

"Think only what is noble; do only what is right."

Now I intend to make that single line of good old High Dutch poetry the rule of my conduct here to-night, and so on all through my share in this struggle for emancipation. "Think only what is noble; do only what is right." Do not tie yourselves down to the mere dollar and cent consideration. Do not stand here, as was said last night, to "make a bargain," while our good old ship of State is rolling amid the terrible breakers of civil war.

In discussing this subject, in order that we may determine the very right or wrong of the matter, I intend to ask this question first—what is slavery? Now, in order that I might not be discursive, I have written down in two or three lines what I consider it to be. It is a holding in bondage of a fellow creature, without his consent and against his will, and the appropriation of the products of his labor to our own exclusive benefit. That is slavery.

Then, having defined what it is, comes up the question—is slavery as a system right? For on the answer to this one single query ought to depend our action here. Is slavery right? If it is wrong, we cannot, we must not, we dare not, dally with it. I listened to a sentiment from the lips of my friend from Somerset (Mr. Jones) the other day, which has the strongest echo in my heart and in my judgment. That sentiment was this: "No people can violate the eternal principles of justice without calling down upon their heads the just condemnation and judgment of heaven." That is true. It is exactly the sentiment of good old George Mason, the true and illustrious predecessor of the false and traitorous Mason of to-day—when in Independence Hall, in 1787, he warned his countrymen against this very evil. Let me detain you for a moment, while I read his exact language. When in the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, this question of slavery was under debate, George Mason said:

"Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of whites, who really enrich and strengthen a country. They produce a pernicious effect on manners. Every master of a slave is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a country."

Sir, if that good old man had been possessed of the spirit of inspiration, what more absolute truth could he have uttered? "They make labor despicable," says he. Look around you. "They prevent immigration." Look at the statistics. "They bring the curse of heaven upon a nation." God in heaven! What evidence of this fact we have just at this hour. It is then, true, that no people can violate the eternal principles of

justice, and not call down upon their heads the vengeance of God.

Now, I want to say just here to the friends of slavery, and to my friends; many of them I have the pleasure of knowing; my intercourse with them is of the pleasantest kind. I beg them to remember that whatever I say is said of slavery, and not of them, and not because I love them less, but because I love my country more.

I now propose to consider as briefly as possible the arguments adduced here in favor of slavery. The first as urged is the argument of antiquity; it is so old! Why, sir, every crime in the criminal calendar, every offence forbidden by the decalogue, is it not hoary with age? Is not rebellion older than the earth? Was it not born in heaven? And every other species of crime, envy, hatred, malice, uncharitableness, lust, murder, fratricide, are they not all older than slavery? Then I say this argument of its antiquity is worthless, because there is no other crime that is not older.

Another argument urged is, that slavery is recognized in the Bible. Now, I put it to my friends, who know so much about the Bible, and who quote it so freely, I put it to them, if they are willing to accept other things recognized in the Bible, and to incorporate them into the organic law of this State, simply because they are set down in the Bible as a part of the Jewish theology? Let them come right fair and square up to the scratch, or give up the argument. My friend from Prince George's (Mr. Berry) in reading from the Bible this morning passages in support of slavery, necessarily had to read passages that seemed to indorse the most immoral of crimes of which humanity knows, that of polygamy; and worse than polygamy, the crime itself without even the seeming sanction of marriage. Then what becomes of the Bible argument?

And another thing. That very part of this very same Bible indorses the doctrine of imprisonment for debt. Sir, ten or twelve years ago, this Hall was eloquent with denunciations of that relic of barbarity, imprisonment for debt. And gentlemen have their names here upon the record who, upon their own showing, voted for what was right and just and proper, against biblical authority. And more: Does not this very theocratic system taught in that part of the Bible sanction and set up the doctrine that you have not only the right to imprison a man for debt, but you have the right to seize him and sell him into slavery; and not him alone, but his wife and his little ones. Now, if gentlemen love slavery because it is in the Bible, I want them to be consistent in their biblical profession. Let them come up here and propose to introduce a provision into the Constitution restoring imprisonment for debt; and set up for the first time in modern times