

to effect this object. He would not have risen to take any part in the debate, but for the remark made by the gentleman from Dorchester, (Mr. Hicks,) which appeared to be sustained by the gentleman from Kent, that this is to be regarded as a test question, and that they who vote against this restriction are disposed to throw away all the guards of the purity of the elective franchise. Now, he begged it to be understood that he would vote against this amendment, and his objection to it is, that it was not an adequate and appropriate remedy. He would concur in any measure which, while it would prevent frauds, would, in no degree, impair the elective franchise in the hands of those who are entitled to it. But he could not vote for a proposition, which, while it aimed at the prevention of frauds, would also have the effect of restricting the right of voters legally.

He deeply regretted the state of things that had been represented as existing in this Commonwealth: because, wherever his earlier lot was cast, he regarded his destiny for the future as fixed in this State. Until he came to this Convention, and heard the statements made by other gentlemen, he had formed no idea of the alleged extent to which fraud and corruption have been carried. This evil, it would appear, from these allegations, is, by no means confined to the city of Baltimore, which has been stigmatized as the sink of political iniquity, but has extended to all the counties of the State. The facts of double voting, giving money to purchase votes, giving money to obtain naturalization papers, in which men of character and standing, wealthy individuals, and even official dignitaries are alleged to have taken part, appear to be common occurrences. Who could have been prepared for such a state of things? He was not, and could not credit it to that extent. Where is the law? Is there no power to check these outrages?

He then went on to shew that bribery had been apprehended in the earlier periods of our history, as was evident from the clause in the Constitution which relates to that crime. It was feared it might reach high places; and the provision in the Constitution was a wise one. The gentleman from Kent was therefore mistaken when he said that corruption was not known to our fathers, and that they had not provided against it. The provisions inserted in our Constitution shew that it was necessary to provide against its introduction in our Judiciary and Executive officers, as well as in the elections. And while these provisions attest the apprehension that it might be practised, they also prove in what abhorrence it was held by the framers of the Constitution. And now we are told publicly that bribery prevails at every election, that it pervades every district in the State. If this be true, it is indeed time that we had a Convention. There is nothing like this in England, where we have been accustomed to believe that corruption stalks abroad in open day. There is nothing like it in the history of Rome, until she had reached the zenith of her glory, and then it appeared and hastened her decline. And so it precipitated the other republics of antiquity to their

ruin. And they all stand, among the wrecks of time, as beacon lights to warn those who shall come after them. If the statements made here are true, then our State is corrupt to the core. There has been nothing like it, if true. He did not say that it was true and does not believe it. But if it is true in any indirect part, it calls for a speedy and vigorous remedy; it is too dangerous to be cured by homœopathic treatment. If the disease has taken such hold in the State; if the cancer has made such progress over the body politic, it becomes our duty to take the knife and cut deep to the root, or our career will be short, and the time is not far off when we shall be stricken down by the iron hand of despotism.

And what is the remedy for this diseased condition of the State? He scarcely knew where to go for an adequate remedy—those proposed were not so. The gentleman from Anne Arundel would provide a remedy by keeping back from the poor foreigner his naturalization papers, or preventing him from receiving from others the expense of procuring them, so that he may be prevented from giving a fraudulent vote. This is certainly homœopathic and unjust treatment. While excluding two or three foreigners, we shall shut out twenty who have an indisputable right to vote. Other remedies have been proposed, all similar in their want of power to effect a cure. In all the suggestions which have been made there is a greater possibility of punishing the innocent than deterring the guilty. He would rather permit foreigners to go into our Courts, and be naturalized gratuitously. That was his remedy. Now the foreigner becomes the tool of the person who pays for his papers, and is used by him to further his purposes. Let him have his papers without cost, and he walks forth free and independent.

Another remedy looks to the question of residence. At present it is necessary that the voter shall have resided twelve months in the State, and six months in the county. The gentleman from Kent says this provision may be evaded. We have already the State residence, and the County residence. And now the district residence is wanted. These districts were established merely for the convenience of the people, and not for the better security of the ballot box. His remedy was to abolish the district elections for Commissioners, and let the whole County vote for them. This would not convert the district system, intended for the convenience of the people, into an injury.

The gentleman from Kent says, a man who has a right to his vote, is deprived of his right when an illegal vote is received; and to this he (Mr. McL.) agreed. But what remedy does he propose? He takes away from a voter who moves from one district into another, the right to vote, because there is a knave standing by him, who will be admitted to vote, if the honest voter is. All the remedies proposed, like this, would unnecessarily shackle the right of suffrage, and be ineffectual to cure the disease.

He objected to the proposition laid down by the gentleman from Kent, that every right that must necessarily be abused ought to be qualified,