

pursuit. He does not say that the people may not alter the Constitution, except in accordance with the Constitution and law, but that they may enjoy the full right of changing it in their own way; but he recommends it to them, to exercise their right in a particular manner.

As he understood this proposition of the gentleman from Baltimore, after its amendment by the gentleman from Cecil, if the people of Baltimore were to call a meeting at the market house, without any authority of law or public notice for that purpose, and should make a new Constitution, and a majority of the people of the State, being there in attendance, should adopt the Constitution thus formed, it would become the law of the land. It was said that this inalienable right of the people, declared in the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore, was recognized in other State Constitutions, and that it did not imply revolutionary action.

He understood the gentleman from Cecil to say, that as he understood the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore it meant nothing more than that the people might assemble, but that their assemblies must be provided for by the then existing Constitution or some Legislative enactment in conformity thereto. If that was the view of the gentleman from Cecil, and his amendment sustained it, he concurred with him; and would desire that his amendment might be adopted in order that the public mind might be relieved on the subject. If the House would adopt an amendment, by which it is provided that any change must be made according to the Constitution, or act of the Legislature passed for the purpose, the American principle on this subject would be carried out.

If the gentleman from Cecil designed to establish such a course of proceeding, his amendment was wholly inadequate to the accomplishment of his object. It was important to have a stable government. But if you adopt the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore, with that attached to it by the gentleman from Cecil, you recognize the power in an assembly of the people, called without public notice, by the secret concert of individuals, held, if you please, at the market house of Baltimore, to change or abolish the form of government, without complying with any legal sanction whatever. They may do this, and in a week after may call another meeting and have a new Constitution, and thus they may go on, changing the government, week after week, and year after year. With a government of such a character, no one would consider himself safe in living under it. Yet the gentleman from Cecil thinks his proposition sufficient. If the gentleman from Cecil would agree to the modification now proposed, he, (Mr. D.,) would accede to his amendment and admit its sufficiency. Without it, the amendment of the gentleman would be entirely insufficient. If the gentleman means that the Constitution shall only be changed in the manner he proposes, and will so frame his amendment, then he would agree with him. But if it is intended, as its perusal would indicate, to admit the principles of the amendment of the gen-

tleman from Baltimore, then the gentleman from Cecil seems rather to recognize than defeat their object. The original proposition only asserts the broad principle that the people have the inalienable right to alter or amend or make a new Constitution; the amendment of the gentleman from Cecil only points out one way in which this may be done; it imposes no restriction on the original right being exercised by the people in any other way. The lawless exercise of such a power was attempted in Rhode Island, where, perhaps, a bloody war was only prevented by circumstances that might not again occur. And it should be remembered, that some persons, but a few years past, called a like meeting of the people at Annapolis, to make a Constitution, and, but for the vigor of Governor Veazy, there might have been a civil war here.

If the gentleman from Cecil would adopt the amendment now offered, prescribing the mode in which only a change of the Constitution must be made, he would be highly gratified; otherwise the gentleman's amendment amounts, only, to a recommendation to adopt a particular mode; not excluding the people from the practice of any mode they might see fit to select.

The difference of opinion which exists as to the meaning of the amendment of the gentleman from Cecil, shows how necessary it is that our constitutional provisions should be so explicit as to preclude all contrariety of interpretation upon the subject; such would be the result of the amendment I propose, and which the gentleman from Cecil thinks is, in effect, identical with his own. My objection to the gentleman's amendment, is, that it will leave the door open for frequent and sudden changes of the Constitution at the will of a majority of the people, formed under sudden excitement, without time for deliberation or any of the formalities of law. As a compromise, he would be willing to take a provision that the Legislature should prescribe the necessary formula to the convention of the people, or their representatives. The Legislature, perhaps, might exert the abstract right without such provision, but he would prefer making it plain by a provision in the Constitution. He repeated, that the amendment of the gentleman from Cecil left the people free, in their primary assemblies, to alter, change or abrogate the Constitution, as in the original amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore. And the effect would be, that whenever Baltimore shall have a population greater than all the other parts of the State, as must soon be the case, they may get up a meeting at the market house, give no notice to the other parts of the State, and thus change the whole form of government. At some future period, Baltimore might thus, in a single day, overthrow the Constitution. This, he would guard against. He was sorry the gentleman from Cecil would not unite with him in his effort to do so by accepting his amendment.

Mr. BRENT, of Baltimore city, said, he felt a strong temptation to make some remarks, but he was so anxious that the question should be taken on these abstract propositions, that he would again call for the previous question.