

A BRIEF CHAPTER IN

THE LIFE OF GENERAL FRANKLIN PIERCE.

From the National Era of June 17.

MR. PIERCE AND THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT.

Mr. Pierce voted, when in Congress, to respect the right of petition as exercised by the Abolitionists. In 1837, when, after having served his State in the House of Representatives, he had taken his seat as a member of the United States Senate, he voted to receive, in the usual manner, a petition asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and sustained his vote by his voice. He took the same ground with Mr. Adams, as to the propriety of the abolition of slavery in the District, but declared that "he would give no vote which might be construed into a denial of the right of petition." That was a time when the influence of slavery was in the ascendant, when it was the fashion to toss back such petitions with contempt in the faces of those who presented them, and it required some courage in a politician of the Democratic school to confront and defy the imperious demand of the South, that all memorials and applications of this nature should be rigidly excluded from the notice of Congress. The right to ask for the extinction of slavery in the District of Columbia is now admitted; but Franklin Pierce, whatever be his opinions respecting the compromise, was one of the earliest to assert it.

New York Evening Post.

Mr. Pierce will be as much surprised as Mr. Orr of South Carolina to learn that he has ever stood opposed to any of the imperious demands of the South. Our friends of the *Evening Post* have derived their information from a very partial record, as we shall now show.

Mr. Pierce entered Congress in 1833. Monday, February 2d, 1835, the House of Representatives proceeded to the consideration of several petitions and memorials from sundry citizens of the State of New York, one of which was signed by eight hundred ladies, praying the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia, presented by Mr. Dickson. The war on the right of petition was at this time about commencing, but Mr. Dickson was allowed to speak in behalf of the passage of the petition; and, at the close of his remarks, he moved to refer the papers to a select committee.

Mr. Chinn did not mean "to disturb the deep sympathy or the tender mercies of the gentleman from New York;" "he only moved to lay the whole subject on the table," and upon that question he demanded the yeas and nays. The friends of the right of petition took the ground that petitions should not only be received, but considered and referred. Their opponents, while recognising it in form by receiving petitions, denied it in fact, by insisting that they should be laid upon the table at once, and without debate.

The question was taken upon Mr. Chinn's motion, and decided in the affirmative—yeas

117, nays 77. The South, aided by such men as Wise, Pickens, Peyton, Bynum, Pinckney, and Gilmer, with its Northern allies, voted *yea*; John Quincy Adams and his friends, voted *nay*. Among the affirmative votes is that of FRANKLIN PIERCE.—*Gales & Seaton's Register, Vol. xi, Part 1, p. 1,141.*

Wednesday, December 16, 1835, Mr. Fairfield presented a petition from 172 women, for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in this District, and moved it be laid upon the table. Mr. Slade moved that it be printed. The question was taken on the first motion, and decided in the affirmative—yeas 180, nays 31—the South, with its Northern allies, including FRANKLIN PIERCE, voting *yea*, John Q. Adams and his friends, *nay*.

Mr. Vanderpoel moved to lay the motion to print on the table; and this motion prevailed—yeas 169, nays 49—FRANKLIN PIERCE again voting in the affirmative, with the Slaveholders.—*Gales & Seaton's Register, Vol. xii, Part 2, p. 1,965.*

Friday, December 18, 1835, a protracted debate sprung up in the House, on the presentation of a petition by Mr. Jackson of Massachusetts, praying the abolition of slavery in the District.

The work of petitioning on the subject of slavery had now fairly commenced. Up to this time, the usual mode of getting rid of the petitions had been by laying them upon the table without debate. This prevented their consideration, and excluded all agitation. But a few Southern men of extreme views, incensed by what they regarded assaults upon the peculiar institution, or determined to open the door for sectional controversy, for the sake of embarrassing the Administration or promoting Discussion, determined upon a more violent course of procedure. The presentation of the petition by Mr. Jackson was used as an occasion. Mr. Hammond of South Carolina moved that it be rejected; Mr. Garland of Virginia, that it be laid upon the table. A rambling conversation followed, upon points of order. At last, for the purpose of getting at the question of rejection, Mr. Hammond and his friends agreed to have the petition considered, and Mr. Garland withdrew his motion to lay upon the table. It was immediately renewed by Mr. Beardsley of New York. The House became again perplexed with points of order, until Mr. Thomas of Maryland, to relieve the members who had voted for consideration from their difficulties, moved to reconsider the motion by which

the House had agreed to consider the petition. A most exciting debate followed. Some of the Southern members avowed that they desired agitation, for the purpose of being able to vindicate their institutions; some deprecated agitation; all denounced it; and they were sustained by the Northern allies of the Slave Power, who abused the anti-slavery men, and were willing to go all lengths for the suppression of agitation, so that they might be spared the dangerous task of an undisguised denial of the right of petition. For himself, Mr. Beardsley said, he was ready to give a direct vote upon the petition, a vote that should mark the opinion of the House upon the character of such petitions, by saying affirmatively that they would not consider it. "If that would meet the views of honorable gentlemen, he was willing to modify his motion to lay on the table, and to move that the House would not consider the petition, or would reject its prayer; although laying it on the table, he thought, was equivalent to either of the modifications indicated."

Mr. Mason of Virginia hoped that the gentleman from New York would so modify his motion that they could have a direct vote on rejecting the petition. "If the House is prepared to decide upon the principle of the petition, why not reject it at once? To refer the petition is an act of supererogation, which can do no good, and will do much mischief." He hoped the House would reconsider, and then at once refuse to consider the petition, or reject it.

FRANKLIN PIERCE hoped the motion to reconsider would be withdrawn, and that Mr. Beardsley would so far modify his motion "as to meet the approbation of all who are most sensitive upon this agitating question;" "and he rose to add his request to the suggestion made by his friend from Virginia," [Mr. Mason.] He was anxious for a direct vote upon the question; he could not bear that any imputation should rest upon the North in consequence of the misguided and fanatical zeal of a few—comparatively few," &c.

The motion to reconsider was laid upon the table—yeas 119, nays 72.

Mr. Beardsley persisting in his motion to lay the petition on the table, so as to get rid of debate and excitement, the question was taken, and decided in the negative—yeas 95, nays 121. Those who voted *yea* were the conservative men of the South, and their Northern allies: those who voted *nay* were the extreme men of the South, who wished to force an undisguised denial of the right of petition, and the true friends of the right of petition, who were intent upon putting an end to the policy by which that right had been practically nullified, while technically recognised. As might have been expected, John Quincy Adams voted *nay*, and FRANKLIN PIERCE, *yea*.

The motion to lay upon the table having failed, Mr. Hammond moved that said petition be, and the same is hereby, rejected. The debate then proceeded with great animation,

and during its progress, the fact was brought to the notice of the House that a similar petition, presented that very day by Mr. Briggs of Massachusetts, had through inadvertence been referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia. Mr. Patton moved to reconsider this vote; and then the whole subject went over till the following Monday, the House adjourning till that day.

Monday, December 21st, it was again taken up, and after debate, the majority being unable to agree upon any more summary mode of proceeding, a motion to lay upon the table the petition, and all motions in relation to it, prevailed—yeas 140, nays 76—the South generally and its Northern allies, including FRANKLIN PIERCE, voting *yea*, John Quincy Adams and his friends, with a few Southerners hostile to any kind of indirection, voting *nay*.

Mr. Owens had previously sent to the Chair the following resolutions:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the question of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia ought not to be entertained by Congress:

"That in case any petition praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia be hereafter presented, it is the deliberate opinion of this House that the same ought to be laid upon the table without reading."

He now moved that the rules be suspended, to enable him to offer these resolutions. The motion was lost—yeas 100, nays 115—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting with the Slaveholders, *yea*, John Quincy Adams and his friends, *nay*.

Mr. Patton of Virginia called up his motion to reconsider the motion by which a petition for the abolition of slavery in the District had been referred; and thereupon a fierce debate arose on the general question of slavery; (occupying three days,) in the course of which the Northern view of the subject was presented at length and with great ability by Wm. Slade.

The question of reconsideration was decided on the 23d in the affirmative, yeas 148, nays 61—the South and its Northern allies, with FRANKLIN PIERCE, voting *yea*, and JOHN QUINCY ADAMS and his friends *nay*.

The petition and motion to commit were then summarily laid upon the table, yeas 144, nays 67—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting, as before, *nay*, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS *yea*.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 2, from p. 1,966 to 2,077.

February 15, 1836, Mr. Pierce obtained leave to make a personal explanation. He read from an Abolition paper an article making severe strictures upon his speech of a former day, in which he had said that not one in five hundred of his constituents was in favor of the abolition of slavery in the District. He denounced the paper as "insignificant and odious," denounced the anti-slavery movement, and undertook to discredit all the petitions on the subject of slavery, whether from his own State or others.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 2, p. 2,528.

February 8, 1836, the resolution of Mr.

Pinckney was adopted, for raising a select committee, to which were referred all papers relating to the subject of slavery, and which was instructed to report that Congress has no constitutional power to interfere in any way with the institution of slavery in the States, and ought not to interfere in any way with slavery in the District of Columbia. The resolution was divided, and FRANKLIN PIERCE voted in the affirmative on every part of the instructions.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 2, p. 2,502.

February 23, 1836, Mr. Adams presented a petition for the abolition of slavery in the District, and moved its reference to the select committee on the subject. Mr. Shepherd objected to its reception; Mr. Davis moved to lay that preliminary question on the table; and his motion prevailed—yeas 120, nays 86—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting *yea*, with the South, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS and his friends *nay*. The effect of the motion was to lay the question of reception on table, thereby virtually refusing to entertain the petition.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 3, p. 2,007.

May 18, 1836, Mr. Pinckney, from the select committee on the subject, made a report concerning the disposition of papers relating to the question of slavery, concluding with the following resolutions:

“*Resolved*, That Congress possesses no constitutional authority to interfere in any way with the institution of slavery in any of the States of this Confederacy.

“*Resolved*, That Congress ought not to interfere in any way with slavery in the District of Columbia.

“And whereas it is extremely important and desirable that the agitation of this subject should be finally arrested, for the purpose of restoring tranquility to the public mind, your committee respectfully recommend the adoption of the following additional resolution, viz:

“*Resolved*. That all petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers, relating in any way, or to any extent whatsoever, to the subject of slavery or the abolition of slavery, shall, without being either printed or referred, be laid upon the table, and that no further action shall be had thereon.”—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 3, p. 3,758.

Various motions were made, and points of order raised, and the subject went over to the next day, when a hot discussion took place, a few extreme men from the South objecting to the resolutions, because they did not assert explicitly the absence of constitutional power in Congress to abolish slavery in the District. The morning hour expired before any question was taken; and the subject did not again come up till the 25th, when, after a long speech from a Southern member, the gag was applied in the shape of the previous question, Mr. Adams struggling in vain to be heard, and the main question was ordered to be put, yeas 109, nays 89—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting with the South. Points of order were raised by the friends of free discussion, but they were overruled by the Chair, and, on an appeal, his decision was sustained by the usual vote—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting in the affirmative.

The first resolution was generally agreed to; the second, by a vote of 132 to 45; the third, by a vote of 117 to 68—FRANKLIN PIERCE in both cases voting *yea*, with the South and its allies, and Mr. Adams and his friends, *nay*. A few extreme Southern men refused to vote, for the reason assigned above.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 4, pp. 4,021, 4,054.

This was the first gag law on the subject of petitions adopted in Congress; Mr. PIERCE was a member of the select committee that prepared and reported it; and he gave his influence and votes for it in all its stages, until it was adopted by the House: and in a debate in the Senate, December, 1837, he publicly avowed that he had concurred fully in the sentiments of Mr. Pinckney's report, and further examination had confirmed him in his opinion.—*Congressional Globe*, Volume vi, page 37. The report contained a long and elaborate argument against the abolition of slavery in the District, (on the grounds that it would be a violation of good faith, would endanger the interests of Maryland and Virginia, would be a blow aimed at the institution of slavery in the South;) and also an argument against emancipation, even by the States, as fraught with the most mischievous consequences.—*Appendix to Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xii, Part 4, p. 104. In all this, Mr. Pierce declared his entire concurrence.

December 26, 1836, Mr. ADAMS presented a petition from citizens of Pennsylvania, for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. In reply to a question by Mr. Pickens, the Speaker said that the rule adopted at the last session, for the disposition of all such petitions, expired with the session. A motion was immediately made to lay it upon the table, and it prevailed—yeas 116, nays 36—FRANKLIN PIERCE among the yeas, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS among the nays.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xiii, Part 1, p. 1,156.

January 9, 1837, Mr. Adams presented a similar petition; Mr. Glascock of Georgia objected to its reception; Mr. Parks moved to lay the question of reception on the table, and this motion prevailed—yeas 130, nays 69. We do not find the names recorded, but it is fair to presume that Mr. Pierce voted in the affirmative, from the fact that he had voted affirmatively on an identical motion made by Mr. Davis on the preliminary question in relation to the reception of a petition presented by Mr. Adams, February 3, 1836.

The Speaker said that the effect of this motion was to arrest the action of the House on the petition, and not to lay it upon the table. In other words, the House refused to receive it.—*Gales & Seaton's Register*, Vol. xiii, Part 1, p. 1,316.

The same day, Mr. Adams presented another Anti-Slavery petition, and the question was put directly on its reception. The Northern allies of the Slave Power were not prepared to deny in this gross manner the right of petition,

though they had been constantly violating it in fact, and they voted with Mr. Adams and his friends to receive it—the name of FRANKLIN PIERCE being recorded for the first time on the same side with Mr. Adams's. The petition having been received, it was laid upon the table without debate or consideration—*yeas* 156, *nays* 50—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting with the *yeas*, John Quincy Adams with the *nays*.—*Gales & Seaton's Register, Vol. xiii, Part 1, p. 1,320.*

January 16, 1837, several petitions for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District were presented; the question of reception was raised in every case, and laid upon the table—the Speaker deciding that the effect of the proceeding was to suspend all action, and leave the petition exactly where it was. We have no record of the yeas and nays in these cases; but Mr. Pierce doubtless voted as he had previously done.

January 18, 1837, the House, under the screw of the previous question, adopted, on motion of Mr. Hawes of Kentucky, the gag rule of the last session, reported by the select committee of which Mr. Pierce was a member, and in the report of which he entirely concurred. It was adopted by a similar vote to that given for it at the last session.—*Gales & Seaton's Register, Vol. xiii, Part 2, p. 1,412.*

February 6, 1837, Mr. Adams rose, and said he held in his hand a paper, on which, before it was presented, he desired to have the decision of the Speaker. It was a petition from twenty-two persons declaring themselves to be slaves. He wished to know whether the Speaker considered such a petition as coming within the rules of the House.

The reader of the debates in Congress, when Mr. Adams was struggling against fearful odds for the maintenance of the right of petition, will recollect what then took place. The House was shaken as with a tempest. Although Mr. Adams had not presented the petition, retaining it in his possession, declining even to send it to the Speaker's chair till he had obtained the decision of the Speaker as to whether, if presented, it would come within the rule, the Slaveholding members, blinded by their indignation, gave way to excesses of passion, and introduced one resolution after another, with a view to inflict punishment on the venerable man for an act he had not committed. Several days were spent in this insensate attempt to crush the defender of the right of petition, and it was with extreme difficulty he obtained the floor to correct the gross misrepresentations of his adversaries and vindicate his conduct.

At last, they agreed to urge the following resolution, submitted by Mr. Patton of Virginia:

“*Resolved*, That any member who shall hereafter present to the House any petition from the slaves of this Union, ought to be considered as regardless of the feelings of the House, the rights of the Southern States, and unfriendly to the Union.

“That the Hon. John Quincy Adams having solemnly disclaimed all design of doing anything disre-

spectful to the House, in the inquiry he made of the Speaker as to the petition purporting to be from slaves, and having avowed his intention not hereafter to present the petition to the House, being of opinion that it ought not to be presented: therefore all further proceedings in regard to his conduct do now cease.”

It was moved to lay the whole subject on the table, but Mr. Adams and his friends keenly felt that, after all the vindictive assaults upon him, without opportunity having been allowed him for defence, this would be a disposition of the subject highly unjust. They voted against the motion, as did the Southern members, who were anxious to have an expression of opinion on the transaction; the motion failed—but Mr. PIERCE *did not vote at all*. He would not vote to give Mr. Adams a chance to be heard; he would not vote against any of his Southern friends.

February 9, the subject being still under discussion, the motion to get rid of the subject by laying it on the table was again made, and with a similar result—Mr. PIERCE still declining to vote.

The question was then taken on the first of Mr. Patton's resolutions, and decided in the negative—*yeas* 92, *nays* 105—Mr. PIERCE not voting. The second resolution was also lost—*yeas* 21, *nays* 137—Mr. PIERCE still not voting.

Several Southern members voted against the first resolution of Mr. Patton, or refused to vote for it, inasmuch as the petition referred to was for the expulsion of Mr. Adams, not for the abolition of Slavery, and they were also unwilling to define in advance the kind of punishment a member deserved who should present an Anti-Slavery petition from slaves. Mr. PIERCE, we presume, agreed with these; for on the 11th, we find him moving to reconsider the vote by which that resolution had been rejected—the purpose being to modify it. It was reconsidered, *yeas* 145, *nays* 48, and then modified, so as to read—

“*Resolved*, That slaves do not possess the right of petition secured to the People of the United States by the Constitution.”

After a great deal more discussion and denunciation, in the course of which Mr. Adams was threatened by Waddy Thompson with an indictment by the Grand Jury of the District of Columbia, his adversaries, failing in their attempt to censure him, settled down upon the following resolutions:

“An inquiry having been made by an honorable member from Massachusetts, whether a paper which he held in his hand, purporting to be a petition from certain slaves, and declaring themselves slaves, came within the order of the House of the 18th of January, and the said paper not having been received by the Speaker, he stated that in a case so extraordinary and novel, he would take the advice and consent of the House:

“*Resolved*, That this House cannot receive the said petition without disregarding its own dignity, the rights of a large class of citizens of the South and West, and the Constitution of the United States.

“*Resolved*, That slaves do not possess the right of

petition secured to the People of the United States by the Constitution."

The first resolution was passed—yeas 160, nays 38; the second also—yeas 162, nays 18—FRANKLIN PIERCE in both instances voting *yea*, John Quincy Adams, *nay*!—*Gales & Seaton's Register, Vol. xiii, Part 2, pp. 1,587 to 1,734.*

We have completed the record of Mr. PIERCE in the House. It demonstrates that during the time he held a seat in the House of Representatives, he was an earnest, thorough, consistent opponent of Anti-Slavery agitation and Anti-Slavery discussion; that he was constantly arrayed against Mr. Adams, the illustrious champion of the right of petition; that, while recognising the technical right of petition, he uniformly voted virtually to abrogate it; that when the Slaveholders attempted to crush Mr. Adams, and with him the hope of free discussion in the House, he would not vote so as to secure that venerable man a fair hearing; in a word, that he was the unwavering ally and supporter of the Slaveholding Interest.

In the year 1837, Mr. Pierce became a member of the United States Senate. Following him thither, we shall find that he continued to pursue the same line of policy in relation to the Slavery Question. He took his stand by the side of Mr. Calhoun, and stood by him in his efforts to suppress Anti-Slavery agitation and discussion.

December 18, 1837, Mr. Wall presented a petition from Anti-Slavery ladies in New Jersey, praying for the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, and moved to lay it on the table. Mr. Hubbard moved to lay that motion on the table. Mr. Clay was in favor of a reference, and a report against the prayer of the petition, with a view to quieting excitement. Mr. Calhoun wished by summary measures to meet the question at once. As the action of Mr. PIERCE in this case has been the subject of misapprehension with our friends of the *Evening Post*, we shall fully explain it. His whole course in the House had proved him an unrelenting opponent of Anti-Slavery discussions and petitions; and he had uniformly sustained all gag-resolutions on the subject. But while violating the right of petition in effect, he had been politic enough to respect it in *form*. This course he continued in the Senate. On this occasion he was in favor of receiving the petition, and then of getting rid of it in any way best calculated to defeat its object and prevent agitation. He did not wish to give the Abolitionists a chance "to make up a false issue on the right of petition." In another place he said—"All we demand is, that since we are to be the first to feel the effects of Abolition ascendancy at home, should it ever be acquired, (which, by the way, I by no means anticipate,) we may meet the question unembarrassed, and not be driven by any course here upon a collateral issue, such as the right of petition or any other." This is a key to the policy of Mr. PIERCE. Mr. Rives was in

favor of rejecting the petition at once—Mr. Hubbard, of laying the question of reception on the table—Mr. PIERCE, of laying the petition on the table. The avowed object of each was to stamp the petitions with disapprobation, to prevent all debate and consideration, to get rid of them as summarily as possible, every one meanwhile declaring his respect for the right of petition.

"When petitions of this character should be received," he said, "he would be prepared to act upon them without delay, to reject the prayer of the petitions, to lay them upon the table, or give them any other direction that might be thought best calculated to silence the agitators, and tranquillize the public mind. As a member of the Select Committee of the other House, of which Mr. Pinckney of South Carolina was chairman, he had fully concurred in the sentiments of the report presented by that gentleman at the first session of the twenty-fourth Congress; and further examination and reflection had only served to confirm him in the opinion he at that time entertained; but mad and fanatical as he regarded the schemes of the Abolitionists, and deeply as he deplored the consequences of their course upon all sections of the Union, he could give no vote that might be construed into a denial of the right of petition, and thus enable them to change their position, and make up a false issue before the country."

He had voted once in the House to lay upon the table the motion to receive an Anti-Slavery petition; but so severely had he been handled for this, that he had become more scrupulous as to forms, and now aimed to reach the same object by laying petitions on the table without debate, printing, or consideration.

And this is the man whom the *New York Evening Post* represents as having stood with John Quincy Adams by the right of petition!

December 27, 1837, Mr. Calhoun brought forward his celebrated resolutions on the subject of Slavery in the District, Territories, and States, designed avowedly to suppress the discussion of all questions of Slavery.

Several amendments were moved to the first four of these resolutions, intended to modify their phraseology so as to remove any implication against free discussion, but they were firmly resisted by Mr. Calhoun and his friends, and in every case defeated—FRANKLIN PIERCE uniformly voting with him. Mr. Morris, of Ohio, for example, moved to strike out from the second resolution the words, "moral and religious," with a view of exempting from denunciation the moral and religious discussion of Slavery; and this seemed so reasonable, that even Mr. Buchanan recorded his name in favor of it; but it was lost—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting *nay* with Mr. Calhoun.

Mr. Morris moved, also, an amendment to the third resolution, declaring the freedom of speech and of the press, on all subjects, indis-

putable, and under the supervision only of the States in which such freedom was exercised; but this was rejected, we believe, by the same vote.

The first four resolutions, with some slight modification, were then adopted—FRANKLIN PIERCE recording his vote in favor of every one of them.

When the fifth resolution came up, asserting substantially that efforts by the People of the States or the States themselves to procure the abolition of slavery in the District or Territories, were "direct and dangerous attacks on the institutions of the Slaveholding States," though all the States are made responsible by the Constitution and Congress for Slavery in the District and Territories, Mr. PIERCE took occasion to define his position. This resolution, he said, was the ground on which this contest was to be determined; "with, perhaps, some modification, would present the true issue here and to the country—an issue which would raise, not a mere question of expediency, but one of a much higher character, in which the public faith is directly involved." He then proceeded to sustain the resolution in its length and breadth, and to vindicate the whole series as offered by Mr. Calhoun, against the assaults made upon them.

But, while Mr. Pierce was anxious to put through all these resolutions, Mr. Clay and other Slaveholding Senators thought the fifth and sixth too sweeping and unguarded; and he moved a substitute, directed only against *interference* by the citizens of one State with the institutions of another; containing no declaration that attempts to bring about the abolition of slavery here "were a direct and dangerous attack upon the institutions of all the Slaveholding States," but recognising, in express terms, the duty of Congress to receive and respectfully treat all petitions, in decorous language, against slavery in the District. This substitute was adopted, with some slight modification—19 to 18—Mr. BUCHANAN and Mr. CLAY voting *yea*, Mr. CALHOUN and Mr. PIERCE, *nay*.

Subsequently, the substitute was divided, and its various parts amended and adopted successively—Mr. CALHOUN and Mr. PIERCE generally voting together.

On motion of Mr. Preston of South Carolina, the sixth resolution of Mr. Calhoun was laid upon the table, on the ground that this branch of the subject would be more appropriately discussed in connection with the resolutions introduced by him for the annexation of Texas to the Union. The vote stood 35 to 9—this time Mr. PIERCE voting with the great majority against Mr. Calhoun.*

January 3, 1838, two petitions were presented—one against the annexation of Texas and

* For a full report of the proceedings on these resolutions, the reader is referred to the Congressional Globe and Appendix, 25th Congress, second session, vol. vi, from p. 55 to p. 80 of the Globe, and p. 59 to p. 108 of the Appendix.

the admission of any new State tolerating slavery; the other for the abolition of the inter-State slave trade. The motion to receive was laid upon the table—Mr. PIERCE voting *nay*, in accordance with his policy, which was, to receive all such petitions, and lay them on the table *instantly*.—*Congressional Globe*, 1838-'39, p. 94.

January 9th, 1838, Mr. Prentice presented resolutions of the Legislature of Vermont, against the annexation of Texas, against slavery in the District, and Atherton's gag; and he moved that they be laid upon the table and be printed. The first part of the motion prevailed; and Mr. Lumpkin then moved to lay upon the table the motion to print. This was carried, and a sovereign State was thus insulted by the following vote—*yeas* 29, *nays* 8—FRANKLIN PIERCE voting, *yea*.—*Congressional Globe*, 1838-'39, p. 110.

February 6, 1838, Mr. Morris presented a resolution directing the Committee on the Judiciary to inquire into certain matters pertaining to the institution of slavery in the States and Territories, and report thereon to the Senate. Some of the Slaveholding members, with their Northern allies, manifested a desire to refuse its reception, but the rules of the Senate forbade this. Mr. Calhoun's resolutions, in December, had been respectfully received, laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed. The resolution of Mr. Morris was at last laid upon the table; but, seeing the hostile disposition of the Senate, he withdrew his motion to print.

The Friday following, the resolution was called up, and Mr. Morris expressed a desire to address the Senate; but Mr. Norvell moved to lay the question of its consideration on the table. Mr. Buchanan requested him to withdraw it. Nobody would misapprehend his position on this subject of abolition, but he was in favor of fair play. Mr. Clay had been permitted to address the Senate at length the day before, on presenting a memorial against abolition, and he thought the Senator from Ohio had a right to be heard in reply. After that, they could readily dispose of the subject.

This was certainly a fair proposition, and creditable to Mr. Buchanan, but Norvell persisted in his motion; and the Senate, 22 to 20, voted to lay the question of consideration on the table; thus applying the gag to Mr. Morris, and virtually denying free speech to Ohio, while it recognised it in Kentucky. Mr. Pierce voted *yea*, together with Mr. Calhoun and his special friends, against Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Clay, and other advocates of "fair play."

We have presented the record of Mr. Pierce as a Representative and a Senator in Congress. During his two terms in the House, and until he resigned his seat in the Senate, he was always true to the Slave Power, and gave no vote which subjected him to its displeasure or suspicion.

It may be said that others in those days

voted as he did, who since then have shown their devotion to Freedom. True, but he has continued unchanged. When John P. Hale, his intimate friend for twenty years, faithful to his convictions of right, denounced the annexation of Texas, in defiance of the edicts of his Party, Mr. PIERCE, trampling under foot his long-standing friendship, turned upon the independent representative, followed on his track with relentless hostility, utterly proscribed him, and compelled the Democratic press of his State to eat its own words on that question. From that time he has been the leader of the Hunker Democracy of New Hampshire; and when Mr. Atwood, the regular nominee of the Democratic Party, frankly avowed his disapprobation of the Fugitive Slave Law, Mr. Pierce attempted, first to browbeat him into a retraction of his honest words, and then led on the Party in the work of making a new nomination, of ascertained devotion to the Slaveholding Interest.

On a public occasion in New Hampshire, after the passage of the Adjustment measures by Congress, he avowed his entire approbation of them; and the newspapers recorded the high praise awarded by him to Mr. Webster for his 7th of March speech.

In a letter to Major Lally, dated May 27, a few days before the late Convention, which was doubtless designed to be used in that body, he insisted that, for the sake of giving protection and strength to the men who in New Hampshire had fought the battle for the Fugitive Law and Compromise, the Democracy of the nation ought to endorse these measures. This letter was read at the Ratification Meeting in this place, by Mr. Ritchie, as follows:

“TREMONT HOUSE, BOSTON, *May 27, 1852.*

* * * * *

“I intended to speak to you more fully upon the subject of the Compromise Measures than I had an opportunity to do. The importance of the action of the Convention upon this question cannot be over-estimated. I believe there will be no disposition on the part of the South to press resolutions unnecessarily offensive to the sentiments of the North. But can we say as much on our side? Will the North come cheerfully up to the mark of constitutional right? If not, a breach in our party is inevitable. The matter should be met at the threshold, because it rises above party, and looks to the very existence of the Confederacy. The sentiment of no one State is to be regarded upon this subject; but having fought the battle in New Hampshire upon the Fugitive Slave Law, and upon what we believed to be the ground of constitutional right, we should of course desire the approval of the Democracy of the country. What I wish to say to you is this: If the Compromise Measures are not to be substantially and firmly maintained, the plain rights secured by the Constitution will be trampled in the dust. What difference can it make to you or me, whether the outrage shall seem to fall on South Carolina, or Maine, or New Hampshire? Are not the rights of each equally dear to us all? I will never yield to a craven spirit, that, from considerations of policy, would endanger the Union. Entertaining these views, the action of the Convention must, in my judgment, be vital. If we of the North who have stood by the constitutional rights of the South are to be abandoned to any time-serving pol-

icy, the hopes of Democracy and the Union must sink together. As I told you, my name will not be before the Convention; but I cannot help feeling that what is there to be done will be important beyond men and parties—transcendently important to the hopes of Democratic progress and civil liberty.

* * * * *

“Your friend, FRANK. PIERCE.”

We should like to see what was omitted!

The action of the Convention was regarded by him as vital—a very different opinion from that entertained by the *Evening Post*. The course which he so anxiously desired, and pronounced “vital,” was adopted by the Convention, and yet the *Post* strives to separate him from this policy, to exempt him from all responsibility for it, and then it gives him support, while repudiating the platform—that is, advocates his election, and repudiates his Principles!

Finally, the most ultra of the Slavery papers cordially sanction his nomination, as above all sectional suspicion. The *Charleston Mercury* pledges him the vote of South Carolina, ten to one. The *Richmond (Va) Examiner*, a leading Democratic journal, which goes for slavery in the abstract, says of him:

“No fact is better known about Mr. Pierce, than that he has ever held correct views of the sectional questions; that he is a steady opponent of Northern fanaticism; and that both in and out of the Senate he has always occupied a position satisfactory to Southern men. He is one of those Northern Democrats who have always stood by the Constitution in dealing with slavery, true to the right in storm and sunshine, in evil and good repute, careless of popular favor, scornful of desertion, and inflexible in their own resolve,

————— “Unmov’d,
Unshaken, unshock’d, unterrified.”

Then follows Mr. Orr of South Carolina, in a speech in the House, immediately after the nomination, in which he holds the following language:

“But other questions have arisen since his Congressional career opened, of the most delicate texture and gravest importance, which he has met as a patriot and a statesman. His voice was among the first heard on the floor of Congress, in opposition to the fanatical schemes of the Abolitionists, when that question—so full of danger and dissension—was introduced here. He proved himself eminently conservative upon that issue, and proclaimed boldly for maintaining the constitutional rights of the South; his action was conformable to the creed you adopted last week at Baltimore, long before that creed was reduced to form and shape on paper. Your resolution there is, that Congress has no power under the Constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several States, and that such States are the sole and proper judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs, not prohibited by the Constitution; and that all efforts of the Abolitionists, or others, made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery, or to take incipient steps in relation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences, and that all such efforts have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people, and endanger the stability and permanency of the Union, and ought not to be countenanced by any friend of our political institutions. If there should be one so cruel and ungenerous as to question his fidelity to the constitutional rights of my section—and I do not ask more than

that from any man—let him recur to his speech in reply to Mr. Slade, of Vermont, on the Abolition question. To the constitutional rights of the South he has been faithful among the faithless; when others have been swept off by the wild waves of fanaticism, and turned their hearts and hands against the just rights of their Southern brethren, he—through all the changes and vicissitudes of fortune—has stood as firm as his native granite hills, resolved that the Constitution alone should be the polar star of his political hopes and prospects. And although he was saddened by seeing, for a brief season, that cloud of fanaticism which hovered over the entire North, obscure the sun of the republican faith even of New Hampshire, he never quailed in the general gloom, but trusted firmly that returning reason and justice would dispel its murky folds, and that it would again shine forth in all its brightness. Nor was he disappointed; for Abolition and its allies there were swept off 'like autumn leaves before the wintry blast.'

"Let me, then, conjure Southern men of the Opposition to pause, and consider long and well before they enlist under doubtful colors to wage a war against one so true, so faithful, so bold, so fearless, as Franklin Pierce has proved himself to be in upholding the Constitution. How many others fell when the tempter came! When State after State deserted, and embraced Abolitionism and Free-Soilism, and madness ruled the hour, he calmly surveyed the impending ruin, sounded the alarm, and rallied his native State on the side of reason and justice. Be not ungrateful to one who stood by you when the issue was far more momentous than a party triumph or defeat. It would be a sin not of the smallest grade. If your nominee has proved, and still proves, his devotion to the Constitution, support him if your principles demand it; but never strike down a true friend to serve a faithless enemy."

In the face of such a record, of such support, and such testimony, what do we see? The New York *Evening Post* electioneering for him, ex-Senator Dix, and ex-Free-Soiler John Van Buren, and ex-Abolitionist Henry B. Stanton, with a crowd of other Free Soil Democrats, praising and advocating the nomination as loudly as they praised and advocated the nomination of Martin Van Buren in 1848, made on Principles and for Purposes directly opposed to those on which the nomination of Mr. Pierce is now made!

Once more we appeal to our Free Soil Democratic friends not committed to the nomination. You now know the antecedents of the candidate and his present position. On the paramount question he is and always has been directly and vitally opposed to you. You know the platform—no sophistry can explain away the fact that it was as fairly adopted as any

platform ever was by a political Convention. You know that Mr. Pierce insisted upon the adoption of the offensive features which characterize it; that he fully represents it; that his success will be the ratification of that platform by the Democracy of the United States. It contains no word in favor of Land Reform, no word in favor of placing the Government of the United States, in its foreign relations and negotiations, on the side of the Democratic Principle in Europe—no word in favor of just protection to the river and lake commerce of the West, a commerce more valuable than all our foreign trade; but, with a single exception, it refers to old issues, which either have been settled, or no longer constitute questions between the two parties; and the exception—the only new article in the platform—is adverse to all your convictions, abhorrent to all your sympathies.

On what principle, in what way, by what device of reason or sophistry, can you justify to yourselves or to others the support of such a platform, such a nomination? Is a man bound to go with his party, right or wrong? Can he not refuse, openly and manfully, to support it when it does wrong, when it calls upon him to vote on a wrong issue, and go with it when it does right? We care nothing about *third parties*: but in certain crises, movements by party men, independently of their party or in opposition to it, are demanded by conscience, consistency, true manhood, the best interests of the country. And at such times personal hazards must be braved. The man must make up his mind to die, *politically*, rather than die, *morally*.

Let him once conceive this high resolve, and he is safe. In the long run, he will by this noble daring best promote his own political interests; but, in any event, he saves his honor, his self-respect, his position in the judgment of all whose good opinion is worth having. In more senses than one is it true, that he who would save his life shall lose it; and he who is willing to lose his life, shall save it. We have in our eye two striking illustrations of this truth, afforded by the case of one public man who found his life in that which threatened his destruction; and another distinguished and eloquent gentleman, who in the attempt to save his life, lost it—shall it be forever?