

"The Slavery Question,"

Philadelphia (PA) *North American and United States Gazette*, June 18, 1861

<https://stampedes.dickinson.edu/document/philadelphia-pa-north-american-and-united-states-gazette-slavery-question-june-18-1861>

**THE SLAVERY QUESTION.**—But what will be done with and by the slaves during the war, and what is likely to be their condition at the end of it? These questions are not asked from any political motive now. We have had enough of party strife and trouble on this vexed subject. But we have a good design in trying to look ahead and to scan the consequences of the war upon those initiated in it and its results. Suppose the conflict goes on for months or years, will slaves, or what is called property by our enemies, and used as belligerent forces by them against us, be protected by us for them and returned if captured or they run away from their masters? Is the fugitive slave law to be still in force, when free colored persons are seized by them and sold into slavery? These are grave questions, which sooner or later must be answered and acted upon. Again: will not a border war induce many slaves to take French leave and visit their Canadian friends? Whether we invite them or not can we refuse to receive them if they appeal to us for work or assistance? Should or should not the army of the United States be employed to catch slaves when used against us as munitions of war? Are they not, as laborers working instead of their proud boasting masters in the "tented field," or as grain growers and corn planters at home producing supplies, as much contraband in war as coal is? If our government were to offer a bounty for them, and give them their freedom and the means of getting out of the country, would it be more heinous than the offering of \$25 for each white man taken alive and delivered to southern traitors?

While we would take no steps to induce a servile insurrection among the insurgents who now war with deadly hostility against us, a course which our humanity would shudder at, we rather think a peaceful stampede of the able bodied blacks would be a humane policy that might prevent their committing violence upon white people left on the plantations at their mercy.

At all events it is time now to have due consideration given to this subject. Some provision should be made for getting rid of all fugitives who do come, and it would be well for the government to have some plan digested before Congress meets on the 4th of July next to provide for all the exigencies of the case that may occur. Have we no statesmanlike philanthropic minds who could grasp and compass a subject of so much importance as the digestion of some suitable plan for eradicating this canker spot of slavery in our land, and thereby free the world eventually from its reproach?

Suppose this accursed rebellion quelled, the stubborn masters of the slave population ruined and subdued, after losing one-half of their slaves in various ways, and the proposition should be made to them by our government that they should be either reinstated in the Union, as under the old Constitution, provided they would give adherence to its paramount authority of governmental sovereignty, or at their option they might become free States, the government agreeing to their keeping as apprentices all the slaves who would willingly serve them on fair conditions, as in Russia serfs are made free and hired out, and that for all who would prefer to be colonized and sent off a fair and just consideration should be paid, either in land at government price or scrip based thereon, which could be held or turned into money, and in this way a real bona fide value should be realized by every owner for all his slaves—would not the first step be thus taken to propitiate our unfortunate erring brethren on this all important subject, and a new and more enduring Union then be introduced into this land, of which all of us might feel proud?

If this hint is thought worthy of consideration, let some wise head mature it. Hayti, or some free home for the blacks besides Liberia, might be provided by negotiation, where, under friendly protection from the government of the United States, this unfortunate portion of oppressed humanity might at last find an asylum denied to them here, but which our countrymen would be willing to establish for them elsewhere. All our States might thus become again united, and form a government really free, sovereign and independent.

SXXXX, Trenton, New Jersey.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

National Park Service Network to Freedom / House Divided Project at Dickinson College