

this same fight would have to be gone over again in the future. I am not willing to shirk the responsibility, nor take it from the shoulders of these southern people who are now engaged in the fight. I am not willing that other generations should charge us with not settling the difficulty now when we have the opportunity.

I am putting this matter in a very mild form. There is a far more severe, a far less charitable, and probably a far truer, view of it than this. But this is putting it in its best shape; and in its best shape I submit that it is not what we as American citizens ought to do, simply to patch up a quarrel and bequeath to our children a heritage of endless war and blood.

The experience of the past three years has taught us that the government cannot exist as a united government with the institution of slavery in its midst. I do not intend to go into an argument to show why this cannot be. The ground has been gone through in the course of the debate upon the 23d article of the bill of rights. That is my judgment; and it is the judgment of the majority of this convention, and I believe the votes will show that it is the judgment of the majority of the people of the State of Maryland. That being the result, I say that the people of this State declare that African slavery shall no longer exist in this State at any rate.

Mr. DAVIS, of Charles. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question? As I understand the tenor of his argument, he is opposed to the Union as it was. Is that the fact?

Mr. PUGH. Most undoubtedly it is the fact that I am opposed now to the Union as it was. I am honest in that.

Mr. EDLEN. Will the gentleman allow me to ask another question? Do I rightly understand him to insist that he is opposed to the preservation of the Union, except upon the ground of the total abolition of slavery throughout the whole southern country?

Mr. PUGH. Yes, sir; if the gentleman will allow me, I will give him my reasons.

Mr. EDLEN. That is being a rebel.

Mr. PUGH. No, sir. That construction cannot be placed upon it. And I will show you why. In 1861, I was in favor of the resolutions of 1861. But as the gentleman from Kent (Mr. Chambers) ably observed on a former occasion, "The times change, and we change with them." I have lived to see the day when it is my conviction that this nation can never unite upon any other basis than that of universal slavery or universal freedom for the black race. Religiously believing that to be the true idea upon which this government alone can exist, I simply prefer universal freedom to universal slavery. I need only ask the gentleman from Charles, to refer to the history of this peculiar institution which has always been going on grasp-

ing for more; and to submit to him that if his ideas are correct of the benign influences which characterize the condition of the African race, the result will be that from these causes, as well as from the cupidity of men, the result will be that eventually this government will be throughout its length and breadth a slaveholding government. It appears to me that there are but two paths to pursue; one leads to universal freedom, and the other to universal slavery. The three years of this war have helped to grind this conviction deep into my heart. I do not say that I entertained this view in 1861; but I do say that I entertain it now. And the reason why I am in favor of the reconstruction of the Union upon a new basis in this respect, is because I believe rather in universal freedom than in universal slavery. It would be utterly impossible for me here to show why I believe that this country cannot exist as a Union without being all slave or all free, in the limited time allowed for debate; but I simply state the ground I occupy, as a mere matter of opinion.

Mr. DENNIS. The gentleman from Cecil in the course of his argument, has said that the condition of things in 1861, does not exist now, and consequently, that the course of proceedings is different now. I would like to know whether the course of proceedings then was in accordance with the law, or the course now, or whether the constitution has changed?

Mr. PUGH. I submitted also in the beginning of my remarks, which the gentleman may have forgotten, that the question as it started was one question; that, as the war went on progressing, it got to be a totally different question; and to-day it was a question, not only of the constitution, not only of written law and their construction of it, but of—

Mr. DENNIS. Then the gentleman admits that the government is not carried on according to the constitution now?

Mr. PUGH. No, sir; I do not admit so. I say that—

Mr. DENNIS. Then he says that it is carried on according to the constitution now?

Mr. PUGH. I do not say whether it is according to the constitution or not. If the gentleman will let me proceed, and wait until I get through, he may understand my position. I was saying that at the outset, in 1861, this course of proceeding was pursued. But we have arrived at a point when it is not solely a question of the constitution, or of written law, but also a question of our existence as a people, which is before us. That is the point I make. And that we might get far beyond all such considerations, no man can tell; and I suggested to the gentleman from Somerset, that the time might arrive, and I allude to it again; and that he would cut a beautiful figure going over this deso-