

The pending question was upon the following amendment, submitted by Mr. Brown:

Add to the 23d Article, 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. STOCKBRIDGE. Mr. President, I approach the discussion of the question now before this Convention with something of reluctance, and with unfeigned diffidence. It has already, at least in many of the speeches, been ably and amply discussed. Besides which, I cannot flatter myself that I can say anything which is adequate to the occasion, and to the question before us.

It is a question of paramount importance; one which is not to be reckoned, as it has been, by dollars and cents alone, going as it does to the very foundation of the social and industrial systems of our State, and shaping as it must in no slight degree the whole future of our State. Yet the question is here before us, and it must be met.

It has come here through the action, not of the enemies of the institution, but of its friends. By them has the issue been precipitated upon Maryland and upon the country. For though it is true that there had long been here many who believed that slavery was an evil socially, politically, morally, religiously; in the language of a distinguished slaveholder, "evil in its inception, in its duration, and doomed to be such in its catastrophe;" an unmixed, unmitigated evil, without palliation or defence save in necessity, yet the men who entertained those sentiments, being persuaded that its extinction could only be wrought by the slow processes of the Great Innovator, or the earthquake throes of bloody revolution, were content to pray and wait. For the sake of peace, they scarcely protested against that which in their very hearts they believed to be "the sum of all villainies." For the sake of peace, they were for long years dumb in the presence of the continued infractions of the principles of the great charter of American freedom, and the constant violations of the principles and teachings of the Great Author of our religion. For the sake of peace, they silently saw iniquity, what they believed, what they knew to be iniquity, framed into law. For the sake of peace, they saw a giant edifice of wrong built up amid scoffs, and sneers, and unmeasured denunciations of all who believed that there was any higher law than theirs; or who deemed that that law which was traced deep in the stone by the finger of Infinite Majesty, amid the lightnings and the thunderings of Sinai, had a more sacred sanction than that which was concocted in the conclave of demagogues, and lobbied through these halls in Annapolis.

So it might long have continued to be, if this power, the slave power, could have been

content to sit as absolute monarch. But even that did not content it. In its citadel of wrong it plotted to add the extinction of national existence to that of individual freedom. But in its plotting it broke the wand of enchantment; and its victims sprang from their unnatural sleep to the assertion of their life and their manhood. And now the world recognizes the hand of manifest destiny writing upon its crumbling palace walls, these words of ill omen to it, but of good cheer to the nations: "Mene, Mene," God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; "Tekel," weighed and found wanting, and palsied and dumb, in the presence of this unexpected blazing forth of Divine wrath, and the seconding of that wrath by the people, it interposes one feeble barrier after another, to stay the inexorable course of events; but in vain. And the question comes before us, as I said before, not because its enemies brought it here, but because it is brought here by its friends, and God.

It is submitted to us, the equal representatives of the sovereign power of Maryland—I say the *equal* representatives—for an effort has been made, persistently made, with singularly bad taste it seems to me, (to call it by no harsher name than that), to draw a distinction between principles and men upon this floor. Some have been called "exotic," and some "native and to the manor born," and that, with some gentlemen, has been the *ultima ratio*; nothing more was to be said. They have—

"Asked not, cared not what the scheme might be,

But if it savored of geography:

Not, does the plan to good or ill incline?

But, was the mover born within the line?"

Such gentlemen from my heart I pity. Lacking either the ability or the courage, or at least the inclination to grapple with the great questions before us, and to decide them upon principle, by their intrinsic merits, they fall back for the support of their measures and pride themselves upon that in which the most degraded slave upon the worst managed plantation in the State; the goose that waddles through the street; the terrapin or the oyster is their equal; for they are "native and to the manor born."

But *we* are here as men, equals, citizens of the United States, residents of Maryland. Some of us are resident here by the accident of birth; some are resident here by our own act of choice. Some of us were born here; some elsewhere, it may be in Massachusetts, the old Bay State. God bless her. Here rest the ashes of the honored ancestry of some of us, and some of us remember with the tenderest emotions that within the bosom of Massachusetts rest the ashes of father and mother, and ancestors for successive generations back almost to the days of