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Mr. Webster's Speech
AT FANEUIL HALL, BOSTON, SEPT. 30.
Mr. Webster was introduced to the audience by the Mayor, in a very neat and tasteful Address, to which he replied nearly as follows:

I know not—I know not how it is, Mr. Mayor, but there is something in the echo of these walls, or in the sea of upturned faces which I see around me, or in the genius which always hovers over this place, fanning into life ardent and patriotic feelings with every motion of its wings—I know not how it is, but there is something that excites me strongly, deeply, too deeply, to allow adequate expression for my emotions. It will not be doubted by you that this salutation, that this greeting, is a greeting felt here at the heart. Boston is my home—my cherished home. It is now more than five and twenty years since I came here, with my family, to pursue here in this enlightened metropolis those objects both public and private, for which my studies and education designed to fit me. It is twenty years since the intelligent citizens of Boston asked me to loan myself to the public trust as their Representative; and it gives me infinite pleasure to see here today, occupying those seats assigned to these gentlemen more advanced in life, not a few of those who were originally instrumental in indicating the course of life by which I had endeavored to serve the people of this town.

When the duties of public life have withdrawn me from this my home—I have felt nevertheless, attracted to the spot to which all my local affections tended; and now that the progress of time must bring about that period—even if it should not be hastened by the progress of events—when the duties of public life must yield to coming advanced years—I cherish the hope of passing among these associations and these friends what shall remain of my life when these public services shall have ended which for good or for evil are all the inheritance I have to leave those who shall come after me.

The Mayor has spoken kindly of my public services; and especially of the results of the negotiation which has recently been brought to a close, and in which I was engaged. I hope, fellow citizens, that something was done permanently useful to the country. I present no personal claims of particular merit. I endeavored to do my duty. I had a hard summer's work—but I am not altogether unused to hard work. I had many anxious days, and some sleepless nights. But if the results of my labors merit the approbation of the country, I shall be richly rewarded, and my other days will be happier, as my other nights will give still sweeter repose. I sought to disperse the clouds which threatened a storm between England and America. For several years past there has existed a class of questions, which did not always threaten war, but which never assumed the aspect of permanent peace.

The highly lamented person—to whom so just a tribute was paid by the Mayor—at his inauguration of President in 1841, called me to the place I now occupy; and though I know it is in bad taste to speak of one self, yet among my friends and neighbors here I will say a word or two if you please. I had the pleasure of seeing him on several occasions at his house and elsewhere. I have never made any boast of the confidence the President reposed in me, but circumstances, hardly worthy of serious notice, have rendered it proper that I should say that as soon as General HARRISON was elected President of the United States, without a word from me upon the subject, he wrote to me inviting me to take a place in his Cabinet, leaving me to choose, and asking my advice as to the persons I would wish associated with me. He expressed rather a wish that I should take the department of the Treasury; because, he was pleased to say, he knew I had paid some considerable attention to currency and finance; and he felt that the wants of the country—the necessity of the country on the subject of currency and finances were among the causes which had produced the revolution—that revolution which had resulted in placing him in the Presidential chair.

It so happened that I preferred another

place—that which I now occupy. I felt all its responsibility; but I can say truly and correctly, that whatever attention I had paid to currency and finance, I felt more competent to carry on other concerns of the Government; and I was not willing to undertake the daily drudgery of trade. I was not disappointed in the exigency that existed in our foreign relations. The whole danger was at no time publicly developed; but the cause of the difficulty I knew—and I knew that an outbreak seemed to be at hand. I alluded to that occurrence to which the Chairman alluded which took place during the year 1841, with which was connected the name of Alexander McLeod. A year or two before the British Government had authorized a military incursion into the territory of the United States,—to destroy a steam-boat alleged to be employed by a power hostile to the peace of her Majesty's territory in Canada. The act was avowed by the British Government as a public act. Alexander McLeod; a person who individually receives and deserves no regard or sympathy, happened to be one of the agents who in military character performed that act; and coming into the United States some time afterwards he was arrested by the authorities of New York on a charge of homicide and held to trial as for a private felony.

Now, gentlemen, according to my apprehensions, a proceeding of that kind was directly adverse to well settled and well received principles of public law; and of all others likely to arouse the indignation, not only of the Government, but also of the people of the country aggrieved. So it would have been with us, if a citizen of the United States, under the orders of his government, and as a military man, obeys an order which he must obey or be hanged, should find himself in the territory of the power against which the supposed crime was committed, and should be seized and tried as an individual for that crime, there is not a man among us who would not cry out for redress and vengeance. Any elevated Government, in a case where one of its citizens, in performance of his duty should be seized and sought to be made answerable, every elevated Government, I maintain, would say, "I am responsible for this act;" as in the story of Nisus and Euryalus, she would exclaim—

"*Adsum qui feci—in me convertite ferrum.*"

Now, gentlemen, when the despatches of the British Government first reached this country—though I do not think it useful nor important to say much of them—yet if you all knew their contents, you would see that the commercial interests of the country, the shipping interests of this city must have been crushed at once. This crisis I thought could be averted; in the first place by upholding the acknowledged principles of public law, and in the next place, by demanding an apology for whatever against these principles of law had been done by the British Government. Let us put ourselves right in the first place, and insist that they shall do right in the next place.

When in England in 1839, I happened to be called on to address a large assembly of English persons, and in alluding to the relation of things between the two countries, I stated there what I thought, and what I now think, of any point in controversy which might terminate in war between the United States and England, and to the result of such a contest declaring that the only advantage which either would enjoy, would be in possessing the right of the cause. With the right on our side we are a match for England. With the right on her side she is a match for us—and for any body. In all the differences between nations and in a final judgment upon them, a great new element has come into the constitution of the tribunal: I mean the tribunal of the public opinion of the world; a nation will not go to war now, either with the consent of her subject or people unless the grounds and reasons are enough to justify her in the general judgment of the world. The influence of civilization, the influence of commerce, and above all the influence of that heavenly light which shines over Christendom, restrain men—restrain princes and people from gratifying an inordinate love of ambition through the bloody scenes of war; and as has been wisely and truly said, every settlement of national differences between Christian States, by reasonable negotiation and on the principles of public justice, is a new tribute to, and a new proof of the benign influence of the Christian creed.

In regard to the terms of this treaty, in regard to the matters made subjects of discussion, it is somewhat awkward for me to speak, because the treaty and correspondence have never been authentically published. But I persuade myself that, when the whole shall be calmly considered, it will be found that at least there has been manifested a good disposition to maintain every just right of the country and every point of honor on the one side,

and to set a proper value upon lasting peace, between us and the greatest commercial nation in the world, on the other. Gentlemen, while I thus acknowledge the compliment you have paid me, I have an agreeable duty to perform towards others. In the first place, I have great pleasure in bearing testimony to the intelligent attention manifested by the President of the United States, and to his sincere and anxious desire, in the whole negotiation, to bring it to a successful termination; and it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge now, as I shall ever acknowledge while I live, my obligations to him for the unbroken and steady confidence which he imposed in me. The negotiator for the United States, if troubled, and jealous, and distrustful, would indeed have been an unequal match for the cool and sagacious representation of one of the most powerful and proud nations of Europe,—possessing to the fullest extent, the confidence of his Government, and the authority to bind it, in any course to which it might agree.

I shall never forget the frankness and generosity with which, after a long interview in which suggestions were exchanged on both sides with the utmost freedom and liberality, I was told that upon my shoulders, and in my discretion, rested the ultimate decision of every question at issue between the two nations.

I desire to acknowledge, as I do with hearty cordiality, the aid I received from the other gentlemen concerned in the administration of the government. I may here say what I have said in a more official manner, that the highest respect is due to the Commissioners of Maine and Massachusetts, for their cordial co-operation—their faithful adherence to the interests of their own States, mingled with a just consideration of what was due to the general government. And I hope I shall not trespass on the proprieties of the occasion, if I speak of the happy selection made by the government of England, in the servant sent on this mission of peace;—who though steadily pursuing the interests of his own government, yet possesses large and liberal views, with a strength and weight of character which would cause everything to which he should agree, to receive the approbation of the whole people;—intimately acquainted with the relation of the two countries, and always acting with strict integrity towards the people and government of the United States. I am sure he will find his work received with commendation at home, and if peace should be made, with congratulations for having been instrumental in making an arrangement satisfactory and desirable, not only to our party, but to all parties;—for making an arrangement honorable to both nations, as all just arrangements are,—and which he may well consider the greatest labor of his life.

I hardly know whether it is proper on this occasion to advert to the correspondence; but when it shall appear with the discussion of other important questions—for the occasion was sought there to treat upon subjects of great moment and concern—when those shall be before the public and shall be calmly and thoroughly read, I shall venture to trust their judgment concerning them.

There yet remains, gentlemen, in our foreign relations several subjects of considerable interests yet unsettled with England. In the first place there is the important subject of our colonial trade, or the trade of the United States with the Northern British provinces and the West Indies. It became my duty to look into this subject—to keep the run of it, as we say, from 1839 to the present time. I was constrained to believe, indeed I know, that the operation of that arrangement is unfavorable to the shipping and navigation of the United States, especially of New England.

It is an important subject for the exertions of diplomacy or for the consideration of Congress—or one or both. Congress called upon the department in which I am for information, and a respectable Committee of the House of Representatives presented a report upon the subject. It is one which I hold to be of vital importance to our navigation and to the interests of the nation.

Then there is the question, somewhat more remote, but which it will be well enough to settle; I mean the Oregon Boundary towards the Pacific and the Rocky mountains. There are reasons why this dispute should be settled before the country itself is peopled on one side or the other. The relations of other States require attention; and many of our citizens have claims of indemnity which require prosecution. It becomes the Government of the United States, by a calm and dignified but decisive and vigorous tone to administer her foreign affairs so as to ensure a just arrangement in these respects.

Gentlemen, I am here to day as a guest. I was invited by a number of highly valued friends to partake with them of a public dinner, for the purpose of giving them an

opportunity to pass the usual greeting of friends now met after some absence, to pay their respects to my public services, and to tender their congratulations at the result of the negotiations just concluded. It was at my instance that this festival, from a dinner, took its present form; and instead of meeting you at the festive board, I choose, for obvious reasons, this public manner. Still, gentlemen, its general character is preserved, and I am here as a guest. I am here to receive your salutations and greetings on particular subjects. I am not here under an invitation, or an expectation, that I should address the gentlemen who have been pleased to meet me here on topics not suggested by yourselves. It would not benefit the occasion, therefore, in my opinion, that I should use the occasion for any such purpose; because, although I have a desire at some time, not far distant I hope, to make my sentiments known upon the political occurrences of the country generally, and the political state of the nation and of parties at the present moment, yet I know well that it would be improper for me to do so now, because I know well that the gentlemen who have written to invite me here on this occasion, entertain many of them, opinions different from myself; and they might properly say, "we came here to greet Mr. WEBSTER, and to extend our congratulations, on those matters in which we agree; and we did not come with the expectation that he would use the opportunity to discuss questions on which we differ."

On that account, and for that reason, I shall forbear, thinking it my duty so to do; and abstaining from using this occasion for the purpose of expressing my own opinions and of stating how far I agree with friends with whom I have acted for years, and how far I am most reluctantly constrained to differ from them, I look forward to a future occasion, if such should be offered, for the opportunity of fulfilling this promise.

I will say one thing, gentlemen, because it has been alluded to. The Mayor has been kind enough to say that, in his judgment, having discharged the duties of the Department in which I have acted in a manner satisfactory to the country, I might safely be left to take care of my own honor and reputation. I suppose he meant to say that in the present distracted state of the Whig party, and in the contrary of opinion which prevails (if there be a contrary of opinion) as to the course proper to be pursued by me—the decision of that question might be left to myself. I am exactly of his opinion. (Loud and repeated cheers.) I am quite of his opinion, gentlemen, that is a question touching my own honor or the consistency of my own character, as I am to bear all the consequences of the decision, I might as well better be trusted to make it. And though, gentlemen, no man values more highly than I do the advice of my friends, yet on a question so important and of such a nature as this, I like to choose the friends to advise me; and on this whole subject, with this reference, I shall leave you just as enlightened as I found you. I give no pledge; I make no intimations, one way or the other; and I will be absolutely free, when this day closes, to act as duty calls, as I was when its dawn first broke upon me. (Repeated cheers.)

Gentlemen, there is a delicacy in this case—because there is always a delicacy in speaking of differences with friends; but there is no embarrassment—no embarrassment. If I see the path of duty clear before me, I trust I have that within me which will enable me to pursue it, and throw all embarrassment to the winds. A public man has no occasion to be embarrassed, if he is honest. He himself—his own feelings are nothing; his country and his public duty are everything, and he should sink whatever is personal to himself in far higher considerations;—these are the characteristics that mark us as great or as little men.

There were many persons in December 1841, who found great objections to my remaining in the President's Cabinet. You all know, gentlemen, that twenty years of honest, I do not say of efficient service, of not altogether undistinguished service in the Whig cause had scarcely prepared me for an outpouring such as seldom proceeds from Whig friends, against Whigs, or against any body. I am a little hard to be teased, and a great deal harder to be driven. I choose to act from my own judgment; and thinking that I was in a post where I could render service to my country, I staid there; and I leave you this day, and I leave my country to say, whether this country would have been better off if I had gone also.

I have no attachment to office. I have tasted its sweets, but I have also tasted its bitterness. I am content; and I acknowledge I am anxious to preserve the good I have than to run risks for new acquisitions in public life. I suppose I ought to pause here. I suppose I ought

not to allude, and I will not, to anything further that merely concerns myself.

Gentlemen, a very respectable Convention, a most respectable Convention, assembled here some ten days ago, and passed some important resolutions. There is no set of gentleman, so far as I know, for whom I entertain more respect and regard. They are Whigs;—but they are no better Whigs than I am. They have served their country in the Whig ranks—and so have I—quite as long, though, perhaps, with less ability and success. They were sent hither, as I suppose, to agree upon one whom the Whigs of Massachusetts should support for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. If their power extended beyond that, I have not seen their commission. If they had authority to speak in the name of the Whigs of Massachusetts, for other purposes or interests, I was not acquainted with that power. And in acting further it seems to me they were a little inconsiderate.

Among other resolutions, they declared, in behalf of all the Whigs of the Commonwealth, a full and final separation from the President of the United States. If these gentlemen said this for the expression of their own opinions, to that extent it is good. Whigs speak their sentiments every where,—and they have a perfect right to do here. But it becomes quite another question, when they assume to represent other characters, and to speak on other points than those on which they were authorized to speak. I am a Whig. I always have been one—and I always shall be one—(repeated cheers)—and if anybody undertakes to turn me out of the pale of that communion—let him see to it who gets out first? I am a Massachusetts Whig—a Faneuil Hall Whig—breathing her air now for more than twenty-five years, and meaning to breathe it on this spot, so long as God shall be pleased to give me life.

I accept the decision of a Whig Convention for proper purposes; for I know that only through such bodies, and such organization, great public good can be obtained. But it is quite another question when a Convention, acting upon the impulse of the moment, decides upon questions which have never been submitted to their arbitration at all. A full and final separation they declare, between the Whigs of Massachusetts and the President of the United States. This text reads a commentary;—what does it mean?

The President has yet three years of his term unexpired. Does the resolution mean that during that three years all the measures of his administration shall be opposed by the Whigs of Massachusetts—right or wrong? Great public interests require his attention—those to which I alluded. If the President of the United States should make an earnest and serious effort to effect favorably the navigation of the country, to regulate the question of British Colonial trade, shall all the Whigs of Massachusetts separate from him and refuse their aid? (Cries of "no!")—Well, I say so! If the President directs the proper department to review the whole commercial regulations of the United States, to take deeply into consideration that reciprocity in our direct trade to which so much tonnage is now sacrificed—and the proper measures shall be suggested and adopted by him, shall all the Whigs of Massachusetts separate from and oppose him? Look, gentlemen, at the question. Do you know that now a great proportion—more than one-half—of the carrying trade, the transportation, for instance, of goods between Brazil and the United States, is carried on by the tonnage of Northern Europe, in consequence of the ill considered reciprocity treaty? As well might we admit them to share our coasting trade. We give them the right, without the shadow of advantage in return, to take the bread from our children's mouths and give them unto strangers. I ask you, sir, (turning to a gentleman on his right,) as a shipping merchant if this is not true.

Well, is every measure of this kind to be postponed or rejected—until these three years become expired, and as many more as shall elapse before the time when Providence shall bless the Whigs with more power to do good than they have now?

Again, the various departments of the Government employ persons who are supposed to be good Whigs—holding offices—Collectors—and other Custom House Officers—Postmasters, District Attorneys, Marshals, &c.; what is to become of them in this separation? Are they to be forced to resign, or will you give them invitation and protraction to resign? Our distinguished fellow-citizen who does so high credit to himself and to his country in upholding the interests and honor of his nation at the Court at London! Is he expected to come home and yield his place to his predecessor or some one else? And the individual who addresses you: where do his brother Whigs intend to place him? Generally when a divorce takes place the parents divide the chil-

dren; I should be glad to know where I am to go!

But I would not treat the matter lightly or severely. I know that at such conventions resolutions are never considered with any degree of deliberation. They are passed as they are presented. Who the gentlemen were who brought in these resolutions I do not know. I dare say they were respectable persons; but I doubt very much whether they had any very definite meaning in their resolutions, or whether they very clearly perceived what little they had. They were angry—resentful—desirous to make out a string of charges against the President—a sort of bill of indictment and they concluded by pronouncing the penalty—a full and final separation.

Now, gentlemen, I do not look upon this without perceiving that they had a bearing, whether intentional or unintentional, upon my proceedings; and therefore I thought proper to take notice of them. There are some topics on which it is my fortune to differ with my Whig brethren; but I dare say they are right, and I know that I am right in entertaining these opinions, and in expressing them if I do entertain them. They are disposed to postpone all attempt to do good to some future and uncertain occasion. Now the Whigs have a majority in each House of Congress, a strong majority, and, in my opinion, the time to do good is now; that now should be accomplished whatever remains to be done. There are persons of more sanguine temperament than I— "Confidence," says Mr. Burke, "is a plant of slow growth;" and it is true when applied to public measures as well as to public men. Some people can see distinctly when the Whigs will have more power, and a better chance for serving their country. Beyond the present, far on in the future, these men see milder skies and halcyon seas; the fogs and darkness which blind other men, dim not their vision in the least.

Now it was not any easy work to accomplish what we have already attained. The Whigs tried it long—they tried it in 1840 and succeeded, but not without labor. I do not believe they will find it easier now; and I know that nothing but union—and by that I mean a cordial, sympathising paternal Union—can prevent the Whig cause from prostration. It is not—and I say it in the presence of the world—it is not by premature and partial, and especially by proscription and deauncing proceedings, that this great Whig family can be united. Do they not know that they came into power as a party made up of different opinions? What did the country expect from these complex opinions? Here were extreme State Rights notions—extreme Federal notions—extreme Tariff and excessive Anti-Tariff notions—What did the country expect? That they should come together in a spirit of harmony, of conciliation, of unity and sympathy—and that they should seek to agree and not to widen the breach. In this lay the hope of saving the country from the ruinous measures which at that time threatened its prosperity. The whole history of the revolution of 1840 preaches conciliation, and forbearance, and kindness, and friendship, and sympathy, and union.

Gentlemen, if I understand the matter, there were four or five great objects for which the revolution was undertaken. In the first place, one great object was the attempt to establish a permanent peace between the United States and England; for though we had no war, we had perpetual agitation and disturbance. What should we do? We needed men capable of knowing the future, and of calculating with a degree of certainty the chance for a permanent settlement. The accomplishment of this must be regarded as one of the most important objects; and I am glad if it proves acceptable to the country.

The next question was concerning revenue; the country was deficient in revenue. It was a fact, a notorious fact, that the late administration exceeded their receipts by their expenditures, thus running the country in debt, and the Government was found in debt. Under the operations of the Compromise Act, the revenue was diminishing. Now this resolution had for one object, therefore, the supply of the revenue, and I hope and believe that to a reasonable extent that object has been answered.

And then the great interest of Protection—its incidental or consequent on Revenue—or maintained by means of levying duty by revenue. As to that much has been done; and it will be found I think that enough has been done and all the Whigs for its support deserve my thanks and your hearty gratitude. But let us be just—let us be just. The French rhetoricians have a maxim that nothing can be beautiful that is not true; and I am afraid we shall see that much of our juvenile oratory will stand the test of this criticism. It is not true that the majority of the Whigs could be found in favor of it in either house of Con-