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“To the Public,” a Transcription of Robert Grier’s 1850 Broadside with an Introduction

BY JOSEPH MOORE

In the fall of 1850, Rev. Dr. Robert Grier, President of Erskine College, published a broadside to the citizens of Abbeville District, SC. Addressed, “To the Public,” its 11,935 words were a compilation of newspaper articles and eye-witness testimony chronicling a local dispute on one of the submerged internal debates on the slave question. Namely, as the region became increasingly rabid on the slave question, how much dissent could any community display against pro-slavery orthodoxy in the Deep South.

Provided here is a transcription of that remarkable document. Fires in 1873 and 1874 destroyed many government papers in Abbeville. This broadside, which Grier published to clear his name from a whisper campaign against himself and Erskine College, lists in order the public statements of both sides in the debate and is the event’s only public record. The controversy began with accusations against a slave carpenter owned by Dr. Grier, named George Grier. They end with George Grier’s conviction and Dr. Grier’s attempts to clear the name of himself and Erskine College from wrongdoing. In order to understand the volatility of the exchange, a few points of background should be noted.

“Scottish Calvinists in the Atlantic World Diasporas”

The two groups involved in this confrontation were all Scotch-Irish Calvinists. However Robert Grier represented a peculiar strain of this tradition known as the Associate Reformed Presbyterians (ARP). These religious dissenters broke away from Presbyterians in two waves known as the Reformed and Associate Presbyterians. However these categorizations hid the fact that, at the lay level, they experienced a great deal of cross-pollination. In America, they joined into a single denomination. They were distinguished by the exclusive singing of Psalms in worship, rigorous piety, and regular family devotional practices. Both sides understood their overt sense of distinction from other Presbyterians, and this underlies the conflict in the text.

“The Slave Literacy Controversy”

The ARP commitment to Biblical literalism brought them into multiple conflicts with southern neighbors. Such a strong devotion to the ability to read the Biblical text by the laity, which predated their immigration, brought a corresponding commitment to the need for a literate laity. Thus, when South Carolina passed laws outlawing teaching slaves to read in 1740, 1800, and 1834 ARP ministers and laity in Abbeville District sent

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1 The headings in this introduction are taken from Robert M. Calhoon’s Political Moderation in America’s First Two Centuries (New York: Cambridge, 2009), 227-229, 233, 235-236.
petitions to the state legislature denouncing the laws and proclaiming their intentions to defy them. This was a stark contrast with Abbeville’s Presbyterians who in 1835 sent a competing petition asking the legislature to shut down ARP Sunday Schools that were being held in defiance of the law. All of this, combined with the ARP unique affection for the American Colonization Society after other South Carolinian’s abandoned it, led to a constant suspicion by South Carolinians that the ARP were heterodox on the question of slavery. Thus, the conflict between Dr. Grier and Abbeville Presbyterians over a preaching slave touched on long-standing controversies in Abbeville and the backcountry.

“George Grier’s Story”

George Grier was a slave carpenter owned by the Grier family. He was hired out to local plantation owners for skilled work periodically, and may have been allowed to keep a portion of the money he earned. At least one ARP family in nearby Laurens District owned slaves but paid them wages for their work, and George could have been part of a similar arrangement. His message to the slaves of the Presbyterian Lemuel Reid began the controversy, and he was eventually found guilty of seditious speech. According to local legend, Rev. William Hemphill, and ARP minister, secured a pardon for Grier after the Civil War, and he returned home after his enforced exile.

“A Community in Conflict”

The ARP congregations of Long Cane, Generostee, and Due West were located in upper Abbeville District. As mentioned above, they had been at odds with residents of other areas of the District on a host of issue. Agriculture in upper Abbeville was generally smaller in scale than other portions of the District. In 1834 and 1836, the height of the Nullification Controversy, they ran Unionist candidates for state office who lost to more radical elements in the district’s middle and southern areas. This geographic, economic, political and religious conflict underlay the excitement about George’s words and may be the reasons the emphasis quickly shifted from accusations against George to accusations against Dr. Grier.

“Devotionalism and Race”

Presbyterian Charles Colcock Jones was desperately trying to win converts to the cause of slave evangelism, but the ARP argued that they had been more proactive even that Jones’ himself. Jones’ campaign focused on religious conversion, basic oral instruction, and opportunities for supervised black worship. The ARP included slaves in worship as well as regular catechism training, which was led by the church’s lay leaders. The ARP also still maintained their rigorous family devotional system, which required morning and evening family prayers, Scripture reading, and discussion of Biblical topics. Because white ARPs took the paternalistic vision of slaves as servants within the family seriously, they included slaves in these devotional rituals. This is probably the basis of George Grier’s defense of his statements as being the sentiments of those in “town,” by which he means the ARP stronghold of Due West, SC.
Eye Contact Between Adversaries

The episode culminated the long smoldering argument between these two groups of Calvinists. Nearly imperceptible to outsiders, these centuries old conflicts were deeply felt by contemporaries and kept congregations and townships apart from one another in the Carolina backcountry. As Professor Calhoon has noted, reflecting a remark by Michael Zuckerman, they spoke to each other “deferentially”, but both sides resolved to live “differently”. In order to resolve this tension, a bi-denominational committee, appointed to bring about a peace settlement between Lemuel Ried and Robert Grier, represented both groups. Representatives from each side met and conducted an independent investigation, mentioned in the document. George Grier himself was put on trial and briefly exiled to North Carolina.

The Transcription:

TO THE PUBLIC.
Due West, S.C., October 1, 1850

Entry 1:

Believing that many of my friends, and also, the friends and patrons of Erskine College, would desire correct information relative to difficulties in which I have been unwillingly drawn, I have concluded to republish the communications, in this connected form.

R. C. Grier
Due West, Sept. 1850

Entry 2: [From the Abbeville Banner, July 27] “Something Rotten in Denmark.”

Mr. Editor: -- Senator Barnwell truly said in his recently delivered speech in the United States Senate, “that the South was putting her house in order, not to die but to live,” relative to the great question.

In order that each State in the South should be prepared for the approaching crisis, it becomes the citizens of each District and County, to thoroughly examine each and every precinct, and if any person or persons are found not prepared to act in unison with their neighbors in defending the honor, rights and institutions of their State to the last extremity, that District or County should be purged of such spuriousness.

In looking over the District, I have been pained to learn that a certain portion of our citizens have been thrown into considerable excitement, relative to some seditious language that should have been used by the slave of a certain gentleman in this District; that this gentleman should have said at a meeting of some of his neighbors, relative to the matter, that had he have desired to deliver a lecture to negroes, he should have used

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2 Entry labels not in the original.
similar language. If, sir, these facts can be established, it behooves the neighbors of that precinct to arrest this negro forthwith, by a process of law. No compromise should be made upon such acts, that will certainly prove destructive to the peace and happiness of that species of property, if such conduct is permitted to pass unnoticed. Bring him to trial, and let the full force of law be meted [sic] out to him.

If those neighbors in whom I have the utmost confidence, will permit this matter to pass unnoticed, then I call upon the Committee of Safety for Abbeville District to take cognisance [sic] of the matter, and bring all concerned to a strict account.

LONG CANE

Entry 3: [From the Abbeville Banner, August 3]

Mr. Editor:-- In last week’s “Banner” some one over the signature “Long Cane” has made, against a “certain gentleman in this District, a charge which if true would, at any time, and especially in the present posture of affairs, draw down the whole pressure of public odium upon the accused.

This charge is made by implication in the Caption of the article, “Something Rotten in Denmark,” and directly in the following sentence, “had he desired to deliver a lecture to negroes he should have used similar (sedigious) language.” It is evidently the design of the writer to present this “certain gentleman” to the community as an abettor of servile sedition, an incendiary requiring the attention of the “Committee of Safety for Abbeville District.”

Let this nameless accuser, who has thus voluntarily preferred this charge, designate this “certain gentleman” -- let him state precisely the seditious “language he said he would have used”-- and give his “authority.”

My reasons for demanding a clear and responsible statement of this matter are that from recent occurrences, and certain rumors which have grown out of them, the public will no doubt fix this charge upon myself, and I wish it presented in a form in which I can meet it. Let then, “Long Cane” give his charge a “local habitation and a name,” and then the community can judge whether I am the offender or he the slanderer.

Yours,
ROBERT C. GRIER

Entry 4: [From the Abbeville Banner, August 10]

Mr. Editor: -- I herewith hand you for publication the following certificates, being the “authority” upon which “Long Cane” based his communication, and in answer to the demand made by the Rev. ROBT. C. GRIER.

Respectfully,
J. Foster Marshall

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ABBEVILLE, So. CA., 8th Aug., 1850.
This is to certify that GEORGE, the slave of the Rev. ROBT. C. GRIER, was
hired to me as a carpenter; that on or about the 12th of June last, about 9 o’clock P.M. my attention was attracted to my kitchen, in consequence of the loud talking of GEORGE to my negroes, on the subject of religion as I supposed. In order to hear more distinctly what he was talking about, I went to my back door, which was about thirty feet from the kitchen. The first thing I heard him distinctly say to my negroes, was, that they ought not to be discouraged on the account of their difficulties. There was no reason why they were in the situation they were, only that God permitted it to be so. That God was working for their deliverance. He was working by secret means, and would deliver them from their bondage as sure as the children of Israel were delivered from the Egyptian bondage. That the question had been in agitation for the last fifty years. That those who were working for them did not know exactly how long it would be before they would be set free. There was no doubt that it would be soon. That they ought to pray for, and their prayers would go up before God and be answered. That the smartest men in the United States——. At this point of his conversation I could not stand any longer to listen to any such conversation, and permit him to talk in that strain to my negroes. I did not hear him finish the sentence, as I became indignant at what he had already said. I called him by name three or four times,- he came to my door. I told him, if that was the kind of doctrine he was preaching, I wanted him to leave my premises. He went off, but in a few moments after I had gone to bed, he came to my door and called me. I got up, and as soon as I opened the door, he said he wanted me to forgive him for what he had said. I told him I could not overlook such conduct as that— that he was preaching up a doctrine that was calculated to make my negroes dissatisfied. He said he meant no harm, for he heard them talking that way about town. In speaking of Due West Corner he always called it the town.

The above facts were detailed before Mr. GRIER and the neighbors around Mr. JAMES FAIR’S, at a meeting that took place, some two weeks subsequent to the time, when the negro made use of the above language. The impression produced upon my mind from the remarks of the Rev. Mr. Grier, and the manner in which he interrogated me, and particularly the answer he made to the interrogatories that were propounded to him, was that he fully endorsed the language of his slave.

I felt much mortified as a reflection that the Rev. Mr. GRIER should have attempted to cast upon me; which was, after I had made my statement, he remarked that he supposed it was about correct, as it nearly corresponded with what George had told him.

LEMUEL RIED

Entry 5: ABBEVILLE C.H., 6th Aug. 1850

This is to certify that in consequence of certain information laid before the undersigned by LEMUEL RIED, relative to language that should have been used by GEORGE, the slave of Rev. ROBT. C. GRIER, in the presence of some of Mr. LEMUEL RIED’S negroes; a meeting of some of the neighbors was held for the purpose of adopting some plan by which the subject might be investigated, and if the negro should be found guilty of using seditious language, should be punished.

It was agreed that the subject matter should be referred to five of the neighbors--
two to be selected by Mr. LEMUEL RIED, two by Mr. Grier; and the four, to select a fifth. Mr. GRIER was to produce his slave and administer whatever punishment, the persons selected to adjudicate the matter, should award, Mr. GRIER presented himself, but his slave escaped, being aware of the trial. In consequence of his escape, it was deemed prudent by the referees not to proceed with the investigation, but the neighbors present for their own satisfaction, agreed to hear from Mr. LEMUEL RIED a statement of the language used by the said slave.

After Mr. LEMUEL RIED had related the language he heard the negro use, Mr. GRIER said, if he was going to say anything to negroes on the subject, he did not know, that he could say anything ore to the purpose or suitable, than what he (the negro) said. Mr. JAMES FAIR said, you surely would not tell them that they would be set free? Mr. Grier replied, that they would be free when they died, that was certain. Mr. GRIER further said, we all have to acknowledge that slavery was an evil, and that he did not know any better way to get rid of this evil, than to pray for it.

The impression produced upon our minds from the relation of the facts by Mr. LEMUEL RIED, and the remarks of Mr. GRIER, and particularly his answer to the interrogatories, was that he fully endorse the language of his slave.

JAMES FAIR
SAMUEL RIED
ALLEN T. MILLER

Entry 6: ABBEVILLE C.H., 6TH Aug., 1850

This is to certify that I was present at a meeting of some of the citizens of Mr. JAMES FAIR’S neighborhood, referred to in the above certificate. That in consequence of the slave GEORGE not being produced by his master, it was deemed prudent by the referees not to proceed with the investigation. It was however determined for the satisfaction of all present that Mr. LEMUEL RIED should state what he heard the negro say in the presence of his negroes.

After Mr. Ried had made his statement, Mr. GRIER said, that had he have been going to have delivered a lecture upon the subject, he did not see, or did not know, that he could say anything more to the purpose than what he (the negro) said. Mr. JAMES FAIR then said, you surely would not tell them that they would all be set free? Mr. GRIER replied that they would be set free when they died, that was certain. Mr. GRIER further said that we all had to admit that slavery was an evil, and that he did not know any better way to get rid of this evil than to pray for it? I then asked him, if he would tell them (the negroes) to pray for it? His answer was; certainly he would, if hey [sic] desired it.

The impression produced upon my mind from the facts stated by Mr. LEMUEL RIED, relative to the language used by the negro GEORGE, and the remarks made by Mr. GRIER, and particularly his answer to the questions propounded, was that Mr. GRIER fully endorsed the language of his slave which language when used in the hearing of our slaves, I regard as highly censurable if not seditious.

WM. BARR
Entry 7: ABBEVILLE, S.C. 8th Aug., 1850

This is to certify that we were present at the meeting of the citizens referred to, in the above certificates. That the language made use of by the Rev. R.C. GRIER, and his answers to the interrogatories propounded by Mr. JAMES FAIR and Mr. WM. BARR, we believe to be correctly stated to the best of our recollection. We further state that the impression produced upon our minds from hearing Mr. LEMUEL RIED’S statement and the answer of Mr. GRIER to the questions propounded was that Mr. GRIER fully endorsed the language of his slave, and that such language when used in the presence of our slaves is highly censurable if not seditious.

HAMILTON T. MILLER
JAMES T. MILLER

Entry 8: [From the Abbeville Banner, August 17].

Mr. Editor: - I confess my surprise at the amount of testimony presented by Mr. MARSHALL in support of the charge alleged against me. I had supposed that he could not have obtained a single certificate sustaining his declaration, but he has produced seven gentlemen who assert that the impression made on their minds was that “I fully endorsed the language of my slave.” Not only have they given this as their own impressions but they have also presented such an account of the proceedings at the meeting of investigation as to produce similar impression on the minds of others who know nothing of the matter, only as it is learned from their certificates.

I cannot hope to counteract entirely, if at all, the effect which such a presentation of my conduct will have on the community. The public mind, in many instances at least, is prejudiced against me by certain slanderous reports-the statement has been made by respectable men-- and the subject is of such a nature as to enlist public feeling in their favor-- and I am comparatively a stranger in the District, of whom hundreds know but little, if anything and whose opinion of my character will be formed by the statements which have been made. With all these things against me- I would let the affair alone- I would let the public say and think what they please, were it not that connected as I am with an institution, which has been generously sustained by many friends in Abbeville and adjoining Districts, -I owe these patrons an explanation, to them I offer it, and to all others willing to listen candidly to my defense.

I do not charge any of the gentlemen who have given their certificates with having asserted falsehoods, but they have for some reason, so modified and misplaced my language as to produce an entirely false impression and one which I disclaim to have intended.

It is necessary in the outset to correct a remark, made it may-be incidentally, but calculated to present my conduct in an unfair light. Four of these gentlemen assert that it was deemed prudent not to proceed with the investigation, but have a statement from Mr. RIED for the satisfaction of the neighbors. Now I for one was not aware of this conclusion. Whether or not there should be an investigation was discussed- but without coming to the decision here given-and as a proof- the Committee was duly organized, heard Mr. RIED’s statement, and retired fifteen or twenty minutes for consultation- on
their return they announced that they had concluded not to decide in the case- this was the first assurance, I had, that the investigation would not be closed. My reason for wishing this matter put right is, that it may be understood why I proposed certain questions to Mr. RIED and made the remarks which I did afterwards. It was the first time I had seen Mr. RIED. I had heard an incorrect report and I wished to hear the truth.

Mr. LEMUEL RIED, in the last sentence of his certificate, charges me with having wounded his feelings by impeaching his veracity- in saying that I believed his statement “because it corresponded with what George had told me.” Anyone on reading this sentence would suppose that I made my remark immediately after he had made his statement, and in reference to it. But the fact is thus- after Mr. RIED had finished, and various questions had been put- I asked him if he had learned anything from his own negroes in what manner the conversation had commenced?- he then gave a statement of what his negroes had said- in reference to this statement made to Mr. RIED by his negroes, I remarked “that I supposed it was correct,” &c.

I had heard but one opinion, and it a favorable one, expressed by any one as to the candor and truthfulness manifested by Mr. REID in his statement. In this opinion I concur and regret that as he misunderstood me, he had not asked for an explanation.

All the certificates except that of Mr. LEMUEL RIED represent me as having made the following declaration immediately after his statement of the negro’s language- “that if I were going to say anything to negroes on the subject (what subject?) I did not know that I could say anything more to the purpose (what purpose?) than what the negro had said.” Now the first thing in order (and does not everyone of these gentlemen recollect it?) after Mr. RIED’s statement, was to propose questions to him- I asked him among other things- what time of night it was? - how far he was from the negroes? &c., - after these questions had been put and answered, I remarked as follows in substance and in words as nearly as I can re-call them- “That my object, in having proposed these questions was not to screen the negro from just punishment, but as his guardian, it was my duty and right to have the matter fully understood; that to me it did not seem probable that GEORGE designed by what he had said to stir up insurrection- inasmuch as he commenced the conversation before Mr. RIED had retired to bed and spoke so loudly as to be heard by Mr. RIED in his own house, and that if I were called on to lecture negroes on the subject of slavery with a view to make them humble and submissive, I do no know that I could use a better argument for this purpose, or tell them anything more suitable than what the negro had said, “that they were in their situation by the providence of God”- This is the only language of the negro that I said I could use- someone remarked, “I would say that the Bible sanctions slavery;” I replied, “I suppose the word of God and his providence coincide on this point.” Mr. FAIR then said to me “you would not tell them that they would all be free would you?” I replied “that they would certainly be free when they died.” Mr. BARR then asked “you would not tell them to pray for it?” I answered, “if they desired it I did not know what I could recommend any more peaceable means.”

In the certificates a good deal of importance is attached to these answers, in having produced the impression that I approved of the negro’s language. The character of these replies The character of these replies is easily explained.- They are intentionally careless and evasive; I regarded the questions as out of place, and presented by those, who, in the circumstances had no special claim to courtesy. The one was not a member
of the Committee, and had no right to ask any such question, in the manner in which he did. The other, Mr. FAIR, after having expressed his opinion in reference to my slave's conduct so that no one could misunderstand him, nevertheless served on the Committee of Investigation and, I thought, acted the part rather of a solicitor than a referee. Instead of having given any replies, I should have passed the questions in silence.

The gentlemen in their certificates represent me as having said: “that slavery was an evil, and that, I did not know any better way to get rid of it, than to pray for it,” (pray for what?) I said nothing about “praying,” only in reply to Mr. BARR’s question, and then just as I have reported above. As to having said that slavery is an evil, I may have used such an expression, as it accords with my sentiments; for I believed it to be an evil, as declared in the following language, which occurs in what has been pronounced by the press as an able defense of slavery: “Slavery is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world,” and the devout believer in Revelation would be mad to close his eyes to the fact ______ _______ ______ __________ in the Bible, is a punishment for crime.” *(Dr. Thornwell- Southern P. Review, Vol. IV, No 1., p.127)*

Before closing, it may be proper to state why the negro did not appear at the meeting, and why after he “came in,” I did not either lodge him in jail or notify the Committee that he could be had for trial.

Just before leaving on Saturday morning to attend the meeting, one of the gentlemen, to whom I had spoken to act on the Committee, informed me that circumstances had rendered it very inconvenient for him to go, and requested me to get a substitute. I then determined that I would endeavor to obtain an individual living some tow or three miles out of my way to the place; and ordered the negro to go directly on-he, as I afterwards learned, went about half the way, and having met an individual who alarmed his fears as to the danger hanging over him, failed to appear.

But why after the Negro came in did I not either lodge him in jail, or notify the Committee that he could be had? I do not believe that any man in the District in my circumstances would have done either- I had learned from a reliable source that the negro would be prosecuted; and I had been branded by different individuals as an Abolitionist. The former fat rendered any action on my part unnecessary- the latter did not excite a very conciliatory spirit, and I concluded to let the matter take its course.

I have thus given to the best of my recollection, a statement of this tangled up business, and the community must decide whether or not, I have been misrepresented and slandered by the injurious reports which are in circulation against me. The whole matter has received its importance, no doubt, from my connection with Erskine College. There are those in the District both avowed enemies and pretended friends, who for some cause are determined, if possible to destroy the confidence of the community in the Institution. They are reckless as to measures, if they may but accomplish their object. I only wish the result may be such as their motives and efforts deserve- disappointment and contempt.

ROBT. C. GRIER

This is to certify that we were present at the meeting in the neighborhood of Mr. FAIR in reference to Mr. GRIER’s negro, that we have examined the statement which he has made of his language, and the connection in which it occurred on that occasion, and that this statement is correct- that he did not produce on our minds the impression that he
endorsed anything which the negro had said only that “they were in slavery by the providence of God”—and that it was not know that there would be no investigation until such announcement was made by the Committee at the close of the meeting.

JAMES LINDSAY
JOHN L. ELLIS
JAMES P. PRESSLY
ROBERT PRATT
ROBERT MCADAMS
GEORGE F ADAMS

P.S.- I have here given the testimony of three members of the Committee as to my language and its connection. Will not the other two give a statement not of their impressions but of what I said, and the order in which it was said.

R.C.G.

Entry 9: [From the Abbeville Banner, September 7]

To the Public

Appended to the communication of the Rev. ROBT. C. GRIER, in your paper of Aug. 17, 1850 is a Postscript in the following language:

“I have here given the testimony of three members of the Committee, as to my language, and its connection. Will not the other two give a statement, not of their impressions, but of what I said and the order in which it was said.”

If the Rev. Mr. Grier will trouble himself, to refer to our certificates in the Banner of the 10th Aug. he will find- precisely what he requests- a statement “as to his language and its connection,” of “what he said and the order in which it was said.”

This statement was given from the very best recollection we had, of the circumstances, and facts attending the meeting, and with this statement we have been no reason as yet to be dissatisfied. Our confidence in its correctness, has not been at all shaken by the Rev. Mr. Grier’s late communication, neither have our impressions been removed; but on the contrary, the effect of his communication has been to strengthen this confidence, and to confirm these “impressions.”

This is, briefly, our reply to the Postscript. And here we might stop, were it not that the Rev. Mr. Grier has thought fit to assail us and others, by numberless imputations. He has even charged us with a willful perversion of the truth. In fact, his whole communication is not so much a defense of himself, as an attack upon ourselves and others who gave certificates. And we think, that we may at least be excused in the attempt to repeal these imputations as best we can.

Mr. Grier says, that he does not charge us “with having asserted falsehoods,” but that we “have so modified and misplaced his language as to cause it to produce an entirely false impression.” This we regard as equivalent to a positive charge of want of veracity. We are not able to distinguish between the moral turpitude of “having asserted falsehoods” and that of having “so modified and misplaced language, as to cause it to produce an entirely false impression.”
But it may be, however, that in the allege perversion of truth the Rev. Mr. Grier does not intend to impute to us any moral ______ whatever, as it seems from his own statement, that his standard of morality does permit him, at his pleasure “to produce false impression,” and upon a most exciting subject, too, by “intentionally careless and evasive replies,” especially upon the minds of those “who, in the circumstances,” he may choose to regard as having “no special claim to courtesy” and when these false impressions, thus intentionally produced, are acted upon, or find utterance in words, and mischief results, this new standard of morality acquits him of all blame, and throws the responsibility, not upon himself who produced, but upon those who unfortunately received and acted upon the impressions.

So far, then, as the Rev. Mr. Grier, himself, is concerned, we could not be required and would not care to repel the charge at all. For in sheer justice, if not by “special courtesy,” he would be bound to give us the benefit of this new standard of morality, which he had adopted for the rule of his own conduct- and having done so, he will at once perceive, that no matter how many the “false impressions” we may have intentionally produced, according to his own rule, and his own statement and justification, we will stand fully acquitted of all censure, and those only, who may have received and acted upon the false impression, will be responsible for the consequences.

But we will not tax the “courtesy” of Mr. Grier, by asking him to extend to us the benefit of his new code of morals. We have decided preference for the old established code, which holds each individual responsible for his own acts and expressions, even when “intentionally careless and evasive,” but does not require him to account for the acts and conduct of others. Besides in this particular instance, we would much prefer to account strictly for our own conduct in the matter, even as it stands upon the statement of the Rev. Mr. Grier, than to assume the responsibility of his. This, Mr. Grier, is our answer to this charge of perversion of truth.

But to the rest of the community, and especially to those who may not be disposed to recognise [sic] the authority of Mr. Grier’s new standard of morals, we would say, that, we indignantly repel the charge of falsehood, and refer to Mr. Grier’s own admission in his communication in refutation of it.

At the request of Colonel Marshall, we gave a simple statement, of the facts as they occurred- of what Mr. Grier “said and the order in which it was said,” and then stated that “the impression produced upon our minds from the remarks of Mr. Grier, and particularly his answers to the interrogatories, was, that he fully endorsed the language of his slave.” Now, whether these “impressions” were true or “false” we respectfully submit, that Mr. Grier alone is responsible for them- and not only for them, but for any mischief that may have resulted.

He now tells us that the “impressions” were “false”, through necessarily “produced” by the “character of his replies,” which were “intentionally careless and evasive.” This itself would be sufficient to acquit us of all blame, unless we are to be censured for credulity, in being duped by Mr. Grier.

We are but plain farmers and never dreamed that the Rev. Mr. Grier would “intentionally” mislead us upon any subject, much less upon one of such exciting interest to the community. We did not for a moment suppose that a Clergyman, and President of Erskine College, would, upon any occasion, or for any purpose have indulged in “replies intentionally careless and evasive.” We did not know that it was proper, or consistent
with the character of a Christian and a clergyman thus to act; and would not have believed, upon any evidence short of his own assertion, that the Rev. Mr. Grier would have thus acted. In fact we did not know that it was possible for the Rev. Mr. Grier or any one else, at any time or on any subject, to be “intentionally careless.” That a person may be “intentionally evasive,” we can understand; but how any one can be “intentionally careless,” we cannot comprehend.

We are so simple as to have honestly thought, that Mr. Grier did mean just what he said, and intended to make the very impression which he admits, “the character of his replies was calculated to produce.” We imagined that we were dealing with a man, who, whatever might be the errors of his head, was too honest, candid, and sincere, deliberately to deceive us; and that what he said, as he admits he did, that “we must all acknowledge that slavery is an evil,” we supposed that he really meant what his language imported—that slavery was wrong, sinful and improper. And we did think, and do still, that his language in defense of the conduct of his slave was the legitimate result of the sentiment, slavery is an evil, a sin; and we were so ignorant as not to know that by the sentence—“slavery is an evil,” any one could intend merely to declare that, “slavery is part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world.”

The Rev. Mr. Grier at the time he used the expression—“slavery is an evil” made no explanation of his meaning, and does not pretend to have done so. We understood the expression in the sense in which we think it was generally understood and used—that the institution of slavery is improper and sinful; and Mr. Grier must have know that we did so understand it—that such was the impression made upon our minds—and yet he made no attempt at the time to remove the impression—or to limit or explain his meaning. And to our comprehension this matter ________ explained, even in his communication. He says that he believes “slavery to be an evil,” in the sense that it “is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world,” but he does not say that, this is the whole extent of his belief in regard to it, nor does he say that such was the sense or, what the meaning, in which he used the expression at the meeting referred to—Would he endorse the whole of the article of Prof. Thronwell in defense of slavery?

But let us hear the justification of his conduct in having deliberately misled us by “intentionally careless and evasive replies.” He says he regarded the questions as out of place, and presented to those who in the circumstances, had no special claim to courtesy.” and this to the mind of Mr. Grier, seems to have furnished a sufficient reason for the practice of a deliberate deception— and may doubtless be fully justified according to his new code of morals. But we were not aware that it required any “special claim to courtesy” to be permitted to participate in a conversation addressed to ourselves, and voluntarily commenced by Mr. Grier himself. We thought that common “courtesy” would have entitled us to participate.

Mr. Grier’s own statement, shows that he had just concluded a remark, excusing, and as we thought, justifying to the fullest extent, the language and conduct of his slave; and the questions asked him were in reply to what he had addressed to us, and intended not so much to express our own sentiments, as to direct his attention to particular portions of the language of the slave; that he might explain, or distinctly indicate, by repeating it, the true extent of his justification of the Boy. But he choose [sic] to regard “the questions as out of place,” and ourselves and others, as not entitled to politeness or common “courtesy,” and he refused to answer them except by “replies intentionally careless and
Can it be possible that the Rev. Mr. Grier claims for himself the exclusive right to express his opinions upon this exciting subject, and that his opinions when expressed, whether orthodox or not, must pass without question, comment, or reply even by those persons to whom his conversation is addressed? Truly he must have adopted a new code of manners as well as morals.

But notwithstanding he thus “intentionally” and knowingly, by his own conduct and language, “produced the impressions,” whether true or “false,” from which all the mischief, to himself and the community, has resulted, he yet loudly complains that he has “been misrepresented and slandered, and appeals most manfully to the sympathy of the public in his behalf, by raising the cry of persecution. That he is “comparatively a stranger in the District ;” that “the public mind is prejudiced against hi by certain slanderous reports.”

Now, according to his own statement, who ,but himself, has “misrepresented and slandered” him? What, but his own conduct, has “prejudiced the public mind against” him? Who but himself, has “produced impressions,” and originated “slanderous reports” to his injury? Doubtless he is a persecuted man, and has suffered grievous [sic] wrong ! but he has the consolation of knowing that the persecution is his own, and that the wrong is inflicted solely by himself! and no doubt he will have the fortitude to bear it with Christian resignation.

But in the closing part of his article, the Rev. Mr. Grier seems actuated by an entirely different spirit, and he deals as liberally in the terms of denunciation, as, in the first part, he had dealt in the language of complaint.

He tells us that “the whole matter has received its importance from his connection with Erskine College - that “there are in the District, avowed enemies and pretended friends, who, reckless as to measures, are determined to destroy the confidence of the community in the Institution.” And wishes the “result may be such as their motives and efforts deserve- disappointment and contempt.”

This is bold, to say the least of it, for one who is “comparatively a stronger in the District ;” and who, on the account has just made a pathetic appeal to the sympathy of the public in his behalf. His spirit and his temper seem to have risen with his subject, and he passes at once, from the tone of the suppliant, to that of scorn and defiance. A happy thought has occurred to him- he has discovered that it may be possible, and for himself highly expedient, to change the issue by diverting public attention form “himself and his conduct, and fixing it upon the avowed enemies and pretended friends” of Erskine College, whom he so liberally denounces ; and by thus raising the cry of hostility to the college, he could much more readily and securely enlist public sympathy, not only in behalf of the Institution, but also in behalf of the President, who is about to suffer martyrdom, simply on account of his “connection” with it. He thus, doubtless, feels himself doubly safe and secure under the shield of the Institution. Hence his scorn, his defiance, and the boldness of his denunciation!

This is truly a master stroke of Diplomacy on the part of the Rev. Mr. Grier and might have succeeded admirably, were it not for the simple reason, that “those avowed enemies and pretended friends” are no where to be found. They are mere men of straw, and have no existence, except in the imagination of Mr. Grier. And we do not believe that his most solemn asseverations could convince any body that such persons do exist in
the District. Had he known Abbeville better - had he not been “comparatively a stranger,” he never would have made the assertion, that any of the citizens of the District were Avowed enemies” or “pretended friends,” either of Erskine College or any other Institution of learning. There are, no doubt, many persons in the District, who would refuse to support an Institution- not because _____ _____ _____ ____ friends “- but simply because they are not satisfied with the conduct and character of those in charge of it.”

It is true, that this “matter has received” some additional “importance”, and very properly too, from Mr. Grier’s “connection” with the college- not because the Institution has “avowed enemies and pretendend friends”- but for another, and very sufficient reason, that it is peculiarly that the President of an Institution of learning in the South, should not only be sound on the question of slavery, but above suspicion.

We are confident, that the terms “avowed enemies and pretendend friends” can have no application to ourselves, and could not have been so intended. For the Rev. Mr. Grier, at the time he penned his article, knew that we had been friends and supporters of the Institution from the time of its establishment- that we had not only contributed liberally to its support, by donation, but that we had educated our sons, almost exclusively, within its walls. With a knowledge of these facts, we cannot believe that Mr. Grier intended to embrace us in his closing denunciations. For we will not do him the injustice to suppose that he meant positively to assert what he knew to be false.

We have done. Whether we have successfully repelled the imputations cast upon us, we leave others to judge. And if they will but carefully read the certificates, together with the article of Mr. Grier, we will cheerfully abide their decision.

But in the meantime we would beg them to remember what are the true issues before the community.

1st. The propriety of Mr. Grier’s conduct in regard to his slave.
2nd. The position of Mr. Grier on the question of slavery.

If Mr. Grier “fully endorsed the language of his slave,” then both the issues are to be decided against him. If he did not endorse the language of his slave, he at any rate “produced that impression on our minds,” and his communication shows that he produced it “intentionally.” He can choose either alternative.

But apart from his conduct in regard to the boy. If Mr. Grier is sound on the question of slavery, it was an easy matter for him to have said so in the first communication, and it was due to the community and the patrons of the Institution, that he should have done so.

We think it peculiarly unfortunate for Rev. Mr. Grier, that he did not do- what it seems he had at first thought of doing- “let the affair alone, and let the public say and think what they please,” for his “explanation,” communication if his is to be so regarded, has but strengthened the “impressions” first “produced” and confirmed the public mind in the truth of “the reports in circulation against” him.

JAMES FAIR

Entry 10:

Having been refused, unjustly as I think, a hearing through the Abbeville Banner,”
in reply to Messrs. FAIR and MILLER, I adopt this method* of repelling the charges which they allege against me.

The defence [sic] of Messrs. Fair and Miller is quite an elaborate article for “plain farmers:” one would hardly suppose that they are so simple as to be very easily duped by “careless and evasive replies.” They deem themselves entirely competent, when an opportunity offers, to read to the public, lectures on morals, manners, and language, and with a volubility too, which might do credit even to lawyers, whose business is to examine codes, and sift with nicety, the various shades of meaning associated with particular modes of expression. If i may give advice in return for the benefit of the last lecture, I would say to these gentlemen, employ some two or three of your legal friends to assist in the manufacture of any dissertations hereafter forthcoming. This expedient, if the selection should be judicious, would, I think, give a decided improvement to the product. They would thus secure the subtlety and chicanery, for which some of the profession are proverbial, which blended with the plainness and simplicity of the “farmer,” would present quite a pleasing variety. But the community have no cause to complain on this point as these plain men have not been wanting in attempting a good deal of management in their effort- their fault is not that they did not attempt maneuvering, but that, on account, no doubt of their plainness and simplicity, this maneuvering is so plain as to entirely to defeat the result intended to be produced. They should be more cautious in the future, and for their benefit, I will give some illustrations of this badly concealed policy, so that they may either do better when they again attempt trickery, or which would probably be preferable, be induced to act out the plainness of their character.- These gentlemen would do well to adhere to their original method of instructing the public, by confining themselves to what they hear, and not deal much in printed statements- they should give impressions, not facts, for thus they might elude detection when their veracity is impinged upon which they may find to be somewhat difficult, if they embark largely in the communication and occurrences which are laid before the public. Their last effort is valuable, as furnishing a measure which can be applied to other statements not otherwise so easily tested; and thus any one can ascertain the amount of reliance which may be placed in those representations which depend for their correctness, on the accuracy and honesty of these gentlemen ______ ______ ______ given on their part, as to my conduct and language at the meeting in reference to my slave. The public, in that business, had no means of judging but by the certificates pro and con. If, now it can be shown that these gentlemen have given misrepresentations in a matter, in which mistakes were much less liable- in which impressions and recollections had nothing to do, as it lay spread out before them in the columns of a newspaper, if in a case so plain, and when detection was so certain, if still they are capable of making false statements, what credit is due to their representations, when they can with impunity, give just such coloring as their feelings and wishes may dictate. They have therefore acted most unadvisedly [sic], in having thus given to the community such an insight into their true character as may seriously impair that confidence so necessary to the success of those schemes in which they are so deeply interested. This opinion may, however, appear “bold” for one who is comparatively a stranger,” and I will therefore proceed to give such evidence, as will enable every one to judge for himself, of the simpleness of the conduct of these “plain farmers.” It will thus be seen, not only that they are “so simple as to be honestly duped by others, but also to be ignorantly duped by themselves.
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Now for the testimony. Near the beginning of their article is the following:

“And here we might stop, were it not that the Rev. Mr. Grier has thought fit to assail us and others, by numberless imputations. He has even charged us with a willful [sic] perversion of the truth. In fact, his whole communication is not so much a defence of himself as an attack upon ourselves and others, who gave certificates.

Here are three sentences - let us examine them in order, and see whether they do not misrepresent facts. The first sentence asserts that I have assailed them and others by “numberless imputations.” Now, according to their own showing in the sequel, they are able to press into service but two charges. The first, is “a positive charge of want of veracity;” this is certainly a grave one, but it will be well if appearances do not seem to justify it, before I get through. The second is not stated in any very definitive form, but from their high sense of honor, I suppose it to be involved in the reasons which I assigned for my conduct, in not having treated Mr. Fair with more courtesy when he condescended to quiz me. There is a third, “imputation” near the close of my communication, contained in the language “avowed enemies, &c.;” but they very generously acquit me of having made any allusion to themselves in that remark:

“We are confident” say they. “that the terms ‘avowed enemies’ and ‘pretended friends’ can have no application to ourselves and could not have been so intended.”

These gentlemen ought to remember, that their being “confident” is a very different thing from their being right; we will however, take it for granted that they are in this case. So that according to their own estimate, I have preferred but two charges against them, and yet I have assailed them by “numberless imputations.”

The second sentence, in order, is, “he has even charged us with a willful perversion of truth.” To prove this, they quote my remark, “that I do not charge them with having asserted falsehoods,” but that they “have so modified and misplaced my language as to cause it to produce an entirely false impression.” This quotation is not made correctly, as any one may see by reference to my communication, but as it is much better than others, which they have pretended to make, as I shall show, I will pass over the fact and examine the remark itself. They regard the sentence “as equivalent to a positive charge of want of veracity.” Remember, I distinctly state that the certificates had been given by respectable men, and that “I do not charge them with having asserted falsehoods.” - Now do these men not know the meaning of “falsehoods?” If not, they should have looked for the word in some Dictionary or have consulted some others of their legal friends, who could have informed them. Webster’s second meaning of “falsehood,” is, “want of truth or veracity.” When then I say that I do not charge them with having asserted falsehoods,” it is equivalent to saying, that I do not charge them with a “want of truth or veracity.” The last clause of the sentence, which is, that “they have, for some reason, so modified and misplaced my language, as to cause it to produce an entirely false impression,” must be understood so as to agree with the first clause. If I had said, that they had intentionally or willfully, “so modified” &c. then their construction would have been just. But the expression is simply “that for some reason, they have so modified” &c. Can there be no “reason” assigned for modifying and misplacing language but a desire to pervert the truth? Are the understanding and memory of these men so perfect, that they never make mistakes from misapprehension, or want of recollection? If so, let them set up for infallible at once. I would, in charity, hope that they belong to the class which is “so fortunate as to be blessed with a bad memory,” for
they certainly need the indulgence claimed for this infirmity, in common with other men, even the most truthful. They can, if they choose, refuse to avail themselves of such benefit, but the refusal will assuredly do much more honor to their pride, than to their “veracity.” My remark, as quoted by themselves, implied nothing more than that they have changed my language, so much as to have changed its meaning, without ascribing this change to any motive either good or bad, and with limitation of the first clause in this connection a dishonorable motive is necessarily excluded, so that I know not now intelligent men could have regarded the sentence as charging them with “willful perversion of the truth,” but I remember the old adage “that a guilty conscience needs no accuser.”

The third sentence in the series is, “in fact, his whole communication is not so much a defence of himself, as an attack upon ourselves, and others, who gave certificates.” My whole communication an attack! Let us see. In all their effort they have been able to press into their service the “numberless” amount of but two _______. Those are contained in _____ dozen lines of a communication filling about two columns of the Banner. One of these charges, and they only one, involving moral character, I have just shown to result from their ignorance of their legal advisers or something worse. Yet the two charges, or some dozen lines are expanded into the “whole communication rendering it a personal attack. The “plain farmers” are getting advanced in life, and their eyes are as treacherous as their ears. But I know not by what legal demain [sic] they can hope to hoodwink men, who can think for themselves, and see, too, without putting on a Lawyer’s spectacle. It must be, that it is the truth which is contained in my communication, that renders it throughout an attack upon those gentlemen for there are some men who cannot be assailed “by numberless imputations” more effectually than by simply hurling the truth at them. A friend having said to Paddy, when about to be tried, “never fear, man, you’ll be sure to get justice.” “Aye! Aye!” Said Pat, “and it is that I am afraid of.”

I have thus examined three sentences, in regular order, in the communication of these plain and honest farmers, and each is marked by the same general character-exaggeration or perversion. it is not necessary to prosecute this analysis further. I am tired of exposing such pettifoggery, and there are some other points which for the benefit of these simple men, I must not pass over.

They proceed on the supposition, that I had charged them with having willfully perverted the truth, gave an answer first, to myself and then to the community. Their answer to me is formed upon a standard of morals, which they have been pleased to ascribe to me, as the rule of my conduct. This rule in plain English, is that I tell lies at pleasure. In their phraseology it stands thus:

“It seems from his own statement, that his standard of morality odes permit him at his pleasure, to produce false impressions” &c.

Again:

“He will at once, perceive that no matter how many the “false impressions” we may have intentionally produced,” according to his own rule, and his own statement, and justification, we will stand fully acquitted of all censure.

It was very fortunate for these men that they succeeded in laying down this rule, for they certainly need one somewhat relaxed in its town, in order to secure an acquittal. I had supposed that these men still had some respect for themselves, even if they had none
for me. But here is the merest billingsgate. Could they have imputed to the “father of lies” a more utter recklessness of all moral principle, than they here charge upon me? And what makes this thing, bad as it is in itself, still worse, is, that they do not, themselves, believe their own charge. A man has some apology for “hard speeches” if he is uttering what he believes to be the truth, but what excuse can palliate [sic] the conduct of him, who pours forth the foulest abuse, simply for the pleasure of blackening character? That they do not believe their own charge is evident, from their own language. At the close of their remarks on the phrase, “avowed enemies and pretended friends” they, say “for we will not do him (myself) the injustice to suppose, that he meant positively to assert what he knew to be false.” This remark is made in reference to one, of whom they elsewhere declare “that no matter how many the ‘false impressions’ we may have ‘intentionally produced’ according to his own rule, and his own statement and justification, we stand fully acquitted of all censure.” Thus these men acknowledge, that they would be doing me injustice to suppose, that I would knowingly assert a falsehood, and at the same time declare that my standard of morals is such as to permit me, at pleasure “to produce false impressions.” Their great critical knowledge of language, may be of service to them, in explaining this, as it appears to ordinary minds, plain contradiction.

Let us look at the method, in which these honest and simple farmers make me adopt this standard of morality. I had used in one place the expression “false impression,” in another, the word “intentionally,” and again the word “produce.” Now they select these terms, remove the from their proper connection, arrange them in the order they wish, and then present them in the form of a quotation, interlarded with such language of their own, as may suit their purpose. Take, as an illustration, the expression “intentionally produced,” which they present as quoted. Can it be found in all my article? A search from beginning to end will be vain. This is not the only instance of their “sleight of hand.” On the 3rd page of the Banner, 1st column and 3rd paragraph, the following is perpetrated. “We were so simple as to have honestly thought that Mr. Grier did mean just what he said, and intended to make the very impression, which he admits ‘the character of his replies was calculated to produce’” Here the clause, “the character of his replies” &c., is marked as a quotation. Can either this admission or quotation be found? If so, where?

The honesty of these men resembles that of the individual, who, like themselves, was making a code of morals in which he justified suicide, and being asked for his authority, he very coolly quoted the passage “Judas went out and hanged himself” and then repeated the divine injunction “Go thou, and do likewise.” These gentlemen charge me, with having adopted a standard of morality, which permits me, at pleasure, to produce false impressions; and in order to give a plausibility to this base calumny, they garble my language, and fabricate such quotations as may serve their purpose. What confidence can be put in men, who exhibit such brazen-faced meanness? Is it possible that they could hope to escape detection? Or in their desperation did they determine to sink themselves, and try to drag me down with them? If they can only convince the community, that I did knowingly, intentionally and deliberately mislead and deceived them, they will have the consolation of fixing upon me, both the infamy and guilt of lying, and also acquit themselves of all blame in what they have thought and said. I have examined one part of their argument to prove the charge, _______ _______ ________
quotations and abuse. I will now examine the other part—which is, in
substance, thus: That having uses such language, as I knew would lead them to believe,
both that I regarded slavery as sinful, and also that I justified the conduct of my slave and
that when asked certain questions in order that I might define my true position, I returned
“intentionally careless and evasive replies.” I have gathered this summary from the 3rd
page of the Banner, 1st Column and appeal to it for proof of my correctness.

They assert, that when I used the expression “slavery in an evil,” they understood
the expression in the sense “that the institution of slavery is improper and sinful ;” and
that I “must have known that” they “did so understand it.” My language, according to
their own certificate, is, “we all had to acknowledge that slavery is an evil,” when in this
article they say that they remark or conversation was addressed to themselves. The
phrase “we all” then must necessarily include these gentlemen, and I was expressing a
sentiment, in which I suppose we all agreed. But, could I, for a moment suppose, that
they, the owners of slaves, regarded the institution of slavery as sinful? Certainly not.
Does not then this fact necessarily limit and define the term “evil,” to a sense
corresponding to the general views of slaveholders? If I had said to a group of
Abolitionists, “we all had to acknowledge that slavery is an evil,” thus identifying myself
with them, then there would have been a propriety in construing my language as hostile to
the institution ; but as it was addressed to those who owned slaves, there is not the
shadow of a reason for understanding me to mean anything more than those privations
and disabilities which every body knows are connected with the system—in other words a
physical evil. Mr. Fair, on one occasion, used the same expression, that “slavery was an
evil,” and “that negroes were under oppression” in the presence of more than myself and
that, too, without any limitation. Now what would he have thought if some one who
heard him, had trumpeted it abroad that HE was not sound on this exciting subject? But
admitting that they did so understand me, how is it possible that I “must have known it?”
Without they can prove that I knew it, how can they prove deliberate deception? I used
such language as to limit my meaning to their views of the evil of slavery— they gave me
no intimation that an unfavorable impression was made upon their minds, and still I
“must have known it!” Verily these men ascribe to me a power of knowing their thoughts
and impressions, to which I lay no claim. Yet it is on this ground—the ground that I knew
their impressions, their unuttered, and unjust impressions, that they feel warranted to
charge me with having knowingly and deliberately misled them.

But they also undertake to prove, that I intentionally deceived them, by appealing
to the remarks I made during the investigation. They say, “Mr. Grier’s own statement
shows that he had just concluded a remark excusing, and as they thought, justifying to the
fullest extent, the language and conduct of his slave ;” and when they, by asking me
certain questions, gave me an opportunity to indicate the true extent of my justification of
the Boy, I returned “intentionally careless, and evasive replies.” They, here appeal to my
own statement of language. That statement represents me as approving nothing that the
Boy had said, except, “that they (negroes) were in their situation by the providence of
God.” This is all that an honest man can make out of it, and I did not know that I was
addressing any other sort. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that they did, as they
say, understand me as “justifying, to the fullest extent,” my slave, the question recurs,
how was I to know it? There were others present, who claim to be as honest if not “so
simple,” as these men, who did not so understand me, and I suppose by the power of
“discerning of spirits,” with which they invest me I knew that Mr. C. understood me in one way, and Mr. D. in another.

These men do not pretend to have informed me of their impression, or of their object in questioning me. A fair construction of my language could not produce such impressions, and still I “intentionally misled them,” and knowingly, by my conduct and language, produced the impressions.” I can now, with what light they gave me, not know precisely, but determine pretty surely how they will understand language, and that is, just as it suits themselves. I have thus examined the language, which they say, not only misled them, but also which I knew had this effect, and am willing that others judge whether they have made good their charge.

But why did I give “intentionally, careless and evasive replies” to their questions? These plain and simple farmers have made these replies the theme of much argument and even literary criticism. They cannot comprehend how a man can be “intentionally careless?” Indeed! One cannot, I suppose, “intentionally” assume an air of carelessness, or in other words, affect carelessness? it seems, at any rate, quite an easy matter for some men to affect learning. This is, however, a trifling matter; their criticism, as one may suppose, is like their logic, not very correct. But why did I give such replies? I answered this question in my former article, but it seems not to suit the comprehension of these farmers. And hence, we have them in their last communication, saying: “Can it be possible that the Rev. Mr. Grier claims for himself, the exclusive right to express his opinions, &c.?” I do not; but I do claim the right to meet impertinence with contempt. What right had they to transfer the investigation from my slave to myself. They were trying him, not me. Mr. Fair and his colleague, in putting questions, will have to come, acting under a higher commission than merely a self-appointment, before they can claim a meek and courteous submission to their inquisitorial authority. I had neither said nor done anything, which could be justly construed into a justification of my slave, or unsoundness on the subject of slavery; and I was not disposed to answer either satisfactorily, or courteously, questions which I regarded as impertinent both in matter and in manner. ______ ______ importance, which they attach to my replies as designed to deceive them as to my views on slavery, disappears on understanding the case correctly. And thus, too, disappears the whole of the argument by which they would establish the base charge, that I deliberately practiced a deception upon them. If they were “so simple” as to be duped let them charge it to their simpleness and not to me. They can now read over their very pertinent and courteous remarks, “we did not for a moment suppose that a Clergyman and President of Erskine College,” &c.

Why do not these plain and simple farmers come out and honestly acknowledge that they were watching for something to catch at, out of which, by clubbing together, they might make capital? Why do they not admit, what the public is beginning to see, that they had a bundle of prejudices, which being wrapped up in the semblance of zeal for Slavery could be scattered throughout the District and State with effect as they hoped, at this particular crisis. This mixed up with political maneuvering for popular favor, is just about the true state of things, at least so far as one of this advanced-guard is concerned, and he would deserve some credit, plainly and honestly, to confess it. Why his officiousness is exciting public feeling?- his eagerness that the reports fabricated against me, should go forth over the District and the State, wafted on the pinions of military fame, and fragrant with the odors of Mexican perfume? If he, a Trustee of the Institution
with which I am connected, has so acted, the community can determine whether, or not, the expression “avowed enemies and pretended friends” can have any application to him. At the close of their communication they present two issues, 1st “The propriety of my conduct in reference to my slave.” 2nd My “position on the subject of Slavery.” Of these issues, they are pleased to say, “if Mr. Grier ‘fully endorsed the language of his slave,’ then both the issues are against him. If he did not indorse the language of his slave, he at any rate ‘produced that impression upon our minds,’ and his communication shows that he produced it ‘intentionally.’ He can choose either alternative.” I thank you- I’ll take neither, not begin under any necessity to do so. That I did not “fully endorse my slave’s language,” is evident from the statement given of my own remarks to which they them selves appeal for proof. That I did not “intentionally” produce that impression upon their minds is evident. 1st, From the fact, that I did not, and could not know without some intimation, that my language had produced false impressions upon their minds. 2nd. And, therefore, I could not have intended by my “evasive” replies, either to have confirmed, or left, such impressions. But, say they, “if Mr. Grier is sound on the question of slavery, it was an easy matter for him to have said so in his communication, &c. Very true. I suppose this would have explained the matter “to their comprehension.” They must be very intelligent and reliable guardians of slaver, to be satisfied of the orthodoxy of one, whom they deem unsound on this subject, simply on his declaration that he is sound. Had I made such a declaration, who would have been any wiser than they are now? I am not disposed to treat the community as if they were all quite “so simple” as these plain farmers profess to be. To the community, then, I would say that I believe the relation of master and slave to be Scriptural, in other words, that slavery is not sinful. At the same time there are, as I regard them, evils connected with the system, ascribable to the passions of men; just as there are abuses connected with any other of the lawful relations of life. I doubt whether these plain farmers have ever read Dr. Thornwell’s article, and am satisfied that they could not endorse it, especially that part advocating the religious instruction of negroes; so that I might safely say, so soon as they may endorse it, I will follow their example. I now submit to the community whether these men have proven me to have justified my slave- whether I intentionally and knowingly deceived them- and whether I am more unsound on slavery, than other slaveholders.

R. C. GRIER

APPENDIX.

[The following extracts from the Trial are taken from a copy furnished by the Clerk of the Court for Abbeville District.] The following is the charge and specification against the slave George: 1st, that the said George, the slave of Rev. R.C. Grier, of said District, did on the eleventh day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty, at Lemuel Reid’s house, or within his enclosures, homestead, or kitchen, in Abbeville
District, in said State, publish and utter to the slaves of said Lemuel Reid, at said time and place, namely, to the slaves Abram, Louisa, and Israel, inflammatory words tending to alienate the affection and seduce the fidelity of the said slaves of said Lemuel Reid. This charge was distinctly read to the said slave George, and being asked whether he were guilty or not, he said he was not guilty of the charge.

The following testimony was then taken in support of said charge:

Mr. Lemuel Reid sworn, says:- On the eleventh June last, at 9 at night, in the Kitchen of L. Reid, he heard George, the prisoner, talking very loud, had some curiosity to hear what George said and went to door, of dwelling house, some ten or twelve steps from kitchen, first heard George say, they ought not to be discouraged on account of their afflictions- whoever God loved he chastened and scourged every one he received - that there was no reason that they were in the situation they were only God permitted it- God was working ways and means to deliver them he was working secret means, that he would deliver them as he did the children of Israel from the land of Egypt- the question had been in agitation for the last fifty years- that these that were for them did not know exactly how long it would be before they would be delivered- but that they would be, there was no doubt- that they ought to pray for it, and their prayers would go up before God, and be answered- George was going to say that the smartest man or men in the United States- and then Mr. Reid interrupted him by calling him- George then came out of the kitchen and witness rebuked him for talking as he had done- George made no answer- then witness went to bed and George returned after witness called on witness and asked his forgiveness witness said he could not overlook such conduct- but he (George) might stay that night- said he did not mean any harm by such conversation with the negroes- George said they talked that way about town- George went home next morning- all the conversation seemed to be carried on by George.

Mr. Grier declined to cross examine Mr. Reid.

Abram, a boy of Mr. L. Reid charged says:

George had been talking a good while- a half hour- talking about singing, praying, and churches, after had done talking about preachers- George said, it would be done at one time or another- it was no matter who was elected, God would do it- George of his own accord talked about this matter- said it would not be done until God did- the smartest man could not liberate them until the Almighty saw fit to do so, said it was occasioned by our first parents’ disobedience, talking about praying and singing, merely a talk, no praying.

The following sentence endorsed on warrant of Freeholders:

“We find the slave George guilty of the offense and sentence the slave George to receive thirty nine [sic] lashes on his bare back at this time. We recommend the master, Mr. Grier, to remove the negro George beyond the limits of this State never to return. And in the event of his removal before the sale day of October next, no further punishment to be inflicted. If not removed then that he receive three hundred lashes on his bare back ; to be whipped with cowskin.”

THOS. THOMSON, Magistrate
R. H. WARDLAW,
A. J. WEEMS, Freeholders
EDWARD NOBLE,
JAS. CARSON,

This is to certify that I have executed the sentence of the Court in this case, by giving the slave George thirty-nine lashes on the 2d Sept. 1850.

A.C. HAWTHORNE, S.A.D.