

long ago in Alexandria, there were in session— I do not know where the place of meeting was—some eight or nine men, one or two of them scraped up in Norfolk and Portsmouth, one or two in Accomac, and the rest from the purlieus of Alexandria, a majority of them never heard of before, assembled in some cockloft, and actually sitting there and calling themselves a Constitutional Convention, and actually in the process of forming a constitution for the great old commonwealth. What has ever become of the proceedings of that body I know not; but they were certainly arrogating to themselves the power to represent the commonwealth of Virginia, all that part of it not included in the limits of West Virginia, so called.

Now, where is the Legislature of Virginia? Where is the authority which is to give the consent of that State to this cession? Are we to be satisfied to accept a cession of that character, coming from a few men scraped together from these outlying counties of the State, reduced to absolute desolation by the war, needy adventurers, having no stake in the State of Virginia and no interest there, brought there to prey upon the followers of the army—from these men, constituting themselves into a body to be called the Legislature of Virginia, and undertaking to cede to Maryland a portion of her territory? Will Maryland lose her dignity so far as to be willing to accept it?

If it be desirable that we should have annexed to the Eastern Shore the territories of Northampton and Accomac, which I very much doubt, or any other portion of the State of Virginia; the ancient relations of amity existing between her and Maryland have been always such in peace, that we ought to blush to be willing, when she is torn by war, when nobody can locate that government which the Federal Government recognizes, in such a state of confusion and anarchy; it ought to bring the blush of shame to our cheeks to be willing to take advantage of her situation, to have this grossly fraudulent transfer of her territory made to us.

Mr. SANDS. I have no knowledge of the place of meeting of the Convention of East Virginia, whether in a cockloft or not. But I have some knowledge of some of the men who composed that Convention. I know some of the men who went there to Alexandria; and instead of being needy adventurers, they were owners of estates in Virginia, from which they had been driven by certain parties. I know that, and I rise in my place to say it.

What portion of the State of Virginia do we propose to accept? What is it likely will be offered to us? It is a question that I have heard spoken of much at length by some of Maryland's ablest men, and some of Virginia's ablest men, for years past. It has always been a favorite idea of the West Virginians that by a union with Maryland, they would

form one of the grandest States of this confederation, having in their sole control the entire iron belt which binds the Ohio to the Chesapeake. They are identical in soil, in climate, in production, and over and above all in the character of their people—West Virginia and the larger part, numerically, far the larger part of the State of Maryland.

There has been for many long years before the outbreak of this rebellion, as my friends of course know, between East and West Virginia, the very strongest antagonism. The antagonism lies in the radical difference of their population. West Virginia was in her feelings infinitely stronger in her anti-slavery antipathies than Maryland. That is a fact notorious to everybody. It was told to the men of East Virginia before this rebellion, that in case they moved a single inch in the direction of dissolution, just so sure they moved in the direction of a dissolution between East and West Virginia. It was urged constantly. I did it myself, in speaking to the people along the borders before the outbreak of this rebellion. I told them that if the time ever came when the people of West Virginia were free to act their own will and wishes, they would sever their political connection with East Virginia.

They did it, sir; not in a cockloft; not by some six or eight needy adventurers, but they have done it through a sovereign convention of the State, in the well-known city of Wheeling; and they have backed it up by twenty-five thousand good and true soldiers in the army of the Union. It is overwhelmingly the sovereign will of the people of West Virginia to dissolve their political connection with the people of East Virginia. It is a will growing out of the radical differences of the people, and in the character of their institutions.

As to Accomac and Northampton, what shall become of them, or what shall be done with them, is a question, which excepting upon the question of principle, I do not moot. But I say that for many long years the aspirations of the people of Maryland, and the aspirations of the people of West Virginia have been in the direction of a more intimate union between themselves. I have heard this from the ablest and best statesmen of both sections long ago.

Upon what ground do gentlemen pretend to oppose the acceptance by Maryland of West Virginia if she proposes a political union with Maryland? Virginia, acting as a State, took upon herself the full consequences of the entire doctrine of political secession. I put it to gentlemen, whether, if a State had a right to secede from the Federal Union, and dissolve her connection with the General Government, any portion of the State, under the operation of the same rule and principle, has not a perfect right to dissolve its political connection with the people of another section?