

How Emancipation Works.

The staple objections to emancipation used to be: first, that the negroes would be idle and dissolute, and that the South would thus be overrun with lazzaroni and robbed of its main industrial support; second, that the negroes would all go North and injuriously compete with white labor; third, that in any case they would be an incumbrance and a trouble. Possibly will smile at these puerile and inconsistent pretexts for perpetuating the foulest wrong known to human annals, and will wonder how an intelligent people were so long deceived into accepting them as sound arguments. The wonder will be greater when it is remembered that slavery was justified by its champions as a civilizing institution in the very breath which declared that the subject of this civilizing process would graduate from it indolent and vicious vagabonds. The opponents of progress and human rights have in all ages exhibited a like self-stultifying inconsistency. It is always easier to put more difficulties in the way of removing than of retaining a wrong. At present we have no business with these errors except to show how rapidly events are exposing them to be such.

Previous to the outbreak of the war which has made speedy and universal emancipation inevitable, a majority of the most earnest friends of freedom were of opinion that a sudden loosening of the bonds of the slave would be attended temporarily by most disastrous results; but if bad results have followed emancipation anywhere, they sink into insignificance compared with the vast evils of civil war, and are seen to be merely temporary. They have been occasioned by circumstances and conditions incident to a state of war, are not attributable to defects in the character of the freedmen, and cannot therefore be urged as objections to emancipation. It has been found difficult, for instance, to utilize the labor of freedmen in districts liable to frequent harassments from a vindictive and cruel enemy, and where the experiment had to rely upon the protection of military camps; but in districts undisturbed by the enemy the freedmen allotted to plantations which they could till for their own advantage, and afforded opportunities to become owners of land, have proved to be industrious, thrifty, moral, and ambitious to acquire knowledge. Although willing and often anxious to fight against the rebellion, and making excellent soldiers, they have exhibited none of that cruel and revengeful disposition which, with a keen sense of the natural workings of oppression, was attributed to them in advance by those who best knew how much cause they had to be revengeful. The absence of this trait as a ruling motive in the character of the Southern negro has relieved the country of a great anxiety, and materially simplified the problem of emancipation, while it has nearly silenced the opposition.

The practical workings of emancipation are best seen in States which have adopted the measure by their own action, and can observe its effects uninfluenced by the accidents of war. Maryland declared instant freedom to her slaves but a few months ago. Did they refuse to labor, and make a stampede to the North? Not a bit of it. On the contrary, we have the testimony of the press of that State and of numerous intelligent observers that the freed men work more willingly and more efficiently for wages than they did under the old system which robbed them of both liberty and wages, and that they prefer to remain on the soil which is native and familiar to them, among their old haunts and neighbors. There has been no lack of laborers since the passage of the Emancipation ordinance. Only the hardest and cruelest masters, says one authority, have any difficulty in procuring hands on satisfactory terms. So smoothly does the new system work that all apprehensions as to evil consequences have vanished, and there obtains in Maryland to-day a feeling of security which no slave community ever experienced. Emigrants are pouring into the State, farms are in demand that before were unsaleable, and the price of real estate is appreciating at a rate which promises at an early day to more than make up the loss sustained by destroying the property value once represented by the slave. Thus the doing of justice is seen to bring a material compensation to those whose selfish interest for a time opposed it, even as it brings a higher reward to those who rejoice in the spread of truth and the diffusion of happiness and freedom.

Referring to such facts as the above, the *New York Tribune* observes:

We beg those who have ever been led to repeat the monstrous assertion that whites and blacks cannot live in the same community unless one caste owns the other, and who have been accustomed to parry all appeals for justice and freedom by the query—"If you emancipate, what will you do with the negroes?" to lay these truths to heart. And we ask our Irish Democracy, who have been terrified by assurances that, if the slaves were set free, they would all come North and underwork our white laborers, to look facts in the face. Already two States—Missouri and Maryland—have formally and absolutely, while several more have virtually, abolished slavery; yet the proportion of blacks in our city has not perceptibly increased—in fact, we are confident it is smaller to-day than it was 10, 15 or 100 years ago. The blacks love freedom; they do not love cold; they will sometimes brave cold for the sake of liberty; but, make freedom universal, and they will nearly all prefer the South to the North. Abolish slavery, and black faces will become nearly as rare in our city as in London or Dublin.

Since the nation is irretrievably committed to the total abolition of slavery, it is highly gratifying to have such evidences that an industrial revolution, so radical and extensive, is likely to be achieved without those profound disturbances which have been feared. It will be a happy thing for the country if the issues growing out of the war are not to be complicated by doubts and discussions as to the best way of fitting the millions of emancipated Africans for their new condition. The adjustment of financial and political questions will sufficiently occupy the statesmanship of the country, even if it were not best that the social problem hinted at should be solved through local action, giving free scope to the native capacity of the humble race just escaped from bondage.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands