

possession. And if they had inquired into that mode, the barbarian despot would most probably have replied that it was none of their business. The slaves were his, and they might buy them or let them alone, just as they pleased. I do not see, under such circumstances, how we could convict the traders themselves as having stolen the slaves.

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"For look at the title by which you, with every other man in the community, must hold the lands and houses in your possession. What is its origin? The country once belonged to the Indian tribes, and the claim set up to it by England, was based upon the right of discovery. What sort of a right is that? Does my discovery of property which belongs to another man make it mine? It would be mere absurdity to pretend it. If I cannot find the true owner, I may be authorized to keep it; but as soon as he appears, I am bound to surrender it, or I become a transgressor. Manifestly, therefore, there is no law of natural justice that authorized Queen Elizabeth, or her royal successors to confer the lands of the Indians on their subjects, in the charters granted by the crown, to the Virginia colonists, or to the Pilgrim Fathers, as it is the fashion to call them, or to Lord Baltimore, or to William Penn. All this was taken for granted by the European maxims of those days, which assumed the right of claiming any land inhabited by savage heathen tribes, and calling it their own; precisely in the same way that they assumed the right of taking the natives themselves, and reducing them to bondage."

Now, I put this question to my learned friend from Baltimore city (Mr. Thomas,) who says he has a house which he was very much afraid the rebels would sack the other day; I have nothing to do with that. But I submit to him that under the law of this land, he does not hold the ground upon which his house stands, by any stronger or higher title, than I and every other slaveholder in this State holds his slaves. I commend this book of Bishop Hopkins, to the consideration of the convention. There is a great deal more upon that very subject, but I have not time to read it all. I have consumed too much time already in reading for the few moments I have left. But I commend the book to the attention of those gentlemen who desire to pursue this investigation farther. The whole subject is here reviewed, and the deliberate and unbiased judgment of one of the highest and most distinguished men in the christian church in this country is here given, that slaves in this country are held by as good, clear and perfect a title, as that by which you hold any piece of real property in this land.

It seems to me that I have now put this point effectually at rest. I have not time to give my own views upon it. But I will let it

rest here before the convention upon the authority of one of the most eminent jurists in the land; one to whom the State of Maryland will ever point with feelings of pride and of joy; and also upon the authority of that eminent churchman, Bishop Hopkins, who will live in the recollection of the people of this country when the present actors in these scenes will have faded away and be remembered no more; or if their names shall be remembered at all, they will perhaps be remembered to be execrated by those who come after them.

Men talk about the iniquity of slavery? Who were the men who represented Baltimore city in the convention of 1850? Every man in that convention voted in favor of a proposition which now stands in the present constitution, prohibiting the legislature from touching this question of slavery.

The PRESIDENT announced that the gentleman's time under the rule had expired.

Mr. CHAMBERS moved that ten minutes further time be granted.

Mr. EDELEN. I want but two or three minutes. I merely wish to call the attention of the convention to one matter which I find I have noted here. I find—and I believe I have obtained as much information on this subject from you, Mr. President, in another character, in your official capacity as the financial head of the State, as from any other source—I find that by a law of the last session of the legislature, the sum of one hundred dollars is given to every owner of a slave that enlists in the land or naval forces of the United States. Upon glancing at the journal of the house of delegates of the last session, I find some names there with which I am familiar. I recognize there the name of the gentleman from Baltimore city, the chairman of our judiciary committee (Mr. Stockbridge,) and also some names from Allegany and Washington counties. I do not now recall them more particularly. Now take my case, for instance. The rolls of your office show that I have one able-bodied negro man, who was enlisted in the naval service of the United States by General Birney, when he was in Charles county. By the votes of those gentlemen, whose names stand recorded upon that journal, they have said to me and to every other slaveholder in the State of Maryland similarly circumstanced: you have a rightful claim against the State of Maryland for one hundred dollars. And when the proper forms are gone through with, it is your duty, Mr. President, as the comptroller of the State, under that law for which those gentlemen voted, to pay me that sum. Now, how can my friends reconcile their votes in favor of that law with that which I doubt not they are prepared to cast upon this proposition? And pursue my case further. When I last left my home I had two female slaves, my do-