

grown rich, while the counties had not been benefited to the amount of a dollar. Now, this was the true state of things, and yet we were constantly taunted that they must have representation according to population, and all because they had done so much for the people of Maryland! It was not so, and it was time that the people at large, should understand it, and he earnestly called the attention of gentlemen from the counties, to the fact. She was doing all she could in various ways, to strip us of our political power. He did not know how rapid were her strides in the cause of abolition, but he knew sufficient to satisfy him and others of the insecurity of their slave property, and were not willing to trust it under such a constitutional provision as that which had been presented for the sanction of this Convention. He would not trust Baltimore twenty years hence on that point, for those movements were always onward. Slave property was, therefore, insecure on that account. Just in proportion as you rid yourselves of the means of protection, to that extent did you lessen your hold and maintenance of that which belonged to you. And he supposed that in ten years more, we should have another Convention, and finally we would be stripped of all that we now possessed. He trusted, and he hoped, he would not appeal to the members from the counties in vain. That they would vote against a proposition to strip them of what little remnant of property was left to them.

Mr. PHELPS said, he was opposed throughout to the proposition of the gentleman from the city of Baltimore, [Mr. Brent.] He regarded it as radically wrong, both in principle, and in detail, and if engrafted in the Constitution without proper restrictions, it would place it in the power of even a meagre minority to overrule the fundamental law of the land. In examining the different Constitutions of the several States of the Union, it will be found that whenever it is provided the people at the ballot box shall have the right to call a Convention, it requires the vote of the majority of all the people in the State, as compared with some general election. But, Mr. President, if this amendment prevail, a bare plurality vote, of perhaps a small minority of the people, may every ten years call a Convention, and re-enact the scenes which we have been witnessing in these Halls for the last six months. The experience of the past, should have some influence upon the future, and it becomes our duty, so to construct the Constitution of this State, that the rights of the majority, should not be overthrown by the action of the minority. This Convention, Mr. President, has been called by the vote of a small minority of the people of Maryland. There are over sixty thousand votes in this State, and at the last May election, held to determine the question of holding this Convention, only about twenty thousand votes were cast. About one-third only of the popular vote was cast, and this Convention is now assembled by virtue of a majority of the votes, not of the sixty thousand electors of the State, but of twenty thousand only. Again, Mr. President,

when this Constitution shall be submitted to the people of Maryland for their adoption, or rejection, it may, and probably will so happen, that a mere plurality vote will decide the contest. If this should be so, and the Constitution be ratified by less than a majority of all the votes in Maryland, he would ask gentlemen of this Convention, whether this would be in accordance with the great principles of our republican institutions? He would respectfully inquire whether this would not be in direct conflict with the well established doctrines of the entire republican party throughout the whole country? He would inquire whether any gentleman upon this floor was prepared to rise in his place and sustain this doctrine? Gentlemen must perceive the position to which these principles when practically applied, must lead. If once solemnly recognized by Constitutional law, the rights of majorities will no longer be secure, but it will frequently happen that the minorities will triumph, and may even overthrow the government itself.

The proposition now under debate would lead to this precise result. If the proposition of the gentleman from Baltimore city is to prevail, he desired to see it so modified as nothing less than a majority of the popular vote of the whole State as compared with some general, and full election, should be competent to call a Convention to re-organize the Constitution, and he would like to see the proposition further amended so as to require a majority of all the votes of the State to adopt the Constitution after it shall have been formed.

He could not well see how any gentleman could object to these modifications. Surely no Democratic reformer can gainsay these principles. None will pretend to deny that the will of the majority constitutionally and legally expressed, should triumph in mere matters of law, over the minority. Whether majorities, much less minorities, from mere caprice, or from love of change, should be privileged at any time and in any manner, to upset the government, and subvert the Constitution itself, is a different question. For himself, he was free to confess he would like to see some restriction thrown around the exercise of this power. Circumstanced as Maryland is, if this proposition be even modified as proposed, candor compelled him to say he should then vote against it. He greatly preferred some other mode of changing the Constitution of the State from that proposed by the Honorable gentleman from the city of Baltimore. He was opposed, in the first place, to the continued and never ending agitation. He desired above all things, a fixed and stable government. The mind required repose. If this amendment prevail, every ten years agitators and demagogues will be seen traversing the whole State, spreading broadcast through the land the doctrines of Constitutional Reform, and the people made discontented with their government, however wholesome its provisions may be. Again, Mr. President, in ten years more the city of Baltimore will contain a majority of the popular vote of the whole State, and will therefore have it completely