

The Rebel invasions and raids to which their situation has continually exposed them have subjected them to losses the most serious and provoking, which, for the sake of the cause in which they occurred, and in the belief that the Government could not prevent, they have suffered cheerfully and without complaint, as they would suffer a great deal more if rendered necessary to the Government's success. But whilst such are the motives and the impulses by which our people have, throughout the present struggle, been actuated towards the Government, they cannot but feel that they have, on the other hand, rights which should be sedulously respected, unless the most urgent and obvious military necessities justified their infringement. They cannot believe that the Government will be unmindful of these claims. It is impossible however, to overlook the anxious concern which recent events have awakened.

Recruiting officers have made their appearance in different parts of the State, openly engaged in the business of enlisting slaves, and a letter has been just published, addressed by a highly respectable member of the Bench of the State to the Secretary of War, urging the latter to adopt that policy and enlist the slaves of the State, with or without the consent of their owners.

It is not my purpose now to enter into any criticism of this letter, or to analyze its legal or logical deductions. I may be permitted, however, to say that I have felt great regret that any one occupying such a position, and especially one for whom I have entertained the respect and regard that I have for the writer, should have ventured to advise the course indicated in that letter; and my surprise has scarcely been less than my regret that one of sound judgement and ordinary discretion could advise so flagrant a violation of the laws of the State and the general sentiment of its citizens, or how any loyal man at such a time as this could suggest a proceeding so well calculated to impair public confidence in the Administration, when such confidence is so important to its success.

Knowing as well as I do, the staunch and inflexible character of the loyalty of our State, I am unwilling to believe it would yield even to the influence of such a measure; but it would nevertheless be subjecting it to an ordeal such as none other similarly situated has ever been required to endure. The effect of such a proceeding upon conventional emancipation would be still more certain and decisive, and all such prospects for the present would be indefinitely postponed. Men will never submit to be coerced towards a policy, although in point of fact otherwise inclined to it, and the mere attempt to so constrain them produces an inevitable reaction. Let the course suggested in that letter be urged as it may as a legitimate method of augmenting our Military force, or defended upon the ground of a military necessity, it will notwithstanding be impossible to convince our people that it has not been instigated mainly with a view to a very different purpose. They will regard it — and circumstances will warrant the conclusion — as an effort to affect by military means a political object, and to ensure by such means a practical and peremptory emancipation — a process all the more inconsiderate and odious because it will leave the legal status of slavery precisely where it found it; and whilst it strips the owner without notice, and in the midst of a busy farming season, of his able bodied hands, it leaves the aged and infirm still for his support.