

"The remedy is worse than the disease"

Another cause which gentlemen have assigned as a reason for secession is that our fugitive slaves have escaped to the North, and the Northern people, faithless to their constitutional obligations and duties, have not surrendered them but have prohibited their recapture and reclamation by their personal liberty bills. Have South Carolina and the Cotton States suffered from any such cause? The evils resulting from the escape of fugitive negroes are borne principally by the States along the border, by Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri. The extreme Southern States, having two tiers of slaveholding States between them, have had little to complain of in regard to run-away negroes. And for these reasons, for these wrongs, for these grievances, not endured by the Cotton States, but endured by the Border States, Virginia has been invited by these Cotton States into an immediate secession, and to link her destinies with the Cotton Confederacy. I will endeavor to show that Virginia is not invited to a banquet of peace, harmony, union, prosperity and power, but she is invited to a carnival of death. We are invited into a Southern Confederacy. Secession and linking our destinies with the Southern Confederacy, we are told, will remedy all the wrongs and evils which we upon the border endure. I cannot perceive how secession can remedy any wrongs or grievances which the Border States now endure, and I believe that secession will only aggravate and increase them. . . .

But we are told that secession will remedy the escape of our slaves. In what manner? What is the remedy proposed? . . . Mr. President, the remedy is worse than the disease. You would establish in the midst of the border States, within their very heart a standing army dangerous to the liberties and freedom of the people, and which would entail upon us for its support and maintenance a cost far greater than the value of the slaves lost. Such a policy would invite the establishment of corresponding military posts along the line of the free border States, and strifes and collisions would inevitably ensue. And, finally, Mr. President, the remedy would be ineffectual, for experience has demonstrated that in all countries where no natural barriers intervene, large standing armies have proved ineffectual to resist the escape of fugitives from justice, or the operations of the smuggler. But what would be the effect of secession upon the escape of fugitive slaves? Secession would relieve the Northern States from all constitutional



Transcription

obligations of duty to return our fugitive slaves. It would relieve the negro-stealer from all legal and constitutional restraints, and it would give a secure and safe asylum upon our borders for the escape of the fugitive. As has been well said by some member upon this floor, it would bring Canada down to our very doors.

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