

State shall be opposed thereto, that the said article shall be inoperative and of no effect, otherwise to be and remain in full force and effect in law."

Mr. BRISCOE said: I do not propose to detain the convention by any extended discussion upon this amendment. From the opening of this convention I have eschewed all extended discussion upon the various matters appertaining to the subject of slavery. I hope that the convention will give to the people of Maryland a fair opportunity of determining, if this constitution is to prevail, by which it is proposed that the institution of slavery in this State shall be abolished; that no compensation shall be granted to the slaveholders, to those who will be deprived of their property by this constitution if it shall be adopted.

I knew very well when this convention assembled here, that there were certain things predetermined. I knew very well when the standard of abolitionism was first raised at the instance of the President of the United States, under his proclamation of the 10th of March, that there was a party then being organized in this State, sustained by all the power of the government, to carry out practically the recommendation of that proclamation. I confess that I have not been astonished that this convention has come to the conclusion to wipe out that institution. I came here with very little hope that the action of this convention would result in anything likely to continue it any longer as an institution of this State. But when I found that the convention had gone further, and had violated what I knew to be the wish of the President of the United States himself, that compensation should be granted to the slave owner, I must confess it struck me with astonishment. I simply offer this motion to test the sense of the house, and to give them an opportunity to say whether the people of Maryland in all time to come shall be deprived of the right here taken from them by an act, as I believe, of sheer and absolute despotism.

I came here, as I said in the beginning, determined to take very little part in the discussion in this convention. I was blessed in one respect. I expected very little from it, and therefore shall go away from it very little disappointed. I had learned in the past to look to the opinions of those men who foretold to us what would be the results when the element of abolitionism seized upon the popular mind. I had seen it proclaimed everywhere, and more particularly in the opinion of the great Clay, who with prophetic sagacity said if the abolitionists should assume the ascendancy in the country:

"With them the rights of property are nothing; the deficiency of the powers of the general government are nothing; the acknowledged and incontestible powers of the States

are nothing; civil war, a dissolution of the Union, and the overthrow of a government in which are concentrated the fondest hopes of the civilized world, are nothing. A single idea has taken possession of their minds and onward they pursue it, overlooking all barriers, reckless and regardless of all consequences."

We have seen the prophecy of Mr. Clay fulfilled. Within the last two years that party has assumed the control; and we have seen the result, not only in the condition of the country at large, but in the action of this convention. The great Webster, too, said of the same party—the abolitionists:

"Let these infernal fanatics get possession of the government, and they will treat the decisions of the supreme court with contempt; they will make laws to suit themselves; they will lay violent hands on all who disagree with them: they will bankrupt the whole country, and finally deluge it in blood."

When the President of the United States enunciated in his proclamation the necessity of wiping out this institution, and when I saw a party organization raised in this State for the purpose of accomplishing this recommendation, I ceased to have hope that any rights of mine, that any rights appertaining to the people of the State would be respected if they stood in the way of the accomplishment of that great purpose—the destruction of the institution of slavery.

These men who act with that party organization may be as conscientious and as sincere in their motives as I am in mine; but we see the prophecies of Clay and Webster illustrated to-day, and demonstrated all over the Union. These men, having obtained possession of your national government are seizing upon your State governments, and they are reckless and heedless of all consequences in accomplishing their great purpose, the purpose that gave this convention life and being, the putting to death of the institution of slavery.

I was prepared for the determination on the part of this convention to destroy that institution; but that they would deprive the people of Maryland of all opportunity to avail themselves of that returning sense of justice, which I believe sooner or later will come, passes all reason and common justice. But I will make no argument upon it. I simply ask that this question shall be determined by the people at the ballot-box, when the constitution shall be submitted to them for their rejection or adoption, that they may say whether or not the legislature shall be forever prohibited from making compensation for the slaves taken from them and set free by this constitution.

Mr. ABBOTT called for the previous question.

Mr. CLARKE demanded the yeas and nays, which were ordered.

The question being taken on sustaining