

I beg leave to assure you that, burthened as I know you are, with the paramount responsibilities of preserving the Nation, whose existence has been menaced during the whole period of your administration, I am most reluctant to do anything calculated to add to your embarrassments. I trust you need no assurance, that neither the loyal citizens of this State nor myself would seek in ought to arrest or impede any action of the Government calculated to contribute to its safety, or to crush the power of those who are assailing it.

An earnest conviction, however, that the practice to which I am adverting, is, in all its moral effects, exerting an influence in direct opposition to such results, not less than the sense of personal wrong, and of an unjust discrimination against this State, prompts these appeals.

Suffer me to make you acquainted with the course of proceedings usually adopted in these cases, as it has been reported to me. A steamer in Government employ, provided with a recruiting officer and armed guard, is sent into some of the many rivers with which our State abounds, and this officer and guard immediately make known their presence, and find means of communicating with the slaves on the neighboring farms; these slaves usually under cover of the night are induced to quit their owners' homes and to repair on board of the boat. The officer in charge exercises his arbitrary discretion, by no means regulated by the question of the owner's loyalty, in carrying off one man's slaves and allowing another's to return; and when his cargo of recruits is thus made up, he weighs anchor and delivers them at camp in a distant part of the State, sometimes before their owner is aware of their absence.

These owners are not allowed access to them, and in some instances have been positively refused, though their only avowed purpose was to identify their property as a preliminary to a claim for future indemnity, in case such should be allowed.

Permit me, Mr. President, respectfully to enquire for any Act of the National Legislature that authorizes such a proceeding, and whether it exists or not, to ask why it should be executed exclusively in Maryland.