

and elaborate, to establish the fact that the proper interpretation of the theory of the Government of the United States, is to be found in that laid down by the States' rights men of our day and of the days that have gone before us. I find it almost impossible to answer the gentleman who has just taken his seat—I am willing to say that for him—many things that he said were so utterly wild. At the close of his speech, he even wished us to believe that the States' rights theory would have been the proper theory, by following which this war could have been avoided. Does the gentleman altogether disregard the facts of history? Does he pay no attention to the political and military history of the inception of this rebellion? Does he pretend to ignore the embryo existence of this rebellion for the last thirty or forty years, embodied in what he calls the States' rights party?

I declare here to-day that I know something of that party. I know something about the leaders of this rebellion: some of them at least. And I never heard any thing so wild as the conclusion of the gentleman's argument, which asserted that the adoption of the States' rights theory by this Government would have avoided this war. But I propose at a later stage of my argument to meet the statement to which I have now only casually alluded. Living as we are to-day in the midst of a practical denial that the States' rights theory is the proper interpretation of our form of government, those who to-day advocate that theory are far more worthy of condemnation than those of our ancestors who avowed their belief in that theory. There was some excuse for our ancestors. It was then an untried experiment. It was said, I believe by James Monroe, that there were three great epochs of free government upon this earth. First, the establishment of the ancient republics of Greece and Rome; second, the establishment of those founded upon the ruins of the Roman empire; and lastly, the present epoch, of the experiment of a republican government, which we are trying, and which they put in definite form when they made the Constitution under which we live. They did not then see the fallacy of the States' rights theory. A great many of them were wrong in being carried away by it, but they had not witnessed the utter ruin which it would entail upon the country. But what excuse can there be for men who stand here to-day and advocate that theory, when it is evident that there cannot possibly exist upon this continent, within the generally admitted boundaries of the United States, any other than one consolidated government; or, on the other hand, universal anarchy, chaos and political death.

I have had great difficulty in determining exactly where these gentlemen who have addressed the Convention, stand upon the States'

rights doctrine; although I have no difficulty in coming at a proper conclusion as to the results to which their arguments lead. But when they undertake to state the matter distinctly, I understood the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke) who first addressed the Convention, to declare that he was not in favor of secession. I did not so understand the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Belt) who last spoke. I understood the theory of the first gentleman (Mr. Clarke) to be this, although it was very difficult to understand him: that the States were sovereign as States; that they yielded up a sufficient amount of their sovereignty to the General Government to deprive them, among other things, of the power of seceding from the General Government. I believe that was about the gist of it. [Mr. C. nodded his head in assent.] The absurdity of such a theory appears upon its face. If they have yielded up that portion of their sovereignty which gives them the right to act in any sovereign capacity as a sovereignty, under the general acceptance of the term, that admits the whole question at issue. If they have no right to secede, what attribute of sovereignty does the gentleman claim for them? The question before us is, what is the supreme power in the land. To what power in this land do we owe paramount allegiance? Is it to the State of Maryland or the Constitution of the United States, and the laws made in pursuance thereof? In answer to that question, the gentleman comes forward and assures us that Maryland, to a limited extent, is sovereign, its sovereignty being limited just enough to prevent her acting in an independent capacity. At the same time he has the effrontery to demand of us that we shall acknowledge paramount allegiance to the State of Maryland.

Mr. CLARKE. I say that paramount allegiance is due to each in its proper sphere.

Mr. PUGH. What we wish to announce here is that paramount allegiance is due from us somewhere. We contemplate declaring in this article where that paramount allegiance is due; for the very reason that in these terrible days it is not clearly understood where it is due and what is to be recognized as sovereign in this country. If the doctrine the gentleman has stated, is that the State of Maryland is to a certain extent sovereign, and to a certain other extent not sovereign, it is only another form of the old delusion which has dragged this country to ruin. I have never before met with the States' rights doctrine in this peculiar mild form; but its aspect to me is just as hideous, its features to me just as revolting, in this shape as in any other; because I look at practical results. Although in that State where I have heard so much of the States' rights doctrine, it never was presented in this peculiar form, yet I have the same abhorrence for it in this form,