

This subject of apprenticeship was never canvassed in my county; it was not the issue. But I am very well assured that the good sense of our people would have guided them to the same conclusion that now controls me; that they would have said that there is no harm whatever to result to the slave by placing him when freed in a condition where he will be impressed with habits of industry, and be reared up accustomed to labor, and thereby be better prepared when he arrives at maturity to go forth in the world upon his own resources, self-reliant.

I do not swerve one moment in a backward tendency in this matter. The remarks of my friend from Baltimore city (Mr. Cushing) certainly do not apply to me. We are not undoing what we have already done, but we let that stand as imperishable as marble, and as immovable as the rocks of Gibraltar. I consider that there is no violation of that principle in advocating this doctrine of apprenticeship, whereby we retain the negro in the hands of his master, if the orphans' court should consider him a judicious and proper person to be the custodian of the slave, if not, then some other one, who will impress him with like habits of industry. I shall therefore vote with great cheerfulness for the principles contained in the proposition of the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd,) because I think the proposition is a good one; I think the principle is correct, and one which will ameliorate the condition of the negro, and there is no corresponding injury to the master.

Mr. Todd. I should have preferred that this convention should have voted upon this proposition without discussion, for the simple reason that I did not desire the time of the convention to be taken up in debate upon it. I thought the proposition had been long enough before them for every gentleman to understand it, and to make up his mind in regard to how he would act upon it. And I thought there was no necessity for any member of this convention to attempt to throw additional light upon the subject. But from remarks that have fallen from the lips of gentlemen here, I feel constrained to utter a few words in defence of the proposition I have submitted to the convention.

Some gentlemen have said they are pledged to go against every such proposition. Of course I would not for a moment think of asking any gentleman to violate the pledges which he has made to his people. But I pledged myself to go for such a proposition, and the people whom I in part represent expect it of me. I go for it, not merely because I pledged myself to do so, but because I believe it to be right and proper. It has been said by the gentleman from Frederick (Mr. Schley) that the adoption of a proposition of this sort would be but the reduction of all these minors to a state of slavery. I do not

so regard it. If that proposition be a correct one, then we ought to make it obligatory upon the legislature to blot out every particle of statutory law upon our books in relation to apprenticeship of any kind. For if this apprenticeship which I am advocating to-day is slavery, then all apprenticeship is slavery.

There is but one single difference between the proposition I have offered, and the law regarding apprenticeship as it exists upon our statute book. That difference is that the proposition which I have had the honor to submit makes it obligatory upon the orphans' court, when in their judgment the former owners of those minors are proper persons to have charge of them, to give to them the preference over other people. That is the one and only difference between the proposition I advocate here to-day, and the statute as it exists upon your statute book.

Now I am very far from doing, or desiring to do, anything that would look like remanding these negroes into a state of slavery. The one of my acts for which I expect always to be the proudest, is that act by which I cast my influence and my vote for the unconditional emancipation of all who have hitherto been held in bondage in this State. I shall ever look back to that period of my life with pride, whatever may be the consequences, whether this constitution be adopted by the people or not. I shall always glory in the position I then took, and by it I expect to stand or fall.

But it does seem to me that it is desirable that this convention should incorporate some such provision as this, which I have offered, in our organic law, for the purpose of protecting society. That is one reason I have for offering this proposition. If we throw out loose upon society the immense number of helpless minors who will be emancipated by the adoption of this constitution, we do not know to what extent society may suffer from it. It seems to me rather that we should take them into our arms, and throw around them this security, and in that way secure society. That we should provide for their interest by the adoption of a proposition of this character, as the gentleman from Worcester (Mr. Purnell,) has very well said, when they are apprenticed to suitable persons—and this proposition gives to the orphans' court the power to choose to whom to apprentice them—they will be taught principles of industry, they will be taught to labor, so that when they arrive at maturity they will be better prepared to go forth and earn their livelihood and become good and useful members of society, than if left to run wild at large, with none to protect them, and with no power to protect themselves, no disposition to take care of themselves, and prepare themselves for a state of freedom. So that it is not only desirable as a protection to society, but also de-