

the parents and their children, and, therefore, dismiss at once the consideration of that matter.

The first evidence relied upon to establish the contract between Stoddert and the elder Bowie, is the three letters before referred to, from the latter to the former. The first dated December 13th, 1845, informs Mr. Stoddert of the communication to the writer, by his son, of the engagement between him and Stoddert's daughter, and Stoddert's willingness to settle real estate upon her, proposes to Stoddert the purchase of the "Nottingham Farm" for that purpose, and states his own ability to give Robert some eight or ten thousand dollars in personal property, without which he considers a farm of little value. The second letter, dated 31st of December, 1845, speaks of a communication made to him by his son of Stoddert's desire for a personal conference with him on the subject of the contemplated settlement, and proposes that Stoddert should meet him in Washington, on the 9th of the then ensuing month, (January) and says, that he sees no reason to apprehend that any difficulty can arise to interrupt the early settlement of this matter. So far there is certainly no proof of a concluded agreement, but of an incipient treaty only, in which there are some suggestions of the disposition of the parties in reference to the terms of the agreement, and propositions agreed to for a personal conference on the subject. The next proof is found in the testimony of Mr. R. Johnson, who sees Robert W. Bowie in Baltimore, on his way to the proposed conference at Washington, and by whom he is told of the engagement, and of the dependence of its completion on the result of this conference. As to what passed between the parties to it we have very little information. No writing has been produced containing its result, and no direct evidence has been adduced of what was proposed or what acceded to by either of the parties. Next comes the third letter, of the 27th of May, one day before the marriage, in which the writer regrets his inability to be present at the nuptials, informs Mr. Stoddert of the completion of his purchase of the "Nottingham Farm," and says further, that "regarding your conversations in our last interview at Washington