

wrongdoer. Because the Federal Government, by persistent and unwarrantable encroachments upon the rights of slaveholders in Maryland, has well near practically annulled and abrogated those rights, the sovereign people of the State are to-day invited to give in the most solemn and emphatic manner their indorsement and to legalize those acts of usurpation and aggression, and to complete the work of demolition so auspiciously begun by the powers at Washington.

Mr. President, I deny that the destruction of slavery in the Border States was the legitimate and necessary consequence of this deplorable civil strife. This war could have been waged and prosecuted with equal success and vigor without interfering with the institution in Maryland, or in any of the Border States. Facts within my own observation and knowledge lead me to such a conclusion. When the Federal military first made their appearance in my part of the State, I saw repeatedly runaway slaves delivered over to their owners by the officers in command. This policy could have been adhered to, or upon the issuing and enforcement of the proper orders, negroes could have been prevented from entering the lines. But these things had scarcely reached the ear of those in power at Washington, before the edict went forth making it a penal offence for any officer in the military service of the United States to be engaged in the rendition of fugitive slaves. From that moment the Federal camps became a general rendezvous and receptacle for runaway slaves. Then commenced that exodus of the slave population which has continued uninterruptedly ever since. This first step of the Government was closely followed by the virtual repeal of the fugitive slave law in the District of Columbia; a citizen of Prince George's county, in attempting to assert his rights under that law, and armed with the writ from the United States Commissioner, being forcibly seized and thrown into prison, and his slaves taken from him and set at liberty. Soon this movement of the Government against slavery culminated in the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation; and for three long years our State has been the theatre of aggressions and outrages upon the rights of slaveowners, so known of all men, that even a bare reference to them here is entirely unnecessary.

Much has been said about the character of the legislation of the Northern States on this subject, their humanity, their magnanimity, their disinterested patriotism have been more than once the theme of stump orators, fanatical women, and men holding places in the councils of the nation.

I have investigated the legislation of many of the Northern States on this subject, and in every instance I have found that their laws were gradual and prospective in their

operation. None of them conferred freedom on the slaves then in being, but simply provided that all born after a certain time should be free. If the legislature of any Northern State ever did pass a law giving freedom to the slaves then in being, it was always prospective in its character, thus enabling the owner before the appointed time for freedom arrived to sell out his valuable slaves to Southern purchasers, thereby attaining the object sought, which was not so much the emancipation of the slaves as the removal of them from their midst. Those who may desire more information on this point will find in Kent's Commentaries, vol. 2d, a reference to the statutes of New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and many others of the Northern States.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. Does the gentleman say that there is any reference to Massachusetts on that subject?

Mr. EDELEN. I think I am not mistaken.

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. I think the gentleman will find that he is.

Mr. EDELEN. Do I understand then the gentleman to say that Massachusetts is the solitary exception?

Mr. STOCKBRIDGE. I do not say it is the solitary exception. I say there is nothing on that subject in the statutes of Massachusetts.

Mr. EDELEN. I think, sir, that I am not mistaken. Certainly what I have said is true of the legislation in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and other Northern States, and in vindication of my position, I will read from my scattered notes a brief extract from Kent's Commentaries, vol. 2, page 289:

"In Pennsylvania, by act of March 1st, 1780, and in New Jersey, by acts of February 14th, 1784, and 24th of February, 1820, passed for the gradual extinction of slavery, this great evil has been removed from them, and all children born of a slave after July 4th, 1804, were declared free.

"So in Connecticut statutes were passed in 1784 and 1797, which have in their gentle and gradual operation nearly, if not totally, extinguished slavery in that State."

And so, Mr. President, without going more into detail, it will be found upon examination that the legislation of New York and other Northern States upon this subject is of the character I have just indicated.

What was the result of this legislation? Did it have the effect to confer freedom on the slaves, or to transfer them from their Northern homes to more Southern climes? I have no statistics at hand which enable me to give a positive answer to this question; but those who know the proverbial trait of the Northern character, will be ready to conclude with me that under the operation of the laws of removal in the Northern States, mis-called emancipation, few, if any, of their