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S P E E C H
OF
MR. BRECK, OF KENTUCKY,
ON THE

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT RELATING TO CALIFORNIA.

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Delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, Monday, March 25, 1850.

The important questions which have recently occasioned so much agitation and concern in the public mind have been so ably and elaborately discussed, not only here and in the other end of the Capitol, but by the press throughout the country, that I can have little hope of presenting any thing new or interesting in regard to them for the consideration of the committee. In obedience, however, to the wishes, as I believe, of my constituents, and in justice to myself, I feel constrained to state my views, and the principles by which my course will be governed, so far as I may be called upon to act.

The great controversy is between the North and the South upon the subject of slavery. And I believe, sir, it has rarely been the case for years past that any question connected with that important subject has been discussed in the American Congress without irritation and excitement. Prejudice against the institution upon the one side, and extreme sensitiveness, arising from various causes, on the other, have often rendered such discussions not only exciting, but productive of serious evil. Their tendency has been to weaken the ties and destroy that harmony and good fellowship, between the North and the South, so essential to our continuance as a united people.

It is my desire to say nothing which will add to the present excitement. If I cannot pour oil upon the troubled waters, I hope not to increase their agitation and violence. Our moderation and forbearance should be more signally manifested, as has been properly remarked, in proportion as the question becomes more important.

Since the commencement of the present session of Congress, slavery has been the all-absorbing and constant theme, not only here, but in every

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part of our extensive country. It has been the *alpha* and *omega* of almost every speech; and has exerted an influence, often controlling, over nearly every thing which we have done or attempted. Among other things which we have heard, it has been repeatedly sounded in our ears, that upon the satisfactory adjustment of this important controversy hangs the destiny of the Republic—the fate of our glorious Union. Similar assurances have reached us from various sources, some of them entitled to very grave consideration.

Now, sir, if this be indeed so, then is the controversy most momentous. No question of such transcendent importance, involving so deeply the freedom and happiness of man, has ever been or can be presented for the consideration of any legislative assembly in the civilized world. If this widespread and happy land, upon which Heaven has showered its choicest blessings, is to be torn asunder by internal strife—if our happy system of government, which reflects immortal honor upon its founders, and under which we have enjoyed a degree of freedom and prosperity and happiness unparalleled in the annals of nations, is to be broken up and overthrown—then, truly, may it be said, that the last refuge of civil liberty, the last hope of free government, is gone.

With what intense interest is every patriot, every votary of freedom, watching our deliberations and waiting the result. On the other hand, with what exulting joy are all the enemies of freedom, and all the tyrants and oppressors of mankind, looking upon the gloomy spectacle we present; and with what a shout of triumph will they hail the sad end of this great Republic. For one, sir, I cannot, will not, believe that so appalling a calamity is about to befall us; I cannot believe that we have so soon become *the degenerate sons of gallant sires*, that we cannot or will not preserve the glorious heritage which their valor and suffering have acquired and have transmitted to us; that the spirit, which united and animated the noblest race of men that ever struggled and battled for liberty, has become extinct in the breasts of their descendants.

It is true, sir, there are those who scout the idea that the Union is in danger, and who regard all that has been said as mere menace and bravado. I am, sir, not of that number. The country, it is true, has been in danger before. It has encountered alarming political storms and tempests, and rode them out in safety. But, sir, republics have often been the victims of delusion and passion, and we have no guaranty that we are exempt from these baneful influences.

I concur fully in the opinion expressed by the gentleman from Louisiana, (Mr. MORSE,) that the omens are ill, that *the times are sadly out of joint*; and I regret to say, that some expressions, used by the gentleman

himself, furnish evidence of the correctness of that opinion. I confess, sir, after surveying the whole ground, that I have been reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the country is in imminent danger, and that there has been no period in its history when a spirit of conciliation and compromise, and all the efforts of patriotism were more eminently required *to prop its reeling glory*, and save it from the greatest of all calamities.

The exciting questions more immediately in controversy arise out of our territorial acquisitions from Mexico, and slavery in this District. It has been emphatically announced in this House and elsewhere, that if by any act of Congress slavery shall be inhibited in these Territories, or abolished in this District, the happening of either of these contingencies will induce immediate action in the South for its protection; or, in other words, as I believe is generally understood, will be followed by secession or revolution by a part, at all events, of the States in the South.

Now, sir, I am decidedly opposed to both these measures, and so is the State which I have the honor in part to represent. But I deem it entirely unnecessary to speculate in regard to her course, should they or either of them be adopted; as there is no probability, I think, that either event will happen, at least during the present session of Congress, unless the admission of California as a State, with a constitution excluding slavery, should be regarded as an equivalent act or measure, and that subject I shall notice hereafter. But, although neither of these unjust and obnoxious measures should be adopted, yet still the existing state of things is evidently tending to a very unfortunate and alarming result. The different views and feelings entertained at the North and the South upon the subject of slavery, and the agitation of this question, in connexion with party politics, manifestly tend to a sectional division in feeling and political action.

To arrest this tendency and avert so fatal a result, should be the effort of every one who duly appreciates the importance of preserving that Union under which we have been so prosperous and happy, and have become so great and powerful.

As I was born and educated in the North, and have for more than thirty years resided in the South, or in a slaveholding State, I trust I may, with some freedom and without offence, examine this subject of slavery, and more especially in view of the opinions and feelings of the North in regard to it.

There has evidently been some new light, or, perhaps, I may with more propriety say obscurity, thrown upon it since I left that section of the country. If the views and feelings which now seem to prevail were entertained in my day, or when I resided there, I could hardly have escaped their influence, and have selected a slave State for my permanent residence.

It is true, I did not select Kentucky because slavery existed there; but I am not aware that *that* circumstance constituted any objection. I am confident it formed no part of my education to listen to lectures upon the injustice and sin of slavery, and its continuance in the South. In those days Abolitionists and Abolition societies—the party styling itself, *par excellence*, the *Liberty party*, and the one-idea *Free-soil party*—were unknown. These new sects have sprung up under the influence of the boasted progress of the age, of which we hear so much. But this progress of the age is in some respects like a high tide in our mighty rivers; it raises a vast amount of trash and rubbish, known in the West and South by the general term *drift*, and in the North, I believe, *flood-wood*, which would otherwise slumber and decay in silence upon the bank. While the tide lasts, it floats with some appearance of importance; often to the serious annoyance of the noble steamer and other useful craft. But when the stream again retires within its natural channel, it ceases to annoy and is seen no more. And such will be the inevitable destiny of those *reforming* sects, *wise above what is written*, when the current of public opinion shall become tranquil and rational.

In regard to the fanatical Abolitionists who are struggling for the immediate abolition of slavery throughout the whole country and the world, reckless alike as to means and consequences, it is useless to waste a word. That sect is so lost to all the dictates of reason, justice, and humanity, that any appeal to them would be utterly unavailing. Such men are as wild and deluded as those who, a century or so ago, hung honest women for witches, and drove out honest Quakers as heretics. This happened even in the good old, and now great and splendid, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The same delusion, although not to the same extent, prevailed in the renowned Old Dominion. And it may be possible that the fanaticism of this sect is the result of some hereditary taint or obliquity. I understand their number is very limited; and it will certainly become more so, should reason ever resume the helm in their minds.

But I apprehend I am not mistaken in supposing that a very considerable portion of the people in the North—and by the North I include all the non-slaveholding States—entertain very erroneous opinions upon the subject of slavery, its condition, the practicability of emancipation, and in regard to the character of slaveholders. The idea that it is unjust and sinful for the South to retain in servitude, instead of emancipating, their slaves, which I think is a pretty generally prevailing sentiment, is certainly founded in error, and must be the result of feeling, rather than reflection and an unprejudiced investigation of the subject.

Now, whether slavery was originally a moral wrong, is a question I shall

not stop to examine; for, whether so or not, it has no more to do with the present question, in regard to slavery as it now exists and its continuance in this country, than the fall of Adam or original sin. I will, however, take occasion to say, that the condition of the African, brought to this country by it, has, beyond question, been improved, and the Christian philanthropist has strong hopes that slavery in America may, in the providence of God, be the means of spreading the blessings of Christianity and of civil liberty throughout the most benighted, degraded, and barbarous quarter of the globe—of ultimately illuminating and civilizing even Africa.

Nor need I inquire whether slavery is a social or domestic evil; for if it is, the North may aggravate, but cannot cure it.

To determine what would be right and what wrong in regard to it, or whether it is right or wrong for the South to retain their slaves in servitude, we must look at the institution as it is, and all the circumstances attending it. Tested in this way, duty, Christian duty, and interest dictate the same course—and each forbids emancipation.

The result of my experience and reflection is, that so long as the white and African races constitute the same community, and the latter in point of numbers approximate any where near the former, the safest and happiest, and, indeed, the only safe and happy, relation for both races, is that of master and servant. And I am satisfied no unprejudiced mind, which will thoroughly investigate the subject, will come to a different conclusion. *That* relation will secure to each race or class the greatest security and the greatest amount of comfort and happiness.

The general emancipation of slavery in the South would result, if not in the ruin, greatly to the prejudice of each class, and more especially the colored. It would be an act of injustice and inhumanity to the slave, not surpassed by the people of the North turning off, helpless and destitute, upon the world, their infant children to shift for themselves. But why enlarge upon this question? Emancipation, in a word, would be madness. What could be done with the slaves, if emancipated? Would the North receive them? No. Some of the non-slaveholding States exclude them as far as possible by law, and even resort to force to break up their settlements, even when upon their own soil, and expel them. If they were to remain in the South, they would necessarily be a degraded *caste*, and virtually slaves—wretched and miserable beyond their present condition.

The boasted emancipation by Great Britain, at the expense of a hundred millions of dollars, of her West India slaves, has proved, so far as any improvement in the condition of the blacks was contemplated, an entire failure. There are gentlemen on this floor, northern gentlemen, who know, and who have been interested in knowing, that a more degraded

and miserable race of human beings can hardly be found upon the globe. And what is Great Britain now doing or permitting to be done? I understand that Africans by thousands, probably those captured from slavers, upon some indenture system, are removed from the Cape of Good Hope to the West Indies, where they are held in a species of service, varying but little from the former condition of slavery in those islands.

I will not, however, dwell longer upon a proposition which will not be controverted by any one correctly informed as to the facts, and whose mind is not warped by prejudice. But, sir, can the people of the North be aware to what extent they would be affected on the score of interest by disturbing slavery in the South? Do they appreciate the fact that almost every interest and department of labor draws largely from the proceeds of the labor of slaves? Not the manufacturer of cotton only, and the thousands and tens of thousands employed in that business, but almost every class of mechanics—also the shipping, mercantile, and agricultural or farming interest; for the prosperity of the latter depends upon the prosperous condition of the other interests or classes. Why, sir, the cotton-gin and almost every implement and instrument used in the culture of cotton and the cane, and all the machinery in the sugar-making process, the clothing of all kinds for slaves, the provision to a considerable extent, and numerous other articles, are almost exclusively the product of northern labor. It would be interesting to pursue this inquiry further in the detail, and show to what extent the North realizes the proceeds of the labor of slaves, but time will not permit.

If, then, as we are authorized to assume, benevolence and philanthropy—in a word, duty—forbid any change in the institution of slavery; and if the prosperity of the North, as well as the South, essentially depends, as it manifestly does, upon the quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of the institution by the South, upon what ground can we account, even if the Constitution were entirely out of the question, for the perpetual irritation and annoyance to which the South are subjected? Do not the South and all their slaves constitute a portion of the population and wealth of a common country?

Why, then, lecture the South, in this Hall and over the whole North, by resolutions of conventions of all sorts and sizes—and, still worse, by resolutions of whole States, through their Legislatures—upon the injustice, curse, and sin of slavery; to say nothing of the untiring assaults of the press, in countless thousands of tracts and novels, and every other species of publication? Why, in violation of the Constitution, render it odious to aid the owner in the reclamation of his fugitive slaves, and even *penal* for State officers to interfere? Why tell the South that slavery shall never

be extended, but confined to the narrowest possible limits, and for the avowed purpose of thereby forcing the South to the suicidal act of emancipation? Such was the *benevolent* and *generous* policy avowed by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. STEVENS.)

All this not only irritates, but seriously affects, the South in the enjoyment of their constitutional rights. It is of no service, but a positive injury to the slave. It has no tendency to loosen, but may render it necessary to tighten, his bonds. It adds nothing to the prosperity of the North, but, on the contrary, as you embarrass the South you affect your own interest.

Why, sir, I have sometimes thought it strange that a people, unsurpassed for intelligence and sagacity, and for an abiding, sleepless regard for their own interests, as is certainly a portion of the North, should have been so mistaken and misled upon this subject. But the marvel measurably ceases when we look into the history of the case, and the means employed for exciting the public mind and for the manufacture of public opinion.

The examination of the subject has been *ex parte*—one-sided. Lecturing fanatics and vagabonds at first went through the country exhibiting, not in imagination, as has been done in this chamber, but actual chains and manacles, and the most horrid instruments for punishment, as indicative of the savage cruelty of the master and the wretched condition of the slave. They had the field entirely to themselves. The slaveholder was calumniated, denounced as an unfeeling tyrant, and the condition and treatment of the slave grossly misrepresented. The subject found its way into the school-house and the pulpit; and, finally, the feeling was rendered available by the political demagogue and carried into the ballot-box. This feeling has progressed till the current has become so deep and strong, that, in many instances, those who would, find it fraught with political danger to resist it.

It is proper, and I will here take occasion to state that, so far as I have or may speak of the course of the North or the South in connection with this subject, I do not design my remarks to apply indiscriminately to the whole North or South—for I am aware such an application of them would be unjust—but only to such portions of either as they may be properly applicable to.

But, sir, the state of feeling to which I was alluding has been seized upon at the South for party purposes. Leading men in the North, with a view to render them unpopular and odious in the South, have been unjustly denounced as Abolitionists and enemies to the South. And such has been the effect of these different sectional views and feelings, that, to render a candidate acceptable to both sections, zealous and unscrupulous

partisans, like pirates, have had to run him with two sets of papers, fraudulent creeds and flags, prepared to use one or another to suit the latitude.

To secure the election, however, of the gallant and patriotic individual now at the head of the Government, I am not aware that such practices were deemed necessary. The people believed him honest, intelligent, brave, and patriotic, and as such were satisfied to elect him; and they have not and will not be deceived in him.

I desire, sir, to say a word or two more, with a view further to show the palpable inconsistency of a portion, at all events of the North, in regard to slavery. If it is so odious in their eyes, and the existence and continuance of it are regarded as a moral wrong, as a sin, why encourage it and grow rich upon it? Why not throw overboard, as was *the tea*, the contaminated articles, the products of slave labor? Why, sir, the people of the North, in receiving and using the cotton, and sugar, and rice, and tobacco, knowing as they do that they are produced by the labor of slaves, give countenance and are accessories to the alleged injustice and sin, as the receiver or purchaser of stolen goods is of the theft. The wildest fanatic is a daily participant of the necessaries, and comforts, and luxuries of life, produced by slave labor; and he is not restrained from indulgence by any conscientious scruples.

Again, the northern creditor, to secure his debt upon a southern slaveholder, without scruple takes a mortgage upon his slaves, and thereby becomes a slave-owner. He never, under such circumstances, emancipates, but sells. And no sale, I apprehend, has ever been arrested by the conscience of a northern creditor. Of this I certainly do not complain; and I have only made these allusions to show the intimate connection between the two sections on the score of interest, and that there *should* be no difference on the score of feeling.

I look upon the present controversy as unnatural and unholy; threatening and jeopardizing, as it evidently does, the safety and stability of this great Government. I believe it to be in the power of the present Congress to terminate it without any sacrifice, by any party, of principle, interest, honor, or feeling. And for the purpose of presenting my views as to the mode, I desire to say something upon the important and more immediate question before the committee, the message of the President transmitting the constitution of California.

The President recommends the admission into the Union of California with the constitution submitted; and, as to the residue of the territory acquired from Mexico, he recommends the establishment of no territorial governments, or *non-action*. The latter recommendation is based upon

the supposition that such governments cannot be established without continued and great excitement upon the subject of slavery.

There is certainly very plausible ground for this supposition. An effort to establish such governments, made at each session of the last Congress, was unavailing, in consequence of this exciting question. The question is still regarded of paramount importance, and its adjustment beset with serious, but I trust not insurmountable, difficulties. The present position of California, praying admission as a State, will certainly, or ought, in my opinion, to aid in the settlement of the entire controversy, so far as these Territories are concerned. It ought to be settled. The condition of the people in these Territories, the dignity of the nation, and, above all, the harmony and safety of the Union, require that it should be settled. Still, if this cannot be effected, if territorial governments cannot be organized, or the question adjusted in some other way, without continued and dangerous excitement, the recommendation of the President of *non-action* will be, as the lesser evil, the safest and wisest policy. The rights of all the people, so far as relates to the occupation of the country, will be thereby unaffected, and continue as they now exist.

California has formed her constitution, and prays admission into the Union, under very peculiar and extraordinary circumstances; no State has ever been admitted under precisely similar circumstances. It is true that several Territories—Michigan, Iowa, Florida, and others—formed constitutions, without any act of Congress authorizing the proceeding, and under such circumstances have been admitted; but they had organized territorial governments. Their admission, however, was irregular; and, as to some of them, grossly so. Texas was an independent sovereignty, and owed no allegiance to this or any other Government. California had no organized territorial government, nor was she an independent sovereignty. Still, I am by no means prepared to say she has been in the wrong in organizing a State government, and seeking admission into the Union, whether we admit her or not.

When this Government, in which was vested the sovereignty over the country by the cession from Mexico, failed to exercise it, the people of California had no alternative but anarchy, or to form a government for themselves. Self-defence and preservation justified her in pursuing the latter course. How long was she to continue in her abandoned condition? Two sessions of Congress had passed, and there was no provision for her government and protection; and there was little probability that the efforts of the present Congress would be more successful. Her condition was peculiar. She constituted, and still constitutes, a point of greater attraction than any other in all the earth. There was a rush to her mountains

of gold—an influx of population, without a parallel in the history of man. Under such circumstances, she has formed a constitution and become a State *de facto*, and now asks, not in contumacy, not in derogation of our authority, but in express recognition of it, to be made a State *de jure*, and admitted into this great family of States. Her constitution was the work, and bears the impress, of American citizens, and seems to have been adopted with singular unanimity. There is nothing to justify even a suspicion that the character of it in reference to slavery is the result of any extraneous influence. It sufficiently appears that it is emphatically the constitution of American citizens in California, at the time of its adoption. It is an objection, however, entitled to consideration, that the population, although at this time sufficiently large, was, to a very considerable extent, unstable and unsettled—composed of individuals not there with a view to a permanent residence. It is also objected that the boundaries are too extensive.

But, sir, in the eyes of all northern gentlemen these objections fade away, and oppose no obstacle to her immediate admission. They are impatient for her adoption. They are anxious to take her—and no questions asked. The clause in her constitution, excluding slavery, covers, like a mantle, all faults and irregularities. If that clause were expunged or out, what a marvellous change would be produced in their views and feelings.

Well, sir, I have made up my mind, notwithstanding all the objections, and that it will be establishing a new precedent—to unite with them and admit California, and even with her designated boundary, provided they will be just and patriotic, and settle the whole controversy as to the residue of these Territories.

I am in favor of a measure providing for the admission of California and the organization of territorial governments for the residue of California and New Mexico without the Wilmot proviso, leaving the question of slavery to be settled by the proper constitutional tribunal—the Judiciary, in the first instance, should the question arise; and by the people in the second, whose authority cannot be questioned when they come to form State constitutions.

And how is it possible that northern gentlemen, Whigs or Democrats, can resist the settlement, in this mode, of this exciting and distracting controversy? Why leave it open for continued strife and agitation, which have already jarred the very foundations of our political edifice? Such a measure will leave the rights of all parties precisely where they are at present, or would be if the country is left, uncared for by this Government, to shift for itself as best it can. It is the South will have most ground of objection. As to the North, a State is admitted in all respects agreeably

to her wishes. In point of territorial extent, equal or nearly so to three States of the first class, with a sea-coast extent upon the Pacific of seven or eight hundred miles, abounding in gold beyond the wildest dreams of avarice, and with a constitution excluding slavery. In comparison with this *El Dorado*, this land of gold, the residue of this Mexican territory, for which governments are sought to be established, is of little value.

And how, sir, has this vast Mexican territory been acquired? Whether by conquest or purchase, it has been acquired by the common valor, and suffering and treasure of the nation, and belongs to all the people—not to one State, or class of States, nor to one class of the people more than another. Under such circumstances, it would be in violation of all the principles of justice and equality to exclude a large class from any participation in the enjoyment of a country they have contributed in common to acquire; for such is the effect of this Wilmot proviso or the inhibition of slavery. Justice and equity would forbid this, even if it were conceded that Congress had the constitutional power. But the South denies the power. Such is the undoubting opinion of many of our most eminent statesmen and jurists, and, I think, the prevailing sentiment in the South. The South has been willing to submit her constitutional right to remove and hold their slaves in this Territory to the decision of the Supreme Court, and abide the result. And this mode of compromising and settling the question would have saved the country from all or much of this excitement.

But northern gentlemen, with some exceptions, claim the power. They insist, also, that slavery is excluded by Mexican law; and contend, moreover, if it were not, that it cannot exist there without express authority of law. Every northern man contends for this, and professes to have no doubt upon the subject. Besides all, *the foremost man* in all the North, and one of the *foremost* of all his race in any age or country, is willing to rely upon the character of the country, the irrevocable law of God and nature, for excluding slavery from the residue of this Territory. Upon the position assumed by northern gentlemen, then, this *proviso* is wholly unnecessary and useless. But, sir, it is more and worse than useless; it is, under the circumstances, a wanton outrage upon the feelings of the South. It indicates not only a want of respect for their feelings, but their opinions. If, however, the South is right, and Congress has not the power, then it is not only an outrage upon their feelings, but upon their constitutional rights. Why, then, should northern gentlemen so pertinaciously insist upon this offensive, and, according to their own avowed sentiments, useless provision? Why not display the magnanimity and patriotism of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts to whom I

have alluded—leave the question to be settled by the character of the country, by the Judiciary, and the people of those Territories, and relieve the country from the agitation and alarm that now pervades it?

But, sir, in support of this proviso, or inhibitory policy, gentlemen—and more especially my friend from Ohio, (Mr. CAMPBELL)—have referred to and relied upon the opinions of distinguished patriots and statesmen, and the views of the people of several of the States—North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia—about the period of the Revolution. What was the condition of slavery at that period I have no time to inquire, and it is not important. The objection, however, seems to have been more particularly against the African slave trade. But what did these eminent men do afterwards, and after our independence had been established? In the most solemn and important act of their lives, with the Father of his country at their head, they not only recognised and provided for the continuance of slavery in all time to come, but authorized the continuance of the African slave trade for twenty years, for the express purpose of increasing the number of slaves in the country. For this provision voted the North as well as the South. The former realized the money by the traffic; the latter desired and obtained the slaves. And what State resisted the adoption of the Constitution on account of this provision, or of any other in reference to slavery? It was opposed by no State on that account, so far as my recollection extends. If all this was the result of compromise in forming the Constitution, it was a noble example, which we ought to follow for its preservation.

But the question is, what would these illustrious men now do in regard to this inhibitory policy, if they were now here, and could be heard in this Hall? Would they, under the change of circumstances, when we have more slaves than the entire population in 1775—when emancipation cannot be effected without ruin to both races—when the condition of slavery has been greatly ameliorated, and when slave labor is employed not only beneficially to our whole country but to the whole world—when our territory has been vastly extended, spreading from ocean to ocean, and acquired by the valor and treasure of the whole nation—would they say, let the alien and the stranger from all countries, no matter whether Christian or Pagan, Mohammedan or Mormon, with one wife or fifty, occupy in unnumbered thousands our vast unpeopled territories, and utterly exclude from every rood of it their own *household*—every slaveholder, although *bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh*—the founders, and descendants of the very founders, of the empire? Would they say this is justice; this is that equality upon which our Union and Constitution were based? No, sir, no! If the shade of the most illustrious man, not only of his country but of

his whole race, could arise here, it would frown upon and condemn such policy, as not only in conflict with the spirit of the Constitution, but as unjust in itself—an outrage upon the feelings and rights of the South. Would he endorse the unfeeling sentiment of the member from Pennsylvania? No, sir. His language would be, you have territory enough and to spare. Humanity, philanthropy, as well as justice and equality, the harmony and safety of the Union, forbid this restrictive policy.

But, sir, the South asks no concession; what the paramount law of the land secures to her is all she contends for. The settlement of the controversy in the way suggested—and, I believe, a proposition to that effect is now before the committee—results in no triumph to any party. It ought to be most acceptable to the North, in view of the admission of California. In this whole matter, however, it is proper I should say I speak only for myself; although I believe most of my colleagues are disposed to sustain a measure of the character which I have indicated. The whole country will rejoice at the settlement of this distracting controversy, and will be generally satisfied that it shall be settled in that way.

I had intended to say a few words, sir, in reply to the reflections which have been, most unjustly, in my opinion, made upon the President as to his course in reference to these Territories. He informs us he continued whatever of government there was in the country as he found it, and disturbed no arrangements which had existed under his predecessor. Of this I have heard no complaint. But he recommended the people, if prepared to comply with the requisitions of the Constitution of the United States, to form, in effect, State constitutions, and submit them to Congress, with a prayer for admission as States. His motive was patriotic—the termination, as soon as possible, of the excitement in regard to the question of slavery, and by the people themselves. He found the people in a measure without government; and, at the same time, no people needed the protection of an efficient government more. He recommended them to do what, under the circumstances, self-defence and self-preservation authorized and required them to do—to form governments for themselves. This they have done, but not, it would seem, at the instance of the President, or in consequence of his recommendation. The constitution of California is now before us, and whether we shall admit her or not as a State, is a question addressing itself to our discretion.

As to the course of the President, I regard it as dictated by sound policy and the most patriotic motives. There is certainly some reason for believing that the same course, in effect, had been previously advised by his predecessor; but whether so or not, is not deemed very material, and I have no time to go into an inquiry as to the fact.

Mr. Chairman, I have been often asked what Kentucky would do, or how she stood in the present contest, and my answer has been a very short one: That Kentucky was against the proviso, but in favor of the Union. She seems to have full confidence in her delegation in Congress. Her Legislature has forwarded no resolutions of instruction or request. She has yet made no effort by a dollar and cent calculation to ascertain the value of the Union. She regards it as priceless, and cannot, therefore, solve such a problem. The flattering estimates and golden results which some gentlemen have so minutely described as the certain fruits of disunion and a southern confederacy, have had not the slightest influence to lessen her attachment to the country and the Government as they now exist. Her devotion to the Constitution and to the Union rises far above such speculating and sordid calculations. Love of liberty, of security, of independence, of the present and anticipated glory and happiness of this magnificent republic, constitutes the basis of her devotion.

It is true, a state of case may possibly occur, when her honor, her independence, her very existence, may render the Union insupportable, and revolution unavoidable. But nothing will ever force her to so sad and desperate a resort but the sternest necessity; and, should she ever be driven to it, the case will be a plain one. As one of her sons remarked, in reference to the memorable shooting or falling of the stars, as the phenomenon was called, that he kept his eye constantly upon the north star, and concluded, if *that* should fall or shoot off, *the hunt would be out*, and that dissolution and ruin would be at hand. So, sir, when Kentucky shall be for disunion, it may well be considered the time has come and the scene has closed.

At the same time, no State has greater cause to complain of the injustice of non-slaveholding States, as regards the abduction and enticing away of her slaves, and the difficulty and danger in their reclamation.

We denounce, sir, and punish as pirates, those who are engaged in the African slave trade. The act of decoying from the owner his slave, and aiding him in his escape, is not less, but even more criminal. As to the owner, it is robbery; and, as to the slave, inhumanity; as, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the effect is to consign him to poverty and wretchedness. It seems to me, if public sentiment in the North were not depraved in regard to the constitutional rights of the South, it would frown down this criminal practice, and that the owner would be aided, and not obstructed, in the recovery of his property.

It is to be hoped that Congress will adopt, and immediately, such measures as shall render available and efficient the constitutional provision in regard to fugitive slaves, and that the North will cordially unite in this

matter, and carry out, in good faith, that important provision. Interest and honor, the harmony and safety of the Union, as well as the obligation imposed by the Constitution, demand this, that the South may be secure in the quiet and unannoyed enjoyment of their property.

It seems to me, sir, that an adjustment of existing difficulties, and in a manner consistent with the rights and honor of all parties concerned, if honestly desired, may be easily effected. And what a day of triumph and rejoicing would that be to every patriot, to every one who has ever sent an aspiration to Heaven for human freedom, which should witness the restoration between the North and the South of that fraternal sympathy and kindness, respect and confidence, which united our ancestors in the glorious struggle for independence! It would be a sad and gloomy day only for demagogues, and fanatics, and the enemies of free Government.

The number who seek revolution or dissolution, *per se*, for the sake of dissolution, whether in the North or the South, must be confined to fanatics. Possibly there may be those who seek it for self-aggrandisement, to gratify a reckless and unhallowed ambition. To such, if any, I would apply the withering invocation of the poet:

———"Is there not some chosen curse,
Some hidden thunder in the stores of Heaven,
Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the man
Who would owe his greatness to his country's ruin?"

Mr. Chairman, if allowable, I would say, in conclusion, that, *personally*, no member of the committee can have more feeling, or a stronger desire for the safety and continuance of the Union, than the humble individual who now addresses you.

The bones of my ancestors sleep beneath the sod of New England, and I have kindred blood in almost every State north of the Potomac. More than twenty years of the first part of my life were spent in the far North, in that State which, politically—of course, in party politics—has acquired and well deserves the flattering cognomen of *The star that never sets*. To that gallant and patriotic State, although differing widely from her views in regard to slavery, I am strongly attached. For—

"Lives there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land?"

I claim, however, as my country, a land not limited by the confines of a single State, but co-extensive with this broad Union—the land of Washington and Henry, of Laurens and Marion, of Hancock and Adams, as well as that of Allen, and the more obscure, but romantic and daring, Boone.

But, sir, my regard for the State of my birth is not inconsistent with loyalty and devotion to that of my adoption. For more than thirty years I have been a citizen of the brave, generous, and patriotic State of Kentucky, and have been treated with all the kindness of a native son. To Kentucky I am bound, not only by all the ties of interest, and honor, and gratitude, but by every tie of feeling and affection which can be entwined around the human heart. And whatever may be her course in regard to the present controversy, or in future trials, I will say, in the expressive language of one of old—"Where thou goest I will go, and where thou liest I will lie; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

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