

ing the representatives of the people of Maryland, in Convention assembled at the capital of the State, here to reorganize the State government, nothing could have been more foreign to my mind than an intention to participate in any of the debates of this body. I knew that here I was to meet men of age and experience—men of great strength of mind and most extensive intelligence—in whose wisdom, learning, and patriotism the people of the State have all confidence. At the same time I was not forgetful of my own want of all the prerequisites necessary to successfully defend and support, otherwise than by my votes, those great propositions which have been made by the Union men of Maryland; for the adoption of which this Convention has been called, for the perpetuity of the Union and for the good of our State. I therefore supposed that my voice would never be heard during the deliberations of this body, except on the call of the roll for the yeas and nays, or on a motion for the previous question; and it has only been within the last day or two that I have determined to throw aside the modesty which with me is sometimes a weakness or a dead weight and very oppressive, and for a very brief space of time summoning to my aid all the fortitude of my nature, trespass upon the time, attention and patience of this Convention with some expression of my views upon a question in which I feel a very deep interest, and on the proper solution of which depends, in a very large measure, the future prosperity of the State. Though having thus determined, I am not forgetful of my inability to deal with the subject now under consideration with either justice to the subject or satisfaction to myself; yet I desire to place myself on the record that my children may know after the Almighty God shall have removed their father from the stage of life, and that the descendants of my family and their collateral relations may know, and above all, that the people of my county may know, what considerations have induced me to take a stand in favor of universal freedom, and in opposition to tyranny, despotism, and misrule, in whatever shape it may be found, whether in the general administration of government or in the institutions of societies. And here, in the conclusion of this first part of my introductory remarks, I must say that during the whole of the time that I shall occupy in addressing the President of this body, I shall be unable to erase the conviction from my own mind, however erroneous that conviction may be, that in availing myself of the opportunity to give expression to my views on the momentous subject now under consideration, I am availing myself of the courtesy of the Convention rather than of a right belonging to me as a member of the Convention.

Mr. President, you have listened to the views of gentlemen learned in the law—or-

ganic, common, and statute—learned in morals, physics, and metaphysics, and deeply versed in historical lore—gentlemen of political renown, whose names are well known throughout the State, and even beyond the limits of the State,—gentlemen distinguished for their abilities as lawyers and statesmen, whose training has been first in colleges of perhaps the highest repute; then in the various courts of the State where they have long since become accustomed to public disputations in the presence and hearing of learned courts. These gentlemen have also long since habituated themselves to making popular harangues on the public stump to the multitude, and, above all, are perfectly familiar with the transaction of business by large deliberative bodies. But now, sir, you are to listen to views expressed by a plain, unvarnished, unsophisticated farmer, whose highest aspirations have ever been the growth of good crops and raising fat cattle, to obtain remunerative prices for the same, and the maintenance of a good character. From the privacy and seclusion, the quiet and retirement of the neighborhood of a small village, far removed from the din and bustle of a large commercial metropolis—far removed from the strife of party, party faction, and political intrigue—and with all his want of the erudition and experience necessary for an accomplished statesman, he has been called by the people of his county to assist in the highest council of the State—to assist in the formation of a new organic law for the people of the State, and now he is here and actually occupying the floor of this Convention in response to that call. As I have not asked for the distinguished honor which my people have seen fit to confer upon me, they alone must be held responsible for any lack of ability on my part to perform the duties which they have seen fit to impose upon me.

The subject now occupying the attention of this body is of the gravest character, and is entitled to, and I doubt not has already received at the hands of every gentleman entitled to a seat on this floor, the most careful and serious consideration, and before the final vote on the adoption or rejection of this article is taken, (which vote must be taken by the people at the public ballot box,) the voters of the State are entitled to all the light which finite wisdom can throw on the subject.

Inasmuch as the institution of negro slavery has been propagated and strengthened in this State, and in other Southern States, by popular prejudices—prejudices created by personal rather than public interests, it becomes necessary, even painfully so, to deal with the subject with ungloved hands. To attack this ebony idol, before which the people of the South have for many decades bowed in humble submission, and to whose fiat the people of the North have long been accus-