

right of suffrage, unwarranted by any principle of law, equity or justice. It is well calculated to produce in the minds of the manly and independent citizens throughout the State, a feeling of hatred towards the powers that rule, and to engender in the heart a bitterness of venom which may break out some of these days, if persisted in, in something worse—something more gloomy and sad than anything which has occurred within the limits of our State. I would read a declaration of an illustrious citizen of the past; because we of the present day seem to have forgotten that such men ever existed in those days which tried men's souls. We seem to have forgotten the lessons which they taught us, and which the history of those days teaches us. We seem to have forgotten entirely the great principles upon which the government they established was founded. I read from a speech of John Hancock, delivered in Boston, as long ago as 1774 :

"It is to the last degree vicious and infamous to attempt to support a government which manifestly tends to render the persons and property of the governed insecure. Some boast of being friends to government; I am a friend to righteous government, to a government founded on reason and justice; but I glory in publicly avowing my eternal enmity to tyranny."

Such, sir, may have to be the open declarations of some of our own fellow-citizens. I would avert anything of the kind if I had power to do it; but it seems impossible to stem or to check in the slightest degree the torrent of oppression which is sweeping down the rights of the citizens of the State, unless they fall into one current, that current represented by the majority controlling this convention.

"The paramount question," as has been asserted here over and over again, upon which the people of Maryland were called to decide, when voting for or against the convention, was the abolition of slavery. The abolition of slavery is a small loss to the citizens who sustain it, in comparison to the privation of the exercise of the elective franchise right.—But small as it is, there might have been something like a show of justice exhibited in the determination of that question by providing that those who had been deprived of their property might receive some compensation for it in the future, if there is an inability to do it in the present. The failure to do this calls to my mind the character of the abolitionists, as portrayed by the great Clay, as read by my friend on my left (Mr. Briscoe) last night. It cannot be too often repeated. Its truth has been verified. It has been realized so strongly in the present day that we are surprised at the prescience and foreknowledge of the great statesman who uttered these sentiments. I will read that paragraph again. It is from a speech delivered by Henry Clay against the insidious policy of the abolitionists :

"Abolitionism! With abolitionists the rights of property are nothing; the deficiency of the powers of the general government is nothing; the acknowledged and incoutestable powers of the States are nothing; a dissolution of the Union and the overthrow of a government in which are concentrated the hopes of a civilized world are nothing. A single idea has taken possession of their minds, and onward they pursue it, overleaping all barriers, reckless and regardless of all consequences."

Such has been the history of abolitionism for the last few years. Such is the history of abolitionism in its present stage. Such has been the history of abolitionism in the action of this convention. How well be understood their character this paragraph clearly shows. The effort upon the part of this convention at consolidation is so manifest, from the debates in the discussion of various questions, and from the acts of this body on various provisions incorporated in this constitution, that we are forewarned to look with fear and apprehension upon the consequences of such centralization of power as seems to be conceded to the federal government by the majority of this convention. This is but another step to that end.

There must be, I opine, some apprehension existing in the minds of gentlemen here that their work will not take so well with the people after all; and that therefore it is necessary to hedge them in, or to keep them out from the ballot-box, the great last refuge of the free man—not the last, I hope, but the great refuge of the free man; thereby to enable them the more securely to take the step towards centralization of power, as has been frequently indicated in the debate, and strongly indicated in some of the provisions of the constitution. It arises from a dread of a free people and a love of power. We should not forget that a free ballot, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, as appeared to that great man, Jefferson, is formidable to tyrants only. They alone dread the effects of a free ballot, free speech and a free press. I am drawn to infer from the action of this convention—because I know it will be their conclusion, as we have been so advertised by a member upon this floor—that it is the operation of such apprehension that their work will fail to commend itself to the majority of the people of the State, which leads them to throw these restraints about the ballot-box, and prohibit the free exercise of that great right which I have been taught to esteem as a heritage inestimable in value, transmitted by a long line of ancestors, dating back to nearly two hundred years ago, and one which I had hoped to be able to transmit as a part of our constitution untarnished to those who may come after us.

[The twenty minutes having expired, the hammer fell.]
Mr. PETER. I regret that I was absent from