

ELECTIVE FRANCHISE.

Mr. CHAMBERS, of Kent, moved that the Convention take up for consideration the report of the committee on the Elective Franchise, irrespective of any further proceedings had thereon in committee of the whole.

And the question having been taken, it was Determined in the affirmative.

The report having been read—

Mr. CHAMBERS, of Kent, moved to amend the first section, by striking out in the fourth line, the words "Howard District."

Mr. CHAMBERS said, the second section was one on which a great deal had been said. It involved all the various propositions that had been designed for the protection of the ballot box from corrupt influence. His own opinion was that it might be materially curtailed without injuring its practical effect, but these expressions had been deliberately inserted, and at this stage of the session he would not suggest an alteration. The provisions in the third and fourth sections would, he thought, be found to be so minute and so much in detail, as to be quite objectionable. He had prepared a substitute for the oath set out in the bill, which would be found quite as comprehensive in substance, and in fewer words and which would serve as an oath for all officers of every grade, thus superseding all other and special oaths of office. The fifth section he proposed should remain as it is with a single verbal alteration.

He believed by these amendments the Convention would secure the objects, which in their former action on this bill they had decided to adopt. With this explanation he would submit his amendments and leave them to the direction of the Convention.

The question was then taken on the amendment which was agreed to.

Mr. FOOKS moved further to amend the first section, by inserting after the word "held," in the seventh line, the following :

"After having taken an oath, (if not conscientiously scrupulous, and in such case, affirmation,) that he has not received and will not receive any fee or reward for his vote at said election, and that he has not given or offered to give and will not give or offer to give directly or indirectly any fee or reward or bribe, or assist in bribing or influencing any voter at said election or to induce any person not to vote at said election."

Determined in the negative.

Mr. FOOKS demanded the yeas and nays, which were not ordered.

Mr. STEWART, of Baltimore city, moved to amend the first section, by striking out from the word "ballot" in the eighth line, to the end of the section.

Mr. STEWART, of Baltimore city, observed that he had made the motion to strike out, because the section thus amended would better harmonize with the refusal of the Convention to district the county or the city of Baltimore. That was now a settled question; the amendment intimated by his friend from Carroll, (Mr. Parke,) would be perfectly gratified by the success of the motion to

strike out. The only effect of the section as reported was in regard to the division of the State into Congressional districts, and it was only because of its onerous and restrictive operation upon his constituents, that he (Mr. S.) opposed its adoption and made his motion to strike out. The Convention were fully apprised of the great number of monthly tenancies which existed in the city of Baltimore; that mode of renting was so general as to have almost the character of a local usage—the humble occupants of small houses selected their residences in view of their contiguity to their places of business and employment; and it was the bounden duty of the Convention to protect their rights, as much as the rights of those occupying more elevated positions in the community. Among these rights, their right of suffrage had been on all hands proclaimed as of inestimable value; and yet the section as reported, tended to embarrass the exercise of that right so as to amount virtually to a denial of the right itself. Take this instance: suppose a mechanic has rented a house in the western part of the city, because of its convenience to his business—after a residence of two or three months, the necessities of his occupation induce him to go to Canton, in the eastern section of the city. Is he to be compelled to travel some six or seven miles, in all, to cast his vote for a representative in Congress, who represents the city, whether he come from one section or the other? Wherever he might vote, he would vote for a representative of Maryland in the Congress of the United States; and inasmuch as the Convention had justly thrown every impediment in the way of fraudulent voting, it would be seen that the voter would be put to inconvenience without any equivalent public good. As the Convention had wisely determined to regard Baltimore as an unit, and not to cur her up and divide her into sections, it would be oppressive and unjust to trammel the voter by the provisions of the section referred to.

It was our republican theory, that the right of suffrage should be as free as the air we breathed, and he (Mr. S.) would never consent here or elsewhere to adopt any course which would prevent the theory from being carried out in practice. He spoke not for *Buncombe*—that shadowy and mysterious power, to whose oracular responses some were disposed to listen. It was not included in the peculiar locality from which he came, but he spoke in his representative character to guard his constituents from the manifest injustice contemplated by this section, to vindicate one of their most precious rights, and to claim for them from a Maryland Convention, what was granted to all other citizens out of Baltimore, and which could not be withheld without a violation of republican doctrines.

Mr. McLANE desired to suggest, rather than to make an objection to the insertion of this clause as a part of the Constitution. He regretted very much that he had not had an opportunity earlier of making that suggestion; but he believed the chairman who had charge of the committee, would give it the same importance that he [Mr. McL] did. He had heretofore said that he con-