The Fugitive Slave case at Syracuse, of which details will be found in another column, furnishes another instance of successful resistance to the execution of a law by violence. A mob resisted the process of law, and arrested from the legal officers the person whom they held in custody.

The offense is serious and aggravated. It is one of which this country knew comparatively nothing until recently. Riots have occurred, and local enactments have been disregarded frequently hitherto. There are scores of laws which remain a dead letter upon our statute-books. The law peremptorily forbids the sale of armed spirits on Sunday; but no attempt has ever been made to carry it into execution. Profane swearing is illegal; but regard for the authority or the majesty of law has never led to the zealous and general enforcement of this statute. Gambling is illegal, but it is practiced extensively. The reason for this is that the laws are not sustained by a vigorous, energetic public sentiment. They are not grounded in the public conviction of their justice and necessity. Men feel no deep interest in their execution. They stand by indifferently and see them violated. They will not take the trouble to aid their execution. Of course, where this is the general sentiment in regard to any statute, it cannot be an efficient, living law. All laws in this country depend mainly upon public sentiment for their efficiency. They may be, and ought to be carried into execution, without regard to public opinion; but unless sustained by it, they will remain inert and lifeless. Public sentiment, in every democratic government, is the soul of law.

Very few laws have ever encountered any active popular resistance in the United States. And consequently, very few such scenes as that at Syracuse, have ever occurred until very lately. Until the enactment of the law for recovering fugitive slaves, there was no law upon the federal statute book which encountered any violent public feeling. This law has been resisted in several instances, and there is, beyond all doubt, a very general distrust among the people of the North for any agency in its execution. Very few of those who have had to do it to be their duty to return a fugitive slave to his master, can do it as if they liked it. It is, at the best, to the great mass of the Northern people, an unpalatable and repulsive duty. But it is a duty nevertheless, and one which will be performed. In this instance it has been defeated. But so far as we can learn, the active participants in the riot and rescue were mostly negroes,—ignorant men, misled by their impulses which are always with the ignorant and degraded stronger than any sense of duty. It is true, others did not escape the obligations imposed upon them by the law. The military,—those men did not step forward and aid in retaining the negro and delivering him to his claimant. They looked on, so far as appears, with utter indifference, leaving the officers of the law to attend to its execution.

We regret this occurrence as one which cannot fail to create unjust apprehensions, and arouse undue resentments at the South. We believe the people of this State, and of all sections of it, are disposed to carry into effect all the laws of the land and that they will frown indignantly upon every attempt to resist and defeat their execution.