

manded upon the requisition of the Governor of Pennsylvania, to answer what? To answer the high crime of having employed agents in the State of Pennsylvania to arrest and bring to him his slave, at his home in Maryland, under the act of Congress passed for that purpose. For doing this without his ever having been in the State of Pennsylvania, under the law of that State, if he understood it, if the people of this country understood it, if the people of the State of Maryland understood it, was a penitentiary offence—and which penalty, if Mitchell should be delivered up to be tried by that law, would be visited upon him, by incarceration in the State prison—to be tried, condemned and imprisoned, under the charge of kidnapping, when the only offence committed was, that he dared to receive his own property, at his own house, in his own State. Nor is this all. The two agents who assisted in reclaiming his property are now confined within the penitentiary walls of the State of Pennsylvania, having been condemned and sentenced under the very law by virtue of which this requisition is made, in order to enforce it against Mitchell. Sir, are we to extend no helping hand to those who cannot help themselves? Are these two men, who have jeopardized and been deprived of their liberty for standing by the institutions of our State and the rights of its citizens, to receive nothing from us but remorseless delay, to prolong their sufferings and their disgrace? Does not every feeling of the human heart, of State pride, of common interest in a common cause, appeal to us to use every effort, to exhaust every remedy, and apply every means to unbolt their prison doors and relieve their sufferings? For one, in a case like this, he could not be tied down to a construction of power that would limit his action in giving relief, or steel his heart to the wrongs endured by these men. Besides, our action was of importance, if for nothing else, to fix the attention of the people of the State and of the whole Union upon this evident, open, direct violation of the peace measures passed by Congress in the execution of the State law of Pennsylvania—a law which amounted to an open nullification by a State of an act of the General Government, passed to save the Union and the Constitution from destruction. The people were interested in it—this Convention, as the representatives of the people, were interested in it—and they, as the representatives of the people, should, in a manner as public as their action can make it, disseminate this light amongst them, that they may see and know how and in what manner their rights are outraged, by those who have in a solemn compact plighted their faith to respect them.

We are here clothed with the sovereign rights of the people—in fact, are the people in epitome; was this the time, then—are we the persons to talk about the sorry matter of dollars and cents, and hold ourselves down to technicalities, the legality of our powers and duties, when the rights of our people are invaded and one of their best citizens demanded to answer for the “crime” of taking back to his possession his own property? He thought not. He thought that we should not be held to the rigid rule, to the Record

in such cases. Why, this was the only law of all the compromise measures in which Maryland was interested. It was the only one in that great series of measures that the South stood on upon that eventful occasion. Maryland, Virginia, and the border slave States, more than any others, were deeply, vitally concerned in the due observance of each and every one of the laws comprised in that adjustment. Violate one—you annul the contract, and by that violation trample into the dust the rights of the party injured. Maryland and the border States have stood by that contract, are willing to stand by it for all time to come, yet a State contiguous to them had passed laws nullifying the laws of Congress—a bond of union by which the States were bound together—taking their best citizens for reclaiming their property, manacled them in the dungeons of a State prison, and in the face of all this, when information was sought to be spread among the people of Maryland, that this might be known, what was to be done by them? Why, we are to be told that we should not move a finger, because if we do, we go beyond the record and the sphere of our duty. He must dissent from this doctrine. This Convention had as much to do with this question as they had to do with other matters that had claimed their attention during its sittings. The publication of the Governor’s message, the appointment of the committee of twenty-one, as referred to by the gentleman from Prince George’s, to take the question of adjustment into consideration, and to endorse this very bill, which was infringed now by the requisition of the Governor of Pennsylvania, when before the Congress of the United States—all required just as much the power of the Convention as that which was now sought to be exercised by the action to be taken by this Convention. Where, then, was the argument of want of powers? This action of the Convention answered that we had it.

He could not sit still without expressing these opinions. He hoped that these papers would be read, printed, and considered, and if it should be necessary, an expression of the feelings and opinions of this Convention be put forth in some shape or form, by way of resolution or otherwise, so that the people of Maryland might know what had been done in reference to some of their citizens, and the people of the whole country might know the action of those who were attempting to disturb this great compromise, this great law of the Union, without which the Union would cease to exist. And for the further purpose of giving relief to those who now were felons in a State prison for standing by our citizens, the institutions of our State, and the execution of laws upon which the safety of the confederacy stands.

The President then announced as the committee, Messrs. Sollers, Shriver, Bowie, Howard, Williams, Lloyd and McHenry.

The Convention then resumed the consideration of the report of the committee on the Executive department.

Mr. CHAMBERS, of Kent, said that he was not aware that the consideration of that part of the Executive report relating to the oath of office