

victed; and all persons held to service or labor, as slaves, are hereby declared free."

Mr. BROWN submitted the following amendment:

Add the following: "And the Legislature shall make provision from the Treasury of the State for the comfortable support and maintenance of the helpless and paupers hereby emancipated.

Mr. ABBOTT. That is for the counties to do, and not for the Legislature.

Mr. PUGH. I have some remarks to offer to the original article; will they be in order at this time?

The PRESIDENT. The Chair considers the original article and the amendment as both before the Convention.

Mr. PUGH. Nations as well as individual men pass through certain periods of change or convulsion, called crises.

Such periods in the case of nations are frequently characterized by upheavals of the general surface of society, by serious disarrangement of social order, by a disturbance of commercial and financial relations, by a rupture of many of the bonds of natural union, by a violation of what are known in quiet times to be private rights, by more or less disaster, distress, and terror. These attending conditions are aggravated or modified by the circumstances under which they arise; they may or may not be terrible according as they extend to the more intimate social relations, or are confined only to the mere political organization of society; and yet in a Government like ours, so completely interwoven are the political with the social relations, so sensitive is each to an injury done to or a benefit withheld from the other, that it is impossible for the purposes of this consideration to distinguish them.

We here to-day are assembled in the midst of one of these convulsions. A convulsion even in view of the history of all nations of far more than ordinary force, likely to produce results of far more than ordinary moment—results involving nothing less than the remodelling, to some of us, of our domestic relations; nothing less than the uprooting of some of our dearest prejudices and passions; nothing less than the total ignoring or abolishment forever of some of the old landmarks of the State; nothing less than, as it appears to most of us, the organizing out of disorder and threatened anarchy—security and happiness; safety to the State and the nation.

It is a convulsion of which we as a State only form a part, and by the unsurpassed violence of which we might be overwhelmed; a convulsion so universal in its effect that the world is shaken by its throes. To inquire immediately into the cause or causes of it, and to apply the remedy without the least delay, is our duty as men.

We have inquired, years of recorded in-

quiry are at hand, and the evidences of our own senses attest the fact, that the system of negro slavery, being as it is called a peculiar institution, is the prime cause of the civil war now raging, and which is but the bloody expression of the crisis that is upon us and in the presence of which we stand appalled. All other causes are incidental and subordinate to this the prime one.

Is there, can there be a man in this House who doubts it? Whether it was as claimed by some through an unjustifiable interference with this institution on the part of Northern men, or whether it was an inordinate demand for further support for it upon the part of slaveholders in the South, or whether it is in the nature of the institution itself to give rise to convulsions in the State by reason of its being an unnatural condition of society; whichever manner of its operation is conceded, it must be admitted that in one way or another, or through all these ways combined, it is the prime cause of the crisis; and it becomes our duty to decide whether, in view of the troubles that surround us, the institution shall not be uprooted and every vestige of it buried, enshrouded in constitutional parchment, and sunken fathoms deep in the free soil of Maryland forever; and when that is done may all coming ages echo with curses upon the man who seeks its resurrection.

This is not spoken in bitterness of spirit. It is the expression of deliberate conviction. There is much less excitement here than has been suggested by some gentlemen. I pronounce the prayer in the fullness of its force, and no patriot can look upon this question as I do and fail to utter it or indorse it. And it is a question for us to determine and to determine now.

We seem to forget the conditions that surround us, and I only say *seem*, for it can hardly be possible that we do.

What mean these researches into the past, to rake up from the cobwebs there, authority for the violability of the right to private property for instance? And, by the way, did it occur to the gentlemen who traced this right back to the period of the origin of what are known as *natural* rights, that there are one or more other natural rights, such as freedom and the right to maintain it to the death? Did it occur to them that that vested right was hardly a natural one which, under a favorable change of conditions, can stand up and knock its owner down and reverse the relations? Possibly not, since they failed to mention these trifling matters.

Why, I say, do we have these endless references to authorities, which, when examined, only show that there were men otherwise wise enough who upon this subject were simply in error?

Men did thus and so under circumstances that surrounded them. Were those circumstances similar to those of our day? We are