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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SLAVERY QUESTION,

ADDRESSED TO THE

President of the United States.

TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

President of the United States.

SIR—The undersigned having some reason to believe that certain views which he had the honor to present to you, the Chief Magistrate of the country, shortly after the first battle of Bull Run, touching the civil war then and still pending, and the measures which in his judgment were best adapted to bring it to a successful issue were received with kindness,* ventures to trespass again on your attention by recurring to one of the topics then adverted to, for the purpose of considering it in the light of developments which have since occurred, and with a particular reference to the existing posture of our affairs.

That topic is Slavery, as it exists in the States now in insurrection against the government of the United States—an institution which has up to this time (as is believed,) proved an element of strength to the rebel cause. The undersigned will inquire whether a policy cannot now be inaugurated and pursued which will make that same institution not only a source of weakness to the insurrection, but an active agent for its overthrow.

*The paper here referred to was laid before the President through the agency of an Hon. member of his Cabinet, late in July or early in August, 1861. Most of the topics adverted to are now bygone, but the subjoined paragraph appertains to the subject discussed in these pages:

“§ 6. But what I deem of the first importance is an expedition into Texas, and perhaps two expeditions, the one by land and the other by sea. I suppose the force for the former should be collected in South-western Missouri, and should move through Western Arkansas into Northern Texas. There are many loyal citizens in Northern and Western Texas who, it is believed, on the appearance of an adequate force would rally to the national standard, and then the same policy could be pursued; which has been attended with so much success in Western Virginia. A loyal State government (executive, legislative and judicial) could be organized. United States Senators could be re-elected, and very likely we could have them in their seats by the first of January next, and what is of much greater consequence, we

The consideration of this question has been rendered urgent by the recent Proclamation of the President, announcing that unless the rebels submit and return to their allegiance within a prescribed period, he will then, by another public act, designate the States and parts of States wherein the authority of the Government continues to be spurned, and will proclaim all slaves within those limits thenceforth emancipated and free.

Directly opposite views have been taken, both at home and abroad, of the efficacy and value of the proposed measure. By some it has been insisted that the success of our arms and the reduction of the insurrectionary States, at least *pro tanto*, would be an indispensable preliminary to emancipation, and that therefore a Proclamation of *that* which can only follow from success to be achieved by other means cannot properly be said to contribute in any degree to that success. They say that the United States must first conquer before they can emancipate, and then emancipation will not be necessary, for conquest, however proper it may be as an act of retribution. They insist that it is an absurdity to adopt a measure as means to an end which can only be brought into activity after that end has been realized. Not a few contend that no effort on our part can possibly subdue the rebellion, and that therefore a proclamation of liberty would be a mere *brutum fulmen*.

But another class (quite numerous at home,) indulge in anticipations of advantages to result from the proposed measure of the most extensive character. According to them, little else is wanting to carry universal dismay into the ranks of the insurrectionists, and to bring large accessions of strength to the side of law and order, than such a Proclamation. They are accustomed to speak of the whole servile population of the rebel States as loyal to the Government and faithful to the Union, but, perhaps it would be more just to say that they instinctively embrace our cause, from a desire for liberty, rather than from any just appreciation of the nature of free government, or even of the advantages which they are likely to derive from the success of our arms. But, however this may be, it is contended that the servile class can, though unarmed, be made, in

should by recognizing such government (as the true government of Texas) acquire the power of dividing that State, in conformity with the Constitution of the United States and the resolutions admitting Texas into the Union. A State formed out of Western Texas would unquestionably exonerate itself from the curse of slavery, if not immediately, at no remote day, and thus we can carry the domain of freedom from Kansas to the Gulf, and erect an effectual barrier against the further spread of slavery over this continent. On the other hand, if we close this war with slavery resting on the Rio Grande, we shall have (though the rebels now submit and return to their allegiance) another outbreak and another civil war in less than a quarter of a century. The consequences likely to result from establishing freedom on the east bank of the Rio Grande are of the greatest magnitude, and will suggest themselves at once to every reflecting mind."

various ways, highly useful auxiliaries, and to contribute much to the efficiency of our armies, whether stationary or in the field, and that if we choose to put arms in their hands they will, on being properly officered and drilled, constitute a most valuable addition to our forces, and so change the preponderance in our favor as to enable us to carry forward, within a brief space, the contest to a triumphant issue.

It is, in the judgment of the undersigned, quite certain that, whether the one or the other of these opposite views shall prove correct, will turn entirely on the measures adopted to carry out the new policy.

How then should the subject be treated to render emancipation, in the rebel States, a measure of efficacy and power? We have presented to us in these few words, a question of statesmanship of great complexity and great difficulty—one which may well occupy the anxious thoughts of our patriotic Chief Magistrate, and of his associates in the Government, and which, in my judgment, calls for the exercise of all their powers.

In the consideration of this matter it will be necessary to recur to many topics of inquiry, like the following :

1. After emancipation shall be proclaimed, are slaves of every class, as our armies advance into the rebel territory, to be welcomed within our lines—men, women and children, the old and the young, the sick and the infirm ?

2. Are they to take refuge under the protection of our main armies only, or may they resort also to columns and detachments of every class ?

3. As any army, column, or detachment moves in advance, or retreat, are all adhering contrabands to move also in the same connection ?

Who is to furnish them with transportation, and is it not certain that in the midst of the rush and the collision of hostile armies that their freedom will be merely nominal?—freedmen one day and slaves the next !

4. Our object is to overrun and subdue the insurrectionary States, to compel them to submit to a lawful and just government. As we advance into States or parts of States, that are densely populated with slaves, where numerically they are fully equal to, if they do not exceed, the whites, is it not certain that our armies will be clogged and embarrassed by the vast horde that will rush to their protection? But, be the number greater or smaller, how are they to be fed, clothed, housed and cared for ?

5. What is to be done with the women and children, and what with the aged, the sick and the infirm ?

6. No doubt a large number of the able-bodied men can be advantageously employed in connection with our armies, but recollect that the aggregate of this class is vast. In the whole of the rebel States and parts of States there are not less than 3,500,000 of slaves, and at least 750,000 able-bodied males, of whom 10 per cent. are probably all that could be

employed as teamsters, laborers, cooks, servants, &c., in our armies. What is to be done with the balance? What with vagabond negroes, the idle and the vicious?

7. So far as the Proclamation may excite fears of servile insurrection, and thus compel the rebels to withdraw their forces for the protection of their own firesides, its effects will be alike just and salutary. I am sure that the good heart of our President would prompt him to exert every power which he can command to prevent an indiscriminate massacre of men, women and children. The duty which will be incumbent on us, to maintain order among the freedmen and to cause the laws of humanity to be respected, will be imperative; and if we fail in the performance of that duty, in any marked degree, the whole civilized world will cry out against us.

8. But the freedmen can be armed. If so, how, and to what extent? That they can be drilled and made effective by competent officers is, in my judgment, certain. Some reference must be had to the prejudice of color, as heartless as it is cruel. Could our volunteers be brought to act with them, with the requisite cordiality? If brought into the field, should any of them be captured and the rebels refuse to observe, in respect to them, the laws of war, what can we do? Suppose they return them into slavery, are we to retaliate? This we have not done in the deplorable case of colored seamen, treacherously captured at an early day on the coast of Texas, and sold into slavery.

9. In some, perhaps most of the insurrectionary States, there are many citizens who are at heart loyal, and who would gladly return to their allegiance, if they could be protected by the Government. Overrunning these States will amount to little or nothing, unless we can find, in the class adverted to, a nucleus of loyalty around whom can rally the indifferent and the neutral—in short, the whole crowd who instinctively take the side of the stronger party. We have a good illustration in the State of Maryland, where loyalty has now a decided majority, from this cause, and this only. How far will arming the negroes tend to alienate the truly loyal in any State, and to destroy every vestige of such a nucleus?

10. It should be recollected that I am not objecting to the policy indicated, but only suggesting topics for consideration, so that the matter may be properly disposed of. If any considerable number of them are to be armed, may not this class of troops be advantageously employed in doing garrison and other stationary duty, thus liberating other and perhaps more efficient troops for operations in the field? I would suggest also, whether it would not be sound policy to employ them in our navy, as marines and sailors, where (as is well known) they would encounter little of the prejudice of color. A distinguished officer of the navy told

me that it takes about three years to make good sailors of raw hands. Under good white officers, they could be drilled and made expert as marines in a very short time. The officer above alluded to seemed to receive the suggestion which I make with favor. I am satisfied that a considerable number of colored young men and boys, perhaps several thousand; could be introduced into the navy, to the advantage of the public service, and I think it would be good policy to encourage their introduction also into the merchant service. If emancipation is to be our policy, the more of these poor creatures we can place beyond the possibility of being returned into servitude the better.

11. But, in this business, how, Mr. President, can you trust the officers of your armies? It is understood that many of them have already set at defiance a peremptory act of Congress. How much respect will this class pay to a proclamation? The eye of the Chief Magistrate will have to be quick to detect and his hand swift to punish, if conformity to the contemplated policy by some is even nominal.

12. But by far the greatest difficulty which presents itself in this connection, is to be found in the fact that the moment the people of any State submit and return to their allegiance, their will is to determine whether they will or will not tolerate slavery. The idea of holding any State or group of States in permanent subjection to the United States as territories, I deem wild and chimerical to the last degree. The moment they submit and form a loyal State government, Executive, Legislative and Judicial, we shall have to accord to them the prerogatives and privileges of self-government. Such State or States will send their senators and representatives to Congress, who will be admitted to their seats, and the irresistible pressure of public sentiment resulting from the burdens of taxation, the embarrassments of trade and commerce, and universal anxiety to end the war, would compel any administration to withdraw our armies from such State or States, and to leave the people to themselves. The present Executive would need no such promptings, but would rejoice beyond measure in an opportunity to do so. What then is to become of the freedman in any such case? Would they not forthwith be legislated back into slavery, at least in all the cotton States, and is it not certain that such legislation would be upheld by the Judiciary, both State and National, any proclamation or act of Congress to the contrary notwithstanding?

13. To form a sound judgment on this subject, it is necessary to bring into view all the elements of the case, the physical, moral, financial and political elements. Of the three first I do not propose now to speak. In adverting to the last, reference must be had both to our foreign and domestic relations. Of the former, that is to say, whether there is any

danger of the intervention of foreign powers, and how far the proposed policy is likely to obviate that danger, or to thwart a hostile purpose, others, who are in a situation to be much better informed than I am, must judge. But our domestic relations present, as I think, a very serious matter for reflection. The ill success of our arms, combined with the pressure of taxation beginning to be felt, and an aversion to a draft so long impending, have enabled unscrupulous demagogues to unfurl a party banner with success, and to carry against the friends of the Administration the elections in several important States. There is some prospect that the opposition may obtain a majority in the next House of Representatives, and what will result from this state of things it is difficult to foresee. Certainly, in carrying on any war, and particularly a great civil war, harmony and unanimity among the different departments of the government are of the first importance. I would further observe, that the case is greatly aggravated by the fact that the commanding generals, to whose incapacity our ill success is (it is believed) in a great measure due, are and ever have been politically associated with these demagogical agitators—were utterly opposed to the accession of the present Administration to place and power, and have not at any time sympathized with its views, purposes and policy. No officer is fit to lead our armies in such a struggle as that now pending, unless his heart is in the cause. While it is admitted that on such an occasion party distinctions should be dismissed, or laid aside, (as they have been in a remarkable degree by the present Executive,) it is no more than common prudence to keep a sharp look-out for any of the old leaven that may possibly remain to influence the official course of those intrusted with commands, particularly such as are of great significance and importance. I trust that there is no cause to suspect in any case positive infidelity or downright treachery, but nevertheless, it is not difficult to perceive that by reason of such a malign influence some of our military leaders may have been made less enterprising, energetic and determined than they otherwise would have been. But the noble conduct of many who did not favor the election of our present Chief Magistrate in rushing to the rescue of their country and its government, amidst the most imminent perils, determined to stand by our good old flag and to maintain our indispensable Union, is worthy of all praise. There are enough of this class to be brought forward and placed in responsible positions, to relieve the Administration from any suspicion of being influenced by any other than patriotic motives in dismissing (as I trust they will promptly hereafter,) all laggards and imbeciles to that obscurity to which they properly belong.

But enough on these preliminary topics—I wish the approach more nearly, the high question of State policy arising from this slavery business.

In dealing with this subject, we must not forget that the season for the second campaign of this deplorable war is about to close, but it is devoutly to be hoped that some telling blow or blows may yet be inflicted on the rebels before winter sets in, and that our immense armies, to say nothing of our fleets will not remain wholly idle during the inclement season now approaching, as the former did during the last. In any event, I trust that we shall open the next campaign under favorable auspices, and that we shall crush out this hideous rebellion before the close of the next year. It is my anxious wish that great progress should be made to that end, if the same cannot be fully accomplished before we are involved in all the turbulence and confusion of another Presidential election—scenes that will be likely to create embarrassments to the national authorities in exercising the powers indispensable to a successful prosecution of the war.

In any view of the case, we must recognize the fact that the time is short, and the question is, how can the war power be most discreetly and effectually exercised on this subject? I hold it to be legitimate to have some reference to the evils of slavery in this connection, and that the purpose of the Executive to resort to emancipation, with a view to give success to our arms, may find support and aid in the magnitude of those evils.

I must confess that I am among the number of those who have not, for a moment, entertained the idea that general emancipation could by any possibility be effected as the direct result of the war. If originally I had felt a doubt on that subject, I should be obliged to dismiss it now, when we are so near the middle of the current Presidential term, and when so little has been done hitherto in that behalf. I have believed, as I do still, that the rebellion would ultimately undermine and overthrow slavery, or, at least, that it has a strong tendency to do so, but I fear we shall be compelled to pass through a succession of civil wars and deplorable scenes of bloodshed and violence before any such result can be attained. No doubt the ægis of the constitution was the safeguard of all the leading interests and institutions of the country, (including slavery,) but that being spurned, and war, violence and lawlessness inaugurated, what other fate than that of annihilation can possibly await an institution so repugnant to every idea of liberty and free government.

But can we not save our country from these terrific evils. Can we not avail ourselves of the existing opportunity (however unhappily presented,) to introduce and carry out a policy which will contribute effectively to the suppression of the rebellion, and at the same time lay a foundation for the ultimate extinction by peaceable means of slavery within our limits?

I have been for a long time convinced that the true way to undermine and destroy slavery in this country is to bring it under the operation and influence of the great fundamental principles of political economy; and I

take consolation in believing that the war affords an opportunity to test the correctness of the opinion.

It must be obvious to any one who has paid attention to the subject, that the hold of this institution on public sentiment and feeling at the South has been gradually gaining tenacity and strength during the last quarter of a century, and that at the inception of the rebellion it had in most of the slaveholding States become irresistible. This has resulted, as is believed, entirely from the great profitableness of this species of labor during the period here adverted to, which has rested for its basis on the fact that the demand for the products of slave labor, particularly for cotton, has all the while outrun the supply. It is true that production has been greatly augmented with the breadth of land cultivated and the number of slaves employed, but the demand has been all the while increasing in a greater ratio. Hence cotton producing has been exceedingly profitable, and this has had the effect to enhance the value of slaves by two or three prices, and the further effect to encourage and sustain the detestable business of slave-breeding in Virginia, and perhaps some of the other border States, to supply the market for human chattels at the South. As long as the owners or occupants of the worn-out estates in Virginia, who at the end of every year find a greater or smaller adverse balance in their accounts, can sponge out that balance by selling off from one to a half dozen of these wretched beings to heartless slave-dealers, just so long will Virginia under their auspices and influence remain (contrary to the warnings of Jefferson, and the inculcations of most if not all of her great statesmen,) harnessed to the juggernaut of slavery. Now if we can only inaugurate a policy which will cut down the price of cotton, down also will go the price or value of negroes, and if we can carry the process far enough, down first will slavery go in the border States! and finally in all the States. Yes, shackles will be stricken off every where, and every human being within our limits will be free!

To accomplish a result of so much importance let us so wield the war power in order to put down this rebellion as to introduce the production of cotton by free labor, and that, too, on a large scale. Our object should be not merely to obtain a temporary ascendancy or to assert the authority of the government for the time being, but to lay a foundation for the permanent peace of the country, and I can conceive of no measure that can more effectually accomplish that end than the one suggested.

Here I would observe that the whole cotton crop of the world has of late, as is understood, amounted annually to about six millions of bales, of which the United States has produced about four millions, or two-thirds in quantity, and much more than two-thirds of the aggregate value. This has been owing, in part, to the more favorable character of our soil and climate, and

in part to superior machinery used, and like skill and diligence exercised in preparing it for market. I am quite confident that an amount equal to the whole crop produced in the United States can be raised by free labor only in the great State of Texas, and that, too, in comparatively a short space of time. At the outbreak of the rebellion free labor was, to some extent, engaged in raising cotton in Texas—particularly in Western Texas, under Teutonic auspices; and I am credibly informed that cotton thus produced, owing to superior care in picking and preparing it for market, brought one cent per pound more than slave-produced cotton; and I am also informed by a friend on whom I can rely, that the late Senator Thomas J. Rusk told him shortly before his death, (which I have ever deeply lamented,) that he had rather have at any time one German than three slaves to pick cotton. Let any vast expanse of country (such as I propose to indicate hereafter,) be divided off into small estates of eighty or at most one hundred and sixty acres (of which there would ultimately be a vast number,) each occupied and cultivated by its proprietor with his wife and children, each raising his own beef, pork, mutton, wheat, corn and other necessaries, and each also producing a few bales of cotton wherewith to obtain a few hundred dollars of cash to foot a store bill, extinguish an incumbrance, buy another farm for a son, or to fit out a daughter, and you will not only have a greater aggregate of cotton than slave labor would produce from the same country, but a much better article. Besides, slavery is ever prodigal of land, and speedily exhausts it—but freedom will keep it in a good healthy state, or is likely to do so. Slavery is like the daughters of the horse-leech, it cries “give! give!”—it all the while wants more land, but freedom is content with what it occupies, and has reason to be content. It seems to me entirely practicable in carrying on this war, to inaugurate legitimately a competition between free and slave labor, and that in such a contest the former will at an early period gain a decided advantage over the latter, resulting in the richest benefits and blessings to the whole country. In making this remark I assume that universal emancipation is at present completely beyond our reach, and that though greatly crippled by the war, slavery is likely to remain, afflicting a large breadth of country for a considerable period after we have brought the struggle to a successful issue. But wherever it may remain, I propose to inaugurate the policy of breaking it down by the competition of free labor. Nothing can be more effectual to that end, and at the same time more beneficent, than the operation of those economic principles to which I have already adverted. They are as follows:

1. The price of any article, particularly of the great staples, depends on the relation which the supply bears to the demand—if the demand exceeds the supply then the price is high—if below the supply, then low, and

whether the difference in either case is great, moderate or small, depends entirely on the excess or deficiency.

2. A slight excess of supply over demand may, and usually does, produce a reduction in the aggregate value of any given crop which exceeds the value of such excess many hundred, if not many thousand, fold, so that it would be much more for the interest of producers to burn up or otherwise destroy such excess rather than to throw it on the market, and they would certainly do so if there were any way of distributing the loss among themselves.

3. When an excess of supply is once established as the ordinary state of the case, the effect will be to drive out of the business all those who produce (taking everything into consideration,) the article at the greatest cost, and ultimately the opposite class, viz.: those who produce the best article at the cheapest rate; those who have the most economical system of labor and method of production, will at last engross the whole supply.

I submit that the effect and operation of these principles, if we can once inaugurate and bring into activity the competition here proposed, cannot fail to be all that good men can desire. They will operate steadily, silently, gently and kindly—in short “like rain on the mown grass,” and ere long the people of the South, not to say our brethren! (I wish I could,) will have their eyes opened to the truth, and will be sure to abandon a system fraught with so many evils. We may have throughout the whole slaveholding region a colored peasantry, not necessarily the equals of white men, but free, gradually to become enlightened, and required (by stringent legislation if necessary,) to lead lives of sobriety, industry and morality—an obligation which is incumbent on every man, be he white or black.

This is certainly an exhilarating contemplation. I do not say it can be realized, but I conceive that it should be attempted, and then on using our best endeavors, all we can do is to leave the result to the smiles of a benignant Providence. Certainly the case is beset with difficulties on every side. No scheme can be proposed to which objections may not be urged. In the absence of a better and with great deference I submit the following:

Let the whole country below Missouri and west of the Mississippi, that is to say, Arkansas, Western Louisiana and Texas be set apart as the theatre for this great experiment. The proclamation which is to mark the advent of the approaching year, will of course be general, and can draw no distinction between the right and the left bank of the Mississippi. To the end here proposed, with a view to an effective movement, I would suggest the following details:

1. Capture Vicksburg, (no doubt now contemplated and perhaps imminent,) and open the Mississippi from Cairo to its mouth. Employ an ample

naval police to insure the safety of navigation and to prevent the possibility of any considerable communication by rebels between the two sides of the river. This will cut off effectually the supplies hitherto received by the rebel armies in Virginia and elsewhere from the region here indicated, particularly Texas.

2. Provide a most ample force for overrunning, subduing and holding the whole country. The success of General Curtiss, in marching comparatively a small army from the Northwest corner of Arkansas to Helena, on the Mississippi, without any serious opposition other than that which he encountered (with brilliant success,) at Pea Ridge, is proof conclusive that we can easily pour into the country a force that would be irresistible.

3. Let the people of these States be thoroughly disarmed, and perhaps the more incorrigible of the traitors handed over to the east side of the Mississippi.

4. Actual emancipation is one thing—emancipation proclaimed is another. West of the Mississippi, let us have the former. Let every slave be liberated as soon as possible, with compensation for loyal masters if any there are.

5. Encourage immediate and extensive immigration into this region. Let the emigrants take the lands belonging to the United States and also those of traitors, without money and without price. The whole state of society should be renovated, and a population raised up who believe that every man should earn his bread by the sweat of his own brow, and not subsist on exudations from the brow of a despised negro!

6. I will not undertake to say whether the experiment should be here tried of arming the negroes. I think it would be quite appropriate to employ them to shoot down guerrillas, marauders and robbers of every class. It strikes me that it would be much safer to employ them as such on the west side of the Mississippi rather than the east side.

7. Provost Marshals should be appointed for districts of suitable size, and the disloyal should be in each held to a responsibility for all the lawlessness, and also for the relief of the destitute therein.

8. Each State should be divided into two or more judicial districts, and United States judges appointed, to the end that, as the country is reduced and made to submit to authority, there may be a prompt administration of justice.

9. No doubt the freedmen not employed in the army should be required to earn a support for themselves and their families. This obligation is imperative, and it is no violation of the principles of true liberty to enforce it. How can this be better done than by binding them out to loyal citizens as apprentices for a short term at moderate wages? A system

of guardianship could be organized to extend to them all requisite protection.

10. It is worthy of serious consideration whether the freedmen of the States this side of the Mississippi should not, just as soon as employment can be found for them, be transferred to the west side of that river. Can any one in his senses believe that this class, for example those on the islands in the vicinage of Port Royal, will remain free for an hour on the assumption by South Carolina of the powers of self-government after returning to her allegiance? If, however, there is any State this side of the Mississippi which I would denude of its whole slave population it is certainly the one here named. It must be admitted that the justice of such a measure would be alike appropriate and retributive.

Such are the outlines of a plan which would, if carried out, inaugurate a competition between free and slave labor on a most extensive scale to produce results in every sense conservative and beneficent. The competition might not merely extend to cotton, but to all the semi-tropical products of that region. I am sensible that in making these suggestions I run athwart of two ideas which the devotees of slavery have been indefatigable in disseminating every where. First, That no effective labor can be obtained from the colored race except in bondage, and second, that white labor cannot be employed in tropical or semi-tropical regions with much, if any, success. The unsoundness of this suggestion is demonstrated by rail-road building on the island of Cuba, where I am informed they have no less than eight hundred miles of rail-roads all constructed by white labor or mainly so. But the idea is not to carry sugar-making and cotton-raising exclusively or even principally by white labor, but by compensated colored labor, when the laws of beneficence and kindness shall take the place of the slave-driver's lash; and when the stimulus of wages, and the promptings of domestic ties, of husband and wife, and parent and child, will ordinarily be a sufficient incentive to effort. Should there be exceptional cases (as there are vast multitudes in the white race,) I am for applying to them the constraints of just and appropriate legislation.

I do not say that the scheme here presented should be adopted either in general or in detail; but I do say that some policy well considered, digested, arranged and vigorously executed is indispensable—without it, a proclamation will I fear amount to little or nothing. It is of great importance that we should not in this connection undertake too much. I fear more from this cause than from almost any other. Therefore, I propose to surround slavery with freedom. I am convinced that *that* is practicable—I do not believe that the universal liberation of all slaves, both east and west of the Mississippi is so now, or will be soon. But if we can not wholly extirpate slavery we can throw it wholly into the embrace of freedom, and then it

will be certain to be smothered sooner or later. Cotton, to say nothing of sugar produced by free labor, white and black, will do the work. Besides by this or some other kindred measure, we shall put an effectual extinguisher on an idea which has had more to do in producing this rebellion than almost any thing else, to wit., that slavery can be made to sweep entirely around the Gulf of Mexico, acquire the islands which lie in front of that Gulf, and thus establish and build up a vast empire with human bondage for its basis.

It is with no satisfaction that I discuss a subject such as this. It is contrary to all my habits of thought, and course of life. During the very considerable period I occupied a seat in one or the other of the two houses of Congress I was ever silent on sectional questions, particularly on that of slavery, contenting myself with a vote in conformity with my sense of right and duty. Reared in the school of Henry Clay, I endeavored to follow in his footsteps, though at an immeasurable distance, and if there is in these suggestions any seeming departure from his precepts or example, I can find an apology in the fact that we are involved in a great and difficult emergency, by this most atrocious rebellion, and that we are obliged to grope our way in the dark, unguided by the counsels of that sagacious and accomplished statesman. I am sure that I desire nothing but the best interest and true welfare of our country and of every part of it.

The subject, Mr. President, is in all its bearings and aspects with you. On you and your associates in the government must rest the responsibility. You are sworn to *preserve* the Constitution of the United States, while other functionaries are only sworn to *support* it, and it is idle to think of preserving the Constitution while the Union goes by the board.

I will conclude by saying, that there is, as I verily believe, now presented to you an opportunity which few public men have ever had. You can by prudent counsels and energetic action so treat this subject as to put an end to further agitation, whether pro-slavery or anti-slavery, and thus lay a sure foundation for national quietude and peace. Then we shall have a Union of inappreciable value. You will have made a deep mark on your country's history, and associated your name with the benefactors of mankind.

NEW YORK, December 24th, 1862.

Truman



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