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LETTER

TO

A WHIG NEIGHBOR,

ON

THE APPROACHING STATE ELECTION,

BY

AN OLD CONSERVATIVE.

John Gerhard Palfrey.

SECOND EDITION.



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LETTER
TO
A WHIG NEIGHBOR.

MY GOOD FRIEND:—

SINCE the year 1848, you and I have voted with different parties. That has perhaps been the main difference between us. You have always said that you were as wide awake to the usurpations of the Slave Power as I was, and as heartily opposed to them. You have said—and I never doubted your honesty—that in your opinion the best way to resist them was to adhere to the Whig party, which, in Massachusetts at least, was always professing and promising so well. I did not think so, because I did not find that those professions and promises proved to be good for anything when the time for action came. So we have continued to differ, but we have respected each other, and have never quarrelled.

After the Whig Convention at Worcester on the 2d of this month, I sat down to write out for you some of my thoughts respecting it. In its proceedings I found ample matter for indignant comment, and I wrote some sheets in that vein. But I throw them aside, and start afresh. As the election approaches, pregnant with such momentous issues, I find myself in no mood for that sort of comment. I dismiss, as far as possible, the thought of men, and of their follies, calumnies, and tricks, and address myself solely and calmly to the public question which is pending.

A little recapitulation is necessary, to show how it stands. The displeasure of good and considerate people has for many years been

roused by the gross usurpations of the Slave Power. The aspirants and managers of both the old parties have been forced, more or less, to consider that state of feeling, for fear of losing their adherents. Those of your Whig party, in particular, were accustomed to use strong anti-slavery language in their speeches, letters, and resolutions at public meetings. This practice, it seems, is henceforward to be discontinued; "We have no outsiders to catch to-day," said one of your orators at the late Convention, comparing it with previous meetings of the same kind; "we have no baits to throw to any gudgeons." But for a while it proved effective, and more or less vigorously, according as changing circumstances permitted or required, was pursued down to the eve of the very last annual election, when, in great stress of politics, the Whig party in convention solemnly resolved "that we are unalterably opposed to the extension of slavery over one foot of territory now free; that we will seek the immediate and unconditional repeal of so much of the Nebraska and Kansas acts as annuls the Missouri Compromise, and that we will oppose the admission into the Confederacy of any new State, formed out of any of our territorial possessions, unless Slavery is prohibited therein." The smooth-faced Whig State Committee, in its call for this Convention, had announced it to be "among the grave matters for its consideration," "whether we can now satisfy ourselves with the simple restoration of that which has been torn down, or whether we ought not to resolve upon some further action, having for its object not merely the recovery of the ground lost for a time to freedom, but the erection of impregnable barriers against the extension of Slavery and against the unceasing assaults of the Slave Power."

During the years of the reign of this policy, great uneasiness was occasioned in the Whig party by the action of its leaders on the Annexation of Texas, — the beginning of our present sorrows, — the war with Mexico, and other kindred proceedings of that time; and when, in the Presidential election of 1848, that party seemed to be playing directly into the hands of the Slave oligarchy, many of its old friends at the North seceded. No sooner was that question settled by the choice of a Whig President, than Mr. Root's resolution for protecting freedom in the new territories was voted down in the Federal House of Representatives, with a great preponderance of influence, on the part of the Whig members, even of the delegation from Massachusetts, in favor of that disposition of it. In the

next following month, the distinguished Whig Senator from Massachusetts gave in his adhesion to the Compromise Measures, so called, including the Fugitive Slave Bill. And the National Whig Convention, which met two years after, resolved, the Massachusetts delegation assenting, that they accepted that series of measures as a final settlement of the Slavery question.

The strong anti-slavery resolution of the Whig State Convention of last year was, you remember, passed at a time when Northern feeling seemed roused to a high pitch by the perfidious repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820. But it was too late for this sort of language from that quarter. It had been a pretty device in its day; but it was worn out. By too sore experience, too many long-trusting people had had their eyes enlightened to see through it. And at the election last November, only twenty-seven thousand voters, out of the fifty or sixty thousand of old times, came up to the help of the Whig skeleton against the mighty. Power slipped out of its hands, and did not leave a wreck behind. Among more than four hundred members of a government in which almost from time immemorial it has reigned supreme, it had but a single representative.

Among the scores of invisible thousands who accomplished this extraordinary *coup de main*, everybody knows that there were large numbers not themselves enrolled in the organization for whose candidates they voted, and other large numbers, who, though they adopted its distinguishing principle, in their hearts laid yet more stress on that of opposition to the Slave Power. I have no defence to make of that organization. Besides regarding its ostensible basis of association as utterly illiberal and anti-republican, I cannot allow that there is any place for a secret political society under a free government. And to me it appears that the dangerous tendency of such clubs — obvious enough to reflection, without history — has been amply proved in the deplorable experience of the ancient republics, and of France sixty years ago. There is the still further weighty objection against it, that, at a critical moment in our politics, it paralyzed and baffled the anti-slavery spirit in the Free States, which otherwise, under the new provocation of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, would have borne down all before it. But to men who, year after year, had seen that the political course dictated by their judgment and conscience was only to be taken at the peril of social ostracism, or, still more, who had found or believed that to vote against the party of a rich employer was to vote away

the living of their families, and who, when they had once secured a Secret Ballot law, had seen it swept away at the next turn of the political wheel, it must be owned that there was some temptation to look for freedom and security in a secret combination.

A year passes, and after the chaotic dissolution and mixture the elements move to shape and combine themselves anew. There has been only one grave question before these United States these dozen years, and to that, after any temporary interruption, every thing presently returns. Whigs who did not go to the polls last year, or who were just induced to cast a Whig vote once more by the renewed strength of Whig anti-slavery profession, conclude that the time has fully come for action in accordance with what they have long professed and believed. Men of the recently victorious party entertain the sober second thought, and agree that there is one, and only one, intolerable evil impending over the country. And both come together with whoever else accords with them in opinion and purpose on the overshadowing question of the time, and agree to forget their old names and differences, and band themselves together, and with patriots of other States, in one party, to labor for the salvation of the country.

They came together in convention, and the result was what the times, and their duty to the times, required; no more and no less. Can anything of the kind be better than their Address and Resolutions, — more dignified, true, patriotic, weighty? They recognize and expose the great fact which every day makes harder to dispute or to keep out of sight, — of the immense wrong and disgrace which the people of this republic are even now suffering, and the extreme danger, in the future, to which they are exposed, from a despotic power, residing in one or two hundred thousand voters, which has erected itself on the institution of chattel slavery in a part of the States. In grave and well-weighed words, they rightly represent the vital question of the day to be, the continuance of “the existence of freedom”; and for the purpose of settling that question, and till that question is settled, they invite patriots to desist from other strifes, and concentrate their action upon this. “Slavery, in its national relations, is the great political question of our times. Slavery, within the Slave States, is a matter of State control, for which we have no constitutional political responsibility. But an imperious necessity has made slavery, in its relations to the nation and to the Free States, a question of practical, immediate, and para-

mount importance." "The Slave Power controls every department of the government. The question is not the abolition of Slavery, but the existence of freedom." Is there any such thing as disputing a word of all this? Whatever selfish or deluded men may pretend or believe, or whatever some sensible and well-intentioned men under some strange hallucination may dream, do you doubt, any more than I, that the whole of it is literally and terribly true?

After the total rout of the Whig party in Massachusetts last year, there seemed nothing for it except retreat from the field, or else a complete change of tactics. Till quite recently, the general expectation perhaps was, that the former course would be adopted; the rather, as the Whig party was known to have disbanded itself in the Southern States, and to keep up a sort of organization only in three or four States of the North,—in short, to have ceased to be a national party, and to have become a "geographical" one in a very narrow sense.

The first indication known to me of a different policy in Massachusetts was in the argument of "A Young Hunker," published in the Boston newspapers two months ago. With some of the views of this writer,—understood to be one of the most able and respected members of the Whig party, and a gentleman sincerely opposed, according to his own view of the case, to the Slave Power aggressions,—I certainly do not accord. But it seems to me that, if there was any hope for that party of recovering their lost confidence and consequence, it was by following his advice. He recommended to them, as I understand him, to stick to their professions, and carry them out in action. "The party," he said, "has taken high ground" in respect to some of the usurpations of Slavery; "it is fairly committed; it cannot recede; if more explicitness is requisite to express what are the real sentiments of three fourths of the members of the party, let it be given." With the idea of "fusion" correctly understood, he expressed no reluctance "to give the subject a fair, a just, and an enlightened consideration." He intimated that "the form, the body" of the Whig party might have "become somewhat decrepid," perhaps might "be laid aside"; possibly "needed an infusion of youthful vigor." He even went so far as to suggest, though with caution and delicacy, that it might not be the worse for discharging some of its leaders.

But unfortunately,—I think we should rather say *fortunately*, considering the embarrassments which, from its past history, would

have continued to cripple the Whig party, however renovated and reformed, for the service of freedom, — different counsels prevailed, and an opposite policy took its form and pressure at the late Convention. I do not assume that all who voted for the Resolutions of that Convention approved or understood them. I know too well in what manner this part of the business of conventions is transacted, to take anything of that kind for granted. The Resolutions were concocted, and the tenor of the rest of the proceedings arranged, by some officious gentlemen in and about Boston. Before the Convention met, one of the Boston newspapers gave a quite accurate account of what it would do. But, at all events, the Resolutions which appear to have been adopted, and the speeches which are said to have been applauded, must stand at present for the sense of the Whig party of Massachusetts.

And what I have to say upon it in the first place is said in a word. It is, that these Resolutions show that the Whig party of Massachusetts — that is, what is left of it, and shall hold together to the next election — *is far on the way to democracy*; by which word, for present use, I mean, pro-slavery democracy, administration democracy, Pierce democracy.

Yes, my friend, unless all signs fail, if you conclude to hold on to the skirts of this Whig Convention, you are presently to find yourself embarked in a coalition with the party which, your whole life long, you have been professing to oppose. Your leaders no longer disguise from you this tendency. Mr. Hillard said that the Democratic party had “got hold of the idea of nationality,” and that “in the long run the party which rests upon the national heart of the people” would prevail; that “conservative men, by a natural reaction” from what he calls “superabundant anti-slavery zeal,” would “take refuge with the Democratic party.” And the last Resolution foreshadows “a union of national patriots in all parts of the land to rescue the great interests of the country from the assaults of sectional fanatics.” All which language, in the connections in which it is used, is perceived by discerning persons to import that the Whig politicians, speaking through this Convention, are presently to be seen striking hands with Mr. Pierce, Mr. Douglas, and Mr. Cushing, in a Northern confederacy for Slavery against the freedom of the North. They will not say so. Some of them will not think so, just yet. But just as surely as day follows day, and effect comes after cause, that is precisely what their present movement will be seen before long to amount to.

Of the six Resolves of the Convention, the first two merely set forth the patriotism and independence of the Whig party, and contain nothing noteworthy, except the coolness of the declaration that the party has "no steps to retrace"; a statement in which the reader who compares it with the Resolves of last year will assuredly find food for thought. The third Resolve passes lightly over the tender point, "that the ensuing election is pre-eminently a matter of State interest, and has no immediate connection with national affairs," and hints, rather than makes, the usual promise of parties out of power, to reduce the State taxes.

So ends the first half of the series. The second makes three points, — one against the "Personal Liberty Law" of the Legislature of this year, another against the "Maine Liquor Law," and the last proscribes "a Northern party, based upon the single issue of opposition to Slavery," and suggests that project of a full coalition with the Slave Power to which I just now referred. For the writers, the series of Resolutions "bore a precious jewel in its" tail.

The last of the three is the only one which has to do with the Republican party. As far as concerns that party, the two other Resolves only beat the air. The Republican party was not in power when the laws in question were enacted. It has assumed no responsibility, and taken no stand, in relation to them. A fundamental principle in its articles of union is, "We require no conformity of opinion on other subjects of national or State policy" besides resistance to the Slave Power. Its members will probably differ respecting those laws, as the members of other political organizations have done heretofore. The Whig Convention does not pretend, or does not dare, to disclaim for its members all agency in procuring the passage of the "Maine Liquor Law"; it speaks of its having been "passed in the hope, by the friends of temperance, that it would suppress the deadly vice of drunkenness."

As to the "Personal Liberty Law," the way in which plausible people treat the question of a man's liberty in Massachusetts, the indifference with which they regard a pretended law of the United States, by force of which (if that made any difference, as it does not) you or I, your children or mine, might be carried into slavery, as well as the blackest menial we employ, is what I cannot look at without amazement. In this gloating over the assumed helplessness of a poor fellow pounced upon in Massachusetts by somebody who truly or falsely says that he gave money for him, — this triumph in

denying him that chance for what is dearer than life, which might be found in the judgment of twelve jurymen, — there is something to my mind inexpressibly horrible. That men who entertain such a feeling can not only hold up their heads in good society, but even claim to be its representatives and oracles, is a thing that, with my old notions and memories, merely mystifies me, when I think of it. Nor is the doltish inhumanity more surprising than the insensibility to personal disgrace. The simple truth is, at this moment, that if an affidavit comes from Georgia that A. B. has escaped from service there, and somebody can be found to testify that I am A. B., and an irresponsible *Commissioner* — the second-hand creature of nominees of the Slave Power — chooses to say, for the fee of ten dollars, that he believes his testimony, I must go to Georgia, to be put in a jail to be whipped and on an auction block to be sold, and there is no remedy for me whatever in the laws of my country, unless the Personal Liberty Bill of Massachusetts is good law, and competent to my protection. Whether good law or not, if you wish to give effective utterance to your discontent at this state of things, and to provide means of relief, if such can be found, you must do what the Republican party invites you to do, that is, choose to public office wise and patriotic men, who know the worth and will vindicate the sanctity of freedom.

In looking at this subject, some men seem to lose sight of common sense, as well as of humanity and self-respect. In its fourth Resolve, what else does the Whig Convention do but invite the “bloodshed” it professes to deprecate, by encouraging any bullies who may claim to be “federal authorities” to resist in arms a statute of this Commonwealth, which, whatever may be in future, no judicial action as yet has declared to want any attribute of law? Mr. Hillard says of the Personal Liberty Law, “I call it *treason*.” What Mr. Hillard calls it, is a fact not without interest. A more interesting question would be, what it is called by those judicial tribunals who may have occasion to pass upon its character. It may be presumed that, at all events, they will not call it what Mr. Hillard does, until they have found a different definition for treason from that brief and explicit one which is set down in the Constitution of the United States. And if the Personal Liberty Law shall prove to require revision, I, for one, shall feel much safer in committing it to the wisdom of a party like that now formed, than to one capable of treating it in a way at once so abject and

so truculent as is expressed in the fourth resolve of the Whig Convention.

The first two Resolves take the field with bold front. The next three drum for recruits. The last contains the manifesto of the war. The Whig party assembled at Worcester will tolerate no organized resistance to the Slave Power. A party being formed on that basis, the Whigs will, in the last resort, enlist with Mr. Pierce's friends to defeat that party. Such, I think you cannot help perceiving, is the import of that Resolve, more simply expressed. Nor, I beg you to notice, is there anything in the series of Resolves which Mr. Hallett could not heartily adopt, except what relates to a separate existence and action of the Whig party; and even this must be regarded as merely provisional, when considered in connection with the last clause in the series. I defy any man to point out why, on the showing of these Resolves, a man may not just as well vote for Mr. Beach as for Mr. Walley.

So much for the tenor of the Resolves. What new light was thrown on the purpose in hand by the letters and speeches?

Before trying to answer that question, let me say a few words on the Convention itself. Considered as a representation from the whole Commonwealth, it is pleasant to know that it was a very lean one. The excellence of the music is said to have been unsurpassed. Twelve reed instruments, I hear it said, lent their added attraction to the harmonies of the regular Brigade Band. But more gentlemen of substance were willing to pay for the Convention's music, than were disposed to march to it, or to have themselves recorded as responsible for the doings of the day. The committee reported delegates from a hundred and twenty-four towns to be present, — not two fifths of the municipal corporations of the Commonwealth. It also reported the number of delegates to be seven hundred and eighteen; but when that number was brought to a test by the ballot, it turned out to be reduced to five hundred and forty-one, which, if five hundred went from the sea-board, as was boasted at the time, leaves only forty-one for all the rest of the Commonwealth. Without implying any disrespect for the capacity of the gentlemen who conducted the proceedings, I yet find it difficult to believe that the whole charge would have been committed to them, if the "weighty brethren," to use a Quaker phrase, had supposed that anything material was to be done. One naturally infers that one description of absentees stayed away because they did not want to commit them-

selves openly with their old confederates, in the new enterprise, and another, because, having fully made up their minds to an ultimate transit into the Democracy, they saw no great use in the ceremony of a short call at the half-way house.

Of the five letters to the Convention from distinguished Whigs, only that of Mr. Choate had any special significance. Mr. Appleton hoped that they would "make such a demonstration as would convince the world that the Whig party of Massachusetts is not extinct"; a hope so modest that it may perhaps be fulfilled. Mr. Winthrop communicated concisely and carefully an opinion which he has long been understood to profess. Mr. Choate let off a brilliant jet of fire-works, and concluded the exhibition with two shotted guns, — one against the Republican party as "a party without politics," the other against it as a "geographical party."

The Republican party is "a party without politics." So said Mr. Choate, and so the parrots of the party say after him. As he wrote this to the Convention from his closet, no man will ever know whether he kept his countenance as successfully as when he told the jury that, if Tyrrell killed Mrs. Bickford, the deed was done in his innocent sleep. A party which undertakes to recover and protect the fundamental liberties of the people against an encroaching despotism, is "a party without politics." I fancy I hear some wordy person asking of the patriot party in the time of Charles the First, of William the Third, of the American Revolution, "What is its foreign policy? By what measures, — by what school of politicians, — by what laws on what subjects, — by what diplomacy, — how, generally, — does it propose to accomplish that good, and prevent that evil, and provide for those wants, for which States are formed and government established?" And I see "unextinguished laughter" shaking the sober sides of Pym, and Somers, and Sam Adams, at the fencing of such a queer antagonist. By Adams and his friends, the "one idea" of "no taxation without representation" was thought to be doctrine enough for a party which aimed for a long time to get its rights by peaceable methods, without saying a word about "schools of politicians," methods of "diplomacy," or all sorts of laws on every variety of subject. And if a party *with* politics is what the citizen is in search of, he must have a rare facility at being satisfied, if he takes up with the present Whig party of Massachusetts, with its recent six Resolves for its manifesto.

The Republican party, says Mr. Choate, is "a geographical

party." If it is, what is that Whig party with which he compares it? If the one, just lighted and set upon a candlestick, does not yet shed light on all parts of the house, how is it with the other, which is just going out under a bushel, — one might rather say, under a gill-measure? To speak of the Whig party now as "a national party," in distinction from anything that has party existence, is the very extravagance of balderdash. With no pretence of life in more than three or four of the thirty-one States, in not a single State south of the Potomac does the name continue to be heard except in discourses on the past. The Slave-Power party — strange as it may seem — was once a "sectional" and "geographical party." It had its origin in the South, and thence spread widely through the North, as is seen at the present day. We mean that the party of freedom, which is to prostrate it, shall have a similar history. It must begin in the North; — that cannot be helped, for at present in the Slave States a man cannot speak out free sentiments except at peril of his life. But we intend before long, God helping us, to have it spread the country through. Of the voters in the Slave States, probably not more than one in seven is a slaveholder. Badly as we of the North fare at the hands of Slavery, the case of the Southern non-slaveholder, under its oppression, is much harder than ours. By the ignorance in which he is kept, by the deception and intimidation practised upon him, he is prevented from knowing and asserting his rights. But that state of things is not going to last for ever. As the masses of the Southern people become more enlightened, they will become more zealous for the objects of the Republican party even than we, because they will see that they have even more at stake. Whenever we shall place a Republican administration at Washington, we shall give the Southern patriots, non-slaveholders and slaveholders alike, — for there are not a few friends of freedom among the latter class, — a chance to speak out; and that day will see the death and burial of the silly pretence that the Republican is a "sectional" and "geographical" party. We shall then be able to say, for the present, what Mr. Choate, in speaking of the Whig party, is already obliged to put in the past tense: "Our allies were everywhere, there were no Alleghanies nor Mississippi Rivers in our politics." There will be Cassius M. Clays, and tens of thousands of voters for them, in South Carolina and Arkansas.

But I should do injustice to this argument by trusting it to words of

my own. Let me rather copy for you the admirable summary of the Address of the Republican Convention :—

“ We offer no geographical or sectional issue. We adopt no principles which have not the sanction of the founders of the Republic, in all the States, North and South, Free or Slave. We adopt no principles which Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry would not have gloried to see brought into action. We adopt no principles which conscientious opponents of the increase of Slavery, from all parts of the land, cannot and ought not to recognize. We act in no sectional spirit as to men. We are ready to vote for men from any part of the land who will act with us. We know that within the area of the Slave States themselves, are free men, not slaveholders, who sympathise with us. We know there are slaveholders who think as we do, — to say nothing of the three millions of slaves themselves. As to the territories and the future States, we know no geographical limits. We desire to see all the future States free, North and South. Secure Free States at the Southwest, and this will be no longer a geographical issue. Had our ancestors been true in 1820, there would have been Free States at the South. Had this generation been true, there would have been Free States at the South. There may yet be free States at the South, if we are true hereafter.”

And again, in the Fifth Resolve :—

“ We tender no geographical or sectional issue ; nor will we be deterred from our duty by the fear of one. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise has erased the geographical line. Our principles are national and general. Our spirit is national and liberal. We seek sympathy and co-operation from all parts of the land ; we look for members and candidates from South and North, East and West. Our principles do not justly lead to a sectional issue. If the slave power raises one, the fault is theirs, let the victory be ours.”

In the introductory speech of the President of the Whig Convention, I find nothing particular to remark upon, — the speeches of that gentleman lose so much when merely read, and bereft of the advantages of tone, countenance, and attitude. He duly laid out the programme, and defied and berated gainsayers. It is related of a clergyman at the South, who had occasion to preach when he had been ailing, that, on returning from the pulpit, his negro asked him how he found himself, and on receiving a favorable answer, the humble friend rejoined, “ I thought you would feel better, master, when you had got so much wind off your stomach.”

The speech of Mr. Hillard was the great feature of the occasion. Mr. Hillard is master of a rhetoric capable, on the one hand, of very attractive, and, on the other, of very offensive use. In private society, one cannot expect, and need not desire, to meet a more amiable or more cultivated gentleman. But in public discussion he takes excessive license. My pen refuses to copy his aspersions. You have read his speech, and you remember them. I shall not borrow from his vocabulary. I do not incline to rail like a fish-woman, though one of the best-mannered of men should set me the example.

The poetical heroics with which Mr. Hillard stepped upon the platform, are particularly out of place on his mellifluous lips. I lately saw a paper, — dated ten years ago this month, when the Texas annexation was in train, — to which his name was subscribed along with those of several persons, then as well as now peculiarly obnoxious to Boston censure. We had not at all embarked “on the smooth surface of a summer-sea.” Louder than then, the Boston winds have not whistled, or the tempests roared, in our day. And anon, with a shoal of pallid swimmers, Mr. Hillard was seen forsaking the ship, and seeking the shore. He did run well at first; what did hinder him? His purpose of integrity I never question; but to resist such beguiling influences as surrounded and surround him, is a task for natures more robust than his.

Nor was it more felicitous in Mr. Hillard to speak of his party's having “lost the disingenuous tricksters who are ever attempting to rule the honest men of Massachusetts by devices like that by which the Irishman drove his pig to Killarney, — by making him believe he was going to Cork.” Why! what but that selfsame ingenious journey to a pro-slavery Killarney have the Whig managers been compassing for years, — making their drove believe, by their anti-slavery outcry, that they were waddling the other way?

Mr. Hillard would persuade his hearers that an attempt to form a party upon the basis assumed by the Republicans “is utterly, hopelessly impossible.” We do not so read the signs of the times. We know by some experience that the difficulties are considerable, but the same experience satisfies us that they are difficulties of a nature to give way before resolute and self-sacrificing endeavor. If Mr. Hillard and those with whom he acts could defeat us, their alleged “impossibility” would, of course, be realized. But we have taken the measure of their ability, and we are not deterred from the at-

tempt. We count much, on the other hand, upon the extreme exigency of the occasion; and the recent course of things in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, and other States, does not appear to us to favor Mr. Hillard's view.

He thinks that the movement to organize a party for freedom, "will be to strengthen the Democratic party." We understand that suggestion, and it does not distress us. Why should it? If men mean to oppose us in our action for freedom, is it not far better for us that they should do it manfully and above-board? The bush-fighting we have in past years been compelled to has not given us a fair chance. We shall do much better in the open field. Pro-slavery Democrat against Republican, — we ask no better issue. I do not think that Mr. Hillard will be brought, without hesitation, to a direct support of the Democratic pro-slavery party. But the language in which he denounces us has a very settled significance in the circles where he is accustomed to hear it used.

Mr. Hillard thinks that the Nebraska Bill would never have been brought before Congress "if Mr. Webster and Mr. Clay had been alive and in their seats." And yet nothing is more notorious than that the friends of that bill made their strongest point, when they alleged it to be a necessary corollary and sequence of the principle of those Compromise Measures which Mr. Webster and Mr. Clay had carried through.

He proceeds to repeat the familiar fallacy that what we call the *Republican* and he "the Fusion" party, must of necessity be "a sectional party," a "geographical party," and then to present a most superficial and erroneous theory of the causes which have led to what he admits to be the "aggressive spirit" of the South, — an aggressive spirit, by the way, which whoever would summon others to resist deserves, it seems, in Mr. Hillard's opinion, to be compared to the person who plies a knocker on the door of a family, "to wake up families ten doors off." Is it some family ten doors off that requires to be waked up, when ruffians have burst the doors and windows, and are mining the foundations, of the dwelling where my own repose?

He thinks that the Republican party might not be subject to objection, if it meant what it pretends to mean; and that it is to be opposed, because it does not mean that, but something different. "If it were in good faith the aim of the Fusion party to bring up the Free States generally to the constitutional standard of opposition to

Slavery, where the Whig party of Massachusetts has always stood, there would not be so much objection to their platform and their plan. But that, although their ostensible purpose, is not their real," &c. Now, I put it to you, as a fair man, whether it is not prudent, under all the circumstances, to take the party's express avowal for proof of its purposes, in preference to Mr. Hillard's distempered imagination of them. I entertain no doubt whatever that the Republican party, at its recent Convention, said just what it meant; and if you think so too, you have a sort of approval from himself for joining it.

Arguing that a "nullification" of the Fugitive Slave Bill is now "the position of Massachusetts before the nation," Mr. Hillard asks, "What would have been the answer at the time of the South Carolina nullification, if she had asked for a modification of the tariff?" History will inform him on that point. We not only know what would have been the answer in that case; we know what it was. The government gave way. Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Clay got together, and agreed upon a most essential "modification of the tariff," such as to make it satisfactory to Carolina. And that arrangement became a law. I am not defending South Carolina nullification; I am but replying to Mr. Hillard's inquiry.

Mr. Hillard comments on the character and action of the State Legislature of last winter. It was composed, almost to a man, of the Know-Nothing or American party. Let that party vindicate or shrive itself. The Republican party will be ready to give an account of its use of power, as soon as it shall have been trusted by the people with it. Meanwhile, Mr. Hillard has not been altogether happy in the selection, under this head, of his materials for a partisan argument. The legislation to which I understand him to refer, where he speaks of "the headlong spirit of innovation in which the great subject of marriage was approached, and the property relations of husband and wife were dealt with," was introduced and pursued to a large extent during the Whig administration of Governor Briggs; and though I do not know what were the proceedings of the last Legislature in this department, I presume there is not in the books a statute involving a wider departure from the old doctrines of the Common Law in respect to domestic relations, than one which was carried through the Legislature of 1842, under the auspices of Mr. Hillard's eminently Whig friend, Mr. Charles P. Curtis, then chairman of the House Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. Hillard holds that "such a party" as the Republican "tends

to create a hostile feeling between North and South." If it is a good rule that we may not stand for our liberties because the invaders of our liberties may not like it, he will do right to hasten that disbanding of his own party, and amalgamation with the pro-slavery Democrats, to which the action of his fellow-partisans is so rapidly tending; for he insists that "the Northern Whig party has always presented a constitutional opposition to Slavery." Or will he say that only the *unconstitutional* opposition to Slave Power encroachments which he presumes to charge upon the new party is suited to give offence? Was offence then never known to be given by such "constitutional" opposition as members of both the Whig and Democratic parties from time to time have made?

Mr. Hillard, like the rest of the speakers, sets up once more the bugbear of Disunion. Will the party whippers-in never have done with that melancholy nonsense? Can they expect long to satisfy men not idiotic, that the slaveholders themselves, for Slavery's sake, want to dissolve a Union without which Slavery would not live among them a year? Do they really dream that, if the slaveholders wanted disunion, their non-slaveholding neighbors — six voters to one in the Slave States — would let them have it? Do the knowing ones, among those who raise the cry, believe a syllable of what they say and sing, when, at the moment that the cry was loudest, they bought and sold stocks at the same rates as before, the quotations of United States securities not being affected to the amount of a fraction of a mill by the hubbub? And who are these gentlemen, who are distracted by apprehensions for the security of our institutions, and of what they protect? Have they a deeper stake in the public tranquillity than men whom they arraign, — than Stephen C. Phillips, for example, or Charles F. Adams? Or upon what grounds hitherto known to the public do they pretend to a juster discernment of what the public tranquillity allows or demands, than is exercised by tried patriots whom, in their feeble flippancy, they presume to stigmatize as rash experimenters upon the public peace?

A point, much labored by the Convention and Mr. Hillard, was that "the present election is a State election, and has nothing to do directly and immediately with national issues"; yet he is equally clear that "no national Whig can support the gubernatorial candidate of the Fusion party." If the one proposition were not enough to confute the other, what expectation, one naturally asks, can any party entertain of convincing the intelligent voters of Massachusetts

that the result of their election is to have no influence on national politics? Reckoning their own rede, the gentlemen of the Whig Convention, as national politicians, of course felt no satisfaction at the late defeat of the Republicans in Maine by the conjoined forces of Democrats and so-called Whigs, — the same operation which they are now arranging here, — nor on the other hand did the great triumph of the Republicans of Ohio in a “State election” this month occasion them a particle of chagrin.

Not a few of Mr. Hillard’s statements are of that vague and equivocal nature, that it would take as much space to attempt to prove upon them a meaning requiring to be refuted, as to refute them when that was done. “Massachusetts can do nothing, in its State capacity, on the subject of Slavery, which is not inconsistent with her obligations to the Constitution, and her duties to the common country.” The phrases, which are imposing, may have clothed something, which, in the speaker’s mind, was pertinent to the argument. But considered as meaning simply that “Slavery, as a State institution, is not within our power or responsibility,” this is equally the doctrine of the recent Republican Convention, which has expressed it in just these words, last quoted.

Mr. Walley, who is said to have been meanwhile advised by his friends that the allusions in his morning speech to the autumnal look of the Whig party, and the approach of its autumnal equinox, were liable to be misunderstood, and that his recommendations of Mr. Rockwell for the office of Governor might be acted upon further than was convenient, tried his hand a second time. He had accepted the nomination in the morning, before the announcement of the Resolves, agreeably to which the party expected to proceed. When they had been brought in, — so different from those of the last year, — he declared them to be entirely to his taste. His speech was no brilliant specimen of reasoning. He rose, he said, to say that in the morning he had been “overwhelmed with surprise at the honor” of the nomination. And why? Not on account of the singular state of facts to which he had then adverted, when, standing in the Convention which had just given him its clamorous nomination for the office of Governor, he said, “If I gave heed to the suggestions which I have received all around me, I should respectfully decline the nomination,” &c. A nomination under these circumstances might naturally occasion surprise, besides raising the doubt implied by the speaker in the words, “If

it is your wish that I should do your bidding." But the reason of the surprise which "overwhelmed" Mr. Walley was different. It was because he considered the nomination "a great honor and a great compliment." — He contradicted Mr. Hillard's notion about "action and not principle" being "the proper object of government," professing his own to be, "that never has there been a moment since the existence of a government in this State, when the conduct of the people in reference to principles was of more consequence than at the present moment." — He had read "only this very morning, that the demand of the Garrison party is now for a dissolution of the Union." It is not understood that Mr. Garrison and his friends have joined, or have it in contemplation to join, the Republican party, — a fact which seems to leave a link out in the close chain of the demonstration of Mr. Stevenson's "next Governor of Massachusetts." But he knows how to supply it. "We have another party," he proceeds, "which tells us that in order to prevent the extension of Slavery, it is necessary to ignore the Whig party; that alone, they say, will answer the purpose. Sir, that is only the first step, and I forewarn gentlemen now, that, if they take one step in that course, they cannot stop anywhere short of the dissolution of the Union."

"Loud applause," according to the newspaper report before me, followed the utterance of this compact and convincing ratiocination. It naturally encouraged the speaker to go on with a further exhibition of his powers in that way. "The simple question," the orator proceeded, "now before the people of the Commonwealth is, Have you calculated the value of the Union, and are you prepared to surrender it; or do you intend to stand by the Constitution of this country, and to hand down the blessings you have enjoyed, unimpaired, to your posterity? If so" — Well, "if so," what then? One might suppose the inference would be, "if so, then in Heaven's name stand by the Constitution of your country," &c., as you have just said you "intend" to do. But that is not the way it strikes Mr. Walley. "*If so, let national principles alone.*" And with one period more he sat down, adhering, in silence as in speech, to the resolution announced in the morning, "I will not take up your time with anything that is not good."

Mr. Fowler of Amherst is said to have made a speech, but I have met with no account of it. Mr. Lord, Speaker of the last Whig House of Representatives, came forward with an "analytical and bold

speech," as it was called by the Boston newspaper which reported it, to clench the nail which had been hammered home by the proceedings of the day. He had a right to count upon the enthusiasm which had been excited, and to utter himself without reserve or fear. He frankly allowed you and me to understand what the persons whose counsels he shared have been about for a long while past. "Until to-day, since some fifteen years ago, in this very place, I have not before seen the *real* Whig spirit roused,—that which has the ring of the true metal. To-day we are Whig, and we are not anything else. (Laughter and applause.) We have no outsiders to catch to-day, we have no baits to throw to any gudgeons. We stand to-day Whigs upon Whig principles, and we stand there or we fall. (Cheers, and cries of 'Good, good!') It does one good to see a regular old-fashioned political meeting, one based upon some kind of politics other than to see who can get the most votes in a scrub race. (Laughter.)"

"Good, good!" the infatuated assembly shouted and laughed, when the deceptions of past years were avowed, and cast off as no longer profitable. Let the managers of such a system henceforward go one way, and do you, a straight-forward man, go another. I hear Whig men denounce knavery in politics, and I fear there is a great deal too much of it in different quarters. But if any man will show me a more unpleasant phase of it than that which an orator of the Whig Convention imputes to a succession of Whig demagogues, certainly I shall very much wonder at his revelations.

With my views of the late Whig Convention, I do not think it material to discuss the character of its candidates. Its design was, to hold back as many as possible of the old Whig party from passing into the ranks of the Republicans, as fidelity to the often repeated professions of the party would naturally impel them to do. Its effect, as far as it has effect, will be only to promote the election of Mr. Beach as Governor this year, and that of the Democratico-Nebraska candidate for the Presidency, a year hence. No man, probably, except the eccentric President of the Convention, imagines that Mr. Walley is going to be "the next Governor of Massachusetts." Under the new *plurality* system, the votes cast for him will be merely so much support to the strongest competitor of Mr. Rockwell, just as the ten thousand scattering Whig votes in Maine last month secured the election of the Democratico-Nebraska candidate, Mr. Wells. On the seventh day of next month, we shall

know precisely how many Massachusetts Whigs, favorable to such a policy, there are, and where they live ; and that will be something well worth knowing. My present persuasion is that the number will not be large of such as will care to keep up any longer the farce of a party which belongs to history ; but that most of the Whigs who have made up their minds to oppose Mr. Rockwell and the Republican party, will prefer to do it more directly and effectually by voting for the Democratic candidate for the office of Governor, as many of them did for the Democratic President three years ago.

If, however, I did expect to see Mr. Walley our next Governor, I should not fail to be extremely dissatisfied with the prospect. There is nothing about that gentleman to recommend him to the suffrage of men who think as I do — and as I presume you do — on public affairs. I observe an attempt to bespeak for him the favor of opponents of the Nebraska bill, on the ground of a speech on that subject made by him in Congress, in April of last year. Have you read that speech ? I have. I do not care for its clumsy language. I do not care much for its muddy reasoning. But I do care very much for its abject tone. As long as the rights of freemen are championed in the manner of that speech, so long will Nebraska bills — and worse outrages, if worse can be — be repeated, though it should be to the crack of doom. “At that time,” says Mr. Hillard, we had in the lower House of Congress a large Whig delegation, an eminently able and estimable delegation, and I say that the opposition which they offered to the Nebraska iniquity was as strong and effective as could have been presented by the same number of men from any part or party of the Northern States.” On the 23d day of January, 1854, agreeably to notice given on the 17th, Mr. Douglas was to call up in Congress his “bill to organize the Territory of Nebraska.” Of course, during that terrific interval, all the patriotic Whig Representatives from Massachusetts, including those from Boston and its neighborhood, had their thoughts engrossed, day and night, to the exclusion of everything else, with the prospect of what has so distressed good citizens, and so shamed the country in the eyes of the Christian world. I look into the newspapers for some transmitted expression of the profound solicitude with which they were agitated at that momentous crisis of affairs. And in a Boston Whig print of January 20, I find the following notice of a message just received from “the efficient representative” (not Mr. Walley) whom it names: “A telegraphic despatch. . . . informs us that the Secretary

of the Treasury has so far modified his schedule, in his proposed alteration of the Tariff, as to take manufactured linens from the free list, and that he proposes to make it subject to the duty of twenty-five per cent, and that copper is to be placed upon the same footing with lead."

Mr. Walley is one representative of the school of which that efficient member of the House was another. Meaner and transient interests first,—the higher and permanent interests of the public last, if anywhere,—this is the most creditable scheme of political action which we are at liberty to deduce from the history of that class of politicians to which these gentlemen belong.

Mr. Rockwell's position realizes the whole idea which I have understood you to maintain of a patriotic public man. I, of course, could have desired that he had separated himself from the Whig party earlier; but, if he trusted its professions longer than was reasonable, this was the error of a generous mind; and for all of us Republicans, who were all once either Whigs or Democrats, the question of making the painful effort to break old party ties, under a sense of the obligations of public duty, has been only a question as to the earlier or later time. Mr. Rockwell's services to freedom, in both branches of the national Congress, have been eminent. From the first to the last of our recent troubles,—from the passage of the Texas Annexation Bill, when the ferocious clamor and abusive parliamentary practice that forced it through did not prevent him from interposing a vigorous argument against that stupendous iniquity, down to his brief but most honorable service in the Senate a year ago,—the lofty tenor of his public action has left nothing to be desired, except that rupture of his embarrassing relations to the Whig party which his upright judgment has at last decided on.

At a time like this especially, you will wish to give your Governor a legal adviser of distinguished abilities and learning in the law, of unstained and unquestioned probity, of ample experience (judicial experience, if it may be), of calm judgment, and of habits of thought such as will not lead him to twist legal technics to the prejudice of our Massachusetts heritage of freedom;—and a man of such attributes, combined in singular excellence, is offered to your suffrage in Rockwood Hoar. And as to other candidates of the Republican party who have been less conspicuously before the public, if I have been so fortunate as to satisfy you that that party is entitled to your support, I presume you will be disposed to vote for them, on the rec-

ognized principles of all party organizations. That they have not hitherto acted with you, can be no reason for not giving them your suffrage; they are acting with you henceforward, and it is a union of men hitherto divided, which must accomplish the recovery of the rights of all, or nothing will.

But you do not like, you say, some of the associates with whom you will be connected in the new movement, if you join it;— you do not like them personally, and you do not like the means which you think, from past experience, they will be likely to pursue to compass the end which you agree with them in desiring. Suppose you do not;— do you expect to find any party numerous enough to make a show at a State election, composed wholly of saints and heroes; or do you expect to do better in this respect in either of the other parties between which your choice must be made? As to the first point, if the newspapers say truth, the Boston procession to and from the Whig Convention was marshalled by a person who, in outrageous defiance of law (Whig lawyers themselves being judges), held Boston in military occupation during an awful day, and who, if one fatal gun had been fired by the orders which he had threatened, and if court and jury had done their office, would infallibly have expiated the crime upon a gallows; and the person who did not take the armed Crafts, and who did take, by his menials, the unarmed and unsuspecting Sims, was put forward to call the Convention to order, and then placed at the head of one of the District Committees in charge of its affairs for the year; and I doubt whether you are prepared to say that it belongs to the party that sought these associations to be very choice about its company. As to your not liking this and that part of the past tactics of this and that man with whom you would meet in the new party, no more, to be frank, do I. But if you will vote with no man, or no leading man, whose past measures and course you disapprove, I suppose it must follow that you will cease to be a voter. The Republican party, just starting into being, is not responsible for any past errors or faults of any persons, conspicuous or otherwise, who enroll themselves in its ranks. In its composition, — comprehending, as one large element of the union, persons in whom hitherto you have been accustomed to place confidence, — you seem to have every reasonable assurance that its joint measures will be as well considered as its principles and aims are patriotic. And by personally connecting yourself with it, you will place yourself in a position to use all your legitimate influence to keep it clear

from any malpractice which reasonably or causelessly you may apprehend.

“The *Republican Party*.” Mr. Hillard thinks that we have no more right to take that name, than “the Reverend Mr. Williams has to the honors and dignities of Louis XVII.” With our understanding of the case, on the contrary, the name seems to belong to us in the most precise and special propriety of application. According to its written Constitution, this nation is a Republic. But under the forms of that Republic, an Aristocracy has grown up in the nation, consisting of a few scores of thousands of holders of slaves, and has strengthened itself by cunning arts and gradual invasions till at length it has usurped all the powers of the Federal authority; till, under that authority, no law can be passed and no officer appointed, except agreeably to its sovereign will; till, having dispossessed the rest of the people of their rightful share in administration, it turns upon them with its whole stolen force, to insult and oppress them as far as its present purposes may require; and the indignities and wrongs which we suffer already give vague but appalling notice of what more may be in store for ourselves and our children, while the name of republican liberty in America goes the way that it has gone in other states and times. We cast votes for Presidents of the United States; but the concentrated strength of the Slave Power, represented in its own politicians, and tampering, by its seductions and bribes, with ours, is always sufficient to determine who the President shall be. We send thirty-two Senators to make part of the appointing power; but their thirty colleagues, who have always one object steadily in view, can always secure enough of them to turn their own little less than half, into a majority. We send Representatives; but Representatives are apt to think they have not got high enough, and the appointing and patronizing power always holds enough of them in its leash to make sure that its policy shall prevail. The Federal Judiciary—supreme, for important purposes, over that of the States—already presumes, by one of its organs, to re-establish Slavery in Free States, and issues its *lettre de cachet* for the unlimited imprisonment of a citizen of the North for the ridiculously alleged *contempt* of truly testifying that he has not had an escaped slave in his custody. While Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary are thus retained, scattered all over the country there are capable and active and aspiring and avaricious men whom the unscrupulous dispensers of public trusts and of the public treasure

engage to do their work, by speech and pen, in blinding the too unsuspecting people, and so fortifying and perpetuating the odious misrule.

The Aristocracy, which, working by these instrumentalities, has planted its foot upon our necks, is what we call the *Slave Power*. We mean to oust it from the seat of authority of which it has usurped possession, and make this nation again in reality, as it is in form and name, a Republic. And therefore it is that the name *Republicans* is our appropriate designation. As politicians, this is that "one idea" of ours, in which some men who imagine themselves capable of two ideas, and of putting two ideas together, find so much scope for impertinent garrulity. *Platforms*, made of a little of everything that the last day's ferment has brought to the surface, — a sort of drag-net for humorsome voters, — are a modern invention in political transactions, and should take out an American patent. Whig, Tory, in England, — Federal, Democratic, in earlier America, — which of these names, or of any others that have moved multitudes of earnest men in the dignified contests of politics, ever stood for more than one central idea, collecting, marshalling, and inspiring the combination? Our "one idea" is, to break and batter down the crafty, impudent, and tyrannous Slave Power, to displace the Aristocracy, and *reinstale the Republic*, — that republic which the Constitution contemplated and organized. That done, — the free people of the United States having recovered their legitimate functions, — they will be in a condition to entertain those questions of detail which belong to the wise administration of the government agreeably to its republican spirit, and Mr. Choate will have to wait but little for an answer to his anxious inquiries respecting "diplomacy," and so on.

I write as a Conservative. And I insist that this is true conservative ground. The conservation of Republican freedom is the Conservatism of a Republic. It requires some patience to hear those who discern how wide has been the departure from the original principles of this government, and how extreme is the necessity of reverting without delay to the original track, prated of as innovators and experimenters by men of whom the best that can be said is that they know nothing of what they are about. If we were not strangely urged to such strange doings, we should look on it as nothing short of the insanity of stupid arrogance for a room-full of gentlemen, from State Street and thereabouts, to take the cars of a morning for Wor-

cester, there to proclaim and resolve that they are "untiring advocates of Liberty, of the Constitution, and of the Union," and that "the success in a national election of a Northern party, based upon the single issue of opposition to Slavery, must put the existence of the Union in peril." The peril of the Union, such as it is, threatens it from a very different source from that on which their purblind vision is fixed. The fool and coward quails before the phantom his imagination has conjured up. The wise man looks through the misty nothing to the real danger beyond. Should the time come for the Union of these States to be dissolved, it will be found to coincide with the time when the abuses of the American Constitution by the despotic Slave Power in the Southern States, and its allies in the Northern, have made its rule intolerable. The men who aid and abet, or who countenance, shield, or palliate these abuses, — they are the innovators, — they are the *Destructives*; and the proper business of a patriotic *Conservatism* at the present day is to see that that process of abuse which has been going on for half a generation in a swiftly accelerating ratio is forthwith obstructed and reversed.

If ever you mean to do a good citizen's part in this indispensably needful work, now is your time. The Republican party, which has undertaken it, is auspiciously inaugurated. The great State of Ohio, where, against immense odds, it has just carried the State election, placing a tried champion of Republican Freedom in the executive chair, is looking with earnest hope for the approval and alliance of Massachusetts. Wisconsin and New York, in a generous emulation, are to bear their testimony for freedom on the same day with ourselves. Bitter were it, if Massachusetts were to be missed out of the faithful sisterhood, when history comes to count the patriotic States of 1855.

Wishing you the blessings of a good judgment for the day of election, and a self-approving mind after it,

I am your fellow-citizen and friend.

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