

siderations, and towering vastly above them in importance, are other arguments and reasons that place the policy now under discussion upon very different grounds, and render annual sessions of the Legislature an absolute essential to the perfection and harmony of the new system under which we are soon to begin our onward progress. With much apparent earnestness, we had been referred to our present financial condition and to the immense revenues that were yearly collected and disbursed through the various offices of the government, and with great force and ability it was argued, that at least one careful revision was annually required, both to keep the whole complicated system working in perfect harmony and to secure strict fidelity in the discharge of every duty, to the State. Sir, it was indeed a fact, that the closest vigilance and the most rigid scrutiny should be exercised over all who had our revenue in charge. The great arteries of internal improvement were just beginning to develop themselves and immense as was the sum that already flowed weekly, monthly and yearly into the public coffers. No one could safely predict the extent and magnitude of our resources when once those mighty commercial highways were in full vigor and action. The day, perhaps, was not distant, when, under wise legislation, the patient tax-payer might reap the full harvest of past toiling. The question, however, that now presented itself was not as to the amount or future disposition of the finances, but as to the best and most economical method of guarding them against dishonest appropriation and improvident squandering. Surely for such a purpose it was not essential to assemble together the whole legislative body of the State at an expense enormous and extravagant, when compared with the hundred simpler methods that might be easily devised, better effecting the same purpose and with less than a hundredth part of the expenditure.

As had been suggested by the gentleman from Frederick, (Mr. Thomas,) a committee, (and a legislature only acted after all through a committee,) might be provided by law, whose duty it should be to make the annual investigation at the close of that alternate fiscal year, when the General Assembly was not in session. If this mode was not acceptable, and it was merely suggested as an example, there was not a gentleman present who could not originate a scheme that would accomplish all the purposes desired, and in a manner much more likely to secure full integrity from all the officers, and full justice to the State, than that general supervision, which from the very nature and composition of Legislatures, could only be formally and carelessly effected. It had been well and wisely said, that the cheapest policy was not always the most economical; but surely a measure, commended both by reason and economy, could not fail to address itself with convincing power, to the judgment and prudence of all. Extravagance was the mother of corruption, and the warning page of history had shown that corruption was the poisonous bane that had worked out the downfall of the strongest governments of the earth. Such solemn teachings of the past, could not and would not be without its le-

gitimate influence upon this body, and he entertained the hope that the most wholesome and proper economy would be every where applied. Not relying, however, entirely upon the argument to which he had just replied, the friends of annual sessions urged against the biennial policy, "the want of time" necessary to the consideration and wise formation of all the laws, which the public and private interests might demand. He regarded this as the most unfortunate and untenable position, which could, by possibility, be assumed. Law-making was the veriest, crying vice of the age, and throughout the whole State, there was complaint, universal, loud and deep, against the countless statutes with which our books are already filled. The familiar maxim, that every one is presumed to know the law, had, in point of fact, long since become obsolete, and no man now dared to express an opinion upon the simplest subject, without the most patient, painful and laborious investigation. Why has order after order been submitted to our consideration asking for a codification and a new arrangement of the laws. Because, sir, our statutes have been one mighty mass of enactment, and repeal, re-enactment and re-repeal—supplement, and supplement upon supplement, until the very brain grows dizzy, in the almost vain attempt to gather from the profound medley what really is the law. We have been told that courts and jurists, alike had been baffled as well in the search as in giving a true construction to the mystic line when once discovered.

Such obscurity could only have resulted from too much and too frequent legislation. Ere an enactment had been permitted to test its efficacy, it was ruthlessly assailed, and it might be by a "tinkering" hand, that at once defeated and destroyed its whole original design and object. But beside this reply to the argument alleging "a want of time," it was well known that a very large period of each past session had been occupied and consumed in the passage of private laws—in the consideration and granting of divorces, and in a vast deal of local legislation, which so far as the judgment of the Convention had been shaddowed forth, was designed to be removed entirely from this hall, and given to other and more appropriate jurisdiction. Under such an arrangement, the whole "time" would be given exclusively to the great public wants, and with but little industry and energy, every subject might receive that calm and earnest deliberation so essential to wise and wholesome provisions. Let the Legislature hereafter busy itself, as well in the beginning as at the end of the session. Let it proceed earnestly and at once, in the labor before it, and on the day fixed by the Constitution for its final adjournment, every petition will have been heard and every real want been gratified. He was unwilling to detain the Convention longer with the refutation of an argument which seemed unsustained by reason, and utterly destitute of every principle of propriety. But it had been said, by the zealous opponents of the measure, he was now advocating, and with an air triumphant, that it was anti-democratic in its tendency, and in direct and open violation of the