

repose to the country, securing the preservation of the Constitution and the perpetuity of the Union.

Another of the principles of the Democratic party, as set forth by its last national convention, is:

"That the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

It is now the policy of the party to prevent all agitation on the subject. And it is the sincere wish of the great mass of the people of the South to see this agitation brought to an end. They only wish to have their constitutional rights respected, and to be let alone. Neither they or the Democratic party of the nation desire to promote any schemes of aggression for or against slavery.

The Republicans charge aggression on the Democracy, and on the South; but they know there is not a word of truth in the charge; and they only make it to deceive their own people, and give a pretext for, and plausibility to, their unconstitutional and fanatical crusade against the South, fearing, doubtless, that unless they can deceive their own people into such a belief, they cannot maintain the present dangerous ascendancy of their party.

The Republicans, to sustain this idea of southern aggression, and that the Democratic party is a southern sectional party, would implicate both in a purpose to reopen the African slave trade. And they do this in the face of the above resolution of the national convention, against the agitation of the question of slavery in any form, in Congress or out of it; and in the face of the fact that nine tenths or more of the Representatives of the southern States, and every northern Democrat on this floor, are opposed to it; and in the face of the President's late message, which takes strong ground against it, and urges increased efforts on the part of the Government to prevent any unlawful continuance of the traffic. Speaking for myself on this subject, coming, as I do, from an extreme southern State, I took strong grounds against this trade in my late canvass, and was sustained in it by the general sentiment of my district.

Now, this is a fair statement of the doctrines of the Democratic party, as far as they relate to the question of slavery. And this shows that, with all the apparent fairness of the gentleman from Connecticut, he has misstated the doctrines of the party, and argued against fancied evils which have no real existence. I will read an extract from his speech, for the purpose of noting some other errors into which he seems to have fallen:

"For where, I may ask, did the people, while in their territorial condition, as they must have been while in the act of making their constitution, acquire the power to abolish slavery in their borders? From any inherent right so to do? This is vehemently denied. From any act of Congress? It is expressly affirmed that Congress can confer no such power. From the Constitution of the United States? The answer is an unqualified negative. Whence, then, does this power come. The gentleman from Texas, [Mr. REAGAN], in his very able speech, gives the only answer of which, upon the Democratic theory, the question is susceptible. The power is a revolutionary one, against all constitutions, all laws, all governmental authority; it comes by revolution. The whole Democratic territorial policy is thus reduced to a system, not of order, but of disorder; not of regulated law, but of chronic anarchy; not of peace and stability, but of revolution."

"Such are the fundamental principles of the Democratic party, and such its logical results."

Now, there are two capital errors in the portion of the gentleman's speech here quoted. The first, in his order of presenting them, is the assumption that, when a territorial convention, in framing a constitution preparatory to being admitted as a State, provides for abolishing slavery, it is the abolition of slavery by the people of a Territory. The answer to this is, that such an act does not take effect while the people remain in their territorial condition; and it is, therefore, not the act of the people of a Territory receiving its vitality from them while they remain in that condition, but it is only the preliminary action of the people, indicating a thing, not done, but which is to be done, when, and on the condition that, Congress gives its consent to their admission into the Union as a State, and their consequent investiture with the attributes and sovereignty of a State. It then becomes the act of a State, through its organic law; and not the act of a Territory, as such.

Congress can only legitimately inquire, in examining the constitution of a State applying for

admission into the Union, whether it be republican in form; and cannot reject its application because its people may have chosen, in the exercise of their attributes of sovereignty, to disregard and destroy private rights.

His other great error is in assuming that the theory which supposes slavery can only be abolished by the authority of State sovereignty, and private property and vested rights destroyed by what I call an act of revolution, is the recognition by the Democratic party of a theory in conflict with all constitutions and laws and governmental authority. Now, exactly the reverse of this is the position of the Democratic party. It respects the Constitution and its guarantees, and therefore refuses to violate them by assenting to powers not delegated, for the purpose of destroying the private property and vested rights of citizens. It respects the authority of States, and therefore will not attempt to interfere with them for exercising the attributes of sovereignty, however harshly, toward their own citizens. And it rightly limits the power to destroy private property and vested rights to the original sovereignty of the people—to their revolutionary right to change, alter, or abolish their forms of government.

And in this, upon this question, consists the great difference between it and the Republican party. That party would violate the Constitution by the exercise of authority by Congress nowhere to be found in it, and by a direct disregard of those of its provisions which guaranty the security of private property and vested rights. It would violate the principles of law and equity by denying to the people of one half the States an equal participation with those of the other half in the settlement, occupation, and enjoyment of the Territories, which are the common property of all; and it would disregard all governmental authority by employing the revolutionary power to destroy private property and vested rights as one of the appropriate objects of their creation.

The difference between the gentleman and myself is, that he would inaugurate the employment of the revolutionary power to destroy private property and vested rights, as a lawful and constitutional means of accomplishing the Republican purpose of excluding slavery from the Territories; while I resist this as violative of the Constitution, and insist that this revolutionary power can only be exercised by a people in their sovereign capacity, by virtue of their inherent right to change, alter, or abolish the existing form of government.

In support of the theory that one of the great objects of Government is to preserve private property and secure vested rights, I refer to the fact that neither the Federal Government nor the Government of any one of the States of the Union has omitted to guard them strictly against the power of the legislative authority. And to omit this in the constitution of any Government would be to omit one of the most important safeguards of liberty and one of the strongest bulwarks against despotism. The struggles between Governments and people are nearly always between power on the one side and right on the other. And hence we limit the powers of our Governments by written constitutions for our protection in such struggles; and these, if observed, secure our rights against everything but an appeal to original sovereignty—the government-making power.

Upon the predicate that the Democratic party maintains that "property in man exists of natural right," and that it takes all the grounds necessary to sustain slavery as right, expedient, and just in the abstract, the gentleman from Connecticut says:

"If these principles be correct, there is no justification or palliation for the laws of the United States against the African slave trade."

I have already said that the Democratic party is neither a pro-slavery nor anti-slavery party; and I have tried to show that it has taken no position on these abstract questions, and only feel astonished that the gentleman should assume it had done either.

For myself, (and in this I speak only for myself,) while I do not occupy the position the gentleman would improperly assign the Democratic party on these questions, I do believe that, whether the African slave trade be right or wrong, and whether slavery as it exists among us be right or wrong in the abstract, the people of the free States have nothing to do with it as it exists in the slave States, and have no right to interfere with the sub-

ject; and that such an interference on their part, whether by agitating speeches or attempts at practical action, is an impertinent, unjust, and unwarranted intermeddling with the affairs of others, in open disregard of the principles of the Federal Union; and I believe further, that, as practical legislators, those who have this institution, and the consequent right to deal with it, must consider it and deal with it as they find it, without going back to inquire whether its origin was right or wrong. We are not charged with the duty of making a Government and its institutions on a theory of our own, but with the duty of administering a Government and its institutions as we find them.

I tell the gentleman I do not believe slavery, as it exists with us, is either a crime or immoral, whatever its origin may have been; but that I do believe it would be a crime against reason and humanity, taking into view the condition of our Government and society as we find them, and of the condition and capacities of the negroes as they are, to set them free. I believe this because I believe the four million negroes in bondage in this country are better fed, better clothed, better protected from violence and wrong, better informed, more intelligent, and possess more religious advantages than any other four million of that race on earth; because I believe them, as a race, incapable of self-government; because I believe, under the providence of God, they are now going through a training which is elevating them in the scale of humanity, and, at the same time, aiding the white race to develop a great and splendid civilization; because I believe, if they were liberated and left here among us, they would fall into such habits of idleness and vice and licentiousness as would render it necessary, for the security of society, to exterminate the greater portion of the race; because I believe that if we were to liberate them and send them away in a body to any other country, and leave them to their own direction, they would at once sink away into a state of anarchy and crime, and from that to a state of heathenish barbarism.

But it is far from following as a matter of course, because I believe this, that I should advocate the reopening of the African slave trade. The slave trade encourages the tribal wars and the consequent cruelties in Africa, and those who engage in it are accessories to the crimes it produces. For this reason I am opposed to it. And then there are reasons resulting from the policy and interest of our own country, which I will not now occupy time to state, which induce me to oppose it. We are responsible for our treatment of the negroes we find among us. But this does not make it necessary or obligatory on us to extend this responsibility by capturing others and bringing them here.

I will add thus more, that I believe any man who understands the condition, character, and capacity of the negroes, and who would advocate the freeing of them, in view of the consequences which must necessarily follow it, would commit a crime against humanity, and be a traitor to his country. And that any man who madly or foolishly agitates this question, without understanding it, and without trying to comprehend what must be the result of his purpose if consummated, is a demagogue who deserves the reprobation and scorn of all honest men.

But, sir, what shall be said of the man who will so agitate to violate the Federal Constitution and dissolve and destroy the Union? Let the blighted hopes of mankind in the despotisms of the Old World, now looking to our Republic and longing to be free, answer. Let the expiring liberty of the millions of free, prosperous, and happy people of our own country answer. Let the future suspension of business, the political commotion, the neglect of agriculture, the grass growing in school and church-yards, the shutting up of our manufacturing establishments, the destruction of commerce, the marshaling of armies, the bloody battlefields of brother against brother, the grief-stricken widows and orphans without hope of such as fall in these battles, let these answer. Let the glee of bloated royalty and hereditary nobility, over the fall of republican equality and American liberty, answer. Let the war of political leaders and military chieftains, such as is now going on in Mexico, with no security for life or property, answer. And then let the dark, unvalled, bitter future bring up