

enormity. And he thought that in pursuing it with such cruel rigor, the Convention was in imminent danger of carrying its fancied detestation and horror quite too far. It seemed as though gentlemen all round were running a Gilpin race, seeking to elevate the political character, by the application of a remedy that caused human nature instinctively to shudder.

An additional amendment had been proposed, which went so far as to deprive the Chief Executive officer of the State, of the power of pardon upon convictions for this offence. What a spectacle would such a constitutional feature present to the world.

Murder, arson, larceny, crimes of all grades and description, might in all their horrid array stalk throughout the length and breadth of our State. And yet for them all, there was pardon. However devastating and demoralizing their influence, the clemency of the Executive was still open. But for the man who dared, whatever might be the circumstances, to give or receive the most trifling bribe, there was no mercy, no hope, this side the grave. Like Cain of old, he must wander the world, bearing upon his brow the mark of shame and the impress of infamy. Surely, gentlemen would pause ere they gave their sanction to such a measure; the consequences may be of the most fearful character. Though the political Cains might be few; yet because their degradation and dishonor could not be wiped out, they would inevitably, like other desperadoes, become moral monsters—infusing their poison into the very vitals of the body politic. Let us be careful then, how we make unpardonable crimes, lest those whom we make inhuman and desperate, deal with us fearfully. The right of suffrage is the exalted privilege of a freeman and should not be lightly wrested from him.

If, then, you desire to destroy bribery, let the punishment be modified, and made proportionate to the offence. No jury (and he expressed his gratification that such was the fact,) could be induced to convict; the penalty absolutely victimized—and therefore defeated the very object sought to be obtained by its extreme and most disproportionate severity.

Before the subject was finally disposed of, he expressed the hope that gentlemen in their great zeal to prevent bribery, would again consider the propriety of prescribing some adequate punishment to destroy the system of double voting, so often alluded to in the beginning of this discussion. He regarded this evil as far the worst of the two. The man who deposits a series of votes, defrauds a whole political community of their rights, and destroys the very spirit upon which our government rests, whilst the voter who suffers himself to become the victim of bribery, deposits but one ballot to which he is legitimately entitled, and involves only himself and his tempter. He expressed the confident belief, that if the Convention was careful to proportion the punishment properly to the offence, the people every where would most cheerfully co-operate in our labors, by strictly observing the mandates of the Constitution and by seeking to

purify the elective franchise in every section of the State.

Mr. CHAMBERS regarded bribery of voters as a crime of the greatest enormity, and one of which no man who had a correct sense of honor and of right moral principle, should be guilty. He expressed his regret to see a spirit prevalent in this body, which while it admitted the magnitude and mischiefs of the crime, obstructed the adoption *seriatim* of each particular measure offered for its correction.

We shall egregiously fail in our duty, if we omit to insert in our Constitution some provision effectually to arrest this vice, which is now stalking abroad through the land, and has made its appearance, as is said, into all classes and circles of society, even amongst those who are in all other particulars elevated in their moral character and worth.

The vice of bribery could not be too soon assailed and put down. The most effectual as well as most prompt means to arrest it, ought to be employed. He was willing to adopt any suggestion, or any amendment, calculated to effect it. To most of the suggestions coming from the gentleman from Queen Anne, (Mr. SPENCER,) he had no objection, but he was opposed to the modification of the executive power as proposed. The fact had been stated and was notorious, that in former instances the Governor had interposed his authority to shield offenders from punishment; in some cases by *nolle prosequi*, to prevent trial, and in others by pardon after conviction. Let this be prevented for the future. In general it might be well to leave some discretionary power with the Governor to remit penalties for crimes, but this should be an exception. It is the crying vice of the times. The rapidity with which it is spreading, and its pernicious and corrupting influence on the ballot-box, called for the utmost certainty as well as severity of punishment. We are now preparing for a fresh start in our political history, with a remodeled and renovated code of organic law; let us move off from the beginning with a firm and decided purpose, to frown upon any and every approach to this detestable and mischievous practice, and thus enlist the great lever of public sentiment against it. Let us give the lead and the tone to that public sentiment. The people expect us to arrest this torrent of corruption, and will sustain us in our efforts to do it. Those persons, if there be such, of high and honorable feeling, who have in a moment of excitement yielded to the example around them so far as to participate, in some degree, in this vice, will give a most attentive ear to your solemn admonition. He believed most firmly that those who had been active in these practices, would be among the very first to thank us for a provision which will make it impossible to continue such a course. They all perceive, as every man must, the debasing, corrupting effects of this vice, and will be most happy to have a reason and a motive on which they can place their refusal, further to pursue a course which their feelings and their conscience detest and loathe.

It is said the modification is designed to leave