

any such, is quite unfounded. We were about as well informed, certainly not more so, than every other member of this Convention, when this item in the bill of rights was adopted; for it was virtually adopted by the majority of the committee before it saw the light of the committee-room. I, however, yield to the request of several gentlemen, and propose to give my views upon this subject.

But I have been influenced to address this house by other considerations. I have witnessed with much regret the temper that seems to prevail here in regard to debate in general. In a life now somewhat beyond the ordinary period, I have been a member of various legislative and other bodies where discussions have been had. But I have never, that I recollect, heard in any one of them such a general tone of apparent submission to the discretion, to the decreed will, of those who were auditors. I never saw such a general exhibition of an assumed willingness on the part of those who listen to forego some claim they had to restrain those who addressed them. I have all my life been taught to hear gentlemen, when assembled to debate and decide upon particular questions, as having equal privilege to give all the views which they may entertain upon that subject; not to do so at the pleasure, at the discretion, and as the favor, of any particular portion of the body. We have heard over and over again, that we are *permitted* here to express our views. That itself is proof that all the one side of the argument is right, and all the other side is wrong.

Now, sir, this is a sort of favor which I do not hold it is in the power of the majority to withhold from the minority. If there be any priority of claim or right to be heard, it is on the part of those who are the minority. If they cannot resist the action of the majority, they should at least express their reasons for dissent. And there has not only been this apparent assumption of great merit for indulgence on the part of the majority, but the most offensive terms have been applied to those who differ with the majority. Gentlemen have not been told *in totidem verbis*—"You are traitors; you are rebels; you ought to have General Wallace and his troops brought here." But they have had applied to them terms not less offensive.

Why, sir, what is the license which every American citizen, which every Maryland citizen claims? The license of debate, in such terms as he may think proper, whatever may be the question brought before the body. What has Mr. Webster said upon this subject?

"Free speech is a homestead right, a fire-side privilege. It has ever been enjoyed in every house, cottage and cabin in the nation. It is not to be drawn in controversy. It is as undoubted as the right of breathing the air,

and walking on the earth. It is a right to be maintained in peace and in war. It is a right which cannot be invaded without destroying constitutional liberty. Hence this right should be guarded and protected by the freemen of the country with a jealous care, unless they are prepared —"

For what? Why, what has been suggested as a possible prelude here:

"— unless they are prepared for chains and anarchy."

Now, this is a subject far beyond the limits contemplated by Mr. Webster, although we may not occupy the ground he does, of entire freedom of speech. It is a subject which involves from necessity the dissolution of the Union. But is this the first time this question was ever discussed? Have not gentlemen told us over and over again—is it not a notorious fact—that this is a question that has divided the sentiments and opinions of the brightest intellects, and the purest patriots of this country? It was discussed, we all know, years and years ago, when no human being dreamed of its resulting as it now has, in such a conflict between different portions of this once happy nation as we now witness. And was it ever heard before—can gentlemen find in all the discussions with which we have been favored, history after history, book after book, speech after speech—can any one point to a solitary allusion to the doctrine now broached here, that it is a subject not within the purview of this right of free speech? No, sir, nobody ever dreamed of it; nobody ever thought of it; nobody ever thought it a doctrine too dangerous to be discussed by freemen. Here, and for the first time, we are told that to advocate what we do is treason.

Now, sir, I do not go to the extent of those gentlemen with whom I have generally acted. But I am like Mr. Webster in that particular at least: and a very humble imitation. I go for the freedom of speech; and whether it be on the one side or the other; whether it be to advocate my doctrine or to dispute it; I will stand by that right of speech at the peril of the pistol, or the sword, or the dagger. And I will hold up my voice against that brow-beating system which would put down gentlemen who may advocate this doctrine as strongly as ever it was advocated, or even more so.

But before I proceed with the argument in this case, there are some little matters entirely unconnected with it, which deserve at my hands some notice. And I prefer preceding those by an effort to extricate the memory of a man who was my personal friend; who was a patriot; who was beloved by a large portion of the American people; who has descended to his grave with a halo about his memory which any citizen of the country may well envy. I would desire to say a word or two in explanation of what if not