

and there was no standard which could be appealed to as fixing the value of the slave as property. Maryland was neither a slave nor a free state.”⁵

Among the many reasons for this state of affairs may be mentioned, first of all, the fact that the radical wing of the Republican party, which now largely favored emancipation, had almost complete control of the National Government, and practical control of the Maryland state government as well, through the presence of the armed military and the provost-marshals. Also, by the state of semi-anarchy which always accompanies a war waged near by, the social and industrial orders were almost paralyzed in Maryland, and legal remedies were more slow and uncertain. Again, the Federal forces regularly seized slaves, either for enlistment or for bodily labor in connection with the forts or supply departments, and they refused to return them (or even runaway slaves), to their masters. These facts are more than enough to explain the demoralized condition of slavery.

Although useless for all practical purposes, this institution was by no means dead politically, as following events will show. The people of Maryland were born and bred during its life and strongest influence, so that it was hard for many of them to realize the fact of its practical annihilation. In addition, they desired, if slavery must go, to procure some return for their lost property.

In an aggregate population of 687,000 in 1860, there were 83,942 free negroes and 87,189 slaves. The number of slave-owners was estimated at about 16,000, though many of these owned only one or two slaves.⁶ A state with so nearly a numerical equality between free negroes and slaves, offered an excellent opportunity for pushing a policy of emancipation, and this opportunity the emancipation advocates were not slow to seize.

⁵ Inaugural address of Governor Swann, Jan. 11, 1865.

⁶ “Debates,” i, 616.