SPEECH

OF

HON. GEORGE BLISS, OF OHIO,

ON THE

NEBRASKA AND KANSAS BILL.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, APRIL 18, 1854.

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NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

The House being in the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. BLISS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: It is my desire to say enough upon the Senate bill for the organization of the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas to exhibit the reasons for the vote which I intend to give upon that measure. And as I know that upon that subject I reflect the opinion of a highly intelligent and soundly Democratic constituency, I feel no embarrassment in declaring my opposition to what the whole country regards as the most important features of the bill.

The objectionable clause regulating suffrage in the proposed Territories, contained in what is known as the Clayton amendment, finds so little favor in this body, that it seems unnecessary for me to consume time in its discussion; but I shall notice it incidentally in the course of my remarks.

My purpose is principally to consider the proposal to repeal the slavery restriction contained in the act of 1820, known as the Missouri compromise. If I did not oppose this policy, I should be under the humiliating necessity of regarding myself as an unfaithful Democrat; false not only to a highly beneficial measure, which, by the general voice of the nation, has been held sacred, beyond the touch of legislation, for more than a third of a century, but false also to the last great pledge of my party to the country in 1852, that the laws then in force, without addition or change, should be and remain a final adjustment of the slavery question. The pledge then deliberately made against further agitation of the subject in Congress or out of it, applies, with the only real force it was intended to have, to those who are *in* Congress, forbidding all action to disturb any existing compromise or settlement, and constituting an honorable bar to the legislation now proposed. Other gentlemen think differently. I do not arraign their motives. I speak of my own obligations and duties as they appear to my own judgment.

Sir, there is too much weight of character in the dominant political party to admit of its shuffling thus suddenly from one position to an opposite one, while circumstances remain unchanged; and whatever individuals may feel constrained to do, the Democracy of the nation will maintain the ground upon which they so signally triumphed over sectionalism and fanaticism in the great canvass which placed the present Administration in power. Vacillation in policy is not the vice of that party; and though the many thousands of Democrats who verily believed that the four years of this Administration would glide smoothly away, without a renewal of the slavery controversy, are bitterly disappointed at the throwing of this firebrand among them, yet their virtuous consistency will be their safeguard. They will exorcise the stormfiend and allay the tempest.

But I have something more to say about the Baltimore resolutions of 1852. Both the great parties of the country assembled, nearly at the same time, to put in nomination their respective candidates for the presidency. Both had experienced enough of the profitless quarrel upon the subject of slavery, to force upon them a uniform sentiment with respect to it, however much they might differ in other matters. It is true that many of the leading politicians of the Whig party at the North denounced their platform while they labored for the election of their candidate. But the Democracy came up at once to the support of *their* platform, with its finality clause. Those among them who thought there were faults in the compromise measures of 1850, especially in the fugitive slave law, which ought to be corrected, smothered their objections for the sake of harmony. All prejudices were sacrificed on the altar of the general good. The happy effect of such patriotic action was very soon perceived. Democracy triumphed everywhere. The Whigs were sorely rebuked for their infidelity. Abolitionism became powerless. The greatest agitation king in the land might well have exclaimed with the afflicted Moor, "Othello's occupation's gone." Until the advent of this injudicious bill, *finality* was the word. It was heard on all the hills of New England, and through all the prairies of the West. It stands now the recorded language of the Administration. The democracy of Ohio, assembled in convention on the 8th of January, 1854, affirmed it with great unanimity—echoing back the voice which, just before that time, reached them from Washington.

Sir, a great change has occurred in the aspect of affairs—a change sudden and unlooked for. We are astounded at finding ourselves in the midst of a seething agitation. The dogs of war are baying around us, and the wild spirit of discord is poisoning the very air. The value of the policy established in 1852 is more apparent, now that the consequences of an attempt to depart from it are seen, than it ever was before. Yet we are urged to kick our platform from under us, and drop down into the mud and slime of a hateful contest, which, however it may eventuate, offers us nothing better to be gained than an impaired character for political consistency.

Sir, it appears to me peculiarly appropriate

that the South should make her voice heard upon the right side of this question. The Missouri compromise was with her a favorite measure; and I know of no party more interested than she in the keeping of such compacts. Her entire interest in negro slavery, and the facilities for protecting that interest, have been secured to her by compromises—beginning with the compromises of the Constitution, about which so much has been said, and ending with the compromise of 1850. Those compromises which guarantee rights to the South, the men with whom I act at the North, have ever held most sacred. We have preached about their sacredness till we were hoarse. Not to meet the North with corresponding faith, would be to invite an assault from those who hold these compromises in lower estimation. Let the South, then, and the North, perform the honorable act of standing by their engagements, and protecting sectional faith. I am happy to know that there are gentlemen on this floor, from southern States, who are determined to do it. It is well. The Missouri compromise is an arbiter of peace, fraternity, concord. It calmed the troubled waters of strife in times past, and affords the best assurance of unity and prosperity in time to come.

There is a class of men who profess to support this bill upon the ground that the abolition of the Missouri line, as a boundary between free and slave territory, will operate prejudicially to the slave interest, by setting aside all amicable adjustment, and leaving parties to contend for every inch of ground hereafter, when States formed out of Texas shall propose to come into the Union with slavery; and, in fact, whenever and wherever opportunity for such controversy shall be presented. And this upon the ground that, if the Missouri compromise shall fall, all others will be held to have fallen with it. I say there is a class of men in the country who profess to desire the passage of the bill for such reasons. They are not avowed Abolitionists, and therefore I doubt their sincerity. But if they are sincere, I cannot sympathize with their designs. If I were one of that factious class of politicians, and proposed to subsist only upon the pabulum of sectional strife, I might entertain such an argument; for the consequences they foresee are more than likely to follow. But as a Democrat, I repudiate it altogether. I recognize fully the constitutional rights of the South; and whenever, *outside* of the Constitution, conflicting interests, or claims of interest, have been settled upon terms to which the nation has assented, I desire such settlements to be observed in good faith, and never violently disturbed. What the South has lawfully got, let her keep, or surrender, as her own conscience or interest may determine; and the equivalents which she has deliberately given, let her not seek to retract.

We ought to provide against unnecessary war, rather than to sit down and calculate its results. If we would do this, we have but to recognize the sovereignty of the people, and bow down before their clearly manifested will. It must be a morbid taste which can find anything agreeable in the anticipation of a controversy like that which this bill invokes; to which no end is promised, except in that possible disruption of the Confederacy which some gentlemen apprehend much more than I do, but which I will admit to be quite probable, when they can prove that its preservation in 1854 requires the destruction of the very appliance which saved it in 1820.

Sir, it is somewhat peculiar, that when this measure was introduced, it was claimed by its author not to be an act of affirmative legislation, for it was argued that the Missouri compromise had already been, in effect, abrogated by the compromise measures of 1850; and, probably, because nobody in the world had been wise enough to discover it, the bill undertook to declare that fact. Legislative construction may make law, but it ought to be truthful and reasonable. However, the weakness of this assumption was so obvious that it has been abandoned; and we are now asked to repeal it out-right, because its longer continuance is not consistent with the *spirit* and *principle* of the laws of 1850. This shift does not help the case. For wherein the inconsistency can truly be affirmed, no man has been, or ever will be, able to show. Did the Congress of 1850 suppose that it was establishing a principle which must lead to a change in all the legislation then in force creating territorial governments? The Territory of Oregon had been organized with the slavery restriction; Minnesota with the same. And even after the compromise measures of 1850 were passed, the Territory of Washington was formed out of the limits of Oregon, and the restriction within it left in full force. According to this argument, that was all wrong. It was contrary to a great principle which had been established without anybody knowing it. A queer principle that. It's birth will be registered in the family record of humbugs, as of 1854, and not of 1850.

But to the point. By the time the proper laws shall have been passed to let the light of this principle shine upon all these Territories, there may have been agitation enough to make politicians desire to rest from their labors. If not, when the anticipated brood of new States shall be hatched from Texas, there will, as all the lovers of turmoil foresee, be an opportunity to continue it by a fierce contest over their admission into the Union with slavery. Then it will be convenient for agitators, whose numbers and strength will be somewhat increased, to know that no faith attaches to these legislative compacts with regard to slavery. The South will insist that the compact (she will call it by that name) with Texas shall be kept. The North asks only the same thing with reference to Nebraska. The South should render the faith she intends to exact.

Sir, if there were an abyss of dark and unknown depths before us, it would be prudent to turn aside and shun it; but in truth, it lies far aside from our path, and we are deviating from our course to drop into it. The laws of 1850 will not drive us there. The Baltimore platform will not. It does not require us to *unsettle* all things to prove that all things are *settled*, and to remain so; nor to plunge the country into an endless *agitation* to prove that *non-agitation* is our policy. I cannot understand the logic by which such an idea is practically taught. Nor, to venture upon another use of an illustration which has been quoted here, can I see the same thing, at short intervals, in the likeness of a camel, then of a weasel, and then of a whale, because it may please the Lord Hamlet to assert such contradictions.

But, sir, what is that principle which was established in 1850, and now requires the repeal of the

Missouri compromise, and legislation to do away the slavery prohibition in existing Territories? It is defined in this bill to be "non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the States and Territories." Nobody ever thought of interfering with slavery in the States, and the idea that Congress in 1850 intended to adopt, or did adopt, a new rule as to legislation upon the subject of slavery in Territories, incompatible with laws then and now existing, is proved to be untrue by reference to the acts to organize New Mexico and Utah, in which acts alone such rule is claimed to have been established. People not familiar with the subject will be surprised to learn that there is no power in the Legislature, either of New Mexico or Utah, to pass any law, without the assent of Congress, upon supervision. Let us see how congressional non-intervention, in general, is established in these Territories. The third section of the act "to establish a territorial government for New Mexico," provides for the appointment of a Governor by the President, who is to hold his office for four years, who "shall approve all laws passed by the Legislative Assembly before they shall take effect." Section seventh provides that "the legislative power of the Territory shall extend to all rightful subjects consistent with the Constitution of the United States and the provisions of this act," and concludes with these words: "All the laws passed by the Legislative Assembly and Governor shall be submitted to the Congress of the United States, and, if disapproved, shall be null and of no effect." The law organizing Utah, in these respects, is the same. There is no provision relating to slavery in either. But it is provided that they may hereafter come into the Union as States, with or without it, as the people, in framing their State constitutions, shall elect. These Territories are vested with no new powers of legislation as to slavery, or any other subject. The same powers were delegated to Oregon and Minnesota before the compromise of 1850, and to Washington afterwards. And, if I am not mistaken, the same have been given to all Territories that have ever been created—except that the restriction upon the exercise of the powers professedly granted are less in some other Territories than in New Mexico and Utah. Slavery is prohibited in Oregon and Washington by the terms of the Oregon act, which is left in force in Washington; in Minnesota, also, by this same Missouri compromise. When is the repeal of those prohibitions to be urged?

Sir, I desire it to be kept in mind, that the leading reason set up for abolishing the Missouri compromise is, that it conflicts with the principle of the territorial acts of 1850. It is claimed, and by many supposed, that the restrictive section of the Missouri law was totally annulled in that part of Texas over which it had been extended by the joint resolutions of annexation, and which was incorporated into the Territory of New Mexico. But how was it annulled? Certainly not in express words; nor, as it appears to me, by any fair implication. When a State shall be formed, it may be disregarded; but until then it must remain in full force, unless hereafter repealed. This celebrated principle, therefore, is merely imaginary; and it would be better, instead of setting up an unfounded claim to precedent for this bill, to openly eschew the Baltimore platform, and demand a new and different policy. But I sum up this argument upon principle in behalf of the bill, and find it stands thus: the establishment of a *new* principle consists in the continuance of an *old* one; and congressional non-intervention in a particular branch of legislation in a Territory consists in the exercise, by Congress, of complete supervision and control of *all* the legislation of such Territory.

It is gravely contended that the Missouri compromise ought to be repealed, because Congress refused, in 1850, after the acquisition of territory from Mexico, to extend the separating line to the Pacific ocean. There does not appear to be any force in the suggestion. Parties certainly are not bound, either in law or honor, to make a bargain because they made one long ago; nor is the one actually made avoidable in law or honor, because one of the parties refuses to make another. So, a law of Congress, or compact made in 1820, loses none of its force because Congress or the parties refused, in 1850, to make one of like terms, relating to a different subject. But the principle—the *principle!* responds this vain casuistry, should be either abandoned or carried to the utmost extent. To this I reply, what has been well said, and should be obvious to every one, that there is no principle involved in the Missouri compromise, nor in the laws of 1850, if they be a compromise, nor in any other specific compromise whatever. And I say this as a further, and, in itself, conclusive answer to the argument in favor of this bill, founded upon the pretense of a principle, which constitutes nine tenths of the whole of it.

Sir, a compromise is an adjustment of claims or differences made by the mutual concessions of the parties in interest. They yield something to each other, in order to reach a medium ground of conciliation. Neither of them believes the result to be entirely consistent with his rights, but he accepts it to avoid further controversy. The contract by which the particular matter in dispute was adjusted, although its violation involves extraordinary turpitude, furnishes no rule to govern other transactions between the same parties.

Let us see how the Missouri compromise originated. The slave States claimed a right to have Missouri admitted into the Union with slavery. On the other hand, the free States claimed a right to insist that she should be admitted only with freedom to all her inhabitants. Both parties stood, for a time, upon their respective claims of right, and Missouri remained out of the Union. After a long controversy, they *compromised;* they settled the question by an agreement to which the form of a law was given. That agreement was, that Missouri should be admitted as a slave State, and, as an equivalent to the free States for this concession, it was further agreed that the residue of the Louisiana Territory, out of which Missouri had been formed, north of 36° 30′ north latitude, should be forever free; that slavery should there be forever prohibited. This was a specific arrangement, settling the question in dispute, and nothing else; applying to the country which is now proposed to be erected into the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas, and to no other country in the world.

Another compromise, entirely independent of the former, was made when Texas was admitted into the Union, by which four additional States

were to be formed out of her limits—those south of 36° 30′ to come into the Union with or without slavery, at their election; and in that part of Texas north of 36° 30′ slavery to be forever prohibited. The Missouri line was adopted in this instance, not because there was any peculiar virtue in it, or because any principle appertained to it, but because conformity to a line then existing, of the same kind, was a matter of convenience. Texas was a slaveholding country, and, therefore, by the application of the prohibition to a portion of her territory, slavery lost ground; but was very soon much more than indemnified, as we shall directly see.

Last of all came the compromise measures of 1850, by which that prohibition in the larger part of that portion of Texas north of 36° 30′, which is made a part of New Mexico, may be superseded by forming slave States, and by which, also, the right to erect all Utah and New Mexico into slave States is guaranteed, while in the smaller portion of northern Texas the prohibition remains entirely unimpaired. Now, any one can see that these transactions were independent of each other, and not upon any principle whatever; and that one is of no higher authority than another.

The consideration to the North for all this was, that California should be admitted, according to the wishes of her own people, with the free constitution which they had formed. The North had to buy for her the right—not the *right*, but the privilege—of coming into the Union. This was the grand feature of the compromise. Thus we have one free State from the Mexican territory. All the rest may be made into slave States, or not, as circumstances shall determine. From Louisiana, as originally acquired, four slave States have been formed—Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas. Four more, to be created by a division of Texas, make eight. Only one free State from that territory—Iowa—has been formed. Now, sir, it appears to me, the South has got enough, without violating any compromise.

Sir, I have noticed that the meager support which is given to this measure in most parts of the country, is upon the assumption that congressional non-intervention in the governmental affairs of the Territories, is its characteristic virtue; that it commits the power of legislation and government directly to the people. Certain phraseology in the bill, which has been used with liberal additions in speeches and newspapers, is calculated to induce such an impression, and enforce an appeal to the favorite idea of popular sovereignty which prevails particularly in the North.

Let us see if this is not all a delusion—if there is any such thing in the bill. Are the people to elect their Governor? No. Their judges? No. Nor their secretary, nor their attorney, nor their marshal. All these officers are to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice of the Senate, which is one branch of Congress. The Governor, secretary, and marshal are liable to be removed at the President's will. Are the people to have an unshackled power of legislation? No. The Governor to be appointed, and removable as aforesaid, is to be armed with the veto power; and if he shall see fit to exercise it upon a bill that may have passed, the concurrence of two-thirds of both branches of the Legislature will be necessary to make it a law. The Governor may exercise this high power without peril to his official station through the displeasure of the people; for his responsibility is not to them, and they have no power over him. I do not say that the President and Senate will not make good appointments, nor that the Governor will improperly exercise his power; but I do say, that in all this system, there is not much of that vaunted power of "self-government" with which this bill is glorified by its advocates.

Again, no power of legislation is proposed to be given to Nebraska and Kansas, which has not been given to existing Territories and former ones, except the power to legislate upon the subject of slavery. That is new. It was not given by the compromise of 1850. It is not in accordance with any precedent, but a peculiarity of this bill. Now, to be candid and fair in this discussion, I must admit, that if freedom from congressional intervention, self-government, popular sovereignty, (I believe it has no more names,) consists in the power to make slaves, then I am wrong, and the bill is what it is claimed by its advocates to be. But I desire to know how it is, that the cause of self-government in the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas is to be promoted by a restriction of the right of suffrage. If the foregoing definition is to be taken as true, it is simple enough; but otherwise, it is a very knotty question. Heretofore persons having made their declaration of intention to become citizens of the United States, and taken the prescribed oath, have been permitted to vote in Territories. But in Nebraska and Kansas, where such immense powers are given to the people, a less liberal rule is to be adopted, limiting all participation in the government to full citizens of the United States. Without inquiring further into the provisions of this bill, enough has been said to show that those who approve of it, on the ground that it increases popular rights, are greatly deceived.

An argument for the bill, more dignified, but equally fallacious, is drawn from constitutional considerations. It is that the Missouri prohibition ought to be repealed, because Congress had no constitutional power to enact it. It is true that Congress derives no express power from the Constitution to legislate for a Territory at all. But that power was assumed long ago, as a matter of necessity, arising from the fact that territory had been acquired with just as little constitutional authority. The assumed right to acquire territory, and to erect government over it, has become so firmly established by numerous precedents, that no one now thinks of calling it in question. But, as I do not intend to consider this branch of the subject any further than it properly applies to the present discussion, we will, if you please, let slavery in a Territory be individualized, as a subject upon which Congress has no power to legislate. Who then can legislate upon it? How can it be made the subject of legislation at all? The Territorial Legislature derives all its powers from Congress, and Congress cannot delegate a power which it does not possess. The unavoidable result is, that until the Territory becomes a State, clothed with complete sovereignty, no such legislation can be had. Now, as slavery is opposed to natural law and right, and exists only by municipal law, in derogation of the law of nature, it follows that there can be no slavery in a Territory, as there can be no law there to create it. If

it be urged that Congress has power to establish slavery in a Territory, but none to prohibit it, the proposition is too absurd to deserve a reply.

If the people of the Territories possess sovereignty of themselves, and have a right to make laws, and exercise the functions of civil government, independently of the *General* Government, then Congress has no right to impose a government upon them with limitations and restrictions of that sovereignty. In that case they may set up a nationality for themselves. This doctrine might cost the nation its territories. It does not comport with reason. It is the new doctrine of "squatter sovereignty," imagined to be carried just far enough to enable the people of a Territory to make a law which Congress could not make for them. I do not suppose that its advocates intend to carry it so far; but they should do so to make it avail them in this case, because, if it is to stop short of that, then the powers of the Territories are confessedly derivative and subordinate, and the conclusion before arrived at must stand.

It is manifest that this view involves the whole practical question; for it is during the settlement of a Territory that the habits and modes of life of the people are formed, and the character of free coming State, as slaveholding or non-slaveholding, is determined. No one has seen such a phenomenon as the formation of a slave State in the midst of an entirely free population.

Whoever assumes a legal position should submit to all the consequences which logically result from it, and, if he believes it correct, stand by it, at least until he has brought it to the test of a trial. But this doctrine would be fatal to the Nebraska bill; for therein is an attempt to exercise the very power which is denied to Congress—an attempt to empower the Territorial Legislatures to make laws upon the subject of slavery—to establish or prohibit it. I quote from the famous clause in the fourteenth section, so much as is necessary to make this appear:

"It being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their *domestic institutions* in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States."

That is to say, the intent and meaning is, to permit the Territorial Legislatures of Nebraska and Kansas to create slavery by law or not, as they may see fit. The phrase "domestic institutions" does not mean the government under which they are to live. They cannot "regulate" that; for Congress, by way of *non-intervention*, regulates it for them. It is not claimed that marriage, or any other social relation, is to be thus regulated. It is intended to apply only to the institution of slavery. Non-intervention, then, may be defined again to be creating by law a local power to establish slavery—a power which could not exist without a grant thereof by Congress. It is wonderful that gentlemen who hold that Congress has no power to legislate upon that subject in a Territory should for a moment believe in the validity of such a pretended grant. I venture to say that there never was before, in all the history of legislation, a proposition urged by men of high talent upon grounds as irrational and untrue as those upon which this bill is placed. By an entire misapplication of descriptive terms, it is made to claim a character which it does not possess, as well as the sanction of principles which it grossly violates.

The doctrine that Congress could not constitutionally legislate upon slavery in the Territories, carried out to its legitimate consequences, as I have endeavored to exhibit them, was acquiesced in by the great mass of the supporters of General Cass in 1848; everybody perceiving that, if sustained, it must leave the Territories unincumbered with slavery; and leave the people, in forming States, to consult their own pleasure. It was a very good answer to the demand then loudly made for the Wilmot proviso. Now, it is practically impugned by some gentlemen who in words assert it, and must be altogether exploded if this bill pass.

If the people felt bound to follow all the sudden dodges which this measure requires, they would soon cry out, in the words of the hymnist, "O where shall rest be found?" They will not do that, however, for *their* convictions are honest, and can be changed only by fair reasoning. The people see this subject in only one light. They see that slave States are desired above the old established line of demarkation; that slavery is pluming its pinions for a northward flight, and seeks to cancel the title deed by which it conveyed Nebraska to free labor and political equality. The people of the North are undoubtedly astonished that some of their representatives are seconding the design; for while they have no prejudices which would lead them to interfere with vested rights, they will not consent to the repeal of the law of 1820, to permit the creation of slave States on ground which fell to the free States by the partition. I submit if in this they are guilty of any wrong or want of comity to the South?

I was greatly surprised to read in the speech of a very worthy gentleman from Pennsylvania, a charge against the North of making an assault upon the South and her institutions by the opposition set up to this bill. An assault by the North upon the South! Why, sir, if I were to imitate very faintly the tone of speeches made here by some southern gentlemen, I might say that the South demands of the North a pound of flesh which is "nominated in *no* bond," except her own bond to keep the peace, and never exact it. The North objects to the immolation, and pleads the covenant of 1820 in bar, and calls upon her doctors of the law here to sustain her cause. And is this an assault upon the South?

Sir, I have spoken of the Missouri law as a compromise, a compact, a covenant. It has been known by these, and names of like signification, ever since it came into existence. To select one of them, I claim it as a compact, and thus place its claim to inviolability upon a ground so high and clear as to cast all legal caviling into the shade. It is now denied to have been a compact, because it is said it had no parties. But it had parties, and has them now. They were and are the two great sections of the Union—the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States—high and dignified parties, who ought safely to rely upon each other for the perfection of faith. It was agreed upon by the ablest and most patriotic statesmen in the land, representing the people in 1820, and ratified and reratified by the great voice of the nation. It was finished, and the North and South joined hands

over it, and consecrated it to perpetual fraternity—a talisman of concord, a bond of peace; subject to no repeal or change, its duration was to be measured only by the years of the Republic. It underlies all other compromises which have been subsequently made in adjustment of difficulties arising from the slavery question. Is it surprising that an attempt to destroy it should strongly excite the people?

Who seeks to rescind it, and under what circumstances? Why, sir, the party in whose behalf it was fully performed by the admission of Missouri. The party who now holds the full consideration seeks to be excused from performance. The justice of the law is, that even where there is wrong in a contract, by which a party may avoid it, he must first put the other party in *statu quo*. Here that cannot be done. Missouri cannot be stripped of her constitution and sovereignty, and reduced to her territorial condition. Therefore, the parties cannot be remitted to the relation they occupied at the time of the compromise, to adjust the question upon other terms, or decide it by force. No lover of his country, no one but the wildest of fanatics, would wish it done, if it were possible. From great difficulties there is usually a way of escape. There is one here, and only one: that is, to live and act honestly up to the contract.

But, sir, lest it should be inferred from my remarks that I intend to charge the *people* of the South with bad faith in this matter, I will do them and myself the justice to say, that the best evidence in my possession tends to show that a very large majority of them are not only surprised, but chagrined, at the effort now being made. It is no policy of theirs. They deny such participation as would exhibit them clearly in the wrong, and put mortal weapons into the hands of their enemies. Further than all, that high sense of honor and justice which belongs to the American people, impels our brethren of the South to acknowledge the obligation of the compact of 1820, and the platform of 1852, and to seek no illegitimate advantage from their overthrow. I verily believe that the opposition to this bill, so well timed by some gentlemen from the South, is a fair expression of popular sentiment in the slave States.

We are told that natural barriers are interposed to the introduction of slavery to these Territories; and, therefore, the repeal of the restriction cannot defeat the design of its framers. That is a question of probabilities. But if it is true that it is a mere naked abstraction which is occupying the attention of Congress from month to month, at a huge expense to the Government, then the sooner we drop it the better. If I were for the bill, I should not like to confess myself agitating the country from center to circumference, and depleting the Treasury to carry a mere fancy, of no importance whatever.

Sir, I do not speak upon this subject with any of the feelings of an Abolitionist, nor yet with the policy of one who feels constrained to outstep the bounds of reason and justice to cover up a former leaning towards political heresy. My record, brief and undistinguished, I admit, is straightforward. I have labored, with others, to preserve the party to which I belong from the inroads of all antagonisms, and intend to do so in time to come. I deny all sectionalism, and claim a sentiment as broadly national as I will concede to any other man. I never did, and never will lend myself to the prosecution of a crusade against any portion of the Confederacy, because of the existence there of rights and institutions which do not comport with the moral sense of men in other regions. The party to which I belong is national in all its attributes. To it, and to its liberal, efficient, and rational policy, I impute the unexampled march of our country to magnificence and power. The people whom I have the honor to represent are no factionists. They contemplate their country as a stupendous whole, and rejoice in prosperity which is universal. They do not dispute with the South about the morality of her institutions, though it is not probable that they will ever attain to that excellence of understanding which enables some statesmen of the present day to perceive that what the sages of the Revolution declared to be self-evident, is only a humbug. They contributed a large majority to the election of the present Chief Magistrate, and support his Administration with all the great principles he has chosen to embody. Whilst they allow to all men freedom of thought, they think for themselves, and grieve to see any portion of their political brethren taking a wrong position. They hold on this measure the true sentiment of the party, and they know it; and although they may be temporarily embarrassed by an error which they do not embrace, they will still march on in their regular course.

I have but a few words more to say. It is claimed that this bill is an Administration measure, and some newspapers have been weak enough to prate about making its support a test of one's Democracy. That is rank nonsense. The private opinion of the President may be in favor of the bill; if so, I think he errs in judgment. But he has communicated no such opinion to Congress. He could not have done so without a violation of the platform upon which he was elected. The President never conceived the absurd idea of taking the consciences and brains of the members of this body into his hands to accomplish the the repeal of the Missouri compromise. Let no man hereafter charge a Democratic President with such a design. He will exercise his judgment upon acts passed by Congress in the way the Constitution points out, and will not be required to bear the responsibility which belongs to those who are elected to perform the office of legislation. Such is the theory of our institutions, and disaster would follow its abandonment in practice.

Those who vainly talk of making this bill a test of Democracy will be quite willing to forego that pleasure when they find themselves, with their *test* on one side, and the Democratic party on the other. That great party of national necessity, which is animated by, and holds in its keeping, the very soul of the Republic, is not destined to be shattered to fragments by any difference of opinion upon this subject.