

ticeship, in the name of almighty God, I ask why do they do it? The Union men and emancipationists of the State thought this convention had left behind the old things and were pressing forward to the new, on the day they declared all men within the borders of Maryland, and held to involuntary servitude, save for crime, free; and proceeding further, declared that all men had certain inalienable rights, and that among these were the right to the proceeds of their own labor; and still further, that slavery was a thing which had in Maryland no claim for compensation and forever prohibited the legislature of the State from granting compensation. We thought the thing was all foreclosed.

We little thought that upon the side of the majority of this house there would be evidenced an eagerness to take back the principle of this thing; not to put back all the blacks into slavery, but to put the bone and sinew of the race into slavery again, and throw upon the community the helpless and infirm. It is left, as my colleague (Mr. Stirling) told you, to the discrimination of the men who hold the slaves; for he only takes those he desires.—He will leave them a burden upon the State until they have attained such an age as to be profitable; and then all the profitable years of the young life of these negroes are to be given to the benefit of the master.

Believing as I do that slavery is injurious to the State of Maryland; believing that it has cursed the State of Maryland from the beginning of its history until now; believing as I do and as I have told you before upon the floor of this house that slavery has brought on this war; believing that slavery has charged this country with a debt of 1,800,000,000, and placed under the sod 500,000 human lives from the north alone; believing that for every single slave in the length and breadth of the land a price has been paid to the slaveowner: that for every slave in Maryland freed by this constitution, five men from the north have gone beneath the sod; believing that the price of blood has been paid for every slave, and that the blood alone shed upon the soil of this State is enough to have washed away every remnant of slavery; I am unwilling that there should be placed in the constitution of Maryland a provision beyond that which stands upon the statute book to-day.

Therefore I offer this proposition which I think is fair, and licensed in some degree by the weight of the laws now existing in this State. I think it is certainly all that any member of the majority of this house should vote for.

It is very easy for the charge to be made upon the floor of this house that men are instigated by hate of the slaveholders. It is a charge easily made, because every man is prone to make and believe such a charge who is injuriously affected by the operation of the acts we have passed. But the operation of

the slaveholder has hardly come into my mind. I do abhor from the bottom of my soul the system of slavery, because it has brought this tide of war upon the land. I do abhor from the bottom of my soul, slavery, because it has depressed and degraded the whole white population of the country in which we live. I do abhor slavery, because it has cursed my native State, and has rendered her far behind the other States of the Union which are free from it, in the race of improvement. And finally, sir, I do abhor slavery that we could never upon the floor of this house advance any proposition looking to the amelioration of the condition of the enslaved race, without members being startled from their propriety by some idea of negro equality. Slavery for years in Maryland has bound down human souls without one human right. In Maryland to-day nearly a hundred thousand men woman and children are held as beasts.

I wonder that after the eloquent argument of the gentleman from Caroline (Mr. Todd) upon this subject, pouring down from high heaven the indignation of an Omnipotent God upon such foul wrong, and the thunders of the Almighty upon those who have made it the occasion of civil war—I wonder that after proving to us by scriptural quotations that this was a crime with which God could have no sympathy, in the face of all that he could come and ask us to put back into the constitution of this State slavery up to the age of twenty-one years.

This proposition forces the orphans' court to put back into slavery every minor freed by this constitution. There is no discretion of age, no discretion of condition. Under the code of Maryland as it now is, the mere fact of the black man being able to support himself does not free him from the action of the apprenticeship laws of Maryland. I submit that it is simply absurd that there should be a law of Maryland which forces a man abundantly able to maintain himself back into the condition of an apprentice, to serve a master and to receive no wages.

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. Negley) inquired what was to be done with these people. A hundred thousand free blacks in Maryland support themselves now. The experience of counties and of the city of Baltimore tells you that there is no more prosperous class of labor in the State of Maryland to-day than the free black labor. They are abundantly able to support themselves by their own exertions. There are no more of them in the almshouses than of white people. The other hundred thousand can equally do it. What are the gentlemen of the lower counties to do for labor? The slaves being freed they must of necessity hire them or do without labor. Human nature is human nature, and although I can understand how a man may not desire in the first ill-