

From Frederick Starr to Unknown

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Weston

December 29th 1854.

Having given the Platte Co[.] Association that high authority for instructing negroes, I told them that I had always understood that there were thousands and thousands of Christians in the south who instructed their slaves, that any violation of the law arose as I hoped from the simple desire to do [*text stricken through*] good to their souls, and enable them to read God's word understandingly. That I was an order loving, and law abiding citizen, that I had broken the law ignorantly and through the mistaken opinion our ablest lawyers as to the statute, but that I was now liable to be prosecuted as a criminal by any one who chose to enter complaint, that I had no money with which to pay the fine. But that I was ready to stand the six months imprisonment at Platte City and another six months instead of the fine. I laid myself out at this point and there was a great deal of evident feeling.

Vnieyard got up and asked if I had permission from the masters, I replied "all of them[,]" "then you did nothing wrong[.]" So I supposed but the law forbids even you from instructing your own slaves under a penalty of six months imprisonment and 500\$ fine. Many a slave holder shook his head emphatically as much as to say[,] I dont care a fig for that law. If I should wish to teach my slave I would do it.

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The remaining charge was, that on July 4th I had insulted the citizens by riding on to the grounds with a negro in my buggy[.] The story had grown until from a "buck nigger" it had become a nigger wench. I remarked, Thus far it has been as solemn as a funeral, it would not be amis for us to smile at least. On July fourth I was chairman of the committee that provided place, seats, speaker, music, ordinance & water & which did the inviting & raised the [chimes?].

I had on that day a Sabbath School to bring into the procession. As I was afraid to bring my horse to the church lest she would break up my buggy when the bands should pass[,] I drew my boy to church, while my wife walked, & I tried in vain to get a seat for her in the public carriages. Therefore when the procession was half way to the ground, I left it[,] crossed over home & got my buggy[.] in my haste my horse acted bad and I was obliged to whip her, and when I came to the church she came very fast. A carriage with four ladies in was just leaving the house next to the church and the negro who had brought them over was on foot as the carriage drove away, with instructions to hurry over to the grounds to take charge of the horses. I had no time to tie my horse which was very restive & pressed the black man into my service. John just run up the steps and see if there is a

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lady in the church. he looked and replied no! Just pull the doors together, he did so.

I had detained him on my business and I thought it my duty to help him along--jump into my buggy. He got in, it was very hot and I had my umbrella up. as I needed both hands to hold my horse I handed him the umbrella & we shot through two streets like an arrow when we came to [Mettier's?] soda & ice cream shop. I told John to hold the horse & being very hot had intended, when I left home to get a glass of soda as we passed. The streets that we rode through were almost entirely deserted[.] we saw two [raw?] Dutch women & a few straggling men. I thanked the negro for holding my horse & jumped in the buggy & spurred on. Thus I did not ride on the grounds with the negro & did not so greatly insult the ladies and gentlemen of the city who were all out at Wells' park.

Dr. Baliss arose and said "The only thing I find any fault with was that you did not give John a dime to keep fourth of July with!" "right Doctor but preachers being poor" the only solitary quarter I had I gave to my wife to get a ride to the grounds with if she could. No man would have been more willing than I. Great laughter.

But the beauty of this charge I must notice a little, has not Mr. Vineyard often rode into this town on horseback with a young nigger or negress behind him lug-

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ging him with both arms or has he not in his buggy rode in town with a big nigger or wench on the seat beside him and that too carying an umbrella in sunshine or in rain, and who was insulted by it, who felt bad over it, & had to raise a great Hollamaloo over it, as much as if some one had been killed.

Or when in her fine carriage with those tall black mules Mrs[.] Vineyard has come into town to shop or gone to visit her friends, with a big black buck nigger on the box and two or three greasy young wenches inside with her to take care of the children or help about the work where she was going, why have not the people of Weston in Holy horror, shuddered, rolled up their eyes & cast up their hands "that she should chose such persons for her companions & appear in public with them."

Well how comes it that I am the only one in the country who cannot do what every body else can without insulting the public. now Mr. Vineyard is rich, I poor. He can drive a carriage & two[,] four or ten horses if he chooses. I can own but one & a poor buggy & yet it seems to me that he is the one to insult the community not me. I am not worth their notice in such a thing.

Well, gentlemen Your charges are answered, are there any more[,] fetch them on[,] they can be explained as easily and clearly as the others have been, are there any more charges? No one answered.

Whereupon Mr. Vineyard got up and moved the following resolution. "Resolved that we deem the explanations of Mr[.] Starr concerning various rumors of his

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