

But it may be asked, is it not a... receiving petitions admits... scene for discussion why not receive this petition, and discuss it at some subsequent stage? Why not receive, in order to reject its prayer, as proposed by the Senator from Pennsylvania, (Mr. Buchanan) instead of rejecting the petition itself on the question of receiving, as we propose? What is the difference between the two?

I do not intend, at this stage, to compare or rather to contrast, the two courses; for they admit of no comparison. My object, at present is, to establish, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that we are not bound to receive these petitions; and when that is accomplished, it will then show the disastrous consequences which must follow the rejection of the petition, be the after disposition what it may. By the meantime, its ancient remark, that it is only on the subject of receiving that opposition can be made to the petition itself. On all others the opposition is to its prayer. On the decision, then, of the question of receiving, depends the important question of jurisdiction. To receive is to take jurisdiction—to give an implied pledge to investigate and decide in the prayer, and to give the petition a place in our archives, and become responsible for its safe keeping; and who votes for receiving this petition on the ground on which its reception is placed, votes that Congress is bound to take jurisdiction of the question of abolishing slavery both here and in the States—gives an implied pledge to take the subject under consideration, and orders the petition to be placed among the public records for safe keeping.

But to proceed, in reply to the objections of our opponents. It is not argued that precedents are against the side we support. I meet this objection with a direct denial. From the beginning of the Government to the commencement of this Session, there is not a single precedent that justifies the receiving of these petitions, on the ground on which their reception is urged. The real state of the case is, that we are not following, but making precedents. For the first time has the principle been assumed, that we have no discretion, but must take jurisdiction over them, however absurd, frivolous, mischievous, or foreign for the purpose for which the Government was created. Receive these petitions, and you will create a precedent which will hereafter establish this monstrous principle. As yet there are none. The case relied on by the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) is in no respect analogous. No question in that case, was made on the reception of the petition. The petition slipped in without taking a vote, as is daily done, where the attention of the Senate is not particularly called to the subject. The question on which the discussion took place was on the reference, and not on the reception, as in this case; but what is decisive against the precedent, and which I regret the Senator (Mr. Grundy) did not state, so that it might accompany his remarks, is the fact that the petition was not for abolishing slavery; the subject was the African slave-trade; and the petition simply prayed that Congress would *inquire* whether they might not adopt some measure of interdiction, prior to 1802, when by the Constitution, they were authorized to suppress the trade. I ask the Secretary to read the prayer of the petition:

"But we find it indispensably incumbent on us, as a religious body, assembled believing that both the true temporal interests of nations, and eternal well-being of individuals, depend on doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God, the creator, preserver, and benefactor of men, thus to attempt to excite your attention to the affecting subject, [slave trade] earnestly desiring that the infinite Father of spirits may so enrich our minds with his love and truth, and so influence your understanding by that pure wisdom which is full of mercy and good fruits, as that a sincere and an impartial inquiry may take place, whether it be not our duty, as a body of men, to your exalted station to exert upright endeavors, to the full extent of your power, to remove every obstruction to public righteousness, which the influence or artifice of particular persons, governed by the narrow, mistaken views of self-interest, has occasioned; and whether, notwithstanding such seeming impediments, it be not really within your power to exercise justice and mercy, which, if adhered to, we cannot doubt abolition must produce the abolition of the slave-trade."

Now, I ask the Senator where is the analogy between this and the present petition, the reception of which he so strenuously urges? He is a lawyer of long experience and of distinguished reputation; and I put the question to him, on what possible principle can a case so perfectly dissimilar, justify the vote he intends to give on the present occasion? On what possible ground can the vote of Mr. Madison to refer that petition, on which he has so much relied, justify him in receiving this? Does he not perceive, in his own example, the danger of forming precedents? If he may call to his aid the authority of Mr. Madison, in a case so dissimilar, to justify the reception of this petition, and thereby execute the jurisdiction of Congress over the question of emancipation, to what purpose hereafter may not the example of his course on the present occasion be perverted?

It is not my design to censure Mr. Madison's course, but I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that his name is not found associated, on that occasion, with the sagacious and firm representatives from the South—Smith, Tucker, and Barber, of South Carolina, James Jackson of Georgia and many others, who at that early period, foresaw the danger and met it, as it ought ever to be met, by those who regard the peace and security of the slave-holding States. Had he added the weight of his talents and authority to theirs, a more healthy tone of sentiment than that which now unfortunately exists, would this day have been the consequence.

Another case has been cited, to justify the vote for reception. I refer to the petition from the Quakers, in 1805, which the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. Buchanan) relies on to sustain him in receiving the present petition. What I have said in reply to the precedent cited by the Senator from Tennessee, applies equally to this. Like that the petition prayed legislation, not an abolition of slavery, but the African slave-trade, over which subject Congress

in a few years would have full jurisdiction by the Constitution, and might well have their attention called to it in advance. But though their objects were the same, the manner in which the petitions were not was very dissimilar. Instead of being permitted to be received silently, like the former, this petition was met at the threshold. The question of receiving was made, on the present occasion, and its rejection sustained by a strong Southern vote as the journals will show. The Secretary will read the journal:

"Mr. Logan presented a petition signed by Thomas Morris, clerk, on behalf of the meeting of the representatives of the people called Quakers, in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, &c. stating that the petitioners, from a sense of religious duty, had again come forward to plead the cause of their oppressed and degraded fellow-men of the African race. On the question, 'Shall this petition be received?' it passed on the affirmative—yeas 19, nays 9."

Among those who received the petition, there were but 4 from the slave-holding States, and this on a single petition praying for legislation on a subject, over which Congress in so short a time would have full authority. What an example to us on the present occasion! Can any man doubt, from the vote, if the Southern Senators on that occasion had been placed in the present position—that had been their lot as it is ours, to meet that torrent of petitions which is now poured upon Congress, not from peaceable Quakers, but from incendiaries, not to suppress the African slave-trade, but to abolish slavery; they would, with united voice, have rejected the petition with scorn and indignation! Can any one who knew him doubt that one of the Senators from the South, (the gallant Sumner) who on that occasion voted for receiving the petition, would have been among the first to vindicate the interests of those whom he represented, had the question at that day been what it is on the present occasion? We are next told that, instead of looking to the Constitution, in order to ascertain what are its limits to the right of petition, we must push that instrument aside, and go back to the Magna Charta and the declaration of rights, for their origin and limitation. We live in strange times. It seems there are Christians now more orthodox than the Bible, and politicians whose standard is higher than the Constitution; but I object not to tracing the rights to these ancient and venerated sources; I hold in high estimation the institutions of our ancestors. They grew up gradually through many generations, by the incessant and untiring efforts of an intelligent and brave People struggling for centuries against the power of the Crown. To them we are indebted for nearly all that has been gained for liberty in modern times, excepting what we have added. But may I now ask how it has happened that our opponents, in going back to these sacred instruments, have not thought proper to cite their provisions, or to show in what manner our refusal to receive petitions can violate the right of petition as secured by them? I feel under no obligation to supply the omission, or to cite what they have omitted to cite, or to prove from the instruments themselves, that there is no violation of them which they have not prayed to be a violation. It is unnecessary. The practice of Parliament is sufficient for my purpose. It proves conclusively that it is no violation of the right, as secured by those instruments, to refuse to receive petitions.

To establish what this practice is, I ask the Secretary to read from Hattel, a work of the highest authority, the several paragraphs which are marked with a pencil, commencing at page 700, under the head of Petitions on Matter of supply.

"On the 9th of April, 1624, a petition was tendered to the House, relating to the bill for granting to their Majesties several duties upon the tonnage of ships; and the question being put, that the petition be received, it passed in the negative."

"On the 28th of April, 1628, a petition was offered to the House against the bill for laying a duty upon inland pit coal; and the question being put, that the petition be received, it passed in the negative. See, also, the 29th and 30th of June, 1628, petitions relating to the duties upon Scotch linen, and upon wales imported—*Vid.* 20th April, 1628."

"On the 5th of January 1703, a petition of the masters of Nottingham being offered against the bill for continuing the duties on malt, and the question being put, that the petition be brought up, it passed in the negative."

"On the 21st of December, 1706, *Resolved*, That this House will receive no petition for any sum of money relating to public service, but what is recommended from the Crown. Upon the 11th of June, 1713, this is declared to be a standing order of the House."

"On the 25th of March, 1807, *Resolved*, That the House will not proceed on any petition, motion, or bill for granting any money, or for releasing or compounding any money owing to the Crown, but in a committee of the whole House; and this is declared to be a standing order. See, also, the 23rd Nov. 1710."

"On the 23d of April, 1713, *Resolved*, That the House will receive no petition for compounding debts to the Crown, upon any branch of the Revenue, without a certificate from the proper officer, annexed, stating the debt, what process has been made for the recovery thereof, and what the petitioner and his security are able to pay."

"On the 25th of March, 1715, this is declared to be a standing order. See the 2d of March 1735, and the 9th of January, 1752, the proceedings upon petitions of this sort."

"On the 8th of March, 1752, a petition being offered against a bill depending for securing the trade of the sugar colonies, it was refused to be brought up. A motion was then made that a committee be appointed to search precedents in relation to the receiving or not receiving petitions against the imposing of duties; and the question being put, it passed in the negative."

Nothing can be more conclusive. Not only are petitions received, but resolutions are passed refusing to receive entire classes of petitions, and that too, on the subject of imposing taxes; a subject above all others, in relation to which we would suppose the right ought to be held most sacred, and this within a few years after the declaration of rights. With these facts before us, what are we to think of the assertions of the

Senator from Tennessee, (Mr. Grundy), who pronounced in his place, in the boldest and most unqualified manner, that there was no deliberate body which did not act on the principle that it was bound to receive petitions? That a member of his long experience and caution should venture to make an assertion so unfounded, is one among the many proofs of the carelessness, both as to facts and arguments, with which this important subject has been examined and discussed on that side.

But it is not necessary to cross the Atlantic or to go back to remote periods to find precedents for the rejection of petitions.—This body, on a memorable occasion, and after full deliberation, a short time since rejected a petition; and among those who voted for the rejection will be found the names (of course I exclude my own) of the most able and experienced men of the Senate. I refer to a case of resolutions in the nature of a remonstrance, from the citizens of York, Pennsylvania, approving the act of the President in removing the deposits. I ask the Secretary to read the journals on that side.

"The Vice President communicated a preamble and a series of resolutions adopted at a meeting of the citizens of York county, Pennsylvania, approving the act of the Executive in removing the public money from the Bank of the United States, and opposed to the renewal of the charter of said Bank; which having been read, Mr. Clay objected to the reception. And on the question, shall they be received? It was determined in the negative—yeas 20, nays 20."

"On motion of Mr. Preston, the yeas and nays being desired by one-fifth of the Senators present, those who voted in the affirmative, are—

Messrs. Benton, Brown, Forsyth, Grundy, Hendricks, Hill, Kane, King of Alabama, King of Georgia, Linn, McKean, Mangum, Morris, Robinson, Shepley, Talbot, Tippon, White, White, Wilkins, Wright.

"Those who voted in the negative, are—

Messrs. Bibb, Black, Calhoun, Clay, Clayton, Ewing, Frelinghuysen, Kent, Leigh, Moore, Naudain, Poindexter, Porter, Prentiss, Preston, Robinson, Sibley, Smith, Southard, Sprague, Swift, Tomlinson, Waggoner, Webster."

In citing this case it is not my intention to call in question the consistency of any member on this floor; it would be the minority of the occasion. I doubt not the vote then given was given with a full conviction of its correctness, as it will doubtless be in the present case, on whatever side it may be found. My object is, to show that the principle for which I contend, so far from being opposed, is sustained by precedents, here and elsewhere, ancient and modern.

In following, as I have, those opposed to me, to Magna Charta, and the Declaration of Rights, for the origin and the limits of the right of petition, I am not disposed, with them, to set aside the Constitution. I assent to the position they assume, that the right of petition existed before the Constitution, and that it is not derived from it; but while I look beyond that instrument for the right, I hold the Constitution, on a question of its extent and limits, to be the highest authority. The first amended article of the Constitution, which provides that Congress shall pass no law to prevent the people peaceably assembling and petitioning for a redress of grievances, was clearly understood to prescribe the limits within which the right may be exercised. It is not pretended that it is not derived from it; but in the slightest degree, on these limits. To suppose that the framers of the Constitution—no, not the framers, but those zealous patriots who were not satisfied with that instrument as it came from the hands of the framers, and who proposed this very provision, to guard what they considered a sacred right, performed their task so ably, as to omit any essential guard, would be to do great injustice to the memory of those stern and sagacious men; and yet this is what the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) has ventured to assert. He said that no provision was added to guard against the rejection of petitions, because the obligation to receive was considered so clear that it was deemed unnecessary; when he might have known that, according to the standing practice at that time, Parliament was in the constant habit, as has been shown, of refusing to receive petitions—a practice which could not have been unknown to the framers of the Constitution; and from which it may be fairly inferred that, in omitting to provide that the petitions should be received, it was not intended to comprehend their reception in the right of petition.

I have now, I trust, established, beyond all controversy, that we are not bound to receive these petitions, and that if we should reject them, we would not, in the slightest degree, infringe the right of petition. It is now time to look to the rights of this body, and to see whether, if we should receive, when it is acknowledged that the only reason for receiving is, that we are bound to do so, we would not establish a principle which would trench deeply on the rights of the Senate. I have already shown that where the action of the Senate is concerned, there also its right to determine now and when it shall act, also commences. I have also shown that the action of the Senate, as a body, begins on the presentation of a petition; that the petition is then before the body; that the Senate cannot proceed to other business without making some disposition of it; and that, by the 24th rule, the first action after presentation is on a question to receive the petition. To extend the right of petition to the question on receiving, is to exchange this rule—to abolish this unquestionable constitutional right of the Senate, and that for the benefit, in this case, of the abolitionists. Their gain would be at the loss of this body. I have not expressed myself too strongly. Give the right of petition the extent contended for; decide that we are bound, under the Constitution to receive these incendiary petitions, and the very motion before the Senate would be out of order. If the Constitution makes it our duty to receive, we would have no discretion left to reject, as the motion pre-supposes. Our rules of proceeding must be in accord with the Constitution. Thus, in the case of received bills, which, by the Constitution, must originate in the other House, it would be out of order to introduce them here, and it has accordingly been so decided. For like reason, if we are bound to receive petitions, the present motion would be out of order; and, as the presiding officer, to call me to order, and to arrest all further discussion on the

question of reception. Let us now turn our eyes for a moment to the nature of the right, which I fear, we are about to abandon, with the view to ascertain what must be the consequence if we surrender it.

Of the rights belonging to a deliberate body, I know of no more universal, or more indispensable to a proper performance of its functions, than the right to determine at its discretion what it shall receive, over what it shall extend its jurisdiction, and to what it shall direct its deliberation and action. It is the first and universal law of all such bodies, and extends not only to petitions, but to reports, to bills, and resolutions, varied only in the two latter in the form of the question. It may be compared to the function in the animal economy, with which all living creatures are endowed, of selecting, through the instinct of taste, what to receive or to reject, on which the preservation of their existence depends. Deprive them of this function, and the poisonous, as well as the wholesome, would be indifferently received into their system. So with deliberate bodies; deprive them of the essential and primary right to determine at their pleasure what to receive or reject, and they would become the passive receptacle, indifferently, of all that is frivolous, absurd, unconstitutional, immoral, and impious, as well as what may properly demand their deliberation and action. Establish this monstrous, this impious principle, (as it would prove to be by its operation) that must be the consequence! To what would we commit ourselves? If a petition should be presented praying the abolition of the Constitution, (which we are all bound by our oath to protect,) according to this abominable doctrine, it must be received. So, if it was prayed, the abolition of the Decalogue, or of the Bible itself. I go farther. If the abolition societies should be converted into a body of Atheists, and should ask the passage of a law denying the existence of the Almighty Being above us, the Creator of all, according to this blasphemous doctrine, we should be bound to receive the petition, to take jurisdiction of it, I ask the Senators from Tennessee and Pennsylvania (Mr. Grundy and Mr. Buchanan) would they vote to receive such a petition? I wait not an answer. They would instantly reject it with loathing. What then becomes of the unlimited, unqualified, and universal obligation to receive petitions, which they so strenuously maintained, and to which they are prepared to sacrifice the constitutional rights of this body?

I shall now descend from those hypothetical cases to the particular question before the Senate. What then must be the consequences of receiving this petition, on the principle that we are bound to receive it and all similar petitions whenever presented? I have continued this question calmly in all its bearings, and do not hesitate to pronounce that to receive, would be to the abolitionists, all that the most sanguine could for the present hope, and to abandon all the outworks upon which we of the South rely for our defence against their attacks here.

No one can believe that the families, who have fled this and the other House with their petitions, entertain the slightest hope that Congress would pass a law at this time to abolish slavery in this District. Infatuated as they are, they must see that public opinion at the North is not yet prepared for so decisive a step, and that seriously to attempt it would be fatal to their cause. What then do they hope? Alas! but that Congress should take jurisdiction of the subject of abolishing slavery—should throw open to the abolitionists the halls of legislation, and enable them to establish a permanent position within their walls, from which hereafter to carry on their operations against the institutions of the slave-holding States. If we receive this petition, all these advantages will be realized to them to the full extent. Permanent jurisdiction would be assumed on the subject of slavery, not only in this District but in the States themselves, whenever the abolitionists might choose to ask Congress to send their petitions here, for the abolition of slavery in the States. We would be bound to receive such petitions, and by receiving, would be fairly pledged to deliberate and decide on them. Having succeeded in this point, a most favorable position would be gained. The centre of operations would be transferred from Nassau Hall to the Halls of Congress. To this common centre, the incendiary publications of the abolitionists would flow, in the form of petitions, to be received and preserved among the public records.—Here the subject of abolition would be agitated session after session, and from hence the assaults on the property and institutions of the people of the slave-holding States would be disseminated, in the guise of speeches, over the whole Union.

Such would be the advantages yielded to the abolitionists. In proportion to their gain would be our loss. What would be yielded to them, would be taken from us. Our true position, that which is indispensable to our defence here, is that Congress has no legitimate jurisdiction over the subject of slavery, either here or elsewhere. The reception of this petition surrenders this commanding position; yields the question of jurisdiction so important to the cause of abolition, and so important to us, to the hands of our enemies; compels us to sit in silence to witness the assaults on our character and institutions, or to engage in an idle contest in their defence. Such a contest is beyond mortal endurance. We must in the end be humbled, degraded, broken down, and worn out.

The Senators from the slave-holding States, who most unfortunately have committed themselves to vote for receiving these incendiary petitions, tell us that whenever the attempt shall be made to abolish slavery, they will join with us to repel it. I doubt not the sincerity of their declaration. We all have a common interest, and they cannot betray ours without betraying at the same time their own. But I announce to them that they are *non* called on to redeem their pledge. *The attempt is now making.* The work is going on daily and hourly. The war is waged, not only in the most dangerous manner, but in the only manner it can be waged. Do they expect that the abolitionists will recede to arms, and commence a crusade to liberate our slaves by force? Is that what they mean when they speak of the attempt to abolish slavery? If so, let me tell our friends of the South who differ from us, that the war which the abolitionists wage against us is of a very different character, and far more effective. It is a war of religious and political fanaticism, mingled on the part of the leaders with ambition and the love of notoriety, and

waged, not against our lives, but our character. The object is to humiliate and debase us in our own estimation, and that of the world in general; to blast our reputation, while they overthrow our domestic institutions. This is the mode in which they are attempting abolition, with such ample means and untiring industry; and now is the time for all who are opposed to them to meet the attack. How can it be successfully met? This is the important question. There is but one way; we must meet the enemy on the frontier, on the question of receiving; we must secure that important pass—it is our Thermopylae. The power of resistance by a universal law of nature, is on the exterior. Break through the shell, penetrate the crust, and there is no resistance within. In the present contest, the question on receiving constitutes our frontier. It is the first, the exterior question, that covers and protects all the others. Let it be penetrated by receiving this petition, and not a point of resistance can be found within, as far as this Government is concerned. If we cannot maintain ourselves there, we cannot on any interior position. Of all the questions that can be raised, there is no one on which we can rally on ground more tenable for ourselves, or more untenable for our opponents, not excepting the ultimate question of abolition in the States. For our right to reject this petition is a truth as clear and unquestionable as that Congress has no right to abolish slavery in the States.

Such is the importance of taking our stand unflinchingly on the question now before us. Such are the advantages that we of the South would sacrifice, and the abolitionists would gain, were we to surrender that important position by receiving this petition. What motives have we for making so great a sacrifice? What advantages can we hope to gain that would justify us?

We are told of the great advantage of a strong majority. I acknowledge it in a good cause, and on sound principles. I feel in the present instance how much our cause would be strengthened by a strong and decided majority for the rejection of these incendiary petitions. If any thing we could do here could arrest the progress of the abolitionists, it would be such a rejection. But as advantageous as would be a strong majority on sound principles, it is in the same degree dangerous, when on the opposite side, when it rests on improper grounds, and the advocates of principles, which would be the case at present. Such a majority must in this instance be purchased by concessions to the abolitionists, and a surrender, on our part, that would demolish all our outworks, give up all our strong positions, and open all the passes to the free admission of our enemies. It is only on this condition that we can hope to obtain such a majority—a majority which must be gathered together from all sides, and embracing every variety of opinion. To rally such a majority, the Senator from Pennsylvania has fallen on the device to receive this petition, and immediately to reject it, without consideration or reflection. To my mind the movement looks like a ruse—a mere piece of artifice to juggle and mislead the Senate. I intend to disrespect to the Senator, and to let his intentions be as good, and believe his feelings as well as I must say that the course he has pursued is, in my opinion, the worst he could take for the slave-holding States. It surrenders all to the abolitionists, and gives nothing in return, that would be of the least advantage to us. Let the majority for the cause be as large as ever so strong, can the Senator hope that it will make any impression on the abolitionists? Can he even hope of obtaining his position of rejecting their petition, without consideration, against them? Does he not see that, in assuming jurisdiction by receiving their petitions, he gives an implied pledge to inquire, to deliberate, and decide on them? Experience will teach him that we must either receive, or go through. I entirely concur with the Senator from Vermont, Mr. Prentiss, on that point. There is no middle ground that is tenable, and least of all that proposed to be occupied by the Senator from Pennsylvania, and those who act with him. In the mean time, the course he proposes is calculated to lull the people of the slaveholding States into a false security, under the delusive impression which it is calculated to make, that there is more universal strength here against the abolitionists than real does exist.

But we are told that the right of petition is popular in the North, and that to make an issue, however true, which might bring it in question, would weaken our friends and strengthen the abolitionists. I have no doubt of the kind feelings of our brethren from the North, on this floor; but I clearly see that, while we have their feelings in our favor, their constituents, right or wrong, will have their votes, however we may be affected. But I assure our friends that we would not do any thing, willingly, which would weaken them at home; and, if we could be assured that, by yielding to their wishes the right of receiving petitions, they would be able to arrest, permanently, the progress of the abolitionists, we might then be induced to yield; but nothing short of the certainty of permanent security can induce us to yield an inch. If to maintain our rights must increase the abolitionists, be it so. I would at no period make the least sacrifice of principle for any temporary advantage, and much less at the present. If there must be an issue, now is our time. We never can be more united or better prepared for the struggle; and I, for one, would much rather meet the danger now, than to turn it over to those who are to come after us.

But putting these views aside, it does seem to me, taking a general view of the subject, that the course intimated by the Senator from Pennsylvania is radically wrong, and must end in disappointment. The attempt to unite all, must, as it usually does, terminate in division and distraction. It will divide the South on the question of receiving, and the North on that of rejection, with a mutual weakening of both. I already see indications of division among Northern gentlemen on this floor, even in this stage of the question. A division among them would give a great impulse to the cause of abolition. Whatever position the parties may take, in the event of such division, one or the other would be considered more or less favorable to the abolition cause, which could not fail to run it into the political struggles of the two great parties of the North. With these views I hold that the only possible hope of arresting the

progress of the abolitionists in that quarter is to keep the two great parties united against them, which would be possible if they divide here. The course intimated by the Senator from Pennsylvania will effect a division here, and, instead of uniting the North, and thereby arresting the progress of the abolitionists, as we anticipate, will end in division and distraction, and in giving thereby a more powerful impulse to their cause. I must say, before I close my remarks on this occasion, that the members from the North, it seems to me, are not duly sensible of the deep interest which they have in this question, not only as affecting the Union; but as it relates immediately and directly to their particular section. As great as may be our interests, theirs is not less. If the tide continues to roll on its rapid waves of folly and fanaticism, it must in the end prostrate in the North all the institutions that uphold their peace and prosperity, and ultimately overwhelm all that is eminent, morally and intellectually.

I have now concluded what I intended to say on the question immediately before the Senate. If I have spoken earnestly, it is because I feel the subject to be one of the deepest interest. We are about to take the first step; that must control all our subsequent movements. If it should be such, as I fear it will, if we receive this petition, and establish the principle that we are obliged to receive all such petitions; if we shall determine to take permanent jurisdiction over the subject of abolition, whenever and in whatever manner the abolitionists may ask, either here or in the States, I do not think the consequence will be ultimately disastrous. Such a course would destroy the confidence of the People of the slaveholding States in this Government. We love and cherish the Union; we remember with the kindest feelings our common origin, with pride our common achievements, and fondly anticipate the common greatness and glory that seem to await us; but our origin, achievements, and anticipation of coming greatness are to us nothing, compared to this question. It is to us a vital question. It involves, not only our liberty, but, what is greater, (if to freedom any thing can be,) existence itself. The relation which now exists between the two races in the slaveholding States has existed for two centuries. It has grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength. It has entered into and modified all our institutions, and all our politics. None other can be substituted. What we will not, cannot permit it to do so, we would be traitors to our section, to ourselves, our families, and to posterity. It is our anxious desire to protect and preserve this relation by the joint action of the Government and the confederated States of the Union; but if, instead of closing the door, if, instead of denying all jurisdiction and all interference in this question, the doors of Congress are to be thrown open, and if we are to be exposed here, in the heart of the Union, to an endless attack on our rights, our character, and our institutions; if the other States are to stand and look on without attempting to suppress these attacks, originating within their borders, and finally if this is to be our fixed and permanent condition, as members of this Confederacy, we will then be compelled to turn our eyes on ourselves. Come what will, should it be necessary, we must defend ourselves; and, if compelled, we would stand justified by all laws, human and divine.

If I feel alarm, it is not for ourselves, but for the Union and the institutions of the country, to which I have been devotedly attached, however calumniated and slandered. Few have made greater sacrifices to maintain them, and none is more anxious to perpetuate them to the latest generation; but they can and ought to be perpetuated only on the condition that they shall be the great object for which they were created—the liberty and protection of these States.

As for ourselves, I feel no apprehension. I know to the fullest extent the magnitude of the danger that surrounds us. I am not disposed to underestimate it. My colleague has painted it truly. But, as great as the danger, we have nothing to fear if true to ourselves. We have many and great resources; a numerous, intelligent and brave population; great and valuable staples; ample fiscal means; unity of feelings and interest; and an entire exemption from those dangers originating in conflict between labor and capital, which at this time threatens so much danger to constitutional Governments. To these may be added that we would not feel to us but one alternative—to triumph or perish as a people. We would stand alone, compelled to defend life, character, and institutions. A necessity so stern and imperious would develop to the full, all the great qualities of our nature, mental and moral, requisite for defence—intelligence, fortitude, courage, and patriotism; and these, with our ample means, and our admirable materials for the construction of durable free States, would insure security, liberty and renown.

With these impressions, I ask neither sympathy nor compassion for the slaveholding States. We can take care of ourselves. It is not we, but the Union which is in danger. It is that which demands our care—demands that the agitation of the question cease here—that you shall refuse to receive these petitions, and decline all jurisdiction over the subject of abolition, in every form and shape. It is only on these terms that the Union can be safe. We cannot remain here in an endless struggle in defence of our character, our property, and institutions.

I shall in conclusion, make a few remarks as to the course I shall feel myself compelled to pursue should the Senate, by receiving this petition, determine to entertain jurisdiction over the question of abolition. Thinking as I do, I can perform no act that would countenance so dangerous an assumption; and, as a participation in the subsequent proceedings on this petition, should it unfortunately be received, might be so construed, in that event I shall feel myself constrained to decline such participation, and to leave the responsibility wholly on those who may assume it.

The Surplus Revenue has increased, is increasing and must be diminished. The amount of public money in the Deposit Banks by the return to (or nearest to) the 1st of March, had increased to Thirty three Million Seven Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars.—*Nat. Intelligencer.*