

CHAPTER XXX.

CONDITION OF CONQUERED KANSAS.

KANSAS was now politically prostrate. Her Legislature was dispersed by federal troops; her leading men languishing in prison. The Missouri river was closed to emigration from the free states, and the tedious and uncertain route through Iowa was menaced, and the only security by that route was by companies, sufficiently strong and determined to take care of themselves. The free-state movement being crushed for the time, or prevented from securing defence for the settlers, there was no legal security for free-state men. The territorial officers imposed by the general government, and the local officers thrust on the people by the Legislature of the Shawnee Mission, were tools of the slave power, and active co-workers in the task of making Kansas a slave state. The leaders of the free-state movement had a prison for a reward. The promulgation of free-state sentiments was branded "TREASON," and the federal troops enforced the usurpation of Missouri and the slave power.

It is a grand fact, that never must be forgotten by the American people, *military power is and ever must be inimical to popular institutions.* Speculating on the political principles of a military officer, who is mainly taught to regard government as a necessary pay-master, and political authority as something connected with promotion, is like trusting to the manhood of a dough-face, or appealing to the tender mercies of the usurer of the tribe of Levi. To expect a delicate discrimination, a nice balancing of social and political rights, a careful watch and protection of the people of Kansas, to flow from the mere fact of turning some six or seven hundred dragoons loose to manage the territory, is

simply preposterous. The hope that this expedient would act as a sedative, and secure justice and the country's peace, may be very creditable to a sanguine heart, but the result proves that the remedy itself was stupid, and the mode of applying it still more so.

Drilled to the doctrine of implicit and unquestionable obedience, the troops were incapable of comprehending the meaning or importance of popular rights. Trained to obey regulations which they have had no hand in making, they consider obedience in others the only indication of propriety. With them the words "treason" and "insubordination" are potent and significant, and to them popular liberty and popular rights are unmeaning and worthless things.

Ever hopeful, the free-state settlers earnestly looked to the troops for protection and peace. Attached to the general government, — feeling for it a respect that Western states rarely evince, and Southern states never, — they could not realize their persecution to be systematic and remorseless. The evidence sent through the country, by the committee of Congress, of their wrongs and the gross fraud of the territorial law; the sack of Lawrence and other outrages; the war waged on the settlers of Kansas by the slave power, — all of these colossal evidences of their sufferings, they trusted would work the cure, and that the peace of the country and the well-being of Kansas would promptly receive the only remedies that could meet the case. Alas! they waited and hoped, and were deceived. And now a yawning depth was before them. On the one side political ruin and ostracism from Kansas; on the other security, and peace, and freedom for the territory. Between these there was a *step* — the Rubicon. In that barrier stood not only the slave power in the territory, which is trilling, but the slave power out of it; and there was a corrupt territorial government, corrupt territorial courts, a corrupt general government, and the leap for freedom and security must be on the sharp points of United States bayonets and sabres.

In all the Kansas struggle the slave power has never yielded an inch of ground. A fraud might be so monstrous that even conservative men in the South would deprecate it, but the fruit of the villany was never relinquished. An outrage might be so

monstrous that every honest man in the country, North or South, would indignantly speak against it; but the power it gained for pro-slaveryism has been jealously guarded, and its protection made the test of political orthodoxy. Yet, at every step, the squatters have hoped, and from every expedient that was to give the slave power a firmer foothold, they have expected something more impartial. Unfortunate fatuity! The slave power could *only win* by such expedients, and it is *determined to win*. Coarse and brutal though each act in the drama, this was the only means of bolstering the weakness of a coarse and brutal system. Fairness was ruin, impartiality equal to a relinquishment. Thus, on the advent of dragoon government, the people said, "Well, we will be protected. These Missourians dare not come here now. Pro-slavery men will not molest us; and then the evidence which has gone on to Congress will secure us at last our rights." It was the same hoping, trusting, peace-loving spirit. The slimy reptile, slavery, was merely wrapping another coil round its victim. The free-state settlers had been so outraged that they would have been vindicated in the eyes of the world for defending themselves. The first fiery spirits had already sprung into the contest. A mere handful of the free-state party had dared to meet the war declared against them, and "Franklin" and "Palmyra" had attested their courage and superiority. But this had been foreseen, and "the people must be protected, and the *peace* preserved."

Liberty and constitutional right were filched from those of the American people who settled in Kansas, first by demagogues, then by Missouri and her pro-slavery allies; and, lastly, the federal troops secured the fruit of outrage and crime, and did their best to clinch the villany.

The conquest of Kansas from guaranteed freedom to slavery was premeditated, and deliberate; but many of those most influential in accomplishing it dared not avow the policy by which they were inspired. Conservative Southern men, terrified at the charge of "abolitionism," which was hung over their head like a whip of scorpions, dared not question the suicidal policy which was endangering the peace of the country, and inflicting an irreparable blow on republican institutions. Corrupt Northern politicians,

greedy for political power, were willing to sacrifice their own honor, as well as the interests of those they represented, for the chance of power and place. For this they struggled to blindfold and deceive those they had robbed of their political birthright; for this they were false to the country that had trusted them, and the constitution they had sworn to protect.

Not content with filching civil rights from the people, these corrupt popular leaders undertook to demonstrate that republicanism is a humbug, by corrupting the popular opinion on which it rests. The term "popular sovereignty" was made the foundation-stone of American despotism, and the weapon by which the people were defrauded of those civil rights on which the prosperity of the state depends was called "allowing the people to settle their *local* affairs for themselves."

The idea of the free-state and slave-state interests quietly deciding "their own *local* institutions for themselves" is as infernal a piece of political rascality as ever imposed on the American people. The two systems are the antipodes of each other. They cannot live together. They cannot breathe together. They cannot *merge* their differences. If Kansas is a slave-state no free-state man can remain; for, in order to bolster up slavery among the population now here, the laws would have to be so oppressive and despotic that freedom could not live under them. This talk of the "people settling the question of slavery for themselves" is merely a pretext under which the antagonistic elements in our government are invited to a warfare on a coveted battle-ground. O, you have but to see the hatred with which men there regard each other, to feel this; the suspicion with which one traveller regards another, to feel its weight! If slavery triumphs, the principle on which our government is founded is virtually overthrown. If freedom triumphs, the greatest evil in our country is kept in bounds.

Murder, rapine, highway robbery, were committed in the name of "law and order," and the appeals of an oppressed people fell unheeded and unanswered on the ears of a corrupt administration. Not satisfied with all the villany that had been done, and all the outrages by which the conquest of Kansas to slavery was consummated, a party, calling itself a *democratic* party, had the hardi-

hood to make these usurpations and crimes the platform on which they stood, and the *argument* by which they dared to appeal to the people for their suffrages. The cry of "save the Union" was raised; that cry under which the stability of our institutions had already received the most fatal stabs. "Saving the Union" had been the blind and the whip under which coercive and unfair legislation was smuggled in; and, having accomplished this, the same cry was raised to cover up the designing schemes of nullification and secession.

The pro-slavery party were jubilant in their triumph. Flushed with a victory in which fraud rather than military power had triumphed, they gave way to rejoicings. The portion of the Southern regiment, stationed at Atchison, joined with the Missourians and pro-slavery men of the territory in a celebration, of which I give the following, from the account of the Atchison pro-slavery paper:

"At the head of the table hung the 'blood-red flag,' with the lone star, and the motto of 'Southern Rights' on the one side, and 'South Carolina' on the other. The same flag that first floated on the rifle pits of the abolitionists at Lawrence, and on the hotel of the same place, in triumph, now hung over the heads of the noble soldiers who bore it so bravely through that exciting war.

"The following are among the toasts drank:

"Kansas: our chosen home — stand by her. Yes, sons of the South, make her a slave state, or die in the attempt! (This toast was received with loud and continued applause.)

"Disunion: by secession or otherwise — a beacon of hope to an oppressed people, and the surest remedy for Southern wrongs. (Enthusiastic cheers.)

"The city of Atchison: may she, before the close of the year '57, be the capital of a Southern republic. (Cheers.)

"Kansas: we will make her a slave state, or form a chain of locked arms and hearts together, and die in the attempt.

"The distribution of public lands: one hundred and sixty acres to every pro-slavery settler, and to every abolitionist six feet by two."

And, also, the following from the proceedings of a celebration of *slavery* in South Carolina:

"Kansas: already stained with the blood of Southern martyrs in the cause of justice and our most sacred rights. May her streams become rivers of blood, and her forests charnel-houses, before her soil shall be contaminated, and her atmosphere polluted, by the free-soil partisans of the North.

"Kansas: it has risen like the ghost of Banquo, to sear the eyeballs of rampant fanaticism; but, ere they clutch it, they must cross many *Brooks*, whose *cane* growth will resist them.

"Kansas:

'Strike while the iron's hot, -
 Strike with men and means;
 And let the Yankees see we've got
 The right to hold the reins.'

"Kansas: the battle-ground upon which is to be decided the fate of Southern rights *under the Union*."

Alas, these were not idle and unmeaning words! Every line and every syllable have been attested by fraud and crime in Kansas; and, while I write, they are echoed by the complaints of enslaved freemen, the wail of bereaved widows, and the unheeded plaint of political prisoners who languish in captivity, for loving freedom fearlessly and well. Liberty stands aghast at the fearful prospect, and asks, if these things be done under republican rule to-day, what will our popular institutions be worth to-morrow?

But Kansas, though conquered by Missouri and her allies, is not yet subdued. Every vestige of popular liberty and constitutional privilege has, indeed, been stricken down, but a liberty-loving people remain. Until that freedom-loving race has been "wiped out," there can be no peace and security for the power that has thus trampled on their rights, or for the institution of negro slavery, for the sake of which all this villainy and wrong has been done. Liberty and independence do not exist in Kansas to-day, but a people loving these is upon her soil. "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." Our political elements have become very corrupt, because we have forgotten principle in remembering

party; but there is a shaking in the "valley of dry bones," and, perhaps, the suffering that has been undergone has purchased a watchfulness on the part of the people, worth all the blood, and treasure, and heart-wrung agony it has cost.

Yet it is possible that the war of conquest may be followed by a war of extermination. Perhaps the struggling, liberty-loving TREASON in the territory may furnish the apology for an attack, in which not only freedom, but the *love of freedom*, will be blotted out. The slavery extensionists well know that without this the fruit of their conquest will turn to ashes on their lips. They know this, and God in heaven only knows what the corrupt men who have been the most active participators in this warfare may not attempt. The spirit that has so far triumphed is exhibited in the following paragraph from a border paper:

"Several parties have inquired of us why the law has not been put in force at Topeka, as well as at Lawrence, against abolition newspapers. Topeka is no better than Lawrence; it is also demoralized; but it is not so well known abroad. If both Topeka and Lawrence were blotted out, entirely obliterated, it would be the best thing for Kansas that could happen. The sooner the people of Topeka sound their death-knell the better; they are too corrupt and degraded to live. We would like to be present and raise our Ebenezer in the funeral. It is silly to suppose, for an instant, that there can be peace in Kansas as long as one enemy of the South lives upon her soil, or one single specimen of an abolitionist treads in the sunlight of Kansas territory."

The foregoing is but one of many such paragraphs which might be given. Such sentiments are a fearful indication of the corruption of the popular mind.

But if that war of extermination is begun, it will prove the war of freedom. The suffering settlers in Kansas have been driven to extremity, and are now nerved to fight. Kansas was settled, in great part, by a peace-loving people; a people in whom delicate sentiment, and a refinement which hates the horrors of blood, are strongly rooted. Imagine an over-sensitive Englishman moralizing over the dead body of a Russian whom he has slain in the trenches

of Sevastopol, and you have a picture of the free-state settler in Kansas, contemplating the horrors of a civil war, which he would suffer much to avert. They have suffered much, perhaps *too* much to avert it; they appeal from their wrongs to the great American brotherhood to right those wrongs. In the vindication of justice, peace may yet be secured, but without it there will surely be war and bloodshed, and with these the triumph of freedom; for,

“Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft is *ever* won.”

Kansas, the Italy of America, the debatable ground, has still much to tempt. Landscapes of unsurpassed levelness, a soil of unmatched fertility, with the richest natural elements, exhibit the value of the future empire whose fate was tossed recklessly, by unscrupulous politicians, in the scale, to vibrate between the conflicting claims of freedom and slavery.

There is a healthy freshness and vitality in the atmosphere of Kansas as favorable to pulmonary weakness as the table lands of Mexico. As you inhale the vigor-giving breezes, you acquire a nerve and elasticity, in the possession of which you might forget that the rights of American freemen had been subdued, in order that slavery might be planted upon its soil; or, if it cannot make you forget this, it may inspire you with the thought that freedom can reconquer what she has lost. What matters it that free speech, and a free press, are “*treason*” in Kansas? What matters it that the judiciary is the obedient slave of slavery? What matters it though the federal troops hold in their iron grasp the Kansas that Missouri and slavery conquered? There is, thank God, still a spirit and vitality in the American character which will rise above all these obstacles, and will yet write RESURGAM! on the tomb of Kansas Liberty.