

## CHAPTER L.

## "THE GLORIOUS NINETEEN."

Annapolis was the scene of a bloodless revolution in September, 1836. The constitution of Maryland was an attenuated relic of colonial times with a dash of republican spirit permeating it. By it, was an extraordinary mode of electing one branch of the Legislative body preserved.

An Electoral College, composed of forty electors, was elected by the people according to certain defined electoral districts. Of these it required twenty-four to make a quorum. The State, since the adoption of the State Constitution in 1776, had gained so in population that these districts, which at first fairly represented the population of the State and the will of the people, had become a huge, political monstrosity by which less than one-fourth of the people of the State elected one entire co-ordinate branch of the legislative department and had a large influence in choosing the Governor of the State.

As it happened, the whigs were strongest in these numerically smaller districts, and, whilst not representing the fourth of the State, were enabled to dictate to the other three-fourths in two important branches of Government. Against this the democracy of Maryland revolted, and, assisted by many whigs who were opposed to the unequal system, had called loudly for reform.

The whigs, loath to give up power, resisted the appeals of party and people for redress. In the elections of 1836, the whigs elected 21 members of the Senatorial College, and the democrats 19. On this the democrats resolved to stop the wheels of government itself or obtain the redress they asked.

From Major Sprigg Harwood, who represented Annapolis in the College, on August 18th, 1836, then in his 78th year, the sole survivor of "the glorious nineteen," as the democrats were wont to call them, I obtained the following:

"We had a little caucus at the Baltimore House, corner Baltimore and Hanover streets, Baltimore, and then agreed that we would assemble at Annapolis and send a communication, as we did on the 19th of September, to the twenty-one whig electors who were in the Senate Chamber, and who had qualified, and were waiting for all of us, requiring at least three before a quorum could be formed to transact business. When we sent our communication to them, they would hold no communications with us until we qualified. If we had qualified, they could have then proceeded to business with their majority of twenty-one.

"I first heard of the intended proceedings some days before the Baltimore meeting by Mr. Dick Higgins coming out to the country at Mr. Evans, and telling me of the letters written to the Democratic and Reform electors to meet in Baltimore. Before going, I consulted with my people here to learn their views. I said they could instruct me now, but if I went to Baltimore, and committed myself it was then too late, I would have to stand by it. They said 'Go, the principle is right, and we will stand by you.' This they did although they had a representation equal to Baltimore's—two delegates in the Legislature.

"We met in Baltimore about a week previous to the meeting of the College here on the 19th of September, and agreed on the outlines of the proposition as indicated by the letter dated on the 19th.

"There was no personal animosity among the participants. I used to associate with the whig electors outside, and they would ask me to go up to the Senate, but I would say—"No, you will look me in." The outsiders were very much alarmed. They thought no rights were left in property as there was no legislature, the whig judges actually taking this view, and the people generally thought the country was gone.

"Afterwards, when three of the nineteen concluded to participate in the organization of the College, John S. Sellman wrote to us to meet at Annapolis, but all declined save Marcy Fountain, Enoch George, George A. Thomas, and Wesley Linthicum. Messrs. Thomas and George regretted coming, but finding three were going in, (enough to make a quorum,) they also consented to go, but not then until the basis of electing a Senate and the reforms to be given had been agreed upon.

"The whigs gave the election of Governor to the people and altered the representation in the Legislature so as to equalize it somewhat in the State.

"The democrats thereupon elected the Governor—the whigs only succeeded in getting in Gov. Pratt in 1843, and the Know Nothings, Thomas Holliday Hicks, in 1857. The whigs often, however, had the Legislature.

"Our people were satisfied, but the whigs were excited here. They did not like giving up the State. Several steamers came here daily from Baltimore and the counties, filled with whigs, who hoped to make an impression on the nineteen. Everybody had gone away then except myself."\*