

ELKTON, JULY 24, 1858

Meeting at Chestertown.

☞ We copy the following account of a meeting of the citizens of Kent county, from the Baltimore Daily Exchange of Monday last.

*Speeches of the Hon. Judge Chambers, Senator Pearce and Hon. James B. Ricard—The Tarring and Feathering of a citizen of Kent County—Resolutions Passed by the Meeting—Future Measures Decided Upon.*

CHESTERTOWN, Kent county. }  
July 17, 1858. }

A meeting of the citizens of Kent county was held here to-day, at which those of adjoining counties were also present, to take into consideration the proper measures to be adopted to promote the better security of their slaves property, &c. The particular circumstances which led to the meeting are fully detailed in the remarks of the various speakers as given below. The meeting was numerously attended by leading citizens, and the subject discussed was, of course, of a very exciting character.

Judge Chambers was called to the chair, and Dr. F. C. Kennard appointed secretary.

REMARKS OF JUDGE CHAMBERS.

The chairman acknowledged the mark of personal respect. He stated that the meeting had been called at the suggestion of the Agricultural Society of the county, whose representatives, the Board of Directors, were in session on Saturday last, and advised this meeting. He thought the time had arrived when it became proper to take some decisive measure. It was not necessary, in this presence to give a detailed history of late events in the county. All were informed of them.—Nor was it necessary to enter into the merits of the question, whether those who had driven from the county a man universally believed to be engaged in the most criminal and mischievous intercourse with our slaves, had executed their purpose in a way to deserve condemnation. He was free to say he would have advised a different course, but that is not now the matter demanding attention, right or wrong, that thing was done and could not be undone. The more important inquiry is, what is doing and to be done? Matters must be dealt with as they existed. The fact was, then, that we were to provide for the protection of slaveholders and the friends of slaveholders, against the lawless attacks, as well as threats, of men who were professing to be the friends of law and order, while in the most palpable violation of it—men who manifested their aversion to everything like illegal violence, by assaulting and beating their neighbors for no other alleged offense than a decided detestation of abolitionists and incendiaries. He was told that men disclaimed sympathy with the man whose guilt they could not deny and dare not openly defend. He did not believe a word of it. Our instincts prevented us from proclaiming even the faults of our friends when engaged with us in a common cause, because they erred in the manner of doing a right thing to turn upon them the fire which ought to be directed against a common enemy. He had been a soldier in the war of 1812. A whole political party, when there were but two in the country, opposed the war. What then did they go about to vindicate the claims of the British? Were they content to take it out in abusing Mr. Madison and his friends, who declared that war? Not at all. We all knew to the contrary. They said, the war is here—right or wrong, our duty is plain: and he was able to say that they had battled side by side with us, as bravely and as effectively as we who have differed with them. No, he said, they were no friends of the slaveholders or their interests, who did nothing in the matter but denounce, insult or assault our friends—there must be some agency, some electric or other unseen fluid, which brought kindred minds into communion. In truth, he said, of the two classes, he thought the man who, by his early education, his associations and exemptions from religious fanaticism or political organizations, ought to know and feel correctly, was more to be censured, when heretical on this subject, than the man who, under these influences, was an abolitionist.

We were then, he said, in this condition—the question arises, are we to fold our arms and quietly submit to see ourselves gradually strip of our property by the great machinations of those who operated in the dark and only in communion with blacks, who could not legally testify against them, and to the threats and assaults of their adherents, or were we to take measures to protect our property and our friends? He had been told there were those who claimed not to be convinced of the guilt of the individual whose

facts of the trial of James L. Bowers, (the person recently tarred and feathered,) who was prosecuted for aiding the slave of Dr. Davidson to run away. This slave was arrested in Harford county, and when taken by his master gave up to him a pass which was supposed to be in the hand writing of Bowers, from whom the negro alleged he had received it. At the trial the State proved by Wm. Thomas, a very intelligent and respectable witness, that he knew the hand writing of Bowers and believed the pass in question to have been written by him. He also proved that in a conversation with Bowers some time previous to the escape of Dr. Davidson's servant, that Bowers admitted that he had assisted slaves to escape.—The testimony was ruled out by the Court at the argument. But the object was accomplished of showing by the sworn testimony of Mr. Thomas that Bowers by his own confessions to him had violated the laws of the land and the rights of his fellow-citizens, and subjected himself to severe criminal justice—that he was a perfidious scamp—an enemy of the community in which he lived, and dangerous to its peace and security. Other testimony was produced and Geo. W. Westcott, a very respectable gentleman of Chestertown, swore to his belief, that the pass was in Bowers' hand-writing, though not so strong in his conviction or belief as was Mr. Thomas. Two other witnesses swore that the pass was not in Bowers' hand-writing.—But one of these witnesses after the trial, being shown a genuine letter written by Bowers, as promptly declared that this was his (B.'s) hand-writing.

Many other facts, as to subsequent escapes were stated, which brought the moral conviction to the minds of all who knew him that this man was actively engaged in seducing or in aiding slaves in this county to abscond from their employers. Of late years these escapes have been in gangs, as many as eleven or more going off at once, and together with the best horses and carriages of their masters, and others, and under circumstances which show such concert of action and such minute information as could only be furnished by some one engaged in the business of planning and assisting escapes. Before the tarring of Bowers a plan of escape was detected which was defeated while in progress. Bowers was supposed to be connected with this. The testimony, however, was not competent in a Maryland Court, though quite convincing to those who obtained it.

It had, therefore, been determined by some respectable citizens of the county, as no legal remedy could be had for an evil severely condemned by the laws, and most injurious and fatal to the property of the county, that they would take measures to expel Bowers from their midst. He had been permitted to avow himself an ultra abolitionist without molestation, but it was no longer to be borne that he should remain in the midst of a community whose prosperity and security he was believed to be constantly endangering and impairing. He was therefore by these gentlemen induced to leave his home at night, was taken to the woods, tarred, and directed to leave the county. The least possible violence or disrespect was shown to his wife, as has been falsely stated—no personal injury done to her. The party were sober men, not stimulated by liquor, but quietly resolved to abate a nuisance so dangerous to them and all others, holders of slave property in the county. Mr. Pearce showed the mutual dependence of all classes in the community upon each other, and how impossible to strike down the prosperity of one class, particularly the largest, without affecting injuriously all others. While he admitted readily the breach of law, he showed how in all cases the fact circumstances which provoked it, so modified its character as to justify and demand that the offended majesty of the law should be appeased by a slight atonement, and that where there was no moral condemnation attaching to an act, the penalties of the law were made as nearly nominal as could be, and that in such cases, public sentiment always justified such a sentence. But in this case it was said that certain parties in the county, not remarkable as law abiding people, had become so indignant on behalf of Bowers, and the violation of law on his person that they talked of the propriety of lynching those who were engaged in this proceeding, and had threatened with violence many peaceable persons who had no connection with the affair, but were supposed not to disapprove of it. On one occasion one young gentleman had been assaulted and knocked down because his father was supposed to be one of the party who tarred Bowers. Another equally unconcerned was violently beaten, and unusual threats had been made against others. These people were so few in number, not, as he believed, one-twentieth of the adults of the county.—It was to be hoped that their indignation would evaporate with their liquor; and that when free from the influence of John Barker