

Slaves in Iowa

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ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

SLAVES IN IOWA.

The echoes of what was termed in the old days, "the peculiar institution of the south," have well nigh died out; but in a folio volume entitled "Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census (1840) by Counties and Principal Towns," we find a brief and very interesting record. This volume was published by the government at Washington, D. C., in 1841. From this we learn that sixteen slaves, old and young, were owned by parties in Dubuque county. Whether the owners were permanent residents, or temporary sojourners, we have been unable to ascertain. But the fact is thus officially published in the Sixth U. S. Census, that slavery existed in Iowa territory.

In early times slaves who had escaped from their masters in the south were also in the habit of passing through the territory or State en route for Canada. As a very natural consequence several fugitive slave cases of more or less importance arose within our boundaries, the most of which have long been forgotten. Recently, however, the Historical Department came into possession of a 40-page pamphlet which contains quite a full report of one of these cases. We copy this report in full in the present number of THE ANNALS. It was made by George Frazee, a member of the bar, who still (January, 1903) lives in the city of Burlington. In justice to Mr. Frazee it should be stated that the original notes in this case were taken solely for private use, but upon the solicitation of the counsel engaged, as well as others, he consented to their publication. He wrote an ac-

count of another fugitive slave case in which he figured as "the court," which was published in this series of *THE ANNALS* (Vol. IV, pp. 118-137). As stated at the close of the trial judgment was rendered against the defendants for the sum of \$2900. The latter filed a motion for a new trial, and also took the preliminary steps to appeal the case to the Supreme Court of the United States, by writ of error. But it never reached the Supreme Court. Why it did not we are unable to state. It transpired, however, that prior to the trial the defendants had put their property out of their hands, thus rendering the judgment worthless. In Yankee parlance, every preparation was made to "beat 'em on the execution." Such would have been the inevitable result had an execution been issued.

While there were other trials in Iowa for the recovery of fugitive slaves, we cannot learn that they were productive of any benefit to those who sought to recover either their "property," or compensation for its loss.

AN APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDED.

The original copy of the petition which we print below was sent to *THE ANNALS* a short time since. We are glad to give it a place in these pages. It is quite remarkable in many respects. It would seem to be a non-partisan document, for it bears the signatures of both Whigs—not Republicans—and Democrats. It is a high testimonial to the rare fitness of Joseph Williams for governor of Iowa territory. The justice of its statements will be attested by the few pioneers who have come down to the present time. The writer has often in past years heard from the lips of his contemporaries the highest compliments to the character of that good man. He was at the time of this petition one of the associate justices of the supreme court of the territory, to which office he was appointed in 1838, though no allusion is made to this fact in the petition. He was not appointed to the

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