

nor let go!" To do right seemed to endanger a national form of Government, and another compromise followed. The word slavery was so obnoxious to men emerging from a long and bloody war for their own liberties, that they would not allow it to appear in the Constitution of the United States. They allowed it to exist in the States as a thing to be passed by rather than noticed, and, although slavery has gone from the land, it has never been necessary to change a word in the original Constitution. "Regulate and restrain," was the policy adopted.

Madison, speaking of this compromise half apologetically, said: "It were doubtless to be wished that the power of prohibiting the importation of slaves had not been postponed until the year 1808, or rather, that it had been suffered to have immediate operation, but it is not difficult to account, either for this restriction on the general government, or for the manner in which the whole clause is expressed. It ought to be considered a great point gained in favor of humanity that a period of twenty years may terminate forever within these States a traffic which has so long and so loudly upbraided the barbarism of modern policy; that within that period it will receive a considerable discouragement from the general government, and may be totally abolished by the concurrence of the few States which continue the unnatural traffic."

The delegates labored under the delusion that their action had placed the question where it would settle itself; but soon prostituted principle woke from the slumber of exhaustion to hear the ringing words of John Randolph, like a fire-bell in the night:

"I know there are gentlemen, not only from the Northern but from the Southern States, who think this unhappy question—for such it is—of Negro slavery, which the Constitution has vainly tried to blink by not using the term, should never be brought to public notice, more especially that of Congress, and most especially here. Sir, with every due respect to the gentlemen who think so, I differ from them *toto cælo*. Sir, it is a thing which cannot be hid; it is not a dry-rot which you can cover with a carpet until the house tumbles about your ears; you might as well try to hide a volcano in full operation; it cannot be hid; it is a cancer in your face, and must be treated *secundum artem*; it must not be tampered with by quacks who never saw the disease or the patient."

Brave, prophetic words. The volcano of an awakening public conscience could not, indeed, be suppressed. Compromise followed compromise, the old ulcer on the body politic grew deeper, the moral pulse of the nation grew feebler, but God was not asleep; the cry of the bond-