

is something shocking in this desecration of what is in itself so holy. I would not vote to reduce this question of marriage to a mere civil contract, to be entered into and solemnized before any man of unclean lips, for all I am worth.

My amendment provides for the religious scruples of everybody. It provides that if a man is a Catholic, he shall be married according to the rites of the Catholic church; if an Episcopalian, according to the rites of the Episcopal church; if a Lutheran, according to the rites of the Lutheran church; if a Reformer, according to the rites of the Reformed church; if a Presbyterian, according to the rites of the Presbyterian church; if a Methodist, according to the rites of the Methodist church; if a Universalist, according to the rites of the Universalist church; and if a Quaker, according to the rights of the Society of Friends.

It is perfectly full and free religious toleration to all men. It leaves every man to marry just in the way he thinks best; and that without the demoralizing influence of having this thing done on the highway or byway, in a magistrate's office, and perhaps, at last in a watchman's box. I am for full, free religious toleration. I would not deny it to anybody. The humblest slave in the land should have it. Every man should be married just according to the rites and ceremonies of his own church or sect. I would that I could throw around this relationship everything that could chasten and hallow that ceremony, and bring it up to a pure ideal; for Heaven knows we are creatures of such sort, that we require something always to be raising us up instead of crushing us down. Our tendencies are unfortunately too much to the gross, sensuous, material, and too little to the pure, the spiritual, the ideal. And we want in every relation in life, and in every connection, the most of that which will purify, and ennoble, and elevate.

Believing, as I heartily do, that this relation is the most important entered into by human beings, I prefer to see it solemnized in all cases, in that manner which shall throw about it all that is sacred, and good, and pure, and holy. For that reason I have offered this amendment which provides for the special case of the Quaker, who may, if he chooses, be married by a mayor or a justice of the peace, and that any one wishing to intermarry with them, may do so. Does not that meet all the requirements of the case? Does it not provide to the fullest extent for religious freedom? It does. Then if we are willing to give them that, why take from us the other? Why shock our religious feelings, and even our moral feelings, and our personal feelings? Why do this at the very moment we are holding out our hand with the boon of perfect religious freedom to them? Let us be as we are, and let the Quakers be as they

choose. That is my rule; and it is all I have to say.

Mr. STIRLING. I have a proposition I would like to offer, and will give notice of, because I am very desirous of meeting the views of the gentleman from Harford (Mr. Russell;) and because I think the portion of the section with regard to registration is a matter very proper for the convention to take some action upon; and also, because I think it is very well in this constitution to give some directions to the legislature with regard to this subject, that they should clear up one doubt that has existed in this State; which is, whether the ceremony, obligations, rights, and responsibilities of marriage, apply in this State to anybody but white people. The amendment I have prepared, does not say anything about white people or black people; but it provides that all persons in this State who are not prohibited by law from being married, may have some recognized mode of celebrating their marriage. I think it covers the case covered by the amendment of the gentlemen from Harford (Mr. Russell.) I am not prepared to vote for his amendment, and shall be compelled to vote against it, unless some amendment of this kind can be adopted.

The reason why I object to the proposition of the gentleman from Harford, is, that I think it unnecessarily includes what is already the law upon the subject, which might be left to stand where it now is.

The amendment I propose will make the section read:

"The general assembly shall provide by law for the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and shall pass laws providing for the celebration of marriage between any inhabitants of this State not prohibited by law from marrying; and shall provide that any persons prevented by conscientious scruples from being married by any of the existing provisions of law, may be married by any judge of any court of record of this State."

I listened with considerable amazement to the speech of my friend from Cecil (Mr. Pugh,) because it seemed as if Maryland had been denying religious privileges to somebody. The State of Maryland has gone far in this matter. When other States and communities declined to recognize the Society of Friends, we have made special provision for them, and excepted them from the provisions of the general law, providing for the celebration of marriages by their rites and ceremonies. As to the question suggested by the gentleman from Harford, I think if representations of the facts had been made to the general assembly in time to be attended to, they would have been attended to; for I think all proper conscientious scruples should have been consulted.

But this is no question of religious privilege or religious liberty. Gentlemen seem to think that the institution of marriage is a