

vided by this constitution, to be held during that year."

Mr. CHAMBERS. Against this I raise my voice, as being more in violation of the obligations due from this convention to the people of Maryland than any act which has been suggested in this body. I suppose that if there is one proposition in regard to which there will be no division of opinion among gentlemen of this body, one fact which will be universally conceded, it is: that by those who voted for the assemblage of this body, whether for or against a convention, there was not one dissenting voice in regard to the proposition that it should be a dead letter until the people should act upon it. There is not a man that I have ever heard of in the State, who participated in the election, that has suggested, that, so far as I know, has ever dreamed of having a constitution until it was submitted to the people and sanctioned by them. I say again, I do not suppose there is upon this floor one individual who, if candid and sincere, will deny that it was the universal expectation that this should be a dead letter until sanctioned by the people.

Starting at that point, what do we witness? The old constitution is in force, perfectly in force, as much so as it was one hour after its adoption, until this new constitution is adopted by the people. In inevitable result, the old constitution, and all the rights and privileges which are by it secured to the citizens of the State, continue in full force and effect until this new constitution is sanctioned by the people.

In the face of this fact, this section proposes to violate that constitution; to deprive certain individuals of rights and privileges which are secured under that constitution; not only to take away the rights of those who have heretofore exercised the first and boasted privilege of freemen, the right to vote; but it undertakes presently, in strict conformity with the principle adopted in this section, to introduce a perfectly new class of voters unknown to that constitution. Is this possible? Is it possible that gentlemen propose, by an instrument of no force and effect until after a certain event, by an instrument thus hereafter to have validity infused into it, to operate such a monstrous result as to destroy constitutional prerogatives and privileges? Let us for one moment look at this. Who sent us here? Those who, under the constitution now existing and in full force, had the right to vote. At least that is the theory of this body. How far they participated in it, I am not here bound now to determine. But none other except those, and all those who choose to present themselves as candidates for the exercise of this privilege, were the constituency—the rightful constituency of this body; none other.

What is now proposed? That while that constitution is yet unrepealed, while it is yet in force, you are to send this constitution, not to that constituency whom we represent, not to be acted upon by those who sent us here, but by a different constituency altogether, those who are supposed to be opposed to, it being restrained by further provisions and restrictions, and those who are supposed to be favorable to it being introduced into the arena as voters, never before known to any constitution which we have had. Is this the mode of erecting constitutions, to shuffle off the constituency which you have had, to deny the privileges which have been exercised? It is bad enough to allow the privilege to others, to extend it; but when we present ourselves here standing on the shoulders, and acting on the authority of a class of individuals, are we then to be told that in defiance of their constitutional rights they shall not vote unless they conform to additional restrictions which this constitution imposes?

Let us suppose for one moment, and no man has a right to say that such a supposition is at all impossible, that the people do not choose to adopt this constitution. What predicament are you in? It shall have then resulted that you have restrained persons constitutionally entitled to vote, by an enactment without a shadow of obligation. If this constitution is not adopted by the people, it has not a shadow of obligation; it has no more force or effect than a newspaper. As yet this paper which is conditionally and only conditionally to have any effect, is to deprive every individual of his right to vote, who besides the privilege secured by the constitution, besides the restrictions imposed by the constitution and existing law, shall not further in addition subject himself to the restrictions imposed by this present instrument. Is that a state of things which gentlemen can admire? Is it a state of things they can honestly desire? Is it a state of things it is supposed they will submit to? Is it a state of things becoming a government of freemen? Is it a treatment which our constituency deserve at our hands, to say that this session of the convention is the result of the voluntary action of the people of the State? What people? People who are voters under the constitution of 1850. Why not then let these people, this constituency, decide this question? The idea of having a piebald concern here, of having provisions intended to throw out some voters and bring in others, and to have effect while the other provisions are silent, is an anomaly unknown to any history we have of our proceedings. Is it a constitution or is it not? If it be so, boldly go in the face of the people and say so. If it be not, why attempt to impose these restrictions and fasten its obligations, when it is not a constitution? If it be not, what is it? What is the appellation, what is the title of