

on the right of suffrage, but to qualify it by such wholesome provisions as the public safety might require. He held that every man of twenty-one years of age had an inalienable right to vote, and it could not be restrained unless demanded by the public safety. He would not vote for this restriction of five days' residence, because it would fall on a large class of poor citizens, who had no permanent home, but were constantly moving from district to district. The amendment would deprive them of the right of suffrage. Because we have the power, it would be wrong to diminish the rights of this class. Public safety demands no such act at our hands. Something ought to be done, but the Legislature could increase the rigor of the penal laws. He was willing to increase the rigor of the penal laws if public opinion demanded it, but, (said he,) "So help me God, I will never consent to strike down the free right itself."

Mr. CHAMBERS was unwilling to remain silent and hear different gentleman again and again impute to him and those with whom he had been acting, motives and reasons utterly at variance with those which governed them. No one here was disposed to violate the fundamental principles of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution—to shackle the right of freemen to vote. He believed all desired the same object—the purity of elections. Opinions differed as to the mode of securing it. Each should adopt this charitable opinion of the intention of others. The right of voting is undoubtedly of vast importance to freemen; and why is it so? Because it enables them to select for themselves their political rulers and agents. Hence your Constitution and laws guarantee that the majority of legal voters in a particular election shall have those elected for whom they cast their votes. If persons not entitled to vote interpose and nullify the effect of legal votes, this pledge is forfeited, and your Governors, Congressmen and others, are not the persons chosen by a majority of the legal voters, but are put upon them by others not entitled to have a voice in their selection. Every false vote defeats and disfranchises a legal voter.

It is not true as has been suggested that if a man has a right to vote in one place, he may as well vote in any place. Where the right of electing an officer is given to the legal voters of a particular district, it is a violation of this right to permit any other than a legal voter to interfere. It is objected that the remedy will in some cases deprive persons of the right, who ought to vote. Every general rule must produce particular instances of hardship. It was the result of human imperfection. Yet general rules must exist. His rule of political morality was, that where an abstract right existed, but owing to particular conditions and circumstances of a community, could not be exercised without necessarily producing greater evil than the good resulting from the exercise of the right would compensate, then the right must be restrained. The greatest good for the greatest number, was the proper aim and end of our labors. If one

citizen, under particular circumstances, cannot exercise the right of voting without necessarily depriving two others or more of all benefit of their right, he must not be permitted to vote; and then others are denied all effect, and of course all benefit of their votes, when each of their votes shall be neutralized by the opposite votes of persons not legally entitled. He invited all to engage in the work of arresting illegal voting. It is a question of expediency of means. There should be no harsh denunciation, where all have a common and a laudable purpose.

Those were mistaken who said this was contradicting the principles of the old constitutional doctrines. Circumstances had changed and those very principles made it necessary to change our legislation. Besides, in the good old times and amongst the pure men of the days of the Constitution, corruption in elections was unknown.—These practices, now it seems, admitted so generally to exist, were of later introduction. We are told to enact penal laws. Well, it has been done and the practice is said to increase. And now, sir, said Mr. C., allow me to say, that if not restrained here and elsewhere, the most fearful consequences may be apprehended. It was his deliberate opinion that the greatest danger to be apprehended to the perpetuity of this glorious Union was from this quarter. If ever an individual shall be put upon the people as President of these United States, who they shall be thoroughly satisfied owes his elevation to fraud in the election, what disastrous results may we not expect from the outbreak of every passion which a sense of insult and outrage can generate in minds already excited to the highest degree by political partizanship? Let us do all we can to correct even a tendency to such an issue. It is asked, why not vote as well one side of a geographical line as another? Why, because it will defect the voice of the *bona fide* residents and voters to whom you give the right of election. If a geographical line divides two counties in the same congressional district, a man must cross that line as a resident, six months before an election, to enable him to vote; but if the geographical line which divides two congressional districts runs through a county or city, then six hours residence is to entitle him. Is this agreeable to reason, consistency or equality?

To make such facilities for fraud is to invite its perpetration. He admitted, the House by refusing to fill the blank with a longer time, had diluted the proposition, which in its present form, could do but little good. Still it was a step, though a short step, in the right road and he would support this and every other proposition tending to the great result of purifying the ballot-box.

Mr. JENIFER, after stating that he had for ten days voted against all amendments fixing a term of residence, advised his friend from Dorchester to withdraw his amendment, and let the subject come up hereafter.

On motion of Mr. McHENRY, the Committee rose and reported progress,  
And the Convention adjourned.