

1861.

to accede to this request because, under the con-
stitution, I possessed no such power.

In thus persistently refusing to comply
with those propositions, I am well aware
that I assumed a grave responsibility. But
I was satisfied, nevertheless, that I was but
performing what, to me, seemed to be a
clear and simple duty. And for the con-
sequences I was then, and am now, willing
to rely upon the justice and good sense of my
fellow citizens; to whom it is due that I ex-
plain, as briefly as I can, the reasons which
induced my course.

I believed that I was thoroughly ac-
quainted with the proclivities of a majority
of the Members of that Legislature. I was
perfectly convinced that they desired Mary-
land to leap, no matter how blindly, into
the vortex of Secession. I believed the same
to be true of the most of those citizens
who so persistently urged the assembling
of the Legislature. I was, therefore, un-
willing to allow that Body an opportunity
so to misuse its great power; not doubting
that, in imitation of the Legislatures of the
then seceded States, it would exert that
power to the great detriment of the People
of Maryland.

It is true that I earnestly desired the People
to have an opportunity of expressing their will at
the ballot box, in regard to the position of Mary-
land; and I would most cheerfully have afforded
them such opportunity if I had possessed the con-
stitutional power to do so, in any other way
than by convening the Legislature.

But I could not trust that Body in so
momentous a crisis. I did not believe the
people could possibly have a fair and
free expression of their will under the pro-
visions of any law for that purpose
which might be enacted by the Legislature.