

IS SLAVERY DEAD ?

We often hear it said or admitted of late that "Slavery is dead." When this cry comes from men who have been in favor of slavery, and have fought for it all their lives; who denounced the President's Emancipation Proclamation; who have opposed all the active measures of the Administration to put an end to the war, and who have not yet ceased to find fault with the Government—what are we to understand by it? Those who are in favor of fighting this rebellion through to the "bitter end" do not claim that slavery is already dead, although they firmly believe that the institution is doomed, and will ultimately die by the folly of those who sought to extend and perpetuate it. If it is dead, why does the South still propose to fight for it? and why does the President make the additional call for two hundred thousand men? If the Government think that slavery is already dead, they are certainly preparing to give it a magnificent funeral.

We are prepared to believe that some who make this assertion honestly think that the days of slavery are already numbered. They not only see that it cannot long survive the desolations of war and the uprising of moral sentiment against it all over the land, but they are perfectly willing to have it forever cease among us. With some, however, we think, after looking at all the suspicious circumstances, it is merely a "trick" of the politicians adverse to the Government, a ruse or a blinder to put their opponents off their guard. We are well satisfied that many would like to have the revolted States come back into the Union with all the rights and privileges enjoyed by them before the commencement of the rebellion. They know that slavery is a hard thing to kill, that entrenched in the pride and avarice of men it becomes a great bond of union, and a gigantic political power. If we believe that it is virtually extinct and withdraw all further means for its destruction, we shall be surprised after a little while to find it as lively, as vigorous and as insolent as ever.

We hope that no man will be deceived by this cry of "Slavery is dead." If it is dead, let us see it decently buried many fathoms deep in the earth, far down below the coal formation. It is too foul a thing to be suffered to decay near the surface; it would breed there a moral pestilence, and corrupt the atmosphere fifty miles high, and for many hundred leagues around. We invite all those who believe in the recent wailing cry that "Slavery is dead," to rally with "crow, and pick and spade," to assist in digging its forever-to-be-unhonored grave. Religion and humanity have too much at stake to neglect any part of their duty to see the eyes of the great enemy fairly closed, his huge limbs decently composed, the black shroud adjusted, and the unsightly corpse buried so deep that no trumpet of political power can ever hereafter give it a resurrection.

Since writing the above, our attention has been called to a speech recently delivered in the House of Representatives at Washington, by Hon. H. Winter Davis:

"Slavery is dead," says the honorable gentleman. "Slavery is dead," is echoed by some on this side of the House. "Slavery is dead," is echoed from the too sanguine people of the country. He may be a very sick man, Mr. Speaker, but I assure the gentlemen of this house and the country that he is not dead; and if he is not done to death he will be your master again. Slavery is not dead in Maryland. We have to carry a majority of the convention on the old slavery apportionment, where one fourth of the population ties the body; and whether the hostile influence that presides near the President's ear will allow Maryland to become a free State, or will fail her in her hour of need, remains yet to be seen. * * * * But "slavery is dead in the rebel States." No, sir. No, sir. Far from it. If our honorable friends on the other side elect their President in the coming fall, slavery is as alive as it was the day that the first gun blazed against Sumter. If we lose a majority in the next Congress, slavery is as powerful as it ever was. We are, it is true, in the condition in which we cannot stand still. We must go backward or we must go forward. My face, sir, is to the future. I wish so to look at it, and so to say, to the men of my day and generation, what I think about the great measures which now touch the salvation of the country, that, whether I be on the winning or on the losing side, whether the nation triumph or fail, whenever anybody shall by accident hereafter rake about among the ashes of the past and find my name, he will find at least that I did not fear to say to friend and foe what the times demand; and it may be that it will be well if it were heeded.

Slavery is not dead by the proclamation. What lawyer attributes to it the least legal effect in breaking the bonds of the slave? Executed by the bayonets, legally valid to the extent of the duration of the war, under the law of 1862 which authorizes the President to use the people of African descent as he may see fit for the suppression of the rebellion, it is undoubtedly valid to the extent of turning them loose from their masters during the rebellion. So long as the military power is engaged in suppressing resistance, they are free from their masters. Re-establish the old governments, allow the dominant aristocracy to repossess the State power in its original plenitude, how long will they be free? What courts will give them their rights? What provision is there to protect them? Where is the writ of *habeas corpus*? How are the courts of the United States to be open to them? Who shall close the courts of the States against the master? Does the master resort to the court against the slave? No; he seizes him by the neck. The law of last Congress freeing a few slaves provides that that act may be pleaded in defense. But when is the slave to be pleaded in defense? When is the time to plead in any such process? Gentlemen legislate without a knowledge of the country or of the people they are legislating for. Their laws are on the statute book, and the opinions of the dominant faction conspire to perpetuate the master's rights and the slave's wrongs. Nothing but the resolute declaration of the Union States that it shall be a condition precedent that slavery shall be prohibited in their constitutions, and that the United States shall give constitutional guarantees to the negroes, freedom in fact, and that the United States shall be kept under the control of men of such political views and purposes that the law will be executed as a constitutional law and imposed on reluctant people—nothing else can accomplish the death of slavery."