It seems, that the formation of the government of our country, like that of England, has not been so much the result of profound political research as of happy coincidences: if much is to be attributed to patriotism, to virtue, and to wisdom, still more must be conceded to fortune, and a favorable concurrence of circumstances. The English American colonists claimed the benefit of the whole of the English Code of laws; and especially those parts intended for the preservation of the rights and liberties of the citizen; and they adopted, in substance, the English system of government. In this general translation and adoption, some parts of the Code were improved, others neglected; and portions of the system of government were better here; others not so good as in England. The representation of the people, in the popular branch of the Colonial Legislatures, was everywhere more equal and
607 better than that of * the people of England in the House of Commons of their Parliament.(*c*)

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sion, that those who have been most anxious to destroy the Constitution of Virginia, and to substitute in its place this thing, will not be more dissatisfied now with the result of our labors, than this new Constitution will very shortly be opposed by all the people of the State. Sir, I see no wisdom in making this provision for future changes. You must give Governments time to operate on the people, and give the people time to become gradually assimilated to their institutions. Almost any thing is better than this state of perpetual uncertainty. A people may have the best form of Government that the wit of man ever devised; and yet, from its uncertainty alone, may, in effect, live under the worst Government in the world. I will do nothing to provide for a change. I will not agree to any rule of future apportionment, or to any provision for future changes called amendments to the Constitution. They who love change—who delight in public confusion—who wish to feed the cauldron and make it bubble—may vote if they please for future changes. But by what spell—by what formula are you going to bind the people to all future time? *Quis custodiet custodes?* The days of Lycurgus are gone by, when he could swear the people not to alter the Constitution until he should return *animo non revertendi.* I have no favor for this Constitution. I shall vote against its adoption, and I shall advise all the people of my district to set their faces—aye—and their shoulders against it. But if we are to have it—let us not have it with its death warrant in its very face: with the *facies hypocratica*—the sardonic grin of death upon its countenance."

The question on the proposition to insert a clause providing for future amendments was then immediately taken and decided in the negative, ayes, twenty-five, noes, sixty-eight.—(*Debates Virg. Con. of* 1829, *page* 789.)

(*c*) "The whole fabric of English liberty rose step by step, through much toil, and many sacrifices; each generation adding some new security to the work, and trusting that posterity would perfect the labor as well as enjoy the reward. A time perhaps was even then foreseen, in the visions of generous hope, by the brave knights of Parliament, and by the sober sages of justice, when the proudest ministers of the Crown should recoil from those barriers, which were then pushed aside with impunity."—2 *Hal. Mid. Ages*, 179, *Phil. edit.*