

Des Moines, Iowa, Feb. 16th, 1893.

Hon. A. W. Tourgee,

Mayville, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:--I have for many years been an interested reader of your writings, but I do not think that I was ever more forcibly impressed with anything from your pen ~~more~~ than what you wrote in the last Inter Ocean concerning the burning of that negro in Texas. True, the crime for which he paid the penalty with his life was one of the most dastardly and atrocious in the annals of crime, yet at the same time the manner of his execution by a Christian(?) mob seemed to me at the time the most brutal of any like occurrence in all history. These people seemed to forget that there was a race question involved, and that some white man, the master of his parents or grand parents, was responsible for this inherent trait of character. In face of all this, as you say, not a word of protest hardly comes from any source, neither from the press or the people, but as one said in my presence not a week ago, "It served him right". Thus is human life bartered away, and no word of protest from the would-be guardians of the rights and privileges of the citizens of this land of liberty.

In contradistinction to this, I have of late become very much interested in another line of effort, that of the strong effort that is being made to make this by legislative action a "Christian Nation",--in the delusive idea that because they may legislate it so, that therefore it is so. Now, constitutionally, Congress has no power to legislate on religious questions; it has no right to bring religious tests to bear upon its acts, for the United States is in no way founded upon the Christian religion, (Treaty with Tripoli) Yet in the face of this, the Supreme Court has decided officially (Feb. 29th 1892) that this is a "Christian Nation", and taking this as a basis Congress at the instigation of the would-be guardians of Sunday sacredness passed the World's Fair Appropriation of \$2,500,000, with the Sunday closing proviso, thereby saying that Sunday was the Christian Sabbath and no other day was, a step that it could logically take provided the decision of the Supreme Court was in perfect keeping with the spirit and letter of the Constitution. If the government may directly or indirectly designate what day is the Sabbath, what shall hinder it from attempting to define baptism and undertaking to settle any theological question at the behest of the

church. And this is what the courts of Tennessee have arrogated to themselves the right to do, in principle, at least, right in the face of their bill of rights, one of the most liberal of any of the states. *How* peaceable men and women, good citizens, loyal and true, have for the past two years or more been subject to repeated arrests for no other cause than that their religious convictions require that they rest on the seventh day of the week as their weekly sabbath, in direct obedience to the divine command, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, etc." Even more, the bigotry and intolerance would not let them remain in a felon's cell, but four of them were taken from the jail during last summer and made to work on the streets in a chain gang. (See Arena Dec, 1892) And only last week some thirteen more were indicted by the grand jury, and called to appear, a boy ten years old being summoned to testify against his father. This is actually happening, and yet where is the voice of protest, and if it continues, what is the future of our much-prized and boasted freedom? No freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience; no protection of life from a howling mob. Is it not time that some voice of warning, *from* this fair land, the fairest the sun ever shone upon, and consecrated to liberty by the blood of so many heroes, shall be raised against these evils that are stalking through our ~~land~~ *midst*?

Very respectfully,

W. E. Cornell