

invention, new and diversified objects of employment and of profit, have been rapidly developing, and the channels of wealth, hitherto unexplored, are constantly opening to the enterprise and industry of our citizens. With these striking mutations, both in territory and population, no corresponding change has been effected in the constitution of Maryland.

The experience of three quarters of a century, as well in the science as in the practical affairs of government, has contributed little towards the adaptation of our system to the altered circumstances, the multiplied wants and varied interest of the community; and there is just reason to fear, that through culpable cupidity and the blighting influence of local prejudice and sectional jealousy, the vital principle of representative republics has been forgotten or overlooked. True it is, that by legislative enactments, frequent, and sometimes beneficial, amendments have been engrafted on the fundamental law, but these, so far from producing the desired result, have in too many instances tended to destroy the harmony of the original code, and instead of improving have served but to add deformity to a body already painfully impeded with the decrepitude of age. Nor are such, however conclusive, the only reasons which have awakened the public mind to the necessity of a radical reform in the charter of the government, by the action of the people themselves, in virtue of their original and inherent sovereignty.

In the laudable effort to secure to Maryland the vast and increasing trade of the West, the golden prize for which several neighboring States were eagerly contending; and with a view also to the development of the exhaustless mineral resources which lay imbedded in the rough bosom of the Alleghanies, the Legislature was induced to embark the capital and credit of the State, in aid of various works of internal improvement. Under the influence of a mistaken confidence in the continuing solvency of the several corporations, for the construction of whose works, loans vastly disproportioned to any present or prospective means of the Treasury, were from time to time contracted, the salutary lesson which inculcates in the economy of individuals and of nations, the duty of making ample provisions for the ultimate redemption of pecuniary obligations, simultaneous only with their assumption, was wholly disregarded. The result of a system so eminently unwise, foreseen by not a few discerning individuals, has long since arrived. The sanguine calculations of the friends of internal improvements, have failed to be realized; and Maryland, in common with many other States of the Union, pursuing a similar line of policy, has been overtaken by a catastrophe involving her in a debt of over sixteen millions of dollars, to meet the interest and ~~gradually~~ to absorb the principal of which, an annual levy of nearly eight hundred thousand dollars upon the property of her citizens, is considered indispensable.

Whatever differences of opinion may have existed, or are now entertained, as to the details of measures designed to meet this emergency, all seem agreed that the debt itself is of the highest legal and moral obligation, and one which every principle of public and private honor, requires to be punctually and faithfully discharged. To a people thus embarrassed; whose energies are paralyzed by a weight of taxation, from which they have hitherto been happily exempt, the ordinary dictates of prudence have suggested the wisdom of a searching and rigid scrutiny into the nature and extent of public expenditures, with a view to mitigate, as far as possible the burden of an immense debt, and to redeem, with the least inconvenience to themselves the plighted credit of the State.

The ends sought to be attained by the friends of reform, consist in the adaptation