

AN ADDRESS

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ON THE

PROGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

AND ON THE

SLAVERY QUESTION.

DELIVERED AT ODD-FELLOWS' HALL, (NASHVILLE, TENN.) FOR THE
BENEFIT OF THE ORPHAN ASYLUM.

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The United States: her Present and Past Condition.

It is now just three quarters of a century since the United States proclaimed her determination to take her place amongst the independent nations of the earth. It was a high and bold resolve, so full of peril that it drew tears from the intrepid patriots who signed the ever memorable declaration. It startled the mother country and astonished the other nations of the Old World. It was a contest of youth against matured and hardened manhood; of a weak and scattered people against the most formidable and powerful nation on the globe. Without money, without an army, with scarcely a single ship of war on the Ocean, without even entire unanimity of sentiment amongst her own people, she fearlessly engaged in the struggle, resolved to be free, or to perish in the attempt.

A cause so just and an example so heroic, could not fail soon to attract the favor and sympathy of mankind. France, partly from hereditary hatred to England, but mainly from the germinating seeds of her own subsequent revolution, tendered to the young Republic her auspicious and powerful assistance. For seven years she maintained

the long and dubious contest. History has faithfully recorded the coösummate skill of her generals, the heroic valor of her soldiery, and the patriotic sacrifices of her gallant people.

At last crowned with success, with her liberties firmly established and their acknowledgment extorted from her oppressor, she stood forth the wonder of the age, the admiration of the world!

But whatever of skill or of valor she had exhibited in the war was far outshone by the wisdom she displayed in the form of government which she subsequently devised and adopted. She summoned her wise men throughout all her borders to come up to the great work of devising a system which should be worthy of the mighty struggle through which she had passed, and of the gallant people who had nobly sustained it. They came. Washington came; Benjamin Franklin came; old Roger Sherman came; James Madison came; Rutledge and the Pinckneys came; and many others whose names and fame have long been identified with her highest glory and renown. When the great work of forming her constitution was completed, it was transmitted to Congress by George Washington, who had presided over its formation, accompanied by a letter, which, like his farewell address, ought to be forever preserved, and as often referred to for lessons of wisdom and patriotic devotion to the Constitution and the Union. I will not withhold on the present occasion the following impressive extract: "In all our deliberations we kept steadily in our view that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the consolidation of our Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety; perhaps our national existence. This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each State in convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude than might have been otherwise expect-

ed; and thus the constitution which we now present is the result of a spirit of amity, and of that mutual deference and concession, which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable. * * * That it may promote the lasting welfare of that country so dear to us all, and secure her freedom and happiness, is our most ardent wish.”

This noble monument of human wisdom was subsequently adopted by the states. It became our constitution, our Union, our system of federal government. They are not separate and distinct things. They are one, indivisible and identical. Whoever has read the one has read the other. Whoever obeys one, obeys the other. Whoever dissolves the one, dissolves the other. As the old articles of confederation formed and were the Union, so the new constitution became and is a more perfect Union. Under it, our country has thus far run a career of prosperity unparalleled in the history of nations. Triumphant in two wars since its adoption, especially brilliant and invincible in the last one, she has placed her military renown above all cavil and beyond the reach of all competition. In peace, in all the arts and sciences, which bless and adorn such a condition, she has been no less an object of admiration and praise. From three millions, her population has grown up to more than twenty millions. From thirteen original states we have become a confederacy of thirty Republics, and can scarcely announce the number until another and another are added to the glittering and gorgeous galaxy. They come from every part of this wide spread continent; from the lakes of the north; from the shores of the Gulf or the distant regions of California, glittering with her gold and sparkling with her diamonds. Her wide spread commerce is seen floating on every sea, penetrating every climate and country, and protected by a Navy which has carried her name and her fame to every

part of the habitable globe. Success in agricultural pursuits has crowned with plenty the labors of her own people, and carried abundance and joy to the famishing population of the Old World. In her internal improvements; her canals; her rail roads; her telegraphic lines; the removal of obstructions from her majestic rivers, she has exhibited the elements of a great and prosperous people. But above all, she has become "The desire of all nations," in the freedom of her institutions, the justice and equality of her laws, and the wisdom and impartiality with which they are administered. In fine, her past history and progress is a bright and almost magic picture on which the civilized nations are now gazing with intense admiration and delight. Most willingly would I hold that picture up to your gaze; to your admiration; to your own patriotic pride and just exultation; but a sterner and far less agreeable duty lies before me.

In the midst of this unparalleled progress, when we are but midway between the morning and high noon of our prosperity, the gloomy shadows of sectional discontent come stealing over and around us, deepening and darkning as they come. A dread eclipse seems to be approaching. Amid the gathering gloom, the cry is heard, that the constitution, the Union, our confederate system is in danger. From the east and the west, from the north and the south, the messages of State Governors, the resolutions of State legislatures and the solemn deliberations of large popular assemblies confirm the astounding and almost incredible annunciation. Panic stricken and amazed, we turn with patriotic instinct to the centre of our political system; to the city which bears the name of the illustrious father of his country; we turn to it for light and peace and safety. But no light is to be seen gleaming from her council chambers. They have all been put out. For weeks and months, no speaker; no clerks; no sergent-at-arms; no chaplain;

no organization for the public good, but perpetual readiness for agitation and mischief. Nearly all, but not all of those great and good men who used to be there from the north to perfect, adorn and perpetuate our system of government, have retired from the theatre of action or have been superseded by men whose sole delight seems to be, day after day, and night after night, amid the fire and smoke and suffocation of a wild fanaticism, to deal blow after blow upon the constitution, until the Union shall crumble to ruins around them. Let us now pause and look at the proposed invasions of that heretofore consecrated instrument.

The first one is, that the clause allowing the representation of three-fifths of the slaves, shall be expunged, obliterated from the constitution. It is a clause which had long been debated in the convention. At that period slavery existed in several of the northern as well as the southern states. But in the spirit of amity and of mutual forbearance and concession, the difficulty was compromised; and Massachusetts and Virginia, Connecticut and Georgia walked harmoniously into the Union, co-equals in every respect, having compromised this and all other points of difference, as the basis and principle of representation. Cannot Massachusetts now consent to do what Massachusetts was content to do then? Is the Connecticut of to-day unwilling to stand to the compact ratified by the Connecticut of 1787? If not, on whose head shall fall the blame of destroying that compact? The south cannot afford voluntarily to submit to a great change like this. She is already in a vast and increasing minority; her contemplated exclusion from the territories of the United States would soon reduce her so low in the scale of insignificance as to sink her on every invasion of her rights, far below the protection of even a Presidential veto. When that shall have been done, who can doubt that the feeble barriers, which are now admitted

to forbid interference with slavery in the states, will all be broken down and the dark spirit of murder and insurrection stalk mad, riotous and bloody through the land. To ask her voluntarily to make this change is but an invitation to suicide; to force it upon her by numerical power is to break and dissolve the constitution; to break and dissolve the Union; to break and dissolve the federal government; no matter which of these forms of expression may be adopted. In such an act the south would stand *passive*, and faithful to the original compact; the north would be *active* and destructive of it. It may be said that the constitution expressly provides for its own amendment, and therefore no alteration can be destructive of it. But let it be remembered that it was to be amended as it was formed, in the spirit of amity and mutual concession; not of hostile and degrading aggression. To amend by *improving* not by *destroying* those guarantees of life and property, without which we know it never would have been adopted.

Look next to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, in the forts, arsenals, navy-yards, and other public establishments of the United States. What adequate inducement can the north have to raise all this clamor for years, about a little district, ten miles square, (now much less,) and a few inconsiderable spots and places thinly scattered over the land, scarcely larger than a mustard seed when compared to the vast body of the slave-holding region? Would a microscopic concession like this appease a conscience, wounded and lacerated by the sin of slavery? If abolished in these, it would be but the removal of one grain of sand from the beach—the withdrawal of but one drop from the vast ocean of alleged national guilt. But small as it might seem to be, the south cannot safely submit to abolition even here. How could Maryland; how could Virginia submit to it? When the District of Columbia

should have become a city of refuge for the slaves of the surrounding country, what earthly power could prevent the chivalrous sons of Virginia and Maryland from asserting their rights, and reclaiming their property? Members of Congress, who now shudder with horror at reading in some metropolitan newspaper, the advertisement of some negro slave for sale, might then be doomed to witness many a scene of strife, and to behold many a wounded captive borne off in chains, who, without his officious legislation, would have remained contented at home, eating the same kind of food, reposing through the same hours of the night, and working side by side with the master through the day, in the same fields, where both had been reared in kind and sometimes affectionate regard for each other.

Look next to another of these aggressions on the rights of the south, which proposes under the pretext of regulating commerce among the states, that no slave, for no purpose, and under no circumstances whatever, shall be carried by his lawful owner, from one slave-holding state to another. That where slavery now is, there it shall forever remain, until by its own increase, it shall outnumber the opposite race, and thus by the united combination of causes—the fears of the master, the diminution in value, and the exhausted condition of the soil, the final purposes of fanaticism whatever they may be, shall be accomplished. For this extraordinary proposition no apology can be offered; for it is established by universal observation, that if you give to slavery but scope and compass, if you permit it to be dilated over ample space, it looses much of that oppression which even a morbid humanity could deplore. In many regions of the south, I hesitate not to declare, that in point of care and anxiety—in point of abundance of food and raiment—of healthful but humble habitation, the slave is but little distinguished from the master.

Before we further pursue this enumeration of our wrongs

permit me to say, that I do not include the whole north engaged in this crusade against us. Whilst we fear that we can exempt no large classes, and no large portions of any party, I freely admit many individual exceptions that challenge our highest admiration and gratitude—men who stand forth among the brightest ornaments of our age and country.

The last in the series of aggressions to which I shall call your attention, is that one commonly called the Wilmot proviso, by which Congress is called upon to prohibit every slave-holder from removing with his slaves to the territory lately acquired from Mexico—a territory as large as the old thirteen States, originally composing the Union—a territory won by the common valor, and paid for out of the common treasury of the nation. Simply to state the proposition is to show its enormity. Even the brigand will make honorable division of the spoils, among all who went willingly and bore themselves valiantly, in the expedition of rapine and plunder. Will proud and independent states do less with their compeers in an expedition of honor and duty and patriotism? If disposed to taunt, I might demand to know if the north, a large portion of it at least, did go willingly? Whether she did not denounce the expedition as wicked and unjust, and the acquisition barren and worthless? How then is it that she shall demand the Lion's share of it to herself? Even after it had been acquired, many there were ready to abandon it, and surrender it back, to what they were pleased to term a weak and helpless and innocent people—more willing then to give all to Mexico, than they now are, one-half of it to their own, countrymen. And what has the south ever done to merit such exclusion from the common soil, the common property of the nation? Trace her history—in peace and in war—on every battle-field and in every council-chamber, she has been true and faithful to all her engagements to

the north. Observe her more especially in the contest, by which that very territory was acquired, from which she is now to be excluded. Both of your great commanders were from the south. Many subordinate generals, their "kindred thunderbolts in war," were also from the south. An equal number—nay, a majority of your invincible soldiery were from the south. Why should they be permitted to gather laurels from Palo Alto to Buena Vista—from Vera Cruz to the Mexican capital, and then, when every province had been subdued, and your flag was proudly waving over the halls of the Montezumas, why should they be required to bow their heads, and meekly to retire—excluded—driven out from the country moistened with their blood, and immortalized by their valor. Could the north point me to "the book and page"—to the very clause of the constitution which would expressly warrant an exclusion so unequal, and so unjust, I would not yet believe that a land that bears upon her bosom the proud and lofty monument of Bunkerhill, would ever perpetrate so foul—so incomprehensibly monstrous deed. But that book—that page—that clause can never be shown. It is vain to point us to that provision of the constitution which declares that, "Congress shall have power to dispose of, and make rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States." Territory means the land—the soil—which *belonged* to her. The *property* which she might have *need to dispose of*. To *dispose of*—to sell her territory or public lands, rules and regulations might and would become necessary: they must be surveyed. The size and form of her surveys, the price which should be demanded for them, the location of the offices where the same shall be *disposed of*, were all among the "rules and regulations" contemplated by this section. It did not speak of political associations or governments under that term. The exclusion of every such con-

clusion is to be made in the latter declaration "that nothing in this constitution shall be so construed as to prejudice any *claims* of the United States, or any particular State." Under this clause, however, the United States may *entirely* prevent the formation of political associations or governments upon her territory or public lands. She may exclude the settlement of them altogether. She may choose to reserve them for after times or to hold them as uninhabited barriers between herself and some coterminous nation. If such should not be her policy she may permit and invite their settlement with a view to political organization. But because that territory is hers, she may *prescribe* the description of persons whether unnaturalized foreigners or the citizens of the United States who may inhabit it. She may discriminate against the former on the great principles of self defence against the formation of an organized government of foreign subjects on her own soil, within her own boundaries, hostile in sentiment, and dangerous to her republican form of government. Against and amongst her own people, she can make no such discrimination, because neither founded on necessity, consistent with the community of property, nor warranted by that perfect equality of rights secured to the people of the states by the constitution. For the same reason, (the right of property) she may designate the boundaries within which such political associations may be formed. The land, the soil, the territory is her own, and she may therefore well determine such a question according to her own will and pleasure. All other questions preliminary to political organization and to subsequent application for admission into the Union, acted on by Congress, must be the result of strict necessity or of acquiescence on the part of the people for mutual accommodation and convenience; all these questions relate chiefly to *mere modes* of action and sink into compara-

tive insignificance in this discussion. Had the great principle of self government inherent in every people and the guarded and limited powers granted to the general government, would clearly indicate to my mind, that whatever Congress has done or may hereafter do in reference to introducing measures preliminary to the organization of territorial governments, she ought never to enter upon direct and immediate legislation for them. But my purpose is not here to discuss the constitutional questions involved in the present contest between the north and the south. This is neither the time nor the occasion. I therefore pass to another, and would solemnly and earnestly enquire what the north can expect to gain by all these high and imperious demands! Does she expect thereby to wipe out the stain of what she is pleased to call the *national sin of slavery*? Why slavery has no nationality! It is purely a local and sectional institution. Whatever of sin may be ascribed to it can never attach in any degree to the north, until we obliterate the states and become one vast consolidated government. If it be replied that whilst this is true as to slavery in the states, yet the territory of the United States is national and the introduction of slavery there would be a national transgression: well, we have agreed to set bounds to this *imputed sin*, by the compromise of the constitution, by the Missouri compromise, by the Texas compromise. And even under these we ask the north to give no affirmative sanction to the sin or other evils of slavery. All we require of her is to take no action on the subject. Will not this do them? It did the venerable men of the north sixty years ago. It satisfied them thirty years ago when Missouri came into the Union. Why not now? Let them remember too, that whether they admit slavery upon one foot of our territory or not cannot affect the question of its sinfulness in the slightest degree. Admit slavery to-morrow, into every

territory north and south of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes, and you add not a single one to the number. Exclude them, and you make their number not a single one the less. The aggregate amount of sin and of suffering, as you regard it, will therefore remain the same whether you fail or succeed in this notable scheme of conscientious purgation.

Let me further enquire of the north, when she has succeeded in all her proposed measures, what she expects to accomplish for the relief of "the poor enslaved and down trodden sons of Africa?" You would shake a continent from the centre to its circumference for their relief. You would deal blow after blow on the constitution, until you would make the Union reel and stagger like a falling and dying man to lighten their yoke and loosen their chains; and what I demand to know is likely to be your success? Deluded by your perpetual agitations, they become gloomy and discontented with their lot. Suspicion watches every look and refers every action to some settled purpose of intended insurrection. If outbreaks ensue, destitute of arms and ignorant of their use, if they had any, with no concert of action, and no leader to conduct them, they would soon be dispersed, or shot down in the fields and the highways like so many wild beasts of the forest. Thus they would perish; by famine, by the sword, by the halter; and dying, would heap curses on those who had disturbed them in their former contentment and repose. But let us suppose that their efforts should be crowned with success so far as to secure their escape from their further bondage. Where shall they go? who will receive them? Will the north? Never! Notified of their approach, the north would meet them on the border, drive them back, or strow the earth with their dead bodies. Would the north ever consent to pay for them and thus secure their final and certain emancipation? Never. Would

she consent to pay even the expenses of their transportation to the shores of their native country? Never! Would she even allot to them a home and a resting place on the banks of the distant Oregon or the plains of the Sacramento? No never: especially now, when gold is washed in every river and sparkles on the summit of every mountain. I again ask, what is to become of them? Excited to rebellion but too weak to conquer; encouraged to fly and yet find no people, no country willing to receive them! Would to God that I could send my voice to-night into every town and village and farm house of the north. I would say let this people alone. They are now comparatively contented and happy. They are well clothed, well housed, and well fed. In sickness, the best physicians are called to their bed sides and in health they are not compelled to work as hard as the day-laborers of your own region. You cannot, you do not know how to better their condition. Let them alone until God in His mercy to the master as well as the slave shall point out the way of their deliverance.

If then, even the slave is to become loser by your injudicious if not officious benevolence, look a little further and see if *you* may not become a loser yourselves by it. Look to the following estimates of your annual profits growing out of your connection with the south; estimates founded on the most reliable data:*

Freights of Northern shipping on Southern produce,.....	\$40,186,000
Profits derived on imports at the North on Southern account.....	9,000,000
Profits of exchange operations,.....	1,000,000
Profits of Northern manufactures sold at the South,.....	22,250,000
Profits of western produce descending the Mississippi,.....	10,000,000
Profits of Northern capital employed at the South,.....	6,000,000
	\$88,436,000

Eighty-eight million of profits annually poured into the lap of the north by its connection with the south! How much of these may you not lose, nay, must you not lose by

dissolving your connection with us. With the annexation of Texas, the last acre of the cotton growing region, passed beneath the wing of the Eagle, and changed for all time to come the destinies of the southern states.

England, France and the northern states have all become competitors and rivals for her great staple, which in the language of an able and eloquent writer in one of our periodicals has been spun into a web that binds the commercial world to southern interests. The cotton growing experiments in India have failed, the blundering emancipation policy of England in her West Indies has failed, and the southern states are now sole possessors of a staple on which half the manufacturing and commercial interests of the world depend.

But whilst the south is conscious of the vantage ground which she occupies, she is neither insensible nor indifferent to the great interests of the north. She turns not a spindle, she weaves not a woof, she sails not a ship in which the south does not feel that she has a just degree of national pride and exultation. Her navigation and manufacturing interest can never become antagonistic to the south. Antagonism must come from England; the north already manufactures more than half a million of our cotton bales; England the greater portion of the balance. Her proximity to the place of production; the abundance and cheapness of her provisions and above all her fraternal and national connection with the south will enable her to achieve successive victories over her transatlantic rival, at which none will more heartily rejoice than her southern brethren.

But that connection must be fraternal. What is the Union worth, when the spirit of amity and concord has departed from it? This agitation of the slavery question is so unfraternal that the south has never seen the day when she would not rather have had a foreign enemy

and by a fair trial, even to have this slavery question their annual discussion in Congress. To the north it brought no danger; your families were safely housed and lumbering in peace and security, far away from the storm that was howling in the distance. Not so the south. For the last few years not a fire-bell has been rung at midnight in our cities, which did not strike a pang to the heart and make the mother clasp the sleeping infant closer to her bosom.

I have yet another question to submit to the north on this great subject, the counter part of the question of less which we have just been considering. What do you expect to gain for yourselves by pressing these measures upon the south? Not political power and ascendancy? You have acquired these already. That was the high stake, for which some of your ambitious statesmen have been playing for nearly half a century. I do not say they have had no southern competitors. But the game has been played out and the south has lost it. The government is yours; all its vast patronage is yours; the President and all the high offices of state belong to you, whenever you choose to have them. The south knows that the scepter has departed from her; nay, that she handed it over to you herself, when Virginia ceded to you with a noble and patriotic generosity her north western possessions. Without Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and I believe a portion of Michigan, where would be now and for all time to come, the preponderance of political power? The Sun in one entire revolution around this earth, no where shines on a finer region than was freely surrendered to you by "the mother of Presidents and of States." It was the gift of the south to the north. The magnificence of that gift if it shall generate no arrogance in the possessor can never bring regret to the generous bosom of the munificent donor. If ambition and power and patronage be no longer

ambitions of your nation, what can you expect to gain by farther agitations? Nothing. I repeat nothing but alienated affections; a violated constitution; a broken, shattered Union, and with these the taunts and jeers of exulting monarchy and the indignant frowns of the friends of liberty all over the world. Dream not that the odium of dissolving this glorious Union, still stretching like the rainbow of hope and of promise over the continent, shall ever be cast on the states of the south. That shall be your work, not theirs. The dissolution of the Union is nothing but the destruction of the constitution. The destruction of the constitution is completed, when your measures of aggression are accomplished. The south loves the Union. She will cling to it to the last, and when one violation of the constitution after another shall have destroyed it, she may well exclaim, "It was not I that did it." When the great crisis shall come and crash after crash shall announce the downfall of the Republic, the world will be at no loss to know what barbarian hand struck the fatal blow. Calm, erect, but sorrowful, the south will be seen standing amid the ruins, holding to her bosom the farewell address of the sainted Washington, and appealing to Heaven to attest her fidelity to its sacred injunctions.

In this dark hour of peril and danger, what does it become the duty of the south to do for the preservation of her rights? If the humblest of her sons were permitted to advise, he would say to her, prepare, by all the means that wisdom can devise and patriotism approve, prepare for the coming tempest. Its low mutterings are no longer to be heard in the distance. It is already upon you and its thunders are bursting peal after peal over your head. Every gale that sweeps to you from the capitol, bears upon its wings the news of renewed agitation and increasing excitement. You cannot tell on what day nor in what hour that glorious flag which waves over the de-

the symbols of our greatness, the proud emblem of our Union, and our power may be stricken down, in token that fanaticism and ambition have accomplished their works, and that the days of the Republic have been numbered. What then; what then! Go ask the sainted spirit of Washington; go ask the genius of Liberty as she stretches her wings to take her everlasting flight from our country. Not yet, not yet, stay! stay! all is not lost. See! our noble flag again reappears! Some bold and patriotic hand has lifted up and restored it, and the light of hope is once more beaming from the dome of our capitol.

Let us never despair of the Republic. God never conducted our fathers through so many trials and dangers, he never inspired them to build up so great and so excellent a system of government to permit their degenerate sons so soon to destroy it. The north will yet recede; a voice which she has long known and so often followed, has already proclaimed that she can and ought to recede. When she shall further hear, as hear she must, that the south can never submit; that come what may, she never can and never will submit, that her peace, her safety, her honor, her very existence all forbid it: when the north shall moreover remember that all the evils of which she complains were inherited by us from her and from our British ancestors, without our consent and against our earnest entreaties, she must pause, she must recede. Let us cherish this hope of returning magnanimity and justice. We have seen the noble vessel of state outride many a storm. Despair can only increase her danger in the present one. Let us hope and cheer her to the last.

"Thou too, sail on, O ship of state
Sail on, O Union strong and great!
Humanity with all its tears
With all the hopes of future years
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what master laid thy keel,
What workman wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast and sail and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope."