

The gentleman says I am discussing "immaterial abstractions," and raising issues that have no practical bearing. Is the fugitive slave law an "immaterial abstraction?"—a law which violates both the divine law and the constitution of the country. Ask the free man, Gibson, who was sent into bondage under it when as much entitled to his liberty as you or I, whether that law has not some bearing on a practical question. Are not the Baltimore edicts before the country? And have they no practical bearing, when their very purpose is to suppress free speech; and when that purpose has been executed again and again?—and the attempt has been made here, within the last half hour, upon me, to enforce it?

Now, sir, I do not believe in preaching against theoretical and distant sins, and letting real and present ones escape. I do not believe in denouncing Hindoo suttees, because they are on the other side of the globe, and defending the extension of slavery in our own land. That sin has the beguiling defence of office and profits not less than ours. But that sin destroys only the body; ours the soul.

The modern clergymen of the "lower law" school can select some monster of the Old Testament—Darius, Nebuchadnezzar, or Jeroboam—and hold them up for execration, while they suffer the greater moral monsters of their own parishes to escape with impunity. They have no mercy for Jeroboam, old hunker though he was, because he "drove Israel from following the Lord,"—more especially as there was no chance for the presidency, nor any tariff nor sale of dry goods to the South to tempt him. But they forget that each and all of the worst sinners whose names blacken the page of history had their accompanying temptations and their casuistry for self-defence just as much as the offenders of our day.

They forget that when posterity looks backward upon great crimes, as they stand out in historic relief, they are seen in their foul nakedness and deformity, and without any of the palliations or pretexts by which their wickedness was softened to the tempted eye of the perpetrator. They forget that it will be as true of the crimes of our day as of ancient ones, when the evanescent circumstances of the seduction have passed by—that then they too will stand out in the foreground of the historic canvas in their full proportions and in their native deformity, hideous, unmitigated, and execrable.

Had not Ananias and Sapphira a temptation every whit as strong to keep back from the apostles a part of the price of their possessions as though they had been offered a sinecure chaplaincy in the navy for defending the fugitive slave law?

We have historic proof that Benedict Arnold attempted to justify his treason on the ground that he was seeking the best good of the colonies, just as his followers in our times seek to justify themselves by the far less plausible plea of saving the Union.

I know it is said that if the doctrine of the "higher law" is admitted all laws will be set at naught, and civil government be overthrown. All history refutes this; for, of all the men who have ever lived, those who contend for the higher law of God have universally been the most faithful and obedient when human laws were coincident with the divine. That identical principle in our nature which makes us true to the will of God makes us also true to all the just commands of men. . . .

And now, having shown what a mighty wrong slavery is, in and of itself; having shown what collateral debasement,

cruelty, and practical atheism it generates and diffuses, let me ask if the political Free-Soil party do not go to the uttermost verge that patriot, moralist, or Christian can go when it consents to let slavery remain where it is? There is an endeavor to make up a false issue for the country and for the tribunal of history on this subject. Free-soilers are charged with interfering with slavery within the jurisdiction of the States where it is.

This allegation is wholly unfounded. Our whole effort has been simply to keep it within the jurisdiction of the States where it is. We would not have it profane free territory. We would not allow it to double its present domain; we would not see it blast with nameless and innumerable woes two thirds of our territorial area on the Pacific coast, as it already has two thirds on the Atlantic. This is all we have done.

And to the argument that, with only about three slaves to a square mile over all your territory, you, gentlemen of the slave States, must have more space, because you are becoming suffocated by so close crowding, we simply reply that we cannot admit that argument, because it devotes the whole world to inevitable slavery. For, if you already need a greater expanse of territory for comfortable room, that, too, will soon be crowded with three slaves to a square mile, and the argument for further conquest and expansion will come back upon us. Yielding again, the argument will speedily recur again. It will be a never-ending, still-beginning pretext for extension, until the whole world shall become a vast realm of slavery—even the free States being engulfed with the rest, so that the dove of freedom will have no spot on the surface of the globe where she can set her foot.

And now, notwithstanding the infinite evil and wrong of slavery, intrinsic in it, and inseparable from it; notwithstand-

ing the virus with which it poisons all our free institutions—its exclusion of independent communities from the brotherhood of the Union; its hardening the nation's heart against all people struggling for liberty; its atheist-making; its attempt to transfer the whole false English code of high treason into our law, and all its debasement of the republican sentiment, and the moral sentiment of this country; notwithstanding all this, the Baltimore conventions decree that the subject of slavery shall be agitated among us no more forever.

Look at the comprehensiveness of this interdict. It embraces all subjects. It forbids the political economist from discussing the relative productiveness of free and slave labor. It forbids the educationist from demonstrating that a slaveholding people must always, from the necessity of the case, be an ignorant people—a people divided not only into castes of wealth, but into castes of intelligence.

It forbids genius from presenting truth in the glowing similitudes of fiction; and that divine-hearted woman, the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," is under the Baltimore ban.

It forbids the poet, whose lips from olden days have been touched as with live coals from off the heavenly altar, from ever again kindling the hearts of mankind with a divine enthusiasm for liberty.

It strikes out all the leading chapters from the book of the moralist. It puts its seal upon the lips of the minister of Christ when he would declare the whole counsel of God, and forbids him ever again to preach from the text, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." All—worldly prosperity, education, genius, morality, religion, truth—are struck out by these Baltimore conventions in their maniacal partisanship.

The noblest men whom God has ever sent into the world—patriots, reformers, philanthropists, apostles, and Jesus Christ himself—are on the side of freedom. Tyrants, usurpers, traitors, men-stealers, the wholesale murderers and robbers of nations, are on the side of slavery. The Baltimore conventions enlist under the banners of the latter. They affiliate with the house of Hapsburg, and with Nicholas, with the King of Naples, and with the "Prince-President" of France. One might almost suppose they had plagiarized their resolves from the Paris "Moniteur," where that ape who mimics the imperial grandeur he cannot comprehend records his tyrannical decrees against freedom of speech. Louis Napoleon decreed free discussion out of existence in France. Six hundred men at Baltimore decreed the same thing for this country. The ape succeeded; they fail.

And how are these resolves to be construed, provided new questions respecting slavery arise, or questions already started are precipitated upon us? Should an attempt to annex Cuba, in order still further to aggrandize the slave power, be made—and if General Pierce should be elected, such attempt doubtless will be made—or should a new State with a slave constitution from California apply for admission; or should Mexico be again dismembered to form new slave territory and new slave States; in the occurrence of these events, or of either of them, how are these Baltimore resolutions to be then construed?

We know perfectly well what claim will be set up. It will be said that the new events come within the terms of the prohibition—the *casus fœderis*—and bind the nation to silence. It will be claimed that the resolutions cover not only all subjects, but all time; and enslave our children as well as ourselves. . . .

And what was the fate of the senator from Illinois, whom some sagacious and over-reaching Whig called the Young Giant—a nickname which his own friends were silly enough to adopt. I say silly, for everybody knows that the common notion which the common people have of a "young giant" is that of unnatural and precocious animal development. The very name conjures up images of rowdyish passion and appetite, of nocturnal revels, of a sort of wild, obscene force, unchastened by the lessons of experience, and untempered by Nestorian wisdom. What was his reward for his implied or understood offer of the annexation of Cuba? From the four States of Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, he never at any one time received more than sixteen votes, and in four fifths of the ballotings he received but five or six. In winning the South he forgot the North.

"Vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself
And falls on t'other side!"

Or, as a graver poet has expressed it, these worshippers at the Southern shrine, while they renounce Northern constituencies, were

—"like idiots gazing in a brook,
Who leap at stars and fasten in the mud."

I cannot stop to enumerate the victims in detail. The slain Hectors may have a monument and be remembered; but it is the felicity of the vulgar herd in an ungodly contest that they rot in a forgotten grave.

Long before the Baltimore convention met we had supposed that the Northern Democratic aspirants for the presidency had done their worst; that they had drunk the last dregs of the cup of humiliation. But Southern genius seems exhaustless in resources for Northern debasement. Some unknown political upstart in Rich-

mond, Va., obtruded himself into notice by shouting out the two words "Presidency," "Pro-slavery" to all the candidates; and instantly thirteen of them were at his feet. He put to them some "more last questions" in the catechism of infamy—"whether, if they could be elected, they would veto any bill repealing the fugitive slave law," and so forth. All answered as his questions indicated they must. Forgetful of the nature of the oath they longed to take, forgetful that it is a violation of the whole spirit of our government for the executive to interfere with Congress by telling them beforehand what acts of theirs he will not approve, they all hastened to give the desired response. He did not send them a pro-slavery creed, with a blank left for their signatures, but he compelled them to write out their own shame with their own hands. He did not send the collar and chains all ready for them to put on; but he said, forge them and rivet them on yourselves; and, submissive, they forged them and riveted them on and expressed gratitude for the favor.

And now, where are those thirteen Democratic candidates? And where, too, are those two Whig candidates who, within the last two years, have done every conceivable thing, and a thousand things before inconceivable, to propitiate the slave power? Gone, sir; all gone with those who perished at Tyburn! They rebelled against humanity and against God, and verily they have their reward. They mounted a platform where they hoped to be crowned amid the huzzas of the people, but an avenging Nemesis stood there, and in the twinkling of an eye changed it into the "drop platform" of the executioner. Sir, when a single malefactor receives at the hands of justice his well-merited doom, the moralist seizes the example to give warning to others who may be tempted in like cases to offend. He points to the ignominious body of his victim, and, as the

herald of God, he proclaims the eternal law, that crime never can compensate the criminal. He declares that, until finite man can overpower or circumvent the infinite Creator the retributions of sin shall pursue the sinner. If the preacher does this when he has but a single victim for a text, what an accumulation of energy and emphasis is given to his admonitions when there are fifteen victims before him! . . .

In regard to Mr. Webster, there are three points which I propose to elucidate—his position of special and marked hostility to slavery in 1848, what he did for the cause of slavery in 1850, and how the South requited him in 1852. His case is peculiarly impressive. Instructive warnings as all the others are, yet "the secretary stands alone." I am about to speak of his downfall in no spirit of personal exultation, though he has done me the greatest wrong. Because, when sitting on the top of his political Olympus, he hurled his shafts at me, I scorn to retaliate when he lies deserted and despairing at its base. The man does not live (unless now it be himself) who felt a more poignant grief at his ruin than was felt in this heart of mine. But it was not on the 21st of June last, and at Baltimore, that he fell; but on the 7th of March, 1850, in the Senate of the United States. It was then that he sunk his beaming forehead in the dust, never again, I fear, to be lifted up. It was then that he tore from his brow the glorious diadem of fame, and cast its clustered stars away—a diadem richer than ever blazed upon the brow of royalty, for its gems were not gathered from rock or mine, but from the more precious treasures of wisdom and eloquence. Then thousands of hearts were wrung with anguish as, cold, relentless, and blaspheming, those apostate doctrines fell from his lips. I say no bosom, save now perhaps his own, was ever more deeply saddened at the spectacle of that moral ruin than mine. As

I think of him now, ever-recurring and dirge-like do the elegiac strains written for the occasion by the great Poet of Humanity wake their mournful echoes in my breast:

"So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

Reville him not — the Tempter hath
A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!

Oh! dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded down the endless dark
From hope and Heaven!

Let not the land, once proud of him,
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame, his dim,
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains —
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone: from those great eyes
The soul has fled;
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide his shame!"

Still I should leave this part of my subject maimed and incomplete should I forbear to draw the moral which the fate of this eminent man so impressively teaches. In the history of this world it is inexpressively sad that offences should come.

It would be still more sad if we could not use them to warn others from offending. Besides, the drama, in one of whose scenes we were brought together upon the stage and enacted a part, has now been played out, and I am now able to establish by history all the positions I then maintained by argument.

The grandeur of Mr. Webster's intellect—the first point always made in his defence—I readily admit. On this point I give his friends *carte blanche* of concession and agreement—the whole argument their own way. . . .

So certain has been the fate of Mr. Webster for the last eighteen months that I, and all those with whom I am politically associated, have foreseen it and predicted it with as much confidence as an astronomer foretells an eclipse. Let us trust that the fate of such victims will not be lost for the future upon Northern men.

Sir, out of this fugitive slave law has arisen an ill-sounding, half-barbarous word to express the wholly barbarous idea that the law is never to be repealed or modified. It is the word "finality." This word has already got into somewhat common use in regard to its objects. It is destined to get into universal use in regard to its authors. I think General Cass and Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Webster, with many others, have by this time an interior and realizing sense of what the word "finality" means. Though too late for them to profit by it, I hope it will be blessed to the use of others.

And what palliation, what pretext, what subterfuge even, had these men for such betrayal of human rights? Nothing, literally nothing, but that fraudulent idea of "danger to the Union;" that cry of "wolf," which the South always raises when she has an object to accomplish; and which she will always continue to raise, on pretences more and more

shadowy and evanescent, the more we have the folly to heed it. The same threat is now, at this instant time, made if the North does not give them their choice in the two candidates for the presidency. . . .

Now, as slavery is error and wickedness combined, it must incur the penalties ordained of God against both. As it corrupts domestic virtue, contravenes the natural laws of a nation's prosperity and growth, excludes and drives away those who are instinct with the love of freedom from settling within its borders, makes general education impossible, and eviscerates from the Gospel of Jesus Christ the highest and purest of its principles and precepts, it follows by a law of adamant necessity that the body politic which suffers it is vulnerable in every part, and that physical and moral death besieges every gate of its citadel. Slavery assails all the laws of God broadside; and it must, therefore, receive his retributions broadside.

These are but specimens of the weakness which is always inflicted by error, and of the fatuity that ensues from moral wrong. They are specimens of those "higher laws" of God which fulfil their destiny, whether men heed them or defy. They crush the resistant while resisting, and silence the blasphemer in mid-volley.

If the northern States of this Union, therefore, will cherish liberty, while the southern foster slavery, the predominance of the former in political power, as well as in all other things desirable, will soon be overwhelming. Foreign annexations by the latter cannot redress the balance. They but palliate the symptoms of a distemper which is organic—as the newly erected wing of a lazar-house for a time dilutes the infection, which it soon sends back to aggravate the general virulence. I appeal to the friends of liberty, then, wherever they may

be found, to stand fast in their integrity; for, to adopt the sentiment of Mr. Jefferson, in such a contest there is not an attribute of the Almighty but must take part with us.

Sir, I have endeavored now to speak upon the real and true state of the Union. I have desired to ascertain toward what point of the moral compass this great vehicle which we call government, freighted as it is with so much of human welfare and with the fondest hopes of the oppressed, is now moving. I have sought to determine that direction, not by the meteoric lights which are exhaled from human passion and selfishness, but by taking observation of the unchangeable luminaries of truth and duty, which shine down upon us forever from their fixed places in the skies. I have spoken no word in the spirit of a partisan or a politician; but have sought to embrace within my vision the horizon of the future as well as of the present.