

## CHAPTER VIII - THE SLAVERY QUESTION

The Compromise of 1850, though welcomed on all sides as a final settlement, failed as completely as the Missouri Compromise had succeeded. It has already been said that the fault was not in any lack of skill in the actual framing of the plan. As a piece of political workmanship it was even superior to Clay's earlier masterpiece, as the rally to it at the moment of all but the extreme factions, North and South, sufficiently proves. That it did not stand the wear of a few years as well as the earlier settlement had stood the wear of twenty was due to a change in conditions, and to understand that change it is necessary to take up again the history of the Slavery Question where the founders of the Republic left it.

It can hardly be said that these great men were wrong in tolerating Slavery. Without such toleration at the time the Union could not have been achieved and the American Republic could not have come into being. But it can certainly be said that they were wrong in the calculation by means of which they largely justified such toleration not so much to their critics as to their own consciences. They certainly expected, when they permitted Slavery for a season, that Slavery would gradually weaken and disappear. But as a fact it strengthened itself, drove its roots deeper, gained a measure of moral prestige, and became every year harder to destroy.

Whence came their miscalculation? In part no doubt it was connected with that curious and recurrent illusion which postulates in human affairs--a thing called "Progress." This illusion, though both logically and practically the enemy of reform--for if things of themselves tend to grow better, why sweat and agonize to improve them?--is none the less characteristic, generally speaking, of reforming epochs, and it was not without its hold over the minds of the American Fathers. But there were also certain definite causes, some of which they could hardly have foreseen, some of which they might, which account for the fact that Slavery occupied a distinctly stronger position halfway through the nineteenth century than it had seemed to do at the end of the eighteenth.

The main cause was an observable fact of psychology, of which a thousand examples could be quoted, and which of itself disposes of the whole "Progressive" thesis--the ease with which the human conscience gets used to an evil. Time, so far from being a remedy--as the "Progressives" do vainly talk--is always, while no remedy is attempted, a factor in favour of the disease. We have seen this exemplified in the course of the present war. The mere delay in the punishment of certain gross outrages against the moral traditions of Europe has made those

outrages seem just a little less horrible than they seemed at first, so that men can even bear to contemplate a peace by which their authors should escape punishment--a thing which would have been impossible while the anger of decent men retained its virginity. So it was with Slavery. Accepted at first as an unquestionable blot on American Democracy, but one which could not at the moment be removed, it came gradually to seem something normal. A single illustration will show the extent of this decline in moral sensitiveness. In the first days of the Republic Jefferson, a Southerner and a slave-owner, could declare, even while compromising with Slavery, that he trembled for his country when he remembered that God was just, could use of the peril of a slave insurrection this fine phrase: "The Almighty has no attribute that could be our ally in such a contest." Some sixty years later, Stephen Douglas, as sincere a democrat as Jefferson, and withal a Northerner with no personal interest in Slavery, could ask contemptuously whether if Americans were fit to rule themselves they were not fit to rule "a few niggers."

The next factor to be noticed was that to which Jefferson referred in the passage quoted above--the constant dread of a Negro rising. Such a rising actually took place in Virginia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It was a small affair, but the ghastly massacre of whites which accompanied it was suggestive of the horrors that might be in store for the South in the event of a more general movement among the slaves. The debates which this crisis produced in the Virginian legislature are of remarkable interest. They show how strong the feeling against Slavery as an institution still was in the greatest of Slave States. Speaker after speaker described it as a curse, as a permanent peril, as a "upas tree" which must be uprooted before the State could know peace and security. Nevertheless they did not uproot it. And from the moment of their refusal to uproot it or even to make a beginning of uprooting it they found themselves committed to the opposite policy which could only lead to its perpetuation. From the panic of that moment date the generality of the Slave Codes which so many of the Southern States adopted--codes deliberately framed to prevent any improvement in the condition of the slave population and to make impossible even their peaceful and voluntary emancipation.

There was yet another factor, the economic one, which to most modern writers, starting from the basis of historical materialism, has necessarily seemed the chief of all. It was really, I think, subsidiary, but it was present, and it certainly helped to intensify the evil. It consisted in the increased profitableness of Slavery, due, on the one hand, to the invention in America of Whitney's machine for extracting cotton, and, on the other, to the industrial revolution in England, and the consequent creation in Lancashire of a huge and expanding market for the products of American slave labour. This had a double effect. It not only

strengthened Slavery, but also worsened its character. In place of the generally mild and paternal rule of the old gentlemen-planters came in many parts of the South a brutally commercial régime, which exploited and used up the Negro for mere profit. It was said that in this further degradation of Slavery the agents were often men from the commercial North; nor can this be pronounced a mere sectional slander in view of the testimony of two such remarkable witnesses as Abraham Lincoln and Mrs. Beecher Stowe.

All these things tended to establish the institution of Slavery in the Southern States. Another factor which, whatever its other effects, certainly consolidated Southern opinion in its defence, was to be found in the activities of the Northern Abolitionists.

In the early days of the Republic Abolition Societies had existed mainly, if not exclusively, in the South. This was only natural, for, Slavery having disappeared from the Northern States, there was no obvious motive for agitating or discussing its merits, while south of the Mason-Dixon line the question was still a practical one. The Southern Abolitionists do not appear to have been particularly unpopular with their fellow-citizens. They are perhaps regarded as something of cranks, but as well-meaning cranks whose object was almost everywhere admitted to be theoretically desirable. At any rate, there is not the suspicion of any attempt to suppress them; indeed, the very year before the first number of the *Liberator* was published in Boston, a great Conference of Anti-Slavery Societies, comprising delegates from every part of the South, met at Baltimore, the capital city of the Slave State of Maryland.

Northern Abolitionism was, however, quite a different thing. It owed its inception to William Lloyd Garrison, one of those enthusiasts who profoundly affect history solely by the tenacity with which they hold to and continually enforce a burning personal conviction. But for that tenacity and the unquestionable influence which his conviction exerted upon men, he would be a rather ridiculous figure, for he was almost every sort of crank--certainly a non-resister, and, I think, a vegetarian and teetotaller as well. But his burning conviction was the immorality of Slavery; and by this he meant something quite other than was meant by Jefferson or later by Lincoln. When these great men spoke of Slavery as a wrong, they regarded it as a social and political wrong, an evil and unjust system which the community as a community ought as soon as possible to abolish and replace by a better. But by Garrison slave-holding was accounted a personal sin like murder or adultery. The owner of slaves, unless he at once emancipated them at whatever cost to his own fortunes, was by that fact a wicked man, and if he professed a desire for ultimate extinction of the institution, that only made him a hypocrite as well. This, of course, was absurd; fully as absurd as the suggestion sometimes made in

regard to wealthy Socialists, that if they were consistent they would give up all their property to the community. A man living under an economic system reposing on Slavery can no more help availing himself of its fruits than in a capitalist society he can help availing himself of capitalist organization.

Obviously, unless he is a multi-millionaire, he cannot buy up all the slaves in the State and set them free, while, if he buys some and treats them with justice and humanity, he is clearly making things better for them than if he left them in the hands of masters possibly less scrupulous. But, absurd as the thesis was, Garrison pushed it to its wildest logical conclusions. No Christian Church ought, he maintained, to admit a slave-owner to communion. No honest man ought to count a slave-owner among his friends. No political connection with slave-owners was tolerable. The Union, since it involved such a connection, was "a Covenant with Death and an Agreement with Hell." Garrison publicly burnt the Constitution of the United States in the streets of Boston.

Abolitionist propaganda of this kind was naturally possible only in the North. Apart from all questions of self-interest, no Southerner, no reasonable person who knew anything about the South, though the knowledge might be as superficial and the indignation against Slavery as intense as was Mrs. Beecher Stowe's, could possibly believe the proposition that all Southern slave-owners were cruel and unjust men. But that was not all. Garrison's movement killed Southern Abolitionism. It may, perhaps, be owned that the Southern movement was not bearing much visible fruit. There was just a grain of truth, it may be, in Garrison's bitter and exaggerated taunt that the Southerners were ready enough to be Abolitionists if they were allowed "to assign the guilt of Slavery to a past generation, and the duty of emancipation to a future generation." Nevertheless, that movement was on the right lines. It was on Southern ground that the battle for the peaceful extinction of Slavery ought to have been fought. The intervention of the North would probably in any case have been resented; accompanied by a solemn accusation of specific personal immorality it was maddeningly provocative, for it could not but recall to the South the history of the issue as it stood between the sections. For the North had been the original slave-traders. The African Slave Trade had been their particular industry. Boston itself, when the new ethical denunciation came, had risen to prosperity on the profits of that abominable traffic. Further, even in the act of clearing its own borders of Slavery, the North had dumped its negroes on the South. "What," asked the Southerners, "could exceed the effrontery of men who reproach us with grave personal sin in owning property which they themselves have sold us and the price of which is at this moment in their pockets?"

On a South thus angered and smarting under what is felt to be undeserved reproach, yet withal somewhat uneasy in its conscience, for its public opinion in

the main still thought Slavery wrong, fell the powerful voice of a great Southerner proclaiming it "a positive good." Calhoun's defence of the institution on its merits probably did much to encourage the South to adopt a more defiant tone in place of the old apologies for delay in dealing with a difficult problem--apologies which sounded over-tame and almost humiliating in face of the bold invectives now hurled at the slave-owners by Northern writers and speakers. I cannot, indeed, find that Calhoun's specific arguments, forcible as they were--and they are certainly the most cogent that can be used in defence of such a thesis--were particularly popular, or, in fact, were ever used by any but himself. Perhaps there was a well-founded feeling that they proved too much. For Calhoun's case was as strong for white servitude as for black: it was a defence, not especially of Negro Slavery, but of what Mr. Belloc has called "the Servile State." More general, in the later Southern defences, was the appeal to religious sanctions, which in a nation Protestant and mainly Puritan in its traditions naturally became an appeal to Bible texts. St. Paul was claimed as a supporter of the fugitive slave law on the strength of his dealings of Onesimus. But the favourite text was that which condemns Ham (assumed to be the ancestor of the Negro race) to be "a servant of servants." The Abolitionist text-slingers were not a whit more intelligent; indeed, I think it must be admitted that on the whole the pro-Slavery men had the best of this absurd form of controversy. Apart from isolated texts they had on their side the really unquestionable fact that both Old and New Testaments describe a civilization based on Slavery, and that in neither is there anything like a clear pronouncement that such a basis is immoral or displeasing to God. It is true that in the Gospels are to be found general principles or, at any rate, indications of general principles, which afterwards, in the hands of the Church, proved largely subversive of the servile organization of society; but that is a matter of historical, not of Biblical testimony, and would, if followed out, have led both Northern and Southern controversialists further than either of them wanted to go.

It would, however, be hasty, I think, to affirm that even to the very end of these processes a majority of Southerners thought with Calhoun that Slavery was "a positive good." The furthest, perhaps, that most of them went was the proposition that it represented the only relationship in which white and black races could safely live together in the same community--a proposition which was countenanced by Jefferson and, to a considerable extent at least, by Lincoln. To the last the full Jeffersonian view of the inherent moral and social evil of Slavery was held by many Southerners who were none the less wholeheartedly on the side of their own section in the sectional dispute. The chief soldier of the South in the war in which that dispute culminated both held that view and acted consistently upon it.

On the North the effect of the new propaganda was different, but there also it

tended to increase the antagonism of the sections. The actual Abolitionists of the school of Garrison were neither numerous nor popular. Even in Boston, where they were strongest, they were often mobbed and their meetings broken up. In Illinois, a Northern State, one of them, Lovejoy, was murdered by the crowd. Such exhibitions of popular anger were not, of course, due to any love of Slavery. The Abolitionists were disliked in the North, not as enemies of Slavery but as enemies of the Union and the Constitution, which they avowedly were. But while the extreme doctrine of Garrison and his friends met with little acceptance, the renewed agitation of the question did bring into prominence the unquestionable fact that the great mass of sober Northern opinion thought Slavery a wrong, and in any controversy between master and slave was inclined to sympathize with the slave. This feeling was probably somewhat strengthened by the publication in 1852 and the subsequent huge international sale of Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The practical effect of this book on history is generally exaggerated, partially in consequence of the false view which would make of the Civil War a crusade against Slavery. But a certain effect it undoubtedly had. To such natural sympathy in the main, and not, as the South believed, to sectional jealousy and deliberate bad faith, must be attributed those "Personal Liberty Laws" by which in many Northern States the provision of the Constitution guaranteeing the return of fugitive slaves was virtually nullified. For some of the provisions of those laws an arguable constitutional case might be made, particularly for the provision which assured a jury trial to the escaped slave. The Negro, it was urged, was either a citizen or a piece of property. If he were a citizen, the Constitution expressly safeguarded him against imprisonment without such a trial. If, on the other hand, he were property, then he was property of the value of more than

50, and in cases where property of that value was concerned, a jury was also legally required. If two masters laid claim to the same Negro the dispute between them would have to be settled by a jury. Why should it not be so where a master claimed to own a Negro and the Negro claimed to own himself? Nevertheless, the effect, and to a great extent the intention, of these laws was to defeat the claim of bonâ fide owners to fugitive slaves, and as such they violated at least the spirit of the constitutional compact. They therefore afforded a justification for Clay's proposal to transfer the power of recovering fugitive slaves to the Federal authorities. But they also afforded an even stronger justification for Lincoln's doubt as to whether the American Commonwealth could exist permanently half slave and half free.

Finally, among the causes which made a sectional struggle the more inevitable must be counted one to which allusion has already been made in connection with the Presidential Election of 1848--the increasingly patent unreality of the existing party system. I have already said that a party system can endure only if it

becomes unreal, and it may be well here to make clear how this is so.

Fundamental debates in a Commonwealth must be settled, or the Commonwealth dies. How, for instance, could England have endured if, throughout the eighteenth century, the Stuarts had alternately been restored and deposed every seven years? Or, again, suppose a dispute so fundamental as that between Collectivism and the philosophy of private property. How could a nation continue to exist if a Collectivist Government spent five years in attempting the concentration of all the means of production in the hands of the State and an Anti-Collectivist Government spent the next five years in dispersing them again, and so on for a generation? American history, being the history of a democracy, illustrates this truth with peculiar force. The controversy between Jefferson and Hamilton was about realities. The Jeffersonians won, and the Federalist Party disappeared. The controversy between Jackson and the Whigs was originally also real. Jackson won, and the Whigs would have shared the fate of the Federalists if they stood by their original principles and refused to accept the consequences of the Jacksonian Revolution. As a fact, however, they did accept these consequences and so the party system endured, but at the expense of its reality. There was no longer any fundamental difference of principle dividing Whigs from Democrats: they were divided arbitrarily on passing questions of policy, picked up at random and changing from year to year. Meanwhile a new reality was dividing the nation from top to bottom, but was dividing it in a dangerously sectional fashion, and for that reason patriotism as well as the requirements of professional politics induced men to veil it as much as might be. Yet its presence made the professional play-acting more and more unmeaning and intolerable.

It was this state of things which made possible the curious interlude of the "Know-Nothing" movement, which cannot be ignored, though it is a kind of digression from the main line of historical development. The United States had originally been formed by the union of certain seceding British colonies, but already, as a sort of neutral ground in the New World, their territory had become increasingly the meeting-place of streams of emigration from various European countries. As was natural, a certain amount of mutual jealousy and antagonism was making itself apparent as between the old colonial population and the newer elements. The years following 1847 showed an intensification of the problem due to a particular cause. That year saw the Black Famine in Ireland and its aggravation by the insane pedantry and folly of the British Government. Innumerable Irish families, driven from the land of their birth, found a refuge within the borders of the Republic. They brought with them their native genius for politics, which for the first time found free outlet in a democracy. They were accustomed to act together and they were soon a formidable force. This force was regarded by many as a menace, and the sense of menace was greatly increased

by the fact that these immigrants professed a religious faith which the Puritan tradition of the States in which they generally settled held in peculiar abhorrence.

The "Know-Nothings" were a secret society and owed that name to the fact that members, when questioned, professed to know nothing of the ultimate objects of the organization to which they belonged. They proclaimed a general hostility to indiscriminate immigration, for which a fair enough case might be made, but they concentrated their hostility specially on the Irish Catholic element. I have never happened upon any explanation of the secrecy with which they deliberately surrounded their aims. It seems to me, however, that a possible explanation lies on the surface. If all they had wanted had been to restrict or regulate immigration, it was an object which could be avowed as openly as the advocacy of a tariff or of the restriction of Slavery in a territory. But if, as their practical operations and the general impression concerning their intentions seem to indicate, the real object of those who directed the movement was the exclusion from public trust of persons professing the Catholic religion, then, of course, it was an object which could not be avowed without bringing them into open conflict with the Constitution, which expressly forbade such differentiation on religious grounds.

Between the jealousy of new immigrants felt by the descendants of the original colonists and the religious antagonism of Puritan New England to the Catholic population growing up within its borders; intensified by the absence of any genuine issue of debate between the official candidates, the Know-Nothings secured at the Congressional Election of 1854 a quite startling measure of success. But such success had no promise of permanence. The movement lived long enough to deal a death-blow to the Whig Party, already practically annihilated by the Presidential Election of 1852, wherein the Democrats, benefiting by the division and confusion of their enemies, easily returned their candidate, Franklin Pierce.

It is now necessary to return to the Compromise of 1850, hailed at the time as a final settlement of the sectional quarrel and accepted as such in the platforms of both the regular political parties. That Compromise was made by one generation. It was to be administered by another. Henry Clay, as has already been noted, lived long enough to enjoy his triumph, not long enough to outlive it. Before a year was out the grave had closed over Webster. Calhoun had already passed away, bequeathing to posterity his last hopeless protest against the triumph of all that he most feared. Congress was full of new faces. In the Senate among the rising men was Seward of New York, a Northern Whig, whose speech in opposition to the Fugitive Slave clause in Clay's Compromise had given him the leadership of the growing Anti-Slavery opinion of the North. He was soon to be



joined by Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, null in judgment, a pedant without clearness of thought or vision, but gifted with a copious command of all the rhetoric of sectional hate. The place of Calhoun in the leadership of the South had been more and more assumed by a soldier who had been forced to change his profession by reason of a crippling wound received at Monterey. Thenceforward he had achieved an increasing repute in politics, an excellent orator, with the sensitive face rather of a poet than of a man of affairs, vivid, sincere and careful of honour, though often uncertain in temper and judgment: Jefferson Davis of Mississippi. But for the moment none of these so dominated politics as did the Westerner whom Illinois had recently sent to the Senate-- Stephen Douglas, surnamed "the Little Giant."

The physical impression which men seem to have received most forcibly concerning Douglas, and which was perhaps responsible for his nickname, was the contrast between his diminutive stature and the enormous power of his voice--trained no doubt in addressing the monster meetings of the West, where tens of thousands crowded everywhere to hear him speak. Along with this went the sense of an overwhelming vitality about the man; he seemed tingling with excess of life. His strong, square, handsome face bore a striking resemblance to that of Napoleon Bonaparte, and there was really something Napoleonic in his boldness, his instinctive sense of leadership, and his power of dominating weaker men. Withal he was a Westerner--perhaps the most typical and complete Westerner in American history, for half of Clay was of Washington, and Jackson and Lincoln were too great to be purely sectional. He had a Westerner's democratic feeling and a Westerner's enthusiasm for the national idea. But, especially, he had a peculiarly Western vision which is the key to a strangely misunderstood but at bottom very consistent political career.

This man, more than any other, fills American history during the decade that intervened between the death of Clay and the election of Lincoln. That decade is also full of the ever-increasing prominence of the Slavery Question. It is natural, therefore, to read Douglas's career in terms of that question, and historians, doing so, have been bewildered by its apparent inconsistency. Unable to trace any connecting principle in his changes of front, they have put them down to interested motives, and then equally unable to show that he himself had anything to gain from them, have been forced to attribute them to mere caprice. The fact is that Douglas cannot be understood along those lines at all. To understand him one must remember that he was indifferent on the Slavery Question, "did not care," as he said, "whether Slavery was voted up or voted down," but cared immensely for something else. That something else was the Westward expansion of the American nation till it should bridge the gulf between the two oceans. The thought of all those millions of acres of virgin land, the property of the American

Commonwealth, crying out for the sower and the reaper, rode his imagination as the wrongs of the Negro slave rode the imagination of Garrison. There is a reality about the comparison which few will recognize, for this demagogue, whom men devoted to the Slavery issue thought cynical, had about him also something of the fanatic. He could forget all else in his one enthusiasm. It is the key to his career from the day when he entered Congress clamouring for Oregon or war with England to the day when he died appealing for soldiers to save the Union in the name of its common inheritance. And it is surely not surprising that, for the fulfilment of his vision, he was willing to conciliate the slave-owners, when one remembers that in earlier days he had been willing to conciliate the Mormons.

Douglas stands out in history, as we now see it, as the man who by the Kansas and Nebraska Bill upset the tottering Compromise of 1850. Why did he so upset it? Not certainly because he wished to reopen the Slavery Question; nothing is less likely, for it was a question in which he avowedly felt no interest and the raising of which was bound to unsettle his plans. Not from personal ambition; for those who accuse him of having acted as he did for private advantage have to admit that in fact he lost by it. Why then did he so act? I think we shall get to the root of the matter if we assume that his motive in introducing his celebrated Bill was just the avowed motive of that Bill and no other. It was to set up territorial governments in Kansas and Nebraska. Douglas's mind was full of schemes for facilitating the march of American civilization westward, for piercing the prairies with roads and railways, for opening up communications with Oregon and the Pacific Slope. Kansas and Nebraska were then the outposts of such expansion. Naturally he was eager to develop them, to encourage squatters to settle within their borders, and for that purpose to give them an assured position and a form of stable government. If he could have effected this without touching the Slavery Question I think that he would gladly have done so. And, as a matter of fact, the Nebraska Bill as originally drafted by him was innocent of the clause which afterwards caused so much controversy. That clause was forced on him by circumstances.

The greater part of the territory which Douglas proposed to develop lay within the limits of the Louisiana Purchase and north of latitude 36° 30'. It was therefore free soil by virtue of the Missouri Compromise. But the Southerners now disputed the validity of that Congressional enactment, and affirmed their right under the Constitution as they interpreted it to take and hold their "property" in any territories belonging to the United States. Douglas had some reason to fear Southern opposition to his plans on other grounds, for the South would naturally have preferred that the main road to the Pacific Slope should run from Tennessee through Arizona and New Mexico to California. If Kansas and Nebraska were declared closed against slave property their opposition would be given a rallying

cry and would certainly harden. Douglas therefore proposed a solution which would at any rate get rid of the Slavery debate so far as Congress was concerned, and which had also a democratic ring about it acceptable to his Western instincts and, as he hoped, to his Western following. The new doctrine, called by him that of "Popular Sovereignty" and by his critics that of "Squatter Sovereignty," amounted to this: that the existing settlers in the territories concerned should, in the act of forming their territorial governments, decide whether they would admit or exclude Slavery.

It was a plausible doctrine; but one can only vindicate Douglas's motives, as I have endeavoured to do, at the expense of his judgment, for his policy had all the consequences which he most desired to avoid. It produced two effects which between them brought the sectional quarrel to the point of heat at which Civil War became possible and perhaps inevitable. It threw the new territories down as stakes to be scrambled for by the rival sections, and it created by reaction a new party, necessarily sectional, having for its object the maintenance and reinforcement of the Missouri Compromise. It will be well to take the two points separately.

Up to the passing of Kansas and Nebraska Law, these territories had been populated exactly as such frontier communities had theretofore been populated, by immigrants from all the States and from Europe who mingled freely, felt no ill-will to each other, and were early consolidated by the fact of proximity into a homogeneous community. But from the moment of its passage the whole situation was altered. It became a political object to both sections to get a majority in Kansas. Societies were formed in Boston and other Northern cities to finance emigrants who proposed to settle there. The South was equally active, and, to set off against the disadvantage of a less fluid population, had the advantage of the immediate proximity of the Slave State of Missouri. Such a contest, even if peaceably conducted, was not calculated to promote either the reconciliation of the sections or the solidarity and stability of the new community. But in a frontier community without a settled government, and with a population necessarily armed for self-defence, it was not likely to be peaceably conducted. Nor was it. For years Kansas was the scene of what can only be described as spasmodic civil war. The Free Soil settlement of Lawrence was, after some bloodshed, seized and burnt by "border ruffians," as they were called, from Missouri. The North cried out loudly against "Southern outrages," but it is fair to say that the outrages were not all on one side. In fact, the most amazing crime in the record of Kansas was committed by a Northerner, the notorious John Brown. This man presents rather a pathological than a historical problem. He had considerable military talents, and a curious power of persuading men. But he was certainly mad. A New England Puritan by extraction, he was inflamed on the

subject of Slavery by a fanaticism somewhat similar to that of Garrison. But while Garrison blended his Abolitionism with the Quaker dogma of Non-Resistance, Brown blended his with the ethics of a seventeenth-century Covenanter who thought himself divinely commanded to hew the Amalakites in pieces before the Lord. In obedience to his peculiar code of morals he not only murdered Southern immigrants without provocation, but savagely mutilated their bodies. If his act did not prove him insane his apology would. In defence of his conduct he explained that "disguised as a surveyor" he had interviewed his victims and discovered that every one of them had "committed murder in his heart."

The other effect of the Kansas-Nebraska policy was the rise of a new party formed for the single purpose of opposing it. Anti-Slavery parties had already come into being from time to time in the North, and had at different times exerted a certain influence on elections, but they made little headway because they were composed mainly of extremists, and their aim appeared to moderate men inconsistent with the Constitution. The attack on the time-honoured Missouri Compromise rallied such men to the opposition, for it appeared to them clearly that theirs was now the legal, constitutional, and even conservative side, and that the Slave Power was now making itself responsible for a revolutionary change to its own advantage.

Nor was the change on the whole unjust. The programme to which the South committed itself after the direction of its policy fell from the hands of Calhoun was one which the North could not fail to resent. It involved the tearing up of all the compromises so elaborately devised and so nicely balanced, and it aimed at making Slavery legal certainly in all the new territories and possibly even in the Free States. It was, indeed, argued that this did not involve any aggravating of the evil of Slavery, if it were an evil. The argument will be found very ingeniously stated in the book which Jefferson Davis subsequently wrote--professedly a history of the Southern Confederacy, really rather an *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Davis argues that since the African Slave Trade was prohibited, there could be no increase in the number of slaves save by the ordinary process of propagation. The opening of Kansas to Slavery would not therefore mean that there would be more slaves. It would merely mean that men already and in any case slaves would be living in Kansas instead of in Tennessee; and, it is further suggested, that the taking of a Negro slave from Tennessee, where Slavery was rooted and normal, to Kansas, where it was new and exceptional, would be a positive advantage to him as giving him a much better chance of emancipation. The argument reads plausibly enough, but it is, like so much of Davis's book, out of touch with realities. Plainly it would make all the difference in the world whether the practice of, say, the Catholic religion were permitted only in Lancashire or were lawful throughout England, and that even though there were no conversions, and the

same Catholics who had previously lived in Lancashire lived wherever they chose. The former provision would imply that the British Government disapproved of the Catholic religion, and would tolerate it only where it was obliged to do so. The latter would indicate an attitude of indifference towards it. Those who disapproved of Slavery naturally wished it to remain a sectional thing and objected to its being made national. But the primary feeling was that it was the South that had broken the truce. The Northerners had much justification in saying that their opponents, if not the aggressors in the Civil War, were at least the aggressors in the controversy of which the Civil War was the ultimate outcome.

Under the impulse of such feelings a party was formed which, adopting--without, it must be owned, any particular appropriateness--the old Jeffersonian name of "Republican," took the field at the Presidential Election of 1856. Its real leader was Seward of New York, but it was thought that electioneering exigencies would be better served by the selection of Captain Frémont of California, who, as a wandering discoverer and soldier of fortune, could be made a picturesque figure in the public eye. Later, when Frémont was entrusted with high military command he was discovered to be neither capable nor honest, but in 1856 he made as effective a figure as any candidate could have done, and the results were on the whole encouraging to the new party. Buchanan, the Democratic candidate, was elected, but the Republicans showed greater strength in the Northern States than had been anticipated. The Whig Party was at this election finally annihilated.

The Republicans might have done even better had the decision of the Supreme Court on an issue which made clear the full scope of the new Southern claim been known just before instead of just after the election. This decision was the judgment of Roger Taney, whom we have seen at an earlier date as Jackson's Attorney-General and Secretary to the Treasury, in the famous Dred Scott case. Dred Scott was a Negro slave owned by a doctor of Missouri. His master had taken him for a time into the free territory of Minnesota, afterwards bringing him back to his original State. Dred Scott was presumably not in a position to resent either operation, nor is it likely that he desired to do so. Later, however, he was induced to bring an action in the Federal Courts against his master on the ground that by being taken into free territory he had ipso facto ceased to be a slave. Whether he was put up to this by the Anti-Slavery party, or whether--for his voluntary manumission after the case was settled seems to suggest that possibility--the whole case was planned by the Southerners to get a decision of the territorial question in their favour, might be an interesting subject for inquiry. I can express no opinion upon it. The main fact is that Taney, supported by a bare majority of the judges, not only decided for the master, but laid down two

important principles. One was that no Negro could be an American citizen or sue in the American courts; the other and more important that the Constitution guaranteed the right of the slave-holder to his slaves in all United States territories, and that Congress had no power to annul this right. The Missouri Compromise was therefore declared invalid.

Much of the Northern outcry against Taney seems to me unjust. He was professedly a judge pronouncing on the law, and in giving his ruling he used language which seems to imply that his ethical judgment, if he had been called upon to give it, would have been quite different. But, though he was a great lawyer as well as a sincere patriot, and though his opinion is therefore entitled to respect, especially from a foreigner ignorant of American law, it is impossible to feel that his decision was not open to criticism on purely legal grounds. It rested upon the assertion that property in slaves was "explicitly recognized" by the Constitution. If this were so it would seem to follow that since under the Constitution a man's property could not be taken from him "without due process of law" he could not without such process lose his slaves. But was it so? It is difficult, for a layman at any rate, to find in the Constitution any such "explicit recognition." The slave is there called a "person" and defined as a "person bound to service or labour" while his master is spoken of as one "to whom such service or labour may be due." This language seems to suggest the relation of creditor and debtor rather than that of owner and owned. At any rate, the Republicans refused to accept the judgment except so far as it determined the individual case of Dred Scott, taking up in regard to Taney's decision the position which, in accordance with Taney's own counsel, Jackson had taken up in regard to the decision which affirmed the constitutionality of a bank.

Douglas impetuously accepted the decision and, forgetting the precedent of his own hero Jackson, denounced all who challenged it as wicked impugners of lawful authority. Yet, in fact, the decision was as fatal to his own policy as to that of the Republicans. It really made "Popular Sovereignty" a farce, for what was the good of leaving the question of Slavery to be settled by the territories when the Supreme Court declared that they could only lawfully settle it one way? This obvious point was not lost upon the acute intelligence of one man, a citizen of Douglas's own State and one of the "moderates" who had joined the Republican Party on the Nebraska issue.

Abraham Lincoln was by birth a Southerner and a native of Kentucky, a fact which he never forgot and of which he was exceedingly proud. After the wandering boyhood of a pioneer and a period of manual labour as a "rail-splitter" he had settled in Illinois, where he had picked up his own education and become a successful lawyer. He had sat in the House of Representatives as a Whig from

1846 to 1848, the period of the Mexican War, during which he had acted with the main body of his party, neither defending the whole of the policy which led to the war nor opposing it to the extent of refusing supplies for its prosecution. He had voted, as he said, for the Wilmot Proviso "as good as fifty times," and had made a moderate proposition in relation to Slavery in the district of Columbia, for which Garrison's *Liberator* had pilloried him as "the Slave-Hound of Illinois." He had not offered himself for re-election in 1848. Though an opponent of Slavery on principle, he had accepted the Compromise of 1850, including its Fugitive Slave Clauses, as a satisfactory all-round settlement, and was, by his own account, losing interest in politics when the action of Douglas and its consequences called into activity a genius which few, if any, had suspected.

A man like Lincoln cannot be adequately described in the short space available in such a book as this. His externals are well appreciated, his tall figure, his powerful ugliness, his awkward strength, his racy humour, his fits of temperamental melancholy; well appreciated also his firmness, wisdom and patriotism. But if we wish to grasp the peculiar quality which makes him almost unique among great men of action, we shall perhaps find the key in the fact that his favourite private recreation was working out for himself the propositions of Euclid. He had a mind not only peculiarly just but singularly logical, one might really say singularly mathematical. His reasoning is always so good as to make his speeches in contrast to the finest rhetorical oratory a constant delight to those who have something of the same type of mind. In this he had a certain affinity with Jefferson. But while in Jefferson's case the tendency has been to class him, in spite of his great practical achievements, as a mere theorizer, in Lincoln it has been rather to acclaim him as a strong, rough, practical man, and to ignore the lucidity of thought which was the most marked quality of his mind.

He was eminently practical; and he was not less but more practical for realizing the supreme practical importance of first principles. According to his first principles Slavery was wrong. It was wrong because it was inconsistent with the doctrines enunciated in the Declaration of Independence in which he firmly believed. Really good thinking like Lincoln's is necessarily outside time, and therefore he was not at all affected by the mere use and wont which had tended to reconcile so many to Slavery. Yet he was far from being a fanatical Abolitionist. Because Slavery was wrong it did not follow that it should be immediately uprooted. But it did follow that whatever treatment it received should be based on the assumption of its wrongness. An excellent illustration of his attitude of mind will be found in the exact point at which he drew the line. For the merely sentimental opponent of Slavery, the Fugitive Slave Law made a much more moving appeal to the imagination than the extension of Slavery in the territories. Yet Lincoln accepted the Fugitive Slave Law. He supported it because, as he put

it, it was "so nominated in the bond." It was part of the terms which the Fathers of the Republic, disapproving of Slavery, had yet made with Slavery. He also, disapproving of Slavery, could honour those terms. But it was otherwise in regard to the territorial controversy. Douglas openly treated Slavery not as an evil difficult to cure, but as a thing merely indifferent. Southern statesmen were beginning to echo Calhoun's definition of it as "a positive good." On the top of this came Taney's decision making the right to own slaves a fundamental part of the birthright of an American citizen. This was much more important than the most drastic Fugitive Slave Law, for it indicated a change in first principles.

This is the true meaning of his famous use of the text "a house divided against itself cannot stand," and his deduction that the Union could not "permanently exist half slave and half free." That it had so existed for eighty years he admitted, but it had so existed, he considered, because the Government had acted on the first principle that Slavery was an evil to be tolerated but curbed, and the public mind had "rested in the belief that it was in process of ultimate extinction." It was now, as it seemed, proposed to abandon that principle and assume it to be good or at least indifferent. If that principle were accepted there was nothing to prevent the institution being introduced not only into the free territories but into the Free States. And indeed the reasoning of Taney's judgment, though not the judgment itself, really seemed to point to such a conclusion.

Lincoln soon became the leader of the Illinois Republicans, and made ready to match himself against Douglas when the "Little Giant" should next seek re-election. Meanwhile a new development of the Kansas affair had split the Democratic Party and ranged Senator Douglas and President Buchanan on opposite sides in an open quarrel. The majority of the population now settled in Kansas was of Northern origin, for the conditions of life in the North were much more favourable to emigration into new lands than those of the slave-owning States. Had a free ballot been taken of the genuine settlers there would certainly have been a large majority against Slavery. But in the scarcely disguised civil war into which the competition for Kansas had developed, the Slave-State party had the support of bands of "border ruffians" from the neighbouring State, who could appear as citizens of Kansas one day and return to their homes in Missouri the next. With such aid that party succeeded in silencing the voices of the Free State men while they held a bogus Convention at Lecompton, consisting largely of men who were not really inhabitants of Kansas at all, adopted a Slave Constitution, and under it applied for admission to the Union. Buchanan, who, though a Northerner, was strongly biassed in favour of the Slavery party, readily accepted this as a *bonâ fide* application, and recommended Congress to accede to it. Douglas was much better informed as to how things were actually going in Kansas, and he felt that if the Lecompton Constitution were acknowledged his



favourite doctrine of Popular Sovereignty would be justly covered with odium and contempt. He therefore set himself against the President, and his personal followers combined with the Republicans to defeat the Lecompton proposition.

The struggle in Illinois thus became for Douglas a struggle for political life or death. At war with the President and with a large section of his party, if he could not keep a grip on his own State his political career was over. Nor did he underrate his Republican opponent; indeed, he seems to have had a keener perception of the great qualities which were hidden under Lincoln's rough and awkward exterior than anyone else at that time exhibited. When he heard of his candidature he looked grave. "He is the strongest man of his party," he said, "and thoroughly honest. It will take us all our time to beat him."

It did. Douglas was victorious, but only narrowly and after a hard-fought contest. The most striking feature of that contest was the series of Lincoln-Douglas debates in which, by an interesting innovation in electioneering, the two candidates for the Senatorship contended face to face in the principal political centres of the State. In reading these debates one is impressed not only with the ability of both combatants, but with their remarkable candour, good temper and even magnanimity. It is very seldom, if ever, that either displays malice or fails in dignity and courtesy to his opponent. When one remembers the white heat of political and sectional rivalry at that time--when one recalls some of Sumner's speeches in the Senate, not to mention the public beating which they brought on him--it must be confessed that the fairness with which the two great Illinois champions fought each other was highly to the honour of both.

Where the controversy turned on practical or legal matters the combatants were not ill-matched, and both scored many telling points. When the general philosophy of government came into the question Lincoln's great superiority in seriousness and clarity of thought was at once apparent. A good example of this will be found in their dispute as to the true meaning of the Declaration of Independence. Douglas denied that the expression "all men" could be meant to include Negroes. It only referred to "British subjects in this continent being equal to British subjects born and residing in Great Britain." Lincoln instantly knocked out his adversary by reading the amended version of the Declaration: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all British subjects who were on this Continent eighty-one years ago were created equal to all British subjects born and then residing in Great Britain." This was more than a clever debating point. It was a really crushing exposure of intellectual error. The mere use of the words "truths" and "self-evident" and their patently ridiculous effect in the Douglas version proves conclusively which interpreter was nearest to the mind of Thomas Jefferson. And the sense of his superiority is increased when, seizing his

opportunity, he proceeds to offer a commentary on the Declaration in its bearing on the Negro Question so incomparably lucid and rational that Jefferson himself might have penned it.

In the following year an incident occurred which is of some historical importance, not because, as is sometimes vaguely suggested, it did anything whatever towards the emancipation of the slaves, but because it certainly increased, not unnaturally, the anger and alarm of the South. Old John Brown had suspended for a time his programme of murder and mutilation in Kansas and returned to New England, where he approached a number of wealthy men of known Abolitionist sympathies whom he persuaded to provide him with money for the purpose of raising a slave insurrection. That he should have been able to induce men of sanity and repute to support him in so frantic and criminal an enterprise says much for the personal magnetism which by all accounts was characteristic of this extraordinary man. Having obtained his supplies, he collected a band of nineteen men, including his own sons, with which he proposed to make an attack on the Government arsenal at Harper's Ferry in Virginia, which, when captured, he intended to convert into a place of refuge and armament for fugitive slaves and a nucleus for the general Negro rising which he expected his presence to produce. The plan was as mad as its author, yet it is characteristic of a peculiar quality of his madness that he conducted the actual operations not only with amazing audacity but with remarkable skill, and the first part of his programme was successfully carried out. The arsenal was surprised, and its sleeping and insufficient garrison overpowered. Here, however, his success ended. No fugitives joined him, and there was not the faintest sign of a slave rising. In fact, as Lincoln afterwards said, the Negroes, ignorant as they were, seem to have had the sense to see that the thing would come to nothing. As soon as Virginia woke up to what had happened troops were sent to recapture the arsenal. Brown and his men fought bravely, but the issue could not be in doubt. Several of Brown's followers and all his sons were killed. He himself was wounded, captured, brought to trial and very properly hanged--unless we take the view that he should rather have been confined in an asylum. He died with the heroism of a fanatic. Emerson and Longfellow talked some amazing nonsense about him which is frequently quoted. Lincoln talked some excellent sense which is hardly ever quoted. And the Republican party was careful to insert in its platform a vigorous denunciation of his Harper's Ferry exploit.

Both sides now began to prepare for the Presidential Election of 1860. The selection of a Republican candidate was debated at a large and stormy Convention held in Chicago. Seward was the most prominent Republican politician, but he had enemies, and for many reasons it was thought that his adoption would mean the loss of available votes. Chase was the favourite of the

Radical wing of the party, but it was feared that the selection of a man who was thought to lean to Abolitionism would alienate the moderates. To secure the West was an important element in the electoral problem, and this, together with the zealous backing of his own State, within whose borders the Convention met, and the fact that he was recognized as a "moderate," probably determined the choice of Lincoln. It does not appear that any of those who chose him knew that they were choosing a great man. Some acute observers had doubtless noted the ability he displayed in his debates with Douglas, but in the main he seems to have been recommended to the Chicago Convention, as afterwards to the country, mainly on the strength of his humble origin, his skill as a rail-splitter, and his alleged ability to bend a poker between his fingers.

While the Republicans were thus choosing their champion, much fiercer quarrels were rending the opposite party, whose Convention met at Charleston. The great majority of the Northern delegates were for choosing Douglas as candidate, and fighting on a programme of "popular sovereignty." But the Southerners would not hear of either candidate or programme. His attitude on the Lecompton business was no longer the only count against Douglas. The excellent controversial strategy of Lincoln had forced from him during the Illinois debates an interpretation of "popular sovereignty" equally offensive to the South. Lincoln had asked him how a territory whose inhabitants desired to exclude Slavery could, if the Dred Scott decision were to be accepted, lawfully exclude it. Douglas had answered that it could for practical purposes exclude it by withholding legislation in its support and adopting "unfriendly legislation" towards it. Lincoln at once pointed out that Douglas was virtually advising a territorial government to nullify a judgment of the Supreme Court. The cry was caught up in the South and was fatal to Douglas's hopes of support from that section.

The Charleston Convention, split into two hostile sections, broke up without a decision. The Douglas men, who were the majority, met at Baltimore, acclaimed him as Democratic candidate and adopted his programme. The dissentients held another Convention at Charleston and adopted Breckinridge with a programme based upon the widest interpretation of the Dred Scott judgment. To add to the multiplicity of voices the rump of the old Whig Party, calling themselves the party of "the Union, the Constitution and the Laws," nominated Everett and Bell.

The split in the Democratic Party helped the Republicans in another than the obvious fashion of giving them the chance of slipping in over the heads of divided opponents. It helped their moral position in the North. It deprived the Democrats of their most effective appeal to Union-loving men--the assertion that their party was national while the Republicans were sectional. For Douglas was now practically as sectional as Lincoln. As little as Lincoln could he command any

considerable support south of the Potomac. Moreover, the repudiation of Douglas seemed to many Northerners to prove that the South was arrogant and unreasonable beyond possibility of parley or compromise. The wildest of her protagonists could not pretend that Douglas was a "Black Abolitionist," or that he meditated any assault upon the domestic institutions of the Southern States. If the Southerners could not work with him, with what Northerner, not utterly and unconditionally subservient to them, could they work? It seemed to many that the choice lay between a vigorous protest now and the acceptance of the numerically superior North of a permanently inferior position in the Confederation.

In his last electoral campaign the "Little Giant" put up a plucky fight against his enemies North and South. But he had met his Waterloo. In the whole Union he carried but one State and half of another. The South was almost solid for Breckinridge. The North and West, from New England to California, was as solid for Lincoln. A few border States gave their votes for Everett. But, owing to the now overwhelming numerical superiority of the Free States, the Republicans had in the Electoral College a decided majority over all other parties.

Thus was Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States. But many who voted for him had hardly recorded their votes before they became a little afraid of the thing they had done. Through the whole continent ran the ominous whisper: "What will the South do?"

And men held their breath, waiting for what was to follow.