

THE ABOLITIONIST ATTACK!

ABOLITIONISTS AGAINST GENERAL PIERCE.

The abolitionists are bitterly opposed to the election of Franklin Pierce. One cause of this bitter opposition may be found in the elevated and patriotic position he has always maintained, and the desire he has always manifested to keep alive kindly feelings between the two sections of the confederacy. They who seek other causes will find them in the position of his competitor—in the auspices under which General Scott was brought before the country, and in the character of those who, at Baltimore, forced him upon the whig party as its candidate for the presidency.

As soon as General Pierce's nomination was made, the National Era, the abolition newspaper in Washington, assailed him, and inflamed the anti-slavery sentiment against him because he was devoted to the constitution, and has defended the rights guaranteed by that sacred instrument. It examined his public acts and scrutinized his votes in Congress, and held him up as a friend of the South, in order to make him odious to the abolition party of the North. Since the nomination of General Scott, the whig committee stationed in Washington to conduct the canvass has adopted the article of the National Era, and has published vast numbers of it in pamphlet form, and sent them to the north, in order to consolidate the abolition forces and perfect the alliance between them and the whig party, and thus force a sectional canvass upon the country, regardless of the danger it will bring to the confederacy.

A true copy of the article from the National Era will be found published below. The whigs rely on it to rally the abolitionists of every shade to the support of General Scott, and thereby absorb the friends and followers of James G. Birney and Wendall Phillips into the bosom of the whig party, which is now under the leadership of Wm.

H. Seward, who will be the controlling spirit of the government should General Scott be elected. The democratic party has always opposed sectional agitation, and the formation of parties based on local feelings or sectional prejudices. It has always known that the Union could only be preserved by maintaining the rights of the States and by respecting their domestic institutions. It has no love for a confederacy of hostile States held together by the power of a central authority, but it is devoted to the confederacy our fathers formed of friendly States, looking forward with fraternal feelings to the same destiny, and bound together by a common language; a common religion; and a common ancestry, and by the hopes of the future and the memories, the trials, and the triumphs of the past.

General Pierce is thoroughly imbued with democratic principles, and his heart responds warmly to democratic feelings. There is nothing narrow nor sectional in his character. No matter in what aspect it is viewed, it is liberal, enlarged, and national. The necessity of his very nature forced him to discountenance the wicked purposes of fanaticism, and repel their assaults on the principles of the constitution and the integrity of the Union.

Franklin Pierce, from his enlarged and national feelings, always deprecated agitation; and he viewed with deep grief the fearful strife which has convulsed the country for the last four years. He watched with painful solicitude every attempt to compose our differences; and when the compromise was finally agreed on, he was among the first to support it against the assaults of those who opposed it in obedience to the commands of a higher law than the constitution. Everywhere in the North the whig and abolition parties have assailed the compromise and attempted to use the

fugitive slave law to destroy the northern democrats. It was the feelings growing out of that attempt which dictated the following passage in General Pierce's letter to Major Lally, written before he thought of being a candidate for the Presidency.

"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 policy, the hopes of democracy and of the Union must sink together."

General Pierce was not an aspirant for the presidency. His name was not presented by a section, in obedience to the dictates of a sectional policy. The principles announced by the convention which nominated him were not shaped to reconcile any portion of the democratic party or of the country to his nomination. They were not the result of a bargain, and made to accomplish a particular object. They were the sentiments which the democratic party had all along maintained and defended, and they were proclaimed so that the people might vote with a full knowledge of the views and purposes of the democratic party. General Pierce did not, like General Scott, accept the platform as a condition annexed to his nomination. In his letter of acceptance he says, "I ACCEPT THE NOMINATION UPON THE PLATFORM ADOPTED BY THE CONVENTION, NOT BECAUSE THIS IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A CANDIDATE, BUT BECAUSE THE PRINCIPLES IT EMBRACES COMMAND THE APPROBATION OF MY JUDGMENT, AND WITH THEM, I BELIEVE

I CAN SAFELY SAY, THERE HAS BEEN NO WORD NOR ACT OF MY LIFE IN CONFLICT."

The position of General Scott no more than that of General Pierce gives room for surprise at the hostility which the abolition party manifested so promptly towards the democratic candidate. General Scott comes before the country under the auspices of Wm. H. Seward, of New York, who has labored unceasingly for the control of the abolition party, who has denounced the compromise, and who has encouraged forcible resistance to it by ostentatiously extending hospitality, and by giving a sumptuous entertainment to a mob of whites and blacks who had beaten down and overcome the officers of the law when in the discharge of their duty. General Scott has permitted his name, and the natural feelings caused by his military services, to be prostituted to the purposes of the abolitionists, and used by them to break down and destroy Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Webster, because they would not commit perjury by a wilful violation of their oaths to execute the laws, in obedience to the requirements of a higher law as expounded by Mr. Wm. H. Seward. The whig platform was insisted on not because it was in accordance with the sentiments of the whig party. The united whig vote of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio opposed its adoption; and it is even now repudiated and denounced by the controlling element of the northern whig party. It was adopted because the attitude of General Scott was so ominous and full of danger that the southern delegates were compelled to insist upon some promise of security. A portion of the friends of General Scott yielded to it, not because it expressed their opinions, but because they could not procure the nomination of their favorite without some shallow and deceptive engagement which the southern delegates might plead before their constituents to excuse them for agreeing to a perilous nomination. Even after this contrivance, arrangement, or understanding, as one of the parties to it pronounced it to be, in the face of the convention, the nomination of General Scott had no one feature of nationality. It was purely and entirely sectional, and marred all over with the worst features of sectionalism. He went into the convention with but one vote from the entire South. This is an ominous fact. How did it occur? The southern delegates saw that he was presented under the auspices of the worst enemies of the South. Why did such men present Gen. Scott? Because they wished to destroy Mr. Fillmore, for the reason that he acquiesced in the

compromise, and refused to falsify his oath to execute the laws of the land. This is a fact which no man can question; and it proves conclusively that the whig platform is a device to entrap—a flimsy and unsubstantial deception. But, in lieu of further words, we present—

THE ABOLITIONIST ATTACK ON FRANKLIN PIERCE.

From the National Era.

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 2, 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 yeas. 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 mo-

tion, and decided in the affirmative—yeas, 147; 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, *nay*. Among the affirmative votes is that of Franklin Pierce.*

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 Quincy 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.†

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

*Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xi, part 1, p. 1141.

†Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xii, part 2, p. 1965.

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 William 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*.*

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.†

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.‡

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 the table, thereby virtually refusing to entertain the petition.§

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

* Gales & Seaton's Register, vol. xii, Part 2, from p. 1966 to 2077.

† Gales & Seaton's Register, vol. xii, Part 2, p. 2528.

‡ Gales & Seaton's Register, vol. xii, part 2, p. 2502.

§ Gales & Seaton's Register, vol. xii, part 3, p. 2007.

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 tranquillity 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.”*

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.†

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.‡ 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.§ In all this Mr. Pierce declared his entire concurrence.

December 26, 1836, Mr. Adams presented a petition from citizens of Pennsylvania for the aboli-

tion 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 Q. Adams among the *nays*.*

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.†

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*.‡

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.§

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

* Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xii, part 3, p. 3758.

† Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xii, part 4, pp. 4031, 4054.

‡ Congressional Globe, vol. vi, p. 37.

§ Appendix to Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xii, part 4, p. 104.

* Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xiii, part 1, p. 1156.

† Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xiii, part 1, p. 1316.

‡ Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xiii, part 1, p. 1320.

§ Gales & Seaton’s Register, vol. xiii, part 2, p. 1412.

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. Patten, 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 disrespectful 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 Colum-

bia, 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*!*

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 de-

* Gales & Seaton's Register, vol. xiii, part 2, pp. 1587 to 1734.

feat 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 tranquilize 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 indisputable, 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 connexion 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 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*.†

January 9, 1838, Mr. Prentice presented reso-

* 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. 58 to p. 108 of the Appendix.

† Congressional Globe, 1838-'39, p. 91.

lutions 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*.*

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.

* Congressional Globe, 1838-'39, p. 110.

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. 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.

THE NEW BOSTON ABOLITION SLANDERS REFUTED BY GENERAL PIERCE.

The Democratic National Convention which assembled in Baltimore on the first day of June, 1852, nominated Franklin Pierce as the party candidate; and among other resolutions embraced in the platform of principles adopted by the convention are the following:

"9. 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; 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.

"Resolved, That the foregoing proposition covers, and was intended to embrace, the whole subject of slavery agitation in Congress; and therefore the democratic party of the Union, standing on this national platform, will abide by and adhere to a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures, settled by the last Congress, the 'Act for reclaiming fugitives from ser-

vice or labor' included; which act, being designed to carry out an express provision of the constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be repealed, or so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency.

"Resolved, That the democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

This is the democratic position on the subject of slavery in the States and in the Territories, and upon the subject of slavery generally, including the fugitive-slave law in particular, and in the terms of which law it is declared that, "being designed to carry out an express provision of the constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be REPEALED, or so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency." Gen. Pierce adopted and endorsed the doctrines and principles of the party as proclaimed by the convention, in the most candid, clear, and unequivocal manner. In his letter accepting the nomination he says:

"I accept the nomination upon the platform adopted by the convention, not because this is expected of me as a candidate, but because the principles it embraces command the approbation of my judgment; and with them I believe I can safely say there has been no word nor act of my life in conflict."