

# GENERAL SKETCHES OF DEBATES, PREPARED EXPRESSLY, AS SUCH, BY ORDER OF THE CONVENTION.

THURSDAY, March 20, 1851.

The Convention met at ten o'clock.

Prayer was made by the Rev. Mr. Griffith.

The roll of the members was called, and a quorum being present, the journal of yesterday was read and approved.

Mr. BISER enquired of the chair, whether it was in order to present a petition.

The President, *pro tem.*, answered in the affirmative.

## A NEW COUNTY.

Mr. BISER presented a petition of thirty-six citizens of Frederick county, praying for the creation of a new county, to be composed of the whole of Middletown Valley, from the Pennsylvania line to the Potomac, including such portions of Washington county as are contiguous to the districts named.

Which was read, and

Referred to the committee on new counties.

Reports of committees, resolutions and notices, were respectively called for.

## THE PREVIOUS QUESTION.

Mr. DORSEY moved that the Convention take up the motion of which he had heretofore given notice to amend the 17th rule. There was now, he said, a full attendance, and probably it was important that the rule should be settled before the Convention proceeded further with its business.

The President, *pro tem.* Does the gentleman make the motion?

Mr. DORSEY. I do.

The motion was then read as follows:

Amend the 17th rule, by adding at the end thereof the following:

"But no member who has discussed any subject before the Convention, shall be permitted to move the previous question thereon, until at least two or more members have had an opportunity of replying to the mover of the previous question."

Mr. DORSEY said, he thought a good deal of

time would be saved by the adoption of this amendment. If he recollects right, it was no unusual thing for gentlemen to rise and discuss a proposition, and then immediately demand the previous question, before any body had had an opportunity to reply either to his statements or facts, or to his arguments. And then appeals were made to the Convention, to permit replies to be made, and in this way more time was spent than would, or ought to be consumed under the amendment he had offered. Thus not only time would be saved, but manifest injustice would be prevented. It had been a matter of remark not only in the Convention, but among the community, that the previous question was sometimes moved under circumstances when such a motion ought not to be made. To make an argument, to state facts, and then to refuse to any other member an opportunity to deny or disprove those facts, or to controvert that argument, was not, in his judgment, fair or right.

He thought that the adoption of the amendment would be found expedient, and would tend to facilitate the transaction of the public business.

Mr. BOWIE said, he hoped that the amendment would not be adopted. It amounted, in fact, to a total abrogation of the previous question. If he understood the language of the amendment, it was that any two or more members, might go on and discuss a question, and answer a gentleman who had moved the previous question. Two or more—this would open the discussion to the whole Convention. It was a virtual repeal of the whole previous question. He maintained that the rule establishing the previous question was a useful and necessary rule, and he was satisfied, that unless the Convention frequently applied it, they would find themselves unable to terminate their labors within the short time that yet remained to them to transact the business before them. If they did not apply it, they would be here until next Christmas. He thought the Convention might be driven to the necessity of engraving a provision on the Constitution which they might form, postponing the taking of the sense of the people until the month of July, thus