


SAMUEL HOUSTON

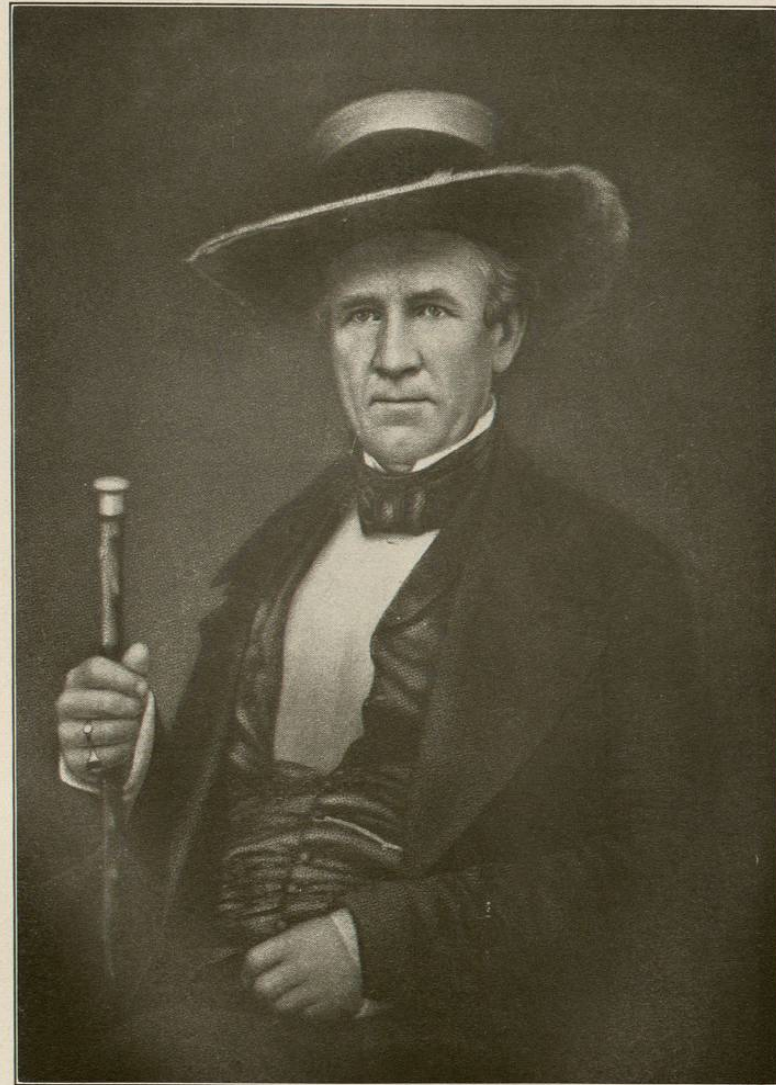
AMUEL HOUSTON, American general and politician, and president of the Republic of Texas before its annexation by the United States, was born near Lexington, Va., March 2, 1793, and died at Huntsville, Tex., July 25, 1863. His education was meagre, and his youth was largely spent among the Cherokee Indians. In 1813, he entered the army and served under General Jackson in the campaign against the Creek Indians, but leaving the service in 1818, he began the study of law at Nashville, and became successively district attorney, adjutant-general, and major-general. He represented Tennessee in Congress, from 1823 to 1827, and in the latter year he was elected governor of that State. Resigning in 1829, he went to reside in Arkansas among the Cherokees, whose interests he afterward represented as agent in Washington. In 1832, he settled in Texas, and when that region was denied entrance as a State into the Mexican republic and war ensued between Texas and Mexico, Houston was appointed commander-in-chief of the Texan forces. At San Jacinto, in 1836, Houston defeated and captured the Mexican general, Santa Anna, thereby securing the independence of Texas. From that period until its annexation to the United States, Houston was president of the Texan Republic, and for twelve years following its admission to the Union he represented it in the United States Senate. In 1859, he was elected governor of Texas, but on account of opposition to Secession he resigned office in 1861 and retired to private life.

SPEECH ON THE NEBRASKA AND KANSAS BILL

DELIVERED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, MARCH 3, 1857

MR. PRESIDENT,—I have very little hope that any appeal which I can make for the Indians will do any good. The honorable senator from Indiana [Mr. Pettit] says in substance that God Almighty has condemned them and has made them an inferior race; that there is no use in doing anything for them. With great deference to that senator, for whom I have never cherished any but kindly feelings, I must be permitted to dissent from his opinions. He says they are not civilized and they are not homogeneous, and cannot be so. with the white race. They

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cannot be civilized! No! Sir, it is idle to tell me that. We have Indians on our western borders whose civilization is not inferior to our own.

It is within the recollection of gentlemen here that, more than twenty years ago, President Ross, one of them, held a correspondence upon the rights of the Indians to the Cherokee country which they possessed east of the Mississippi, and maintained himself in the controversy with great credit and ability; and the triumph of Mr. Adams, if it was one, was much less than he had obtained over the diplomatist of Spain [Mr. Don Onis] in relation to the occupation of Florida by General Jackson. The senator from Indiana says that in ancient times Moses received a command to go and drive the Canaanites and Moabites out of the land of Canaan, and that Joshua subsequently made the experiment of incorporating one tribe of the heathen with the Israelites, but it finally had to be killed off. Therefore, the senator concludes, the Cherokees cannot be civilized. There may have been something statesmanlike in the policy, but I do not discover the morality of it. I will say, however, that there is no analogy between the two cases. The people of Judea who were killed or exterminated were idolaters, and the object was to keep the people of Israel free from the taint of idols and idolatry under the command of Providence, and therefore the extermination in his dispensation became necessary. But the Cherokees never have been idolaters, neither have the Creeks, nor the Choctaws, nor the Chickasaws. They believe in one Great Spirit—in God—the white man's God. They believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and his atonement and propitiation for the sins of men. They believe in the sanctifying efficacy of the Holy Ghost. They bow at the Christian's altar and they believe the Sacred Volume.

Sir, you may drive these people away and give their lands to the white man; but let it not be done upon the justification of the Scriptures. They have well-organized societies; they have villages and towns; they have their State-houses and their capitols; they have females and men who would grace the drawing-rooms or salons of Washington; they have a well-organized judiciary, a trial by jury, and the writ of habeas corpus.

These are the people for whom I demand justice in the organization of these Territories. They are men of education. They have more than one hundred native preachers in those tribes, as I have heard. They have their colleges, as I remarked in my former address to the Senate on this subject. They become associated in friendship with our young men in the various institutions in the United States; and they are prepared to be incorporated upon equal terms with us. But even if they were wild Indians, untutored, when you deprive them of what would give them knowledge and discourage them from making an effort to become civilized and social beings, how can you expect them to be otherwise than savage?

When you undertake to tame wild horses do you turn them from you and drive them into the desert, or do you take care of them and treat them with humanity? These Indians are not inferior, intellectually, to white men. John Ridge was not inferior in point of genius to John Randolph. His father, in point of native intellect, was not inferior to any man. Look at their social condition in the nations to which I have alluded. Look at the Chickasaws who remain in the State of Mississippi. Even among white men, with all their prejudices against the Indians, with their transcendent genius and accomplishments, they have been elected to the legislature. Whenever they

have had an opportunity they have shown that they are not inferior to white men, either in sense or sensibility.

But the honorable senator from Iowa [Mr. Dodge] characterizes the remarks which I made in reference to the Indians as arising from a feeling of "sickly sentimentality." Sir, it is a sickly sentimentality that was implanted in me when I was young, and it has grown up with me. The Indian has a sense of justice, truth, and honor that should find a responsive chord in every heart. If the Indians on the frontier are barbarous, or if they are cannibals, and eat each other, who are to blame for it? They are robbed of the means of sustenance; and with hundreds and thousands of them starving on the frontier, hunger may prompt to such acts to prevent their perishing. We shall never become cannibals in connection with the Indians; but we do worse than that. We rob them, first of their native dignity and character; we rob them next of what the government appropriates for them. If we do not do it in this hall, men are invested with power and authority, who, officiating as agents or traders, rob them of everything which is designed for them. Not less than one hundred millions of dollars, I learn from statistics, since the adoption of this government, have been appropriated by Congress for purposes of justice and benevolence toward the Indians; but I am satisfied that they have never realized fifteen millions beneficially. They are too remote from the seat of government for their real condition to be understood here; and if the government intends liberality or justice toward them it is often diverted from the intended object and consumed by speculators.

I am a friend to the Indian upon the principle that I am a friend to justice. We are not bound to make them promises; but if a promise be made to an Indian it ought to be regarded

as sacredly as if it were made to a white man. If we treat them as tribes, recognize them, send commissioners to form treaties and exchange ratifications with them, and the treaties are negotiated, accepted, ratified, and exchanged—having met with the approval of the Senate—I think they may be called compacts; and how are these compacts regarded? Just as we choose to construe them at the time, without any reference to the wishes of the Indians or whether we do them kindness or justice in the operation or not. We are often prompted to their ratification by persons interested; and we lend ourselves unintentionally to an unjust act of oppression upon the Indians by men who go and get their signatures to a treaty. The Indian's mark is made; the employees of the government certify or witness it; and the Indians do not understand it for they do not know what is written. These are some of the circumstances connected with the Indians.

Gentlemen have spoken here of voting millions to build ships, and placing the army and navy at the disposition of the President in the event that England act inconsistently with treaty stipulations. This is done because, if England violates a treaty with us, our national honor is injured. Now I should like to know if it becomes us to violate a treaty made with the Indians when we please, regardless of every principle of truth and honor? We should be careful if it were with a power able to war with us; and it argues a degree of infinite meanness and indescribable degradation on our part to act differently with the Indians, who confide in our honor and justice, and who call the President their Great Father and confide in him. Mr. President, it is in the power of the Congress of the United States to do some justice to the Indians by giving them a government of their own, and encouraging them in their organization and improvement by inviting their delegates to a

place on the floor of the Senate and House of Representatives. If you will not do it, the sin will lie at your door, and Providence, in his own way, mysterious and incomprehensible to us though it is, will accomplish all his purposes, and may at some day avenge the wrongs of the Indians upon our nation. As a people we can save them; and the sooner the great work is begun, the sooner will humanity have cause to rejoice in its accomplishment.

Mr. President, I shall say but little more. My address may have been desultory. It embraces many subjects which it would be very hard to keep in entire order. We have, in the first place, the extensive territory; then we have the considerations due to the Indians; and then we have the proposed repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which seems to require the most explanation and to be the main point in the controversy. The great principle involved in that repeal is non-intervention, which, we are told, is to be of no practical benefit if the Compromise is repealed. It can have no effect but to keep up agitation. Sir, the friends who have survived the distinguished men who took prominent parts in the drama of the Compromise of 1850 ought to feel gratified that those men are not capable of participating in the events of to-day, but that they were permitted, after they had accomplished their labors and seen their country in peace, to leave the world, as Simeon did, with the exclamation: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." They departed in peace, and they left their country in peace. They felt, as they were about to be gathered to the tombs of their fathers, that the country they had loved so well and which had honored them—that country upon whose fame and name their doings had shed a bright lustre which shines abroad throughout all Christendom—was reposing in peace and happiness.

What would their emotions be if they could now be present and see an effort made, if not so designed, to undo all their work and to tear asunder the cords that they had bound around the hearts of their countrymen? They have departed. The nation felt the wound; and we see the memorials of woe still in this chamber. The proud symbol (the eagle) above your head remains enshrouded in black, as if it deplored the misfortune which had fallen upon us, or as a fearful omen of future calamities which await our nation in the event this bill should become a law.

Above it I behold the majestic figure of Washington, whose presence must ever inspire patriotic emotions and command the admiration and love of every American heart. By these associations I adjure you to regard the contract once made to harmonize and preserve this Union. Maintain the Missouri Compromise! Stir not up agitation. Give us peace.

This much I was bound to declare, in behalf of my country, as I believe, and I know in behalf of my constituents. In the discharge of my duty I have acted fearlessly. The events of the future are left in the hands of a wise Providence; and, in my opinion, upon the decision which we make upon this question must depend union or disunion.