

such men, and who, in consequence of this enlargement of the term required for residence would the more readily detect them. And how easy is it for individuals, or classes, to come into a ward to sleep for one night in order to be entitled to vote. This has indeed been done, if we are to believe the current reports. But the allegation is, that the frauds are perpetrated by foreigners; but they originate not with them, but with our own people who are eager to secure their votes. Another evil is that of double voting, the same persons having voted at different polls on the same day. It had been replied to this, that even if they had done so, no harm could result, that it was only a fuller expression of public opinion! But when this practice is carried into the Congressional districts in the State, the result is more important, tending as it does to change the whole character of our government. He was opposed to this system of aggregate voting. He wished to see the people represented by delegates not elected in this mode, not by an aggregated franchise, but by the votes of their own proper constituency. This was the best system. He desired an expression of the sentiments of all, on the subject, that we may, by a compromise, adopt that mode which is most approved. He wished a full expression of public opinion at the polls, and thought this amendment would effect it.

Mr. PHELPS consented to modify his proposition. But a general desire being expressed to take a vote on "thirty," he adhered to his original motion.

Mr. RIDGELY, in consequence of the impatience of the House to take the vote, very briefly addressed the Convention in correction of the erroneous views which he thought gentlemen had taken with regard to the question of residence. The gentleman from Dorchester (Mr. PHELPS) appeared to entertain the belief that thirty days residence meant actually the presence of an individual in the ward for that time previous to the election; and that he lost his right to vote because his residence was not qualified by his presence. The fact of residence must be determined by the *quo animo*. He would illustrate, by putting a case. You bring a man desirous of voting to the Judges of election at one of the wards of Baltimore city. He may have worked twenty-nine days out of the ward, and relying on his residence, comes to vote. His vote is objected to because he has not resided the thirty days required by this proposition. He replies, that although he had been at work out of the ward for twenty-nine days and actually present in the ward only one day, yet he considers that his place of residence, and he is ready to swear to the fact. Here then the question of the *quo animo* comes up for consideration and determines his right to vote.

Hitherto, he had voted against all restrictions on the suffrage. He would continue to do so. It was his wish that the ballot-box should be preserved in all its purity. And, at a proper time, it was his intention to submit a proposition for purifying the ballot-box. He thought the

familiar adage ought to be reversed, and that an ounce of cure was worth a pound of prevention in this instance. All the expedients which had hitherto been introduced, might perhaps have the effect of reaching one or two illegal votes, while they would operate against twenty legal ones. While preventing illegal voters from treading on the heels of legal ones, we may perhaps impose restrictions on legal voters. He did not think the amendment would produce good.

Mr. MERRICK said his opinion was precisely in opposition to that of the gentleman from Baltimore county on this point. He believed as the old adage quoted by the gentleman runs, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Mr. RIDGELY explained that he wished to reverse the adage.

Mr. MERRICK understood this, but differed with the gentleman, and thought now, as in times of yore, "an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure," and he therefore was for making provision to prevent the evil complained of. He had been altogether averse from the various propositions discussed during the last few days, making, as he conceived, invidious distinctions between different classes of citizens. The amendment of the gentleman from Dorchester did not partake of that character, and was in his opinion wise and salutary—more useful even than the requirement of the six months' previous residence within the particular county.

For what purpose is the qualification of six months' previous residence in the county, now required by your laws, and still without objection, proposed by the pending report to be continued? Certainly not for the purpose of insuring to the voter a sufficient knowledge of our interests and local institutions to enable him to exercise his right of suffrage understandingly—this purpose is accomplished by the requirement of twelve months' previous residence in the State—for what purpose then is this residence within the particular county of six months required? Plainly that the voter may have identity of feeling and interest with the community for whom he purposes to aid in electing a functionary, and also that he may become sufficiently known to the people of the vicinage to render the proof of his right to vote easy, and the avoidance of spurious voting by transient persons more certain. And for the very same reasons was the requirement proposed by the gentleman from Dorchester of thirty days' previous residence in the particular election district necessary and proper. To give to the great body of the resident and legal voters of every district, a sufficient opportunity of knowing who were legal voters among them, and thereby protecting themselves from frauds upon the dearest and most sacred of all the freeman's privileges, the right of selecting his own functionaries, by the abominable system of colonizing voters, as it is called; that is, of sending voters for a single night before an election from one district to another, for the purpose of there voting and controlling the election. Something had been said of correcting this abuse by penal enactments, to provide for the punishment of the fraudulent voter,—but he preferred