

E 387

.136

Copy 2





INCONSISTENCY AND HYPOCRISY

OF

MARTIN VAN BUREN.

ON THE

QUESTION OF SLAVERY.

No event in the history of political parties in this country since the establishment of the government, has excited more surprise, than the recent nomination of Martin Van Buren by the Buffalo Convention, as the Free-Soil, or Anti-Slavery Candidate for the Presidency.

If all the public and private records which compose the political history of this fortunate partisan had been burned up in a general conflagration, and the recollection of his intrigues and corruptions, blotted forever from the memory of men, or if a lapse of two, or three generations had intervened, and a new order of things, and a new race of men had sprung up, the position which Mr. Van Buren now occupies as the representative of the abolition sentiment of the North, no man might think proper to attack.

But when we find on every printed page, and in the memories of our women and children, even, the record and the recollection of his former corrupt opinions and practices, of what Martin Van Buren was, in contrast with what he now pretends to be, it is impossible to forbear exposing the glaring effrontery inconsistency, and hypocrisy manifest in the declarations which he has so recently promulgated. Mr. Van Buren, ever since he came upon the stage of public life, has been remarkable for nothing so much as the uniform success with which he has employed the machinery of party in the acquisition of power. Introduced early into public station in the State of New York, first as Surrogate of Columbia County, and subsequently, by gradual steps, ascending to be Judge Advocate, State Senator, Delegate to the Constitutional Convention, Governor, Secretary of State of the United States, Minister to England, Vice President, and finally to the Presidency,—on every round of this ladder, to the pinnacle of power, we find him the same unscrupulous, intriguing, partisan leader, preserving, and perpetuating his succession to power, and eminence, by a distribution of the public patronage, and the public treasure, among the greedy and misguided creatures of his cupidity, and ambition.

Never rising to the dignity of the Statesman, by any broad and comprehensive views, or commanding even the respect of his associates in the public service, he has never had the assent of the people to the principles of his political life,

or the confidence of those through whose exertions his elevation has been accomplished.

Honest and sagacious men have always mistrusted him, while those of his own party who were acquainted with his secrets, have used and despised him. The evidences of this want of respect, and confidence, on the part of those who professed to be his friends, and of their thorough knowledge of his character for chicanery and duplicity, are to be found every where. M. M. Noah in 1834, speculating upon the then impending Presidential election, writes as follows, "every paper almost that we open, speaks contemptuously of Van Buren's prospects for the Presidency; but they speak without knowledge of the labors of the man, and the vast machine of intrigue, and corruption that he has set in operation in every part of the Union. . . . they do not see the fox prowling near the barn; the mole burrowing near the ground; the pilot fish who plunges deep in the ocean in one spot, and comes up at another to breathe the air.

"If it were the free, unbought, unthreatened voice of public opinion, his chances could not be counted; but Van Buren trusts nothing to the good opinion of the people; their will, their wishes, their desires, their frank and unbiassed suffrages, he rejects and repudiates; his appeal is to the *interests* and the *fears* of men, he secures those whom he imagines *controls* public opinion, he buys the *leaders*, and makes them *accountable for the rank and file*."

And again, a more truthful and graphic portrait of the man, was never penned, than that which appeared in the New York Evening Post in 1841, (a paper devoted to his interests.)

"Mr. Van Buren has little moral faith of any kind, barely enough to need no artificial excitation of body or mind. This deficiency drives him into an artificial code of political practice, in which he refers all social actions to individual interests, and all political actions to combinations of those interests. He believes firmly in the *force of management*. . . . He belongs wholly to the present time, and may be said to represent *trading or business politics*. *He is the very impersonation of party in its strictest features of formal discipline and exclusive combination*."

Mr. Brownson, also, in the January number of his Review, of 1844, uses the following language with reference to Mr. Van Buren's probable nomination by the Baltimore Convention;—"But the reappearance of Mr. Van Buren on the stage, changes the whole aspect of affairs. He comes not alone, but as the chief of a band, which the country had devoutly hoped was *dispersed*, never to be collected again. He comes as the representative of the same old *corrupt*, and corrupting system of party tactics, followed by the same swarm of greedy spoils-men, with their appetite for plunder sharpened by the few years' abstinence they have been forced, through the remains of the original virtue and patriotism of the country, to practice."

But it is not worth while to accumulate proofs of the general profligacy of Mr. Van Buren's character, and career, as a politician. The good, or evil, which may have resulted from his identification with the administration of the government, must be left to the judgment of impartial history. We have never had but one opinion of the man, and we must do him the credit to say, that we have always believed him consistent.

By means of his pro-slavery principles, and declarations, he secured the influence and votes of the South, and thus crept into the Presidential Chair; and when in 1844, that influence, and those votes, were given to a genuine southern man with southern principles, and were not to be had for the highest bid of any northern dough-face, Mr. Van Buren turned his back upon the South, to court the

abolition party of the North, upon which he had heaped every degree of insult and opprobrium. It was no exaggeration of the truth for Mr. J. R. Giddings, of Ohio, to speak of his new political high priest and exemplar, in the following strain: "I may be led to confide in the honor of a slave-holder; but a 'SERVILE DOUGHFACE' is too destitute of that article to obtain credit with me. MR. VAN BUREN HAS PLACED THE EVIDENCE OF HIS SERVILITY CONSPICUOUSLY upon the records of his country. THERE IT WILL REMAIN, AND BE REGARDED AS AN ENDURING MEMENTO OF THE DEGENERACY OF THE MAN WHO FILLED OUR PUBLIC STATIONS.

"Although a Northern man, it became the boast of HIS FRIENDS that he possessed "Southern principles," and he soon gave SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE of his devotion to the interests of his employers (slave merchants.) Indeed, had he been bred up in the business, he would scarcely have discovered MORE ATTACHMENT TO THE INTERESTS OF SLAVE GROWERS and SLAVE DEALERS. . . . ANXIETY FOR THE SUCCESS of that "execrable commerce," appears to HAVE BEEN UPPERMOST IN HIS MIND, and to have superseded ALL OTHER MATTERS of State policy."

We are not disposed to make any extended comment upon the change which has come over the spirit of Mr. Giddings's dream, otherwise than to remind him that he stands in very much the same relation to Mr. Van Buren, that Dr. Faust did to the Devil.

Faust. — Who does what no one ever told him,
Must thank himself for what himself has wrought,
Who has the devil, let him hold him,
Another time he may not so be caught.

Mephistopheles. — Oh! if you wish, I make the composition,
And from this very instant join your train,
Without a salary; but on one condition,
Your soul with my slight art to entertain.

But Mr. Giddings's opinion; with whatever increased value that opinion may have at the present moment, is not necessary to Mr. Van Buren's conviction on the grounds which we have alleged against him; we choose rather that his own acts should speak for themselves, and we doubt not they will be sufficient to satisfy every discriminating reader, of his complete recklessness and dishonesty, in parading himself as opposed to the extension of slavery in the territories, and as favorable to its abolition in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Van Buren's first declarations upon the subject of Slavery, reach as far back as the date of the Missouri Compromise. During the agitation of that question, in 1819, a meeting was held at Albany, to consider the propriety of restricting the extension of Slavery beyond the Mississippi. It was a meeting composed of gentlemen of both political parties; Mr. Van Buren's name had been used in the call, and had been placed upon the Committee, appointed to draw up a Memorial to Congress.

When the meeting was held Mr. Van Buren was absent from the city. The Memorial which was adopted, expressed the sentiments of the agitators. A single paragraph will show its scope, and spirit.

"With all due submission to the superior wisdom and intelligence of Congress, your memorialists respectfully suggest, that since the expiration of the time limited in the Constitution (1800) the Legislature (Congress) has possessed the power of prohibiting the introduction of Slavery into any State thereafter to be admitted into the Union, whether that State was formed from Terri-

tory comprised within the original limits of the United States, or from Territory acquired by treaty beyond those limits; and consequently, that it now possesses indisputable power to render the prohibition of the further extension of Slavery in such new State, a condition of its admission into the Union. That there was nothing contained in the treaty by which the Missouri Territory was, with the rest of Louisiana, ceded to the United States, to restrain the exercise of such power in regard to the State now proposed to be erected therein; and that it is highly just and expedient that Congress should on the present occasion, as well as in all other future cases, in the admission of new States into the Union, interpose to prevent, in the most effectual manner, the further increase of Slavery in this Nation."

Before despatching this paper to Congress, Mr. Van Buren was invited to co-operate with the Committee, and sign the document which had been prepared. *This he refused to do, and for the following reasons:*

"He sincerely deprecated the existence of Slavery in the United States, and was willing to concur in any measure to prevent its extension West of the Mississippi, consistent with the Constitution, and not calculated to disturb the settlement of the question of Slavery, made by that instrument, nor to endanger the rights and securities of Slave-owners. But he was not willing to unite in any course of proceedings from which such results might be apprehended; nor to join in any denunciation, political or otherwise, against the people of the South. Notwithstanding his great personal respect for the other members of the Committee, as well as those whose names appeared in the proceedings of the meeting, he could not approve the spirit by which the resolutions adopted by it were characterized."

Being further importuned, he addressed the following letter to the Committee:

"SIR:—You had permission to use my name as a Committee to call a meeting of our citizens to express their opinion on the Missouri Question, and the propriety of your doing so has not been questioned by me. You surely cannot suppose, that the use of my name for that purpose, imposed on me an obligation to sign whatever Memorial might be agreed upon by the meeting. Being out of town when it was held, and having had no hand in forming or adopting the Memorial, I declined signing it. My reasons for doing so, further than you are concerned in calling the meeting, I presume it is not your intention of inquiring into.

Yours, respectfully,

M. VAN BUREN.

January 20th, 1820.

Henry T. Jones, Esq."

Such was Mr. Van Buren's position at one of the most important periods of our history. Thus he stood in 1819, before the admission of Missouri, upon the miserable pretext that to memorialize Congress upon the subject of the further extension of Slavery into new Territories, was to "*endanger the rights and securities of Slave-owners.*" It is upon this very ground that Mr. Calhoun and his adherents of the South claim a share in the soil of California and New Mexico, for the uses of Slavery. To no other man could the remark of John Randolph be more appropriately applied, than to Martin Van Buren,—"*We do not govern you of the North by our black Slaves, but by your white Slaves.*"

All Mr. Van Buren's subsequent letters and speeches, sustain the grounds which he assumed on the question of the Missouri Compromise. This was the creed of his party, and to it he hung, as long as his party would hang to him.

In 1834, commenced the great Abolition excitement. In the early part of that year inquiries were made of Mr. Van Buren, for his opinions upon the Slave agitation, and these were given in substance, as follows:

"The subject is, in my judgment, *exclusively under the control of the State Governments; and I am not apprised, nor do I believe that a contrary opinion, to an extent deserving consideration, is entertained in any part of the United States!* "I do not see on what authority the General Government could interfere, without a change in the Constitution, even at the instance of the Slave-holding States."

Mr. WRIGHT, then a Senator in Congress, being appealed to by several members of the Virginia Legislature for Mr. Van Buren's sentiments, replied:

"The Constitution of the United States does not, in the opinion of Mr. Van Buren, give to Congress the *right to interfere with the relations between master and slave in any of the States; and he would consider it highly impolitic for that body to pass a law abolishing Slavery in the District of Columbia.*"

Mr. B. F. Butler, Mr. Van Buren's principal manager, throughout his political career, and the friend by whose consummate tact the Abolition Delegates were duped into his nomination at Buffalo, was then Attorney General of the United States, and in reply to a note addressed to him by Mr. Garland of Virginia, re-affirmed the statements made by Mr. Wright, fortifying his lucid and unanswerable exposition *by facts*, showing that there is scarcely a shadow of difference among the great mass of the intelligent and reflecting people of the Middle and Southern States.

Later in the same year, it was found that the abolitionists were circulating in great numbers, their incendiary publications through the Southern States, and matters had reached such a pitch of excitement, that the interference of Congress was loudly called for. A bill was accordingly introduced in the Senate, which provided that Postmasters *should be allowed to open mail bags*, and if any incendiary documents were found, *to destroy them*.

When this bill came to a vote, it resulted in a tie, and *Mr. Van Buren, as Vice President in the chair, gave his casting vote in its favor*. This vote was perfectly consistent with his avowed principles, and only shows that he was prepared by one of the most questionable acts to be found anywhere on the public records, to play the subservient tool of the South, in order to secure its Presidential votes.

We have evidence of the successful manner in which he managed his part, in his nomination, which followed soon after, as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency.

In his letter of acceptance of that nomination, he re-affirms, and strengthens his former opinions, and acts.

He says;—"Thoroughly convinced that the overthrow of our present Constitution, and the consequent destruction of the confederacy which it binds together, would be the greatest sacrifice of human happiness and hopes that has ever been made at the shrine of personal ambition, I do not hesitate to promise you, that every effort in my power, whether in public or private life, shall be made for their preservation. The Father of his Country, foreseeing this danger, warned us to cherish the Union as the palladium of our safety; and the great exemplar of our political faith, Thomas Jefferson, has taught us, *that to preserve that common sympathy between the States, out of which the Union sprang, and which constitutes its surest foundation, we should exercise the powers which of right belong to the General Government, in a spirit of moderation and brotherly love, and religiously abstain from the assumption of such as have not been delegated by the Constitution.*"

The Hon. Andrew Stevenson, presided over the National Convention.

On a motion of Hon. Silas Wright, a Committee was appointed to draft an address, expressive of the views of the Convention, and Mr. Wright was placed upon the Committee as its Chairman: at his request the President of the Convention was added, and the address was written by Mr. S.

It was sent to Mr. Wright, and not only signed by them, (Mr. S. and himself,) and published with their signatures, but Mr. Van Buren, and Mr. Wright, in letters to Mr. Stevenson, expressed their cordial approval of it.

It must therefore be taken, as the public, explicit, and carefully considered opinion of Mr. Van Buren, on the subjects embraced in it. Parties stand in very much the same relation to each other now, that they did in 1835, and most of the passages which we have marked for quotation, are equally applicable.

“We come now, fellow citizens, to another objection to the convention, or rather one of its nominations, and to another effort at discussion of a very different character, and probably ONE OF THE MOST MISCHIEVOUS AND WICKED THAT HAS EVER BEEN MADE AGAINST THE PEACE AND HAPPINESS OF ANY COUNTRY! IT IS THE ATTEMPT TO CREATE SECTIONAL PARTIES AND DISUNION, and to alienate one portion of our country from the rest, by charging upon the supposed defects of our complicated political system, the calamities which evil men are endeavoring themselves to bring about. This is a subject of transcendent and universal interest, and one that demands to be well weighed and considered by all parties and all men! And here we will take occasion to remark, that it is on this weak side of human nature, in appeals to the most degrading and dangerous purposes of the human mind, *that those who seek to betray nations to their purposes, and to kindle the torch of discord, always resort.* It is here, that AMBITION as well as FANATICISM (always prolific in the allurements and delusions necessary to accomplish their purposes) direct their batteries. It is the point, moreover, in which not only free governments, but our own peculiar system, can be most effectually assailed. Hence it is, that in different parts of the country, we see mischievous and misguided men, attempting to weaken the bond of union, and exciting the North against the South, and the South against the North. The peculiar differences in the social organization of those two sections of our country, is ever a ready and fruitful object to create those jealousies and dispositions. It has ever been a fundamental article in the republican creed, that those relations were not, by our constitutional charter, brought within the scope of federal powers, and that *Congress has as little right to interfere with the domestic relations and local institutions of the United States, with the relation of master and apprentice in Massachusetts, or master and slave in Virginia, as they have to meddle with similar social relations in Great Britain, France, and Spain.* So deeply rooted is this conviction not only in the minds of our brethren of the Northern and Middle States, but in the minds of the whole republican party of the Union, that it is incorporated in the democratic creed, and constitutes one of the broad lines of separation between the strict constructionists of the Jeffersonian school, and the latitudinarians and consolidationists under the Protæan colors. Republicanism is the safest guaranty of the stability of our Union. *No man or set of men can interfere, or even wish to interfere with the reserved rights of states, embracing their domestic institutions and social relations, and call himself a democratic republican, or a friend to union.*”

“True republicans can never lend their aid and influence in CREATING GEOGRAPHICAL PARTIES in the East, West, North, or South. They can never engage in such schemes without *violating their principles*; principles which tell them they are all brothers, each left a rich inheritance by their fath-

ers, never to be cancelled, while they forbear to meddle with the local feelings and domestic relations of each other."

"Under such circumstances, how wicked as well as unfounded are those attempts to excite and influence the South, and create *sectional parties on such a basis!* Who can look to such a state of things without dismay and horror? Was it not, fellow citizens, against the danger of indulging such feelings, and on the importance of discouraging them, and preserving harmony and union, that our revolutionary fathers endeavored so deeply to impress their countrymen? Will you pardon us, while we ask you to read and listen to their eloquent and pathetic exhortation!"

"But this DETESTABLE EFFORT TO ALIENATE ONE PORTION OF OUR COUNTRY FROM THE REST, and enfeeble the sacred ties that now link together its various parts, can never succeed. The people of America have too much good sense to enter into the perilous and gloomy scenes, into which these Advocates of Disunion would lead them. They will not harken to the unnatural voice which tells them, knit together as they are, by so many cords of affection, they can no longer live together as members of the same great family; can no longer be mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellow citizens of our great and flourishing empire. They will shut their ears against this unhallowed language. They will shut their hearts against the poison it contains. The kindred blood which flows in their veins; the mingled blood which they have shed in defence of their sacred rights; consecrate their union, and excite horror at the idea of their becoming aliens, rivals, enemies!"

"This was the admonition of a man of the soundest and most experienced head, and the purest and most patriotic heart. Need we say, it was that of JAMES MADISON, one of the most distinguished founders of our Constitution. Hear, too, the solemn warning of WASHINGTON, the great Virginian and Savior of his country, against the DANGERS OF GEOGRAPHICAL DISCRIMINATIONS and these insidious and daring attempts at disunion and disaffection. In his valedictory, and affectionate admonition, at the moment he was retiring from public life forever, he too, warned his countrymen:

"Union, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you—it is justly so—it is the main pillar in the edifice of real independence; the support of your tranquillity at home; of your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; and of that very liberty which you so dearly prize. That is the point of our political fortress, against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (*though often covertly and insidiously*) directed. FROWN, THEREFORE, INDIGNANTLY, UPON THE FIRST DAWNING OF ANY ATTEMPT TO ALIENATE ONE PORTION OF OUR COUNTRY FROM THE REST; OR TO ENFEEBLE THE SACRED TIES WHICH NOW LINK TOGETHER ITS VARIOUS PARTS."

These thoughts, it will be recollected, were expressed at a time when southern votes were deemed necessary to the election of Martin Van Buren to the Presidency.

In September, 1835, a meeting of the citizens of Albany was held in that city, "to embody and express the predominant sentiments in relation to the unconstitutional and incendiary movements of the abolitionists, and their agents, &c." The call was signed by A. C. Flagg, John Van Buren, John A. Dix, James Vanderpoel, John Hermans, John Keyes Paige, Jeremiah Osborn, Cornelius Ten Broeck, D. B. Geoffrey, H. C. Southwick, James Maher, Andrew J. Colvin, &c., &c.; Gov. Marcy presided, and among the Vice Presidents, were the following gentlemen, viz., A. C. Flagg, James Vanderpoel, Seth Hastings, &c.; John Van Buren officiated as one of the Secretaries. On motion of

John A Dix, Esq., a committee was appointed to prepare and report a series of resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting; Mr. D. was appointed its chairman, and among those reported by him to the meeting, were the following:

“Resolved, *That we deprecate as sincerely as any of our fellow-citizens, the conduct of individuals, who are attempting to coerce our bretheren in other states into the abolition of slavery, by appeals to the fears of the master and passions of the slave; that we cannot but consider them as disturbers of the public peace; and that we will by all constitutional and lawful means, exert our influence to arrest the progress of measures tending to loosen the bonds of union, and to create between us and our southern brethren, feelings of alienation and distrust, from which the most fatal consequences are to be apprehended.*

“Resolved, *That while we impute no criminal design to the greater part of those who have united themselves to abolition societies, we feel it our duty to conjure them, as brethren of the same great political family, to abandon the associations into which they have entered, and to prove the purity of their motives by discontinuing a course of conduct, which they cannot now but see must lead to disorders and crimes of the darkest die.*

“Resolved, *That while we would maintain inviolate the liberty of speech, and the freedom of the press, we consider discussions, which from their nature, tend to inflame the public mind, and put in jeopardy the lives and properties of our fellow citizens, at war with every rule of moral duty, and every suggestion of humanity, and we shall be constrained moreover to regard those who, with full knowledge of their pernicious tendency, persist in carrying them on, as disloyal to the Union, the integrity of which can only be maintained by a forbearance on the part of all, from every species of intrusion into the domestic concerns of others.*

“Resolved, *That the inevitable consequences of the unconstitutional and incendiary proceedings of individuals in relation to slavery in the South, must be to aggravate the condition of the blacks by exciting distrust and alarm among the white population, who, for their own protection and security, will be compelled to multiply restraints upon their slaves and thus increase the rigours of slavery.*

“Resolved, *That the people of the South will do us great injustice if they allow themselves to believe that the few among us, who are interfering with the question of slavery, are acting in accordance with the sentiment of the North on this subject; and we do not hesitate to assure them that the great body of the Northern people, entertain opinions similar to those expressed in these resolutions.*

“Finally, Resolved, *That we make these declarations to our southern brethren in the same spirit of amity, which bound together their fathers and ours, during a long and eventful struggle for independence, and that we do, in full remembrance of that common association, plight to them our faith to maintain in practice, so far as lies in our power, what we have thus solemnly declared.”*

Gen. Dix addressed the meeting in support of the principles laid down in the resolutions. In the course of his remarks, he said:

“I regard it, therefore, as a fundamental condition of our social existence, that the question of slavery, in a slave-holding state, shall not be disturbed by the government or people of another state; and IT IS CONCEDED THAT THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT HAS NO CONTROL OVER IT. It is a part of the same great collection of political rights, in the preservation of which, all are alike interested; and it cannot be touched without impairing the tenure by which every other is held.

“But I go farther. I hold there is a political obligation arising out of the

compromise of interests, in which the foundations of the Union were laid, to abstain from every species of interference, which may tend to disturb the domestic quietude, or put in jeopardy the rights of property, which the Constitution was designed to secure. Are we not bound, then, by every consideration of reciprocal justice, to put down, as far as we can by lawful measures, the spirit of fanaticism which has led to this unjustifiable and dangerous interference with the domestic relations of our Southern brethren, and stamp it with the strongest marks of reprobation? But I need not appeal to your justice, nor to the disposition which I know you must all feel to do to others as you would have others do to you. The character and numbers of this assembly of citizens, coming together as they have done without regard to diversity of political sentiment, sufficiently indicate that on this question, so deeply interesting to the South, you think and feel rightly. If we have been divided with regard to questions of public policy: if we are still divided with regard to the men who administer the government, or the measures of their administration, we have here the evidence that the same united feeling which animated the North and South to pour out their blood in common on the plains of Germantown and Camden, at Saratoga and the Cowpens, still lives in their descendants, and that it will unite us all in a common effort, whenever the integrity of the Union is threatened, or the tranquillity of any section of it is menaced, by an invasion of its constitutional rights. Let us, then, by the adoption of the resolutions, manifest to our Southern brethren our determination *to arrest, so far as we can by lawful means, the progress of measures which we consider at war with their rights, and with the obligations imposed on us by the constitution to maintain in practice the spirit in which it was framed.*"

On the 10th of the same month, a gentleman in Augusta addressed a letter to Mr. Van Buren, desiring his opinions in relation to the slavery agitation, he being then a candidate for the Presidency, to which he replied as follows;

"I send you the enclosed proceedings of the citizens of Albany upon the subject, and authorize you to say, that I fully concur in the sentiments they advance.

"I was absent from the city at the time the meeting was held, but took an early occasion to advise its call, and to encourage the attempt to make it what it has been, a meeting of the people without reference to their sentiments on any other subject than that which was discussed before it. Connected with its proceedings are to be found the names of our principal State officers, executive and judicial, including the Governor of our State, and an array of private citizens which, for personal worth and weight of character, has never, to my knowledge, been excelled at any previous meeting.

"It would be presumptuous in me to add any assurance of my own, as to the sincerity with which the sentiments they express are entertained, or of their disposition to make them effectual upon the important subject to which they relate.

"May we then hope, that the proofs of an affectionate and just spirit towards the rights and interests of the South, which have been brought out by this hitherto threatening excitement, will have the effect in future, to remove all unfounded impressions, and to put an end to every feeling and prejudice inconsistent with the principles upon which the Union was founded?"

In the month of October of the same year, a meeting was held in the city of Hudson, Mr. Van Buren's county, at which John W. Edmonds, his warm personal and political friend, presented a dozen resolutions, upon the subject of slavery. We quote two of them:

“Resolved, That whatever may be the desire of any portion of our citizens to abolish slavery in the United States, they have no right to intermeddle with the question beyond our State limits; and while we have been permitted to remove every vestige of slavery from among us, by slow, and tedious, and gradual steps, yet by our own voluntary action, without dictation or even admonition from the other members of the confederacy, it is but fair and just that we should now yield to others, that, which we would have so strenuously claimed, but which was so freely yielded to us.

“Resolved, That while we have no sympathy with those blind fanatics, who are actuated by a misguided, perhaps an honest, zeal, and whose conduct goes far to show us, that the bondage of the mind may be at least as dangerous as southern slavery, **WE REGARD WITH ESPECIAL ABHORRENCE, THOSE WHO URGE TO EXTREMITY THIS ALARMING QUESTION, FOR THE GRATIFICATION OF PERSONAL AMBITION, OR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PARTY PURPOSES;** and that it is our solemn duty vigilantly to watch, and vigorously to counteract, their every movement.”

Three days subsequent, a Convention comprising the entire County (Columbia) was held, at which Gen. Samuel Ten Broeck presided.

Mr. Edmonds was again found upon the committee to prepare resolutions, and reported the following:

“Resolved, That we have no right under the constitution of the United States to interfere with the question of slavery or any other domestic relation, in any State other than our own, and no such interference ought to be permitted, above all, by inflammatory appeals to the passions of the ignorant or the prejudices of the bigoted. And when appeals are made, so pregnant with danger, it is our right and our duty to disavow them as hostile to our feelings and our institutions. But when we find a serious and alarming question, *urged at such immediate hazard, for party purposes*, it becomes us to denounce, as we now do, the authors and their measures, *as violators of the public will and enemies alike to the integrity of the Union and the safety of the people.*

“Resolved, That we approve of certain resolutions against the doctrines and efforts of the Abolitionists, passed at a meeting of the Democratic Republicans of the City of Hartford, held at the American Hotel, on Tuesday evening, the 20th of October, 1835, and that we hereby adopt said resolutions, as part of the proceedings of this convention.”

In the month of February, 1836, several gentlemen in Jackson, North Carolina, addressed a letter to Mr. Van Buren, requesting an explicit answer to this interrogatory:

“Do you, or do you not believe that Congress has the constitutional power to interfere with, or abolish Slavery in the District of Columbia?”

In a long and elaborate reply Mr. Van Buren laid down the platform which the subsequent Baltimore Conventions of 1844, and '48, adopted.

In that letter he expressed his “*full concurrence*,” in the sentiments expressed by the citizens of Albany, in the public meeting which had lately been held, and the proceedings which we have quoted from. Being again solicited with reference to his opinion upon the constitutional power of the General Government to abolish Slavery in the District of Columbia, he conceded the power, but adds that it ought not to be exercised *against the wishes of the Slave-holding States*, and that if he should be successful at the Presidential Election, “I must go into the Presidential Chair *the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of any attempt on the part of Congress to abolish Slavery in the District of Columbia,* **AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE SLAVE-HOLDING STATES;** and also with the de-

termination equally decided, to resist any interference with the subject in the States where it exists."

Not satisfied with the strength of these declarations on that subject, Mr. Van Buren goes on further to say :

"I do believe, that the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, *against the wishes of the Slave-holding States,* (ASSUMING THAT CONGRESS HAS THE POWER TO EFFECT IT,) would violate the spirit of that compromise of interests which lies at the basis of our social compact; and I am thoroughly convinced, that it could not be so done, WITHOUT IMMINENT PERIL, IF NOT CERTAIN DESTRUCTION TO THE UNION OF THE STATES. Viewing the matter in this light, IT IS MY CLEAR AND SETTLED OPINION THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OUGHT TO ABSTAIN FROM DOING SO, and that it is the sacred duty of those whom the people of the United States intrust with the control of its action, SO TO USE CONSTITUTIONAL POWER WITH WHICH THEY ARE INVESTED TO PREVENT IT. * * *

"I think it due to the occasion, and only a simple act of justice to my fellow citizens of the North, of all political parties, to add the expression of my full belief, that the opinions above expressed accord in substance with those entertained by a larger majority of the people of the non-slave-holding States, than has ever before existed in those States on a public question of equal magnitude. It is also due to them to say that their sentiments on this subject spring out of considerations of too high a character, and look to consequences of too solemn an import, to be shaken by slight causes. With only a generous confidence on the part of the South in their brethren of the North, and a firm determination on the part of each, TO VISIT WITH THEIR SEVEREST DISPLEASURE ANY ATTEMPT TO CONNECT THE SUBJECT WITH PARTY POLITICS, those sentiments cannot be overthrown. All future attempts on the part of the Abolitionists to do so, will only serve to accumulate and concentrate public odium on themselves. That there are persons at the North who are far from concurring in the prevailing sentiment I have described, is certainly true; but their numbers, when compared with the rest of the community, are very inconsiderable, and if the condition of things be not greatly aggravated by imprudence, many of them, I have no doubt, will ultimately adopt sounder views of the subject; *and the efforts of those who may persist in the work of agitation, may be overcome by reason, or rendered inoperative by constitutional remedies.*

"*Instead of accusing our countrymen, who hold property in Slaves, with disregarding the general principles of liberty and the dictates of a pure religion, they will recognize in this class of our citizens, as sincere friends to the happiness of mankind as any others, and will become sensible that this species of property, the result of causes over which they had no control, is an inheritance which they only know how to dispose of.* Instead of charging the people of the non-slave-holding States, as has often been done, with hypocrisy in professing an ardent love of freedom, they will find that the free citizens of the North are only acting upon the principles of fidelity to their most solemn engagements; that if they were to attempt the accomplishment of what is desired of them by those who regard slavery as inconsistent with the equal rights on which our institutions are founded, they will involve themselves in the odium, either of seeking to evade a compact which was the means and the pledge of our national existence, or of availing themselves of their present power and unexampled prosperity, to dissolve a connexion with their southern brethren, formed at a period of mutual adversity, for a cause which was then only known to exist, but the continuance of which was expressly recognised as the bond of their Union.

“From abroad we have, I think, some right to expect less interference than heretofore. We shall, I am confident, for some time at least, have no more foreign agents to enlighten us on the subject. Recent results here, and the discussions with which they have been attended, cannot fail to attract the attention of the leading and reflecting portion of the foreign public. By these means they will be made to understand our real position in this respect, and they will know that the unchangeable law of that condition is, that **THE SLAVE QUESTION MUST BE LEFT TO THE CONTROL OF THE SLAVEHOLDING STATES THEMSELVES, without molestation or interference from any quarter**; that foreign interference of every description can only be injurious to the slave, without benefit to any interest, and will not be endured by any section of our country, and that **ANY INTERFERENCE coming from the non-slaveholding portions of our own territory, is calculated to endanger the perpetuity, and, if sanctioned by the General Government would inevitably occasion the dissolution of, our happy Union.**”

Under these declarations Mr. Van Buren was elected by a powerful vote to the executive chair of the Union. His inaugural address was delivered on the 4th of March, 1837. He dwelt in a pointed manner upon the slavery excitement which had produced a formidable array against him at the North during the presidential canvass, and which had been especially aimed at him with bitterness and personality.

He thus exulted over those (his present allies and confederates) who opposed his election as a northern man with southern principles!

He wrote thus upon assuming the Presidential honors and duties: “Perceiving before my election the deep interest this subject was beginning to excite, I believed it to be a solemn duty fully to make known my sentiments in regard to it; and now, when every motive for misrepresentation has passed away, I trust that they will be candidly weighed and understood. *At least they will be my standard of conduct in the path before me.* I then declared, that, if the desire of those of my countrymen who were favorable to my election, was satisfied, *I must go into the Presidential chair the uncompromising opponent of every act on the part of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia against the wishes of the slaveholding States; and also with a determination equally decided to resist the SLIGHTEST interference with those States where it exists.*”

Were any declarations more distinct and sweeping than those contained in this passage which we have quoted from the inaugural address? They leave no room for retreat, evasion, or qualification of any sort whatever. In reference to the determination expressed beforehand by Mr. Van Buren in this address to veto any bill for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, a position, by the way, precisely like that taken by Mr. Polk, in the message which he sent to Congress on the subject of his approval of the Oregon bill, the late William Leggett, a friend and partisan of Mr. Van Buren, and then editor of the Plain-dealer, wrote as follows:

March 11, 1837.

“But it is not so much for what it has omitted to say, as for what it says, that we feel dissatisfaction with this inaugural address. We dislike exceedingly both the tone and spirit of its remarks on the subject of slavery. On that one topic, there is, indeed, no want but a superabundance of “particularity and distinctness.” Mr. Van Buren is the first President of the United States who, in assuming that office, has held up his veto power, in terrorem, to the world, and announced a fixed predetermination to exercise it on a particular subject, no matter what changes might take place in public opinion, or what events may

occur to modify the question on which his imperial will is thus dictatorially announced.

“*Mr. Van Buren’s indecent haste to avow his predeterminations on the subject of slavery has not even the merit of boldness. It is made in a cringing spirit of propitiation to the South and in the certainty that a majority at the North accord with his views.* His sentiments on the subject of slavery, so far as it can become a question for federal legislation, were well understood before. They had been distinctly expressed, and he had been supported with a clear knowledge of his opinions on that topic, and a clear apprehension of what would in all probability be his course, should executive action become necessary. There was not the slightest proper occasion, therefore, for any thing, beyond a calm repetition of his previously expressed sentiments. *The Veto Pledge is the peace offering of an ignoble spirit to appease the exasperated slave holders at the South.* What a mockery it would now be, if, in the course of the next four years, such a change should take place in the public mind (and such a change is clearly within the scope of possibility) as that a large majority of the people should demand the abolition of slavery at the seat of the federal government, and Congress, in compliance with the demand, should pass a bill to that effect — what a mockery, we say it would be, to present the measure to the President for his approval. He would answer, “I am pledged to use my veto.” But the opinions of men have changed since that pledge was given. “No matter; it was unconditional, and must be fulfilled.” But the facts elicited in the discussion of the subject prove incontestibly that the measure is demanded by a regard for the prosperity of the country. “No matter: I am pledged.” But the free States have solemnly resolved that they will no longer be bound in union with the slave States, if the condition of the league requires the perpetuation of slavery in the ten miles square placed under the executive control of the Federal Government, and therefore this measure is necessary for the preservation of the Union. “No matter: I am pledged. I am pursuing a course in accordance with the spirit which actuated the venerated fathers of the republic, and I cannot be moved from my fixed and predetermined purpose. I told the people in the outset of my administration what I meant to do. They had ample warning, and ought not to have changed their minds, for, being solemnly pledged to veto any bill for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, I cannot now recede.””

If any additional evidence were necessary to prove the utter recklessness and dishonesty of Mr. Van Buren’s southern views, as expressed in all his published letters and speeches, during the presidential canvass, and in his inaugural address, read what came from the lips of the “Old Man Eloquent.”

Hon. John Quincy Adams, in addressing his constituents at Braintree in 1842, two years after Mr. Van Buren had been thrust from the presidential chair, and after the considerate reflection of several years, under the excitement of no party feeling, and as a simple matter of history, spoke as follows:

“When the abolition petitions began to multiply, some forty bale theorists made the discovery that Congress, with express power to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatever over the District, had yet no power to abolish slavery; and having no such power, the people had no right to petition Congress for any thing which Congress had no power to grant; and so conclusive was this logic south of Mason and Dixon’s line, that when Mr. Van Buren, as a *Northern man with Southern principles*, became a candidate for the succession to the Presidency, he was specially catechised for his opinion upon this point, and he answered the inquiry by a compromise. He thought it not quite safe to deny the power of Congress, but he held that the exercise of the power was as much interdicted as if it did not exist — and he faithfully promised a veto, if,

while he should be President, majorities of both Houses of Congress should pass an abolition act. On the faith of this and other acclimated pledges, Mr. Van Buren was elected by Southern votes; and with the auxiliary force of the Northern Democracy, the Southern sectional policy became the supreme law of the land. — *The right of petition was suppressed — internal improvement was arrested — the manufacturing interest was outlawed — the public lands were devoted to devastation and waste — and the States stimulated by floods of spurious currency to incur burdensome debts for their own improvements, are stripped of the funds from which they had a right to expect the means of making their payments, and are driven to the desperate resource of repudiation.*"

Of the entire consistency of Mr. Van Buren's course on the question of Slavery, subsequent to his defeat in 1840, it is scarcely necessary to multiply instances. In regard to the annexation of Texas, it is matter of history, that this measure, more important in all its aspects and relations, than any other which had preceded it, although it met with his qualified opposition, was carried through by the votes of such men from the Free States, as Dix, Niles, King and Hamlin, over whom Mr. Van Buren has always exercised and preserved a control, by which, if he had been sincere in his opposition, it might have been defeated. The objections of Mr. Van Buren referred not so much to the act itself, as to the time and the manner. At the close of his letter in 1844, he says distinctly, that in case the two Houses of Congress should agree to the measure of Annexation, he should give it the executive sanction. It is notorious, that every Whig member of the Senate, but three, North and South, and every Whig member of the House but one, voted against it, while Northern Democrats, men representing free constituents, voted for it. Every Democratic Senator from the *Free States* voted for it, *Barnburners and all.*

It is also well known that this measure received the undivided support of the Democratic Party, Barnburners as well as Hunkers. What shameless hypocrisy then, for Mr. Van Buren, and Mr. Dix, who held the destiny of this measure in their own hands, and along with it the destiny of so vast a population for Freedom or for Slavery, to set themselves up as the champions of Freedom! They, forsooth, the standard bearers of Free-soil! The consistent opponents of Slavery and its extension!

We come now to Mr. Van Buren's nomination by the Utica Convention.

The letter which he addressed to that Convention (June 20, 1848,) contains the following sentences;

"Whilst the candidate of my friends for the Presidency, I distinctly announced my opinion in favor of the power of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, although *I was, for reasons which were then, and still are satisfactory to my mind, decidedly opposed to its exercise there.*

But the Convention were of opinion that the use of my name was necessary, as well to enable the *Democracy of New York* to carry forward, with a reasonable prospect of ultimate success, the great principle for which they contended, as to sustain themselves in the extraordinary position to which they had been driven, by the injustice of others; and that *the relations which had so long existed between us*, gave them a right to use it, not only without my consent, but against my known wishes. Entertaining these views, they decided to nominate me, and omitted to give me the usual notice of their proceedings.

"It is in this form that my name, as a candidate for the Presidency, has been brought before the people. Occupying this position, I shall feel myself honored by the support of an assemblage so enlightened and patriotic, and so devoted to the maintenance of the great principle we contend for, as that in whose behalf you have addressed me."

Following upon the Utica Convention came the assemblage at Buffalo, composed of Barn-burners, Liberty-party-men, and recusant Whigs, by which Mr. Van Buren was nominated as the Free-soil candidate for the Presidency. At this convention the following resolution was adopted;

“Resolved, *That it is the duty of the Federal Government to relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or continuance of slavery wherever that government possesses constitutional authority to legislate on that subject, and is thus responsible for its existence.*”

Mr. Van Buren, in his letter accepting the nomination, in no manner modifies his previously expressed opinions on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia.

In reference to the foregoing resolutions, he says: “My opinion in favor of the power of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, has been repeatedly avowed, as well when a candidate as whilst President; and every day’s reflection has but served to confirm my conviction of its correctness. *I at the same time, express myself strongly against the expediency of exercising it;* and in a recent letter to the New York delegation at Utica, I referred to my continued opposition to that measure.” So that down to the very last act of his political life, and in that very act itself, we see Mr. Van Buren’s cloven foot. He labors hard to preserve his consistency as a servile pro-slavery man, and at the same time by the most specious involutions and explanations to make himself acceptable to the *consciences of Free Soil Whigs.*

Upon what grounds, then, does Mr. Van Buren found his claims to the support of Whigs?

He was always an ardent and unscrupulous supporter of all the ultra measures of Gen. Jackson’s administration.

He was a supporter of Mr. Polk’s administration; vide his letter to Gansevoort Melville, of June 3, 1844.

“Concurring with them (Polk and Dallas,) in the main, in the political principles by which their public lives have been hitherto distinguished, I am sincerely desirous of their success.”

He was in favor of the war with Mexico, having said (October 7, 1847,) to Mr. Colling:

“The existence of that war has received the official sanction of every department of the Government which is required by the Constitution, and it is due to the future fame, as well as present prosperity of this great nation, that it be triumphantly sustained.”

He *was and is* opposed to the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia.

He is opposed to the right of petition; having favored the “Atherton Resolutions,” and the adoption of the “21st Rule,” restricting debate, reference or printing of Abolition Petitions.

He is opposed to the abolition of Slavery in Cuba, having written, when Secretary of State, (October 22, 1829,) to the American Minister in Spain, to urge the Spanish Government to make peace with her Colonies, as otherwise the Colonists might be tempted to manumit their Slaves, and, in view of the effect which such emancipation would have upon Slavery in the United States, instructed the Minister to oppose the baneful spirit of emancipation, designed to be introduced and propagated in the Island of Cuba.

He is opposed to the circulation of Abolition publications in the Southern States.

He was the supporter of Thomas W. Dorr in his attack upon the Institutions and people of Rhode Island.

He was opposed to the Tariff of 1842, and is in favor of the Free Trade Tariff of 1846.

He is in favor of an armed Militia; and he is pledged in the most solemn manner, by the declarations of his Inaugural Address in 1837, to veto any Bill of Congress which shall have for its object the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia.

If this is not enough to satisfy every Whig who supports Martin Van Buren, that by so doing he is throwing himself and some of the most vital interests of his country into the arms of its most insidious and designing enemy, then human reason can go no farther. If these and the other considerations which we have named, shall not receive their due attention, we have, at least, the satisfaction to believe that the evidence of Mr. Van Buren's friend and associate, on the Buffalo ticket, Mr. Charles Francis Adams, given in 1844, in a review of Mr. Van Buren's previous course, will be at once conclusive of the argument and our labors.

"Even now there is living on the banks of the Hudson River, an individual, the chief merit of whose political life is to be found in the fact that he, as President of the United States, refused to negotiate a treaty like that which John Tyler now proposes. The recollection of that act, at this time, weighs heavily against him and his hopes of again reaching the station which he lost. He has, through his friends, bargained away much that the Free States deem valuable, the right of petition, the protection of home industry, the freedom of speech, and indeed, almost every other security to liberty, for the sake of assuring himself of the support of the Southern States. They are not yet satisfied. They require the surrender of all opposition to Texas, and it is to be feared that this also will be sacrificed to them. For instead of meeting half way the generous feelings of four fifths of the people of the Free States, indignant at this secret manœuvre of John Tyler's, the Legislatures of at least three States friendly to Mr. Van Buren, have coolly determined in silence to await the issue. We were not disappointed in this result, for we know the calculating policy of that gentleman. *The principles of liberty are never safe in the hands of men who make a trade of public affairs.* MR. VAN BUREN MUST BE JUDGED BY HIS PRECEDING COURSE, TAKEN AS A WHOLE—AND FROM THAT LET NO MAN DELUDE HIMSELF WITH THE BELIEF THAT HE IS FIXED TO ANY THING BUT HIS OWN INTERESTS.

"And in considering what dangers are most to be apprehended, we have very reluctantly been driven to the conclusion, that the most imminent of them springs from the cold and temporizing policy of Mr. Van Buren, and his organization of political management in the Free States. And we draw this inference, not merely from the fact that the opposition to the twenty-first rule of the House of Representatives, made so late in the day by his friends, has been basely abandoned; nor yet from the fact that three Legislatures of the great States of New York, Pennsylvania, and Maine, friendly to him, have distinctly refused to express even an opinion against the policy of annexing Texas; nor yet from the fact that a New Hampshire Senator, of his party, has expressed himself friendly to that policy; nor yet from the fact that the influential press of the Democratic Party in the Free States, with a few exceptions, is either silent or friendly to it; nor yet from the fact that many of those who are the most violent against Great Britain in Congress, about the Oregon Territory, are among the most active of his party, and are also playing into the hands of the Texans. We say that we do not draw our inference from any one of these facts by itself, but by putting them all together we deem it irresistible. *The principles of liberty, the hopes of peace, and of an honest administration are not safely to be trusted in the hands of men who make a trade of politics—who bargain one thing against another—and who are finally ready to sell every thing, rather than not to gain possession of power.*"









39





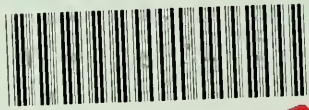
DOBBS BROS.
LIBRARY BINDING

ST. AUGUSTINE
FLA.

32084



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 896 420 2

