

amount of debt which the State might choose to incur. Still, this was not a practical difficulty, because the remedy was easy, and sure to be applied.

A few words as to the right of revolution: There was an admirable article, (the 4th,) in the bill of rights of the State of Maryland, (which Mr. D. read.) There was embodied the true principle which lay at the foundation of all our rights, and which constituted our true security for the future. It was all that we wanted of the right of revolution—more would be dangerous.

Mr. D. dwelt at some length upon the confusion of terms, and consequent confusion of ideas of those gentlemen who had spoken of all political changes, however slight, as being revolutions—as taking from the word “revolution,” all its true political meaning—and giving the same significance to things that were the most beneficial and the most noxious. Revolution in *physics* and revolution in *politics*, were things widely different in their nature. Unless the method prescribed in the Constitution was adopted, or in case none such were provided, unless the American doctrine of Mr. Webster were applied, no changes in the Constitution could, in his, [Mr. D’s,] opinion be made, except there were such a degree of oppression as would authorise a resort to the right of revolution, as defined in the fourth article of our bill of rights.

Gentleman might say, must we then suffer, and continue to suffer, under mis-government? He would answer boldly, yes! so long as we could endure it—so long as there were legal modes of redress—so long as there was any hope that liberty might be preserved and property protected. The regular operations of time, and of public opinion would effect the requisite changes. He illustrated this point. He had been supposing, (he said,) a case where civil rights were invaded, but where mere abstract political rights were concerned—as, for instance, where the right to a certain numerical proportion of representation was not enjoyed to the extent claimed by certain parts of the State—in such a case he declared it criminal to change or overturn the government in a revolutionary manner. Our political rights were only valuable as they secured to us our civil rights. And so long as our civil rights were in no danger of invasion, there was nothing to justify revolution. The political objects avowed here were made of undue importance. He admired, the other day, the candor of the distinguished gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) formerly Governor of the State, when he declared that this question of representation was a mere question concerning the distribution of political power, and quickly added, at the suggestion of another gentleman, “and of office.” The greater part of the people were sublimely indifferent to mere politics and politicians, unless in cases where substantial rights were involved. Mere politics—as such—the struggle who should have one office or who should have another, had become offensive to the people of the State. The true objects of reform, in his opinion, had no reference to mere political rights. And he

asserted, without fear of contradiction, that this question of representation according to population, or the right of a majority to rule, never could have procured the call of this Convention.

If reform meant improvement, he hoped that no gentleman had a seat in this Convention, who was not ready to make a great many reforms; but this “concert of action,” which had been called for, could not be obtained by those who arrogated to themselves exclusively the title of reformers, and strove to inflict on others the odium of being anti-reformers. In almost every county in the State, the question of representation according to population, was either not broached, or was disavowed; the friends of the principle tried to avoid declaring themselves in favor of it, and put the question of a Convention upon other grounds. They said, we must reform the Judiciary; we must place checks upon the Legislature, in relation to the exercise of this or that power; and they pointed out quite a variety of reforms, some of them good enough, and others from which he hoped we might be delivered. This reform party was something like the share which the subtle Jacob secured of his father-in-law Laban’s flocks, “ring-straked, speckled and spotted:” it had as many colors as Joseph’s coat. There was no such thing as concert of action among reformers. They disagreed upon every proposition, and they ought to disagree, because out of that conflict good might ultimately come.

If the Convention could succeed in establishing such a system of reform as that justice, rigid, prompt, efficient justice might be brought within the reach of every man; if it should check the power of the Legislature to contract debts; if it should arrest special legislation by which general rules and rights were disregarded for particular purposes; if it should take away from the Legislature the power of divorce, which was now used wantonly, recklessly, and even shamelessly, to cancel and tear to pieces, the bond that made man and wife one; if it should give to the State a substantial and well-regulated common school system; organise the treasury department on a proper basis, and accomplish other objects which he detailed; if these things should be done, and be done well, there was no ground for apprehension that the people would have a revolution, or even a new Convention very soon.

He pointed out briefly the evils which would result to society from the principle contended for, that a bare majority had a right, at any moment, and in any way, to change their Constitution; and said, this was in fact confounding right and power, and the practical operation of that principle would realize with us a state of things graphically depicted by the great poet of the human race—poet, historian, and prophet:

Force should be right, or rather right and wrong
(Between whose endless jar justice resides,
Should lose their names, and so should justice
too,
Then every thing resolves itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,