

ter of these gentlemen than their description of themselves would induce us to think.

We have heard some queer things. We have heard what I was most glad to hear, the gentleman from Baltimore county (Mr. Berry) condemn, in terms of deserved severity, a young gentleman, (Mr. Cushing,) arise on this floor, in the face of this respectable body, and tell us—(his ancestor was a citizen of Boston, by the way, and I had the pleasure of being acquainted with him, a most respectable and modest man)—a gentleman of an age scarcely of maturity, get up here and proclaim and boast of it, that he would have resisted that government, which is "the best on the face of the earth." Yes, sir; and that sentiment was received with cheers and clapping of hands; an exhibition which I confess was to me most offensive; and that the gentleman from Baltimore county (Mr. Berry) condemned it in terms of severity was to me by no means surprising.

We have had another development. The best and most respectable men, from Chief Justice Taney down, have been treated by gentlemen as ignorant of the law, and destitute of any claim to our respect for their high moral character or in any one particular. I think that sometimes freedom of speech is abused.

Mr. President, I have said that this Convention have *no right* to manumit negroes. The Constitution of the United States in just so many terms—

(The hour having expired, the hammer fell.)

On motion of Mr. DAVIS, of Charles,

The time was extended half an hour.

Mr. CHAMBERS proceeded: The Constitution of the United States, which is the supreme law of the land, and has been recognized all over the Union as such, says in so many words that no State shall pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts. Now, I say that this will introduce, in many cases, a most perfect outrage in this very particular. Contracts will be violated in every sense in which the violation of a contract can be expressed. A man has as security for a debt, a mortgage, to take the case referred to by my friend from Prince George's, (Mr. Clarke,) and there is no security for the debt in the mortgage except negroes. They are emancipated. The contract is that the negroes shall pay the debt. The act of the Legislature destroys that contract. Again, a man has a judgment against his neighbor. That neighbor has not a dollar of tangible property except a negro man or woman. He therefore levies a *fieri facias* upon that property to secure the payment of that debt. That is the condition of the case when this law intervenes, and says the sheriff shall not pursue his duty by selling that property. What is the claim worth? Not a particle. I will not depend upon my own views merely upon this point.

I have but one authority to read; but I suppose that will be considered as conclusive. It is a case decided in Georgia many years ago, certainly without any reference to its being used for the purpose for which I am now using it:

"But if there be no allowance of time within which to enforce existing and vested rights, after the passage of the law, the effect is completely to destroy the right, as if the contract were annulled or the judgment rendered void whilst the right to regulate the remedy in its own courts must be incident to each State, who may modify and change it as the welfare of society may require, and whilst as a consequence of this, a law changing or affecting the remedy only, is not considered as impairing the obligation of the contract, yet an absolute denial of the remedy, amounting to an exemption of any portion of the property, must necessarily impair the obligation of the contract. The distinction has often been asserted between a law changing or modifying the remedy only, and a law which so completely takes away the remedy as to destroy this right. In the great case of *Ogden vs. Sanders*, (12 Wheaton, 218) one of the judges says:

"A law which in any shape exempts any portion of a man's property, must impair the obligation of the contract."

I have not time to enlarge upon it. Here is the law. The property is liable; it is pledged for the payment of the debt, and taking away that property, according to the court of the United States, is a violation of this constitutional provision.

But even if this body had the power, I hold that it is not expedient to act in opposition to the sentiments of all those who have gone before us. All who have been considered wise and great, those who have been considered good, who have taken a deep interest in the concerns of their country, all who have been entrusted by the people with its legislation, have concurred in the sentiment that slavery in this State was the most proper condition for the negro; and I think they were justified by the experience everywhere of what has been the result of manumission. I had some cases in my own mind, some experience with which to enforce this doctrine; but I am denied by the rules of the House and by the unwillingness of gentlemen to make any change in those rules, the time and opportunity to refer to them.

I say this is ruinous to the masters; and nobody can doubt that. We are in the condition, some of us, of having a large amount of money invested in this species of property. From \$40,000 to \$100,000 worth of these servants have been owned by individuals. They are stripped of the whole at one blow, without a dollar of remuneration. I am speaking of the proposition as it is now presented, in the absence of any pretence that there will