

purpose to have made the Committee room the scene of debate upon a proposition of this kind, which, whether right or wrong, is of so fundamental a character, is so entirely proved or disproved by the whole history of the country, that it was perfectly unnecessary to invite discussion upon it in the Committee.

It is evident that in the discussion of this proposition, the gentlemen upon each side have in some respects differed from each other in their arguments; and it has been especially the case that gentlemen who have addressed the House, belonging to the minority, have with scarcely an exception proposed different views and interpretations, and different explanations with regard to the constitutional question. While there is between the different sides of this House as broad and clear and distinct a line of demarcation as could possibly be drawn upon the whole subject, this variety of views renders somewhat difficult the discussion I have to perform, because there has been no uniform system of interpretation adopted by the gentlemen who have addressed the House.

The second gentleman from Prince George's who addressed the Convention, (Mr. Belt,) in his very able, compact and philosophical argument, took the broad ground that there was no sovereignty at all in the Government of the United States. He took the ground that the States were not only sovereign in a general sense, but that they retained all their powers of sovereignty as intact as at the time at which the Declaration of Independence was made, or at any time antecedent to that declaration. Both himself and the first gentleman from Prince George's, (Mr. Clarke,) denied that the people of the United States, or the States of the United States, or in whatever phraseology you choose to frame the expression, were a nation in any proper sense of the term. The gentleman from Anne Arundel, (Mr. Miller,) and the gentleman from Kent, (Mr. Chambers,) have approached more nearly to the views that I entertain than any other members upon that side of the House. They have expressly acknowledged that there is sovereignty in the General Government. They have expressly acknowledged that the citizen owes allegiance to the General Government. And they have denied what I consider the argument of the gentleman from Prince George's to assert, that there is any legal power in the State to withdraw itself directly or indirectly from under the obligations of the General Government.

So far as the argument goes that this Government is no nation in any sense whatever, I shall give it a very slight consideration. It so happens that there are some ideas which are so instinctive that even in the minds of those who deny them in terms they find utterance, ideas so impressed upon the whole individual consciousness that they cannot

avoid expression. While gentlemen upon this floor have denied that the United States were a nation, the expression "nation," and the term "country," has flown forth from the mouth of every gentleman who has addressed this Convention. I am willing to leave that question to the profound instincts of the people. I am willing to leave it to the individual consciousness of the members of this body; and I shall do so after a very slight reference to the arguments and authorities upon the subject.

It may somewhat enlighten us as to the meaning of the article, if we look for a moment to the meaning of the expression "nation." What is a nation? It is a body of people associated together under some common government, recognized among the other common governments of the civilized world. Does any man pretend that the State of Maryland is a nation? No, sir; I suppose no member of this body makes any such pretension; and for the reason that it is not an organized community known in the condition of independence of any other power, to the people of the civilized world. The United States is a nation, a nation of States, but still a nation, because in its united form it stands before the people of the world as one of the great family of peoples. That fact I suppose cannot very well be denied.

What is allegiance, and where is allegiance due? It is due in some sense to the government of every State in this Union. It is due to every organized government of any subordinate character which exercises certain degrees of power. In the proper sense, which the gentleman from Kent (Mr. Chambers) has attached to the term, the sense alone in which it can be interpreted under a democratic form of government, the allegiance of the citizen is due, as recognized by the laws of the whole world, to that power or sovereignty which represents the existence of that people before the other people of the world. It is that sovereignty which claims his allegiance by birth.

Now, I propose to submit the proposition to this Convention that there is no State of this Union which has ever claimed, until very recently at least, or if it has ever claimed, had any pretensions to support the claim, that it had any right to the allegiance of a citizen as a question of birth. Every government in the world has claimed that every person born upon its soil belongs to it; and so constructively every person born upon the soil of any nation, owed perpetual allegiance to the government under which he was born. But under the Constitution of this State and the Constitution of the United States, and every authority that has ever been founded upon either of them, it has been recognized as a fact, that the moment a man leaves the State of this Union in which he was born, his right of citizenship drops from him; the mo-