

acting amidst, and being acted upon by the sternest facts of all history. Were the facts which justified their theories similar to those which are acting upon us? The great past is useful to us only in so far as it becomes the lesson of *experience*. To that end no man can give a more attentive ear to its teachings than myself.

From that distant day when the Chaldean shepherd tending his flocks on the holy plains of the east by day, and studying the stars by night, gave us our first rude lesson in astronomy; from that day to the present the whole past is full of instruction and should not be disregarded, and I do not disregard it. But in the meantime we must not forget that we are making history and making it rapidly; that we are to-day living in times when *action*, immediate action, is indispensable; when inaction or too much delay may lead to national death.

And yet it is notorious to this body that times have been brought in here from day to day. Harangues have been dealt out to us in detail and with ability. To show what? Simply this: That with an experience very limited in importance in comparison to that through which we are now living and struggling, some men argued that a certain theory of our Government was the true theory. Do the facts justify that theory?

So here upon this 23d article we are again listening to authorities by which it is sought to be shown that the institution of slavery is for instance beneficent, when we ought certainly by this time to be convinced by facts that on the contrary it is malevolent and vindictive; or that it is for instance conciliatory politically when every political development of it has been *aggressive* beyond all precedent of aggression.

Is it aggressive? Let us see. This institution, claiming to be only local in its character, praying only to be let alone, has been shown to be in the course of this debate so insatiate and persistent in its demands upon the non-slaveholding portion of the country (from whom all the boon it asked was to be let alone) that considering its demerit, the whole world was astonished at the forbearance of the North. In its interest almost all the Presidents have been elected. Over the damning course which its votaries marked out was the only road to political success.

At its behest the State Government was obliged to lay its iron hand upon good Christian white citizens everywhere, who uttered a word at the instance of their consciences, which could be tortured into falling within its interpretation of the term "incendiary"—a word by the way with an application *invented* to suit this institution, and as applied in its behalf, now standing indelibly fixed in American record to her everlasting shame, as the initial of a history more terrible than that of the Inquisition of Spain.

At its bidding also the General Government was perverted into a despotism, and while in its written form it provides that consciences should be free, it required Northern men, who believed as they believed in a God; that every slave was wrongfully held in bondage, and had a natural right to break those bonds and seek his freedom whenever he had the power—required these men I say to assist in hunting down and returning into slavery every fugitive that escaped. And the political power of the institution had become so great that all these demands were complied with by Northern men in spite of the fact that their own judgment and the judgment of most of the disinterested civilized nations condemned it.

Is it aggressive? Commencing as an unfortunate system of labor, acknowledged as an evil to be borne with temporarily, it has gone on and on, grasping for power, and securing so much that it is able to-day to shake to its centre our whole form of Government.

On the other hand, is it beneficent? The votaries of the system claim that it is beneficent to the negro; that it christianizes and civilizes him. The statute books of the Southern States are written all over with the denial of this statement. I need not deny it. The laws that sustain the system announce continually the fact that in order to keep this species of property secure they must deprive them of the rights of religion and civilization; as for instance, the most sacred of all temporal rights, to read the Bible and to keep inviolate the marital obligation. This is not inconsistent with the system, but on the other hand is a part of it. A slave cannot for a moment be supposed to be a man.

Is it beneficent to the master? Even that I deny; and it is no new doctrine; it is the old American doctrine. The very essence of the American idea is that labor is respectable. Slavery makes labor *disreputable*; hence the master learns to look upon laborers with more or less contempt. Being an American, and indorsing with my whole heart this American doctrine that labor is not only respectable, but is the source of all power in a nation, I must conclude that for this reason alone the institution is not beneficent to the master; and by the master I mean the community interested in the *holding* of slaves. The whole society takes the cue, and the "one-headed nigger man" follows the lead of the one with the hundred heads. The young ladies look down with contempt upon mechanics, railroad and steamboat men—the artificers in fact of our nation's greatness.—I have understood that the young ladies of North Carolina would associate with store keepers—"sto' keepers" they pronounce it—but with nothing lower.

Now I conceive that all such ideas are the very reverse of beneficent. Look at the re-