

Our State unquestionably possesses natural advantages which entitle her to rank with any other of equal size in the Union; with a genial and salubrious climate, a soil naturally fertile, parts of it abounding in mineral wealth, situated on the very suburbs of the National Capitol, connected both with the Ocean and Western States by direct communication, and possessing in her ample Bay the advantages of tide-water navigation in immediate connection with three-fourths of all her Counties, there is scarcely a State in the Union possessing such guaranties of prosperity. Yet from some cause she has hitherto, in population, production, and many other evidences of public thrift, fallen far behind others inferior to her in nearly all the advantages above enumerated. I will not say that slavery has been the sole cause of this tardy progress, but it has unquestionably been the most prominent, if not the only feature particularly distinguishing her from other States, that have outstripped us in the race. For nearly fifty years after our existence as a State there were but few of our prominent public men who denied that slavery was a radical evil; the policy so long observed by the State sufficiently proves this; even her *bona fide* residents were for a long time denied the right of bringing from any other State a slave within her borders, and afterwards only allowed to do so on payment of a *bonus* on each one imported, appropriated to the use of the Colonization Society; and it was not until the question of slavery had become an element in our party politics that this interdict was removed and slaves were allowed to be introduced without restriction and their manumission prohibited. If for no other reason than that this inflammatory topic will be hereafter in this State excluded from the political arena, I feel that I may congratulate you that the subject of it is forever extinguished within the State.

The immediate results of that extinction, and the question of how the advantages expected from it can be best realized, and its temporary inconveniencies obviated, are subjects that will undoubtedly challenge your earliest attention. That so complete and immediate a revolution in a system long interwoven with our social life and habits, can be accomplished without some personal inconvenience, is not to be expected, but judicious legislation may do much towards a remedy. We shall for a time experience the evil, and witness the wants of an ignorant and dependent class, perhaps generally averse to labor, and now at least for a time, more averse than ever, from the fact that they are for the first time relieved from all coercion, unaccustomed to think or act for themselves, suddenly thrown upon the community whose duty it