

position on record against it. As the gentleman from St. Mary's (Mr. Dent) has said, it may at least be safely trusted to the future sense of justice of the future legislators of Maryland, to the will of the people of Maryland in times of more calm reflection, when a sense of justice might impel them to make compensation for the wrong which in my judgment will be inflicted upon them if this constitution should be adopted with an emancipating clause in it.

I do most sincerely regret that these questions have to be debated in the midst of the passions, the excitement, and all the angry feelings which are necessarily incident to a state of civil war. I could have hoped that we might have got along quietly and peaceably under the constitution under which we had been living for the last fourteen or fifteen years, until these troublous times should have passed. But being here, and the convention having determined it as their sense of duty that the slaves of Maryland should be emancipated, that that institution should be suddenly, immediately, and unconditionally removed by a constitutional amendment, that the relation should be destroyed, with that question I have no further right to debate. I will say this, however; and I utter it for the calm reflection of gentlemen upon this floor, that when this convention shall have adjourned, and shall have submitted this question to the people, and when the people shall have voted upon this proposition—the people of those counties that have scarcely a solitary slave in their midst, and the people of Baltimore city that cannot understand the condition in those counties where this population is numerous, if they shall adopt this constitution—winter will then be approaching. If those slaves now comfortably housed, fed, and clothed by their owners, under the express injunctions of the law, shall be then, at the approach of that inclement season, turned out houseless, homeless, without protection, without food and without clothing upon the charities of a cold world, to get their living by their industry, women and children to be thus turned out, I suggest to those who are unacquainted with the condition of this unfortunate class of people, what will be the condition in the approaching winter, with the present high prices of food, with the present high prices of clothing? Where will they find a home? Where will they find food, and clothing to protect them? When so many of the valuable, able hands have been removed, taken away and set free, can it be expected that the owners who are left with whole families of women and helpless children, when they are now hardly able to provide food and raiment for their own families, and when the legal obligation to provide for this class is removed from them, when the tie is severed whereby they can require any obedience on the part of any of them, will feel able or

willing to furnish food, shelter, home, and clothing, to all those that will be turned out? I suggest it to the consideration of gentlemen, if no provision is to be made for these children, by putting them in a condition of apprenticeship to their present owners, for the helpless, for the idiotic, for the infirm, if they are to be turned out, they will perish of cold and hunger uncared for.

Upon the immediate proposition before the convention, I have met very few—I do not know that I have met with any—individuals in the course of my intercourse, who have expressed it as their private opinion that this property belonging to the citizens of Maryland should be taken from them without compensation from some source. Very generally it has been said it is for the benefit of the whole Union that this proposition to remove slavery from the border States is made and is insisted on. It is that, whatever may be our future, so far at least as the border States are concerned, this institution shall be removed, by way of taking away the bone of contention, and any future source of discontent, in carrying out, for instance, the constitutional provision with reference to the rendition of fugitive slaves; and other reasons have been assigned. Therefore many gentlemen have said, we think it is but fair that the Congress of the United States—and even if an amendment of the constitution for that purpose becomes necessary—that the constitution of the United States should be so amended as to give Congress the power to make compensation for the slaves that may be thus emancipated for the public benefit, peace, and future quiet of the people of the United States. This has been the remark generally, and I do not know that I have ever met with or heard of any individual who dissented from that opinion.

There is nothing in this provision in this article, no request, no expression of opinion that now or at any time hereafter the people whose property will thus be taken from them, have no claim upon the government of the United States or the people of the United States for compensation.

Will any gentleman point out to me the distinction? Will he show me how it is consistent with the provision which my friend from St. Mary's just read, that private property should not be taken for public use without adequate compensation as agreed upon or fixed by some tribunal to be established by law? How can gentlemen reconcile that declaration of fundamental law, justice, and right, with the provision in this article of the constitution which is proposed now for our consideration? Are not these slaves the private property of their present owners? As much so as any article of property that they own. Has not the institution existed, almost from the very settlement of this State, and the relation of master and slave? Has it