

prevent the legislature of the State making any compensation; and when, furthermore, overtures have been extended by the general government, in the form of pledged faith, that they will at some time or other make compensation when it can be done consistently; and when the proposition referred to by the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling) only enables the owners of these slaves to preserve the evidence of their title so as to derive the benefit of this appropriation, should it ever be made; it does seem to me that when, after a proposition of this sort has been adopted by this house, gentlemen say that they will not only do all they can hereafter to obtain a reconsideration, meaning thereby, I presume, to bring all the party machinery to bear, but go further, and say they will place the State in the position of being unable to accept any such appropriation from the general government—I say it does seem to me to be only the evidence of a disposition, which I regret to see, upon the part of the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling,) to spite the owners of these slaves, and keep out of the State it may be twenty millions of dollars, if the general government chooses to give so much. Gentlemen may say they are opposed to compensation, and all that. But for them to say that when twenty millions of dollars are offered to the people of the State to pay for their property, Marylanders or any portion of the Maryland people will say they will not take it, they are placing themselves in opposition to what are the true interests of the State.

I think the gentleman must have spoken inadvertently. I hope he will refrain from the impatience he has manifested to reconsider, or to attempt to exclude either of these propositions. They are nothing more than measures of the sheerest justice, to enable the people of this State to receive such a sum, if offered to them, and distribute it properly. It is simply a mode of doing justice to the people at some future time, when justice can consistently be meted out to them, after the personal feelings which agitate the public mind now have died out. I hope, therefore, the gentleman will reconsider his intention. Although I may have my views *pro* and *con*, I have no desire by any vote to show any hostility to any portion of the people or any section of the State. And I hope the gentleman will consider the section we have just adopted as only carrying out the object of enabling the people generally, all over the State, to derive the benefit of any appropriation which the general government may hereafter think proper to make to this State.

I hope, therefore, that the gentlemen, upon reflection, will consider both propositions in a different light; the one which he offered, and which I was pleased to see emanate from him, and the proposition of the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stockbridge,) which,

it does seem to me, is, but following up to its logical consequence the one offered by the gentleman himself.

Mr. STIRLING. I offered that proposition yesterday in perfect good faith, and I am perfectly willing to stand by it. But if it is to be accompanied by the proposition which the house has just adopted, I shall move, and shall insist upon the motion, to reconsider. I, of course, appreciate the motives of the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke,) and those who voted with him upon this proposition. They have done what satisfies their own consciences, and I have no desire to complain of them. But I regard this proposition as contrary to the general principles upon which I and my associates have acted. It is giving this particular class of property holders a special right to verify their title. Now, does anybody think that the institution of slavery has not heretofore been sufficiently protected in this State to enable the holders of slaves to verify their title? These gentlemen have consistently contended and voted that it was improper to put any special provision in the constitution directing the legislature to do what they have full power now to do. Yet upon this subject, for the purpose of giving it a protection over other kinds of property, gentlemen are willing to repudiate every principle they have assumed upon this floor, and to instruct the legislature in regard to this especial subject. I consider this section as unnecessary. The legislature have now full power and ample authority over this subject if it is necessary.

And then I have a further objection to it. While, so far as I am concerned, I was willing to put a section in the Constitution embracing all subjects, by which the United States might benefit the State by grant, I am unwilling to place in the Constitution another section which puts this State in the attitude of asking for, or recommending, that appropriation from the general government. I am not disposed to prohibit that; but I am not disposed by any word, act, or deed of mine to facilitate, promote or vote for the grant of any compensation either by the State or the general government. But this section puts me in the position of providing the means by which that can be proved which I say is proved already, which amounts to an act by this convention deciding that that compensation ought to be advocated.

What was the proposition of the gentleman who offered this section? He took the broad ground that the declaration of a cabinet minister that this proffer stood upon the same ground as the bonds of the government, is an obligation upon the part of the government. I deny that there is any obligation today upon the part of the general government to vote one dollar for the negro slave. And I will not place myself in a position of asserting directly or indirectly any such obligation. I