

they know in their own conscience that they sympathize with the south and are rebels, have they a right to complain because the people of the loyal States do not think them fit persons to hold office? These are the reasons which I wished to assign for my vote; but I am unwilling further to prolong the debate.

Mr. CHAMBERS: I have no argument to offer that I can expect to have any influence upon gentlemen holding such opinions as have been expressed here to-day expressed, I confess, to my surprise, and because expressed they have induced me to enter in this formal protest against the doctrine which they have taught.

I have heard for the first time upon this floor an open, avowed, unqualified declaration, a renunciation I should say, of the constitution which it has been the labor of this house to make us swear was so binding upon our consciences, claiming such absolute and almost exclusive allegiance, so absolutely essential to the perpetuation of the nation, so necessary to the continuance of the present form of government; that no argument against it, no appeal of want of necessity for it could prevail for one moment to suspend the decision of this house by an immense majority declaring the allegiance is due, in terms apparently the strongest that the English language contains.

This is the constitution which we are now told they repudiate. It is nothing but a farce. The beautiful idea, the splendid idea, of which some gentlemen are enamored, is that it is to be trampled under foot during the long period of the history of this people, or the States, or the government, which is to last forever, while this parchment, this tabernacle, is nothing but the water shell that may be trampled in the dust. It is a beautiful idea that it is a tabernacle; but there is a fact in relation to that which the gentleman from Cecil (Mr. Pugh) did not seem to recollect; that on a certain occasion when unholy hands were laid upon the tabernacle, the consequence was the destruction of those that thus desecrated it. I do not mean to predict what will be the consequence of this attempt now to lay unholy hands upon the constitution which they swear is the tabernacle containing the seal of this nation. But as the gentleman from Cecil has referred to the possible period when those now at enmity with this nation may absorb this State, I ask what is to become of his oath, by which he swore allegiance to it; and went farther to say that he never had opposed it? If Jeff Davis, according to his supposition of possibility, were to become the President of this State, united with those at the south, and separated from the other northern States, which may be conceived as a possibility, this constitution remains, and the doubtful exhibition would then be presented of gentlemen having placed

upon the tablet of their memory the fact that they have sworn allegiance to the Davis government; that they have further sworn that they never have opposed it; and they would lose what the gentleman seems not to have forgotten was at least the kernel within the shell—the officer of the State.

I do not go for any such doctrine in any of its forms, its substance, or its consequences. A remark of mine he has quoted here—*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*. I do not apply that to myself. So far as I know, I have, in respect to this question, not one solitary shade of opinion that I have not entertained since I had the capacity to know what the constitution and the Union was. It is a misfortune with some of us that we have not been accustomed to direct our thoughts to the great question of the elements of government. We are liable to fall into the strongest things imaginable; and talk about the Union—the Union with the constitution trampled under foot; the Union and allegiance to the Union as the first duty of every man; and yet we are not living under the constitution. Is this a state of common sense, what is the use? Gentlemen have not an adequate conception; they do not seem to comprehend the first idea of the principle of the government which unites the varied people of the United States into a union, if the nation pass into a union.

There is not a particle of union, except as the constitution makes it. Gentlemen may talk as they please about living in a state of war. They may laud in the highest terms the United States army; and they may condemn in the grossest terms those in the Confederate or rebel army. They cannot make anything out of government which is to correct these matters, except the government of the United States. What government have we? Does any man doubt that the people of the United States are the sovereigns of this country? There does not live such a man. There is not a man on this floor who would contradict that. The people are the sovereigns. They have the sovereign power except so far as they have parted with it.

Where have they parted with it? If they have parted with it, how have they parted with it; and to whom have they parted with it? They parted with it when they made the government of the United States for the union of the country. They parted with it when they made the constitution, and no further, because they say themselves that every right is reserved except it can be found there passed away. To whom have they given it? To the officers elected under their authority by virtue of the provisions of that instrument. Talk about union without a constitution? You might as well talk about a house without brick, mortar, wood, or any other material from which it can be constructed?