

ard (Mr. Sands.) Those who heard the gentleman's interpretation of the orphans' court law yesterday, can very well appreciate his remarks upon my consistency. If any gentleman in this house will take the pains to read my remarks, or shall have the curiosity to do so, he may take them from beginning to end, and if he will find a solitary inconsistency between the remarks upon the pages of these debates and those which I made this morning, I will yield that I have been inconsistent.

Inconsistent in what? Have I changed my views as an unconditional emancipationist? I say not. I occupy the same position I did when my constituents sent me here. They sent me here as an emancipationist; and when I return to them I shall tell them exactly what I have done; and if I cannot vindicate myself before my constituents, it is for them to censure me for not having conformed to their will. I occupy now the same ground precisely that I have from the time they sent me here. In voting, as I conceive, to ameliorate the condition of this class by indenting them for a limited period, which at most cannot be more than ten or twelve years, I think I violate no principle contained in the bill of rights, or upon which I was elected to this convention.

As I observed before, the question of apprenticeship was not an issue in my county. I am unprepared to point to a single individual who ever mentioned the subject to me. I came here perfectly untrammelled so far as that question is concerned. The only and the absorbing question before them was the question of emancipation. It has been upon our statute books from the earliest history of our State that apprenticeship ought to exist. White apprentices are bound out annually, monthly, daily, in the various counties of the State. The law limits the treatment of them by their masters; and it is the duty of the masters to provide for educating them in certain branches. From the negro that privilege has been withheld. That seems to be the policy of the State; for what purpose I am not prepared to say. Nevertheless the provisions of law seem to indicate that that was the policy. I feel no disposition at this time to invade upon that policy. If the condition of the minor negroes can be improved by this system, I think it is our duty to do it. I think it is a benevolent duty. As their benefactors we ought to do it.

What hardship does it impose upon their parents, their father and mother? They are disencumbered of their board, maintenance, clothing, and of all care and solicitude in the matter. It is placed in other hands. The adult can go forth in the world and improve his own condition, and accumulate means, and is not subject to the incumbrance which would be otherwise imposed upon him of rearing up his minor children to their man-

hood. I am entirely satisfied in my own mind that it is a benevolent duty we owe to this class of people without in any degree infringing upon their rights.

Mr. L. DREW. As I shall vote for this proposition with some modification which I shall propose, when an opportunity is offered, modified so as to put it under the theory which I understand the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd) proposes to occupy, that is, precisely the theory of the existing laws of the State in relation to free negroes, I take this opportunity to say a word in explanation of the vote which I shall give.

A proposition which appears to me to be a very simple one has been made to occupy a character and position entirely different from its purpose; and I hope it has not been made to occupy such a position for the purpose merely of its defeat; but that gentlemen who have given that definition of it have come to the honest judgment that such was the meaning of the proposition. But it means anything else in the world, according to my interpretation of it, than that which the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stockbridge and Mr. Stirling) have given to it.

This is no proposition to enslave a free man; and it requires a most extraordinary stretch of imagination, in my judgment, for any mind to reach any such conclusion, or to engraft any such interpretation upon the proposition. What is the proposition? If it had read thus, that the jurisdiction of the orphans' court touching free negroes and mulattoes, as now exercised by law, or as hereafter may be prescribed by law, shall be so extended as to authorize them to give the preference in apprenticing such negroes and mulattoes, to their former masters, the whole proposition would have been comprehended. That is all it means. It means nothing more and nothing less. In the exercise of the present jurisdiction, of the power now conferred by law, over free negroes and mulattoes, the orphans' court shall be required to give a preference to the masters, and so indent these free negroes or mulattoes, if they believe them to be competent persons to hold such relations to them. It means nothing more and nothing less.

This ghost of slavery that has been invoked—I will not say invoked for the purpose of killing this proposition—has the effect of intimidating those who from convictions of duty are seeking to emancipate the enslaved race in this State. The orphans' court have the right now to bind over free negroes and mulattoes in this State; that is vagrants, any class of persons who are not capable of self-support. When your constitution takes effect, and emancipation becomes a law by the ratification of the people of the State, these people now slaves will all be free negroes and mulattoes. The laws of your State will