

signed to prevent him from being punished unjustly. The denial of trial and punishment, except at the place of the crime,—apart from the express recognition of the right of demand,—appears to sanction that right, and to impose on the State on whom it is made the obligation to surrender. The good of all the States depends, in some measure, on the observance of law and order in each other. If an offender may escape punishment for any act by removing to a State where that act is not criminal, those penal laws of any State may be violated with impunity, which are predicated on its peculiar condition, or on the character of its institutions and local policy, as distinguished from the other States. This condition of things all would deplore; and we should not encourage such a construction of our mutual relations, as may lead to so calamitous a result. The States would find themselves as New York now is, in the attitude of shielding their own citizens from punishment for the flagrant violations of necessary and salutary laws in other States. We would present the anomaly, in government, of independent States, without any power to keep our citizens at home, or to prevent the commission of crimes by them when abroad; and yet clothed with State sovereignty amply sufficient to sustain and protect them after the acts were committed.

Your committee will not discuss the question whether slaves can be the subject of property. It is familiar to every one that, before the organization of this Government, and ever since, the laws of the States, to say nothing of the constitution, recognized them as the subject of property; and, at this very moment, when the flame of abolition continues to burn in some of the States, their Legislatures have not repealed the laws by which the recovery of fugitive slaves is provided for. But even New York herself, now denying that a slave can be stolen, has recently transmitted to this General Assembly a copy of a law, by which the right of the owner may be asserted in that State. Your committee are at a loss to imagine how that State can deny that a theft can be committed of a negro slave, when her laws recognize them as liable to be recovered by their claimants as property, and where larceny is defined to be the "felonious taking and carrying away of the property of another." But it is contended that the act complained of must be a crime according to the laws of New York. Neither the law of nations nor the constitution allows such a construction. The demand is not made for the benefit of New York. It concerns Virginia