

dent in a county which was the first that had been settled in the State. He might have lived there all his life; he might be a descendant of the very men who had first landed upon the shore, he might have resided in one district in a county for twenty-five or thirty consecutive years—the same district perhaps in which his ancestors had resided, and where all his own property was, and yet because upon the day of the election, or the day before, he should see fit from motives of business, or health, or pleasure, *bona fide* to remove himself and his family into another section of the county in which he had every thing at stake, and to which he had every thing to bind him, he was to be disfranchised because he had not been a resident of District No. 1, more than one day; and yet he might have resided in the adjoining district No. 2, for twenty-five or thirty years. The officers who were to be elected were men to whose hands his interests, his rights, his life, and that which was dearer to every rightly constituted mind—his reputation, were to be entrusted, and yet he was not allowed a voice in their selection. Such were the consequences, which would result from the proposition for a five days residence. He could not, under any circumstances, give it his support.

But if frauds did exist, it was more probable that they would exist in the city of Baltimore than in the counties. He made this assertion only because the larger and increasing population of that city, made it more difficult for the judges of election, or those persons interested in the election, to know who the legal voters were. He referred to the allegations of fraud and corruption which had been made against the county, which he in part represented, (Kent,) and vindicated her from these allegations. He had been a politician for twenty years; yet, he had never known a case in his county where a successful attempt had been made, either by a native born citizen, or a foreigner, to interfere with the elective franchise. In regard to colonization in that county, he could only say that it was the same kind of colonization already spoken of; it had taken place in high party times, and it was the work of the old federal party.

But, if these frauds, about which, so many confessions had been made, did exist, they were far more likely to exist in the larger counties, or in the city of Baltimore. In the smaller counties, the probability of their existence was not so great, because the people residing therein, were so much better acquainted with each other. The remedy proposed would fail to answer the object and would be a dead letter upon the Statute Book.

How, then, was the Convention to act? By prescribing and setting forth plainly and emphatically, what this great constitutional right was, and when that shall have been done, to cultivate on the part of the citizens of the State a due appreciation of its value, to make every man free to exercise this inestimable privilege, and to make it his interest and his duty to protect it alike from secret corruption or open invasion. If we had an enlightened people—if every man was

made to understand his constitutional rights, and to cultivate in his bosom a love of country, and a devotion to its institutions—every man would be made the guardian of this right. We should then depend neither on courts of justice, nor jurors, nor officers for the enforcement of the right, or for its immunity from violation. His life, upon it, if the punishment were made commensurate with the offence, there need be but one or two convictions to put an end to such offences.

How were these frauds to be checked? He thought that the best protection was that which he had indicated. It was by an enlightened public opinion—it was by instructing the rising generation—by multiplying school-houses, and thus ensuring a sound, healthy, moral condition of the public mind. For wherever there was an enlightened public opinion, the rights of every man would be guarded and respected, just as wherever there was an ignorant people, there would be a people that could be led by designing men to the commission of fraud, perjury, or other crimes.

But this process might be regarded as too tedious. We should then guard against these frauds by giving to the legislative branch of the Government, power to devise ways and means, to prevent these frauds, and if they could not be prevented, they should be made the subject of exemplary punishment.

He referred to the registry law which had been passed some years ago, and to its repeal after a brief existence. It was a failure. He was a member of the Legislature, by which it had been passed and repealed. The objection against it was not that, if properly regulated, it would not answer the object for which it had been designed, but that the measure itself was unconstitutional—that the Constitution itself determined by whom, and in what manner the elective franchise should be exercised, and that the Legislature in undertaking to impose restrictions unknown to the Constitution, exercised a power not given to it, and that, therefore, the law was null and void.

Mr. R. also suggested, as a means of protecting this right, a small tax, to be laid by the Legislature, for purposes of education. He cared not how inconsiderable the sum might be.

It had been said, that in the violent combats of party which might occur, not only this right but every other which was dear to us, might be taken away. He had no such apprehension. Such was his confidence in the general patriotism and intelligence of the people of the country; that he did not think our institutions would ever be endangered from this source; for whenever any party, however strong, should attempt to trample upon our Constitutional rights, it would soon find itself hooted into a very small minority. The whole history of the country had demonstrated that, however violent the struggles of party might be with each other, the moment the country was in peril, both were found ready to do their whole duty to it. Such, he believed, would ever be the case. The struggles of party would continue to be, as they had always been,