

it an organic law better suited to their wishes and necessities. Men would be worse than slaves if they were to hold themselves bound by such decrees, or yield a tame acquiescence in them.

The people are eternal—immortal. Government is immortal—though its peculiar form and features must be changed, so as to be adapted to the fluctuations of human life and the vicissitudes of human affairs. I will not go into a puzzle. It is admitted that the people have a right to make, and to change their Constitution. I will not go into dialectics to show, that when I admit a board principle, and say “yes, you may do this thing for yourself to-day,” I cannot cripple and invalidate that very principle by adding, “but you cannot let the people do it for themselves to-morrow.” I belong to no such school of tactics. If the people have the right to-day to change their Constitution, they have the right to-morrow. As their minds and the circumstances by which they are surrounded change, they may so change their Constitution, as to give it a more perfect adaptation to the new condition of affairs. Take an illustration—it may, perhaps, at this time of day, be regarded as an absurd one; but it will answer for the occasion. Let us imagine all the departments of the government—legislative, executive and judicial—conspiring to overthrow the influence of the people, and to monopolise all power within their own hands. Is there a man with a human heart beating in his bosom, or a mind that yet retains one lingering impression of the great principles of human freedom, that would not rebel—instantly, wildly rebel against such outrages? The people—the people alone—are to direct and control these things; and I will not desecrate their cause by calling them a “mob.”

Mr. CHAMBERS, of Kent, interposed and said, that he had applied the term to a certain class of lawless men, and hoped he was not understood as applying it to all popular assemblies. If the gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Johnson,) had understood him as saying one word either in opposition to the right of revolution, or in relation to that right at all, the gentleman was mistaken. He was fighting a shadow. Whenever oppression justified revolution, that was another affair.

Mr. JOHNSON, (continuing.) I was not answering the argument. I do not intend to do so, nor to go into a skirmish. I consider the term inappropriate to the people of Maryland. What is revolution? What is meant by the term? Let us come to the meaning of words and define them. All change is revolution.

Mr. CHAMBERS, of Kent, (in his seat.) Forcible charge.

Mr. JOHNSON, (continuing.) That is another thing. I am not to be drawn off in that way. I say, revolution is change, alteration, mutation. Revolution is going on daily, hourly, in our own nature. All the elements are in a state of revolution. The seasons gracefully revolve. I am not going to discuss what is revolution. Let not that be presented as a bug-bear here. It is not flood—it is not fire—it is not sword—it is not

cannon. Revolution is alteration. We are in the progress of revolution at this moment. We are changing, or attempting to change a past state of things to a present, and a future; and I suppose that those who come after us will be as wise as we are, with all of our experience, and, at the same time, more than our knowledge. I pass over the first and second articles of the bill of rights. The fourth article teaches revolution. Human language cannot be stronger. It teaches us that whenever the people are oppressed, it is their high and holy duty to turn out their rulers and kick off a government that galls them. That duty is inscribed upon the decrees of the political Decalogue of Maryland. It is already spoken. It is already proclaimed.

How then may you do this thing? If the people have the power, and that is conceded, then I agree with the gentleman from Baltimore, (Mr. Presstman,) that they will always have good sense enough to exercise the power discreetly and wisely. It is not for me to hold up the feeble light of my pale candle—it is not for me to confine within the compass of my own limited horizon, the desires, the hopes, the interests, the necessities of those who may follow me, and whose expanse of vision may perhaps leave my own in comparative darkness. The question is plain. I will not argue it. I will vote “aye,” from morning to night, and from night to morning on such propositions. I recollect that when a boy, some twenty years ago, in the city of New York, the American Historical Society held a meeting for the purpose of organization. I attended it. The venerable John Quincy Adams was made President, and the first duty was to form a Constitution. Article by article was adopted; and finally a young lawyer rose in his place, and offered an article, declaring that a majority of the society could change their Constitution whenever they pleased. He was about addressing the Chair, when the venerable old man said to him, “Sir, it is useless to incorporate such an article in the Constitution; for in the nineteenth century, in America, it would be ridiculous to assert a power which no one dare deny, and in which the whole world concur.”

Therefore, whether we insert in our Constitution those declarations, as to what the people may do, or whether we do not insert them, they can, and will, whenever they are in a majority, correct the abuses of their government. I say, they always will do it. There is not in the wide world a people more forbearing, more orderly, more law-loving, more attached to the true principles of republican government, than the people of this brave old State of Maryland. If any evidence of this truth is needed, we have but to point to the patient endurance with which they have consented to live under their old Constitution, without suffering themselves to be quickened to rash or evil acts.

But I will say no more. I rose to give an opinion—not to make an argument. Nor do I desire to do so; for I do not believe that any converts are to be made on this question by discussing it.

Mr. BRENT, of Baltimore city, admitted that