

follow, in the constitution of the lower house, was the precedent set in the parliaments of Great Britain. It is well known that the witenagemote, which was the assembly of freemen under the Saxon Kings, resembled in some respects the representation by hundreds, which first existed in this Province, just as the change into representation by counties and cities, afterwards resembled the English Parliament. The arbitrary power of issuing writs to summon members, has its likeness in the prerogative of the earlier Kings of England of Norman descent, at least until the days of King John. It is submitted, that the county delegates, when so chosen, occupied no other relation to their respective counties, nor those counties any other political rank, than that possessed by their English prototypes. They were local divisions, contrived for purposes of municipal government and domestic police, not small regalities, whose union gave strength to the whole system. Their powers were concessions from the general authority, not reservations of any thing belonging of right to themselves.

If there had been any other interpretation existing at that day, of the true relation of the constituent parts of the Province to the Government, they were certainly wise in suppressing its expression. By the fourteenth article of the charter, the Proprietor, and of course, also the Crown, after the surrender of the rights of the Proprietary, was authorised to erect towns into boroughs, and boroughs into cities; which power, under the law of 1716, would have enabled the crown officer to control, at pleasure, the deliberations of the whole body, and would have made the independent, self-subsisting power of the counties, even if they had possessed it, a mere nullity.

The undersigned have dwelt at some length upon this question, because it has been seriously said, that the constitution, agreed to in 1776, was a compact between these petty sovereignties. They respectfully urge, on the other hand, that the counties were only local divisions, created for municipal convenience and purposes of internal police, or for the same reasons that towns were elevated into boroughs and cities, viz: in order that the acquisition of a corporate character might give them the legal powers necessary to the management of their internal concerns.

So stood the question until the Revolution. It is material to examine the steps taken at the withdrawal from the allegiance to the crown. At the convention held in 1775, the freeholders of each county in the Province, qualified by law to vote for burgeses, were empowered to vote for a committee of observation from the different counties and cities, which was to be composed of twenty-four from St. Mary's, thirty-two from Charles, fifteen from Calvert, thirty-three from Prince George's, and so on, varying in number in every county of the State, but following, as nearly as we can tell, not so much an arbitrary rule as some proportion of population; and qualified apparently, by the exposure of the district to the chances of war.

So, too, in the convention which met in Annapolis, on the 21st