

EXCERPTS FROM THEODORE PARKER'S SERMON UPON THE BETRAYAL AND DEATH OF DANIEL WEBSTER



Of all my public trials, this is my most trying day. Give me your sympathies, my friends; remember the difficulty of my position, — its delicacy too.

I am to speak of one of the most conspicuous men that New England ever bore, — conspicuous, not by accident, but by the nature of his mind, — one of

her ablest intellects. I am to speak of an eminent man, of great power, in great office, one of the landmarks of politics, now laid low. . . . I am to speak while his departure is yet but of yesterday; while the sombre flags still float in our streets. . . .

I do not follow opinion because it is popular. I cannot praise a man because he had great gifts, great station, and great opportunities; I cannot harshly censure a man for trivial mistakes. . . .

A great man is the blossom of the world; the individual and prophetic flower, parent of seeds that will be men. This is the greatest work of God; far transcending earth, and moon, and sun, and all the material magnificence of the universe. It is “a little lower than the angels,” and, like the aloe-tree, it blooms but once an age. So we should value, love, and cherish it the more. America has not many great men living now, — scarce one: there have been few in her history. . . .

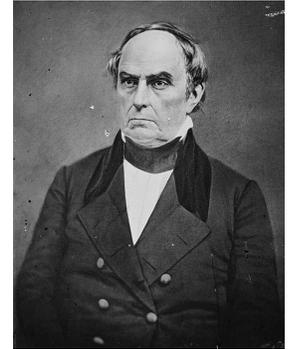
But here let us pause a moment, and see what greatness is . . .

Brute force is merely animal; cunning is the animalism of the intellect, — the mind's least intellectual element. As men go on in their development, finding qualities more valuable than the strength of the lion or the subtlety of the fox, they come to value higher intellectual faculties, — great understanding, great imagination, great reason. . . .

But there are qualities nobler than the mere intellect, the moral, the affectional, the religious faculties, — the power of justice, of love, of holiness, of trust in God, and of obedience to his law, — the eternal right. These are the highest qualities of man: whoso is most imminent therein is the greatest of

great men. . . .

Yet how we love to honor men eminent in such modes of greatness as we can understand! . . . We are always looking for a great man to solve the difficulty too hard for us, to break the rock which lies in our way, — to represent the possibility of human nature as an ideal, and then to realize that ideal in his life. . . .



Human nature loves to reverence great men, and often honors many a little one under the mistake that he is great. . . . The possession of office, of accidental renown, of imposing qualities, of brilliant eloquence, often dazzles the beholder; and he reverences a show. . . . Intellect and conscience are conversant with ideas, — with absolute truth and absolute right, as the norm of conduct. But with most men the affections are developed in advance of the intellect and the conscience; and the affections want a person. . . . As the affections are so large in us, how delightful is it for us to see a great man, honor him, love him, reverence him, trust him! . . .

Merchants watch the markets: they know what ship brings corn, what hemp, what coal; how much cotton there is at New York or New Orleans; how much gold in the banks. They learn these things, because they live by the market, and seek to get money by their trade. Politicians watch the turn of the people and the coming vote, because they live by the ballot-box, and wish to get honor and office by their skill. So a minister, who would guide men to wisdom, justice, love, and piety, to human welfare, — he must watch the great men, and know what quantity of truth, or justice, of love, and of faith there is in Calhoun, Webster, Clay; because he is to live by the word of God, and only asks, “Thy kingdom come!”

. . . In America it is above all things necessary to study the men of eminent mind, even the men of eminent station; for their power is greater here than elsewhere . . . Our nation is a great committee of the whole . . .

Hence I spoke of Dr. Channing, whose word

went like morning over the continents. Hence I spoke of John Quincy Adams, and did not fear to point out every error I thought I discovered in the great man's track, which ended so proudly in the right; and I did homage to all the excellence I found, though it was the most unpopular excellence. . . .

You see why this ought to be done. We are a young nation; a great man easily gives us the impression of his hand; we shall harden in the fire of centuries, and keep the mark. . . . Ere long, these three and twenty millions will become a hundred millions; then perhaps a thousand millions. . . .

A man of eminent abilities may do one of two things in influencing men. Either he may extend himself at right angles with the axis of the human march, lateralize himself, spreading widely, and have a great power in his own age, putting his opinion into men's heads, his will into their action, and yet never reach far onward into the future. . . .

Or a great man may extend himself forward, in the line of the human march, himself a prolongation of the axis of mankind: not reaching far sideways in his own time, he reaches forward immensely, his influence widening as it goes. He will do this by superiority in sentiments, ideas, and actions; by eminence of justice and of affection; by eminence of religion: he will differ in quality as well as quantity, and have much where the crowd has nothing at all. . . .

I come now to speak of his relation to slavery. Up to 1850, with occasional fluctuation, much of his conduct had been just and honorable. As a private citizen, in 1819, he opposed the Missouri Compromise. At the meeting of the citizens of Boston to prevent that iniquity, he said, "We are acting for unborn millions, who lie along before us in the track of time." . . .

A few months after the deed was done, on Forefathers' Day in 1820, standing on Plymouth Rock, he could say: —

I deem it my duty, on this occasion, to suggest that the land is not yet wholly free from the contamination of a traffic at which every feeling of humanity must for ever revolt, — I mean the African slave-trade. Neither public sentiment nor the law has hitherto been able entirely to put an end to this odious and abominable trade. At the moment when God in his mercy has blessed the Christian world with a universal peace, there is reason to fear that, to the disgrace of the

Christian name and character, new efforts are making for the extension of this trade by subjects and citizens of Christian states, in whose hearts there dwell no sentiments of humanity or of justice, and over whom neither the fear of God nor the fear of man exercises a control. . . . If there be, within the extent of our knowledge or influence, any participation in this traffic, let us pledge ourselves here, upon the Rock of Plymouth, to extirpate and destroy it. It is not fit that the land of the Pilgrims should bear the shame longer. I hear the sound of the hammer; I see the smoke of the furnaces where manacles and fetters are still forged for human limbs. I see the visages of those who, by stealth and at midnight, labor in this work of hell, foul and dark. . . . Let that spot be purified, or let it cease to be of New England.

He always declared that slavery was a local matter of the South; sectional, not national. In 1830 he took the ground that the general government had nothing to do with it. In 1840, standing "beneath an October sun" at Richmond, he declared again that there was no power, direct or indirect, in Congress or the general government, to interfere in the smallest degree with the "institutions" of the South.

At first he opposed the annexation of Texas; he warned men against it in 1837. . . .

but alas! all this was to pass away. Was he sincere in his opposition to the extension of slavery? I always thought so. I think so still.

Yet, after all, on the 7th of March, 1850, he could make that speech — you know it too well. He refused to exclude slavery by law from California and New Mexico. It would "irritate" the South, would "re-enact the law of God." He declared Congress was bound to make four new slave states out of Texas; to allow all the territory below the 36[degrees] 30' to become slave states; he volunteered to give Texas fifty thousand square miles of land for slave territory, and ten millions of dollars; would refund to Virginia two hundred millions of dollars derived from the sale of the public lands, to expatriate the free colored people from her soil; he would support the Fugitive Slave Bill, with all its amendment, "with all its provisions," "to the fullest extent." . . .

My friends, you all know the speech of the 7th of March: you remember how men felt when the telegraph brought the first news, they thought there must be some mistake! They could not believe the

lightning. . . . But such was the power . . . that, eighteen days after his speech, nine hundred and eighty-seven men of Boston sent him a letter, telling him that he had pointed out “the path of duty, convinced the understanding and touched the conscience of a nation;” and they expressed to him their “entire concurrence in the sentiments of that speech,” and their “heartfelt thanks for the inestimable aid it afforded to the preservation” of the Union.

You remember the return of Mr. Webster to Boston; the speech at the Revere House; his word that “discussion” on the subject of slavery must “in some way be suppressed” . . .

You remember the agony of our colored men. The Son of Man came to Jerusalem to seek and to save that which was lost; but Daniel Webster came to Boston to crush the poorest and most lost of men into the ground with the hoof of American power. . . .

You all know what followed. The Fugitive Slave Bill passed. It was enforced. You remember the consternation of the colored people in Boston, New York, Buffalo, Philadelphia, — all over the land. . . . You remember the sermons of doctors of divinity, proving that slavery was Christian, good Old Testament Christian at the very least. You do not forget the offer of a man to deliver up his own mother. Andover went for kidnapping. The loftiest pulpits, — I mean those highest bottomed on the dollar — they went also for kidnapping. . . . And when we said, mildly remonstrating, “Why, what evil has the poor black man done?” the answer was, “We have a law, and by that law he ought to be a slave!”

You remember the first kidnappers which came here to Boston. Hughes was one of them . . . He thirsted for the blood of Ellen Craft. You remember the seizure of Shadrach, and his deliverance out of his fiery furnace. . . . You remember the kidnapping of Thomas Sims; Faneuil Hall shut against the convention of the people; the court house in chains; the police drilled in the square; soldiers in arms; Faneuil Hall a barrack. . . .

You have not forgotten Mr. Webster’s definition of the object of government. In 1845, standing over the grave of Judge Story, he said, — “Justice is the great interest of mankind;” I think he thought so too! But at New York, on the 18th of November, 1850, he said, — “The great object of government is the protection of property at home, and respect and renown abroad.”

He went to Annapolis, and made a speech complimenting a series of ultra resolutions in favor of slavery and slave-catching. One of the resolutions made the execution of the Fugitive Slave Law the sole bond of the Union. The orator of Bunker Hill replied: —

Gentlemen, I concur in the sentiments expressed by you all — and I thank God they were expressed by you all — in the resolutions passed here on the 10th of December. And allow me to say, that any state, North of South, which departs one iota from the sentiment of that resolution, is disloyal to this Union. . . . I hold the importance of maintaining these measures to be of the highest character and nature, every one of them out and out, and through and through. I have no confidence in anybody who seeks the repeal, in anybody who wishes to alter or modify these constitutional provisions. There they are. . . . The settlement with Texas is as irrevocable as the admission of California. . . .

You have not forgotten the speech at Capon Springs, on the 26th of June, 1851. “When nothing else will answer,” he said, “they,” the abolitionists, “invoke ’religion,’ and speak of the ’higher law!’” He of the granite hills of New Hampshire, looking on the mountains of Virginia, blue with loftiness and distance, said, “Gentlemen, this North Mountain is high, the Blue Ridge higher still, the Alleghanies higher than either, and yet this ’higher law’ ranges further than an eagle’s flight above the highest peaks of the Alleghanies! No common vision can discern it; no common and unsophisticated conscience can feel it . . . It is the code, however, of the abolitionists of the North.

This speech was made at dinner. The next “sentiment” given after his was this: —

“The Fugitive Slave Law. - Upon its faithful execution depends the perpetuity of the Union.”

Mr. Webster made a speech in reply, and distinctly declared, —

You of the South have as much right to secure your fugitive slaves, as the North has to any of its rights and privileges of navigation and commerce.

Do you think he believed that? Daniel Webster knew better. In 1844, only seven years before, he had said, —

“What! when all the civilized world is opposed to slavery; when morality denounces it; when Christianity denounces it; when every

thing respected, everything good, bears one united witness against it, is it for America — America, the land of Washington, the model republic of the world — is it for America to come to its assistance, and to insist that the maintenance of slavery is necessary to the support of her institutions?”

....

To accomplish a bad purpose, he resorted to mean artifice, to the low tricks of vulgar adventurers in politics. He used the same weapons once wielded against him, — misrepresentation, denunciation, invective. . . . In this New Hampshire Stafford, “despotism had at length obtained an instrument with mind to comprehend and resolution to act upon, its principles in their length and breadth; and enough of his purposes were effected by him to enable mankind to see as from a tower the end of all.”

What was the design of all this? It was to “save the Union.” Such was the cry. Was the Union in danger? Here were a few non-resistants at the North, who said, We will have “no union with slaveholders.” There was a party of seceders at the South, who periodically blustered about disunion. Could these men bring the Union into peril? Did Daniel Webster even think so? I shall never insult that giant intellect by the thought. He knew South Carolina, he knew Georgia, very well. . . .” I think Mr. Webster knew there was no danger of a dissolution of the Union. But here is a proof that he knew it. In 1850, on the 22nd of December, he declared, “There is no longer imminent danger of the dissolution of the United States. We shall live and not die.” But, soon after, he went about saving the Union again, and again, and again, — saved it at Buffalo, Albany, Syracuse, at Annapolis, and then at Capon Springs.

I say there was no real danger . . .

But suppose the worst came to the worst, are there no other things as bad as disunion? The Constitution — does it “establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity,” and “secure the blessings of liberty” to all the citizens? Nobody pretends it, — with every eight man made merchandise, and not an inch of free soil covered by the Declaration of Dependence, save the five thousand miles which Mr. Webster ceded away. Is disunion worse than slavery? . . . Imagine the condition of the new nation, — the United States South; a nation without schools, or the desire for them; without commerce, without

manufactures; with six million white men and three million slaves; working with that barbarous tool, slave-labor, an instrument as ill-suited to these times as a sickle of stone to cut grain with! How would that new “Democracy” appear in the eyes of the world, when the public opinion of the nations looks hard at tyranny? It would not be long before that younger son, having spent all with riotous living, and devoted his substance with slavery, brought down to the husks that the swine do eat, — would arise, and go to the Nation, and say, “Father, forgive me; I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.” The southern men knew well, that if the Union were dissolved, their riches would take to themselves legs, and run away . . .

Here is the reason. He wanted to be President. That was all of it. Before this he had intrigued, — always in a clumsy sort, for he was organized for honesty, and cunning never throve in his keeping, — had stormed and blustered and bullied. “Gen. Taylor the second choice of Massachusetts for the President,” quoth he: “I tell you I am to be the first, and Massachusetts has no second choice.” Mr. Clay must not be nominated in ’44; in ’48 Gen. Taylor’s was a “nomination not fit to be made.” He wanted the office himself. This time he must storm the North, and conciliate the South. This was hid bid for the Presidency, — fifty thousand square miles of territory and ten millions of dollars to Texas; four new slave states; slavery in Utah and New Mexico; the Fugitive Slave Bill; and two hundred millions of dollars offered to Virginia to carry free men of color to Africa.

He never labored so before, and he had been a hard-working man. What speeches he made at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Annapolis! What letters he wrote! His intellect was never so active, nor gave such proofs of Herculean power. . . .

In 1820 he could say, “All conscience ought to be respected;” in 1850 it is only a fanatic who heeds his conscience, and there is no higher law. . . .

The fountains of his great deep were broken up — it rained forty days and forty nights, and brought a flood of slavery over this whole land; it covered the market, and the factory, and the court-house, awn the warehouse, and the college, and rose up high over the tops of the tallest steeples! But the ark of freedom went on the face of the waters, — above

the market, above the factory, above the court-house, above the college, high over the tops of the tallest steeples, it floated secure; for it bore the religion that is to save the world, and the Lord God of Hosts had shut it in.

What flattery was there from Mr. Webster! What flattery to the South! what respect for Southern nullifiers! "The secessionists of the South . . . are learned and eloquent; they are animated and full of spirit; they are high-minded and chivalrous . . ."

He scorn against the "fanatics" of the North, against the higher law, and the God thereof!

New England, it is well known, is the chosen seat of the abolition presses and the Abolition societies. There it is principally that the former cheer the morning by full columns of lamentation over the fate of human beings free by nature and by law above the Constitution . . . mingling all the while their anathemas at what they call 'men-catching' with the most horrid and profane abjuration of the Christian Sabbath, and indeed of the whole Divine Revelation: they sanctify their philanthropy by irreligion and profanity; they manifest their charity by contempt of God and His commandments. Depend on it, the law [the Fugitive Slave Bill] will be executed . . . in the midst of the next Anti-slavery Convention, if the occasion shall arise; then we shall see what becomes of their 'lives and their sacred honor!'"

The anti-slavery men were "insane persons," "some small bodies of fanatics," "not fit for a lunatic asylum."

To secure his purposes he left no stone unturned; he abandoned his old friends, treating them with rage and insolence. He revolutionized his own politics and his own religion. The strong advocate of liberty, of justice to all men, the opponent of slavery, turned round to the enemy and went square over! But his old speeches did not follow him: a speech is a fact; a printed word becomes immovable as the Alps. His former speeches, set all the way from Hanover to Washington, were a line of fortresses grim with cannon, each leveled at his new position.

How low he stooped to supplicate the South, to cringe before the Catholics, to fawn upon the Methodists at Faneuil Hall! O, what a prostitution of what a kingly power of thought, of speech, of will!

The effect of Mr. Webster's speech on the 7th of

March was amazing: at first Northern men abhorred it; next they accepted it. Why was this? He himself has perhaps helped us understand the mystery: —

The enormity of some crimes so astonishes men as to subdue their minds, and they lose the desire for justice in a morbid admiration of the great criminal and the strangeness of the crime.

Slavery, the most hideous snake which southern regions breed, with fifteen unequal feet, came crawling north; fold on fold, and ring on ring, and coil on coil, the venomous monster came: then avarice, the foulest worm which northern cities gender in their heat, went crawling south; with many a wriggling curl, it wound along its way. At length they met, and, twisting up in their obscene embrace, the twain became one monster hunkering . . . The dragon wormed its way along, — crawled into the church of commerce, wherein the minister baptized the beast, "Salvation." . . .

Mr. Webster stamped his foot, and broke through into the great hollow of practical atheism, which undergulfed the State and Church. Then what a caving in was there! . . . Metropolitan churches toppled, and pitched, and canted, and cracked, their bowing walls all out of plumb. Colleges, broken from the chain which held them in the stream of time, rushed towards the abysmal rent. Harvard led the way, "Christo et Ecclesiae" in her hand. . . .

But in spite of this, in every city, in every town, in every college, and in each capsizing church, there were found faithful men, who feared not the monster, heeded not the stamping; — nay, some doctors of divinity were found living. In all their houses there was light, and the destroying angel shook them not. The word of the Lord came in open vision to their eye; they had their lamps trimmed and burning, their loins girt; they stood road-ready. Liberty and religion turned in thither, and the slave found read and wings. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up!"

After the 7th of March, Mr. Webster became the ally of the worst of men, the forefront of kidnapping. The orator of Plymouth Rock was the advocate of slavery; the hero of Bunker Hill put chains around Boston court-house; the applauder of Adams and Jefferson was a tool of the slaveholder, and a keeper of slavery's dogs, the associate of the kidnapper, and the mocker of men who loved the right. Two years he lived with that rabble-rout for company, his name the boast of every vilest thing. . . .

But what as the recompense? Let the Baltimore Convention tell. He was the greatest candidate before it. . . . The two hundred and ninety-three delegates came together and voted. They gave him thirty-two votes! Where were the men of the "lower law," who made a denial of God the first principle of their politics? . . .

Where was the South? Fifty-three times did the Convention ballot, and the South never gave him a vote, — not a vote; no, not one! . . . the cruel South, treacherous to him whom she beguiled to treason against God, she answered, "Not a vote!" It was the old fate of men who betray. . . . Mr. Calhoun had said, "The furthest Southerner is nearer to us than the nearest Northern man." They could trust him with their work, — not with its covenanted pay! . . .

The telegraph which brought him tidings of his fate was a thunder-stroke out of the clear sky. No wonder that he wept, and said, "I am a disgraced man, a ruined man!" His early, his last, his fondest dream of ambition broke, and only ruin filled his hand! What a spectacle! to move pity in the stones of the street!

But it seemed as if nothing could be spared him. His cup of bitterness, already full, was made to run over; for joyous men, full of wine and the nomination, called him up at midnight out of his bed — the poor, disappointed old man! — to "congratulate him on the nomination of Scott!" . . .

Daniel Webster went down to Marshfield — to die! He died of his 7th of March speech! That word indorsed on Mason's Bill drove thousands of fugitives from America to Canada. It put chains round our court-house; it led men to violate the majesty of law all over the North. I violated it, and so did you. It sent Thomas Sims in fetters to his jail and his scourging at Savannah; it caused practical atheism to be preached in many churches in New York, Philadelphia, Washington; and, worst of all, in Boston itself! And then, with its own recoil, it sent Daniel Webster to his grave, giving him such a reputation as a man would not wish for his utterest foe.

No event in the American Revolution was half so terrible as his speeches in defense of slavery and kidnapping, his abrogation of the right to discuss all measures of the government. . . .

He wrote to an intimate and sagacious friend in Boston, asking, "How far can I go in defense of freedom and have Massachusetts sustain me?" The

friend repaid the confidence and said, "Far as you like!" Mr. Webster went as far as New Orleans, as far as Texas and the Del Norte, in support of slavery! When that speech came, — the rawest wind of March, — the friend declared: "It seldom happens to any man to be able to disgrace the generation he is born in. But the opportunity has presented itself to Mr. Webster, and he has done the deed!"

Cardinal Wolsey fell, and lost nothing but his place. Bacon fell; the "wisest, brightest," lived long enough to prove himself the "meanest of mankind." Strafford came down. But it was nothing to the fall of Webster. The Anglo-Saxon race never knew such a terrible and calamitous ruin. His downfall shook the continent. Truth fell prostrate in the street. Since then, the court-house has a twist in its walls, and equity cannot enter its door; the steeples point awry, and the "higher law" is hurled down from the pulpit. One priest would enslave all the "posterity of Ham," and another would drive a fugitive from his own door . . . another] had the "assurance of consciousness that Christ Jesus would have sold and bought slaves!" . . .

My friends, it is hard for me to say those things. My mother's love is warm in my own bosom still, and I hate to say such words. But God is just; and, in the presence of God, I stand here to tell the truth. . . .

Do men mourn for him? See how they mourn! The streets are hung with black. . . . The Mayor and Aldermen wear crape. Wherever his death is made known, the public business stops, the flags drop half-mast down. The courts adjourn. The courts of Massachusetts — at Boston, at Dedham, at Lowell, all adjourn; the courts of New Hampshire, of Maine, of New York; even at Baltimore and Washington, the courts adjourn; for the great lawyer is dead, and justice must wait another day. Only the United States Court, in Boston, trying a man for helping Shadrach out of the furnace of the kidnapers, — the court which executes the Fugitive Slave Bill, — that does not adjourn; that keeps on; the worm dies not, and the fire of its persecution is not quenched, when death puts out the lamp of life! . . .

Do men mourn for him, the great man eloquent? I put on sackcloth long ago; . . . I mourned when he spoke the speech of the 7th of March. . . . I mourned for him when the kidnapers first came to Boston, — hated then, now "respectable men," "the companions of princes," enlarging their testimony in the court. I mourned when my own parishioners

fled from the “stripes” of New England to the “stars” of Old England. I mourned when Ellen Craft fled to my house for shelter and for succor, and for the first time in all my life I armed this hand. . . . I mourned when that courthouse was hung in chains; when Thomas Sims, from his dungeon, sent out his petition for prayers, and the churches did not dare to pray. . . . I mourned for Webster when we prayed our prayer and sang our psalm on Long Wharf in the morning’s gray. I mourned then: I shall not cease to mourn. The flags will be removed from the streets, the cannon will sound their other notes of joy; but, for me, I shall go mourning all my days; I shall refuse to be comforted; and at last I shall lay down my gray hairs with weeping and with sorrow in the grave. O Webster! Webster! would God that I had died for thee! . . .

He knew the cause of his defeat, and in the last weeks of his life confessed that he was deceived; that, before his fatal speech, he had assurance from the North and South, that, if he supported slavery, it would lead him into place and power; but now he saw the mistake, and that a few of the “fanatics” had more influence in America than he and all the South! He sinned against his own conscience, and so he fell!

He made him wings of slavery to gain a lofty eminence. Those wings unfeathered in his flight. For one and thirty months he fell, until at last he reached the tomb. There, on the sullen shore, a mighty wreck, great Webster lies. . . .

No man can resist infinite temptation. There came a peril greater than he could bear. Condemn the sin — pity the offending man. The tone of political morality is pitifully low. It lowered him, and then he debased the morals of politics.

Part of the blame belongs to the New England church, which honors “devoutness,” and sneers at every noble, manly life, calling men saints who only pray, all careless of the dead men’s bones which glut the whited sepulcher. . . . The disgrace is not his alone. But we must blame Mr. Webster as we blame few men. . . .

Boston now mourns for him. She is too late in her weeping. She should have wept her warning when her capitalists filled his right hand with bribes. She ought to have put on sackcloth when the speech of March 7th first came here. She should have hung her flags at half-mast when the Fugitive Slave Bill became law; then she only fired cannons, and

thanked her representative. Webster fell prostrate, but was Boston more innocent than he? . . . It was she that ruined him. . . .

It was partly by Boston’s sin that the great man fell. I pity his victims; you pity them too. BUt I pity him more, oh, far more! Pity the oppressed, will you? Will you not also pity the oppressor in his sin? Look there! . . .

Last time he was in the Senate it was to hear his successor speak. He stayed an hour, and heard Charles Sumner demonstrate that the Fugitive Slave Law was not good religion, nor good constitution, nor good law. The old and new stood face to face, — the Fugitive Slave Bill and Justice. What an hour! What a sight! What thoughts ran through the great man’s mind, mingled with what regrets! . . . Had Mr. Webster been true to his history, true to his heart, true to his intention and his promises, he would himself have occupied that ground two years before. . . . He came home to Boston, and went down to Marshfield to die. An old man, broken with the storms of State, went home — to die! . . .

Just four years after his great speech, on the 24th of October, all that was mortal of Daniel Webster went down to the dust, and the soul to the motherly bosom of God! Men mourn for him: he heeds it not. The great man has gone where the servant is free from his master, where the weary are at rest, where the wicked cease from troubling. . . .

Massachusetts, the dear old mother of us all! Let her warn her children to fling away ambition, and let her charge them, every one, that there is a God who must indeed be worshiped, and a higher law which must be kept, though gold and union fail! . . .

Then let her lift her eyes to heaven, and pray: —
 “Sweet Mercy! to the gates of heaven
 This statesman lead, his sins forgiven;
 The rueful conflict, the heart riven
 With vain endeavor,
 And memory of earth’s bitter leaven,
 Effaced for ever!

But

— why to him confine the prayer,
 While kindred thoughts and yearnings bear,
 On the frail heart, the purest share
 With all that live?
 The best of what we do and are,
 Great God, forgive!