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4265.485

(AMERICANISM—SLAVERY QUESTION.) 2

2 1857
SPEECH OF

HON. THOMAS P. (AKERS),

OF MISSOURI,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 14, 1857.

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SPEECH, &c.

The House being in the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. AKERS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I had hoped—indeed I may say I had confidently expected—that the ordinary subjects of Congressional legislation would not be held in abeyance during the present short session of Congress, by the rehearsal of fanatical lectures on the ethics of slavery. I had hoped that the slavery agitation—that “ghost of Banquo” which has haunted these Halls so long—would suspend its disturbing and distracting influences; if not for all future time, at least until capital is needed for another Presidential campaign. I had hoped that, now the election is over, the country would enjoy a season of repose—that members of all parties would meet here and cordially co-operate with each other in promoting the common interests of the nation. The people throughout the land have entertained these hopes. They have looked to this session of Congress for something more substantial—of more real intrinsic worth, than mere electioneering speeches, whose greatest merit consists in the faithfulness with which they reproduce the issues and arguments which have been met and answered during the recent campaign in almost every village and neighborhood of the land, and with which the people are quite as familiar as the honorable members who deliver them. Thus far, however, they have looked in vain!

What a spectacle do we of the American Congress this day present to the world! Chosen and sent here to legislate for a people indisputably the most flourishing on the face of the globe; appointed to act as the immediate guardians of the most liberal government ever framed by the skill and wisdom of man; invested with the power of controlling its commerce, the great world-magnet which if properly adjusted, would attract and draw to our shores a large share of the wealth of all nations; clothed with power and expressly commissioned to develop its agriculture, whose Titanic

force of enginery moves the whole vast machinery of our social and political affairs—occupying this high position, and invested with these noble trusts—we yet continue, from day to day, and from week to week, to thrust aside these great interests, to turn our backs upon them, and engage in a driveling discussion which we all know can have no other effect than to widen the breach, and deepen the animosity, and embitter the strife between those sections of the Union which are now so unhappily and so defiantly arrayed, the one against the other.

The slavery agitation has become a sort of exclusive monopoly in both Houses of Congress. It seems to have acquired, possibly under the reign of “squatter sovereignty,” a perpetual pre-emption right to this floor. And so it is, also, in the other end of the Capitol. Neither here nor there can any other subject obtain a respectable hearing.

Near the close of the last session the wheels of the government were actually locked in order that agitation might have

“Ample scope and verge enough.”

When Congress adjourned, and the members went home to their constituents, they found the whole country convulsed with a tempest which they had called into being on the floor of this House, and which a reckless fanaticism was fast guiding and deepening into public ruin. No part of the country was entirely exempt from the all-prevalent excitement.—From North to South, from the rising to the setting sun—in every State of this great Confederacy—the slavery agitation simultaneously raged.

I had hoped that the storm, from its very violence, would have exhausted its fury during the Presidential campaign; but in this hope I have been most signally disappointed. At the very threshold of the present session we found ourselves again beset by this intolerable nuisance. The presentation, by one of my colleagues, of the credentials of the Delegate

not proviso; and are we to regard them all as Free-soilers? Surely the gentleman will not have the hardihood to assert it. He will hardly have the daring effrontery to rise up in his place, and so insult the living, and reproach the patriotism of the illustrious dead. Sir, the Legislature of the State of Missouri, and that a Democratic Legislature, declared by resolution that the peace, the permanency, and the safety of the Union depended on a strict adherence to the *principle* of the Compromise line, in its application to *all* the new territory acquired by purchase or otherwise. And it instructed its Senators, and requested its Representatives in Congress, to vote for the *further extension of that line*. But the gentleman insists that the *principle* of the Missouri compromise was the same as that of the Wilmot proviso. Does he mean to affirm that a Democratic Legislature, in a slave State, instructed the Senators of that State, and requested its Representatives in Congress to vote for the principle of the Wilmot proviso? Surely this is not his meaning, though it is a fair deduction from his premises. Sir, I fearlessly affirm—and I do it with the names and the votes before me—that from 1820 to 1854, a period of more than thirty years, Southern men defended and voted to sustain that line, while Northern men refused to recognise it, and voted against it. In 1854 the Democrats and Free-soilers changed sides. And now, because the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. DAVIS] is unwilling to stultify himself, as his colleague [Mr. BOWIE] has done, by whirling a political somersault, and planting himself on precisely the same position that Mr. HALE and his followers occupied before the Compromise line was repealed—because he denounces the “squatter sovereignty” of the Kansas-Nebraska act, and rebukes the unfairness of his political adversaries, as displayed in the recent canvass—because he believes and affirms that the existing agitation had its origin in that act—in short, because he refuses to accompany his colleague, and join the ranks of a party that carries the banner of “Buchanan and Breckinridge and slavery” in the South, and “Buchanan and Breckinridge and Free Kansas” in the North, he is branded as a Black Republican, seeking to Free-Soilize the State of M'd. The charge is a perfect mockery!

The statement of the gentleman's colleague [Mr. DAVIS] was simply one of fact. Who that has eyes to see and ears to hear can

deny the existence of slavery agitation? Who that is capable of thought can fail to discover its source? And who that has courage and manliness enough to avow his honest convictions will hesitate a moment to speak out, as the member from Maryland has done, and vindicate the truth of history? I hesitate not to affirm that a chasm has been opened in the floor of this House which the hands of all the true patriots of the land may not be able to close. For two years I have watched the traveling edges of that gulf. Statesmen abroad have not been unobservant. Indeed, a member of the British Parliament has actually fixed the day when its crumbling margin will undermine the institutions of our Government—when they and the great confederate temple itself will disclose their foundations to the world.

Sir, it is not a single cloud hanging on the horizon of Kansas, in which sleep the bolts that shall shiver an oak here and another there, and scathe a few forest shrubs, that now rises upon the view of the nation. The storm is raging in every region of the North. The lightning gleams, in its passage from one cloud to another, as if the whole forest would be enkindled—as if the tempest, before purifying the atmosphere, would spread in eccentric desolation on every side.

Sir, the views of the gentleman's colleague [Mr. DAVIS] are, substantially, the views of a large majority of those whom I have the honor to represent. If he is a Black Republican so are they. I, therefore, in the presence of this House, and in behalf of my constituents, hurl back into the teeth of their author the odious and slanderous epithets which he has seen fit to utter. I should lose the confidence of my constituents, and richly deserve the loss—nay, I should lose my own self respect, if I had not the courage to say precisely what I have said. My sense of justice would not allow me to say less: my limits forbid that I should say more.

I come now to what I shall call the *campaign* portion of the gentleman's speech. I refer to that part of it in which his droll utterance, and droller gesticulation, indicated so clearly the oratory of the *stump*. In this connection he characterized the American party as proscriptive of foreigners. Sir, in what sense is the policy of that party proscriptive? What does it propose in reference to the foreigner, that partakes of the nature of proscription. You answer, “It withholds from him,

or a time, the right of suffrage." And have not all parties, from the beginning of the Government, done precisely the same thing? We propose, as a party, nothing new in principle. The necessity of putting foreigners on probation, when they come to this country, is recognized by the existing laws of the land, and by the policy of all parties. We only ask to extend the term of probation. The difference between us and other parties, therefore, is a difference in regard to time, and is founded wholly in expediency. We say to the immigrant, "Sir, we are unwilling to invest you with the right of suffrage until you have learned how to exercise it." We tell him that the machinery of our Government is delicate and complex in its structure—that its motions are regulated by the great balance-wheel of free suffrage—and, therefore, that he should not touch it until he learns how to do so with safety. Otherwise, we tell him, he might disturb its equilibrium and unsettle its motions, in which event the innate powers of self-propulsion within the machinery of State would scatter its rolling and flying wheels in a thousand directions. We tell him he must not carry combustible material into the magazine until he learns where the train lies. Otherwise, he may set fire to the train, and the explosion may ruin both us and himself. Is there any proscription in this? If so, it is a proscription designed and adapted to protect the foreigner—a proscription that withholds from him only the means of his own ruin—that throws a wall of shields around both him and us, and keeps in check the horrors of misrule and anarchy. If ours is a war upon the foreigner, it is one in which the vanquished will share the spoils with the victor.

But, to give every conceivable argument of our political opponents its appropriate place and weight, I will pause here a single moment, and examine the alleged proscription of foreigners by the American party, in withholding from them the emoluments of office. This charge, based on the hypothesis last mentioned, scarcely rises to the rank of a sophistry. If a freeman may not prefer a native-born to a foreign-born citizen, and cast his vote accordingly, political liberty is a phantom, and free suffrage a mockery!

The error into which our political opponents have fallen is this: they fail to discriminate between *preferring* and *proscribing*—they attach

to the former the odium that properly belongs to the latter; but they do so only in reference to the American party. They seem to regard it as perfectly legitimate and right that a Democrat should prefer to be ruled by Democrats but if an American prefers to be ruled by Americans, and, in the exercise of free suffrage, votes accordingly, his action is branded as proscription.

"Strange such difference there should be
"Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee!"

But we Americans, it is said, make the *accident of birth*, while Democrats make *harmony of views*, the basis of preference. This is simply untrue. It is untrue both as it relates to them, and as it relates to us. Where, I demand, is the boasted harmony of their views?—where the basis and groundwork of their agreement? Is it in the *principle* (?) of the Kansas-Nebraska act? Their own speeches, delivered on this floor during the present Congress, clearly demonstrate their diversity of opinion as to what that principle is. They differ from each other in regard to its meaning and practical working out, as widely and as radically as they do from the Republicans themselves. Some of them affirm that it clothes the Territorial Legislature with power to establish or exclude slavery *whilst a Territory*. Others, admitting that it gives the power, deny that the "squatters" have a right to exercise it until they come to form a State constitution. There are those, again, who, strangely enough, insist that it gives the Territorial Legislature "no power whatever" over the subject of slavery, but that the power to establish or exclude it is inherent in the breast of the "squatter," and is, therefore, *underived*. This diversity of opinion was well understood before the meeting of the Cincinnati Convention; and yet there was no attempt on the part of that convention to define and fix its position. It simply inserted in its platform the ambiguous and intangible expression—"the principle of the Kansas-Nebraska act"—leaving the contestants of every locality "perfectly free to frame their own" construction of its meaning, and "regulate" the mode of attack and defence "in their own way," subject only to such limitations as are imposed by the *accommodating principles* of the Democratic party. Harmonious Democracy! Its fittest symbol was seen, in vision, by the Prophet of Patmos, and is described in his gorgeous apoc-

alypse as having "seven heads and ten horns." The figure would be perfect if the "heads" were *legion*, and the "horns" of each *obliterated* for battle with all the rest.

But it is not true, in the sense alleged, that we of the American party make the accident of birth the ground of our preference. This is our position: that it would be wiser and safer—both for us and the stranger who comes to live with us—to take charge of our own affairs, and govern our own household ourselves, than to give him the rein and trust to his uncertain and inexperienced guidance. We take it that the very existence of our government is endangered by an indiscriminate bestowment of office and suffrage upon the hundreds and thousands of foreigners who are annually thrown upon our shores.

It is not my purpose, in treating this branch of the subject, to worry the House and the country by rehearsing the tragic story of foreign crime, and foreign pauperism, and mobs, and riots, and all that. The public mind is already well informed in reference to these matters. They each and all have an important bearing on the subject in hand, and the lesson of warning which they read to the nation should not be wholly disregarded. But our greatest danger, in my opinion, comes from an entirely different quarter—a quarter to which the public mind has not yet been fairly directed. I refer to the corrupting "*isms*" which are fast being foisted upon us by foreigners in the great cities of the land. These are the points on which we are most vulnerable.

The relation of our cities to the country at large is well understood. We know that they are centres of wealth; that they are centres of power; that they are centres of intelligence; that they are the *great hearts* of the nation, which send out their pulsations to every part of it; so that what the cities are now the country soon will be.

I have only space to mention two of these pestilent "*isms*"—one of them imported from France, and the other from Germany.

The French "*ism*" writes its creed in one sentence—"Marriage is an unreasonable restraint, and ought to be abolished." This creed was inaugurated in the city of New York only a few years since, and now it counts its votaries by thousands. Its practical effect is to substitute for virtue the vagrancy of lust. It seeks to disband the family, to stop the warm

beating of its heart, and quench the pure fires that burn upon its altar. Yes, the family! that sacred shrine of the pure and holy affections; that centre of attraction which holds back the heady and high-minded, and whose cord draws out of the vortex the shipwrecked mariner, when the last strand of every other cable is parted; that verdant spot in life's dreary waste around which memory lingers—these political Vandals would desecrate and wither with the foul breath of lewdness.

The other "*ism*" to which I refer, and which is brought here by immigrants from Germany is, *if possible*, still more terrific in its baneful tendency. I mean the demand which is made in the platform of principles published by the Free Germans of the city of Louisville, in 1854, "*That all laws for the observance of the Sabbath shall be repealed.*"

Sir, I regard our peaceful Sabbaths as the brightest, if not the only relics that have survived the general wreck of the fall. I look upon them as bivouacs "preparatory to the battle of the week," or rather as "beautiful islands" cast out by the hand of the Divine Benignity on the roaring and restless torrent of time, within whose quiet groves the voyager of life finds rest and refreshment, and from which he looks out at the rush and listens to the din of the eddy world around him. But these more than Goths would cover these beautiful islands with the mantle of desolation and death.

Abolish our Sabbaths and you remove the most powerful restraints which hold back the impatient depravity of man. The repeal of all laws requiring its observance would be to us like the falling of the dam, and the unobstructed overwhelming of the flood. The healthful tone of our morals would relax. The purity and virtue which form the foundations of public strength would perish. Vice and crime—long maddened by confinement, but now unchained—would less rend than *tear* the strength of the nation asunder. Insubordination, then anarchy, and then revolution, would follow each other in quick succession; and finally, after buffeting the waves until its energy and vigor are exhausted, the nation would seek repose in the calm of despotism.

In answer to all this, we are told that the American people will never consent to the repeal of their Sabbath laws. Our reply is, they have already consented. In the city of Saint

Louis—the commercial metropolis of my own State—the present Board of Aldermen, consisting in part of Germans, did actually repeal the Sabbath laws a few months since, that were enacted by the American Board of Aldermen of last year.

Sir, in less than ten years, at the present ratio of immigration, and with the present facilities for acquiring suffrage, our large cities will be ruled by foreigners. And who can doubt that they will then finish, in other cities, what they have begun in the city of St. Louis?

You tell me that the number of foreigners is too insignificant to excite alarm. And this is precisely what was said in France of the infidel clubs of Voltaire. “What can they do?” said the King, in the pride of his power.—“What can they do?” said the nobility that surrounded the throne. Contemptible visionaries! “What can they do,” said the bishops, “against us who hold the conscience of the nation by the force of habit and by the terror of eternity?” And thus—while the heaven was fermenting, while the fever was rising, while the unquiet earth was heaving and the magazines of war were filling up—the people were soothed to sleep. They were awakened only by the roar of revolution: and only in time to see the uncapping of that fearful volcano which rolled out a continuous sheet of desolation over all the land.

It is in vain that we rely for safety on the freedom and power of the government; for these, in the hands of a profligate suffrage, are the very attributes of our peril. Nor will it afford us protection from these menacing evils to close our eyes to the fact of their existence; for all history testifies that the danger of national ruin is augmented and rendered more inevitable, inversely, in proportion as the sources of ruin are less clearly discerned. Nor yet will it save us to have an aggregate majority on our side, for, as I have stated above, these evils assail us on our weak points, and where we have not the majority. It must also be remembered that the alertness of minorities is quite as proverbial as the phlegmatic indolence of majorities—commonly the one gains and the other loses, until the majority changes sides. But a majority is not needed to destroy our government. A small number of madmen may wreck a ship in a storm. Ask history how the governments of antiquity were subverted. The answer is, in the general, “By

the decay of virtue and the consequent growth of vice.” It was this that destroyed the Grecian republic. It was this that touched with death the iron sinews and proud heart of the Roman Empire. It was this that broke down the ancient and illustrious kingdom of David and Solomon into a trembling dependency, which was finally subverted by the son of Vespasian in the midst of boundless slaughter. It was this, in short, that ruined all the governments of ancient story. Such, at all events, is the teaching of history. And how does philosophy account for this uniform destiny? Let it speak for itself. Its utterance is clear and distinct. “Slowly,” it informs us, “and reluctantly does human nature rise up from sloth, and ignorance, and animalism; and many hands and constant effort are demanded to raise and hold up the sluggish mass; but a single hand may cut the cord and let it thunder back on destruction. A well-tuned orchestra and a harmonious choir demand science and skill; but a fool may put the instruments out of order, and send out notes of discord. To bring a garden to its highest state of culture, taste and industry and experience must combine the discoveries of ages; but a herd of swine may destroy its beauties in an hour.”

Finally, on this point, to throw into one sentence the cause and reason of our fears, as well as the distinctive ground upon which we base our preference of the native to the foreigner, I remark that it is infinitely easier to *pull down* than it is to *build up* a government; and while the foreigner is peculiarly qualified to achieve the former result, he is utterly unable to accomplish the latter.

We are not alarmists. We trust that our government will live, and rise to a glorious immortality; but if it is destined to fall on evil times and be ruined, then we desire, while the smoke of our burning ascends, and the fragments of our wreck are floating by, that our countrymen may know that we put forth our hands, in feebleness it may be, to arrest the evil. This is the position of the American party; and for this the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. BOWIE] brands it with proscription.

But it is more than time that I should turn to the last point in the gentleman's speech which I propose to notice. It is the charge of religious intolerance.

In submitting my views on this branch of the subject, it may not be improper to state

that there are leading men in the American party who differ with me. Of this class I may mention my distinguished colleague (Mr. KENNETT) of the St. Louis district. I will therefore be understood as only proposing to give my own construction as to its policy.

And here I must be permitted to express my regret that the gentleman saw fit to leave out the proof of his charge. I had heard it made on the stump, with apparent sincerity; but the proof has invariably been wanting. I had never expected to hear it in Congress unaccompanied with the proof. But I here affirm, that neither in the speeches which I heard during the canvass, nor in the gentleman's speech on yesterday, have I been able to discern even the trace of an argument in proof of the charge alleged. The truth is, there has been no attempt at argument, unless there is argument in abuse, or in drollery, or in swaggering gesticulation.

What do we say in our published platform of principles on the subject of religion? We say plainly and distinctly, "No religious intolerance." We did, I admit, in our first platform, express a determined resistance to the "aggressive policy" and "corrupt tendencies" of ecclesiastical domination; but we never have proposed, nor do we now propose, to interfere with any man's rights of conscience. We have said, and still say, that there shall be "No union of Church and State," in this country, for the Church has always been corrupted by the foul embrace. How was it affected when Constantine united its powers with those of the State? History symbolizes its spiritual condition by the apt and appropriate figure of a "whited sepulchre"—beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones. How has it invariably been affected under similar circumstances; and how has it scourged the State for seeking and securing the unholy alliance? Look at Spain, groaning under the lash of the Church! Look at Galileo, whose genius it tortured on the rack! Look at Latimer and Ridley, whom it burned at the stake! Look at the horrid Inquisition, whose galling weight it dared to lay on the world! Behold it wielding the axe, and wearing off its bloody edge in beheading men, because they dared to read their Bibles, and interpret its meaning for themselves! See it in Ireland, driving from the door of the starving peasant his only cow, and selling her for half

her value to raise tithes for the support of a Protestant clergyman whom he never saw! And in addition to this, see the priests of his own Church, as they meet him at the cradle; watch them, as with jibbering and clenched teeth and hungry stomach, they dog him through life to the grave; yes, and beyond the grave, with their demand for money! Hear them asking for money when the infant is baptized;* hear them asking for money when the boy is confirmed; hear them asking for money when he goes to confession; hear them asking for money when they grant an indulgence; hear them asking for money when they visit the sick; hear them asking for money when they grant the benefit of extreme unction to the dying; hear them asking for money when they perform the last sad offices to the dead; and finally, hear their heartless and ceaseless demand for money from the friends of the departed, until the monk and the mass have extracted his soul from purgatory!—The voyage to Paradise by this expensive and circuitous mode of transit, becomes an intolerable burden; and it is made to pass round by the way of purgatory for no other conceivable purpose, that I can discern, than to justify their enormous exactions of *freight*. [Laughter.]

Sir, we love religious liberty. We are jealous of the rights of conscience; and hence we will ever resist such a union of Church and State in this country as would crush out religious liberty. Nor do we, in this respect, go a whit further than the American Catholic goes. He eschews, as cordially as we do, the dogma once held by the Church of Rome—"That the Pope has power to dethrone Kings and Princes, and deprive them of their crowns." He would resist, as promptly as any other American, the erection on this continent of that inexorable tribunal, whose pathway through Spain is still marked with the traces of ancient murder. So far from being intolerant in matters of religion, we are the first political party, if not the only one, that has ever distinctly declared its opposition to religious intolerance. We propose to protect the religion of both the Catholic and the Protestant; and to that end we intend to resist the "aggressive policy" by which the one might crush out the life and being of the other.

And now, having disposed of the gentleman's

* Kirwan.

speech, I resume the line of remark on which I set out in the beginning. I stated that I was opposed to the further agitation of the slavery question in Congress; partly because of its mischievous tendency, but, chiefly, during the present short Session, because it keeps in abeyance, and will probably defeat altogether, other and important public interests. I desire, during the residue of my hour, to speak somewhat in detail on each of these two topics.

An eminent British historian, speaking of the American Republic, calls it the "Young Giant of the West;" and considering its unrivaled growth and expansion, it has certainly applied to it a very appropriate designation.—But this "slavery agitation" is a fearful gangrene on the limbs of the youthful giant, climbing with dark, mortal omen toward the seat of life. It was the hiss of this serpent that alarmed our fathers when they were laying the foundation of the government; and from that day to this it has trailed its slimy length—its pathway of shame—along all the years of our growing greatness. It has finally succeeded in coiling itself about the body of the "giant." Its strong folds are now contracting with crushing power, and history has already recorded the first tragic line of the final catastrophe.

We shall not fully appreciate the mischievous tendency of "slavery agitation," unless we look narrowly into its past history, and carefully note its occasions and effects. It began far back in our national annals. Its first scene was enacted on the floor of the old Continental Congress. For three successive years it rocked the floor of that Hall, and shook the ill-compacted elements of the Confederacy almost to dissolution. It was raging fiercely when the convention met to frame the Federal Constitution; and it was transferred to the floor of that convention. So fierce and violent was the contest there, that the hope of uniting the contending factions into one common sisterhood of States was for a time completely blighted.—At length an amicable adjustment was effected. The State of Virginia ceded to the United States that splendid domain known as the Northwestern Territory, from which five flourishing States have since been formed. This munificent bequest was at that time an effectual quietus to the slavery agitation. It was the great pacificator. It said to the troubled elements, "Peace, be still!" and instantly the sea went down, and the great vessel of our coun-

try's fortunes was seen floating like a beautiful swan on the bosom of the quiet waters.

A little attention to the slavery agitation in this instance, especially to the manner of its adjustment, will disclose the secret and baneful source of all subsequent and similar agitations. Before the Federal Constitution was adopted, the area and population of what is now the slave country largely exceeded the area and population of the free States. It was clearly apparent, therefore, that the slave States, under the three fifths rule of representation, would hold the balance of power in both branches of the National Legislature. Hence the relentless opposition of the free State-delegates in that convention to the institution of slavery. The contest *then*, as in subsequent instances, to which I will presently advert, was a struggle for vested rights on the one side, and political supremacy on the other. This proposition is susceptible of a degree of proof scarcely inferior to demonstration. In the argument which I propose to make upon it, I shall leave out of view the interesting proofs that might be drawn directly from the contest itself, and direct my attention to such only as are deducible from its final adjustment.

If the contest in question did not originate in an unworthy grasping after political supremacy on the part of the free State's delegates, *in what, I ask, did it originate?* Did it spring from an inherent repugnance to the institution of slavery, considered simply and in itself? Was it the offspring of humanity interposing in behalf of the slave? Surely such a contest could not have sprung from either of these sources. In what, then, did it originate? There is but one answer to the question; and that answer is clearly deducible from the mode of adjustment by which the struggle was terminated. The acquisition of the Northwestern Territory opened out to the free States the prospect of future expansion, and, with that expansion, the prospect of ultimate political supremacy in the councils of the nation. Hence the magic power of the famed ordinance of '87. You remember how promptly and effectually it appeased the storm; how completely it bridled the wild ravings of fanaticism; how it closed up the temple of Janus, and furled for the time all banners of battle. And yet the condition of the slave was nowise affected by its passage. The proof of the proposition submitted above is full and complete—that the

slavery agitation was a contest on the part of the free States for political supremacy. I will not without further remark to the review of the subsequent history.

The next serious agitation of the slavery question occurred in the year 1812, when the State of Louisiana applied for admission into the Union. A bloody war with Great Britain was just on the eve of bursting upon the country, but the battle upon the slavery question was not so directly, to interest on the one side, and so mad fanaticism on the other, that even the "pomp and circumstance" of approaching war were either unheeded, or lost sight of, in the hurry of sectional agitation. In this, as in former instance, the contest was a struggle for power.

The third, and by far the most frightful "agitation" that has ever transpired since our government began, occurred when Missouri applied for permission to form her State constitution. It commenced in the year 1819; and in a few terrible years the smoke of the battle covered the Capitol. The great heart of the country was beating tumultuously and almost without apprehension, when suddenly little-clouds lifted, and all eyes, in both parts of the Union, turned eagerly to a banner whose banner victory had perched. We saw the contending hosts sitting quiescent around a double-faced monument, on each side and the other of which, each bore the inscription of its own victory. Missouri was admitted beneath the ægis of the Union; but slavery was restricted forever to the territory north and west of that

parallel pass by the "agitation" of 1836, which occurred when the State of Arkansas applied for admission into the Union. Other agitations so complicated the struggle as to render the true source and character most difficult of discernment.

The next scene in this tragic act occurred in 1845, when the annexation of Texas was completed. Here the issue was fairly presented. A contest for power on the part of the States, and for nothing else. Slavery had existed in Texas. Its admission neither diminished nor increased the number of slaves. It gave the South additional power in the councils of the nation; and was therefore demanded by the North. Slavery was only an

incident; while political aggrandizement was the source and object of the strife.

The successive agitations that occurred in connexion with the Oregon bill, the California bill, and the Utah and New Mexico bill—commencing in 1847 and terminating in 1850—are so nearly alike, and trench so closely upon each other, that the three may be grouped together, and regarded as constituting one great struggle. I shall not pause here to argue the questions relating to the occasion and object of this struggle. We were all eye-witnesses of the scene; but as each of us observed it from a different angle of observation, we would all differ, most probably, in our opinions as to its origin and effect. There is one respect, however, in which there is perfect agreement. We all agree that its amicable adjustment arrested the eddying whirl of that fearful maelstrom which threatened to engulf the Union. In this instance the contest was settled on a new principle—the principle of non-intervention. All sections of the country acquiesced in the adjustment; and the feverish excitement of 1850 was fast dying out, when suddenly, like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, the double-dyed fraud of "squatter sovereignty" was launched down upon us. It shivered the line of partition that gave us some sort of show for future expansion, and laid open our spreading and fertile domain to the paupers and loafers and felons of Europe. And now, the alien, standing upon that soil still red and slippery with the blood of Southern chivalry, can turn us and our property away. If the repealing clause of the Kansas-Nebraska act had been so framed as to revive the "Old French laws" establishing slavery in the Louisiana purchase, the interests of the South would then have been protected; but that act, by express provision, declares, that those laws shall not be "revived" or "put in force." In conclusion on this point, I put the question: Where are our troubles about slavery to end? We are now in the very throes and travail of agitation. Omens of evil hang thick and dark along the horizon of the future! No star of hope arises! No ray of deliverance gleams out to gladden the heart of the nation! Our present is full of trouble, our future replete with doubt only less than despair.

If there were no other subjects demanding Congressional attention, I should still regard this eternal clamor about slavery as the climax

of madness; inasmuch as it tends directly to unharness the loins and quench the vigor and divide the councils of the nation. But when I remember that, in addition to these positive evils, it keeps in abeyance the consideration of all other subjects, however grave and weighty in their character, I have no language in which to express my utter aversion to its further vexatious and harassing progress.

In this immediate connexion, and with a view to indicate the particular class of subjects upon which our people in the West desire Congressional legislation, I will ask your attention to a brief statement of facts in relation to that interesting region of country.

Less than three-quarters of a century ago, Governor Spotswood, of Virginia, plied every effort within the grasp of his great mind to induce his countrymen to cross the Alleghany ridge. "When motives of avarice failed, he succeeded by considerations of ambition. An order of knighthood was formed. Caps, and epaulets, and garters were distributed. A small horse-shoe of beaten gold, stitched to the coat of each daring knight, proclaimed the adventurous character of the transitory crusade." With fearless step they ascended the untrodden heights of the mountain; and in ten short weeks the gates of the magnificent West were burst asunder. Since then the tide of emigration has been sweeping westward with the steady and resistless advance of a sea. The soldiers of 1776 and 1812 have since drawn their warrants and settled in that land of promise. Their sons and daughters, blooming in health and vigor are there. The arts and improvements of civilized life are there. Wealth and intelligence and refinement are there.—Schools and colleges and the pulpit and the press are there. All that the East called its own is there. The largest half of the country's population is there. The mighty genius of the nineteenth century is there. The whole stupendous array of machinery, whose wondrous power in abridging labor has relaxed the curse on man and beast, is there. The terrors of the wilderness have shrunk back as if from the glance of destiny. Interminable forests have gone down with all their plumed honors before the axe-armed cohorts of peaceful industry. Thousands of log-cabins, which once formed the image and emblem of the West, have long been supplanted by mansions scarcely less elegant than the palace of Aladdin. Flourishing

cities have arisen as if from the wavings of magic. In plain, unfigurative truth, "the wilderness and the solitary place" have been made glad; and the desert literally "blossoms as the rose."

Such was the past, and such the present, the West. Shall I now lift the veil and disclose the horoscope of its future? No power of prophetic discernment can grasp the whole of the future; but its bold striking outline is palpable to the obtusest observation. The West is destined soon to become, if indeed it is not already, the richest agricultural region in the world. How much of its future greatness is revealed in the breadth and fertility of its soil. Compared with other countries, it is, in round numbers, about twelve times as large as France, six times as large as Great Britain, and nearly thirty times as large as Old England alone. Its climate is mild and salubrious. The Rocky Mountains protect it from the rude blasts of the northwest Pacific, and the Alleghanies interpose an effectual barrier against the east wind, so destructive of life and health to the Atlantic States. These lofty ridges are the heaven-built walls of that garden of the world. Indeed, I have sometimes imagined that the very position of these rock-brown ridges was studiously arranged, for a wise and beneficent purpose, by that wisdom which built and fashioned the earth for the comfort and convenience of man. Starting at the extreme northern boundary of the West, some hundreds of miles asunder, they regularly and gradually converge as they approach its southern limits, forming a mighty tunnel through which the wind and weather of the north are poured out on the Mexican Gulf. But the South can never return this compliment to those who live in the West. If all the siroccos of the tropics should conspire to blast us with their foul, hot breath, they would soon find themselves blowing from the wrong end of the tunnel. Their utmost rage could not reach us. When the south wind does come, it is as soft and bland as an infant's breath. It melts the hoar frosts of spring, brings us our birds and our flowers, and fills the whole land with the early harbingers of returning summer.

Again: the West is destined to become a great manufacturing region. It possesses every advantage for this purpose that the hand of bounteous nature could bestow. Its creeks and rivers must be numbered by the thousand; a

in all their higher sections, they are rolling and tumbling over ledges and precipices in all the wildness of untamed and unappropriated power. In the dash of every torrent; in the roar of every cascade; in the rush and thunder of a thousand cataracts, the voice of destiny is heard throughout the mighty West. Neither New England nor Old England can much longer enjoy the profits of furnishing us with their various fabrics. We will soon have our Lowell and our Manchester, as we now have our Pittsburg, and Wheeling, and Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Nature has furnished us the necessary facilities, and Western enterprise will accomplish the work.

No nation has ever become great or powerful without enterprise. Why is it that China is so weak and powerless, compared with other nations? Is it because she is wanting in industry? No nation is more industrious. She walls her territory to shut out the invader; she bridges her valleys with chains; she transforms her rocks into terraces; and, as if disdain the assistance of nature, she rears her temples on mountains of her own construction. And yet, if an earthquake should sink her to-day what ocean would miss her sails? The secret of her weakness lies in this: *she is wanting in energy.*

It is with nations as it is with individuals.—The man who has energy holds a guarantee to greatness. Exile him to the wilderness, and he presses milk and honey from its rocks.—Launch him on the stormy ocean, and he exacts a rich revenue from its billows. Place him in a printing office, and he becomes a philosopher and statesman. Imprison his body, and, through the grated windows of his cell, he sends out his soul to tread round the zodiac, and count the constellations of heaven: Bring out and spread in his pathway the racks and chains of Jewish persecution, and, looking forward to the results, and rewards of his labors, he points to these instruments of torture, and says, with serene composure, "None of these things move me." Place him in any and in all relations, whether prosperous or adverse, and still his step is firm, fearless, *forward*; and if the framework of the universe fall, its shattered ruins will strike him on his way to his object. And, as with individuals, so with nations, energy is the condition and guarantee of greatness.—Who, then, in the light of these facts, can set bounds to the growing greatness of the West

—a country where Providence has emptied the horn of abundance, and where energy is the staple character?

Finally: The West is destined to become great and powerful, in a commercial point of view. Spread out the map of that wonderful region and look for a moment at its natural facilities for transit and transportation. Take up your position at the mouth of the "beautiful Ohio" and trace out the lines of travel that radiate thence to all points of the compass. In the direction of Pittsburg you have nine hundred and fifty miles of steam navigation. To the Falls of St. Anthony you have a thousand miles more. To the head waters of the turbid Missouri you have a continued stretch of three thousand miles more. These noble streams, together with their numerous tributaries, make up a combined aggregate of not less than ten thousand miles.

Nor is the West shut in from intercourse with the rest of the world. Nearly all its navigable streams terminate in that "Father of Waters" which nature herself has channeled out to the southern marts of trade. The great chain of lakes which forms its commercial and political boundary on the North opens a direct communication to that ocean of opulence which has made New England and Old England the commercial emporiums of the world. And, finally, if Congress will only suspend the slavery agitation long enough to listen and respond to the wants of the country, it will soon be connected by railroad with the Pacific ocean. That great work accomplished the West will have fairly entered upon its high career. Only think of it a moment. Ships from the Indian ocean, from Canton, and Calcutta, can cross the Pacific, and deposit their rich freight on the western shore of this continent, and save ten thousand miles of the most difficult and dangerous navigation. The entire circumference of the earth will then be traversed by steam, and the line of transit so formed—to borrow a figure from geography—will be the commercial equator of the globe. It will reverse the course of the world's commerce. It will be the great channel along which the wealth of nations will flow. Merchants from London and Liverpool will cross the American continent by railroad on their way to Asia. They will purchase their silks, and gums, and spices, and rich aromatics in the respective markets of Asia and the islands of the Pacific, and then return homeward

by the same line of travel. They will thus pass and repass, and their commerce will be transported, across the entire breadth of this continent. But this is not all. The merchandise imported from the same markets to the Atlantic cities, and which is now carried round by Cape Horn, will take the same course; and the entire aggregate will pass through the very heart of the West. Then, and not till then, will its vast natural resources have fairly begun to be developed. Then the American Republic will have fairly begun to achieve its high destiny. Yes, when that iron pathway is spread from ocean to ocean, and this earth-compassing current of travel and transportation is set in motion along it, not only the West, but this great and powerful nation—not only the nation, but the trading and trafficking world, will feel the impulse.

I have detected, in the course of my remarks, a smile of incredulity—I will not construe it less charitably to myself—playing upon the lips of members who sit immediately around me. Sirs, I cheerfully accord to you, and each of you, the benefit and luxury of a smile at my expense. The country whence I came, and of which I speak, is smiling also. It will, I trust, continue to smile for many years. It will ultimately, and in due time, go up and possess the broad inheritance which these views anticipate. In what I have said I have not given utterance to idle declamations. I have not unbridled and set wild an impulsive and fervid imagination. It has been no part of my design, thus far, to pursue a line of remark in the nature and character of argument. The statements I have made are higher, more reliable, and more affirmative than arguments. They are statements of *fact*; and deductions from premises as immutable as the laws of matter. What I have said of the past and present of the West is matter of history. What I have said, in the shape of deductions, respecting its opening and brightening future—especially of that future which shall follow the completion of the Pacific railroad—is based upon laws as old as the creation. No skepticism can gainsay them or doubt the deductions based upon them.

And here let us look for a moment, from this angle of observation, at the discussion now pending in both Houses of Congress.

A vast region of country, opulent in all the essential elements of power and greatness, asks

Congress to aid it in constructing a road which would lift the whole nation into new capacities of progress; and Congress strangely and persistently refuses to suspend the slavery agitation, and give even one day to the consideration of that reasonable request. The completion of this work, it is freely and frankly admitted, would pour new life and vigor into every sinew of our social and financial system; it would immeasurably enlarge our already unrivalled agriculture; it would raise our infant manufactories, now struggling for a doubtful existence, into prosperous and permanent ascendancy; it would whiten every ocean with the sails of our commerce, and fill every mart with the products of our skill; and yet its completion is delayed, and will most probably be defeated, at least so far as the present Congress is concerned, by the intolerable nuisance of slavery agitation.

Nine-tenths of the people in the Western States, and a large majority of the citizens of the Eastern and Middle States, desire the speedy construction of the Pacific railroad. The commercial necessities of the nation demand it.—The continued possession of four hundred thousand square miles of our territory on the Pacific coast demands it. The defence of our ocean-bound Republic demands it. And yet, though the money and the energy are ready to construct it, no time can be spared from the pending discussion to investigate its claims.

But I have another and a higher reason for desiring the termination of the existing contest. If it continue, our ruin is inevitable. As well might you attempt to blot out the sun, and bind the solar system together with cobwebs, as to waste your strength in an insane endeavor to hold the discordant elements of this Confederacy in a state of adhesion, while this vexing and disorganizing question is permitted to *infest* the halls of legislation. But if we bury the dangerous issue, and set our hearts upon the aggrandizement of the country, there may be no bound to the sacred munificence of our preservation. The coming trials and tribulations of earth may but augment our glory. Preserved amidst the "thunderings and lightnings" which appal the tribes and races of earth, we may yet be led up, like the Prophet to the Mount, to see the face of the Eternal Lawgiver, and when the visitation has past, the world may see us descending from the mountain and the cloud, our brow blazing, and our

hands holding the Commandments of Mankind. And if—as there is great reason to suppose—the terms of metaphor employed in the Scriptures to represent the destruction of the globe, are only material emblems of the spiritual up-breaking and subsequent renovation of the race, then our government may stand forever. The cause of humanity bids it stand. The suc-

cess of our great experiment of self-government bids it stand. "The very earth itself," as it whirls along its orbit, "carries the universal shout around, *esto perpetua!*" and from the most distant realms of the coming future returns the prolonged and repeated echo, "*thou everlasting!*"

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