

the State of Maryland, if you were to say expressly that the Government of the United States—I mean thereby the old-fashioned machine Government, constituted of all the elements that make the system created by the Constitution—if you were to say in so many words that the Government of the United States should have jurisdiction over any subject denied to them by the Constitution of the United States, you would not enlarge its powers. Nor can you abridge them. As I propose presently to show the powers possessed by the General Government are supreme to the utmost extent of that word. You cannot abridge them; you cannot enlarge them. Then where is the necessity of undertaking to describe them? That description adds nothing to them. Your description will not be regarded as the rule of construction. I say, therefore, it is an idle business; it is a business with which we have nothing to do; it is a business with which we should not meddle. The Constitution of the United States and the laws passed pursuant thereto, will regulate the action of all the departments of the Government of the United States, in its executive, its legislative, its judicial character. We cannot control them. I say, therefore, it is an idle effort for us to interfere with it.

There has been very large reference made to the elementary principles of this organic law. We have heard—and I must be permitted to say, I think without any necessity, for I really do not think it was calculated at all to enlighten us upon the subject of introducing or rejecting this article—a great deal of debate, very interesting, very intelligent, sometimes very harsh to be sure in language, upon the subject of the organization of this government, of the rights of the States and of the United States. I propose upon that subject to give my views, and a few of the reasons which lead me to the conclusions I shall advance. In doing so I shall probably differ from most of the gentlemen who have addressed us upon that subject; because I cannot concur to the whole extent, either with one side or the other.

I never have believed in the doctrine of secession. I do not now. I never have believed in the doctrine of a centralized government on the part of the United States. I once heard a member of Congress say, in reference to the tariff question then under debate, "he believed with Duff Green," then editor of a newspaper at Washington. Now I will say, not because I cannot describe my opinions, but because I have not time to do so, that I entertain on this subject the opinions expressed by Daniel Webster. That I suppose will mark me as a heretic with some folks.

(The hour having expired, the hammer fell.)

Mr. DANIEL moved that the gentleman be allowed to proceed.

Mr. ABBOTT. I do not desire to abridge the time of the gentleman by any means, but as the hour of one o'clock is near, and as no other speeches are to be made after that hour except by the chairman of the committee, I solicit from the House the privilege of ten or fifteen minutes to make some reply to the gentleman from Prince George's, (Mr. Berry.)

Mr. DANIEL modified his motion, so as to give Mr. Chambers the privilege of speaking until one o'clock.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. CHAMBERS proceeded. I mean, when I speak of opinions for which I have great respect, opinions expressed before these troubles had brought other men and greater minds than some of us into a predicament which warped their judgment. I mean the opinions which Mr. Webster entertained when I had the pleasure of sitting beside him and hearing his addresses to which reference has been made.

In the first place, I broadly assert that there was no such institution, there was no such government, there was no such nation as the United States prior to the year 1778. That may astonish my friends; but I assert it as a fact. Originally, as has been properly said by the gentlemen from Baltimore, the colonies had for their sovereign, King George III. It was to him they owed allegiance. This word "allegiance" is one of the royal words, which has not been much used in this country heretofore. It denotes the fealty which the subject owes to the prince. But it is now used to denote obedience to any power which has a right to command. Let us remember that the colonies conducted the war against Great Britain for two years before they undertook to call themselves independent States. They were colonies while they were prosecuting the war. At first not one man in a thousand dreamed of being anything else than a subject of King George. They claimed redress in that character. They expected it, desired it, and were fighting to obtain it, in that character. They were certainly not a sovereign nation at that time.

In 1776, the doctrine of independence obtained. The independence of what? The independence of these colonies. Not of the Federal Government; but of these colonies. They declared themselves independent. Did they organize a government? Had they a head, branches, or anything that constituted a government? No; they had not. Each State sent delegates to a Congress, just as King George, King William, and the Emperor Napoleon, may send delegates for conference to London. They had certain powers delegated to them by their respective constituencies, each being perfectly independent of the others, as England is independent of France. These people managed the concerns of these then United States, or