

The eyes of slave-owners have been open to the fact that, to emancipate at all, is to compromise the institution of Slavery to that extent. They now see that what was intended as an act of benevolence towards a faithful slave, has been perverted to the basest purposes by Abolitionists.

The all important question now is : How can we wipe out the wrongs of our own acts? We answer, that what we voluntarily gave as an offering to misguided humanity, we must now legitimately reclaim as essential to our vested rights.—The free negro never has been, and never can be, a citizen of these United States. And the relinquishment of ownership by one man only, places him in a state of vassalage to the body politic, and subjects him to any disposition the good of the State requires.

There are few, if any of your Honorable Body, who will dispute the soundness of these premises.

The question of jurisdiction being settled, the bare question of *duty* now remains for consideration. How has this act of emancipation effected the condition of the liberated slave? Has he preserved those habits of industry and sobriety, which he possessed when set free! Has he accumulated any additional means of support for the decline of life and security against pauperism? Where is the house, land and other property his master bestowed upon him? Does he act the part of a good husband and a discreet parent? Is he honest, sober and industrious? Does he support the government that protects him, or contribute in any way to the good of the State? Applied to our free negro population as a class, these questions can only be answered in the negative. There may be a few isolated exceptions.

It may be that five, ten or twenty years have fallen upon him since he left his master's roof. How do we find him now? Generally debased in morals, a victim to intemperance, with none to respect him, because none can protect him from himself; filthy, and in rags; his property gone; he drags out a miserable life, and fills a pauper's or a felon's grave. Notwithstanding this sad picture of our free negro class, which we witness every day and in every part of the State, few men have the moral courage to stop and enquire why it is so. If it be asked, was he not free? We answer—yes, he was *free*, and that destroyed him. He mingled with a superior race, whose virtues and refinements he would not learn, but whose palpable vices responded to his own grosser nature, and he was engulfed by them.

His conception of freedom opposes all restraint, necessity and labor. Indolence, his native trait, fetters him down to want; want impels him to theft. Our penitentiary and county