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Political.

SPEECH
OF THE
HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,
ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

Delivered in the U. S. Senate, March 7.

[CONCLUDED.]

Now, as to California and New Mexico, I hold slavery to be excluded from those territories by a law even superior to that which admits and sanctions it in Texas. I mean the law of nature—of physical geography—the law of the formation of the earth.—That law settles forever, with a strength beyond all terms of human enactment, that slavery cannot exist in California or New Mexico. Understand me, sir; I mean slavery as we regard it; slaves in gross, of the colored race, transferable by sale and delivery like other property. I shall not discuss the point, but I leave it to the learned gentlemen who have undertaken to discuss it, but I suppose there is no slave of that description in California now. I understand that *peonism*, a sort of penal servitude, exists there, or rather a sort of voluntary sale of a man and his offspring for debt, as it is arranged and exists in some parts of California and New Mexico. But what I mean to say is, that African slavery, as we see it among us, is as utterly impossible to find itself, or to be found in Mexico, as any other natural impossibility. California and New Mexico are Asiatic, in their formation and scenery. They are composed of vast ridges of mountains of enormous height, with broken ridges and deep valleys. The sides of these mountains are barren, entirely barren, their tops capped by perennial snow. There may be in California, now made free by its constitution, and no doubt there are, some tracts of valuable land. But it is not so in New Mexico. Pray what is the evidence which every gentleman must have obtained on this subject, from information sought for himself or communicated by others. I have enquired and read all I could find, in order to obtain information. What is there in New Mexico that could by any possibility induce any body to go there with slaves? There are some narrow strips of tillable lad on the borders of the rivers; but the rivers themselves dry up before midsummer is gone. All that the people can do, is to raise some little articles, some little wheat for their tortillas, and all that by irrigation. And who expects to see a hundred black men cultivating tobacco, corn, cotton, rice, or any thing else, on lands in New Mexico made fertile only by irrigation? I look upon it, therefore, as a fixed fact, to use an expression current at this day, that both California and New Mexico are destined to be free, so far as they are sealed at all, which I believe, especially in regard to New Mexico, will be very little for a great length of time; free by the arrangement of things by the Power above us. I have therefore to say, in this respect also, that this country is fixed for freedom, to as many persons as shall ever live there, by as irrepealable and more irrepealable a law, than the law that attaches to the right of holding slaves in Texas; and I will say further, that if a resolution, or a law, were now before us to provide a territorial Government for New Mexico, I would not vote to put any prohibition into it whatever.—The use of such a prohibition would be idle, as it respects any effect it would have upon the Territory; and I would not take pains to reaffirm an ordinance of Nature, nor to re-enact the will of God. And I would put in no Wilmot Proviso for the purpose of a taunt or a reproach. I would put into it no evidence of the votes of superior power, to wound the pride, even whether a just pride, a rational pride, or an irrational pride, to wound the pride of the gentlemen who belong to the Southern States. I have no such object, no such purpose. They would think it a taunt, an indignity; they would think it to be an act taking away from them what they regard a proper equality of privilege; and whether they expect to realize any benefit from it or not, they would think it a theoretic wrong; that something more or less derogatory to their character and their rights had taken place. I propose to inflict no such wound upon any body, unless something essentially important to the country, and efficient to the preservation of liberty and freedom, is to be effected. Therefore, I repeat, sir, and I repeat it because I wish to be understood, that I do not propose to address the Senate often on this subject. I desire to pour out all my heart in as plain a manner as possible; and I say, again, that if a proposition were now here for a Government for New Mexico, and it was moved to insert a provision for a prohibition of slavery, I would not vote for it.

Now, Mr President, I have established, so far as I proposed to go into any line of observation to establish, the proposition with which I set out, and upon which I propose to stand or fall; and that is, that the whole territory of the states in the United States, or in the newly acquired territory of the United States, has a fixed and settled character, now fixed and settled by law, which cannot be repealed in the case of Texas without a violation of public faith, and cannot be repealed by any human power in regard to California or New Mexico; that, under one or other of these laws, every foot of territory in the states or in the territories has now received a fixed and decided character.

Sir, if we were now making a government for New Mexico, and any body should propose a Wilmot proviso, I should treat it exactly as Mr Polk treated that provision for excluding slavery from Oregon. Mr Polk was known to be in opinion decidedly averse to the Wilmot proviso; but he felt the necessity of establishing a government for the territory of Oregon, and, though the proviso was there, he knew it would be entirely nugatory; and, since it must be entirely nugatory, since it took away no right, no describable, no estimable, no weighable or tangible right of the South, he said he would sign the bill for the sake of enacting a law to form a government in that territory, and let the entirely useless, and, in that connexion, entirely senseless, proviso remain. For myself, I will say that we hear much of the annexation of Canada; and if there be any man, any of the Northern democracy, or any one of the free soil party, who supposes it necessary to insert a Wilmot proviso in a territorial government for New Mexico, that man will of course be of opinion that it is necessary to protect the everlasting snows of Canada from the foot of slavery by the same overpowering wing of an act of Congress. Sir, wherever there is a particular good to be done; wherever there is a foot of land to be staid back from becoming slave territory, I am ready to assert the principle of the exclusion of slavery. I am pledged to it from the year 1837; I have been pledged to it again and again; and I will perform those pledges; but I will not do a thing unnecessary, that wounds the feelings of others, or that does disgrace to my own understanding.

Mr President, in the excited times in which we live, there is found to exist a state of crimination and recrimination between the North and South. There are lists of grievances produced by each; and those grievances, real or supposed, alienate the minds of one portion of the country from the other, exasperate the feelings, subdue the sense of fraternal connexion, and patriotic love and mutual regard. I shall bestow a little attention, upon these various grievances produced on the one side and on the other. I begin with the complaints of the South. I will not answer, further than I have, the general statements of the honorable Senator from South Carolina, that the North has grown upon the South in consequence of the manner of administering this government, in the collecting of its revenues, and so forth. These are disputed topics, and I have no inclination to enter into them. But I will state these complaints, especially one complaint of the South, which has, in my opinion, just foundation; and that is, that there has been found at the North, among individuals, and among the legislators of the North, a disinclination to perform, fully, their constitutional duties in regard to the return of persons bound to service, who have escaped into the free States. In that respect it is my judgment that the South is right, and the North is wrong. Every member of every Northern Legislature is bound like every other officer in the country, by oath, to support the Constitution of the United States; and this article of the Constitution, which says to these States they shall deliver up fugitives from service, is as binding in honor and conscience as any other article. No man fulfils his duty in any Legislature who sets himself to find excuses, evasions, escapes from this constitutional obligation. I have always thought that the constitution addressed itself to the Legislatures of the States themselves, or to the States themselves. It says that those persons escaping to other States shall be delivered up, and I confess I have always been of the opinion that it was an injunction upon the States themselves. When it is said that a person escaping into another State, and becoming therefore within the jurisdiction of that State shall be delivered up, it seems to me the import of the passage is, that the State itself, in obedience to the Constitution, shall cause him to be delivered up. That is my judgment. I have always entertained that opinion, and I entertain it now. But when the subject, some years ago, was before the Supreme Court of the United States, the majority of the judges held that the power to cause fugitives from service to be delivered up was a power to be exercised under the authority of this Government. I do not know, on the whole, that it may not have been a fortunate decision. My habit is to respect the result of judicial deliberations, and the solemnity of judicial decisions. But as it now stands, the business of seeing that these fugitives are delivered up resides in the power of Congress and the national judicature, and my friend at the head of the Judiciary Committee has a bill on the subject now before the Senate, with some amendments to it, which I propose to support, with all its provisions, to the fullest extent. And I desire to call the attention of all sober-minded men, of all conscientious men, in the North, of all men who are not carried away by any fanatical idea or by any false idea whatever, to their Constitutional obligations. I put it to all the sober and sound minds at the North as a question of morals and a question of conscience. What right have they, in their legislative capacity, or any other, to endeavor to get round this constitution, to embarrass the free exercise of the rights secured by the Constitution to the persons whose slaves escape from them? None at all; none at all. Neither in the form of conscience, nor before the face of the Constitution, are they justified, in my opinion. Of course it is a matter for their consideration. They probably, in the turmoil of the times, have not stopped to consider of this; they have followed what seem to be the current of thought and of motives, as the occasion arose, and neglected to investigate fully the real question, and to consider their constitutional obligations; as I am sure, if they did consider, they would fulfil them with alacrity.—Therefore, I repeat, sir, that here is a ground of complaint against the North well founded, which ought to be removed, which it is now in the power of the different departments of this Government to remove; which calls for the enactment of proper laws authorizing the judicature of this government, in the several states, to do all that is necessary for the recapture of fugitive slaves, and for the restoration of them to those who claim them. Wherever I go, and whenever I speak on this subject—and when I speak here I desire to speak to the whole North—I say that the South has been injured in this respect, and has a right to complain; and the North has been too careless of what I think the Constitution peremptorily and emphatically enjoins upon it as a duty.

Complaint has been made against certain resolutions that emanate from Legislatures at the North, and are sent here to us, not only on the subject of slavery in this District, but sometimes recommending Congress to consider the means of abolishing slavery in the states. I should be sorry to be called upon to present any resolutions here which could not be referable to any committee or any power in Congress, and, therefore, I should be very unwilling to receive from Massachusetts instructions to present resolutions expressing any opinion whatever upon slavery as it exists at the present moment in the States, for two reasons; because, first, I do not consider that the Legislature of Massachusetts has anything to do with it; and next, I do not consider that I, as her representative here, have anything to do with it. Sir, it has become, in my opinion, quite too common; and if the Legislatures of the States do not like that opinion, they have a great deal more power to put it down than I have to uphold it. It has become, in my opinion, quite too common a practice for the state legislatures to present resolutions here, on all subjects, and to instruct us here on all subjects. There is no public man that requires instructions more than I do, or who requires information more than I do, or desires it more heartily; but I do not like to have it come in too imperative a shape. I took notice, with pleasure, of some remarks upon this subject made the other day in the Senate of Massachusetts, by a young man of talent and character, from whom the best hopes may be entained. I mean Mr Hilliard. He told the Senate of Massachusetts that he would vote for no instructions whatever to be forwarded to members of Congress, nor for any resolutions to be offered, expressive of the sense of Massachusetts as to what their members of Congress ought to do. He said that he saw no propriety in one set of public servants giving instructions and reading lectures to another set of public servants. To their own master all of them must stand or fall, and that master is their constituents. I wish these sentiments could become more common, a great deal more common. I have never entered into the question, and never shall, about the binding force of instructions. I will, however, simply say this: if there be any matter of interest pending in this body, while I am a member of it, in which Massachusetts has an interest of her own not adverse to the general interest of the country, I shall pursue her instructions with gladness of heart, and with all the efficiency which I can bring it. But if the question be one which affects her interest, and at the same time affects the interests of all other states, I shall no more regard her particular wishes or instructions than I would regard the wishes of a man who might appoint me an arbiter or referee to decide some question of important private right, and who might instruct me to decide in his favor. If ever there was a Government upon earth, it is this Government, if ever there was a body upon earth, it is this body, which should consider itself as composed by agreement of all, appointed by some, but organized by the general consent of all, sitting here under the solemn obligations of oath and conscience to do that which they think is best for the good of the whole.

Then, sir, there are these abolition societies, of which I am unwilling to speak, but in regard to which I have very clear notions and opinions. I do not think them useful. I think their operations for the last twenty years have produced nothing good or valuable. At the same time, I know thousands of them are honest and good men; perfectly well meaning men. They have excited feelings, they think they must do something for the cause of liberty, and in their sphere of action they do not see what else they can do, than to contribute to an abolition press or an abolition society, or to pay an abolition lecturer. I do not mean to impute gross motives even to the leaders of these societies, but I am not blind to the consequences. I cannot but see what mischiefs their interference with the South has produced. And is it not plain to every man?—Let any gentleman who doubts of that, recur to the debates in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1832, and he will see with what freedom a proposition made by Mr Randolph for the gradual abolition of slavery was discussed in that body. Every one spoke of slavery as he thought; very ignominious and disparaging names and epithets were applied to it. The debates in the House of Delegates on that occasion, I believe, were all published. They were read by every colored man who could read, and if there were any who could not read, those debates were read to them by others. At that time Virginia was not unwilling nor afraid to discuss this question, and to let that part of her population know as much of it as they could learn. That was in 1832.—As has been said by the honorable member from South Carolina, these abolition societies commenced their course of action in 1835. It is said—I do not know how true it may be—that they sent incendiary publications into the slave states; at any event, they attempted to arouse, and did arouse, a very strong feeling; in other words, they created great agitation in the North against Southern slavery. Well, what was the result? The bonds of the slaves were bound more firmly than before; their rivets were more strongly fastened. Public opinion, which in Virginia had begun to be exhibited against slavery, and was opening out for the discussion of the question, drew back and shut itself up in its castle. I wish to know whether any body in Virginia, can, now, talk as Mr Randolph, Gov. McDowell, and others talked there, openly, and sent their remarks to the press, in 1832.—We all know the fact, and we all know the cause, and every thing that this agitating people have done has been, not to enlarge but to restrain, not to set free, but to bind faster the slave population of the South.—That is my judgment. Sir, as I have said, I know many abolitionists in my own neighborhood, very honest and good people, misled, as I think, by strange enthusiasm; but they wish to do something, and they are called on to contribute, and they do contribute; and it is my firm opinion this day, that within the last twenty years as much money has been collected and paid to the abolition societies, abolition presses, and abolition lecturers, as would purchase the freedom of every slave, man, woman, and child in the state of Maryland, and send them all to Liberia. I have no doubt of it. But I have yet to learn that the benevolence of these abolition societies has at any time taken that particular turn. [Laughter.]

Again, sir, the violence of the press is complained of. The press violent! Why, sir, the press is violent every where. There are outrageous reproaches in the North against the South, and there are reproaches in not much better taste in the South against the North. Sir, the extremists in both parts of this country are violent; they mistake loud and violent talk for eloquence and for reason. They think that he who talks loudest reasons the best. And this we must expect, when the press is free, as it is here, and I trust always will be—for, with all its licentiousness, and all its evil, the entire and absolute freedom of the press is essential to the preservation of government on the basis of a free Constitution. Wherever it exists, there will be foolish paragraphs and violent paragraphs in the press, as there are, I am sorry to say, foolish speeches and violent speeches in both Houses of Congress. In truth, sir, I must say that, in my opinion, the vernacular tongue of the country has become greatly vitiated, depraved, and corrupted by the style of our congressional debates. [Laughter.] And if it were possible for our debates in Congress to vitiate the principles of the people as much as they have depraved their taste, I should cry out, "God save the Republic."

Well, in all this I see no solid grievance, no grievance presented by the South, within the redress of the government, but the single one to which I have referred; and that is, the want of a proper regard to the injunction of the Constitution for the delivery of fugitive slaves.

There are also complaints of the North against the South. I need not go over them particularly. The first and gravest is, that, the North adopted the Constitution recognizing the existence of slavery in the States, and recognizing the right, to a certain extent, of representation of the slaves in Congress, under a state of sentiment and expectation which do not now exist; and that by events, by circumstances, by the eagerness of the South to acquire territory and extend their slave population, the North finds itself, in regard to the influence of the South and the North, of the free States and the slave States, where it never did expect to find itself when they entered the compact of the Constitution. They complain, therefore, that instead of slavery being regarded as an evil as it was then, and an evil which all hoped would be extinguished gradually, it is now regarded by the South as an institution to be cherished and preserved and extended; an institution which the South has already extended to the utmost of her power by the acquisition of new territory. Well, then, passing from that, every body in the North reads; and every body reads whatsoever the newspapers contain; and the newspapers, some of them, especially those presses to which I have alluded, are careful to spread about among the people every reproachful sentiment uttered by any Southern man bearing at all against the North; every thing that is calculated to exasperate, to alienate; and there are many such things, as every body will admit, from the South or some portion of it, which are spread abroad among the reading people; and they do exasperate, and alienate, and produce a most mischievous effect upon the public mind at the North. Sir, I would not notice things of this sort appearing in obscure quarters; but one thing has occurred in this debate which struck me very forcibly. An honorable member from Louisiana addressed us the other day on this subject. I suppose there is not a more amiable or worthy gentleman in this chamber—nor a gentleman who would be more slow to give offence to any body, and he did not mean in his remarks to give offence? But what did he say? Why, sir, he took pains to run a contrast between the slaves of the South and the laboring people of the North, giving the preference in all points of condition, and comfort, and happiness, to the slaves of the South. The Hon. member doubtless did not suppose that he gave any offence, or did any injustice. He was merely expressing his opinion. But does he know how remarks of that sort will be received by the laboring people of the North? Why, who are the laboring people of the North? They are the North. They are the people who cultivate their own farms with their own hands; freeholders, educated men, independent men. Let me say, sir, that five sixths of the whole property of the North is in the hands of the laborers of the North; they cultivate their farms, they educate their children, they provide the means of independence; if they are not freeholders, they earn wages, these wages accumulate, are turned into capital, into new freeholds, and small capitalists are created. This is the case, and such the course of things, with us, among the industrious and frugal. And what can these people think when so respectable and worthy a gentleman as the member from Louisiana undertakes to prove that the absolute ignorance and the abject slavery of the South is more in conformity with the high purposes and destiny of immortal, rational, human beings, than the educated, the independent free laborers of the North? There is a more tangible, and irritating cause of grievance at the North. Free blacks are constantly employed, generally as cooks or stewards.—When the vessel arrives, these free colored men, are taken on shore, by the police or municipal authority, imprisoned, and kept in prison, till the vessel is again ready to sail. This is not only irritating, but exceeding inconvenient in practice, and seems altogether impracticable and oppressive. Mr. Hoar's mission, some time ago, to South Carolina, was a well intended effort to remove this cause of complaint. The North thinks such imprisonment illegal, and unconstitutional; as the cases occur constantly and frequently, they think it a great grievance.

Now, sir, so far as any of those grievances have their foundation in matters of law, they can be redressed, and ought to be redressed, and so far as they have their foundation in matters of opinion, in sentiment, in mutual crimination and recrimination, all that we can do is to endeavor to allay the agitation and cultivate a better feeling and more fraternal sentiments between the South and the North.

Mr. President, I should much prefer to have heard from every member on this floor declarations of opinion that this Union should never be dissolved, than the declaration of opinion that in any case, under the pressure of any circumstances, such a dissolution was possible. I hear with pain and anguish, and distress, the word secession—especially when it falls from the lips of those who are eminently patriotic, and known to the country, and known all over the world, for their political services. Secession! Peaceable secession! Sir, your eyes and mine are never destined to see that miracle! The dismemberment of this vast country without convulsion! The breaking up of the fountains of the great deep without ruffling the surface! Who is so foolish—I beg every body's pardon—as to expect to see any such thing? Sir, he who sees these States, now revolving in harmony around a common centre, expecting to see them quit their places and fly off without convulsion, may look, the next hour, to see the heavenly bodies rush from their spheres and jostle against each other in the realms of space without producing the crash of the Universe. There can be no such thing as peaceable secession. Peaceable secession in an utter impossibility.—Is the great Constitution under which we live here—covering this whole country—is it to be thawed and melted away by secession, as the snows on the mountain melt under the influence of the vernal sun?—disappear almost unobserved, and die off? No, sir! No. sir! I will not state what might produce the disruption of the States; but, sir, I see it as plainly as I see the sun in heaven—I see that disruption must produce such a war as I will not describe *in its twofold character!*

Peaceable secession!—peaceable secession! The concurrent agreement of all the members of this great republic to separate! A voluntary separation, with alimony on one side and on the other. Why, what would be the result? Where is the line to be drawn? What States are to secede? What is to remain American?—What am I to be? An American no longer? Where is the flag of the Republic to remain? Where is the eagle still to tower? or is he to cower and shrink and fall to the ground? Why, sir, our ancestors,—our fathers and our grand fathers, those of them that are yet living amongst us with prolonged lives, would rebuke and reproach us; and your children and our grand children would cry out shame upon us, if we of this generation should dishonor these ensigns of the power of the Government and the harmony of the Union which is every way felt among us with so much joy and gratitude. What is to become of the army? What is to become of the navy? What is to become of the public lands? How is each of the thirty States to defend itself? I know, although the idea has not been stated distinctly. There is to be a Southern Confederacy. I do not mean, when I allude to this statement, that any one seriously contemplates such a state of things. I do not mean to say that it is true, but I have heard it suggested elsewhere that that idea originated in a design to separate. I am sorry, sir, that it has ever been thought of, talked of, or dreamed of, in the wildest flights of human imagination. But the idea must be of a separation including the slave states upon one side and the free states on the other. Sir, there is not—I may express myself too strongly perhaps—but some things, some moral things, are almost as impossible as other natural or physical things; and I hold the idea of a separation of these States, those that are free to form one government, and those that are slaveholding to form another, as a moral impossibility. We could not separate the States by any such line, if we were to draw it. We could not sit down here to-day and draw a line of separation that would satisfy any five men in the country. There are natural causes that would keep and tie us together—and there are social and domestic relations which we could not break if we would, and which, we should not if we could.—Sir, nobody can look over the face of this country at the present moment—nobody can see where its population is the most dense and growing, without being ready to admit, and compelled to admit, that ere long America will be in the valley of the Mississippi.

Well, now, sir, I beg to inquire what the wildest enthusiast has to say on the possibility of cutting off that river and leaving free states at its source and branches, and slave states down near its mouth? Pray, sir, pray, sir, let me say to the people of this country that these things are worthy of their pondering and of their consideration. Here, sir, are five millions of freemen in the free states north of the river Ohio; can any body suppose that this population can be severed by a line that divides them from the territory of a foreign and an alien government, down somewhere, the Lord knows where, upon the lower banks of the Mississippi? What would become of Missouri? Will she join the arrondissement of the slave states? Shall the man from the Yellow Stone and the Platte River be connected in the new Republic with the man who lives on the Southern extremity of the Cape of Florida? Sir, I am ashamed to pursue this line of remark. I dislike it—I have an utter disgust for it. I would rather hear of natural blasts and mildews, war, pestilence, and famine, than to hear gentlemen talk of secession. To break up!—to break up this great Government—to dismember this great country—to astonish Europe with an act of folly such as Europe for two centuries has never beheld in any Government! No, sir; no sir! There will be no secession. Gentlemen are not serious when they talk of secession.

Sir, I hear there is to be a Convention to be held at Nashville. I am bound to believe that if worthy gentlemen meet at Nashville in Convention, their object will be to adopt counsels conciliatory—to advise the South to forbearance and moderation, and to advise the North to forbearance and moderation; and to inculcate principles of brotherly love and affection, and attachment to the constitution of the country as it now is. I believe, if the Convention meet at all, it will be for this purpose; for certainly, if they meet for any purpose hostile to the Union, they have been singularly inappropriate in their selection of a place. I remember, sir, that when the treaty was concluded between France and England at the peace of Amiens, a stern old Englishman and an orator, who disliked the terms of the peace as ignominious to England, said in the House of Commons, that if King William could know the terms of that treaty, he would turn in his coffin.—Let me commend the saying of Mr. Windham, in all its emphasis and in all its force, to any persons who shall meet at Nashville for the purpose of concocting measures for the overthrow of the Union of this country over the bones of Andrew Jackson.

Sir, I wish to make two remarks, and hasten to a conclusion. I wish to say, in regard to Texas, that if it should be hereafter at any time the pleasure of the Government of Texas to cede to the United States a portion, larger or smaller, of her territory which lies adjacent to New Mexico and North of 34 deg. of North latitude, to be formed into free states, for a fair equivalent in money or in the payment of her debt. I think it an object well worthy the consideration of Congress, and I shall be happy to concur in it myself, if I should be in the public councils of the country at the time.

I have one other remark to make. In my observations upon slavery as it has existed in the country, and as it now exists, I have expressed no opinion of the mode of its extinguishment or amelioration. I will say, however, though I have nothing to propose on that subject, because I do not deem myself so competent as other gentlemen to consider it, that if any gentleman from the South shall propose a scheme of colonization, to be carried on by this government upon a large scale, for the transportation of free colored people to any colony or any place in the world, I should be quite disposed to incur almost any degree of expense to accomplish that object. Nay, sir, following an example set here more than twenty years ago by a great man, then a Senator from New York, I would return to Virginia,—and through her for the benefit of the whole South—the money received from the lands and territories ceded by her to this Government, for any such purpose as to relieve, in whole or in part, or in any way to diminish or deal beneficially with the free colored population of the Southern States. I have said that I honor Virginia for her cession of this territory. There have been received into the treasury of the United States eighty millions of dollars, the proceeds of the sales of public lands ceded by Virginia. If the residue should be sold at the same rate, the whole aggregate will exceed two hundred millions of dollars. If Virginia and the South see fit to adopt any proposition to relieve themselves from the free people of color among them, they have my free consent that the Government shall pay them any sum of money out of the proceeds which may be adequate to the purpose.

And now, Mr. President, I draw these observations to a close. I have spoken freely, and I meant to do so. I have sought to make no display; I have sought to enliven the occasion by no animated discussion; nor have I attempted any train of elaborate argument. I have sought only to speak my sentiments, fully and at large, being desirous once and for all to let the Senate know, and to let the country know, the opinions and sentiments which I entertain on all these subjects. These opinions are not likely to be suddenly changed. If there be any future service that I can render to the country, consistently with these sentiments and opinions, I shall cheerfully render it. If there be not, I shall still be glad to have had an opportunity to disburden my conscience from the bottom of my heart, and to make known every political sentiment that therein exists.

And now, Mr. President, instead of speaking of the possibility or utility of secession, instead of dwelling in these caverns of darkness, instead of groping with those ideas so full of all that is horrid and horrible, let us come out into the light of day; let us enjoy the fresh air of Liberty and Union; let us cherish those hopes which belong to us; let us devote ourselves to those great objects that are fit for our consideration and our action; let us raise our conceptions to the magnitude and the importance of the duties that devolve upon us; let our comprehension be as broad as the country for which we act, our aspirations as high as its certain destiny; let us not be pigmies in a case that calls for men. Never did there devolve on any generation of men higher trusts than now devolve upon us for the preservation of this Constitution, and the harmony and peace of all who are destined to live under it. Let us make our generation one of the strongest and the brightest links in that golden chain which is destined, I fondly believe, to grapple the people of all the states to this Constitution for ages to come. It is a great Constitutional Government, guarded by legislation, by law, by judicature, and defended by the whole affections of the people. No monarchial throne presses these states together; no iron chain of despotic power encircles them; they live and stand upon a Government popular in its form, representative in its character, founded upon principles of equality, and calculated, we hope, to last forever. In all its history it has been beneficent; it has trodden down no man's liberty; it has crushed no state. Its daily respiration is liberty and patriotism, its yet youthful veins are full of enterprise, courage and honorable love of glory and renown. Large before, the country has now, by recent events, became vastly larger. This republic now extends, with a vast breadth, across the whole continent. The two great seas of the world wash one and the other shore.—We realize, on a mighty scale, the beautiful description of the ornamental edging of the Buckler of Achilles:—

"Now the broad shield complete the artist crowned,
With his last hand, and poured the ocean round;
In living silver seemed the waves to roll,
And beat the buckler's verge, and bound the whole."

Mr. CALHOUN.—I rise to correct what I conceive to be an error of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts as to the motives which induced the acquisition of Florida, Louisiana and Texas. He attributed it to the great growth of cotton, and the desire of the Southern people to get an extension of territory, with the view of cultivating it with more profit than they could in a compact and crowded settlement.—Now, Mr. President, the history of these acquisitions I think was not correctly given. It is well known that the acquisition of Florida was the result of an Indian war.—The Seminole Indians residing on the line attacked one of our fortresses; troops were ordered out, they were driven back; and, under the command of General Jackson, Pensacola and St. Marks were seized. It was these acts, and not the desire for the extended cultivation of cotton, which led to the acquisition of Florida. I admit that there had been for a long time a desire on the part of the South, and of the administration, I believe, to acquire Florida, but it was very different from the reason assigned by the honorable Senator. There were collected together four tribes of Indians—the Creeks, the Choctaws, the Chickasaws, and the Cherokees, about thirty thousand warriors—who held connexion, almost the whole of them, with the Spanish authorities in Florida, and carried on a trade perpetually with them. It was well known that a most pernicious influence was exercised over them; and it was the desire of preventing conflicts between the Indians and ourselves in the South, as I believe, which induced the acquisition of Florida. I come now to Louisiana. We well know that the immediate cause for the acquisition of Louisiana was the suspension of our right of deposite at New Orleans. Under a treaty with Spain we had a right to the navigation of the river as far as New Orleans, and a right to make deposites in the port of New Orleans. The Spanish authorities interrupted that right, and that interruption produced a great agitation at the West, and I may say, throughout the whole United States. The gentlemen then in opposition, a highly respectable party—the old Federal party, which I have never said a word of disrespect in regard to—if I mistake not, took the lead in a desire to resort to arms to acquire that territory. Mr. Jefferson, more prudent, desired to procure it by purchase. A purchase was made, in order to remove the difficulty and to give an outlet to the West to the ocean. That was the immediate cause of the acquisition of Louisiana.—Now, sir, we come to Texas. Perhaps no gentleman had more to do with the acquisition of Texas than myself; and I aver, Mr. President, that I would have been among the very last individuals in the United States to have made any movement at that time for the acquisition of Texas; and I go further, if I know myself, I was incapable of acquiring any territory simply on the ground that it was to be an enlargement of slave territory. I would just as freely have acquired it if it had been on the Northern as on the Southern side. No, sir, very different motives actuated me. I knew at a very early period—I will not go into the history of it—the British Government had given encouragement to the abolitionists of the United States, who were represented at the World's Convention. The question of the abolition of slavery was agitated in that Convention. One gentleman stated that Mr. Adams informed them that if the British Government wished to abolish slavery in the United states they must begin with Texas. A commission was sent by this World's Convention to the British Secretary of State, Lord Aberdeen; and it so happened that a gentleman was present when the interview took place between Lord Aberdeen and the Committee, who gave me a full account of it shortly after it occurred. Lord Aberdeen fell into the project, and gave full encouragement to the abolitionists.—Well, sir, it is well known that Lord Aberdeen was a very discreet, and, in my opinion, a very honest and worthy man; and when Mr. Pakenham was sent here to negotiate with regard to Oregon, and incidentally with respect to Texas, he was ordered to read a declaration to this Government, stating that the British Government was anxious to put an end to slavery all over the world, commencing at Texas. It is well known, further, that at that very time a negotiation was going on between France and England to accomplish that object, and our Government was thrown by stratagem out of the negotiation; and that object was, first, to induce Mexico to acknowledge the independence of Texas upon the ground that she would abolish it. All these are matters of history; and where is the man so blind—I am sure the Senator from Massachusetts is not so blind—as not to see that if the project of Great Britain had been successful, the whole frontier of the states of Louisiana and Arkansas, and the adjacent States, would have been exposed to the inroads of British emissaries. Sir, so far as I was concerned, I put it exclusively upon that ground. I never would run into the folly of re-annexation, which I always held to be absurd. Nor, sir, would I put it upon the ground—which I might well have put it—of commercial and manufacturing considerations; because those were not my motive principles, and I chose to assign what were. So far as commerce and manufacturers were concerned, I would not have moved in the matter at that early period.

The Senator objects that many northern gentlemen voted for annexation. Why, sir, it was natural that they should be desirous of fulfilling the obligations of the constitution; and, besides, what man at that time doubted that the Missouri compromise line would be adopted, and that the territory would fall entirely to the South? All that Northern men asked for at that time was the extension of that line. Their course, in my opinion, was eminently correct and patriotic.

Now, Mr. President, having made these corrections, I must go back a little further, and correct a statement which I think the Senator has left very defective, relative to the ordinance of 1787. He states very correctly that it commenced under the Old Confederation; that it was afterwards confirmed by Congress; that Congress was sitting in New York at the time, while the Convention sat in Philadelphia; and that there was concert of action. I have not looked into the ordinance very recently, but my memory will serve me thus far, that Mr. Jefferson introduced his first proposition to exclude slavery in 1784. There was a vote taken upon it, and I think on that vote every southern delegate voted against it; but I am not certain of it. One thing I am certain of, that it was three years before the ordinance could pass. It was sturdily resisted down to 1787; and when it was passed, as I had good reason to believe, it was upon a principle of compromise; first, that the ordinance should contain a provision similar to the one put in the constitution with respect to fugitive slaves; and next, that it should be inserted in the constitution; and this was the compromise upon which the prohibition was inserted in the ordinance of 1787. We thought we had an indemnity in that, but we made a great mistake. Of what possible advantage has it been to us? Violated faith has met us on every side, and the advantage has been altogether in their favor.—On the other side, it has been thrown open to a northern population, to the entire seclusion of the southern. This was the leading measure which destroyed the compromise of the constitution, and then followed the Missouri compromise, which was carried by northern votes, although now disavowed and not respected by them. That was the next step, and between these two causes the equilibrium has been broken.

Having made these remarks, let me say that I took great pleasure in listening to the declaration of the honorable Senator from Massachusetts upon several points. He puts himself upon the fulfilment of the contract of Congress in the resolution of Texas annexation, for the admission of the four new states provided for by those resolutions to be formed out of the territory of Texas. All that was manly, statesmanlike, and calculated to do good, because just. He went further; he condemned, and rightfully condemned, and in that he has shown great firmness, the course of the North relative to the stipulations of the Constitution for the restoration of fugitive slaves; but permit me to say, for I desire to be candid upon all subjects, that if the Senator, together with many friends on this side of the chamber, puts his confidence in the bill which has been reported here, further to extend the laws of Congress upon this subject, it will prove fallacious. It is impossible to execute any law of Congress until the people of the states shall co-operate.

I heard the gentleman with great pleasure say that he would not vote for the Wilmot Proviso, for he regarded such an act unnecessary, considering that Nature had already excluded slave-