

words, can be given to it except for the basest purposes, and by political demagogues, whether of the South or of the North.

Gentlemen have not pretended to show here how it is possible for a Government constituted as they profess to believe that this Government was constituted, to have between its constituent incoherent parts any cohesive power. On the contrary they maintain that each retains its sovereignty, and has a right to leave on its own responsibility, whenever it desires. They would have that right, if this were simply an agreement; and if that interpretation could properly be given to this preamble; for the same parties that make an agreement have the right to dissolve it. If the Constitution is anything else than it declares itself to be, a form of government, it contains within itself the elements of its own destruction. But I deny that that is a correct interpretation of our system of government. What have gentlemen said to lead us to believe that this Government could exist as a mere agglomeration of sovereignties, in one mass, there being nothing to hold them together except their own choice? The gentleman who last spoke (Mr. Belt) declared that there was no sovereignty whatever in the General Government.

I might refer to authorities; there are plenty of them; but I think we have had authorities enough. It is sufficient to cite the plain words written in the Constitution itself. "We the people," the American citizens, as distinct from Virginians, Marylanders, Pennsylvanians, South Carolinians, or people of any other individual State. "We the people of the United States" ordain and establish a certain form of government. We refer, therefore, in the first place to the written document, in proof of the correctness of our interpretation.

In the next place we refer to the facts of history, and more especially the history of the last thirty or forty years. Two ideas have started, and have worked themselves out. One of them is the idea, gotten up as I religiously believe, for the basest of purposes, and full of destruction, the idea that our government is only a partnership concern. The other idea, that it is what it claims to be, a government, has been combatting it. Calhoun was the most powerful representative of the first idea. Daniel Webster was probably the most powerful representative of the other. Those two ideas are clashing to-day. We need no other evidence of the fact that the one leads inevitably to disintegration, and that the other only can establish unity, than the very existence of this terrible war. For years past this first idea has been kept at work, and never allowed a single hour for slumber. At first it was done for the purpose of raising a few political aspirants into power, but afterwards probably for the purpose of sustaining the institution of slavery. That fatal

idea was kept at work all the time, not only there but also in the North; for I want to make the statement here, that I believe there are just as many slave-holders in spirit, in proportion to the population, in the North as in the South. That idea was kept constantly at work, and the true idea was left free to combat it. We see the result to-day. Instead of the facts being as the gentleman states, instead of our government being controlled by the States' rights idea, as the gentleman proclaimed, it was simply controlled as a Federal Government, in spite of the working of the States' rights idea. I agree with all the gentleman has said of the magnificence of our country, and the respect she had abroad among the nations. But where do we find ourselves to-day; and what is the cause of it? This is a serious question for reasonable men, and seems to admit of but one answer. It has been therefore a matter of astonishment to me that the gentleman from Prince George's can stand up here and boldly declare against this war upon the ground that it is the offspring of a consolidated form of government. It is an assertion which deserves no reply from me, other than to ask that the people of Maryland may have an opportunity to show their sense of the true disturber of our peace, by declaring that our paramount allegiance is due to the Government of the United States.

Mr. NEBLEY. In the discussion of this question, I desire first to follow the arguments of the gentleman from Prince George's who addressed the Convention this morning, (Mr. Belt) and then to follow to some extent, what I consider without any disrespect whatever for the author of it, the rambling, disjointed and disconnected argument of his colleague (Mr. Clarke.) I shall then discuss this article, and answer the only solitary objection that has been attempted to be urged against it—its asserted tendency to centralize the power of the Federal Government; that it has a tendency to make that government so strong as to endanger, they do not say the rights of the people, but the rights of the States. I shall show from the very authors whom they have invoked in the name of Madison and the old founders of the Republic, to show that this was not a National Government but a mere confederation of States; I shall show from the Federalist, from Madison and from Hamilton, that they regarded the present Government of the United States as a National Government and not as a Federal Government, on the whole. But I will not go into that discussion now. And I shall conclude by inquiring whether the States' rights party or the national party of the land, is responsible for the war in which we are involved. Those are the three subjects to which I shall call your attention.

The gentleman who addressed us this morning (Mr. Belt) commences his argument