

slave he once held. I state that it is my belief that if you let this institution exist even in this mild form of apprenticeship, even in this almost half-dead form, the result will be that in those counties where the judges of the orphans' court are people of their selection, where the circuit court is a court of their creation, those gentlemen in those counties who entertain the idea that slavery is a benign and benevolent institution, will hang on to it by this slight thread as long as they possibly can; and hanging on to it they will keep up a political organization which it is just as important should be broken up, as it is that the institution itself should be broken up. They will keep good their political organization, and whatever disasters may befall us, they will unite under the banner of the institution, in this mild and almost dead form, and will hang on to it as long as they can. They show every disposition to do so, and in those counties where they have the courts, they will do so as long as possible.

I do not say this in bitterness of spirit, or because I have any hatred towards those people who own slaves. Some of the warmest friends I have in the world are men who own slaves. I do not say this out of any hatred or ill-will towards them. But I do say it out of an undying hatred to that system which, in my judgment, has brought my country to the verge of ruin. That is my judgment, and it is the judgment of many gentlemen in this house, that to that system, and to its existence in this country, we to-day owe all the evils that now surround us. And for that reason I am against recognizing its existence even by the shadow of its dying shade, in any manner, shape or form.

Mr. STIRLING. I had not intended to say anything in regard to this matter, when I read some time since a substitute for this section. But the course the debate has taken this morning, in my judgment renders it necessary that I should say something—not that it is necessary that I should inflict my views upon the house, but I wish to explain my own position.

I must confess that I have been very much surprised at this debate. In everything that I have said in this body, upon the subject of slavery, I have chosen to debate it upon political grounds only. I confess that I am surprised to hear gentlemen who have stood upon this floor and argued in eloquent language about the sinfulness of the institution of slavery, who have advocated before this convention as a proposition of law that every slave in this State was held by a thief's title, now get up here and advocate the holding out this proposition as a conciliatory measure to the disloyal element in this State, for the purpose of bringing about a more harmonious state of feeling. Now, while I have uttered no such language in reference to the sinfulness and illegality of slavery as has fal-

len from the lips of gentlemen upon this floor, still I am opposed to the provisions contained in this proposed section, because I believe they are counter to the political reasons which have brought us to adopt the policy we have already incorporated into this constitution. And representing a constituency which, so far as the portion I represent is concerned, is a unit upon this subject, I must stand up here, if it is but to utter a protest against this proposition.

I have no objection to allowing the matter to rest where the legislation of the State has placed it, severe as I regard that legislation to be. I have no objection to a provision which meets the views I have heard expressed upon this floor in regard to the custody of these minor children that are helpless, and in the hands of their masters to-day. But there is no reciprocity in this proposition. It is a proposition by which the master, if he chooses, can have bound to him those able-bodied males that constitute the great bulk of the labor of the slaveholding counties, and who are the very class upon which your policy of emancipation really operates; while, if he chooses, he can decline to have bound to him the helpless, whether young or old, who are unable to render the service he desires. I see no policy to be pursued in regard to those who are too old to take care of themselves. I see no proposition to have apprenticed to the master, or to any one else, those who are too young to take care of themselves. But I see a proposition that those who are able to take care of themselves, and to assist in taking care of those others, shall be re-enslaved to a certain extent for the purpose of providing compensation to those from whom they have been taken. I do say that if this policy is adopted it does break up part of what we have done, not upon a moral ground but upon a political ground; and it still keeps in what is actual slavery a large class of the population of the State, and still keeps the institution of slavery alive.

Gentlemen say it is nothing but apprenticeship. And what is apprenticeship, and what are the laws about apprentices? By the consent of the parents children may be apprenticed. And if children are vagrants and there is nobody to take care of them, they are to be apprenticed without the consent of the parents. This is a proposition to apprentice all persons of a certain class, whether they have parents or not, whether they can take care of themselves or not, whether there are those who can and will take care of them or not—they are all to be apprenticed without the consent of their parents, or without the consent of any one for them. What is this but a modified system of slavery? When you take these persons who have been held as slaves, and say that as a class they shall all be apprenticed to the same people who formerly