

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 13, 1862.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. MORRILL made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany bill No 108.]

The bill provides for the emancipation of the slaves in this District, with just compensation to loyal masters.

Slavery is tolerated at the capital of no other civilized nation.

It is respectfully submitted that it is unbecoming the freest government on earth longer to allow the practice of it here.

The continuance of a custom offensive to the moral sense, at the common residence of the diplomacy of the Christian nations as well as the annual resort of the representatives of the people, partakes of the quality of a public indecorum. Its repugnance to the sentiments of most of those who officially assemble here is, of itself, deemed adequate ground for its discontinuance.

But the public history, early legislation, and general sense of the nation in regard to slavery and the slave trade, it is believed, may be confidently appealed to in vindication of the measure proposed, and as justifying the belief that a practice so at variance with the traditions of the people and the fundamental principles of the government was never designed to be perpetuated.

Contemporaneous with the organization of the government under the Constitution, provision was made, by irrevocable law, for the exclusion of slavery from the territory of the nation, not embraced within the limits of any State.

The public sense against the foreign slave trade found expression in a prospective provision for its suppression in the federal Constitution, and the people everywhere hailed with joy the approach of the period for its constitutional inhibition.

Mr. Jefferson, in his annual message in 1806, in reference to the subject, said: "I congratulate you, fellow-citizens, on the approach of the period at which you may interpose your authority to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of our country have long been eager to proscribe."

Congress, impatient to interpose its authority, in the early part of the year 1807 passed an act to prohibit the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States from and after the first day of January, eighteen hundred and eight.

In obedience to the public sentiment against the traffic, early efforts were made by the federal government to procure its proscription by the powers of Europe by having it classed with the most flagitious of crimes.

President Monroe, in his message to Congress in 1819, used the following language: "In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives, adopted at the last session, instructions have been given to all the ministers of the United States, accredited to the powers of Europe and America, to propose the proscription of the African slave trade, by classing it under the denomination, and inflicting on its perpetration the punishment, of piracy. Should this proposal be acceded to, it is not doubted that this odious and criminal practice will be promptly and entirely suppressed."

The subject of slavery and the slave trade in this District commanded public attention in 1850, and Congress in that year passed an act entitled "An act to suppress the slave trade in the District of Columbia," in the words following: "That from and after the 1st day of January, 1851, it shall not be lawful to bring into the District of Columbia any slave whatsoever for the purpose of being sold, or for the purpose of being placed in a depot to be subsequently transferred to any other State or place to be sold as merchandise. And if any slave shall be brought into the said District by its owner, or by the authority or consent of its owner, contrary to the provisions of this act, said slave shall thereupon become liberated and free."

It is submitted that the act of Congress of 1850 for the suppression of the slave trade in this District logically succeeded the act of 1807 for the suppression of the foreign slave trade; and that the measure now proposed is the inevitable sequence of the legislation and policy of the government in regard to slavery and the slave trade.

The absolute suppression of the traffic in this District, accompanied by the declaration of "freedom to any slave brought into the District by its owner, contrary to the provision of the act," is at once the vindication of a principle and assertion of a power which find their natural expression in a measure for the abolition of slavery therein. The logic and morality of a law, applicable to any country or locality, providing that slaves are not to be regarded as subject to transfer and sale, is virtual abolition.

The number of slaves in the District at the last census was about thirty-two hundred. Under the provisions of the bill the number for which compensation might be claimed would probably be less than three thousand.