

feeling to hire his own slave, taken from him, yet I believe he will act under the strong necessity to hire another man in his place if he comes to labor. If the gentlemen in the lower counties do not wish for labor—if they prefer that their whole agricultural operations should stop, there is more than demand enough for all these free negroes in the other parts of the State. And if there is no demand for them there the army of the United States can take them from eighteen to twenty-one, and pay them such wages as will enable them to support their families at home. There is some way of providing for them. If the men that owned them will not use them, the men in the rest of the State will use them. And I should suppose that the army of the United States would take so many of them that their wages would support their families.

Mr. TODD. I wish to say with reference to the remarks of the gentleman who has just taken his seat, that I do not see any inconsistency between the course I pursued on a former occasion, when the twenty-third article of the bill of rights was under discussion, and the course I have pursued to-day in offering the section now under consideration. If the gentleman by his eloquence could convince me that apprenticeship is slavery, then I should offer a different section. I would offer a section forever hereafter prohibiting any apprenticeship in the State of Maryland, upon any terms, anywhere, or under any conditions. But I do not see it in that light; and therefore I think no extended remarks are necessary as a vindication of my course upon the ground of inconsistency. I feel myself that my course to-day is perfectly consistent with my course heretofore.

I have, however, drawn up an amendment to my proposition which I hope I will have leave to offer, which will modify it, though I prefer the proposition as it was originally offered by myself, with the modifications I have already accepted, yet, as a compromise measure, I propose the following modification: to insert after the word "minors" in the fourth line, the words, "incapable in the estimation of said courts of maintaining themselves."

Mr. HERR. I would suggest to the gentleman to add, "and whose parents are unable to maintain them."

Mr. TODD. I would much prefer the modification as offered by myself.

Mr. RIDGELY. I hope the gentleman from Caroline will accept that.

Mr. TODD adopted the suggestion, and modified his proposition by inserting "incapable of supporting themselves, or whose parents are unable to maintain them."

Mr. SANDS. I give notice that at the proper time I will move the following substitute:

"In the indenturing of any negro apprentice under the laws of this State, the orphans'

court shall give the preference to the former master of the apprentice, if there be such, and if he shall be a proper person to have the custody of the said apprentice."

I propose to make a very few remarks upon this question. I had hoped that I had said my last word here on this long-vexed question of slavery, or on any other subject that bore to it so close a resemblance. I had hoped that my share of the labors of this convention would be discharged, and I should go home without the necessity of again even alluding to this matter. But the course events have taken here this morning, very unexpectedly to myself, compels me, in simple justice to what I have said and done heretofore, to state my position with regard to this matter.

In conversation with many gentlemen of the opposition side of the house, I had expressed the hope that this question of apprenticeship would be allowed to rest where the law had placed it; allowed to rest in the administration of the orphans' courts of the several counties, which would, as a matter of course, exercise their best discretion in providing for the wants of minor negroes liberated under the twenty-third section of the bill of rights. I am sorry that I was disappointed in my expectation. I am sorry that the matter has been thrown again into this hall, to be the subject of long hours of debate. But there are some reasons, both on the master's account and on the slave's or the freedman's account, as well as my own, which force me to express the views which I entertain upon this subject as briefly as I can.

First and foremost, I consider myself pledged against the creation of any system of slavery by this constitution. I shall vote against the proposition, unless it be amended to meet the views I entertain, for the reason not only that I was thus pledged on this subject to the people who sent me here, but because my whole course since I have been a member of this convention is entirely inconsistent with the idea that I should favor the creation of an apprenticeship system. The reasons why I oppose it are these:

I put it to gentlemen on the opposition side of the house, and especially from southern Maryland, if negro labor is not a great necessity to them. A strong argument urged against the twenty-third article of the bill of rights was that this labor was absolutely necessary to their existence. Now I put the question whether they desire to drive this labor from their midst; because, in my opinion, they can adopt no more vigorous means of driving labor from their midst than adopting this section. Why? Because the twenty-third article, if the people adopt our constitution, liberates all adults, male and female; all over lawful age. Do you believe that the father and mother, the free man and free woman, are going to sit down quietly in