

R E P O R T .

The Committee on the Colored Population, to whom were referred the memorial of the Slaveholders' Convention, and other memorials, orders and leaves in relation to free negroes and slaves, beg leave to report:

That it has been their object in framing a bill to meet the serious evils under which the State is laboring from the present condition of this class of its population,—first, to prevent the escape of slaves from their owners,—secondly, to make the free negroes of the State industrious, and place them beyond the reach of temptations to crime, which a life of idleness readily embraces,—thirdly, to arrest the increase of free negroes within the State, and lastly, to make the penalties of a character to insure their own enforcement, as well as to deter from the commission of the offences against which they are designed to guard.

The committee, in view of the important charge which has been assigned them, deem it proper further to say, that in a large portion of the State, the slaves are leaving their owners in such numbers, and their efforts to escape are attended with so much success, as seriously to affect the demand for labor and the value of cultivated lands, as well as to induce those who are suffering from this evil, solemnly to call upon the government, towards the support of which they are contributing equally with their fellow citizens, to guarantee to them the rights of property, by proper legislative enactments. And as it appears to your committee, no matter how limited the number thus demanding protection may be, if the rights of property attached under the laws the obligation to protect, is as perfect, as the duties of allegiance are undoubted. And if there be those, who being, themselves for the *present*, removed from the operation of this evil, decline to surrender their predilections or prejudices for the benefit of those who are suffering—surely, a just regard for the supremacy of the laws—for the dignity and character of the State—for the support of the agricultural interests, and for the rights of the citizen thus