectfully submit it to the anti-slavery men of the North, that the champions of Right and Truth should have clean hands. They should come to the holy task of propagating truth among men with guileless lips. They should be "wise as serpents," but "harmless as doves." They should practice no double-dealing invent no pious frauds, nor act upon the maxim that "the end justifies the means." The champions of Freedom should be the best, purest, most disinterested and candid men in the country. They should inspire confidence and respect, above all things, among the Southern people, by an honorable, liberal, law-abiding course. How else can they expect to convert the Southern people to their views?