

# THE OVATION TO MR. FILLMORE.

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## SPEECHES OF MR. FILLMORE.

The Press of the State of New York has recorded the brilliant ovation, and triumphal progress homeward of Mr. Fillmore; from the time he landed in New York till he reached Buffalo, the Empire State poured out its thousands and tens of thousands to welcome home its favorite son; and from the mouth of the Hudson to the Lake, never public man before had such a testimonial of regard, affection, and sympathy. Men of all parties, and without distinction of party, were in the crowds, and the municipalities; and he there made a series of speeches, always in good taste, and often with great freedom in the expression of his opinions. Three of these speeches we have here rescued from the many, as being the most important, and as we have seen they have most attracted the attention of the country.

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## MR. FILLMORE IN NEWBURGH.

Mr. Fillmore went up the North River, in the steamer *Alida*, and stopping at Newburgh, Washington's head-quarters during the Revolution, and being warmly welcomed, said—

### FELLOW-CITIZENS OF NEWBURGH :

Accept my cordial thanks for this hearty greeting. My friend has introduced me as the standard-bearer of the American party, and a friend of the Union. For the former position I am indebted to the partiality of my friends, who have without my solicitation made me your standard-bearer in the contest for President, which has just commenced; but I confess to you that I am proud of the distinction, for I am an American, with an American heart. (Cheers.) I confess, also, I am a devoted and unalterable friend of the Union. As an American, occupying the position I do before my countrymen, I have no hostility to foreigners. I trust I am their friend. Having witnessed their deplorable condition in the old country, God forbid I should add to their sufferings by refusing them an asylum in this. I would open wide the gates and invite the oppressed of every land to our happy country, excluding only the pauper and criminal. I would be tolerant to men of all creeds, but would exact from all faithful allegiance to our republican institutions. But if any sect or denomination, ostensibly organized for religious purposes, should use that organization, or suffer it to be used, for political objects, I would meet it by political opposition. In my

view, Church and State should be separate, not only in form, but fact—religion and politics should not be mingled.

While I did this I would, for the sake of those who seek an asylum on our shores, as well as for our own sake, declare as a general rule, that Americans should govern America. (Great cheering.) I regret to say that men who come fresh from the monarchies of the old world, are prepared neither by education, habits of thought, or knowledge of our institutions, to govern Americans. The failure of every attempt to establish free government in Europe, is demonstrative of this fact; and if we value the blessings which Providence has so bounteously showered upon us, it becomes every American to stand by the constitution and laws of his country, and to resolve that, independent of all foreign influence, Americans will and shall rule America. (Cheers.)

I feel, fellow-citizens, that I need hardly allude to the importance of maintaining this Union. I see the national flag floating from yonder height which marks the consecrated spot of Washington's head-quarters. There was performed an act of moral heroism before which the bravest deeds of Alexander pale, and with which the greatest achievements of Bonaparte are not to be compared. It was there, on that sacred spot, now shaded by the flag of a free republic, that Washington refused a crown. (Cheers.) It was there that the officers of the army, after our independence had been achieved, made him the offer of a crown, which he indignantly spurned. I am sure I need not urge upon you who live near this hallowed spot, and in sight of that flag, the duty of observing in all your actions, the farewell advice of the Father of his Country, "that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to the UNION; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts." Again I thank you most sincerely for this unexpected and hearty welcome to my native State. (Cheers.)

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### MR. FILLMORE IN ALBANY.

Immense crowds pouring out in the Capitol of the State, and the Mayor welcoming, Mr. Fillmore replied—

MR. MAYOR AND FELLOW-CITIZENS:

This overwhelming demonstration of congratulation and welcome almost deprives me of the power of speech. Here, nearly thirty years ago, I commenced my political career. In this building I first saw a

legislative body in session (cheers); but at that time it never entered into the aspirations of my heart that I ever should receive such a welcome as this in the capital of my native State. (Cheers.)

You have been pleased, sir, to allude to my former services and my probable course if I should again be called to the position of Chief Magistrate of the nation. (Applause.) It is not pleasant to speak of one's self, yet I trust that the occasion will justify me in briefly alluding to one or two events connected with my administration. (Cheers.) You all know that when I was called to the executive chair by a bereavement which shrouded the nation in mourning, that the country was unfortunately agitated from one end to the other upon the all-exciting subject of slavery. It was then, sir, that I felt it my duty to rise above every sectional prejudice, and look to the welfare of the whole nation. (Applause.) I was compelled, to a certain extent, to overcome long-cherished prejudices, and disregard party claims. (Great and prolonged applause.) But in doing this, sir, I did no more than was done by many abler and better men than myself. I was by no means the sole instrument, under Providence, in harmonizing those difficulties. (Applause.) There were at that time noble, independent, high-souled men in both houses of Congress, belonging to both the great political parties of the country—Whigs and Democrats—who spurned the dictation of selfish party leaders, and rallied around my administration, in support of the great measures which restored peace to an agitated and distracted country. (Cheers.) Some of these have gone to their eternal rest, with the blessings of their country on their heads; but others yet survive, deserving the benediction and honors of a grateful people. By the blessing of Divine Providence, our efforts were crowned with signal success (cheers); and when I left the presidential chair, the whole nation was prosperous and contented, and our relations with all foreign nations were of the most amicable kind. (Cheers.) The cloud that had hung upon the horizon was dissipated. But where are we now? Alas! threatened at home with civil war, and from abroad with a rupture of our peaceful relations. I shall not seek to trace the causes of this change. These are the facts, and it is for you to ponder upon them. Of the present administration I have nothing to say, for I know and can appreciate the difficulties of administering this government; and if the present executive and his supporters have with good intentions and honest hearts made a mistake, I hope God may forgive them, as I freely do. (Loud and prolonged applause.) But if there be those who have brought these calamities upon the country for selfish or ambitious objects, it is your duty, fellow-citizens, to hold them to a strict responsibility. (Cheers.)

The agitation which disturbed the peace of the country in 1850, was unavoidable. It was brought upon us by the acquisition of new territory, for the government of which it was necessary to provide territorial organizations. But it is for you to say whether the present agitation which distracts the country and threatens us with civil war, has not been recklessly and wantonly produced by the adoption of a measure to aid in personal advancement rather than in any public good. (Cheers.)

Sir, you have been pleased to say that I have the union of these States at heart. This, sir, is most true; for if there be one object dearer to me than any other, it is the unity, prosperity, and glory of this great republic; and I confess frankly, sir, that I fear it is in danger. I say nothing of any particular section, much less of the several candidates before the people. I presume they are all honorable men. But, sir, what do we see? An exasperated feeling between the North and the South, on the most exciting of all topics, resulting in bloodshed and organized military array.

But this is not all, sir. We see a political party presenting candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency, selected for the first time from the free States alone, with the avowed purpose of electing these candidates by suffrages of one part of the Union only, to rule over the whole United States. Can it be possible that those who are engaged in such a measure can have seriously reflected upon the consequences which must inevitably follow in case of success? (Cheers.) Can they have the madness or the folly to believe that our Southern brethren would submit to be governed by such a Chief Magistrate? (Cheers.) Would he be required to follow the same rule prescribed by those who elected him, in making his appointments? If a man living south of Mason and Dixon's line be not worthy to be President or Vice-President, would it be proper to select one from the same quarter as one of his cabinet-counsel, or to represent the nation in a foreign country? or, indeed, to collect the revenue, or administer the laws of the United States? If not, what new rule is the President to adopt in selecting men for office, that the people themselves discard in selecting him? These are serious but practical questions; and in order to appreciate them fully, it is only necessary to turn the tables upon ourselves. Suppose that the South, having a majority of the electoral votes, should declare that they would only have slaveholders for President and Vice-President, and should elect such by their exclusive suffrages to rule over us at the North. Do you think we would submit to it? No, not for a moment. (Applause.) And do you believe that your Southern brethren are less sensitive on this subject than you are, or less jealous of their rights? (Tremendous cheering.) If you do, let me tell you that you are mistaken. And, therefore, you must see that if this sectional party succeeds, it leads inevitably to the destruction of this beautiful fabric reared by our forefathers, cemented by their blood, and bequeathed to us as a priceless inheritance.

I tell you, my friends, that I feel deeply, and therefore I speak earnestly on this subject (cries of "You're right!"), for I feel that you are in danger. I am determined to make a clean breast of it. I will wash my hands of the consequences, whatever they may be; and I tell you that we are treading upon the brink of a volcano, that is liable at any moment to burst forth and overwhelm the nation. I might, by soft words, inspire delusive hopes, and thereby win votes. But I can never consent to be one thing to the North and another to the South. I should despise myself, if I could be guilty of such duplicity. For my conscience would exclaim, with the dramatic poet,

\* \* \* "Is there not some chosen curse,  
Some hidden thunder in the stores of heaven,  
Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the man  
Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin?"

In the language of the lamented, but immortal Clay: "I had rather be right than be President!"

It seems to me impossible that those engaged in this can have contemplated the awful consequences of success. If it breaks asunder the bonds of our Union, and spreads anarchy and civil war throughout the land, what is it less than moral treason? (Cries of "Nothing—nothing less!") Law and common sense hold a man responsible for the natural consequence of his acts, and must not those whose acts tend to the destruction of the government, be equally held responsible? (Cries of "Yes! yes!")

And let me also add, that when this Union is dissolved, it will not be divided into two republics, or two monarchies, but broken into fragments, and at war with each other. (Sensation.)

But, fellow-citizens, I have, perhaps, said all that was necessary on this subject (cries of "Go on! go on!"); and I turn with pleasure to a less important but more agreeable topic. It has been my fortune during my travels in Europe, to witness the reception of royalty, in all the pomp and splendor of military array, where the music was given to order, and the cheers at the word of command. But for myself, I prize the honest, spontaneous throb (great cheering) of affection with which you have welcomed me back to my native State (renewed cheering), above all the pageants which royalty can display. (Cheers.) Therefore, with a heart overflowing with grateful emotions, I return you a thousand thanks, and bid you adieu.

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#### \* MR. FILLMORE IN ROCHESTER.

AFTER returning his thanks for the manner in which he had been received, and for the flattering terms in which the chairman had been pleased to speak of his administration, Mr. Fillmore said that he had no reason to disguise his sentiments on the subject of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which seemed to be the chief source of the unfortunate agitation that now disturbed the peace of the country. He said that it would be recollected, that when he came into the administration, the country was agitated from centre to circumference with the exciting subject of slavery. This question was then forced upon the country by the acquisition of new territory; and he feared that the eloquent address of the chairman had given him more credit for the settlement of that question than he was entitled to—not more, however, than he would have deserved, had his power equalled his desires. But the truth was, that many noble patriots, Whigs and Democrats, in both Houses of Congress, rallied around and sustained the Administration in that trying

time, and to them was chiefly due the merit of settling that exciting controversy. Those measures, usually called the Compromise Measures of 1850, were not in all respects what I could have desired, but they were the best that could be obtained, after a protracted discussion, that shook the Republic to its very foundation, and I felt bound to give them my official approval. Not only this, but perceiving there was a disposition to renew the agitation at the next session, I took the responsibility of declaring, in substance, in my annual message, that I regarded these measures as a "final settlement of this question, and that the laws thus passed ought to be maintained until time and experience should demonstrate the necessity of modification or repeal."

I then thought that this exciting subject was at rest, and that there would be no further occasion to introduce it into the legislation of Congress. Territorial governments had been provided for all the territory except that covered by the Missouri Compromise, and I had no suspicion that that was to be disturbed. I have no hesitation in saying, what most of you know already, that I was decidedly opposed to the repeal of that Compromise. Good faith, as well as the peace of the country, seemed to require, that a compromise which had stood for more than thirty years, should not be wantonly disturbed. These were my sentiments then, fully and freely expressed, verbally and in writing, to all my friends, North and South, who solicited my opinion. This repeal seems to have been a Pandora's box, out of which have issued all the political evils that now afflict the country, scarcely leaving a hope behind, and many, I perceive, are ready to impute all the blame to our Southern brethren. But is this just? (No, no.) It must be borne in mind that this measure originated with a Northern Senator, and was sustained and sanctioned by a Northern President. I do not recollect that even a single petition from a Southern State solicited this repeal; and it must be remembered that when a Northern administration, with large numbers of Northern senators and Northern members, offered the Southern States a boon, Southern members of Congress could not, if they would, safely refuse it. To refuse what seemed a boon, would have been to sacrifice themselves, and this is certainly expecting too much from political men in times like these. The blame, therefore, it appears to me, with all due deference, is chiefly chargeable to those who originated this measure; and however we may deplore the act, it affords no just ground for controversy with our Southern brethren—certainly none for which they should be deprived of their political rights. But, we now see a party organized in the North, and for the first time selecting its candidates exclusively from the Northern States, with the avowed intention of electing them, to govern the South as well as the North. By what rule is a President, thus elected, to select a cabinet-council, his foreign ministers, judges, and administrative officers? Are they also to be selected exclusively from the North?—or may you take a cabinet officer from the South, though you cannot a President or a Vice-President? These, in practice, as I have said on another occasion, must become embarrassing questions. The North is, beyond all question, the most pop-

ntous, the most wealthy, and has the most votes, and therefore has the power to inflict this injustice upon the South. But we can best judge of its consequences by reversing the case. Suppose that the South was the most populous, the most wealthy, and possessed the greatest number of electoral votes, and that it should declare that, for some fancied or real injustice done at the North, it would elect none but a President and Vice-President of slaveholders from the South to rule over the North. Do you think, fellow-citizens, you would submit to this injustice? (No, no.) No, truly, you would not; but one universal cry of No would rend the skies! And can you suppose your Southern brethren less sensitive than yourselves, or less jealous of their rights? If you do, let me tell you that you are mistaken—and you must therefore perceive that the success of such a party, with such an object, must be the dissolution of this glorious Union. I am unwilling to believe that those who are engaged in this strife can foresee the consequences of their own acts. Why should not the golden rule which our Saviour has prescribed for our intercourse with each other, be applied to the intercourse between these fraternal states? Let us do unto them as we would that they should do unto us in like circumstances. They are our brethren—they are our friends, and we are all embarked in the same ship; and if she founders in consequence of the mismanagement of the crew, we must all go down together; this Union must be torn asunder; this beautiful fabric, reared by the hands of our ancestors, must be scattered in fragments, and the people, in the language of the eloquent address of your chairman, be converted into a nation of Ishmaelites. I cannot contemplate such a scene without horror, and I turn from it with loathing and disgust.

I fear that your chairman anticipates too much when he supposes it would be in my power, if elected to the Presidency, to restore harmony to the country. All I can say is, that in such an event, I should be willing to make every sacrifice, personal and political, to attain so desirable an object. But I can never consent to be the President of one portion of this nation as against the other. I can give no pledge for the future that is not found in my past conduct. If you wish a Chief Magistrate to administer the Constitution and laws impartially in every part of the Union, giving to every state and every territory, and every citizen, his just due, without fear or favor, then you may cast your votes for me. I repeat here, what I have said elsewhere, that if there be those at the North who want a President to rule the South—if there be those at the South who want a President who will rule the North—I do not want their votes. I can never represent them. I stand upon the broad platform of the Constitution and the laws. If I should be called upon to administer the government, the Constitution and laws of the country shall be executed, at every hazard and at every cost.

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