

their midst and leave their children in at least a state of half-slavery? Not one out of twenty will do it; but day and night they will be going off and carrying their little ones with them. You lose the labor you now have.

Another reason why I oppose the creation of this system is this: You are going to turn loose upon your State thousands and tens of thousands of men and women. You are giving them motives of industry and sobriety, and correct habits. How do you give them these motives? By robbing their homes of all that makes home pleasant and agreeable, loving and endearing? Will you say to the man and woman, you can go off in freedom, but your children must remain in servitude? What is the consequence? Dissatisfaction among them as a class. They have no object for which to labor; no child to educate; no pride to take in their children; nothing to live for save each other. What is to be the result of that? They will be idle. Idleness will beget intemperance in them. You know how wretchedly the negro goes through any trouble. Idleness will follow; universal pauperism will follow. And these people, instead of being an element of strength and prosperity in the State, will become its curse, simply because we have taken from them all motive for honest and honorable exercise. Is not that going to be so?

Try its effect by its application to your own feelings and your own consciences. What is the great spur to the exertions of every man? We have children. For them we toil. For them we spend. For them we labor early and late. For them we are sober, discreet, temperate, all that a man should be. Is it not so with this race? They have their human feelings, their human sympathies. Give them some motive for exertion if you do not want them to curse you, and curse the community, and curse the country.

What will follow? If they do not, now that they have an opportunity to labor for themselves, and to enjoy the fruits of their labor, become good, sober, honest citizens, or residents, if you do not like the term citizens, of the community, the law as it stands to-day, and as I propose to embody it in my substitute, will enable you to go into the orphans' court and require of the court that they apprentice to you in preference these children. That is right. We do not want vagrancy. I will go as far as any gentleman in this hall to guard against negro vagrancy. I never want to see it. I will be willing to resort to anything in the world to prevent it. But, in my humble opinion, the only way to prevent this class from becoming vagrants as a class, is to give them proper motives for exertion, labor, sobriety, and every virtue they ought to practice.

I hope there will be a disposition on all

sides of this house to accept in a spirit of conciliation and compromise the offer made here to meet on the basis of the existing laws of the State; not requiring us, who are pledged to the contrary course, to create a new system, but to meet on the existing laws of the State, simply declaring in this section of our constitution that it shall be the duty of the orphans' court to give a preference to the master in all cases where apprentices must be indentured. For that proposition I will vote with all my heart, and against the proposition as originally presented, I must as earnestly enter my protest, believing as I do that the acceptance of that proposition would work harm to the present master, to the negro, and to the State; because I do believe that if the negro population of the State to-day had any idea that you intended to deprive their children of the benefits of the emancipation promised them by this convention, they would go from you in a month in swarms.

Before we passed our twenty-third article, it was directly met by gentlemen in our section of the country who owned negroes, and who urged immediate and speedy action in this matter on the very ground that the negroes were deserting them and going off in crowds. It will be so again. If you talk of the creation of an apprenticeship system, they will go from your land in swarms, as the Hebrews went from Egypt, and depopulate your State, take away from you the labor you say you want, and leave us then to till the soil with our own hands or to starve.

I tender again to gentlemen on the opposite side the olive branch which I hold out in the substitute I propose to offer, that these negroes shall be indentured under the laws of the State as they exist this day, and that in thus indenturing them, their masters, shall they are proper persons to have them, shall have the preference. So far I will go. For that proposition I will vote with all my heart; and against the other I must as clearly enter my protest.

Mr. PURNELL. I would like to ask the gentleman the question whether by the act of emancipation all indentured negroes are set free? Does that liberate all the apprenticed negroes, the free negroes now in the State?

Mr. SANDS. How can it free a negro that has never been a slave?

Mr. PURNELL. I should like to have a categorical answer, yes or no, whether they are liberated who are held in apprenticeship?

Mr. SANDS. I will read the article and the gentleman will see.

Mr. PURNELL. I have it before me and can read it for myself; I wish to hear from you.

Mr. SANDS. I should like to know what construction of it justifies that view of the case?

Mr. PURNELL. Then I understand the gen-