

THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION OF 1864

I.

It is a well-known fact that the two powerful and opposing forces of "freedom" and "slavery" battled with each other for years in the economic and political life of our country, till they ended in the Civil War of 1861-5. In fact, around these forces centred all the history of the United States up to that time, for they were born of our Constitution, were nursed into self-assertive strength under its provisions, and grew as the nation expanded, step by step, year by year, from one administration to another, till finally they overthrew all other ties of political fealty, religious association, and patriotic allegiance, and asserted themselves in the great question of the hour. This question was: Shall the nation be free in its domestic relations as in its government, or shall it countenance and protect negro slavery?

Although veiled under the immediate doctrine of "State's Rights," this fundamental contention soon pushed its way to the fore, and in a terrible struggle of brother against brother, was settled forever on the basis of negro emancipation and the integrity of the Union.

The state of Maryland, situated midway between the North and the South, the two great sections of the country that championed the respective sides of the question, united within her borders both the slave system, dominant in the southern counties, as well as the practically free labor of the northern counties and the mountain districts. To these must be added the city of Baltimore, a seething cauldron of divided political sentiment, and which was often opposed by the remainder of the Commonwealth in matters of state polity. Hence Maryland naturally became the scene of bitter strife, consequent upon and contempora-