

minors whom your constitution makes free; and it will be so viewed by all who are interested in preserving the institution of slavery, by all who regard the institution as proper under our form of government to be placed upon the statute book of the State.

It is a very serious matter. The proposition to give a preference to their former masters is one that certainly looks humane; but the refusal to have the assent of the parents or next friends of those minors shows that there is something improper about it. If they are the proper persons to have the custody and the service of these minors, surely those most interested in their welfare ought to be the suitable persons to decide upon that. I have no doubt that in every case where the master has been humane that the attachment of the servant and his gratitude would incline him to select that master for the future master of his children during their minority. But we have upon the statute book a provision of law for all cases that can possibly arise here. Every necessity appears to be anticipated, and if there is a deficiency anywhere it can be supplied by statute better than by fundamental law.

Mr. CUSHING. By the operation of this section as it is written here proposed by the gentleman from Caroline, I think its adoption would simply amount to postponing the emancipation of all minors until they arrive at the age of twenty-one years. I can hardly believe that to be the desire of this convention, many of whom I know have come here especially pledged against the adoption of any system of apprenticeship as a specific article in the constitution. The orphans' courts of the State will have power to apprentice any minors whose parents are unable to support them, and who are liable to be a burden to the community in which they live. There certainly can be no need of a provision to force the orphans' court to apprentice these minors when they are able to make their own living, or when their parents are able and willing to support them. Many of the minors who must be apprenticed under the operation of this section will be fully competent to earn their own living. You apprentice men twenty years of age, under this section, quite capable of supporting themselves. You apprentice those of eighteen, seventeen, sixteen and fifteen, all of them fully capable of supporting themselves by their own labor. And you do this at a time when there is a demand for labor all over the State, when the cry is that there is not labor sufficient for the agricultural and mechanical operations of the State. And certainly the younger children can most of them be supported by their parents.

I regard this as a modified form of slavery, as a postponement of the emancipation of slaves in Maryland after the adoption of the constitution. I have no idea of voting for

the adoption of an article which puts back into slavery all under twenty-one years of age. By the operation of this section all those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one will be prevented from being taken into the army without compensation to their masters for interfering with the contract of their apprenticeship. I certainly hope it is not the intention of the convention to get rid of slavery, and then to put back into a modified form of slavery all slaves under twenty-one years of age.

As to myself, the delegation of Baltimore city are all instructed by our constituents upon this subject, and are definitely pledged not to vote for any law for colored apprenticeship; and certainly this is a proposition that none of us can entertain. And certainly in other parts of the State delegates were sent here for the purpose of emancipating the slaves, and it could not have been the will of their constituents that after their emancipation all persons under twenty-one years of age should be remanded to slavery.

The orphans' court has at present the undoubted power to apprentice all such as cannot support themselves, or whose parents cannot support them. While there is not the slightest doubt that in such cases the minors should be apprenticed that they may not become an expense to the community, and while they would always give their masters the preference, I am sure you need not give the orphans' court any more power than it now has under the present regulations and laws of the State. Certainly it will not at all aid in the adoption of your constitution in the western part of the State to put into it a section putting back into slavery all those under twenty-one years of age, who were previously emancipated by your bill of rights. I shall therefore be obliged to vote against everything which in the slightest degree looks to sanctioning in any way the proposition to put back into slavery all emancipated slaves under the age of twenty-one years.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I regret to see the sad spectacle exhibited to us this morning. I had really hoped that this extravagantly violent animosity towards everything like the interest of the slaveholder, would ere this, by its own violence, have dissipated itself. It has been said that the most violent disease soonest terminates, either by cure or fatally. It would really seem that the expiration of time but adds fuel to the flame which has been so hotly burning against everything like the interest of the slave owner. We have had spectacles, I hope not of the sober feelings of the body generally, of gentlemen who have already been distinguished for the warmth of their opposition to everything like these slaveholding interests. I trust and am willing to believe they were not a fair specimen of the cool, calm, deliberate judgment of the majority of the house.