

## "LANE SEMINARY REBELS."

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THE phrase, "Rebels of Lane Seminary," is historic. There was no danger in the days of its origination, that it would convey a calumny; but the phrase survives while the events which environed and explained it are forgotten. For this reason it is of some consequence that I should say that it applies in a way of metaphorical accomodation only. There was neither rebellion nor the shadow of rebellion in the event to which it points. For proof, if proof be demanded, I certify the fact that the students who are designated as rebels, severally received at the hands of the faculty, certificates of good standing as they went out.

Perhaps it is expected—in any case I shall be allowed here to state the circumstances which to the view of the recusants indicated the prudence and demanded the step they took in severing the relation by which they had been held to Lane Seminary.

It is proper that in the outset I should say that the painful and exciting events attendant upon our

exodus, did not infract the reverence and love which we bore to the reverend men, Beecher, Stowe and Morgan, of the faculty. We were attached to these teachers by bonds that have yielded to no gentle strain. Internally, there never was tension or friction to disturb the harmonious working of the institution. This is probably the final rehearsal of events which, when current, were so prominent and exciting.

The basal mischief was slavery. Slavery opened a crack which enlarged to a chasm. We were well advanced towards an entry to our professional work as teachers in Israel. Indeed we had for more than a year being prophesying by indulgence of kind auditors in the waste places about Cincinnati. At least six of our class were heads of families and some had given themselves to foreign missions.

We deemed it important as a preliminary to our life task, that we should make ourselves acquainted with the moral wants and maladies of our times. To that end we had formed missionary committees and set in motion the agencies usual in theological seminaries. No domestic question of the era basetted out with such prominence as slavery. The American Anti-Slavery Society had just been formed. Lundy and Garrison, like bulls rampant, were fretting the Northern welkin with their roar. The Southern sea was agitated as though the four winds of heaven were surging upon it, while the "solid South" was whittling upon the ligaments that held Dixie to the Union.

Just at this juncture the outgoing of our ethical inquiries brought us to this very theme—slavery. I suppose there was a general consent in the institution that slavery was somehow wrong and to be got rid of. There was not a readiness to pronounce it a sin. Colonization was the favorite expedient of a portion and immediate emancipation of another portion of our brotherhood. It was agreed to debate the matter, and so two questions were formulated, one under which to try the merits of one, and another relating to the other scheme. The debate was long and earnest. All the fire of the contest entered into the local discussion, but without its bitterness. Knowledge upon the subject was short and crude. There was, however, a signal exception. A fellow-student, Theodore D. Weld, had studied the whole subject thoroughly, and when he came to speak he held the floor for eighteen hours. His speech was a thesaurus, giving the origin, history, effects, both upon the despot and the victim, of slavery. When the debate ended, it was found that we were prepared to take decided ground. We were for immediate emancipation by a most decisive majority.

Two societies were immediately formed. The colonization society was feeble from the outset. It had a brief day, but it neither attempted nor accomplished much.

Very different was the spirit of the abolition society. The duration of the two societies was precisely equal. The abolitionists entered upon their work as one that was to be done and finished.

while the sun and moon endured, while the colonizationists contemplated a deeper eschatology.

Good fruits of abolition began to appear. A student who was a slave-holder, and who had come to the seminary relying upon the hire of his slaves to carry him through his theological course, went home and emancipated his slaves and put himself to expense for their benefit.

James G. Birney, a slaveholder and secretary of the Kentucky Colonization Society, whose conscience had been awakened, appeared at the seminary. The enlightened students took him in and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Every day brought its advance.

A committee to find the address of men of influence in all the land, went to work. Another committee prepared a document which, without pad or buffer, set forth the doctrine of immediate emancipation. This was printed in great numbers. A committee of the whole folded and directed this document, and sent it abroad to all the winds. Then came cyclones and thunderings, and an earthquake. Portents appeared and voices were heard. Tokens were abroad in the earth, and waterspouts in the heavens.

About this time came vacation. The term closed happily. No disapprobation had been signified by the faculty, no token of discontent among the students. But the faculty having dispersed, the trustees came upon the stage. Yes, convened in Cincinnati, and took the seminary in hand. Then followed acts declarative and statutory, which en-

tirely changed our relation to the institution. We were there under the tacit understanding that the rules would be reasonable, and their administration in the hands of fathers, who would administer them in a paternal fashion. We knew our teachers, we did not know the trustees, even when we met them.

It was a breach of good faith to assume the government over us. If the mayor, aldermen and common council of the city had extended jurisdiction over us, I do not see that more marked injustice would have menaced us. New laws were immediately enacted, some of which were annoying, and others menacing. I will give samples:

1. That societies, relating to slavery, that have recently been formed in the seminary, are abolished.

2. It shall not be lawful for the students to have public communication with one another, at *table or elsewhere*, without leave of the faculty.

Now if any reason had existed for these rules, we should have submitted to them. They were annoying and inconvenient. They seemed to regard us as mischievous boys, who needed additional bringing up. We were held to the seminary in part by necessity, much more by affection.

But another weight was added, which decided our action with an emphasis that precluded deliberation. It was this:

*"The Executive Committee of the Trustees shall have power to dismiss any student, when they shall think it necessary so to do."*

In the letter of the law, we saw ruin to all our hope in life; in the commentary which immediately followed, we saw the confirmation of the worst, for no sooner had this enactment been made, than action under its provision was taken. A motion to dismiss William T. Allan was made and entertained, and was laid over to a subsequent meeting. They meant business.

Who was William T. Allan? He was a gentleman, most agreeable to his peers and to the faculty, son of an Alabama slaveholder, most scrupulous in the observance of every rule of the seminary, with no spot upon him; obnoxious only because he had been made president of our anti-slavery society. There was Allan, asleep in his dormitory two miles away, while proceedings fatal to his character and to all his aspirations, were proceeding in the office of a pork-house in the city, and only deferred by adjournment.

None can deny that such mode of proceeding is exceedingly convenient. What waste of patience it would have saved in the Guiteau trial and in the Star Route trials. It requires no summons of parties or of witnesses—not even acquaintance with the victim. Do the executive committee of the trustees think it necessary so to do? All turns upon that question.

I believe we find among the moderns, no example of juridical proceedings so curt and facile. Yet a little historic knowledge will show among the more ancient courts abundant precedents.

The great Herod—prudent man—saw dangers

to the royal succession. He thought it necessary so to do, then down came his blow upon the innocents. Torquemada and his compeers in the Holy Office of the Inquisition, thought it necessary so to do, and sent men and women to torture and the flames. The Venetian Council of Ten ordered unseen victims sent to the galleys, or to torture, "when they thought it necessary so to do." In the days of the Stuarts, the Lords of the Star Chamber did anything and everything "when they thought it necessary so to do." The Executive Committee of Lane, affecting more these ancient than any recent precedents, had got their machine all ready and bound their Isaac, when circumstances intervened. Just as the blow was about being delivered, William. T. Allan, and those like him exposed to danger, bolted the jurisdiction, for they thought it necessary so to do.

"Down came the blow, but in the heath  
The erring blade found bloodless sheath."

We went out, not knowing whither we went. The Lord's hand was with us. Five miles from the seminary we found a deserted brick tavern, with many convenient rooms. Here we rallied. A gentleman of the vicinity offered us all necessary fuel, a gentleman far off, sent us a thousand dollars, and we set up a seminary of our own and became a law unto ourselves. George Whipple was competent in Hebrew, and William T. Allan in Greek. They were made professors in the intermediate state. It was desirable that we should

remain near to Cincinnati for a season, as we were there teaching in evening schools for the colored people of that city.

Gentlemen of the jury, our plea here closes. You will have the case in your hands and will render a true verdict upon this question. Ought we (conventionally named Rebels of Lane Seminary) to have re-entered under the amended code?

If your interest in the fortunes of these "rebels" requires, it is due to you to relate briefly what befel them until they reached this refuge.

The American Anti-Slavery Society proffered to a dozen of us commissions and employment in its service. We accepted their proposal. On our way to our lecturing field, we stopped at Putnam and assisted in the formation of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society.

Our outfit was scanty, and with a view to its replenishment, we moved our classmate Weld to open his ample stores, as common property, to the band. To this he generously assented, and we gathered at Cleveland, where, by the grace of Judge Sterling, his law office was made free to us for the purpose, and there was opened a school of abolition, where, copying documents, with hints, discussions and suggestions, we spent two weeks in earnest and most profitable drill.

A chemical question arose, which related to tar and feathers and how to erase their stain. This practical question was disposed of in a single lesson. The names of those availing themselves of this course were: T. D. Weld, S. W. Streeter, Ed-

ward Weld, H. B. Stanton, H. Lyman, James A. Thome, J. W. Alvord, M. R. Robinson, George Whipple and W. T. Allan.

A few months of exciting and dispiriting experience followed, we became familiar with harsh words and the more solid missives,—stale eggs, brick-bats and tar.

But in our despondency this was our cheer: Calhoun, Wise and Toombs, in Congress, would advance the *monstrous* assumptions of slavery, and then the devotees of the North, like Buchanan, Cass, Hendricks, and Atherton, would bow down and worship.

We were humbled, feeling ourselves to be mere symptoms in the great fight; but we were comforted, and could laugh until sleep came on.

Our next step brought us to Oberlin, where a kind hospitality awaited us, which no words can depict.

Pending our exit from Lane we were admonished by good men, who prophesied that our regret would follow hard upon our action.

Six trees of natural growth have escaped the axe and the fire, and stand upon this site to represent the ancient forest of Oberlin. I make them typical of the six old men who remember both Lane and Oberlin, and have come up here to participate in this jubilee. The winds of fifty winters have blown upon us, and the sedative of half a century since the events of my narrative were current has ministered its influence. The ardor of youth has departed and the western verge of life

looms in the near distance. Oblivion waits before our gate.

Those who took the step, long ago, adhere to the decision then made.

For myself, I cannot see how we could have done differently in consistency with public duty or self-respect. How could I have lifted my face here to-day, in the presence of juniors, who met the same issue and maintained a sterner debate upon the historic fields of Winchester, Cross Lanes, Fort Republic, Ringgold and Cedar Mountain, not to say Cleveland?

Then behold here what extravagances select men, under the influence of a popular craze, will enact, and what a straddle charity has to make to adjust herself to the apothegm, "Charity never faileth."