

He would only add, that the committee were prepared to act on the subject.

Mr. SPENCER expressed his gratification that the committee had come to such a conclusion. He had not seen or read the provisions from the committee, and his course would not, therefore, be changed.

He here read another of his proposed amendments, as follows:

Sec. 5. That the Governor of this State shall under no circumstances grant a *nolle prosequi* to any person, who may be prosecuted in due course of law in any of the courts of this State, for any violation of the second Section of this Constitution, nor shall he grant a pardon to any person who may be convicted in due course of law, as aforesaid, for any such violation, unless he is satisfied that the said prosecution was malicious, unfounded and untrue.

These amendments would show that so far as he was concerned, he was anxious to preserve the purity of the ballot box, by preventing bribery or the colonizing of voters. On these, and the remedies suggested by the gentleman from Cecil (Mr. McLANE) and a proper tone in public morals will rest our security against the corruption of the elective franchise. It is not right or just to attribute them to the humble, the uninformed, the poor. They originate in more elevated sources and flow from a higher fountain—from those who occupy seats of power and who are distinguished by wealth and station. Official dignitaries have connived at, encouraged and often taken the lead in them. The humble instrument is not as much to be blamed, as the tempter who, taking advantage of his necessities, seduces him by his alluring bribe. Men of the highest talent and education in the State are implicated. It is well known that committees are appointed and money raised to immense amounts, for the purpose of controlling the elections, by buying and colonizing voters. Committees to carry out purposes so discreditable are raised. We must strike down this evil, in order to arrest the disease. We must interpose barriers which will prevent our public men from engaging in the corrupting schemes which are resorted to at elections. It will not do to impose restrictions upon the right of suffrage. That right is too sacred. If the amendment proposed is adopted, it will operate most unjustly and oppressively upon the laboring classes. It will effectually strike down the right of many humble and honest men every where, throughout the State, whilst it will inflict no punishment on official criminals. In the city of Baltimore it will work particularly hard. Our elections for State purposes occur early in October, the first Wednesday, and we have heard no intimation that the time will be changed. Hundreds of the honest laboring classes in that city, men who have not the substance to enable them to procure permanent residences, rent by the quarter, which will expire on the first day of October. If you pass this restriction, and their necessities, business or convenience require them to move into another ward, they will lose their votes. Five days will not have elapsed from the termination of

their quarter to the day of election. It was not just to deprive this class of citizens of their rights by imposing such restrictions. It was not proper to deprive an honest man of his rights of suffrage, because another abuses it. There is no reason why a just and honest man should not vote, because dishonest men abuse the same high privilege. And yet, this is the excuse given for such a measure, by the gentleman from Kent, and others. The morals of such a sentiment cannot be appreciated. They rest upon no authority derived from any school in ethics.

It is alleged that the object was to prevent the colonizing of voters. It would have no such effect. Colonizing would be conducted on a more extensive and demoralizing scale. It is no new thing in Maryland. Many years ago, under the old divisions of party, as he had understood, and the gentleman from Kent, (Mr. CHAMBERS,) he supposed, knew of the fact, voters were colonized in Kent for six months, previous to an election.

Mr. CHAMBERS, interposing, observed the gentleman then resided in the county.

Mr. SPENCER. Yes—he was then a boy, but the gentleman was a leader of the party which was reported to be engaged in the matter. It was said that a factory was established in Chestertown for the purpose of manufacturing voters.

Mr. CHAMBERS in explanation said a factory was established by a company, and he was a stockholder in it, but it had no relation to the elections, as the gentleman supposed.

Mr. SPENCER was about to reply, when Mr. BRENT of Baltimore, called the gentleman to order, they being engaged in a colloquium, which was irregular.

Mr. SPENCER resumed and went on to say, that we could gain nothing by adopting the five days system. The only effect would be that voters would be colonized for five days, instead of six months; and during those five days the grossest corruption will be practised, and the largest purse will win the victory. We have had in this State proof in abundance of the power of money to corrupt and destroy; and if we adopt this restriction, we must expect to see a flood of corruption inundating the State. You can never expect to see the ballot-box purified, until the money temptation can be checked. It can never be effected by bearing down upon the poor and humble man, whose poverty lays him open to temptation. Let the humble be uninterrupted in their enjoyment of the right of suffrage; and adopt the principle that no man shall be allowed to hold office, until he shall have purified himself, on oath, from all suspicion of having been guilty of bribery or corruption. Some gentlemen admit that they had contributed to election expenses. Would these gentlemen, if elected to high office, put their hands to the book. He believed there was no man here, who would perpetrate so palpable an outrage on the laws of God and man. Candidates for office would not, could not, directly or indirectly, engage in frauds and corruptions. They would not give money to buy or colonize voters. Nor could their friends do so for them.