

inadequately guarded, would disarm them of any hostility to the measures contemplated by the committee.

The evils arising from the idle and vagrant habits of a large portion of the free negroes of this State, both to themselves, to slaves, and to property holders of every description, are too universally felt and acknowledged to need illustration, and have not failed to be a matter of solicitude to your committee in the preparation of the accompanying bill. And it would seem obvious that whilst the free negro remains subject to disabilities, political, civil and social, such as the policy of the laws and the habits of our citizens alike impose, no course could be so well calculated to promote the happiness and honesty of this class of our population, and prevent an interference with the proper contentment of our slaves from examples of idleness, as that which will insure their constant employment, and place them as near as may be, upon an equality with the slave. In the attainment of this object, indeed, some apparent severity cannot be avoided. But when it is recollected, that this severity is administered to promote the happiness and respectability of these people, and to rid the State of evils of the most serious character, neither the good citizen nor the faithful legislator could hesitate to sanction such a measure by his hearty approbation and support.

It is believed that an increase of the free negro population is deprecated by all. And to guard against such an event, the committee rely, *principally*, upon prohibiting the entry or return of such persons into the State, as well as upon a restraint upon manumission, unless the party exercising this license places the slave beyond our limits. This last provision—the restraint upon the privilege of manumission—will doubtless meet with some objection, and the committee have not recommended its adoption without consideration. But sympathy must bow to the necessities of the times. The highest considerations of interest dictate, that a State like Maryland, already having within her limits more free blacks than any other State in the Union, should not be further burdened. It should also be recollected, that the right to manumit is but a license granted by the Legislature, and which the master in Maryland has been exercising for less than half a century—that he who now exercises it, does so at the expense of his neighbor, and that the proposed prohibition will not prevent any master from giving freedom to his slave, since he can either transport such slave to another State and there exercise the power of manumission, or can manumit him at home, and furnish him with the means of going out of the State.

The committee have endeavored to devise some means by which to insure a rigid execution of the provisions of the bill which they now submit. This they believe may be accomplished by the nature of the penalties which they have adopted, since they are of a character to deter all from a violation of the law, and at the same time to induce their own enforcement where such violation shall