

**THE GREAT AMERICAN QUESTION,  
DEMOCRACY VS. DOULOCRACY, OR,  
FREE SOIL, FREE LABOR, FREE  
MEN, & FREE SPEECH, AGAINST THE  
EXTENSION AND DOMINATION OF THE  
SLAVEHOLDING INTEREST**

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The great American question, democracy vs. doulocracy, or, Free soil, free labor, free men, & free speech, against the extension and domination of the slaveholding interest by William Wilson

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**WILLIAM WILSON**

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## PREFACE.

The right of free discussion, as it is inalienable to man, is happily secured by Constitutional Law to every citizen of the United States. Of course, the use which is made of it ought to be at once decorous, and for the promotion of the private and the public welfare. With this object in view, and under a sense of this obligation, it is exercised upon the present occasion.

The Author of the brief and hasty hints contained in the following pages, upon a subject which might well command and occupy several volumes, conceives that he owes it to himself to state, that he does not view the GREAT QUESTION which is now pending before the independent freemen of our country, nor write in relation to it, as a partisan. He has ever believed, and acted in correspondence therewith, that party ought to be held in abeyance to principle: and this conviction does not diminish, but increase, by the progress of time, and by the acquisition of experience. His intimate and cherished friends have always been found, indifferently, in both of the two great parties of Democrats and Whigs, which have formerly divided our citizens; and even now, when these parties are rapidly undergoing the process of decomposition and dissolution, he numbers among their remains, notwithstanding they are still clinging to, and battling for, DOULOCRACY, individuals, not a few, who are objects of his esteem and regard, as well as in the swelling ranks of the redeemed, and renovated, and living DEMOCRACY of our age. "Principles, and not men;" and "men as the representatives, and in order to the success, of principles," have been, and still are, his governing maxims. So, he thinks, it ought to be with all. This the present crisis emphatically demands.

He also feels himself uninfluenced by any geographical prejudices, as far as he can know himself and his motives. He loves the UNION of these States, both as a great whole, and in each of its particular constituent parts; of it he has been accustomed to form no disparaging estimate, and to augur great and glorious things for it in the future; and for its welfare and prosperity, he would deem it his honor and privilege to labor and pray. He, as a matter of course, is altogether uninfluenced by "the loaves and fishes" of political office. Selfish ends he does not seek to promote. He knows nothing of North, South, East, or West, which would influence him to take part with the wrong, or shrink from the maintenance of the right. Love, and not hate or indifference, requires that "we do not suffer sin upon our brother," but, by all means, reprove and counteract him in his pernicious ways. If any section of our land continues to prosper, or the integrity of the Union be preserved, and its existence and operations be blessed, it must be by the prevention of the extension of slavery to Territories now free of the evil; and by the marked rebuke, through the medium of the polls, of the spirit which would, at this day, set up the unhalloved and unconstitutional claim: for, by a different course of action, we should incur the wrath of God Almighty, from whom all national, as well as individual prosperity and happiness emanate.

This Question being now, in the providence of God, distinctly before the American People, so simplified, and so separated from every other issue as that he who runs may read, and he who reads may understand, viz.: "SHALL LIBERTY OR SLAVERY, DEMOCRACY OR DOULOCRACY, TRIUMPH IN REPUBLICAN AMERICA?" is about to be answered by every Freeman at the approaching election, according to the vote which he deposits in the ballot-box. And we much mistake the spirit and sense of our citizens, as well as their lively regard for Liberty, and jealousy of everything which would even seem to interfere with it, if they do not speak, in tones of thunder, in favor of the former, and against every aspirant after office, from the highest to the lowest, who is a professed Doulocrat, or who is uncommitted upon this Great Question, which overshadows and completely absorbs

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every other topic of difference at present existing among us. This Patriotism expects and requires. "He that is not for us, is against us."

This Question merits serious, religious consideration. Prejudice, and party-spirit and aims ought to be dismissed, or else the verdict of the mind in relation to it will be erroneous. The character and the fruits of Democracy are to be tested in the light of the law of God, and of the experience of our country. In order to this, these pages may contribute something. Their aim is to enlighten, solemnize, elevate, and direct the minds of those, especially, who shall use the Elective Franchise at the coming election, as well as of any others into whose hands they may fall. They may hereafter be augmented to a much larger work, as was the original design, by the full discussion and illustration of their contents. But at present, all that it is practicable, or that would be subservient to the specific end intended, is this synopsis, which the friend of Freedom may use as his *vade mecum*, or pocket-companion.

The author deems it proper also to state, that, in what he has written, he has endeavored not to be heedless of the language of Elihu, nor of the weighty instruction which it conveys to its readers: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." He has likewise sought carefully to avoid the opposite of flattery, which is defamation. There are no special relations subsisting between him and Mr. Van Buren; neither have they held any correspondence upon the great topic which causes at present such an unusual commotion throughout our country. He has never been one of his active supporters; although he has always been compelled to hold him in high estimation, both as a Man, and as a Statesman. Viewing him now as raised up by the Supreme Ruler of nations, to perform an important service for his country, and his age, he has spoken of him, not only without panegyric or exaggeration, but much within the limits of what he conceives to be the truth: partly, because he judged it not to be necessary; and partly, because of a conviction that prolixity, as his time would not allow of it, would be unsuitable to the occasion and its exigencies. And with regard to the other distinguished candidates, he would not desire to pluck a laurel from their brows. But, however worthy they may be as men, and in their own place, they are not fit for the Presidency, in this critical juncture of our national affairs.

Farther, and finally, he would state, that, in thus undertaking to show his opinion upon this the greatest Question of our history, since we became a nation, he has had prominently in view the promotion of the glory of his God, and the good of his fellow-men—especially of the American People. For his mind is deeply impressed with the conviction, that upon the decision of this Great Question in such a manner as to prevent the extension of slavery, our future prosperity, peace, happiness, and honor, if not our very existence as a united people, depend. Thus believing, he has spoken. And his earnest desire is to contribute something which may induce Freemen, of all parties, so to forget, at least for the moment, their personalities, prejudices, and minor, although they may regard them important, differences, as to stand up, and act unitedly, shoulder to shoulder, for their country and freedom, in this the hour of their peril. When the house is on fire, it is no time to contend about culinary matters; or about the manner in which the duties of the domestic economy were formerly discharged, or shall be discharged in the future; or about the persons of men, or the views which they may have entertained of these. The action then demanded, is the joint efforts of all for the extinction of the flames. This being accomplished, subordinate matters may be adjusted afterwards. The application of this will be obvious to all. And with these observations, he cheerfully commits the work to the blessing of God, and to the unbiassed attention of American Citizens.

Cincinnati, September 13th, 1848.

THE  
GREAT AMERICAN QUESTION.

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DEAR SIR: Allow me, as your friend and fellow-citizen, with all freedom, and sincerity, and earnestness, to confer with you in relation to the momentous issue now before the American People, and to your duty with regard to it at the approaching Presidential election. In doing so, under a sense of duty to God, to our country, to our age, and to our world, I shall, as one who must give account at that Judgment Seat from which there lies no appeal, and who has no personal feeling to gratify, nor selfish object to accomplish, studiously avoid speaking evil of any party or man; and endeavor to treat this grave Question, at once with brevity, and with the veracity, the dignity, and the solemnity, which are its own, and which it rightfully claims from all who consider or attempt to answer it.

You are already aware, and, I doubt not, that you cherish the feelings of a patriot upon the subject, that the greatest crisis in our national history has come upon us, which must be met by our citizens at the polls in the course of a few weeks; and which if met and decided in a manner worthy of freemen, will be the occasion of permanent and unutterable advantage to every section and interest of our beloved country, and, through her, to the world at large: but which if met and decided either with neutrality, or direct or indirect subserviency to the empire of Slavery, or Doulocracy, will entail upon our Republic, and her Territories, a lasting and deep curse and disgrace; as well as do much to realize the fears of the friends, and the wishes of the enemies, of free government, and of our happy and distinguished nation, to the extremities of our globe. Your influence and your vote, at such a time, may save or destroy. Give them cheerfully, I conjure you, irrespective of the trammels of party, as a Man, a Freeman, and a Christian, according to the dictates of the law of Nature, of Humanity, of the Constitution, and of the God of Nations.

As to how this crisis has reached us, you need not, I am persuaded, to be informed. It is generally admitted that it has been hastened and matured by the zeal and aggression of our Southern brethren, who have recently become distinguished as the propagandists of slavery, by the power, and under the banner of the government, of Republican America. Here all may concur, according to my judgment, whatever may be their views of the old

parties which are now dissolved, or of the measures of the present or past administrations. Vast territories are annexed to the empire, as the result of negotiation with Great Britain, and of the war with Mexico. Oregon has been always free. The others come to us free of slavery—even the Popish and unenlightened government of Mexico, having, in accordance with the spirit of the age, abolished it a considerable time before their cession. Over these extended and free domains our doulocrats would have the General Government to extend the empire of slavery; or at least to take the ground, that the ordinance of 1787, excluding slavery from the North-Western territory, was unconstitutional, and to do nothing toward its prohibition from our possessions along the shores of the Pacific. The claim arouses the nation; and the exciting question is now to be decided at the polls. Doulocracy,\* under which this land has too long been injured and

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\* The term Doulocracy signifies, *the government of serants*, or, as the South, and the apologists of slavery translate the word δουλος, *of slaves*. It is composed, as the learned reader is aware, of δουλος, a *servant or slave*, and κρατω, *to govern*. It is most directly opposed to Democracy, which signifies, *the government of the people*, and is compounded of δημοσ, *the people*, and κρατω, *to govern*. The former is not found in our English dictionaries, because, until lately, and in our own free country, no people ever professed, or were willing, to be under the government of slaves, properly so denominated; and, therefore, there was no use for the word. It will be seen, however, from this, that it is as pure English as the latter, and as directly derived from the Greek language, the common origin of both.

Our national government is democratic—a Representative Democracy. Of this, slavery is the direct and inexorable antagonist. For it would be as easy to conceive, and as proper to speak, of *white black*, or of *holy sin*, as of *democratic slavery*! They cannot both long co-exist upon the same soil; but the one must conquer and annihilate the other. It was merely tolerated within the States where it existed, as a domestic institution, and the foreign traffic in it forever abolished, under the penalties of piracy, from and after the year 1808, under the notion of a hereditary evil entailed upon those involved in it by past generations, who had very erroneous conceptions of the principles of civil and religious liberty, and by the British government, which it was evidently expected by our worthy fathers would soon die out or be abolished, through the progress of society, and the influence of our free institutions, when the Constitution of the United States was adopted, and in that very remarkable instrument. Contrary to this just and enlightened expectation, however, this sore evil has been rapidly on the increase ever since that day, in the Southern section of the Union, while the States lying North of Mason and Dixon's line have spontaneously abolished it; and the slaveholders, or doulocrats, although but a small fraction of the population, have governed the country, by the tame and shameful acquiescence and connivance of the Free States, and have actually furnished our Presidents, all but twelve years, up from the foundation of the Federal Government; and they now, having grown insolent and audacious by the power which they have been thus allowed, not from their own special merits, but exclusively from the sufferance of their brethren, seem disposed to claim this as a matter of right, and to make submission to their will, in this respect, an indispensable condition of the continuance of the Union. Hence the nomination of Cass and Taylor at her dictation, by the late National Conventions of Baltimore and Philadelphia, on the avowed ground of "AVAILABILITY" or expediency alone; because the South would vote for no candidate who was not bound to slavery, either by his own pledge, as the former, or by the guarantee furnished by his residence within her geographical boundaries, the infected district, and his being personally deeply involved in the sin and misery of practical slave-holding, as the latter. Opposed to this stand Van Buren and Adams, the nominees of Freedom. Old parties and issues are now



disgraced,—that is, the government of servants or slaves,—the 250,000 slaveholders being governed, through the medium of their fears, their avarice, and their ambition, by their slaves, and they controlling the Republic by the influence of party-spirit, and by threats of secession from the Union if they should not be allowed to rule,—had so impregnated the old parties of Whigs and Democrats, and was so politic and overbearing, that she dictated her own terms to the Baltimore and Philadelphia Conventions; and had nominated, as candidates for the Presidency, in the persons of Generals Cass and Taylor, such as would undoubtedly give the whole influence of their high office in favor of the views and the interests of the Doulocrats. Justly indignant at this, the freemen of our land, nobly bursting the bonds of faction, and determined to sink or swim in the Ark of Liberty, and on the side of the Constitution, and the acts of our fathers under it, assembled in that ever-memorable convention at Buffalo; and united, as one man, and with religious and enlightened enthusiasm, in nominating for your suffrage, two distinguished civilians, Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams, as the representatives of Liberty and Freemen, in opposition to the modern pretensions and the insufferable aggressions of Doulocracy and Doulocrats. These candidates, planted upon a platform of principles which commends itself to the cordial approbation of every intelligent citizen, stand fully and publickly pledged to employ the influence of their stations, if elected, against the extension of slavery; while leaving it as it exists in several States, to be regulated by themselves, as long as they may find themselves able to bear its crushing weight, and its blighting calamity. This is noble ground. The men who have, in existing circumstances, assumed it, are moral heroes. You, my friend, will cordially sustain them. The unfurling of the banner of a regenerated Democracy, is hailed by our citizens with peculiar delight, who amazingly rally around it. The old

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out of the question. Liberty and Slavery, or Democracy and Doulocracy, are really the only combatants, and must continue to be so until the question is finally decided which of them shall reign on this continent. Every man among us is, therefore, either a democrat, discharging nobly the duties of a freeman under the banner of Van Buren and Adams, in this campaign, or a doulocrat, doing service ignobly under the banner of Cass or Taylor. There is truly no other alternative. This invests the contest with peculiar importance, dignity and grandeur. And as, perhaps, there never was a case in which names were more emphatically things, it appears to me that it would eminently prevent confusion, simplify, and set the only issue now before the public mind in a clear and impressive light, as well as secure other fair and decided advantages to the cause of consistent Liberty and her rapidly swelling hosts, if the only parties at present existing were habitually designated by the friends of Free Soil, as Democrats and Doulocrats. And the state of the question being actually as it is here represented, it is desirable that the whole North would speedily wheel round into the lines of Freedom,—which it is also most reasonable to expect that she will,—for her own honor, the good of the whole country in general, and particularly for the salvation of the South herself.

parties are shattered, as if smitten by "the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands."

The merits of slavery and doulocracy being now fully and fairly before the public, and the view taken of them being calculated potentially to influence the decision of the GREAT QUESTION OF THE AGE at the polls, let me say a few words to you about these, as they are discovered when tested by every sound, political, moral and religious standard. What is the character of that thing which our Southern friends, and Cass and Taylor, with their partisans in the Free States,—if indeed they have many, or any, here at the election, considering the detestable ground which they occupy, and the insult which is offered to every Northern man in asking for them his vote,—would have you and me to extend over territories which are now free of it? Is it good, or useful, or becoming, or tolerable at all in the light of the nineteenth century, and in a land so favored by God with light, with free institutions, and with unexampled prosperity, and so proud and jealous of her liberties? And here we must glance at general principles and facts, which the mind may reflect upon, and reason out at leisure; for I have not time to argue them, were it necessary, which is happily not the case, nor have you to read anything prolix, on an occasion of high and laudable excitement, when freemen are called to prompt and decisive action. I ask you then attentively to consider,

**THE SINFULNESS OF SLAVERY; WHICH, IN ORDER TO PREVENT MISAPPREHENSION, I DEFINE TO BE, THE HOLDING OF UNOFFENDING MEN IN INVOLUNTARY BONDAGE.**

*It is diametrically at war with the* UNITY OF THE ORIGIN *of the human race.* You believe, I presume, that all mankind have descended from a single pair. This is most orthodox. Adam and Eve were the progenitors "of all living." To them the commandment was given by the Creator, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." "Have we not all one Father?" "God hath made of ONE BLOOD all the nations of men, for to dwell upon all the face of the earth." To these oracles, both of the Old and the New Testaments, enlightened Philosophy adds her consistent testimony. All human beings have the same physical, intellectual and moral constitutions. The enslaved and the enslaver are radically here alike. The differences are only of degrees and circumstances. This lays the foundation for mutual sympathy; and for the discharge of the offices of righteousness, kindness and love, among men of every nation and description. With all this, you know, slavery is irreconcilably at war. She first brutifies the man, and then affirms for her justification, that he is of a race inferior to that of those who have degraded and enslaved him.\* And it is this brutal system which unblushingly

\* The tone of the doulocrats, whether in the Free or Slave States, upon the subject of slavery, has, of late years, become much more in favor of it than it formerly

asks our government to propagate it in its territories, which are at present free of its unhallowed foot, and of its poisonous and polluting influence. You will not, by your vote, elevate a man to office who is not distinctly pledged to limit this evil, and to rebuke this pretension. You, a Northern Freeman, surely cannot.

*It is at war with THE IMAGE OF GOD in which man was created.* It is this, and not the mere killing, or taking away of the animal life, of a human being, which makes murder a capital crime in the sight of Heaven. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." This mysterious being, this microcosm, who stands in a close relation to all existence, whether above or beneath him in its extended scale; in his inferior nature, to the inanimate, the animate and the irrational creation, and in his superior nature, to angels, and to God himself, is indeed fallen into ruin by his sin; but still the wreck is noble. He is placed under a dispensation of grace by Jesus Christ our Lord; and for him God has a special care. And although he were a Cain, ill shall pursue those who do him wrong. It is this being, however, in which slavery trades as a chattel! You will, by your vote, do all in your power to arrest this.

*It is at war with the LAW OF NATURE.* No man is born a slave or a slaveholder, a *δουλος*, or a doulocrat. Such unnatural and false relations only exist, by might usurping the prerogatives of right. Every man is born free of every other being but God. Hence, he has a right to dispose of himself, and his talents, and his movements, while his deportment is good, under accountability to God alone. With every attribute of this freedom, and with every line of the law of nature, slavery is irreconcilably at war. And it is this which asks, or commands freemen to

was; instead of diminishing by the progress of light and liberty. As a specimen of this, I cite the following from the 1136th page of the 1st Volume of the 4th Series of "American Archives," which gives an account of the proceedings, in 1775, of the "Darien Committee," whose object was to put an end to the foreign and domestic slave trade in the colony of Georgia:

"We, therefore, the representatives of the extensive district of Darien, in the colony of Georgia, having now assembled in Congress, by authority and free choice of the inhabitants of the said district, now freed from their fetters, do resolve—

"To show the world that we are not influenced by any contracted or interested motives, but a general philanthropy for all mankind, of whatever climate, language or complexion, we hereby declare our disapprobation and abhorrence of the unnatural practice of slavery in America—however the uncultivated state of our country, or other specious arguments, may plead for it—a practice founded in injustice and cruelty, and highly dangerous to our liberties, as well as lives, debasing part of our fellow-creatures below men, and corrupting the virtue and morals of the rest, and as laying the basis of that liberty we contend for (and which we pray the Almighty to continue to the latest posterity) upon a very wrong foundation. We, therefore, resolve at all times to use our utmost endeavors for the manumission of our slaves in this colony, upon the most safe and equitable footing for the masters and themselves."