

gentleman rise in his place and say that the proceeding which this order contemplates, is in conformity with any of these principles?

Mr. SANDS. I rise in my place and say that the principle of that order, if made operative, will prevent the burning of any man's house, and the taking of any man's goods and chattels in violation of the principles of the bill of rights.

Mr. CHAMBERS. I understand that part of the gentleman's argument. Let it go for what it is worth. I say that I have no right to take my neighbor's purse, because I think I can make a better use of it than he can. I have no right to take away a man's property lest he should hire some man to commit a murder. The argument is just as good. I have no right to steal my neighbor's horse, because I think I can effect a good purpose by it. If a thing is wrong, it is wrong any way; and you cannot make it anything else.

Mr. SANDS. Let me ask the gentleman if your neighbor had a gun in his hand, and you knew he was going to commit murder, would not you take it from him?

Mr. CHAMBERS. Why, surely; and I should not violate any one principle here. Show me the provision in the bill of rights which prevents a man in such a case as that from acting in self-defence, or in defence of his neighbor.

Mr. SANDS, [in his seat.]. "Self-defence;" that is it.

Mr. CHAMBERS, [continuing.]. You might as well talk about the right to put out a fire, when your house is in flames. Here is a plain unequivocal proposition. If a man commits an offence, let him be indicted, and tried, have counsel, have witnesses, and be punished. I say, let every criminal be punished. These gentlemen have described violent offences. They make out these men to be immensely criminal. Such offences were never perpetrated before. Be it so. It is no part of my business to lessen the enormity of any imputation these gentlemen may make. Is that to destroy the whole principle upon which this government rests, every pillar that supports it? Is that any reason why a lieutenant or an ensign, or any other military officer deputed by the President, shall come and say, in the first place, I demand to know who perpetrated the offence?

A great mistake exists with regard to this matter. The gentleman knows that his own friends and neighbors have been charged with being offenders when they were not offenders. But no matter whether they are or are not, if this gentleman, with the epaulette on his shoulders chooses to say they are offenders, no power on the face of the earth can protect the individual from any punishment that this false assertion, as it may be, will induce the officer to inflict upon his victim. It is a crying offence. A man has no chance of escaping.

That is not a necessary effect. The law is to punish a man for his crimes; but punishment is not for crime here. It is for imputation. The gentleman tells us that there cannot be any mistake; that they are to be "known sympathizers." Known to whom? I say, to some malignant individual in the neighborhood, and not necessarily known to anybody else. The President cannot find among us in every vicinity men personally familiar with the neighborhood, and knowing who are or who are not secessionists. He sends a man who is a stranger; and he is to punish known offenders. Known to whom? Will the gentleman tell us who are to know the offenders? Facts are stated with regard to individuals. He has heard these facts. He does not know them to be true. He has information, no doubt very satisfactory, but it is no proof.

Mr. CURRIE. They are taken before the provost marshal, and refuse to take the oath.

Mr. CHAMBERS continued. It has been customary to require of witnesses upon the stand that they should know something of their own knowledge. Yet that officer, alone, in violation of all these articles in your bill of rights, which I have read, is to make the charge, to decide without proof upon it, to award the punishment and to inflict it. There is hardly a proposition in your whole bill of rights that this proceeding is not in conflict with. All the power is here concentrated in one individual. God knows of what character, what degree of intelligence, what disposition to act justly, how subject to impure influences. We act upon it in a state of perfect and entire ignorance. All we know is that all these principles are violated.

The gentleman strangely says that we have sworn to obey the Constitution and the laws of the United States. Have not we also sworn to obey the Constitution and laws of Maryland? Is Maryland sunk so deep beneath the power of the general government, that its laws and Constitution are not to have any effect upon us? Are they not willing to have both? How can a man profess to recognize Constitution or law in the appointment of a military officer who shall be jury, judge, sheriff, jack ketch, and everything else? Is that law? Is that the Constitution? No, sir; no, sir.

I say there is but one appellation which can possibly describe such a state of things. It is the most perfect and complete military despotism.

Allusion has been made to the past offences of some people in Baltimore, who committed great outrages at the election, and who are known sympathizers, and who, claiming to be a majority of the State, are prepared to do this, that and the other. I say again, that I do not stand before this body to exculpate any man from any offence which the Legislature of the State of Maryland, or the Congress