

this he appears as surviving pioneers remember him. As a historic portrait it is very valuable, and worthy of careful preservation in every Iowa library. The recent portrait of Mr. Harlan is copied by the kind permission of Colonel D. M. Fox, from his "History of Political Parties."

---

### THE FIRST FUGITIVE SLAVE CASE IN IOWA.

---

It is a curious historical fact that the first reported decision of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa, in July, 1839, was made upon the question of the rendition of an alleged fugitive slave, the court at that time consisting of Charles Mason, Chief Justice, and Joseph Williams and Thomas S. Wilson, Associate Justices. Ralph, the alleged fugitive slave, had been owned by one Montgomery of the State of Missouri. The latter consented that the slave might come into the Territory of Iowa, but afterwards sought to assert his rights as owner and recover his "property." Montgomery secured Ralph's arrest by the sheriff of Dubuque county, and had started with him down the river in a steamboat. Mr. A. Butterworth obtained a writ of *habeas corpus*, upon which Ralph was brought before the District Court, whence, by consent of the parties, the case was at once taken to the Territorial Supreme Court. This case is given in full in a thin octavo volume now very scarce, containing "Reports of the Decisions in the Supreme Court of Iowa, from the Organization of the Territory in July, 1838, to December, 1839, inclusive, by Wm. J. A. Bradford, Reporter of the Supreme Court." (It was also included in the later reports by Morris.) Owing to the scarcity of this volume, and the historical importance of the case itself, we copy the report in full. It is the first one that appears in the book. The colored

man's defence was conducted by David Rorer, who afterwards won high distinction as a lawyer and author. It was written long ago that "Slaves cannot breathe in England," and it would seem that the atmosphere of early Iowa was equally unfriendly to that "peculiar institution," as it was called in those days. A few were held for a time—as the United States census of 1840 sets forth—in Dubuque and Des Moines counties, but Iowa soil was never congenial to slavery and it soon disappeared.

---

### THE MEANING OF THE WORD IOWA.

---

This subject is still frequently taken up and discussed, with the result, however, that little or no additional light is ever thrown upon it. Exact information has been greatly desired in the past, as it is now, and doubtless will be in the future when "mould gathers upon the memories" of all who are alive today. From whatever information is available now, it would seem that the meaning of this particular word, or words sounding very much like it, varied with different tribes of Indians who formerly occupied the territory of this and surrounding states. This fact doubtless accounts for the confusion or contrariety of opinion which has existed in regard to its signification. Popularly, in this State, for many years past, it has been thought to signify "The Beautiful Land." Two agreeing statements in regard to its meaning would seem to be entitled to respectful consideration, if not to final acceptance. The first was contained in a letter still extant by Antoine Le Claire, the distinguished half-breed, who lived and died in Davenport, to Hon. Theodore S. Parvin. It was dated March 10, 1860. Mr. Le Claire was well educated, "an accomplished linguist, speaking some twelve or fourteen Indian dialects, as well as

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.