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S P E E C H

OF

HON. JAS. B. McKEAN, OF NEW YORK.

Delivered in the U. S. House of Representatives, June 6, 1860.

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

Mr. McKEAN said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: "The South rules supreme in the councils of the Democracy." So said a Southern Opposition member of the last Congress. And he gave it as his reason for uniting with the Democratic party. How true the statement, and what a spectacle has that party exhibited to the world, because of such Southern supremacy! How changeable, and yet steadily sectional, has been the policy of the South! Look at it, sir. When the Southern rulers of the Democracy coveted Missouri for a slave State, they said it was constitutional for Congress to prohibit slavery in the Territories. When they coveted Kansas for the same purpose, they said it was unconstitutional for Congress to prohibit slavery in the Territories. When they considered themselves strong enough forcibly to plant slavery in free soil, they said, "Leave the question to the settlers." When the settlers plucked up slavery by the roots, they said that

that was unconstitutional, and that Congress must protect slavery in the Territories. When they meant to violate the compromise of 1820, they said it had been virtually repealed by that of 1850, inasmuch as the latter neither established nor prohibited slavery in New Mexico; whereas the compromise of 1820, itself, neither established nor prohibited slavery south of the designated line. When Mr. COBB would probably be chosen Speaker of this House, they said that the plurality rule was constitutional. When Mr. SHERMAN would probably be chosen, they said that that rule was unconstitutional.

Sir, the Constitution is generally supposed to be a fundamental law, firm as granite. But there are those who seem to regard it as a spring-board, on which to turn summersets. These Southern rulers of the Democracy require that party to believe, or to profess to believe, that stolid barbarism fosters the highest style of civilization; that the structure of white society must have a black foundation; and that the tree of liberty will grow only in the

barren, shifting quicksands of slavery; and they are rapidly convincing the rest of the world that Dahomian and Southern Democratic politics are the same.

Recently, at the Charleston Convention, this sectional supremacy was, for the first time, mildly opposed by the Northern Democracy; and the South contemptuously spurned their Northern allies, and arrogantly took to themselves the name of "the Democratic States." Sir, the supreme South is ruling the Democracy to death.

[Thus far Mr. McKean spoke on the evening of June 6, when he was interrupted by a call of the roll, demanded by Mr. CRAIGE, of North Carolina. The House continued in session all night. The next morning, the speaker resumed his remarks.]

Mr. Chairman, this is no time for me to make a speech. A few remarks must suffice. Last evening, I should have been brief; this morning, I shall be still briefer. Many considerations prompt me to be so. Not the least among them is the exhaustion consequent upon a sleepless night.

Sir, the statesman from whom I have quoted uttered but part of the truth. He should also have said, "The Southern Democracy rules supreme in the councils of the country." And what a spectacle has our country exhibited to the world, because of this supremacy! Opposed to a reasonable tariff to encourage free labor; opposed to a Pacific railroad, so located as best to promote the interests of the whole country; opposed to free homes for free men, the South demands that slavery shall be extended and strengthened. The supremacy of the South is the supremacy of slavery. The gentleman from Alabama [Mr. CLIFTON] spoke truly when

he said of the slavery question, "It overshadows all other questions." In the language of that distinguished man, whose illustrious career terminated in the old Hall, just without that door, and whose distinguished son now sits in this Hall, just within that door—in the language, I say, of John Quincy Adams—

"The preservation, propagation, and perpetuation of slavery constitutes the vital and animating spirit of the National Government."

Last evening, I should have spoken in brief detail of the conduct of the Southern Democracy towards the Territories. An instance or two must now suffice.

Look back a few years, and behold the fair young Kansas, with her brow and waist adorned by the hand of Nature with wreaths and girdles of flowers. See how she is assailed by that ruffian, Slavery. See how she struggles to tear herself from the grasp of the monster, while Democratic Presidents, and Cabinets, and Senators, and Representatives, with locked arms, form the ring around. Look again. She is free. Thank God, she is free, and her virtue is unsullied. Her lately bloody garments are replaced by robes of spotless white. And, coming up through great tribulation, and leaning on the arm of her Conway, this fair half-sister of ours now stands at the threshold of the Capitol. Hasten, sir; open the door, and let her come into the sisterhood of States. We shall see if the Dahomian Democracy will again slam the door in her face.

Turn your attention to the Territory of New Mexico. Not only has slavery been established there, where it was prohibited by the laws of Mexico, but the votaries of slavery have enacted laws giving the masters of hired servants the

right to whip them, and denying such servants all redress therefor in the courts. I shall make no comments on such laws. No comments are necessary to disclose their more than Draconian atrocity.

The rulers of the Democracy and of the country now claim that neither Congress nor Territorial Legislatures, nor any human power, can keep slavery out of the Territories, and that Congress must protect it there. Thus do they seek to make slavery absolute emperor, dictator, czar. In the language of Cassius M. Clay, the noble Kentuckian, who is adding new lustre to both his Roman and American name—

“The slave oligarchy began by asking *neutrality* in the National Government, then *equality* with freedom, and at last *supremacy*.”

Turn from the Territories, and see what effect the supremacy of slavery is having upon the States. Sir, as one wayward member of a family may disturb the happiness of all the rest, so one Southern member of this family of States has more than once disturbed the harmony of the Union. Recently she sent an ambassador extraordinary, and proposed—ay, we are told, that in the very hall where Aaron Burr was tried on suspicion of treason, she proposed to a sister State that they join in an act akin to treason. On a former occasion she tried a nullification experiment. General Jackson was about to teach her better, when Henry Clay interposed a compromise. The motives of the “great pacificator” were patriotic. But, looking back upon those transactions in the light of subsequent events, we see reason to regret that the stern Jackson was not permitted to take hold of this refractory member of the family with his hickory hand. She would have behaved better ever afterwards.

New York, supposing herself to be a sovereign State, decreed that a slave, coming by the consent of his master within her jurisdiction, should be free. Under such circumstances, she liberated the Lemmon slaves. Private individuals then paid the owner the full value of the slaves. Should not that have been the end of the matter? But Virginia disputes the sovereignty of New York, and brings her into court to compel her to be a slave State. Tell me, O New York, my mother State, tell me, could any power on earth make thee a subject, and Virginia thy sovereign? Could all the standing armies of all the despotisms of Europe annex thee as a new domain to the Old Dominion? Let the courts consider long and well before they attempt it.

Mr. LEAKE, of Virginia. Will the gentleman answer me a question?

The CHAIRMAN. Does the gentleman from New York yield to the gentleman from Virginia?

Mr. McKEAN. For six months I have sat here in silence, save when answering to the call of my name. Last evening I obtained the floor, and have been interrupted for twelve hours. I cannot yield.

I must not omit, in this connection, briefly to speak of the affair at Harper’s Ferry. Sir, as the “reign of terror” legitimately succeeded the reign of the Bourbons; as the Sepoy rebellion was the natural consequence of the East India Company’s misrule; so did lawless, pro-slavery violence, on the borders of Missouri and Kansas, beget the offspring afterwards brought forth at Harper’s Ferry. And then, too vicious to be ashamed, but so timid as to be afraid of that offspring, the Southern Democracy sought to lay it on the doorsteps of the Republican party. The gentleman from

Alabama [Mr. CURRY] was so just and generous as to say :

“From the bottom of my heart I do acquit the Republican party from all connection with that raid which was made into Virginia.”

All sensible men know, and all just and generous men admit, that it is right thus to acquit the Republicans.

But why is it that the South is alarmed? Why is it that even her brave men are alarmed, as though they saw an apparition? John Brown, invisible to us, is ever and anon awfully visible and audible to them. How is this? Is not John Brown dead? Did not the United States conquer him? And afterwards, did not Virginia kill him? Ah! sir, he seems to be like the great wild boar, Scrimner, in the Northern Mythology, that was killed every day for an offering to the gods in Valhalla, and came to life again every night. Sir, I do not blame even brave men for being afraid. He who builds his domicile on the side of a volcano, or where earthquakes prevail, has a right to be afraid—ought to be afraid. But is it not amazing that any one should demand that the structure of society in the Territories should be built on the volcanic foundations of slavery?

In the light of the affair at Harper's Ferry, how clearly is seen the vast difference between slave and free society—the insecurity of the one, the safety and stability of the other. Could that affair have happened in a free State, the police would have intervened, the law would have had its quiet course, and society would have been disturbed about as much as the ocean is disturbed by the falling of a pebble. Sir, a slave State is balanced on a point, like a boulder on a craggy summit; the hand of a child can rock it; one man's arm can hurl it

into the anarchical abyss below. A free State stands like a pyramid on the plain—nor winds, nor floods, nor thunderbolts, can beat it down, nor the weight of centuries can crush it.

Though purposely abridging my remarks, I cannot overlook the Southern Democracy as exhibited here in the Federal Capitol. Congress convenes; and day after day, for weeks and months, on the highest notes in tenor, on the lowest in double-bass, with the gestures, tropes, and idioms, peculiar to the Anglo-Congo school of oratory, they clamor against Northern men—

“Loud as the wolves on Orcus' stormy steep,
Howl to the roarings of the northern deep.”

And because the “northern deep” will not roar, but will be calm, the noise from Slavery's “stormy steep” is the louder and the longer. At length, amid the deafening din, made by others, and not by himself, a usually self-poised gentleman from Virginia cried out, in tones of bitter complaint, that the Republicans sat here “in sullen and almost contemptuous silence.” Sir, if one of the ancients could have come back to earth, and from that gallery have witnessed the composure on this side, and the clamor on that, would he not have exclaimed, “Are these the Senators of Rome? Are those the chiefs of Brennus?” And all this clamor, sir, is about John Brown, a dead man, and a pamphlet written for white men, and which slaves cannot read!

We are repeatedly told, by gentlemen on the other side of the House, that the North must send other men to this Federal council—must send “national and conservative men.” They are so kind as to tell us who are “national and conservative.” And as nearly as I can understand the definition, they are those Southern men who hold that slavery is

God's vicegerent upon earth, and those Northern men who fall down and worship it as divine. Such men, they tell us, are alone fit to represent the people.

Sir, in the ancient days of Æsop, when quadrupeds were endowed with the power of speech, the wolves sent an embassy to the sheep, saying, "Let us hereafter live in peace, as good neighbors. Those watch-dogs of yours make all the trouble. Send them away, and we shall live in harmony and union." The thoughtless sheep sent away the dogs. But hardly were they out of sight, when the "national and conservative" wolves leaped into the fold, slaughtered the sheep, and sucked their blood. To the people of the North, the history of the punic faith of the wolves towards the sheep has a moral. They will not call down their sentinels from the walls. They will not send away their watch-dogs.

Let not the South suppose that the North can be induced to recall from the outposts which he has so long defended, from the councils which he has so long instructed and adorned, the Washington of this war, the Jefferson of this revolution. Sir, I am not about to defend that eminent man, Senator SEWARD, from the assaults of the Democracy. No, not at all. When he needs to be defended, his own left hand will do it. But, sir, what scenes have we here beheld? What Democratic dwarf has taken the floor, that has not shaken his tiny shillalah at this giant? See how they tug and toil to tumble pebbles in his pathway, supposing them to be boulders. Look, what coils of ropes they bring to bind him! Ropes? No, they are but the ravelings of the once strong cord of Democracy. Sir, do you not remember the "Strong Man," Kwawind, in the song of Hiawatha?

"Now, this wondrous strength of Kwawind,
In his crown alone was seated."

Do you not remember "the envious little people, the Puk-Wudjies?" Hark, how they conspire against the "Strong Man:"

"If this great, outrageous fellow,
Goes on thus a little longer,
Tearing everything he touches,
Rending everything to pieces,
Filling all the world with wonder,
What becomes of the Puk-Wudjies?
Who will care for the Puk-Wudjies?
He will tread us down like mushrooms."

But, sir, the statesman is greater than the "Strong Man;" for, unlike the latter, the former grows greater and stronger with each successive encounter. In the other end of the Capitol, behold the great statesman of New York; behold there and here his Democratic enemies; and then tell me, sir, do you think it more than a step from the sublime to the ridiculous?

Gentlemen have been so puerile as to suppose that they could intimidate us by threats. One would have us believe that "the people" would come here and hurl us from our seats. Sir, when those people to whom the gentleman refers shall come in here to hurl us from our seats, though we are but few more than a hundred men, we shall ask for no quarter. The historian of the future may record whether we shall have needed any.

The gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. DAVIS] said to us:

"When you presented Fremont as a sectional candidate for the Presidency, * * * you undertook to seize the Government for yourselves. * * * In doing that, you were guilty of organizing rebellion against the Government. * * * We are going to bring the navy and army to put

‘down this rebellion. That is what we mean to do; and we will hang the last one of you.’

I would have that gentleman understand that my constituents, not a few of whom are sons of sires who sleep beneath the battle-field of Saratoga, have read this threat of his with as much composure as is consistent with laughter. They regard his demonstration as about as formidable as that of General Tom Thumb, armed with a tin sword, slashing at the boot-legs of his keeper.

Others tell us that the South will manufacture for herself, and withdraw her trade from us. Sir, let her proceed with her manufactures and her home industry. She can do nothing that will so soon strangle slavery, and nothing that will so promote the prosperity of the North. Is not New York benefited by the prosperity of Massachusetts, and Ohio by that of Pennsylvania? So will the North and the South each be benefited by the progress and prosperity of the other.

Parton, in his *Life of Jackson*, says:

“To go southward is to make a journey into the Past. Travel twenty-four hours into the Southern States, and then get ten miles away from the railroad, and you have arrived at Sixty Years-Ago.”

Sir, let the South awake from her Rip Van Winkle sleep, and soon the incubus of slavery will cease forever to benumb her energies. Let her turn her attention to all departments of manual industry and intellectual inquiry, and she will thereby create demands which ignorant, indolent slave labor cannot meet, and which intelligent, industrious free labor can alone supply.

We are told that the Union is in danger. Whence and why this sound of alarm? Does any Republican threaten

the Union, or even predict its dissolution? No, not one. Does any American, North or South, avow hostility to the Union? I have not heard one. From whom, then, the danger, and from whom the warning? Ah, sir, the danger, if there is danger, and the warning, come from the same source. It is a noticeable fact, that no one anywhere ever knows or hears that the Union is in danger until the Democracy tell of it, and they never tell of it until they themselves are in danger. When defeat stares them in the face, they insolently tell us that if we overthrow them they will overthrow the Union. All the time holding the helm themselves, they cry out with horror, and upbraid the passengers because the Ship of State has got into the outer whirls of a maelstrom; and when we, the passengers, ask that the vessel be put about, while yet it may be done, they declare that if we insist upon that, they will scuttle the ship, and sink the passengers, crew, and cargo, all together. Ho! men of America, arise to the rescue! All hands on deck! Let us save the vessel and her precious freight, and, if need be, cast the corsairs overboard. If that be mutiny, “make the most of it.”

Behold the policy, behold the practice of these men; the policy—rule or ruin; the practice—rule and ruin.

I shall quote but one of the scores of Southern Democratic members who have threatened the Union. The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. CRAWFORD] says:

“We have four million slaves. * * * We demand expansion. We *will have expansion.*”

And again:

“This question has resolved itself at last into a question of slavery and disunion, or no slavery and union.”

Sir, let the gentleman tell the people

of the North, as he tells us, that slavery and the Union cannot both exist; that the one must destroy the other; but that slavery shall be maintained and expanded; and, irrespective of party, they will answer him, "Then slavery must die." They know that it is a greedy monster, whose hunger is whetted by what it feeds upon. If you cast it a State, it seizes it, coils around it, crushes it, swallows it. If you cast it a Territory, it takes it down as though it were but a morsel. Hold! sir; stay your hand, give it no more food; let it digest or disgorge what it has, and then let it starve.

I must hasten to a conclusion. The question is now presented to the millions of Northern men, whether they will be intimidated by threats, and, like cravens, permit the country still to be misruled by men who, while in power, avow that they will be traitors when out of power? I think, sir, that the result will show to an admiring world that those millions of men fear traitors less than they abhor tyrants; and then we shall see whether these disunionists will rebel against the Government, as they say they will, or whether they will merely call a convention at New Gascony, and adopt some resolutions.

"Did the militia stand fire?" asked Washington, when he heard of the first battle of the Revolution. "Did the militia stand fire?" He well knew that, if they did, the day of victory would soon come; and so it did. Soon the battle of Saratoga was fought and won; and then came our allies, the French, giving assurance of other victories and final triumph. In 1856, led by Fremont and Dayton, the freemen of this land stood fire. Then they fought their Bunker's Hill. Now they are led by Lincoln and Hamlin. In the morning, at Borodino, Napoleon exclaimed, "Yonder is the sun of Austerlitz!" Who in this army of freemen does not see the dawn of the day of victory? We shall have our Saratoga, and then we shall have our allies—not aliens, but sons of the South. The noblest men amongst them will declare for us, giving assurance of the final triumph of our principles; and the South, no longer old in her youth, will stand erect, rejuvenated, as though she had bathed in the Fountain of Youth; and the North and the South, each accepting the friendly challenge of the other, will run a race of generous and glorious rivalry down the ages.



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