

that all and every such criminal servants for whom the county shall pay the fees due by law to such officers as aforesaid, shall, after the end and expiration of their time of servitude to their master or mistress, satisfy and pay unto the commissioners of the county who paid such fees for them to the sheriff, and other officers as aforesaid, for the use of the county, such sums as they have paid as aforesaid; and the several commissioners of the several counties shall, and are hereby empowered to make inquisition after all such servants, criminals, for whom the county hath defrayed the said fees to the sheriff, and other officers as aforesaid; and they, the said commissioners, according to their best discretion, shall cause to be entered rules for the servants to make such reasonable satisfaction to the county as they shall think fit, and in such manner as they shall find convenient.

By the act of 1727, ch. 2, all fees due on the prosecution of imported servants, were to be paid by the masters, &c. of such servants, and not by the public or county; and the owners (unless in case of conviction and execution for capital offences,) to have recompense for such fees, by such servitude of the servants (not exceeding three years) as should be thought reasonable by the county court, &c. By May, 1766, ch. 6, the legal fees on the prosecution of any negro, or other slave, in any county court, (whether convicted or acquitted,) shall be paid by and assessed in the levy of the respective counties where prosecuted.

Masters,
&c. to deli-
ver up ser-
vants, &c.

SEC 11. *And*, for the better security of the county which shall pay such fees for such criminal servants as aforesaid, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That the master, mistress or dame of all such servants, be and are hereby enjoined and required, at the expiration of the time of such servant's servitude to such master, or mistress or dame, to render and deliver up to the sheriff of the county, for the use of the county aforesaid, such servants, criminals as aforesaid, under the penalties to such master, mistress or dame, refusing or neglecting to deliver up such servants as aforesaid, of making satisfaction to the county for all such fees as by the county aforesaid have been paid for such criminal as aforesaid; and such sheriff to whom such criminal servant shall be delivered as aforesaid, is hereby required to receive and secure such servants criminals as aforesaid, so that he be and appear at the then next county court to be held for the said county, to be disposed of as the said court shall consider.

During our colonial dependence, convicts might be sentenced by the courts of the mother country to transportation to the colonies, there to be sold and held as servants for a term of years. The conditions of plantations adopted by the lord proprietor, authorised a grant of 100 acres of land for every servant a settler should import into the colony. The character of that population gave rise to much peculiar legislation, which is now inapplicable to our present social condition. At the last session of the general assembly, these laws were presented to their consideration. I find that no notice was taken of them.