

years. If therefore, under the existing laws, a person, other than a slave, is convicted of murder in the second degree, or any other crime of like magnitude, such person is punished by confinement in the Penitentiary for a period of not less than two nor more than twenty years; whilst the slave who is convicted of the like offences, can only be punished by transportation - That is, by substituting for his Master in Maryland a Master residing beyond the limits of Maryland. The glaring inadequacy of this punishment must render comment unnecessary. In another view this inequality and inadequacy of punishment, operates against the slave. From the origin of the government, it has been customary for the Executive, where persons are sentenced to death, of whose guilt he may entertain doubts; or where palliating circumstances ^{may exist} to pardon, upon condition of confinement in the Penitentiary for such period as he may designate. It will be seen that the Executive, under the existing laws in the case of a slave, would be compelled either to order the execution of the sentence of death, or to substitute transportation; which would neither be considered by the slave or the community as any punishment whatever.

I have adverted more fully to this subject because I was present at this time in a peculiar position. At the last term of Charles County Court, a negro slave was convicted of the crime of insurrection, and sentenced to be hanged. I at first delayed the execution of the sentence, to see what would be the verdict and sentence in the case of his associates. The greater portion of the slaves who were engaged in this outbreak, were without trial sold by their Masters; and have been taken out of the State; and a free negro indicted with the slave in question, as the leader in this affair, was convicted of a minor grade of the same offence, and has been sentenced to the Penitentiary for the period of forty years.

A memorial very numerous and respectfully signed, has been presented to me, asking a transmutation of the punishment in this case. If I possessed the power to commute the punishment from death to confinement in the Penitentiary for life, I would not hesitate to do so; but the existing law furnishing no alternative between the punishment of death in such a case and an entire exemption from all punishment, I determined to submit the case to your consideration, with the earnest request that you will authorize me to commute the punishment in this case, with the assent of the convict from death, to confinement for life in the Penitentiary.

By resolution No. 54, of December Session, 1842, the Governor was directed to distribute to the Levy Courts of the several Counties, one standard of the several kinds of weights and measures, which should be received from the United States, under the Act of Congress of 1836. Under this resolution his Excellency, Governor Thomas, appointed J. H. Alexander, Esq., the agent of the State to receive the standards from the United States, and to prepare copies of each for distribution. The required number of "Standard yards" have been completed, and delivered by Mr. Alexander to me for distribution amongst the several Counties, and it is due to the Agent of the State, that this "measure of length" should be inspected by you, that its