

raised has been sent into every part of the State. He thought all had contributed their means for one purpose or other. He himself was not so free from the charge as the gentleman from Kent. He admitted that he had contributed to the expenses of an election. It was, indeed, so common a case, that it had ceased to be regarded as dishonorable among gentlemen. Our only remedy for this evil is to correct public opinion. He would pass laws that would lead to that correction and stamp all such conduct as unworthy. He would protect the franchise, preserve the innocent from fraud, and punish the guilty. He would render bribery infamous, both to the giver and the receiver of a bribe. He knew no other way of securing the purity of the ballot-box. No law, however, could have a beneficial effect, unless it was in response to public opinion, and did not involve the innocent in a common fate with the guilty. Any law that punished the legal voter in order to reach the fraudulent, would enlist both in opposition to it, and render it ineffectual. Would this amendment of a five days residence effect the object proposed? A man disposed to do wrong would find no greater difficulty in getting over five days, than over a longer period—such as is provided by a residence of six and twelve months already in the laws. He did not expect to purify the ballot-box by such measures as these; it would be just as easy a task to purge society. Frauds of a higher character exist; and when we can reach these great frauds, we may hope to be able to remedy the others. But while we leave the greater evils unremedied, it is vain to expect that we can extirpate the smaller.

Mr. MERRICK expressed his regret, that concurring so fully as he did with much the greater part of the general remarks so eloquently made by the honorable gentleman from Cecil, he should find himself compelled to dissent from the conclusions to which he had come. He was not disposed to trespass on the Convention by any attempt to make a speech in reply, and indeed, were he ever so much disposed to do so, the difficulty he now had of utterance, from a severe cold, forbade such an effort.

He united most cordially with the honorable gentleman in deprecating the effects of party strife here and every where, and the honorable member could not be more deeply impressed than he was with a sense of its past and a dread of its future influence upon our republican institutions. He was fully aware that under the excitements engendered by party contentions, many good men would temporarily forget that just sense of moral and political duty, by which ordinarily they were actuated; and their evil example on such occasions had the fatal tendency of lowering and corrupting the moral tone of the whole community—of producing that unhappy state of public opinion, by which it had or might become to be regarded that in elections almost anything was justifiable which tended to secure the ascendancy of your party, that the end sanctified the means. He agreed too, that the very best means of preventing and correcting these evils was the enlightenment and purification of

public opinion, and wise and patriotic men should spare no pains, leave no stone unturned both by precept and example, by general education and legislation, so to enlighten and improve the general public sentiment. He united, too, most cordially with the honorable gentleman in calling on the Convention to elevate their minds above all subordinate considerations, and come up in the spirit of liberalized and enlightened patriotism, in the true spirit of the *Patres Conscripti* of the Commonwealth, to the performance of the high duties entrusted to them, and to bring to the consideration of the great question now under consideration, a proper sense of its deep and abiding importance. True, he said, it was difficult, very difficult, to divest ourselves of the influences of long cherished associations—the ties of habit—and deal with such questions solely with reference to their own intrinsic merit—but the end was at least worthy of a vigorous effort. Such were the infirmities of human nature, that a perfect accomplishment of this object was hardly to be expected, yet an approximation to this good end was certainly to be hoped for.

Sir, said he, what is the question we now have on hand: the regulation of the exercise of the elective franchise and the protection of this most precious prerogative of freemen from frauds and abuses. Could you deal with a graver or more momentous question to a republican people? It is the foundation stone of the republic—the sheet anchor of freedom. It should not be touched with unholy hands; and the guards and securities thrown around it should be proportioned to its inestimable value—and yet gentlemen argue, or seem to argue, that because it is so valuable and precious, it must be left unguarded! And here is the point of great difference between myself and the very distinguished gentleman from Cecil. He has discoursed fluently on the subject of political morality; upon the baneful effects of party strife; upon the invaluable nature of the elective franchise; and admits that frauds are, and are likely to be, practised upon the privilege—yet he proposes no guards to protect us from these frauds, and declares himself averse to the slightest additional security which would be given by the pending amendment, requiring only five days previous residence within the district before a newcomer shall be there entitled to vote.

Mr. Chairman, as I have before said, I am utterly opposed to all improper restrictions upon the right of suffrage. I have resisted throughout all attempts to make invidious distinctions on this subject, among classes of our citizens. I have voted steadily against all amendments intended or tending to impose any other or greater restrictions upon our naturalized than are imposed upon our native citizens. I am here to advocate the extension of this sacred right equally to all our citizens of every age and condition, to whom, according to the general judgment and general sense of the people of the State it should be extended; but it must be limited; it must be guarded; it must be protected,—it is too dear, too valuable to freemen to be trifled with. Some gentlemen have said they were for giving it the widest extension. How far would these gentle-