

maintain your rights. The principles and position of the present administration of the United States—the Republican party—present some puzzling questions. While it is a fixed principle with them never to allow the increase of a foot of slave territory, they seem to be equally determined not to part with an inch “of the accursed soil.”

Notwithstanding their clamor against the institution, they seem to be equally opposed to getting more or letting go what they have got. They were ready to fight on the accession of Texas, and are equally ready to fight now on her secession. Why is this? How can this strange paradox be accounted for? There seems to be but one rational solution, and that is, notwithstanding their professions of humanity, they are disinclined to give up the benefits they derive from slave labor. Their philanthropy yields to their interest. The idea of enforcing the laws has but one object, and that is a collection of the taxes raised by slave labor to swell the fund necessary to meet their heavy appropriations. The spoils is what they are after, though they come from the labor of the slave.

HENRY WILSON



HENRY WILSON, American statesman and author, was born at Farmington, N. H., Feb. 16, 1812, and died at Washington, D. C., Nov. 22, 1875. The son of a farm laborer, he at the age of ten was apprenticed to a farmer for a period of years, during which he had little schooling, but read, it is said, over a thousand volumes. Until he came of age, his name had been Jeremiah Jones Colbath, but he now assumed the name of Henry Wilson. After abandoning farming he learned the shoemaker's trade at Natick, Mass., and presently came into notice as a speaker at political meetings and an outspoken opponent of slavery. In 1840, he entered the State legislature and from 1844 to 1846 was State Senator. He was actively opposed to the admission of Texas as a slave State, and, with the poet Whittier, presented a largely-signed petition to Congress against it. He was a delegate to the Whig convention at Philadelphia in 1848, but withdrew because of its rejection of anti-slavery resolutions. He once more sat in the State Senate, from 1850 to 1853, and, succeeding Everett in the Senate of the United States, in 1855, was a member continuously of that body for eighteen years. He took part in all debates of importance, and although his speeches are not marked by special graces of style, they are statesmanlike and effective. Wilson was a man of positive convictions, though he was careful in his statements of fact and was seldom successfully challenged. He was elected Vice-president on the ticket with General Grant, in November, 1872, and accordingly resigned from the Senate. His published writings comprise, besides single speeches: "History of the Anti-Slavery Measures of the Thirty-seventh and Thirty-eighth Congresses" (1865); "Military Measures of the United States Congress" (1866); "History of the Reconstruction Measures of the Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Congresses" (1868); "History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America" (1872-77). Though the latter was hardly completed when death overtook him, it is his best-known production and one on which he spent much and assiduous labor.

SPEECH ON BILL TO CONFISCATE THE PROPERTY AND FREE THE SLAVES OF REBELS

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE, MAY 1, 1862

MR. PRESIDENT,—The senator from Vermont [Mr. Collamer], in submitting this amendment to the original bill proposes to authorize the President of the United States, if in his judgment it shall be necessary for the more speedy suppression of this insurrection, to appoint a day when all persons held to service or labor in any State

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whose inhabitants he has declared by proclamation to be in a state of insurrection shall be declared free. That honorable senator, in the course of his speech, said that it seemed to be the chief object of some of the supporters of the original bill to carry that provision of the bill emancipating the slaves of rebels; and yesterday the senator from Virginia [Mr. Carlisle] alluded to and indorsed that declaration.

Now, sir, I am free to confess here that it is with me the chief object of solicitude. I care something for the confiscation of the property of the leading rebels; but I do not wish to touch the property of the masses of the people. I think the distinction is a just one,—that the leaders should be punished, and that the masses of the people should feel that they will be forgiven and protected if they return to their loyalty.

I do not expect that we shall realize any large amount of property by any confiscation bill that we shall pass. After the conflict, when the din of battle has ceased, the humane and kindly and charitable feelings of the country and of the world will require us to deal gently with the masses of the people who are engaged in this rebellion. It will be pleaded that wives and children will suffer for the crimes of husbands and fathers; and such appeals will have more or less effect upon the future policy of the government.

But, sir, take from rebel masters their bondmen, and from the hour you do so until the end of the world, to "the last syllable of recorded time," the judgment of the country and the judgment of the world will sanction the act and it will be stronger every day while the world lasts. Therefore, sir, I am in favor of emancipating the slaves of all the rebels who are engaged in this rebellion.

Sir, with the lights of to-day I do not see how any man

can be for slavery and at the same time be a loyal man. Slavery and treason this day and this hour in this country are one and the same. Slavery and treason are synonymous words. I can conceive how a man of intelligence and character can recognize the existence of slavery, look upon it as it is as an evil, and yet not see how it is to be abolished or when it is to be got rid of. I can appreciate the position of such a man, and I think I do appreciate it.

But, sir, how can any man looking over this broad land to-day and seeing flashing from every quarter of the heavens the crimes of human slavery against this country, labor to uphold, strengthen, and support human slavery in America? It is the cause and the whole cause of this rebellion. We talk about "Jeff" Davis, Slidell, Mason, and Toombs, and their treasonable confederates; but they are not the cause of this rebellion; they are simply the hands, the tools: the heart, the brain, the soul is slavery; the motive power is slavery. Slavery is the great rebel; Davis and his compeers are but its humble tools and instruments.

Slavery for thirty years has been hostile to and aggressive upon the free institutions of America. There is not a principle embodied in our free institutions, there is not an element of our government that elevates or blesses mankind, there is not anything in our government or our institutions worth preserving, that slavery for a generation has not warred against and upon.

It smote down thirty years ago the great right of petition in these halls. It destroyed in large sections of the country the constitutional freedom of the press. It suppressed freedom of speech. It corrupted presses, churches, and political organizations. It plunged the nation into a war for the acquisition of slave-holding territory. It enacted a fugitive-

slave law, inhuman, unchristian, disgraceful to the country and to the age. It repealed the prohibition of slavery over half a million square miles in the central regions of the continent. It seized the ballot-boxes in Kansas; it usurped the government of the Territory; it enacted inhuman and unchristian laws; it made a slave constitution and attempted to force it upon a free people; it bathed the virgin sods of that magnificent Territory with the blood of civil war. It mobbed, flogged, expelled, and sometimes murdered Christian men and women in the slave-holding States for no offence against law, humanity, or religion. It turned the hearts of large masses of men against their brethren, against the institutions of their country, against the glorious old flag, and the constitution of their fathers. It has now plunged this nation into this unholy rebellion, into this gigantic civil war that rends the country, and stains our waters and reddens our fields with fraternal blood.

Sir, I never see a loyal soldier upon a cot of sickness, sorrow, or death, without feeling that slavery has laid him there. I never gaze upon the wounds of a loyal soldier fallen in support of the flag of the republic without feeling that slavery inflicted those wounds upon him. I never see a loyal soldier wounded and maimed hobbling through your streets without feeling that he was wounded and maimed by slavery. I never gaze upon the lowly grave of a loyal soldier dying for the cause of his country without feeling that he was murdered by slavery. I never see a mourning wife or sorrowing children without realizing that slavery has made that mourning wife a widow and those sorrowing children orphans.

Sir, all these sacrifices of property, of health, of life, all this sorrow, agony, and death, now upon us, are born of slavery. Slavery is the prolific mother of all these woes

that blight our land and fill the heart of our people with sorrows.

Slavery pronounced long ago against the free elements of our popular institutions; it scoffed at the Declaration of Independence; it pronounced free society a failure; it jeered and sneered at the laboring masses as mudsills and white slaves. Scoffing at everything which tended to secure the rights and enlarge the privileges of mankind, it has pronounced against the existence of democratic institutions in America. Proud, domineering, defiant, it has pronounced against the supremacy of the government, the unity and life of the nation.

Sir, slavery is the enemy, the clearly pronounced enemy of the country. Slavery is the only clearly pronounced enemy our country has on God's earth. There it stands. Hate is in its heart, scorn in its eye, defiance in its mien. It hates our cherished institutions, despises our people, defies our government. Slavery is the great rebel, the giant criminal, the murderer striving with bloody hands to throttle our government and destroy our country.

Senators may talk round it if they please, they may scold at its agents and denounce its tools. I care little about its agents or its tools. I think not of Davis and his compeers in crime; I look at the thing itself, to the great rebel with hands dripping with the blood of my murdered countrymen. I give the criminal no quarter. If I with the lights I have could utter a word or give a vote to continue for one moment the life of the great rebel that is now striking at the vitals of my country I should feel that I was a traitor to my native land and deserved a traitor's doom. Sir, I believe that every word spoken in Congress or out of Congress, every act that continues, strengthens, or keeps the breath of life in human slavery in America, is against the existence

and perpetuity of democratic institutions; against the dignity of the toiling millions of my country; against the peace, the honor, the glory, and the life of the nation.

Sir, slavery being the criminal, slavery being the rebel, it should be stricken down through the agents it employs. It has its hundreds of thousands of rebels in arms against the country. To punish its instruments I will strike at it and destroy it if I can. I believe that we have a constitutional right to free the slaves of rebel masters, and I think it would be a crime against my country if I did not give a vote to free the slaves of every rebel on this continent. If this Congress adjourns without putting upon the statute-book of the country an act to free the slaves of every rebel in the United States I believe it will be false and recreant to the cause of the country.

I believe it is policy to emancipate the slaves of rebels. Gentlemen tell us that they do not see success in this direction. I do not see success in any other direction. I expect the armies to win brilliant victories. I have no doubt of success either on the Mississippi or at Yorktown, under Halleck or McClellan. I have no doubt but that the brave men whose hearts are burning with love of liberty and of country and hatred of this criminal that is striving to destroy the republic will, with arms in their hands, smite down its agents on land or wave. Victory I am sure will flash upon the banners of the republic.

I believe that we are to win victories, but how are we to change the hearts of the masses of men that have plunged into this rebellion? What made them hate the people of this country? What made them jeer at the toiling millions of the free States as mudsills of society? What made them scoff at the Declaration of Independence and at the free in-

stitutions that do not pull down the highest to elevate the lowly up? What made them hate the old flag of our country? What made them raise their hands for the overthrow of our institutions, the destruction of this government and this nation?

Slavery made them do it. It was slavery, nothing more, nothing less, that perverted their hearts, clouded their reason, blinded their consciences, and made them traitors. Just in proportion to the strength of slavery in any locality in the country is the hate of the people against our institutions, our government, and our people; and so long as slavery shall live, so long as it shall have vitality, so long as it shall be an institution to be nurtured and strengthened, upheld and sustained, so long as it shall be an element of power on this continent, just so long will the people now in rebellion against the government hate our people and hate our country.

An intelligent man who believes in slavery, who would strengthen and spread it, who would nurture it, who would make it an element of political power, cannot love the democratic institutions of this country; he cannot love the country itself. It is an impossibility—a moral impossibility.

You have all cast your eyes over the country in rebellion. Where live the loyal men? In western Virginia, in eastern Tennessee, in western North Carolina, in Missouri, in the mountain regions where there are few slaves. There you have men who are not seduced or conquered by slavery; men who yet love our institutions, love our government, love our people, love our old flag. But wherever slavery is strong it has seduced, subdued, or conquered the hearts of the people, made them disloyal against the country; and they will hate us so long as slavery is a power on earth.

Sir, casting aside all regard for the bondman, looking at

this question simply in the light of action for the suppression of the rebellion and the restoration of the future harmony and repose of the country, I believe it is our duty to destroy the cause that has changed the hearts of millions of our people. Destroy slavery and you take from the heart of that people the sole motive for hating us and hating our country. When they shall see that the cause of all their hate and disloyalty lies low in the dust they will rise again and support your institutions and your government, and be proud again to recognize the flag of their country. Slavery has intoxicated and maddened the people of the slave-holding States. Take the cup from the trembling hand of the drunkard, who is ready, in his delirium, to smite down wife and child, and the drunkard will be a man again and love and protect that wife and child. Strike the chains from the limbs of the slaves of rebel masters and those masters will become loyal again, ready to pour out their blood for the institutions they now hate and the government they so madly assail.

Every hour of thought and reflection brings me to the conclusion that death to slavery is life to the republic. Believing this, I think it is our duty to walk up to the extreme verge of our constitutional power, and I would go no farther, but I would walk up to the extreme verge of constitutional power to destroy slavery. If there is a doubt I would not give that doubt to slavery, but I would give that doubt to my country. If I have any doubts on these points I give the doubts in favor of my country against slavery, and not for slavery against my country. But, sir, I have no doubt. We have a right to take the life, take the property, and free the slaves of every rebel on this continent. While I would not take the lives of many, if any; while I would not take the property of more than the leaders, I would take the bondmen

from every rebel on the continent, and in doing it I should have the sanction of my own judgment, the sanction of the enlightened world, the sanction of the coming ages, and the blessings of Almighty God. Every day, while the world stands, that act would be approved and applauded by the human heart all over the globe.

Sir, it seems to me our duty is as clear as the track of the sun across the heavens, and that duty is, before the adjournment of this Congress, to lay low in the dust under our feet, so that iron heels will rest upon it, this great rebel, this giant criminal, this guilty murderer, that is warring upon the existence of the country. It is in our power to do it, and we ought to meet it; and I must confess I have no sort of respect for any of those doubts that have been thrown out during this session of Congress in regard to this policy of freeing the slaves of rebel masters.

Why, sir, I remember, from the time the flag of rebellion was raised, that every act of the government to uphold its authority has been denounced in Congress and out of Congress as offensive to the rebels. We could not propose anything to sustain the authority of the government without being told, "Oh, you will offend the loyal men of the border States, and you will exasperate the rebels." We disregarded it in many cases, and this country has lost many lives and millions of dollars because we did not disregard it in the commencement and boldly act up to our constitutional obligations.

Last summer when it was proposed to free the slaves who had been actually employed by their masters, with arms in their hands, to smite down our brethren, we were told: "It will not do; you offend these rebels; you will unite the hearts of the people of the slave States against you; you will offend the loyal border-State men." Well, sir, we passed the act in

spite of these doubts, and it is the law of the land to-day. I only regret that it is not more faithfully executed by the government and by the military men in the service of the government. When we proposed to abolish slavery in this District the other day we were told it would not do; we would unite the hearts of traitors against the country and strengthen their hands, and it would be a rock of offence before our border-State men. We passed the bill, and this day and this hour thirteen thousand black men in this District in their churches are offering up prayers to Almighty God for blessings on us for that beneficent act. Sir, every movement we make, every proposition we make, we are met with this same talk about giving offence to rebels. I do not fear these rebels. Our bayonets will be as bright and as sharp after we act upon this subject as they are now.

Sir, every day that slavery stands, every moment that it breathes the breath of life in all its power, there stands an enemy that can never love our people, our institutions, or our government. It is a moral impossibility. Then destroy it, and when it is gone will come back the old sentiments of the Washingtons and the Jeffersons and the great men of the revolutionary era in the slave-holding States. Then will come back the love for the Declaration of Independence, for the constitution of the United States, for the free institutions that adorn, bless, and elevate the masses of mankind. Then will come back the reverence for the glorious memories of the past. Then will come back the love for the Stars and Stripes of our country. Then will come back a feeling of amazement and of shame that men were so perverted by the monster slavery as to imbrue their hands in the blood of their countrymen. Rebels will come back with a feeling of repentance for these crimes against their country. Then, when slavery is

stricken down, they will come back again and offer their hands, red though they be with the blood of our brethren, and we shall forgive the past, take them to our bosoms, and be again one people. But, senators, keep slavery; let it stand; shrink from duty; let men whose hands are stained with the blood of our countrymen, whose hearts are disloyal to our country, hold fast to the chains that bind three millions of men in bondage, and we shall have an enemy to hate us, ready to seize on all fit opportunities to smite down all that we love, and again to raise their disloyal hands against the perpetuity of the republic. Sir, I believe this to be as true as the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God, and nothing but the prejudices of association on the one side, or timidity on the other, can hold us back from doing the duty we owe to our country in this crisis.

The senator from Vermont has proposed in his amendment to authorize the President of the United States, whenever he shall believe it necessary for the suppression of this rebellion, to issue his proclamation declaring the slaves of rebels free. This proposition gives up the whole question. If I understand it, it is a full concession. It concedes the right of this Congress to authorize the President of the United States to emancipate the slaves of rebels in all the States where he has made proclamation that the people are in insurrection.

I accept it, sir, and if Congress has the right to authorize the President to issue a proclamation emancipating these slaves, if in his judgment he believes it necessary, then Congress has the right to authorize and require the President to do it if Congress believes it necessary, for the suppression of the rebellion, that such a proclamation shall be issued. The senator from Vermont has laid down a doctrine upon which we can stand; and therefore I propose to amend his proposi-

tion and not allow any discretion anywhere but in the law, and let the law say that, for the more speedy and efficient suppression of this rebellion, the President shall be authorized and required to issue his proclamation. We decide that question for ourselves. With the lights that are flashing upon us this day, how can we doubt for a moment? If the Senate will sustain the amendment I have proposed, we shall require the President, thirty days after the passage of this act, for the speedy and more effectual suppression of this rebellion, to issue a proclamation declaring the slaves of rebels, in these States and parts of States, free. I hope the Senate will thus amend this proposition so that we shall leave nothing to accident, nothing to contingencies. With the lights of to-day let us meet the responsibilities of to-day and do our whole duty.

I feel, sir, that if we adjourn, if we go hence without putting upon the statute-book of our country a law declaring the slaves of rebels free men, we shall be guilty of the blood of the brave men who are to uphold the flag of our country the hot and sickly climes of the South. Many of them lie to-day in humble graves in the land of strangers. Many of them are now marching to the far South. They are to die by thousands with the disease and sickness of the climate. They are to perish by thousands on battle-fields.

Shall we permit this power to stand in front of them, ready to overwhelm them? Shall we permit this power to stand unbroken, because we are afraid of offending timid or doubting men? Sir, I care for the blood of the brave men from my State, from the loyal part of the country, who are fighting this battle for freedom and for national life. Their lives are dearer to me than the doubtful constitutional rights of criminals. We are very tender of the constitutional rights of

crime. Hardly a day passes that the constitutional rights of crime are not illustrated in this chamber or in the other House. Sir, I joyfully give my vote and my voice for the cause of my countrymen and my country, against the great criminal that stands to-day with bloody hands ready to pull down the institutions and destroy the existence of my country. In thus acting I am cheered and sustained by the proud consciousness that I am actuated by a patriotism that embraces our whole country and the present and future welfare of the republic.