

having known others who paid it—it was a mistake to say that it was grievous and oppressive. I denied the statement as a statement of fact, because I had lived under the operations of such a tax. And I do now deny the statement as a statement of fact, whoever makes it. It was the law in Virginia, where resided and acted some of the wisest statesmen of this country, to which the gentleman himself has already incidentally alluded.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I am very happy to hear that the gentleman exempts himself—for I believe “exemption” is the fashionable phrase now—exempts himself from conscription to the new doctrine.

Mr. PUGH. I do not exempt myself from my words, for I repeat them. But I exempt myself from the interpretation put upon them.

Mr. CHAMBERS. He does not choose to be classed among those who think that our forefathers were fools, and that the men of the last Convention were knaves. He exempts himself from any such imputation as that.

Mr. PUGH. Undoubtedly I do.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I have been taught to believe in the verity of the old maxim—actions speak louder than words. Now, where is the veneration for the patriarchs who have gone down to the grave full of honor, and whose names will be borne to posterity with reverence? At least I trust so; God forbid that this irreverent generation should propagate that particular characteristic of itself. Where is the reverence for such men? What are we doing? Treading their work under our feet; denouncing it as incompetent; adopting notions which they never entertained. Never entertained? Which they repudiated; which they denounced; which they abjured; which they considered heretical. And we glory in it. We have all knowledge with us; we are the first to pioneer a new road, an untrodden path. We go to glory by steps which our forefathers knew nothing of, or rather which they thought not fit to tread. Now, the gentleman exempts himself from that. But that does not at all change the character of my argument.

Mr. President, is there a family, I may almost say, is there an individual, who has not had motives for personal excitement, for agitation of feeling, for a course of thought utterly inconsistent with the calmness required in the preparation of a paper, which, as Judge Marshall says, looks to be immortal, to teach lessons of political wisdom to those who are to come after us; telling them what men, not in a time of war, of strife, of bloodshed, of carnage and death—but what men, in the pursuit of their rights of property and person and reputation, would ask for them? Would any man go to the camp to prepare a Constitution? Would any man go to the general's tent, and amid the noise and bustle of conflicting armies, undertake to prepare a Constitution for the government of a people for

all time? This is an extreme proposition; but sometimes extreme propositions are the best test of truth. We are in the midst of a camp. Every day the roar of the cannon sounds in our ears; every day the news is brought to us of the death of some beloved son, some beloved husband, some being upon whom the wife and the infant child depend for maintenance and support. We are virtually in the tent; we are virtually in a war which gives character to our thoughts and our actions; and which will set our thoughts and our actions in a direction very different from that which they ought to take while we are framing a Constitution for the government of future generations. And are not gentlemen sensible of this fact? Is there a man within the sound of my voice that does not feel, that will not affirmatively respond to this demand made to his conscience—who will not confirm the truth of the statement that he is not in the cool, calm, deliberate temper fitted for the performance of such a duty as this?

Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I do not mean that we shall quit the duty we are sent here to perform. But I do mean this: I do say that gentlemen, if they are sensible of this state of mind, will forbear to take this action; they will forbear to interpolate in this constitution principles and doctrines which never before have been thought proper to be entertained here, and which no State in this Union has thought it proper to adopt in their Constitution.

Now, if there is any reverence for the work of our ancestors; if there is any charity for the opinions of our neighbors and our friends; if there is any sense of incompetency upon our part to go beyond all others who have lived in times of calmness and quiet; if there is any sense of this sort resting with us, I appeal to it as a sufficient reason why gentlemen should forbear taking such steps as were never before thought proper to be taken, and glorying as some gentlemen have done to be the first to go beyond all the bounds that have ever been regarded here as including the action of other and calmer minds. I say, therefore, this is not the proper time for this article.

I say that it is not a proper subject for this bill of rights. A bill of rights is the enumeration of certain principles, which, according to the judgment of those who frame it, should be constantly kept in view for the protection of the persons, the property, and the reputations of those for whom it is made. What is the object of the Government? It is to secure us in the exercise of our personal rights, to secure us in the possession of our acknowledged property; to secure us reparation for injury done to our reputation. Does this answer any one of those purposes? How is it to do it? You cannot confer power upon the General Government; this does not do that. If you were to enact in the name of