

KEOWEE COURIER.

"TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE, AND IT MUST FOLLOW, AS THE NIGHT THE DAY, THOU CANST NOT THEN BE FALSE TO ANY MAN."

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ADDRESS OF THE SOUTHERN CONVENTION.

To the people of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri and Arkansas:

FELLOW CITIZENS:

In obedience to the commands of those we represent, we have assembled together to confer with each other concerning your relations with the General Government and the non-slaveholding States of the Union, on the subject of the institution of slavery. We deem it proper to lay before you as briefly as the subject will permit, the result of our deliberations and councils.

In order that your condition may be understood, and the conclusion at which we have arrived justly appreciated, it is necessary briefly to refer to a few past transactions.

It is now sixteen years since the institution of slavery in the south began to be agitated in Congress and assailed by our sister States. Up to that time, the people of the Northern States seemed to have respected the rights reserved to the southern States by the Constitution, and have acted under the conviction, that the subject of slavery beyond the legislation of Congress, all agitations with respect to it on the part of Congress, was equally forbidden by the Constitution. But at this time, a portion of the people of the North began to assail, in Congress, the institution of slavery, and to accomplish their object of dragging it into the vortex of congressional agitation, they claimed the right of petitioning Congress upon all subjects whatsoever. As a petition is only the first step in legislative action, it was clear that a right to petition a legislative body, must be limited by its powers of legislation. No one can have a right to ask of another to do that which he has no moral or legal right to do. Nor can any tribunal have the power to receive and consider any matter beyond its jurisdiction. The claim therefore to present petitions to Congress on the subject of slavery, was considered, by the southern Representatives generally, as an attempt indirectly to assume jurisdiction over the subject itself in all parts of the Union. They object, without disguise, was the overthrow of slavery in the States; but our assailants framed the petitions presented chiefly against slavery in the District of Columbia and our territories, and against what they call the internal slave trade—that is, the transmission of slaves from one southern State to another. Conscious of the fatal tendency of the agitation of slavery in Congress, to destroy the peace and stability of the Union, an effort was made, supported by a large portion of the Northern Representatives, which provided, that all petitions on the subject of slavery, should be either considered, printed or referred. This rule was assailed by the Northern States, as violating clause of the Constitution which prohibits Congress from passing laws to prevent the people from peaceably assembling and petitioning for a redress of grievances. In December, 1844, this rule fell before the almost unanimous voice of the North; and thus the unlimited power of introducing and considering the subject of slavery in Congress, was asserted. In the mean time, the course of the Northern people showed clearly, that the agitation of slavery in Congress was only one of the they relied on to overthrow this institution throughout the Union. Newspapers were set up amongst them, and lecturers were hired to go abroad to excite them against slavery in the southern States. Organizations were formed to carry off slaves from the South, and to protect them by violence from recapture. Although the Constitution requires that all fugitive slaves like fugitives from justice, should be rendered up by the States to which they may have fled, the Legislature of almost every Northern State, faithful to this treaty stipulation between the States, passed laws designed and calculated entirely to defeat this provision of the Constitution, without which the Union would have never existed, and by these laws virtually nullified the act of 1794, passed by Congress to aid its enforcement. Not content with the agitation of slavery in political circles, the Northern people forced it also into the religious associations extending over the Union, and produced a separation of the Methodist and Baptist churches. The result of all these various methods of assailing slavery in the southern States, was that it became the grand topic of interest and discussion in Congress and out of Congress, and one of the most important elements of politics in the Union. Thus an institution, belonging to the southern States exclusively, was wrested from their exclusive control; and instead of that protection which is the great object of all governments, and which the Constitution of the United States guarantees to all the States and their institutions, the Northern States, and Congress under their control, combined together to assail and destroy slavery in the south. The southern States did nothing to vindicate their rights and arrest this course of things. The Mexican war broke out; and instead of that patriotic co-operation of all sections of the Union,

which would have taken place in the better days of the Republic, to bring it to a just and honorable conclusion, in the very first appropriation bill to carry it on, the North endeavored to thrust in the subject of slavery. Throughout the war, they kept up the agitation; thus clearly manifesting their determination that the General Government in none of its operations, internal or external, shall be exempted from the introduction of this dangerous subject. The war closed with honor; and an immense territory was added to the United States. Their previous threats were realized; and the non-slaveholding States immediately claimed the right to exclude the people of the southern States from all the territory acquired, and to appropriate it to themselves. If this pretension arose from a mere lust of power, it would be hard to bear the superiority and mastery it implies. It would degrade the southern States from being the equals of the Northern States, to a position of colonial inferiority. But when your exclusion is not from a mere lust of power, but is only a further step in the progress of things, aiming at the abolition of slavery in the States, by the extension and multiplication of non-slaveholding States in the Union, the pretension is seen to be as alarming as it is insulting. The southern States in their Legislatures, set forth with great unanimity, the rights in our territories belonging to them in common with the Northern States, and declared their determination to maintain them; and finding in the Northern States no disposition to abate their demands, the convention in which we are assembled, has been brought together to take counsel as to the course of the southern States should pursue, for the maintenance of their rights, liberty and honor.

Such is a brief, but imperfect statement of past transactions; and they force upon us the question, in what condition do they place the southern States? And first, what is their condition in Congress? The time was when your Representatives in Congress, were neither offered, nor would they endure reproach in your behalf. But for many years past, they have heard you in Congress habitually reviled by the most opprobrious epithets on account of the institution of slavery. If their spirits are yet unbroken, they must be chilled by a sense of humiliation at the insults they daily receive as your representatives. You are arraigned as criminals. Slavery is dragged into every debate, and Congress has become little else, than a grand instrument in the hands of abolitionists to degrade and ruin the South. Instead of peace and protection, aggression and insult on the south characterize its proceedings and councils. And what is your condition, with respect to your sister States? Where is that respect and comity, which (due from all nations towards each other) is more especially due from States bound together in a confederacy, and which was once displayed in all their intercourse; instead of respect and sympathy—denunciation and hostility, on account of your institution of slavery, have for years past characterized the communications addressed to you by the Northern States. And what is your condition in the Union? The non-slaveholding States stand combined, not only to wrest from you your common property, but to place upon your front, the brand of inferiority. You are not to extend, on account of your institutions, but they are to increase and multiply that the shame and sin of slavery, may by their philanthropic agency, be extinguished from amongst you. But the worst feature of your condition is, that it is progressive. As low and humiliating as it now may be, it is destined, if not arrested, to a lower deep. Every effort is a cause; and the spirit of fanaticism brooks no delay in the progress it creates. If you were to yield everything the North now requires—abolish slavery in the District of Columbia—submit to be legislated pirates for conveying slaves from one State to another, let trial by jury and the writ of habeas corpus, wrest from you in the Northern States every fugitive slave; give up all your territories to swell Northern arrogance and predominance, would things stop there? These are all means aiming at one great end—the abolition of slavery in the States. Surrendering one of these means you will but inflame the power by which another will be exacted—and when all are conquered, will the evil be arrested? In fifty years, twenty new non-slaveholding States may be added to the Union, whilst some which are now slaveholding, may become non-slaveholding States. There then, will be no need as now, openly to put aside the Constitution to reach their object. If they will deign to do it, the non-slaveholding States will then have the power by two thirds in Congress and three fourths of the States, to amend the Constitution, and then have its express sanction to consummate the policy. Your condition is progressive.

If from the past transactions we have narrated, we learn our condition in the Union, they teach us also that our past policy of non-action and submission to aggression cannot bring us peace and safety. When the doors of Congress were thrown open to agitation on the subject of slavery, if the southern States had moved with energy to avert a state of things unconstitutional itself, and surely tending to bring the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States into collision, although late, it might not have been too late to stop subsequent encroachments upon our rights. But the southern States were passive; and their forbearance has had the effect of inspiring the Northern people with the belief either that we value a union with them more than we value the institution of slavery, or that we dare not move from a conscious inability to protect ourselves. You have ungenerously stood still whilst your supporters and the defenders of the Constitution in the Northern States, in their efforts to protect you from the agitations of slavery in Congress, have been politically annihilated, or have turned your foes. You have tamely acquiesced until to hate and persecute the South, has become a high passport to honor and power in the Union. You have unwisely stood still, whilst year after year the volume of anti-slavery policy and sympathy has swollen into unanimity throughout all the non-slaveholding States, and the sections of the Union now face each other in stem collision. You have waited until the Constitution of the United States is in danger of being virtually abolished, or of becoming what the majority in Congress think proper to make it. That great principle on

which our system of free government rests, of so dividing the powers of Government, that to a common Government only those powers should be granted which must affect all the people composing it equally in their operation, whilst all powers over all interests, local or sectional, should be reserved to local or sectional Governments, it is in danger of being uprooted from their constitution. Local and sectional interests absorb the time and business of Congress, and thus a sectional despotism, totally irresponsible to the people of the south, constituted of the Representatives in Congress from the non-slaveholding States, ignorant of our feelings, condition and institutions reigns in Washington. These are the fruits of your past forbearance and submission.

If we look into the nature of things, such results will not seem to be either new or strange. There is but one condition, in which one people can be safe under the dominion of another people, and that is when their interests are entirely identical. Then the dominant cannot oppress the subject people without oppressing themselves. The identity of interests between them is the security for right government. But as this identity can scarcely ever exist between any two people, history bears but one testimony as to the fate of subject people. They have always been compelled to minister to the prosperity and aggrandizement of their masters. If this has always been the case under the ordinary difference of interests and feelings which exist between States, how much more certainly must the experience of history be realized between the people of the Northern and Southern States. Here is a difference of climate and productions throughout a territory stretching along the whole belt of the temperate zone, affecting the pursuits and characters of the people inhabiting it. But the great difference—the one great difference—the greatest which can exist among a people is the institution of slavery. This alone sets apart the southern States as a peculiar people—with whom independence as to their internal policy is the condition of their existence. They must rule themselves or perish. Every colony in the world where African slavery existed with one exception has been destroyed; and if this has been the case, under the old and effete Governments of Europe, will it not prevail under the dominion of the restless people of the Northern States? They do not practically recognize the inferiority of the African to the Caucasian race. They do not realize, because the circumstances of their condition do not compel them to realize the impossibility of an amalgamation between the races. Exempt from the institution of slavery, it is not surprising that their sympathies should be against us, whilst the dogma on which they profess to build their system of free government—the absolute rule of the majority—leaves no barrier to their power in the affairs of the General Government, and leads them to its consolidation. Religion, too, false or real, fires their enthusiasm against our institution which many of its professors believe to be inconsistent with its principles and precepts. To expect forbearance from such a people, under such circumstances, towards the institution of slavery, is manifestly vain. If they have been false to the compact made with us in the Constitution, and have allowed passion and prejudice to master reason, they have only exemplified that frailty and fallibility of our nature which has produced the necessity of all governments, and which, if unchecked, ever produces wrong. The institution of slavery having once entered the popular mind of the non-slaveholding States, for action and control, the rest is inevitable. If unrestrained by us, they will go on until African slavery will be swept from the broad and fertile South. The nature of things, therefore, independent of experience, teaches us that there can be no safety in submission.

To submit to evils, however great, whilst they are endurable, is the disposition of every people—especially of an agricultural people, apart and association in their pursuits. But the responsibility of preserving a free government rests with all its members, who have the power or the will to destroy it. A minority, by submission, may as much betray the constitution, as a majority by aggression. The constitution does not protect a majority; for they have all the powers of the government in their hands and can protect themselves. The limitations of a constitution are designed to protect the minority—those who have no power, against those who have it. Hence, the great motive and duty of self-protection is peculiar to a minority, independent of that faith to the constitution which they owe in common with the majority. They must protect themselves and protect the constitution; and if they fail in this double duty, they are at least as culpable as those who, in aggressing upon their rights, overthrow the constitution. And the public opinion of the world is in conformity with these views. The oppressor is hated—but the unresistingly oppressed is despised. More respect follows the tyrant, than the slave who submits to his power. The Southern States, therefore, although a minority, are not exempt from the responsibility of preserving the constitution, and, in preserving it, to protect themselves.

In what way shall they preserve the constitution and protect themselves?

As a general rule, it is undoubtedly true, that when, in a government like ours, a constitution is violated by a majority, who alone can violate it in matters of legislation, it cannot be restored to its integrity through the ordinary means of the government; for these means, being under the control of the majority, are not available to the minority. It is for this reason that frequent elections of our rulers take place in our systems of free gov-

ernment, in order that the people, by their direct intervention, may change the majority. But this resource cannot avail us in the violation of the constitution, which now press and breathe the South. By changing their representatives, how can the people of the south effect the majority in Congress and restore the constitution? Their representatives are true; and have done all that men can do, to preserve the constitution from the aggression of the majority. Removing them, and putting other representatives in Congress, could have no effect in restoring the constitution. It has been broken by the representatives of the people of the northern States, who sustain them in their violations of the constitution. It is clear that the ballot-box in the south is powerless for its protection. And the same causes which induced the violations of the constitution by the northern majority, prevents its restoration to its integrity. Throughout the northern States there has been no indication of any change in their policy. On the contrary, the majority against the south is greater in the present Congress than in the last, following the usual course of every successive election for years past. Nor have we seen in the action of the States, with few exceptions, any proof of a returning sense of justice to us, or of reverence for the constitution. Several of them, lest false inferences might be drawn as to their position, have taken care lately to reiterate in the most offensive forms their former declaration against our rights; and when a great senator, representing one of them, anxious for the perpetuation of the Union, has ventured to advocate something of justice to the south, he has been rebuked by the Legislature of the state he represents, and virtually denounced for his fidelity to the constitution. This resource then, under the ordinary operations of the constitution, is of no avail. And how is it with the present Congress, the only other source of redress in the usual administration of the constitution? For six months it has been in session, and during this whole period of time slavery has been the absorbing topic of discussion and agitation. Yet nothing has been done to heal the discontents which so justly exist in the south, or restore a bleeding constitution. All we have received has been bitter denunciations of our institutions by many members of Congress, and threats to coerce us into submission. Although nothing has been done, a report has been made in the Senate by a committee of thirteen members, which is now pending in that body; and as the measures it proposes have been pressed upon the South as worthy of her acceptance, we deem it proper to lay before you a brief consideration of the matters it contains.

This report embraces four distinct measures—1st the admission of California as a State, with the exclusion of slavery in her constitution. 2d, Territorial Governments to be erected over the territories of Utah and New Mexico, with nearly one half of Texas to be added to the latter. 3d, The prohibition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia; and 4th., provisions for the recapture of fugitive slaves in the non-slaveholding States. To understand whether these measures are consistent with our rights and worthy of our acceptance, each of them must be considered separately.

The South is excluded by the bill from the whole of that part of California lying on the Pacific, including one hundred and fifty thousand square miles of territory; and if this is done by the legislation of Congress, the mode in which it is done is of no importance. California belongs to the United States, and all action by the individuals in that territory, whether from the United States or from the rest of the world, appropriating the soil to themselves or erecting a government over it, is of no validity. They constitute a people in no proper sense of the term; but are citizens of the States or countries from which they have come, and to which they still owe their allegiance. When therefore Congress attempts to carry out and confirm the acts of these individuals, erecting California into a State and excluding slavery therefrom, it is the same thing as if Congress had originally passed a law to this effect, without the intervention of these individuals. The exclusion of slavery from California is done by the act of Congress, and by no other authority. The constitution of California becomes the act of Congress; and the Wilmot proviso it contains, is the Wilmot proviso passed and enforced by the legislation of Congress. Here then is that exclusion from this territory by the act of Congress which almost every southern State in the Union has declared she would not submit to plainly and practically enforced by this bill. A free people cannot be satisfied with the mode in

which they are deprived of their right. A sovereign State will disdain to inquire in what manner she is stripped of her property, and degraded from an equality with her sister States. It is enough that the outrage is done. The mode is of little consequence. There is therefore in the mode of extending the Wilmot proviso over the territory of California presented by the bill nothing to mitigate the indignation of the Southern States, or to baffle their determination to redress the wrong if inflicted. They are excluded from the whole Territory of California, a Territory extensive enough to contain four large States.

If the constitution proposed by California contained nothing about slavery, would the North allow her to enter into the Union? Such were the territorial bills proposed for California at the last Congress, but they rejected them because the south was not excluded from this territory in express terms. The inhabitants of this territory have been left without any civil government, solely because the south would not consent to be legislated out of them with her institutions; and now that this object is accomplished by the constitution presented by California, these conservatives—the advocates of law and order—are eager to admit her, without right or precedent, into the Union. We are aware of the inconveniences the inhabitants of California may have suffered for want of a civil government established by Congress, and therefore are prepared to yield much on account of the circumstances in which they have been placed.

The next measure is in perfect keeping with this first feature of "the report." It takes from Texas territory sufficient for two large States, and adds them to New Mexico. What the bill contains with respect to slavery will be of little consequence; for it is designed that next winter New Mexico, thus constituted, shall follow the example of California, and be admitted as a State with a constitution excluding slavery from its limits—for without such exclusion she cannot hope to be admitted by the non-slaveholding States into the Union. The effect will be that territory, over which slavery now exists, equal to two States, will be wrested from the south, and will be given up to the non-slaveholding States. The pretext is, that there is some doubt as to the boundaries of Texas. Texas, by her laws, when she was admitted into the Union, had but one boundary towards the West, and that boundary was the Rio Grande. Congress, in the resolutions admitting her into the Union, recognised this boundary by laying down a line of limitation between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States—(being the Missouri compromise line of 36 deg. 30 min. parallel of north latitude)—through that very part of her territory her right to which is now questioned. Her boundary of the Rio Grande to its source alone gave her this country; and was thus recognised and ratified by the resolutions of annexation. To vindicate this boundary for Texas, as a member of the Union, the Mexican war took place; and in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo it was finally vindicated and settled, by a clause in the treaty designating the Rio Grande as the boundary between Mexico and the United States. Thus, by the laws of Texas, by the legislation of Congress, and by a solemn treaty of the United States, the Rio Grande is the western boundary of Texas. Yet the pretension is set up that her territory does not extend to within three hundred miles of the Missouri compromise line, where Congress, in receiving her into the Union, determined that her territory should be divided between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States. Texas is the only State in the Union which has the solemn guarantee of the Government of the United States in every possible form of her boundaries. Yet this is the Government which disputes them; and, under the pretext that they are very doubtful, proposes to take from her nearly one-half of her territory. It is by virtue of such pretensions, that by the bill two States are to be taken from the South; and given to the Northern States; and this wrong is aggravated by compelling us to pay for it through the Treasury of the United States.

It is undoubtedly proper that Texas should be quieted as to her boundaries; but she should be quieted by a law of Congress, plainly acknowledging them. If, after her boundaries are settled, the General Government, to carry out the purposes of the constitution, or in good faith to fulfil all the obligations the annexation of Texas to the Union requires, should think proper to purchase any territory from Texas, the arrangement may be unobjectionable. But any arrangement concerning her territories, which leaves a shade of doubt as to the right o-