

The Debate Over Slavery

The Staunton Spectator, November 29, 1859, p. 2, c. 2

While the crazy fanatics of the North imagine that the poor negro, smarting under a galling sense of his degradation, and inspired by a noble impulse of resistance to tyranny, is ready at a moment's warning to grasp the murderous pike and fight for his freedom, the people of the South feel the most perfect security in the full assurance that they possess not only the willing obedience but the strong attachment of their slaves. It is a most egregious blunder to suppose that we who live in the enjoyment of all the benefits of the "peculiar institution," live also in constant dread of insurrection and rebellion, and go to our beds at night with the terrible apprehension that our throats may be cut before morning. Not a bit of it. We sleep as soundly and sweetly as though we were surrounded by an armed body guard of chosen defenders, in the confident belief that our ebony friends will not feel the slightest disposition to "rise". . .

This fact has been demonstrated beyond a cavil by the experience of the negrophilists at Harper's Ferry. . . . With the hour of deliverance at hand, surrounded by professed hands, prepared to lead them to the Canaan of deliverance, with arms and ammunition in abundance within their reach, there Cuffee snored, and in defiance of entreaties and exhortations and commands positively refused to "rise."

The state of public feeling at present establishes the fact that no apprehension of danger from servile insurrection is felt by the people of the South. The danger is apprehended outside of the State, from the insane crew who entertain such unfounded opinions in regard to the condition of the slaves, and their disposition to free themselves from bondage. In the prospect of further invasion of our State for the purpose of rescuing those who have already stained its soil with blood, we see the people of Virginia leaving their wives and children in the hands of their faithful domestics, and repairing to the borders of Virginia, far away from their homes, to repel the insolent foe. They leave their families behind without an apprehension of danger from those who are supposed at the North to be ready to massacre them at the first favorable opportunity. . . .

But in addition to their confidence in their own servants, the people of the South place their trust in a higher power, whose protecting care they expect in time of peril. They believe that an institution of slavery is ordained in Heaven, and that the slaveholder who trusts in the Almighty arm will find that arm a refuge and a fortress. They expect to be delivered from the

snare of the Abolition fowler and the noisome pestilence of fanaticism. Truth is their shield and buckler, and they are not afraid of the terror by night nor the arrow that flieth by day. And in any contest that may arise in so righteous a cause will have an abiding confidence that a thousand shall fall at their side and ten thousand at their right hand, until they come off conquerors.

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