"The Democrat."

S. G. HEMPSTEAD, Editor and Proprietor.

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SPEECH OF HON. D. WILMOT,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 3.

In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the President's Message transmitting the Constitution of California.

Mr. WILMOT said:

MR. CHAIRMAN: This lengthened debate, in my judgment, has been productive of at least one good result. It has disclosed, beyond all question of denial or equivocation, the policy and purpose of the South. It affords ample justification, if any were needed, where the path of duty is so clearly marked out, for final adherence to that policy, upon which I have stood from the first, and [illegible]

On the [illegible] this [illegible] were [illegible] controversy—that [illegible] *hibition* by Congress, [illegible] territories [illegible] tion, having [illegible] ing to no practical result. [illegible] years earnest, and [illegible] the halls of this Capitol—an agitation wide-spread as the country, reaching all classes, and stirring to their profoundest depths the passions of men, attests the magnitude of the struggle, and the mighty interests dependent upon its issue. Except that [illegible] which gave birth to the nation, none has arisen, and, in my judgment, none will arise in our subsequent history, involving interests so vast, consequences so momentous for good or evil, as the one now pressing its fearful weight upon us—reaching as it does, to the remotest posterity, and involving, if not the existence, the character and policy of our Government, so long as it shall have a name and a place among the family of nations. The ultimate decision of the present controversy will settle the great question, of the condition and destiny of the southern half of this Continent. It will also settle another great question: whether the government shall be administered in the spirit that gave it birth, or whether the [illegible] of the Revolution shall [illegible]—whether the Democratic [illegible] to stand, or the government [illegible] an aristocracy, based upon slave property, and slave representation.

In the [illegible] momentous [illegible] viewed [illegible] and [illegible] the conflict [illegible] mate [illegible] volved [illegible] has been [illegible] dred to [illegible] the hands of [illegible] selfishness [illegible]—restrained [illegible] nor by the obligations of [illegible] patriotism, [illegible] days [illegible] direct [illegible] ject, and [illegible] purpose, the dismemberment of the Union and the total destruction of the [illegible] institutions under which we live. Such, sir, is the spirit and temper [illegible] exhibited in this struggle—a power as insolent, as arrogant and fierce of right, and justice, and law, as the most [illegible] conspiracy that ever reared its head against a just and benign government.

Sir, this spirit of threatening and defiance, must be successfully resisted, or we are ourselves the veriest of slaves. What! shall the line of our conduct be prescribed to us under the pressure of treasonable threats? We have severally sworn to support the Constitution, each man for himself; and for our fidelity in this respect, we must stand individually responsible to God and the country. But we are told that we must understand that Constitution, as it shall be taught us by the advocates of slavery—we must adopt their construction of that instrument, and if we presume to overstep the limits of their interpretation, that the Union shall be dissolved, and our system of government overthrown. Not only this, but the line of our action is prescribed to us, within the acknowledged limits of the Constitution. "New States may be admitted by Congress into this Union," is the explicit language of that instrument. Yet we are given to understand, if we presume to exercise this clear and admitted power in the case of California, without making certain concessions to slavery as an equivalent, that measures of a revolutionary character will be brought into requisition to arrest our action—that the ordinary government supplies will be withheld—that the *yeas* and *nays* will be called, in defiance of Parliamentary law and usage, upon frivolous and dilatory motions until the end of the present Congress.

Sir, where are we? Is this a Chamber in which the representatives of freemen meet, for the discussion and determination of grave and important questions? or is it a theatre upon which slaves are taught their obligations and duties? It behoves us to examine the ground upon which we stand. We have arrived at a point from which we cannot retreat, without a surrender of our independence as representatives upon this floor. I repeat it, we *must go forward*. To step back—to cower under these threats, is base dishonor—a virtual surrender of our rights, and the rights of the freemen whose representatives we are. It is no question of feeling or personal pride; but of independent action upon this floor—of the exercise of these acknowledged powers, which belong to us as a part of the Government. Shall the acknowledged powers of this government be exercised thro' its constitutional organs? or in a band of conspirators to arrest its action and set its authority at defiance? This, sir, is the point we have reached. I am for meeting this issue here and now. I will yield nothing to treason. I will know no concessions to the threats of faction. It would be base cowardice—a flagrant dereliction of public duty—a surrender of the constitutional powers of this House into the hands of a factious minority, subversive of all rightful authority, and destructive of the very foundations of our institutions of government.

Who is it, and what is it, that dares thus hurl defiance at the constitutional authority of this government?—that dares threaten a dismemberment of this Union? [illegible] an aristocracy of slaveholders, [illegible] will make [illegible] constitution [illegible] from the slave States, we [illegible] that all shall be well—that agitation shall cease and peace and harmony be restored to our country; but if we dare [illegible] that instrument for ourselves, and [illegible] upon our understanding of its true meaning, we are threatened with convulsions, civil bloodshed, and civil war. If one man should assume the right to fix an authoritative construction upon the constitution—to dictate what Congress might, and what it might not do—acquiescence in this demand, would be to change this government into an absolute monarchy. To concede that right to any number less than a majority, is to convert it into an aristocracy. Yet this is what we are called upon to do at the peril of the very existence of [illegible]. Sir, I am no agitator. I am the friend and lover of peace, but I [illegible] agitation—I prefer any [illegible] danger to a peace that is purchased [illegible]

The great champion of the South, now [illegible] among the dead—he whose courage [illegible] designs [illegible] proposed such an amendment to the constitution as should place [illegible] the power of a [illegible] direct proposition [illegible] there was no disguise [illegible] It could be clearly seen and [illegible] and boldly sent to a people of [illegible] States [illegible] revolted at the [illegible] of the most ultra [illegible] back from the [illegible] had carelessly taken. It [illegible] It stripped slavery [illegible] exposed to length [illegible] was this proposition [illegible] as honest [illegible]

[illegible] of threats, and [illegible] can be brought [illegible] it is better for the aristocracy of slavery, than an [illegible] constitutional amendment. It is an ever [illegible] bargain, made [illegible] equal to every necessity. I prefer any change of the constitution to this. If the great principles of our government are to be subverted, and an aristocracy established on its ruins, let it be done by a change in our organic law—let it be written down, so that the freemen of this country may see it—Let the powers and privileges of our masters be distinctly defined and such rights as are vouchsafed to us, have the guarantees of written law. Of all tyrannies, save me from that unlimited and undefined tyranny, which acknowledges no restraint except the will or caprice of the tyrant—which demands control over my judgment and conscience, and enforces obedience by threats, if not of life, of all that makes life valuable.

Mr. Chairman, this is no picture of the imagination, but a sober reality. How stand the facts? We of the non-slaveholding States believe that Congress has power under the constitution to prohibit slavery in the national territories. We have read that instrument for ourselves. We have carefully studied its provisions. We have called to our aid the lights of history and the experience of the past, and we find our opinions fortified by the unbroken action of this government, throughout all its departments, for the entire period of its existence. We believe further, that it is our bounden duty to God and the country to exercise this power, and to give to the principle of the non-extension of slavery, the authority and force of positive law. How are we met? We are told that if we, being in a majority, dare to act upon this, our understanding of the constitution—if we shall dare to carry out our deep and solemn convictions of public duty, that the Union shall be dissolved, and the country involved in anarchy and the horrors of civil war. Gentlemen representing the slave States tell us that they have a different reading of the constitution. Disregarding all precedents—rejecting all cotemporaneous construction, they arrogate to themselves infallibility as the expounders of that instrument; and if we shall dare act counter to their exposition, they notify us by the most solemn warnings, that the government shall be overthrown, and our glorious institutions of liberty and law buried in the abyss of irretrievable ruin. Sir, no dangers threaten the Republic so imminent as the assaults made by slavery upon the constitution and powers of this government. Submission to its threats and demands is the most dire calamity that can befal us. What more fatal to liberty? What more subversive of our institutions than a surrender of the constitution, and the rights of a majority under it, and the adoption, as the law of our guidance, of the arbitrary behests of slavery, enforced by threats of violence and blood?

Again, Mr. Chairman, we propose to admit California into the Union. Our *right* to do so is acknowledged. Here there is no dispute of our constitutional power; yet, here again we are warned not to proceed at the hazard of the Union. We are told that California shall not be admitted, except upon such terms as slavery shall prescribe—that its admission must be purchased by the substantial [illegible] doctrine of slavery [illegible] other territories. Yes, sir, [illegible] constitutional admission of California, [illegible] in the plain open highway of our duty, slavery lurks [illegible] Shall we [illegible] shall [illegible] "*save the Union*" [illegible] standing like trembling cowards [illegible] Those [illegible] I shall not. To my ear [illegible] sounds like the crack of the whip; and he who cowers under it is better fitted for the service of the plantation, than for the performance of those responsible duties which belong to the representative of a free people.

Upon the question of the admission of California as a *separate and independent measure*, there is but one sentiment among the people of the free States. It is demanded by the general and unanimous voice of all parties. The most servile of the pro-slavery press at the North has never presumed so far to outrage public feeling as to advocate the connexion of any other measure to the admission of California. Upon this point even the Pennsylvanian has been silent, while upon all others it has kept neck and neck with the Washington Union and Charleston Mercury in its advocacy of the most extravagant demands of the South, and is justly entitled to preeminence over both in the bitterness and malignity of its assaults upon the principles and friends of freedom. It has been forced, by the strong public sentiment at home, to conceal its opposition to the unconditional admission of California—to disguise its hostility under the cover of a "general compromise."

When we assembled in this hall in December last, there could not have been found five representatives from the free States who were not opposed to mixing up California with other subjects of controversy. Here at last the north was to take a firm stand—one from which she was not to be seduced by promises or driven by threats. How stands this House to-day upon the question of the unconditional admission of California? God, sir, only knows; but if reliance can be placed upon [illegible] assertions of the friends [illegible] the friends of California are in a [illegible] The great measure of [illegible] admission with a free constitution, is to be embarrassed by questions of territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah, and the settlement of the boundaries of Texas. California is to be *compromised* into the Union, and the price of her admission is the extension of slavery. Sir, I trust in God it will not be. If the North prove recreant *now, and upon this question*, when and where can we hope for successful and manful resistance against the aggressions and threats of slavery? I trust that the representatives from the North will never consent that California shall be made the make-weight for the extension of slavery—that they will save themselves and the honest constituencies they represent from this deep humiliation. California abandoned as an *independent and separate* measure, and there is no ground upon which the friends of freedom can stand and maintain this unequal struggle. This crowning act of treachery to northern interests and northern rights, would strike a chill upon the hearts of the freemen of this land. I should feel myself as if the chains were clanking upon my limbs. I pray Heaven that it may not be; yet I fear the arrangements and corruptions of this political mart, where principles and the highest interests of humanity are mere commodities—where the question of the Presidency is made to override the great issue of freedom or slavery. Would to God that the men who are at the plow and in the workshops could be here to speak and vote upon these momentous questions. They, sir, could not be seduced by flattery, nor awed by threats, nor corrupted by office. With them the love of truth is stronger than the love of gold.

Mr. Chairman, the whole history of this struggle is a history of high and haughty bearing—of proud and arrogant defiance on the part of slavery; while on the side of freedom there has been a shameful exhibition of weakness, irresolution, and a timidity bordering on cowardice. The North has been driven from one position to another, until the outposts are all abandoned, and we are now summoned to an unconditional surrender of the citadel itself. Under the influence of threats, of persuasion, of flattery, and above all, of patronage and the promise of political preferment—our numbers have been reduced by desertion—our ranks broken, our forces divided, until there is danger of a general rout. In the commencement of this struggle, the friends of freedom were closely and thoroughly united upon the ground of *positive legislative prohibition* against the introduction of slavery into any territory which we might acquire from Mexico. The constitutionality and propriety of this position, met with the general and almost universal assent of the people of the free States. Their Representatives on this floor, presented the same united and unbroken front [illegible] soon, however, the ranks of the northern Democracy began to give way, under the pressure and patronage of a Southern Administration. Fearing to abandon at one step, a principle which had been received with such general favor, the allies of slavery extension at the North discovered that the agitation of the subject was "*premature*." Claiming still to occupy the same high ground—loud and zealous in their professions of fidelity to the principles and the cause of freedom, they took shelter behind the plea, that the Proviso, as an amendment to the three million bill, was inappropriate both as to time and place;—that we should *acquire* the territory before seeking to engraft upon it the ordinance of [illegible] Under this specious disguise [illegible] the first [illegible] Proviso [illegible] "*humbug*," [illegible] "*construction*," [illegible] a prejudice against the [illegible] I could quote from the [illegible] in support [illegible] I will, however, [illegible] extract from the [illegible] colleague. I make this selection, because he has made himself conspicuous of late in [illegible] the principle, and [illegible] who support it. He has, in fact become a travelling missionary in the cause of [illegible] agitation. His [illegible] knows no bounds. He denounces the Proviso as a violation of the Constitution—a damning political heresy—an old Federal delusion; and all who support it as [illegible] and traitors to the Democratic party. [illegible] three years ago he stood upon this floor [illegible] making his opposition under professions of friendship, solemnly asseverating in the face of the nation, that he would go for engrafting the principles of the Proviso upon the legislation of the country wherever territories should be acquired, and Congress called upon to establish territorial governments therein. I hope his southern friends will take note of this case, as one especially deserving remembrance and reward. The appointment of *chargé d'affairs* would be but a reasonable compensation for the industrious and important services [illegible] of the [illegible] Congress. This notice, I am certain, will secure him a safe passage through the Senate.

I read from the speech of the Hon. Richard Brodhead, delivered in this House, February 9, 1847:

"I have thus, Mr. Chairman, briefly [illegible] colleague's [Mr. WILMOT] [illegible] amendment. I will now make some observations of a general character upon the subject of slavery, in relation to which so much has been said in this debate, in order that my position and views may not be misconstrued. First, however, permit me to premise, that *if we had acquired either New Mexico or California, and a bill was before the House providing territorial governments therein, or a bill was before the House providing for the admission of either of those Territories as States (the territory being first acquired by treaty) I would vote for a provision [illegible] the principle contained in the amendment of my colleague, and will go for ingrafting it upon the legislation of the country*, but in the proper *form*, and at the proper *time* and *place*, when the power to do so can be rightfully exercised."

Sir, this "*premature dodge*," which we have seen invoked at the present session, by a distinguished representative from Massachusetts, is not original with him. I claim priority of discovery for the gentleman from whose speech I have just read; and I think I could find some score or more, who have at least three years advantage of the gentleman from Boston, in its use. I should not have deemed this worthy of note, but that I do not think it fair in Massachusetts to claim originality for all the inventions connected with this subject. She, I fear, will be coming in for pay, to the exclusion of earlier and more meritorious inventors. A distinguished Senator from that State, claimed the Proviso by right of prior discovery, and exhibited much warmth and indignation, that humbler men should play with his "thunder." This, however, promising neither quick nor large returns of profit, the distinguished Senator has recently abandoned, and patented another invention, under the name of "*physical geography*," or the "*law of the formation of the earth*," by which he proposes to quiet the apprehensions of the North, upon the subject of the extension of slavery. Here again, Massachusetts is infringing upon the rights of Pennsylvania. This same *panacea* was offered to the public as early as the fall of 1847, by a distinguished citizen of my own State, in a celebrated document, known as the "Berks county Letter." It did not promise at that time to become a *popular medicine*. Every Whig stomach rejected it. We shall see whether or not it will be more palatable to them, when administered by one of their own doctors. But, sir, it is not my purpose to enlarge upon this theme. I only desired to state the facts, to vindicate the "truth of history," and to notify the South, that Pennsylvania claims the first instalment of pay.

To return, Mr. Chairman, to the subject from which I have been led by this digression: It was under pledges of fidelity and support, that treachery to freedom first took shelter. This cloak was worn, until the South demanded that it should be laid aside. The territories were acquired, and it became necessary either to stand up to these professions, or to find some new cover behind which to shelter opposition. A presidential election was approaching. The slave power insolently proclaimed its purpose to support no man for that high office, who should regard with the least favor the ordinance of freedom. True, a prominent candidate had given it his unequivocal endorsement—had spoken of it as a great measure of right, which ought not, and must not be abandoned. But slavery was inexorable. The oracle must speak, and it must speak as commanded. Sir, the oracle did speak, and we had produced the "Nicholson letter," in which, for the first time, the ground was taken by a northern man, that the "Proviso" was unconstitutional.

We hear much said, Mr. Chairman, of the aggressions of the North upon the South. I charge upon the South wanton and wicked aggressions upon the North. She seduces our public men. She tempts them beyond their strength. She leads them "up into an exceeding high mountain," and shows them the kingdoms of this world, and promises them dominion and power, and they "fall down and worship."

Sir, I have spoken of slavery as the basis of an aristocracy. It is so; and I give it as my mature and deliberate judgment, that the slaveholders of the South constitute one of the most formidable and powerful aristocracies upon the face of the earth. An aristocracy is where the power is in the hands of the few, to the exclusion of the many. It is not essential to an aristocracy, that its powers and prerogatives should rest upon law; they may rest upon a strong public opinion, that has the consistency and force of law. Thus it is in the South. The public opinion of the South is entirely moulded and directed by the slaveholders. Their views, sentiments, and principles, make up southern public opinion. The strength of this public opinion is strikingly exemplified in its influence over the press, that great lever which moves the world. The press of the South is the mere organ and advocate of the interests and prerogatives of slavery. It no more dare assail that institution, or question its rightful supremacy in the State, than dare the press of any aristocratic government on earth assail the privileges and immunities of its aristocracy. In the one, the press is under the *surveillance* of law and a vigilant police, in the other it is under the equally watchful *surveillance* of a public opinion stronger than law. I say stronger than law, because the freedom of the press is secured by the constitution of every slave State; yet this provision is a dead letter so far as respects slavery. The press of the South is free to discuss every other subject, and all sides of every other subject. There is nothing in morals, in law, or religion, so sacred, that it may not undergo a full and thorough discussion at the South, save only the one subject of slavery. Why is this made an exception? I answer, because it is the *bulwark* of southern aristocracy. Why, sir, the press is free in Russia, in Austria, in the most despotic and aristocratic governments in Christendom, to discuss all and every subject, so that it does not trench upon the prerogatives of the privileged order.

No aristocracy ever struggled more desperately to strengthen and fortify their prerogatives than have the slaveholders of the South, to extend and perpetuate that system, upon which their power rests. Holding in their hands fifteen hundred millions of dollars of slave property, together with a large portion of the real estate of the South—having entire control over the public opinion, and filling near all the positions of office and power in their respective States, with ninety-one representatives upon this floor, one half of the Senate, and the Executive branch of the Government during nearly the whole period of our national existence, thoroughly and indissolubly united in the common interests and dangers of slavery,—I repeat the proposition with which I set out, that the slaveholders of the South constitute this day one of the most powerful aristocracies on the face of the earth, and are now fighting a battle of life and death for the permanent control of the Government of the Union.

Sir, one of the characteristics of an aristocracy, is unrelenting and unforgiving hatred of those who question its privileges or assail its power. Slavery has exhibited this in a marked degree, during the history of our Government. When has a statesman of the North, however pure, and just and noble—however exalted in the affections of his countrymen—when has such a man crossed the track of southern policy—when has he planted himself in the path of slavery, and made manful resistance to its exorbitant demands and survived its proscriptive wrath? Sir, the example cannot be found in the history of this Government. Such a man could have sooner passed in safety the ordeal of the INQUISITION in the dark ages, upon a charge of heresy, than he could pass that Senate Chamber to-day.—Are these things ever to be? Must we forever bow our necks to the yoke of slavery? Shall the true men of the North be forever struck down? Are we to stand still and see our children proscribed in the land of their birth? No, sir! no! The men are born who will rescue this Government from the grasp of a heartless and ruthless aristocracy. This great work is the appropriate and appointed mission of a genuine Democracy—composed as that Democracy in truth is of the great free masses of the country, however now divided, or by whatever party names they may now be known.

Democracy is a principle of eternal justice. It contends for equality and right.—It resists all wrong and oppression. It is the foe of all special privileges and immunities.—It seeks the elevation and redemption of man from every species of bondage and tyranny. It is the friend of the down-trodden and oppressed—of earth's millions, whose destiny it is to sweat and toil from the cradle to the grave. It sympathises with labor, and vigilantly guards its interests and rights against the insidious and heartless demands of capital. Governed by these high principles and aims, Democracy has struggled against the increasing power, and unjust exactions of the great moneyed interests of the north.

Until now, we have never had interests of a purely sectional character, pushed upon the country as the main issue in national politics; but now, sir, the South insist upon making the support and extension of slavery, the all-controlling issue and test in our national politics. Democracy, true to its high mission, is called upon to resist the progress of slavery upon this continent, and upon this issue, it is met by the aristocracy of the South in deadly strife.—Southern aristocracy, and southern capital, seek to save themselves from the application of those great principles of justice and right, under which they were willing to fight the battle of Democracy, against the capital and aristocracy of the North. Long accustomed to lead in our party conflicts, the aristocracy of the South still holds the machinery of the party, and by a bold and unscrupulous use of its organization, seeks to lead Democracy on to self-destruction—to the breaking down of these great principles of justice and right, which have given it vitality and power as a party, and which alone entitle it to the support of a generous and free people. I am the friend, and have ever been the consistent supporter of party organization; but the organization I follow, must be one based upon principle, and having for its object the attainment of legitimate ends. I will not organize to steal, nor to murder, nor to extend into territory now free, the institution of African slavery.

Sir, the great elements by which slavery seeks to extend and perpetuate its power—to bear down freedom in this conflict, are the organization of the Democratic party—the patronage of the Federal Government, and abundant and prolific promises of future political preferment. It seduces by its promises, corrupts by its patronage, and *drives* by its use of party organization.—The two first are employed upon the leaders—the latter upon the rank and file. This driving business has been tried upon me pretty thoroughly, but with a success, or rather want of success, which I trust is not very satisfactory to the operators. I shall support no organization, wielded by men who openly declare their purpose to extend slavery, and who proclaim in advance, that they will support no candidate unless he avows principles favorable to their policy. I shall go into no caucus with men who tell me upon the threshold, that opposition to the extension of slavery disqualifies a man for their support—that "*under no political necessity whatever*," will they vote for a man whose principles harmonise with my own; and yet demand of me, that I vote for one of opposing views. This is a kind of party organization to which I have not been accustomed, and into which I cannot be driven. Sir, I know of but one way to put a stop to such a system of wrong upon my rights, and the rights of my constituents—such an outrageous perversion of the ends and purposes of party organization thus constituted, and thus perverted, I would still oppose the man who had bartered away my principles for office. I would do this, if for no higher reason, as evidence, that all self-respect and manhood had not been extinguished in me. No, sir! the man who sells my principles, must not draw on me for pay. I shall offer no such premium for treachery. The South must reward, her own vassals. She cannot hold up the offices and high places of this Government, as a reward to northern men for their treachery to the cause of freedom, and then call on me by my vote, to consummate the bargain.

I repeat, sir I am the friend of party organization. I have ever been one of its most steadfast supporters. I value it too highly to consent, without a struggle, that an aristocracy shall wield it for the advancement of its local and sectional objects, and to the utter prostration of those principles, which it was designed to uphold and maintain. As a Democrat, and one of the [illegible] of the [illegible] I have resisted, and shall continue to re[sist] with all my feeble powers, any and every attempt on the part of the slaveholders of the South to wield the organization of the Democratic party, against its principles, and for the purpose of the propagation of human slavery. I will battle while I have strength against this effort to lead Democracy to self-destruction, by an unscrupulous and unjustifiable use of its organization.

What are the legitimate objects of party organization? What are its uses? As I understand, to bring together those entertaining common opinions and sentiments upon political subjects, and uniting them in concentrated action. The maintenance of *principle* is the end, to which all legitimate organization points. Its object is not to bring together those holding incongruous and conflicting opinions. It may, and indeed often does serve to reconcile differences of opinion upon minor points, but it never can, and never ought, to unite into harmonious action, those holding opposing principles, which are deemed vital and fundamental. No one would think of uniting permanently in the same party organization, the republican and the monarchist. They might for a time stand together, fighting a common enemy, which threatened to overpower both; but the danger once passed, they would immediately separate and commence a warfare upon each other. This alliance of antagonist interests and principles, is not unfrequent. It always takes place when threatened by a common danger. Even absolute despotism not unfrequently finds its interest and safety in an alliance with the down-trodden masses, and earnestly seeks to remove, in some degree, the crushing tyranny which overwhelms them. It is so to-day in Russia, and has been so for centuries. The Autocrat of that Empire has a formidable rival, and at times a deadly enemy, in a powerful aristocracy, which holds in serfdom the great mass of his subjects. If by relieving the serfs from some portion of the tyranny which oppresses them, he could cripple the power of this aristocracy, he would feel more secure in his prerogatives, and more safe upon his throne. Should he, however, succeed in weakening that aristocracy, (which now is the only check upon his power,) by a partial enfranchisement of the serfs, things would be changed; and there would be a corresponding change in his sympathies and policy. The masses, relieved in part from the crushing tyranny which had kept them down, would demand an enlargement of their rights, and the imperial power would ally itself with an enfeebled aristocracy, to resist those demands.

Governed by the same great principles of human action, but under circumstances widely different, we have seen an aristocratic interest at the South, drawn into temporary connexion with the Democracy of the country. Democracy, as a principle, can have no sympathy or natural alliance with slavery. Light and darkness are not more opposed. They occupy the extreme point of political antagonism. The one, the friend of the largest liberty; the other, the enemy of every human right. While thus opposed to each other, from the nature and constitution of things; yet Democracy, as an active and practical element in the workings of our system of Government, pays profound respect and loyal obedience to the Constitution, and refrains, as in duty bound, from any interference with slavery in the several States where it exists. As a local, domestic, State institution, whatever may be its evils and its wrongs, it is entitled under the Constitution to peace and security. But when slavery steps beyond State boundaries, and invokes the power of the General Government to extend and perpetuate the system—to strengthen and uphold the aristocracy which it nourishes and sustains, Democracy must either be false in its principles, or it must resist demands so extraordinary and dangerous. It is only as a State institution, that slavery can claim forbearance and toleration. When it voluntarily lays aside its local and domestic character, and enters upon the theatre of national politics,—when it assumes an attitude towards the Federal Government such as that in which it now stands, dictating law under the threats of disunion, resistance becomes a duty of the highest obligation. Silence and submission under such circumstances, would be moral treason to our free institutions.

Mr. Chairman, we hear much anxiety expressed in certain quarters for a speedy and final settlement of all the controverted questions growing out of the subject of slavery. Some northern gentlemen are nervously alarmed for the safety of the Union. So distressing are their fears, that they cannot speak except in terms of the most gloomy forebodings. A solicitude so deep and anxious presses its weight upon them so as to destroy sleep, and appetite, and physical comfort. The sweets of a long-coveted retirement cannot hold within its sanctuary the anxious throbbings of a patriot heart. The rest of a quiet retreat is abandoned for a pilgrimage to the Capitol, to teach the North submission, and aid the South in the work of "preserving the Union." Surely, such patriotism deserves its reward! Oh! sir, how ungrateful is a [illegible] and uncharitable world, to breathe its suspicions that selfishness or ambition for presidential honors had aught to do in this labor of love.

Sir, there has been an industrious and labored effort to create alarm for the safety of the Union—to get up a panic in the country; and in this work northern men and northern presses have contributed their full share. The North is to be frightened from its principles and propriety; and under the plea of "danger to the Union,"—northern men on this floor hope to justify themselves to their constituents for their abandonment of the cause of freedom. I desire most earnestly a settlement, upon a just and truly national basis, of the present controversy growing out of the demand of slavery to overrun and occupy our free territories. I will support any proposition which shall give effectual guarantees against the extension of slavery, come from what quarter it may. I will support no scheme which does not give such guarantees, with whatever plausibility it may be concocted, or however imposing the circumstances which may attend its introduction into these halls. I have no such veneration for large committees, however distinguished the individuals of which they are composed, as to reconcile me to the extension of slavery. The committee of thirteen, recently raised in the Senate, composed as it is of eleven members who are known to favor the policy of the South, will submit no plan of adjustment that is not wholly one-sided and sectional. Nothing can be hoped from that quarter in the least favorable to freedom. The committee was raised against the votes of those who represented two-thirds of the freemen of this country—its members elected themselves and each other, and I cannot view it in any other light than as a scheme to force upon the country a measure of southern policy, under the name of "*compromise*." Yet it is hoped by some such process to quiet the North, and calm the agitation growing out of the dangerous and unwarrantable demands of slavery. Sir, no palliative which may be offered us by this committee of thirteen, will reach the disease or give quiet to the country. This struggle will go on increasing in force and intensity until limits are fixed to the possessions of slavery—until the aristocracy of the South shall abandon its alarming pretensions, and rest content with that share of political influence to which it is justly entitled under the Constitution. Agitation will continue until there is freedom upon this floor, and the rights of a majority acknowledged and respected. Sir, these threats of disunion—this bold defiance of the rightful and constitutional authority of this Government, must cease, before peace and fraternal concord will be restored to the country. A stop must be put to this proscription of northern men, who do not acknowledge the divine character and inestimable blessings of slavery. In short, this struggle between the opposing principles of freedom and slavery, will go on, until that day shall arise when the child that is nursed by a white mother, shall stand an equal chance in this Government, with one nursed in the lap of a slave. We claim for the men of the North an equality in this Government. It is ours by right of inheritance, and with the blessing of God we mean to have it. We wage no warfare upon the South. Their system of slavery is their own, as is the aristocracy it sustains. Their rights, under the Con-