

Proceedings of the Maryland Constitutional Reform Convention.

ANNAPOLIS, Dec. 10, 1850.

The Convention met. Mr. Wells submitted an order directing appropriate committee to inquire into the propriety of creating a new county out of Howard district, to be called Howard county; which was adopted.

Mr. Merrick said that, as chairman of the committee on representation, he had his individual opinions upon the subject, to the assent of which he had been unable, so far, to gain that of a majority of the committee, and presented a project which he desired simply to present, that members might have a fair chance of reading, understanding, and considering, and that they might be referred to the committee.

The project (of which I gave you an outline yesterday) embraces the following features: The House of Delegates to be composed of 96 members, elected annually on the first Wednesday of October; each county and Baltimore city to elect one delegate for every four thousand inhabitants, up to twenty thousand, and for any excess of inhabitants above twenty thousand and less than eight thousand, one additional delegate—and for increased excess above twenty-eight thousand, one additional delegate; and so on duplicating the number of souls, an increase of one delegate. The Senate to consist of twenty-two members, to be elected every fourth year; each county to elect one senator, and Baltimore city to be divided into two senatorial districts, each district to elect one senator; and Baltimore city to be also laid off into nine districts, each district to elect one delegate of the House of Delegates.

According to this project, Mr. M. gave the following as a conjectural position of the counties and Baltimore city in the popular branch of the Legislature:—Baltimore city 9 delegates; Caroline 2; Calvert 2; Kent 2; Talbot 3; Queen Anne's 3; St. Mary's 3; Harford 4; Charles 4; Montgomery 4; Carroll 5; Dorchester 5; Cecil 5; Somerset 5; Prince George's 5; Allegany 6; Anne Arundel 6; Frederick 6; Washington 6; Baltimore county 6.

After some suggestions by Mr. Jenifer, in opposition, the resolutions went over to the committee.

Mr. E. F. Chambers, from the select committee of twenty-one, submitted a series of resolutions, (a copy of which is herewith furnished,) sustaining the action of Congress in passing the fugitive slave law, &c. Some remarks were made by Messrs. Ege, Chambers, McLane, and Fiery, (the latter making his maiden conventional speech, which was peculiarly chaste, elegant and forcible,) when the resolutions were unanimously passed; and, on motion of Mr. Magraw, five thousand copies ordered to be printed—a copy to be sent to the President of the United States, members of Congress, and each State Executive, &c.

Mr. Brent, of Baltimore city, submitted an order providing that unless committees report matter for action before the first of January, that then the convention proceed to consider such distinct propositions as may be submitted, to be considered in committee of the whole, and that the subject of representation be postponed till after the settlement of other questions. After discussion, laid on the table.

Mr. Brown moved to reconsider the vote of yesterday, providing for a recess from the 19th to the 31st inst. Negatived by a vote of 25 to 41.

Mr. Jenifer, referring to the expression of the press and the people in favor of having the debates and proceedings published in revised form, offered an order directing the committee on printing to employ a reporter, and limiting the cost of reporting and printing to ten thousand dollars.

A debate arose, and before taking a vote upon the order the Convention adjourned.

The following are the resolutions referred to in the above proceedings:

Whereas, the Constitution of the United States was designed more effectually to secure the civil and political rights of the citizens of every part of the Union, and, especially to protect their persons and property, as well in the other States as in the State in which they might reside; and whereas, amongst the rights of property there was none more generally known, or more distinctly recognized, than that of holding slaves; and whereas, the peculiar risk of loss to which this species of property was exposed, was so obvious, and the absolute necessity of a suitable provision to guard against it so universally felt, that no one hesitated to acknowledge that without such provision the Union could not have been formed; and whereas, certain persons in various portions of the Union, instigated by a spirit of fanaticism, have combined for the purpose of openly resisting and defying the guarantees of the constitution and laws by which alone the slave-holding States can be assured of the rightful possession, and just protection of their property; we the members of the Convention of Maryland, lately elected from the body of the people, and intimately acquainted with their feelings and opinions, deem it proper to declare, in calm and deliberate terms, what we believe to be their views in relation to the exciting subjects to which we have referred, and do

1st. Therefore, resolve, That the Constitution of the United States has accomplished all the objects—civil and political—which its most sanguine framers and friends anticipated, and that the affections of the people of Maryland are justly riveted to its principles by the memory of the sacrifices of the wise and good men who formed it, as well as by the blessings it has so liberally dispensed to our country.

2d. That a proper appreciation of these blessings should lead every State in the Union to adopt all such measures as from time to time may be necessary to give complete and full effect to any provision of the Constitution, or of the laws pursuant thereto, intended for the protection of any portion of this great family of States.

3d.—That while we do not conceal that the several acts of Congress passed at their last session, relating to the admission of California, to the territorial Government's of Utah and New Mexico, to the adjustment of the boundary of Texas, to the prohibition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and to the reclamation of fugitives from labor, do not, to the extent we desired, meet the just demands of the South; nevertheless, viewing these several acts as parts of an entire system, to be adhered to and maintained as a whole, proceeding on the basis of compromise, and intended, by a permanent adjustment of so many critical questions, to heal the public agitation and perpetuate the Union, they have received our acquiescence, and have inspired us with admiration of those eminent statesmen, who, rising above the influence of party and sectional considerations, periled their well earned reputations for the enduring welfare of their country.

4th. That the vigorous and faithful execution by the general government of all laws, made in pursuance of the constitution, is its primary duty, and affords the only security for the just protection of the rights and property of the citizen, and for the permanency of the Union; and it is equally the duty of all good citizens to encourage and support the officers of the government in the execution of the laws, and to discountenance and rebuke the efforts of those who seek to subvert them. And while, therefore, we entertain every proper confidence in the ability and determination of the Chief Magistrate of the Union faithfully to perform his duty in the present crisis, and take the opportunity to tender to him our assurance that, in any emergency that should require it, he may safely rely upon the cordial co-operation of the people of Maryland, we cannot withhold the warmest expression of our firm and continued reliance upon the patriotism of those of our countrymen, in all sections of the Union, who have fearlessly asserted the constitutional rights of the South; and, in view of the calamities which must ensue if those rights continue to be violated, we would earnestly suggest to the governments of the non-slaveholding States the propriety and the importance of enacting such laws as will facilitate the recovery of fugitives from labor; and upon the citizens of every State we would anxiously urge the absolute necessity of maintaining and enforcing each and all of the measures of adjustment adopted at the last session of Congress.

5th. That of the aforesaid series of laws, that intended to ensure the restoration of fugitives from labor is the only one professing to protect the peculiar rights and institutions of the Southern States from the mischievous hostility of a wicked fanaticism in other portions of the Union, is but a tardy and meagre measure of compliance with the clear, explicit and imperative injunctions of the constitution, and holds out the only hope that the protection which the South was authorized to expect from the union of the States to this species of property will be afforded to them, and being the chief inducement to the South for its accession to the compromise, the repeal of that law, or the failure to enforce its provisions, could only be regarded as evidence of a determined purpose in other States to violate the sacred charter of our rights, or a want of ability in the General Government to enforce the laws made for our protection; and in either event there would be a failure to comply with the solemn obligations which give to the constitution its chief value and binding force, and which could not be violated or deliberately evaded without leading to a dissolution of the Union.