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SPEECH OF HON. S. S. BLAIR,

OF PENNSYLVANIA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

FEBRUARY 23, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. BLAIR said:

Mr. SPEAKER: There seems to me a strange anomaly in our politics. In the clashing opinions of these troublous times, all appear to unite in praise of the Government of the United States; with one consent its structure is pronounced to be better adapted to the spirit of our people than any that could be devised. This is the testimony which an experience of three quarters of a century bears to the wisdom of its framers, and which we have been accustomed to expect would be strengthened as years increase. But while these encomiums are on the lips of all, we find that one party, in open rebellion against its authority, is organized to destroy it by force of arms; another seeks to change its Constitution; and yet a third threatens to revolt, unless it shall be altered to suit their views; while a fourth, in opposition to all, demands its preservation and perpetuity as our fathers made it. The enemies of the Government, bold, cunning, and impetuous, have usurped the powers of the people in six of the States. They have by force, and by the basest treachery that ever stained the earth, become possessed of property of the nation, purchased at a cost of over seven million dollars, for the common defence of all. They have taken our guns and turned their fire on the flag of the nation, thus far, with perfect impunity. In the face of these dire events, what a spectacle do we present to the world? Will the generations that are to succeed us believe that at such a time we sat out a whole winter, trying how far we might go to comply with the demands of traitors, and what new securities we might devise for the protection and spread of human bondage?

Sir, when we came here in December, I hoped to see the patriots of the North and South standing together in firm concord, and uniting their counsels for the preservation of the Union in its integrity. I thought they might all agree to provide whatsoever legislation might be deemed needful for the prompt and vigorous execution of the laws; and was prepared, and am still prepared, to join hands with every man willing to avow his unqualified devotion to the country. Animated by this hope, I was pained when the honorable gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BOTELER] introduced his resolution changing the accustomed order of procedure by referring that portion of the President's message touching the troubles to a select committee of thirty-three. If we had voted down the resolution, and all others of like character, we would have had before the public mind the naked issue, Union or disunion; you would have almost instantly aroused from its profoundest depths the Union sentiment in the hearts of the people. To meet any great crisis like this, it is essential that the public spirit should be called forth; but following in the footsteps of the Administration, which was without policy, without unity, struck with the paralysis of wavering resolution, and distracted by fears and timorous doubts, we failed in that important work

A new issue has been made up—a false and distracting one; not union or disunion; but new guaranties to slavery or disunion. From that day, slavery has seemed almost to keep court within the temple of the nation; where, from far and near, men have come to do her the reverence of right loyal liegemen. Propositions of great diversity in form, but nearly all looking to the national recognition of slavery, were showered upon us for many days; and the gentlemen from the disaffected States on the committee, as we are informed, after it had been determined that slavery should not have a roving commission over Mexico and Central America, refused further official intercourse with their colleagues; who, themselves divided and distracted, have presented a number of reports, no one of which, it appears, had the sanction of the majority. Thus it is, sir, that in this great effort to win over the enemies of the Union, we have succeeded only in distracting its friends.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we have not yet grappled with the living issue that is before us; we have been telling the people that this question of disunion must be looked squarely in the face; and yet the House and the Senate and the Administration have, up to within one week of our adjournment, been looking at it askance, while we endeavor to reopen a discussion already exhausted and irrevocably closed by the solemn verdict of the people. Sir, the only question that any man can ask this day is: shall the will of a majority be successfully thwarted by an organized conspiracy in the minority? The problem which is uppermost in the minds of the people, all experience shows, must be first solved, before they will direct their attention to other less interesting investigations. It is a law—which, if but obeyed, will lead to success—to seize first upon the greatest good that is within our reach, and to combat first the greatest evil that encounters our progress.

The people are at this time more deeply concerned in establishing the fact before the nations of the world that the Government of the United States is a real power on the earth, than in adjusting the details of policy. It is no time now to be higgling with the demands of faction in the State, when faction has drawn the sword against the State itself. Faction must be put down. Treason must first be subdued before its pretexts can be safely considered. We cannot dally with it but at the peril of the nation's honor, which is the nation's life. It asserts the principle that the people of any one State may, in the exercise of a right springing from the Constitution, at any time, with or without cause, withdraw from the Union, and erect in our midst a foreign independent government, such as they may choose to adopt, whether it be a republic, a constitutional monarchy, or an absolute despotism. If this be true, then, we must bow to the necessity of acknowledging it with becoming grace. Bitter as may be the cup, we must drink it to the dregs. We must give up every fort and arsenal in the seceding States, take down the stars and stripes, and salute with respect the Palmetto, the Pelican, and the Rattlesnake. If secession is constitutional, then, sir, we are bound, by our oaths, to recognise these States as foreign sovereignties as fully as we recognise the sovereignty of England or of France. But, sir, if there is no such right, we cannot, we dare not, recognise it, or even seem to recognise it, however slightly or obliquely.

The right of secession is a political theory of modern growth. It looks upon the Constitution as but a league or compact between independent States, and that the Government which it establishes is but an agent of the several States intrusted with the execution of certain powers, which may be revoked and annulled by any State, as the interest, convenience, or whims of its people may determine; and that, after such revocation, the State resumes its original independent sovereignty. Its first fundamental error is, that the States composing this Confederacy ever were in possession of separate independent sovereignty. When South Carolina sent her delegates to Congress, she was still a colony of Great Britain, never having assumed to exercise the high powers of a sovereign; and her delegates, like the delegates of all the other colonies, met only to consult for the public safety, but found the pressure of events so strong that they were of necessity compelled, as *united colonies*, to *assume* the powers of a sovereign nation. It was as united colonies that sovereignty was assumed, by which they were able to vindicate the independence of the United States. This league, or Confederacy, though itself declared to be perpetual, not being a Government which operated on the people directly, but upon the States, gave place to the Constitution, which established a Government, not a league. It was established by the people, in precisely the same way that they established their State governments; and in all matters confided to its jurisdiction by the Constitution, it claims the obedience of the citizen in the same way that the State Constitution claims his obedience in all matters within the jurisdiction of the State. Each government is supreme within its own sphere; so that neither can absolve the citizen from his obligations to the other. The sacred instrument itself declares its character as a *Constitution* for the people of the United States. It was not ordained by the deputies of sovereign States, as is professed by the Montgomery constitution. But the fact that it operates upon the people in the several States no more lessens its force as a Government for the whole people, than does the division of the people of a State into county and township organizations detract from the obligation of the citizens of each of them to obey the State Constitution.

From the foundation of the Government till recently, the idea was never entertained that our Constitution was but a league of States. About the first resolution that was adopted by the convention which formed it, declared "that a *national* Government ought to be established, consisting of a supreme legislature, judiciary, and executive," and that resolution was fully carried out in the great work of the convention. And it is for us to say whether it shall be preserved, or whether it shall go down, ignominiously, at the bidding of South Carolina and her confederates. It is for us to say whether its foundation is on a rock, or on sand or stubble. Its supremacy must be preserved by a firm and just execution of the laws in every portion of the country. It must not be enervated, and thereby dishonored, by the faintest actual or implied recognition of this heresy of secession.

But others tell us that the only effectual way to preserve the Government is by a compromise. Now, there are thousands of people who tell us to compromise, who seem to attach no definite idea to the word. When reminded that Congress can only execute its powers by the enactment of laws for the remedy of evils, without telling us what particular line of action we should take, they advise us to "do something." Nobody seems to know what particular "something" it is wise to do. The country is actually in a panic. Some persons, alarmed by unusual events, without waiting to take counsel of reason, would madly rush on almost any extraordinary course; they know not, and care not what. We all remember how the whole country was panic-stricken by John Brown's lawless invasion at Harper's Ferry; or, rather, how it was seized upon by desperate politicians to alarm the fears of the people; under the influence of panic, extraordinary measures were resorted to, which all now admit to have been unwise, and which, ultimately, cost the State of Virginia more money to watch Brown, at Charlestown, than it cost the British Government, for the same length of time, to watch Napoleon on the Island of St. Helena. These movements, aided by the fierce attacks in Congress on the Republican party, as being responsible, produced such a state of alarm, that the Union meetings called on the Republicans to disband their organizations, and "do something" for the salvation of the Union. But, instead of yielding, the Republicans, in the strength which conscious rectitude imparts, proceeded to the proper business of legislation, and convinced the country that a party which, standing by its principles, was able to govern itself, was fit, likewise, to govern the country. We let the panic die out; and our fidelity to principle has been rewarded by the confidence of the country. And now, again, a mad and foolish panic is diligently nourished, under which six States—from South Carolina to Louisiana—have been forced out of the Union by the same alarmists. Has the world ever witnessed such an exhibition of wicked folly?

Some of these States, since the origin of the Government, and all of them, since their organization into State Governments, have enjoyed the advantages of a Union, to which they are indebted for whatever of consequence they possess, and yet, in an hour of unreasoning madness, have levelled the forces of destruction against that Union itself.

They seize upon its public buildings, upon its treasury, and appropriate to their own uses the hospital which the benevolence of the Government had dedicated to its disabled seamen. Montesquieu has a chapter of three lines in his Spirit of Laws, to illustrate his idea of despotic power. He tells us—

"When the savages of Louisiana are desirous of fruit, they cut the tree to the root and gather the fruit; this is an emblem of despotic government."

While the illustration does justice to the selfishness of despotism, it reminds us, in the light of the events I have mentioned, that many of the more enlightened successors of the aboriginals of Louisiana have not much improved on the wisdom of their predecessors. Do they, with any reason, expect to gather and long to enjoy the fruits of Union—independence, security, and strength—by destroying the tree which bears them? No, sir. All men everywhere pronounce them mad. They have been hurried by their leaders into excesses and troubles for which there is but one remedy, and which, if we will only be equal to our duty and possess our hearts in patience, will certainly be applied; and that is, the expulsion of the conspiring leaders from power by the certain return of the people to reason and reflection. The men who sacrifice the public order to their ambition, will in turn become the victims of the very disorders which they have brought about. If history has its logic, it has its avenging justice too.

But shall the Government do nothing? Well, sir, I think there is one branch of the Government has been already used to do a good deal. Heads of Departments, sworn to maintain the Constitution and the laws of the United States, have openly and secretly used the opportunities of office for the overthrow of the country. Disgraceful engagements have been made with men in arms against the Government, to leave the strongholds of the country in a defenceless condition. Inasmuch, however, as confidence in the integrity of that arm of the Government has been improved of late, let us hope that the future will show it to be well founded. But shall not Congress enact some laws relative to slavery, which can be called a compromise, with these men, in order to *bring them back to the Union?* Bring them back! Sir, they are not out of the Union. Their paper resolves are nullities; and when you thus recognise South Carolina and other States as out of the Union, you admit that its laws have no force within their limits. Contrive as you please to devise compromises for what you call reconstruction, and as a condition precedent to them all, you are confronted with this humiliating concession which you are forced to make—that South Carolina rightfully disgraced your flag, and that she may do so again at any future time. Sir, in this hour of peril I turn a willing ear to the voices of departed patriots. I listen submissively to one of the wisest, greatest, and noblest of men. When South Carolina rebelled, in 1833, because she disliked the tariff laws, John Quincy Adams, of the Committee on Manufactures, in his report, says:

"The subscribers believe, therefore, that the ground assumed by the South Carolina convention for usurping the sovereign and limitless power of the people of that State, to dictate the laws of the Union, and prostrate the legislative, executive, and judicial authority of the United States, is as destitute of foundation as the forms and substance of their proceedings are arrogant, overbearing, tyrannical and oppressive. They believe that one particle of compromise with this usurped power, or of concession to its pretensions, would be a heavy calamity to the people of the whole Union, and to none more than to the people of South Carolina themselves. That such concessions by Congress would be a dereliction of their highest duties to the country, and directly lead to the final and inevitable dissolution of the Union. With the usurpations of the South Carolina convention, there can be no possible compromise. They must conquer, or they must fall."

Oh, that the statesmen of that day had all been true to the principles of Mr. Adams's report and General Jackson's proclamation, and had consulted the future of the Republic, rather than their temporary quiet! A compromise tariff was passed to bring back South Carolina, and she was taught that rebellion was a wise policy to maintain her supremacy in the Union. That compromise has brought us unmixed evil; but I hope that patience and fortitude will enable us now to avoid the mistake which was then made; for I do believe that, if you bring her back by a compromise, she will, before six months, rebel against the specific duties of the pending tariff bill, if it should become a law. Slavery is thought to be somewhat weaker now than formerly, and the bargain proposed is, if we will give our solemn pledge to strengthen and perpetuate it, we will be paid for the wear and tear of principle by the return of the "confederates" into the Union, with the right to leave it again whenever they please.

But the majority of those who urge concession, admit that the cotton States, having assumed an open attitude of rebellion against the Constitution and the laws, compromise with them is inadmissible without dishonor; yet, unless concession be made to the border slaveholding States, the same causes which operated to drive off the former, will, in a very short time, produce like results in the latter.

But if a compromise to bring back the seceded States is inadmissible, because it would amount to a recognition of the doctrine of secession, does not the same objection apply to a compromise made in obedience to a threat of secession? If one is dishonorable, is not the other equally so? There is scarcely anything within the compass of our powers to do, not involving a sacrifice of principle, that the noble Union men of these States would ask, to which I would not be inclined to respond as a brother. I know their heroism and their fortitude, and the dashing gallantry with which they have swept the field against haughty insolence and arrogance, which thought to crush them at a blow. But hearts so noble as theirs will not, and cannot, insist that we should sacrifice our convictions of duty to the country in this time of its trial. Rather than do this, I believe they will buckle on their armor afresh, and march to the higher and the final conflict. The strength which their victory over immediate disunion has imparted to them will bring within their power its more insidious, and therefore more dangerous enemy—conditional secession. They have had their ovation; let them arise to their triumph. In my judgment, any measures of compromise are a concession, not to the patriots of those States, but to the usurpers themselves, by which they will be enabled to return to power.

But, sir, what is it that is demanded of us? I notice that the President has preferred the charge that the people of the North have, by their presses and their pulpits, spoken evil of slavery, and that pictorial representations unfavorable to it have been scattered over the country. Now, Mr. Speaker, as to the pictures, I have heard that a long time ago they were sent into the Southern States. As the President has always been a swift witness for slavery, his antiquarian researches into the forgotten events of the past, that he might bring forth some apology or excuse for treason, is calculated to excite rather our curiosity than our surprise. There may have been pictures—they are not unusual weapons of warfare in political encounters; I cannot tell how much the President himself may be indebted to their instrumentality in the canvass of 1856. They were extensively used by Granville Sharp and Clarkson, in their contests with slavery in England, and the good La Fayette, afraid to trust the cause of freedom alone to the eloquence of Mirabeau, lest its sacredness might be sullied by the ambition of the orator, distributed five hundred pictures himself among the members of the French Assembly; a copy of that picture is the only one of the kind that I have ever seen in my life, and that came from Mr. Jefferson's library. I do, therefore, truly think that a revolution must indeed be "artificial," which includes among the evils to be remedied a grievance like this.

We are told, however, by the gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr. SIMMS,] that even if we should adopt every proposition for adjustment yet made, yet, unless we "put down" all publications and speeches at the North against slavery, there can be no Union. We are not told how we are to put them down. I suppose it would perhaps be agreeable to return to the old Spanish policy of subjecting every manuscript of book or pamphlet to a board of licensers before publication, and allow nothing to be printed and read but what they approve by their mark; somewhat in the same way that leather and other commodities are admitted to the market by the official brand of the inspectors. But, Mr. Speaker, whether a censorship of the press, or a system of pains and penalties, be desired, if the constitutional guarantee of its freedom must be destroyed as a sacrifice for the Union, it will never be done. It underlies our whole system of constitutional liberty, and may be said almost to compose it.

It is further charged that the Republican party design to abolish slavery in the States where it exists, and we must therefore consent to an amendment to the Constitution, putting it expressly out of the power of Congress. The Constitution ought not to be altered, except for the gravest reasons, much less to meet an evil that has no existence. The charge that the Republican party claims such a power, or intends to usurp it, is untrue. I have never known a Republican who did not consider an attempt by Congress to interfere with it in the States, as a usurpation to be resisted. Congress has no more power over the subject of slavery in the States than it has over the State laws relating to the descent of lands, or any other State institution. We have said so in our platforms, our addresses to the people, and in our votes given here unanimously at this session on the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, That neither Congress nor the people or government of any non-slaveholding State has the constitutional right to legislate upon, or interfere with, slavery in any slaveholding State in the Union."

Our opponents know that we will live up to our pledges, and therefore fear that the people who have been deceived by their misrepresentations will very naturally conclude that they are not to be believed hereafter. They cannot have my vote to help them out of that difficulty. The South has every security in the Constitution already, without the proposed amendment. We have done everything that men can do to remove apprehensions on this point. An Athenian ambassador, in treaty with the Lacedæmonians, after many propositions had been considered, said: "There can be but one bond and security that will bind us. You must show that we have so much in our hands that you cannot hurt us if you would." You have that bond and security. Why, then, did the committee report a remedy for an evil which can only have a place in the wildest fancy. With regard to slavery in the District of Columbia, where Congress has the unquestionable power to abolish it, they say that, inasmuch as no one proposes to interfere with it, they deem it useless to report any amendment. I think it not quite consistent in the committee to refuse an amendment where it is possible to interfere with slavery, on the ground that nobody proposes to do so, and at the same time to bring in an amendment to provide against not only what no one proposes to do, but what, if desired, it is impossible to do.

But gentlemen tell us that demagogues in the South, by persistently misrepresenting our purposes to the people, have brought them to believe that it is our purpose to abolish slavery. I am bound to suppose that the opponents of this class of politicians in the South have always known these representations to be untrue. They have had all the evidence which any man capable of thinking could ask. I must presume, likewise, that they have, with the earnestness of sincere men, brought this evidence to the notice of the people; so that, wherever the poison of falsehood has been scattered, the antidote, truth, has followed. Now, if the friends of truth have done their whole duty in this respect, to the Southern people, I would be very sorry to suppose that a majority of them continue to believe a falsehood. It would be evidence to my mind that they would not believe though one rose from the dead, and that they were given over to an utter inability to see the truth, though it blazed around them as the light of the sun at midday. If an amendment to the Constitution could be carried, it would not open their eyes; for the demagogues would tell them, as they tell them now, that we care nothing about the Constitution, and we only amend it to blind them, that we might the more easily accomplish our purposes; and if it should be lost in any four States, and consequently not adopted, then they would aver the evidence of the design they charge upon us to be conclusive. Let us not, I entreat, then, permit a rash hand to be laid upon the ark of our safety, lest for the error we may be smitten with greater evils than we design to cure.

Another proposition is before us, which was first brought forward under the auspicious name of the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, and called a compromise. The offer is to revive the Missouri line of 36° 30′, and extend it to California, and to exclude slavery from all territory north of the line, and to protect and secure it in all territory, "now owned or which may be hereafter acquired" by the United States; and this astounding proposition is to be incorporated in the Constitution as an amendment, to become the supreme law of the land, high above all Congresses, courts, and Territorial Legislatures A superficial glance at it might lead one to suppose that it contains a concession to freedom. The territory, however, which it proposes thus to consecrate, is already free. Kansas, the first fruits of the bloody strife between freedom and slavery, inaugurated by the repeal of the Missouri compromise, has already been welcomed into the councils of the Union. She is free by her patience, her sufferings, her endurance, and by the valor of her sons. Had she gone down under the victorious heel of slavery, not only her doom was sealed, but that of every rood of national territory to the north and west of her limits. But the same tide of free emigration which gave her population needful for a State, has peopled Nebraska, already organized, and Dakota, with her sister Territories, yet awaiting organization from this Congress. And these are the Territories which the Crittenden amendment magnanimously devotes to freedom. Sir, they need no Wilmot proviso, either in their organic acts or in the Constitution, to preserve them to freedom.

There is no virtue, then, in this part of the proposed compromise, except that which is born of necessity. We neither wish it nor ask it; why, then, is it offered? It is but a cloak to cover the nakedness of the attempt to devote the free territory southward to slavery. Let the people mark it, and reflect on the humiliation to which they are invited:

"That the territory now held, or that may hereafter be acquired by the United States, shall be divided by a line from east to west on the parallel of 36° 30′, north latitude. That in all the territory south of said line, involuntary servitude, as it now exists in the States south of Mason and Dixon's line, is hereby recognised, and shall be sustained and protected by all the departments of the territorial governments."

The country "now held" south of the line to which this amendment is applicable, is the Territory of New Mexico, organized by one of the compromise measures of 1850, and which was extended by the act of 1853, so as to cover the country called Arizona, with the right of admission as a State, with or without slavery, as its constitution might provide.

The right, however, was expressly reserved to Congress to repeal any law which might be passed by the Territorial Legislature. No one will be so credulous as to suppose that this extended barren waste called New Mexico, where in ten years they have only been able to introduce about twenty slaves, is the field in which this extraordinary constitutional amendment is expected to operate. The real intention is to apply the provision to Mexico, or such portions of her dominions as we may hereafter acquire by treaty or acts of aggression. She has long been a weak and distracted nation, owing to the cause that now, for the first time in our history, begins to show itself with sufficient force to disturb the general tranquillity of the country—refusal of a defeated party to submit to the will of a majority.

Sir, this Chamber has been ringing with appeals to the Republican members to come forward, in a magnanimous and conciliatory spirit, and cast away the Chicago platform. These appeals are made by gentlemen without a smile on their faces. They seem to be agonized at the thought that we hesitate to abandon our platform and adopt theirs.

By what right do you assume to charge us with the elevation of a party platform above the country, when you yourselves do claim that your platform is of so much more value than the Union that unless you get it foisted into the Constitution of the country you will trample her flag in the dust. You plunder the public moneys and cry out, "give us justice;" you seize the forts and arsenals, and then preach conciliation; you turn the guns which you have taken on an unarmed steamer in the service of the Government, and then with extended hands implore us to rise to the height of this great argument, far above the Chicago platform. Sir, if we could cast off our principles as easily as old garments, it were low-thoughted baseness to yield our manhood on such dishonorable terms.

But I would have no one believe I would yield to these demands, if they could honorably be considered at all. Candor and frankness, I venture to say, are virtues as essential in public affairs as in private, notwithstanding the maxim of Louis XII prevails to a great extent, that "he who knows not how to dissemble knows not how to govern." Regarding the right of one man to have property in another as being in derogation of the law of nature, and that wherever the right exists it must depend exclusively on the local law, I believe—and that belief is much older than the Chicago platform—that the moment the slave is transported beyond the limits of his State, to a State or Territory where no such law exists, he becomes as free as his former master. How then, sir, can I, or any one believing this, consent to a law of Congress or a new Constitution, that will seize that man thus made free and convert him into a chattel? Twelve years ago the Union was threatened, because the people of California thought proper to seek admission as a State with a constitution forbidding slavery. Senator Davis presented this identical demand, as his ultimatum, in these words:

"That my position may go forth to the country in the same columns that convey the sentiments of the Senator from Kentucky, I here assert that never will I take less than the Missouri compromise line extended to the Pacific ocean, with the specific recognition of the right to hold slaves in the territory below that line; and that, before such Territories are admitted into the Union as States, slaves may be taken there from any of the United States at the option of their owners."

To this demand for mere congressional recognition of slavery south of the line, Mr. Clay replied in this memorable language, so familiar to us all:

"I am extremely sorry to hear the Senator from Mississippi say that he requires first the extension of the Missouri compromise line to the Pacific, and also that he is not satisfied with that, but requires, if I understood him correctly, a positive provision for the admission of slavery south of that line. And now, sir, coming from a slave State, as I do, I owe it to myself, I owe it to truth, I owe it to the subject, to say, that no earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure for the introduction of slavery where it had not before existed, either south or north of that line. Coming from a slave State, as I do, it is my solemn, deliberate, and well-matured determination, that no power—no earthly power—shall compel me to vote for the positive introduction of slavery, either south or north of that line."

These noble words of the great orator of Kentucky will live in the memory of men, and preserve his fame in the ages that are to come after us, if all else that he has said should be forgotten. But I am told that Pennsylvania is conservative, and has never been so devoted to this abstraction—as it is the fashion to call it—that her Representatives might not, consistently with her views, prove false to it. She is a conservative State, and for that reason they traduce her who would represent her infidelity to principle. She will have her Representatives conserve, in legislation, every good principle which she has ever avowed. She was conservative of justice, humanity, and political consistency, when, in 1784, she put slavery in the way of ultimate extinction within her borders by an act of her Legislature, which tells us—as well by its provisions as by its thrilling preamble—how she loved liberty and hated bondage. She recorded her sentiments again, in 1819, on the question of slavery in the Territories, and those gentlemen who suppose that we are only standing on the Chicago platform, will do well to look at this record. We are told the platform was not made in view of these troubles, or she would have repudiated it. Well, sir, the resolve which I am about to cite was no party platform, made in time of public quiet to catch votes, but the solemn declaration of her Legislature, at a time not unlike the present. The first conflict on the Missouri question was in the winter of 1819, and it shook the very foundation of the Union; but the people of Pennsylvania, with one heart and voice, protested against the admission of Missouri, with a slave constitution; and the Legislature resolved against the admission of the State, unless slavery should be prohibited. From its preamble, I extract the following:

"A measure was ardently supported in the last Congress, and will, probably, be as earnestly urged during the existing session of that body, which has a probable tendency to impair the political relations of the several States; which is calculated to mar the social happiness of the present and future generations; and which, if adopted, would impede the march of humanity and freedom through the world, and would affix and perpetuate an odious stain upon the present race. A measure, in brief, which proposes to spread the crimes and cruelties of slavery from the banks of the Mississippi to the shores of the Pacific.

"The Senate and House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, therefore, cannot but deprecate any departure from the humane and enlightened policy pursued not only by the illustrious Congress of 1787, but by their successors, without exception. They are persuaded that, to open the fertile regions of the West to a servile race, would tend to increase their numbers beyond all past example; would open a new and steady market for the lawless vendors of human flesh, and would render all schemes for obliterating this most foul blot upon the American character useless and unavailing."

In disregard of these sentiments, some of her Representatives, the next winter, voted for the admission of the State with the compromise line; and she showed her conservatism by letting them all stay at home after that. Still conservative, she stood by the Missouri compromise, though distasteful to her; and when, in 1854, that compromise was abrogated, she showed her appreciation of the conduct of those who betrayed her principles by burying them in a common political grave. And now, sir, we are asked to abrogate the compromise of 1850. Let those who say Pennsylvania would make one compromise to destroy another keep in mind her history, or she will hold them in fierce remembrance.

The recent attempt of her Senators to move her from her moorings will fail. If it were an effort to mislead her people by the artful contrivances under which politicians ordinarily endeavor to screen their departure from principle, a temporary success might be possible; but when all disguises are thrown off, and the naked, unveiled word of command is given that they must not only abandon their "feelings" but their "principles," it will not be obeyed. No hopes of gain, or fears of loss, will change the determination of her people. You may set forth in order all the past glories, the present blessings, and future prospects of Union, on the one hand, and on the other you may marshal the horrors of its violent rupture, and she will still refuse to set her seal to such a covenant as this. There is nothing in the proposition which would entitle it even to a respectful consideration but the excellent character of its first mover.

I have been surprised, Mr. Speaker, to learn that persons who profess a desire for a lasting peace should be found the advocates of this project. The honorable gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. COWEN,] in the remarks which he made on bringing forward his report, saw the dangers so clearly himself that he simply said everybody knew what would be the effect. I wish he had thought proper to say more on that point. He elaborated upon the absurdity of the apprehension which was supposed to be entertained by many, that the Republican party designed to change the relation of master and slave in the States; everybody knew that; but then, how much better did we know it after he had spoken of it? Sir, if this amendment shall be proposed for adoption by the States, it will provoke an agitation on the subject of slavery which will cast into the shade all that has gone before it. The moral, political, and social aspect of slavery will be the theme of every tongue; the storms of 1820, 1836, 1850, and 1854, will be but as the strains of a lullaby compared with the howlings of the tempest. And then for the result. If it should be rejected by more than one-fourth of the States, as it would be, the same influences now at work on the disruption of the Union, if quieted by this measure until that time, would be revived with more power for mischief. But if it should be adopted, what then? As the Constitution now stands, it is in the North sustained because it is a free Constitution; so that no man can justly say he is responsible at the bar of conscience for the bondage of any human being in a slave State? But let such a provision once go into the Constitution, and the people realize the fact that the independence of these United States—which, as Mr. Jefferson said, was won, not for our rights as American citizens only, but for the rights of human nature—has been perverted to the open and avowed sanction of chattel slavery, and I see clearly enough you would not have peace. You now talk of destroying the Government on a supposed point of honor. Do you suppose a point of conscience would be less likely to breed discontent?

I have a word to say of what is called the border State proposition. It proposes that when, in any sixty thousand square miles of territory, south of the line 36° 30′, there shall be found a population equal to the number required for a Representative in the House of Representatives, it shall be admitted as a State; but that, in the mean time, neither Congress nor a Territorial Legislature shall *abolish* or *prohibit* slavery. This project is bottomed on an assumption that slavery has a constitutional right in the Territories. It assumes what is without warrant in any line or word of the Constitution, and in opposition to the whole current of legislative and judicial authority of the Government from 1787 till a very recent period, that whenever we acquire territory, and before its admission as a State into the Union, a slaveholder may take his slaves within its bounds, and there hold them or sell them, without any law specially giving him such licence. There is, in principle, no real difference between this proposition and that which I have just considered.

The proposition is objectionable for another reason: that while it in terms applies to the territory south of the line 36° 30′, yet inasmuch as it is put forward as involving a just principle of compromise, it requires no prophet to see that further acquisitions of territory in that direction will only renew the present disturbances, and as the agitators will claim their settlement on like terms, we will easily persuade ourselves that the principle of what was esteemed a settlement in 1861, might with fairness be applied to all such additions to our domain to the southward.

It is said that New Mexico has already established slavery by a territorial law, and we are therefore only invited to recognise an existing fact; we all know, sir, that the law was enacted at the request of a member of this House by outside influences, such as sought to introduce it into Kansas; but if the fact were otherwise, I deny the right of a few people in New Mexico, or any number of people in any Territory, to make a slave of any man. They may have the mere brute force to accomplish it, but they are without the right; and so long as I have a seat here, they shall have no such permission by any vote of mine. And, sir, in support of this view, I voted last year to repeal the obnoxious laws of New Mexico, by which not only the slavery of black men but of white men is secured. We reserved the right to repeal her laws in her organic act, and I will not consent to yield that right.

The proposition to admit New Mexico as a State is not acceptable to me for many reasons. If she were here to-day asking admission as a State, I would vote against her, with a free or a slave constitution. She has never asked for admission. Her population is confessedly insufficient, as all accounts that I have as yet seen have not placed her population of American citizens beyond seven hundred; while Mexicans, half-breeds, and all, do not amount to more than sixty thousand. It seems to me unjust to the old States to admit into the Union a State without population enough to entitle her to a member of Congress, and yet give her one member and two Senators. But that objection has increased weight when the population has so recently been citizens of a foreign nation, and therefore without that training in the principles of our Constitution which fits our people for the responsibilities of free government. A great body of her people, we learn, are Mexican peons—white slaves—men who have been sold to pay their debts. I think it would be better to await the progress of these people to a point where men are better thought of. The introduction of this "peculiar institution" will not go far to allay the trouble which springs from the other "peculiar institution"—the perpetual fountain of bitterness and strife; and therefore, I feel disposed to retain the Territory in apprenticeship yet a while longer. The object is to remove a bone of contention. I do not believe that one man in a hundred has had his thoughts upon New Mexico from the beginning of these troubles. The real trouble has been the offices. A leading secessionist of the Senate, a day or two since, declared that, if Lincoln and Hamlin would resign, the troubles would end. That, sir, is the true secret of our mischief. It is not the bare dry bone of New Mexico, but the fat pastures, where the Democracy have browsed, are the objects of solicitude to those of them who rebel against the will of the people.

The gentleman from Virginia [Mr. GARNETT] has thought that it was the true policy of Virginia to secede, because in her present connection she would hold a subordinate place, whilst she would take the lead in a Southern confederacy. Has Virginia any special policy she can expect to promote there that she cannot here; or is it even supposed that she will shape the course of the present confederate States? She hardly