

ernment this morning; and said that it had left its footprints of desolation in St. Mary's county. He had reference I suppose to the carrying away of their slaves; perhaps some other descriptions of private property. But unless St. Mary's is an exception to the general rule of counties in Maryland, the footprints of desolation were there long before this war broke out. And that is the reason why I, as a Marylander, want to get rid of this desolating institution of slavery, because it is the cause of so many of our misfortunes. It has carried the footprints of desolation into every county in the State, even into my own county, though there are comparatively few slaves there. But even there you can find the footprints of desolation, and from the very same cause.

He also charged the people of Baltimore city with ingratitude, and talked as if the public works were made solely for the benefit of Baltimore, and paid for by the counties of Charles and St. Mary's. But I will not hold the gentleman responsible for that literally, though you would have thought, by the lamentations he made over it, that those two counties had actually constructed the Baltimore and Ohio railroad out of their own means.

Mr. BILLINGSLEY. I said that but for the members from those counties, naming them, who were the most prominent men from my own section of country in regard to works of internal improvement—but for their influence you never would have consummated that great work of internal improvement. I state it as a matter of history, that but for the votes and support of those men you never would have consummated those works of internal improvement. I said that we had paid the taxes growing out of those works, and had never complained of it, though we had never considered ourselves benefited at all by those works of internal improvement.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, sir, I take rather a broader view of the subject. I think that any work of improvement that benefits one part of the State of Maryland benefits in some proportion all parts of it. Though the city of Baltimore, at first sight at least, has had the greater benefit from these works, yet they benefit the most remote county of the State by furnishing a market for their produce. We are all bound together, and we must sink or swim together. Anything that benefits the city of Baltimore benefits the counties; and anything that benefits the counties benefits the city of Baltimore. There is no need of this narrow jealousy of one part of the State against another part of it.

I now come to the gentleman from Somerset (Mr. Jones.) I am sorry he is not now in his seat, for I want to say some kind things of him. But I perhaps can say them with a better grace in his absence. He starts off with the declaration that private property

cannot be taken for public use without compensation. That is true enough. But we do not propose to do that. We do not intend to take this property for use; but to take from slaveholders the property they wrongfully hold and set these slaves free for themselves. We do not take this property for public use.

These gentlemen say they hold their right to slaves just as they hold their right to every other kind of property. Now, I intend to look into that title a little. How do you acquire title to property? If a man buys a stolen horse, is his title reckoned a good one? One gentleman from Prince George's, (Mr. Marbury,) who I believe is not now in his seat, said that the title to slave property dated back beyond the records; by his argument there never was a time when there were no slaves. Now, I want to trace back the title and see where it originated. Do you remember anything about the treaties between the United States and every civilized power on earth in regard to the slave-trade? And do you remember what character they give to that traffic? Do they not designate it as piracy, and do not they denounce the punishment of death upon those taken in that traffic? Can an institution be good that has no other foundation than that? Trace it back to its origin, and it is piracy. It is not so with other property.

Mr. MARBURY. I would ask the gentleman if the Constitution of the United States does not say it is a good title, and if he has not sworn to support that Constitution?

Mr. SCOTT. I have so sworn, and I shall keep my oath. But I say that the title to slaves in this country, if you trace it back to its origin, is in piracy. Slavery had its origin first in captives taken in war, who were sold for slaves. But the system was so repulsive, so repugnant to every principle of common sense, and of right, and of justice, that the civilized nations of the world have joined together by treaties to prohibit that traffic, and they call it piracy, and inflict the punishment of death on all those caught in the traffic.

Mr. BELT. I would like to ask the gentleman a question. I do not ask it with any desire to interrupt the thread of his argument. I am quite sure he is as satisfied of that as any gentleman in this house, and I know it does not inconvenience him at all.

Mr. SCOTT. O! of course not.

Mr. BELT. I would like the gentleman, just at this point of his argument, to explain how it was that the Constitution of the United States provided that the slave-trade should cease in the year 1808, twenty years after the adoption of the Constitution? Because I will tell him in advance my theory about it, if he will suffer me to do so. It is this: that the men from Virginia and the men from the South in the Convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States,