

THE ATTITUDE OF JAMES BUCHANAN TOWARDS
SLAVERY.

(A PERSONAL STUDY BASED UPON THE WORKS OF JAMES
BUCHANAN HIMSELF.)

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The attitude towards slavery of all men prominent in public affairs from 1820 to 1860 is most interesting and instructive, both as a personal study and as throwing light upon the development of the slavery issue. The attitude of Buchanan is especially instructive, as his public life covered the entire period of the controversy, and as he was President when the struggle came to a climax after the election of Lincoln. Let us study his conception of the struggle as a moral, as a constitutional, and as a sectional issue.

AS A MORAL ISSUE.

On November 27, 1819, we notice the first indication of Buchanan's attitude towards slavery. On that date he was one of a committee of three which drew up resolutions for a large and enthusiastic meeting of the citizens of Lancaster, Pa., voicing their approval of the congressmen who "sustained the cause of justice, humanity, and patriotism," in opposing the introduction of slavery into Missouri, and declaring that they were "Entitled to the warmest thanks of every friend of humanity."¹ Buchanan here takes his position upon high moral ground. But his lamentable fall from this high position is well illustrated by his letter to Jefferson Davis of March 16, 1850, in which he

¹ John Bassett Moore, *The Works of James Buchanan*, Vol. III, p. 5.

lame excuses himself for his early stand which "that scamp General Cameron" had just recalled to the public attention. "I was then a young man, had a great veneration for the chairman of the committee as my legal preceptor, and probably was under the influence of the excitement then universal in Pennsylvania."²

After 1819 we never again find Buchanan facing the issue with resolute moral boldness. On April 11, 1826, he declared in the House of Representatives that he believed slavery to be "a great political and a great moral evil," but "an evil at present without a remedy."³ He was afraid that the slaves would become the masters if set free and that they would massacre "the high-minded and chivalrous race of men in the South."⁴ Let us notice other instances of this moral bluntness and feeling of impotence in coping with a recognized evil.

In 1850 he fears that there are "very many in the Northern states who place their consciences above the Constitution of their country "by trying to rescue fugitive slaves, "thinking, at the same time, they were doing God's service."⁵ He would put patriotism before conscience, and would subscribe to the abominable doctrine, "My country first, right or wrong." In August, 1857, when the North was enraged over "bloody Kansas," he can not understand why some should question the right of the Southerners to keep their slaves there. "How it could ever have been seriously doubted is a mystery."⁶

In July, 1860, he declared in a speech at the White House that it was "the most extraordinary thing in

² W. U. Hensel, *The Attitude of James Buchanan to the Slavery Question*, Pamphlet, p. 5.

³ Moore, *op. cit.*, I, p. 202.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 401.

⁶ *Ibid.*, X, p. 120.

the world'' that the Northern people should make such an ado about slavery. He said that it was as unreasonable for a territorial legislature to forbid slavery as it would be for it to forbid the mining of coal and iron, and was so pitifully narrow as to say that ''the principle is precisely the same.'''' He failed to make a distinction between negro souls and coal and iron. He looked with amazement at people who could become passionate over this great moral question.

Buchanan failed entirely to appreciate the genius of the abolitionists. Instead of having the vision to see that they must win out in the end, he believed that they were ''adopting the most effectual means of defeating their own avowed object'''' by presenting to the negro's mind ''vague notions of freedom never to be realized,'' and making their condition ''doubly miserable by compelling the master to be severe in order to prevent any attempts at insurrection.'''' Thus by enraging the South, the abolitionists have ''postponed for a long period, if not forever, the emancipation of the slave,''''' and have ''brought the Union into imminent peril.''''' He was always most bitter against these agitators, and declared in December, 1856,—''The great object of my administration will be to arrest, if possible, the agitation of the slavery question at the North.'''''

Another enlightening indication of Buchanan's narrow moral vision is his belief after every slavery crisis that the issue is now settled. Thus, on March 2, 1836, he declares that the abolition agitation ''will pass away in a short period, like the other excitements which have disturbed the public mind, and are now almost

⁷ Moore, *op. cit.*, X, p. 462.

⁸ *Ibid.*, IX, p. 60.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 453.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 397.

¹² *Ibid.*, X, p. 100.

forgotten.”¹³ In December, 1837, he is opposed to “lighting up a flame over the whole country” by reopening the questions of the right to petition Congress and of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. He considers the issue settled. “Let us now adhere to the decision firmly.”¹⁴ Again, in 1840, “The crisis is now over,” and abolition, which threatened to invade the constitutional rights of the South and to dissolve the Union “has been nearly extinguished.”¹⁵ In 1845, he offers to the North the foolish notion that the annexation of Texas would probably be the means of removing slavery altogether, because the slaves would be attracted to Texas, and would then go over the Rio Grande into Free Mexico! He is still utterly blind to the significance of the agitation “for the sake of an unavailing philanthropy. . . . Close the agitation now, and it would be closed forever.”¹⁶ Again, in November, 1850, he declares that the Northern agitation, “like everything human, will have its day. We have already passed the dangerous crisis.”¹⁷ In December, 1855, writing to Mr. Slidell about the approaching presidential campaign, he states that unchangeable firmness and prudent discretion would put down the slavery agitation. He believed that the issue was settled, and that “this settlement should be inflexibly maintained.”¹⁸

In June, 1856, he declared that the slavery issue was “rapidly approaching a finality.”¹⁹ And so it was, but not the peaceful “finality” which he expected when he said in November of the same year that “we shall hear no more of Bleeding Kansas,” that Kansas would

¹³ Moore, *op. cit.*, III, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 329-330.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 179-180.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 404.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IX, p. 486.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, X, p. 83.

"slide gracefully into the Union,"²⁰ and that when Kansas was admitted, all agitation "will soon die away for want of outside ailment." He was so fatuous as to imagine that the Harper's Ferry raid would so alarm the people of the North that it would "be the means, under Providence, of allaying the existing excitement and preventing further outbreaks of a similar character."²¹ Even as late as July, 1860, in a speech from the White House, he declared that "the present issue is transitory, and will speedily pass away. In the nature of things it cannot continue."²² But this speech was largely political bait. He was really worried about the situation now, and in a private letter to Robert Tyler, wrote, "Everything looks bad, not only for the party, but for the country."²³

Having viewed Buchanan's utter lack of appreciation of slavery as a potent moral issue, it is a relief to note his firmer stand with relation to the slave trade. Of course he praises Cass for preventing the passage of the Quintuple Treaty, and is strongly against Article 8 of the Ashburton Treaty, which implies the recognition of the right of England to co-operate with the United States to search ships for captured African negroes. He is afraid that we will recognize the "claim of the British government to be the supreme protector of the rights of humanity, either on the ocean or on the land."²⁴ But as Secretary of State under Polk, he is firm and energetic in suppressing the trade. In August, 1847, Brazil refused to accept David Tod as our Minister because we insisted on searching American vessels in her waters for Africans. The feeling which Buchanan shows in his letter to Tod has the ring of genuineness. "The

²⁰ Moore, *op. cit.*, X, p. 97.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 463.

²³ *Ibid.*, XI, p. 516.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, V, p. 360.

African slave trade is a disgrace to the civilization of the Nineteenth Century; but thank God! Brazil is the only nation on the American continent where it is tolerated." He insists on our right to search American vessels in Brazilian harbors, even though it may "produce dangerous and delicate questions . . . and end in an open rupture."²⁵ In 1860, he recommended that Congress provide \$45,000 for aiding to send back to Liberia 300 negroes taken from a slaver, and for insuring sanitary conditions among them. There is no reason to think that he was not sincere in deploring the growth of the slave trade during his Presidency. The connivance of the South in refusing to check the trade greatly hampered the central government in trying to crush it.

AS A CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE.

Turning now from Buchanan's view of slavery as a moral issue, let us note how he approaches the question from the constitutional viewpoint. His own words indicate his main position best—"This is not a question of general morality, affecting the consciences of men, but it is a question of *constitutional law*."²⁶ He declared in 1836 that all Pennsylvanians were opposed to slavery in the abstract, but that they would "never violate the constitutional compact which we have made with our sister States."²⁷

And right at this point, in his tender solicitude for all the claims of his sister States in the South, Buchanan appears in the worst light. He is the prince of "Northern men with Southern principles." In 1838 he said, "I do not desire to maintain myself at home, unless I can do it with a due regard to the rights and

²⁵ Moore, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 407.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, p. 345.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

the safety of the people of the South.”²⁸ In March, 1850, in a letter to W. R. King, he resented the implication of Senator Hale that the Northern Democrats were the natural allies of *Slavery*, but under the fine distinction that “*Slaveholders* have no friends or allies to stand by their constitutional rights except the Democracy of the North.”²⁹ He wishes this letter to be shown to Jefferson Davis, whom he declares will “always be willing to defend an absent friend.” After the Compromise Bill of 1850 had been passed, he declared that “the honor of the South has been saved.”³⁰ He was more concerned about “the honor of the South” than of that of the North. He perceived quickly that the doctrine of squatter sovereignty would be “unsatisfactory and unpopular in the South within a brief period after it shall have been adopted.”³¹ He accepted the extreme Calhoun view when he saw that the Missouri Compromise was abrogated. He wrote to Mr. Foote in May, 1850, that he hoped the United States would extend over all North America, and clearly indicated whose interests he wished to advance by this extension by saying that “the recent *Nicaragua* Treaty rendered this impossible without a war with Great Britain.”³²

Buchanan has the antipathy of the typical Southerner for New England, and enjoys making thrusts at it. During the discussion over the annexation of Texas, he reminds the New Englanders that they resisted the acquisition of Louisiana. “They will also resist the annexation of Texas with similar energy, although, after it has been acquired, it is they who will reap the chief pecuniary advantage from the acqui-

²⁸ Moore, *op. cit.*, III, p. 342.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 371.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 387.

tion.”³³ In his “Mr. Buchanan’s Administration” he accuses New England of trying to be its brother-section’s keeper. “If sinful in itself, slavery was certainly not the sin of the people of New England.”³⁴ He claimed that they had as little right to agitate against slavery in Brazil as in South Carolina. “Their sins are not our sins. We must intrust their punishment and reformation to their own authorities, and to the Supreme Governor of nations.”³⁵

However strongly the above illustrations indicate that Buchanan had “sold out” to the South, it is not fair to come to definite conclusions until we have examined the actual constitutional grounds on which he ostensibly bases his Southern views.

During the early slavery debates, Buchanan places most emphasis upon the constitutional rights of the States to regulate slavery as they please within their own borders. Practically no one questioned the constitutionality of this “fundamental compact.” But Buchanan argued that Maryland and Virginia would never have given the District of Columbia to the United States if they thought that slavery could be abolished there while they permitted it within their own borders, and that to abolish it in the District would be an act of bad faith by Congress. “When slavery ceases to exist under the laws of Virginia and Maryland, then, and not till then, ought it to be abolished in the District of Columbia.”³⁶ This argument, however, is palpably based more on a desire not to hurt the feelings of Southern States than on sound constitutional reasoning.

His arguments in favor of the right of petition, however, are sound. He attacks Calhoun strenuously,

³³ Moore, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XII, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 454.

showing that the right to petition is guaranteed by the Constitution, even though the grant of the petition—to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, would be unconstitutional. The petitioners are not constitutional lawyers, and it is not for the Senate to decide whether the people are aggrieved or not. “If the People have a constitutional *right* to petition, a corresponding *duty* is imposed upon us to receive their petitions. From the very nature of things, rights and duties are reciprocal.”⁸⁷

Buchanan stood for a strict enforcement of the fugitive slave law, as it was passed “to carry into execution the plain, clear, and mandatory provision of the Constitution.” He was “sorry, very sorry to state that Pennsylvania was among the number” of States which sought to obstruct its enforcement. Since the fugitive slave law of 1793 existed for more than half a century before its force was lessened by the decision of the Supreme Court in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, he could not see why there should be objection to the law of 1850. He believed that the South would not “patiently submit to have this law repealed, essentially modified, or nullified,”⁸⁸ as it represented the great Southern advantage gained in the Compromise of 1850.

Buchanan learned from Justice Grier of the position which the Supreme Court would take in *Scott v. Sandford* as early as February 23, 1857, and sought to prepare the country for its acceptance in his Inaugural Address. After the decision, this Northern man took the extreme Southern view of the case, and split with Douglas. While Douglas did not care whether Slavery was up or down, Buchanan struggled to keep it up. If the thought that the crucial part of the decision was *obiter dictum* ever occurred to him, he never even tried to refute it.

⁸⁷ Moore, *op. cit.*, III, p. 16.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 402.

In November, 1850, Buchanan declared that the South would not be justified in dissolving the Union, and believed that "the patriotic people of the South will, by a large majority, arrive at the same conclusion."³⁹ He held to this view after the Southern states had seceded, but as early as September, 1856, he indicated in a letter to William B. Reed that he believed that the Northern states had no constitutional right to coerce them to force them back into the Union. When he heard that many in the South threatened to form a Southern Confederation if Fremont were elected, he "received such communications with regret and astonishment," but there is no note of anger. He exclaims impotently, "God save the Union! I do not wish to survive it."⁴⁰

AS A SECTIONAL ISSUE.

So far in our discussion we have noticed that Buchanan had no conception of the great moral significance of the continued slavery agitation, and that he leaned towards the extreme Southern viewpoint, with which his constitutional view of the problem mainly coincided. He has been presented so far in a rather unfavorable light. But he was, nevertheless, a great lover of the Union, and an opponent of strictly sectional parties. Until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he believed that "the harmony of the States and even the security of the Union itself require that the line of the Missouri Compromise should be extended to any new territory which we may acquire."⁴¹ He held that the Compromise saved the Union in 1820, and that "its extension in 1848 to any new territory will secure a like happy result."⁴² He

³⁹ Moore, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 404.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, X, p. 92.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, VII, p. 386.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 387.

was sincere when he wrote to Jefferson Davis in March, 1850, "Would to Heaven that General Taylor might come out in favor of the Missouri Compromise! I should glory in sustaining him."⁴³ He was eager for some settlement of the vexed slavery question, and was willing to compromise. He wrote to W. R. King, "If the question can be settled upon the principle of non-intervention, I say Amen with all my heart. If this should fail, my letter (in favor of the Missouri Compromise) may yet come into play."⁴⁴

Although Buchanan in 1835-6 was active in his attempts to prevent the circulation of incendiary publications through the mails for fear that it would injure the feelings of the South," it is evident that he was alarmed for the safety of the Union because of the growing agitation. He justly felt that the Abolitionists were taking the aggressive at this time in stirring up the sectional issue. He felt that if he did not try to stop these publications and the slaves actually rebelled because of the propaganda, that he "would consider himself an accomplice in their guilt."⁴⁵

Buchanan's attitude towards acquiring territory as a result of the Mexican War is very inconsistent. Polk tells us that on June 30, 1846, Buchanan was opposed to taking any land south of latitude 32°, and on that date had a heated argument with Walker, Secretary of the Treasury, who wished to secure land as far south as 26°. Buchanan "spoke of the unwillingness of the North to acquire so large a country that would probably become a slave-holding country if attached to the United States."⁴⁶ In November he declared in the Cabinet that the acquisition of this South-

⁴³ Moore, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 374.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III, p. 89.

⁴⁶ James K. Polk, *Diary*, Vol. I, p. 496.

ern territory "would be the means of dissolving the Union."⁴⁷ How strange it is to find him taking the Northern view into consideration! But we must not forget that at the same time he was vigorously opposing the expedition to Mexico City,—led by his great Whig opponent, General Scott. In January, 1848, when we had conquered Mexico, he no longer pretended to fear Northern sentiment, but went beyond Polk by declaring "That we should secure Tamaulipas and all the country east of the Sierra Mountains."⁴⁸ One can hardly refrain from agreeing with Polk that "the true reason of Mr. Buchanan's present course is that he is now a candidate for the Presidency, and does not wish to incur the displeasure of those who are in favor of the conquest of all Mexico. He is an unsafe adviser."⁴⁹

Buchanan could not understand the moral sentiment which secured so many adherents to the Wilmot Proviso. It was to him simply a new device introduced into the issue "to add fuel to the flame and to excite the Southern people to madness."⁵⁰ It is impossible to attribute his attitude entirely to his Southern feelings. He honestly dreaded purely sectional parties, and the effects upon the nation of a Congress "divided into hostile parties, rather than that of the Representatives of a great and united people . . . promoting the common good of the whole Republic."⁵¹

Buchanan was an earnest advocate of the Compromise of 1850. In a letter to a Public Meeting in November, 1850, he clearly showed that he believed the North to be on the aggressive, and that it must be checked in order "to preserve this Union from the

⁴⁷ Polk, *op. cit.*, II, p. 255.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III, p. 276.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁵⁰ Moore, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 394.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

most imminent danger." Although he recognized that many Southerners advocated secession, he believed that "a large majority still fondly cling to the Union." But the two things which he deemed necessary to save the Union both applied particularly to the North, where the slavery agitation "must be rebuked and put down by a strong, energetic, and enlightened public opinion," and the fugitive slave law "must be executed in its letter and in its spirit."⁵²

In Buchanan's attitude on the Kansas-Nebraska question, we notice the same change of position which so compromised him in his attitude towards Mexican Accessions. In June, 1856, we find him saying to the Committee of Notification of his nomination to the Presidency, that the principle of squatter sovereignty "will surely not be controverted by any individual of any party professing devotion to popular government. Besides, how vain and illusory would any other principle prove in practice in regard to the Territories!"⁵³ But when he sees the Southerners turn against squatter sovereignty, he becomes the chief spokesman of a strict Southern construction of the Dred Scott decision, and an opponent of Douglas. In August, 1857, he sends a stinging reply to a Memorial of Connecticut citizens, signed, among others, by Timothy Dwight and Horace Bushnell, in which he compares the Topeka Convention to the Hartford Convention. Instead of any other principle than squatter sovereignty being vain and illusory, it is now a mystery to him how anyone could ever have seriously doubted the right of anyone to keep their slave property in the territories, whatever view Congress or the Territorial Legislature might take. After this decided change of front, together with his refusal to take cognizance of the heinous election frauds at the Blue Lodge Election

⁵² Moore, *op. cit.*, VIII, p. 393.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, X, p. 83.

and of the deception practised in presenting the Le-compton Constitution to a vote, one is not very much impressed by his appeals in 1858 for the "obedience and conformity to law" as he sees it. Evidently Buchanan was satisfied, for on July 31 he wrote, "Throughout the South all or nearly all are now satisfied,"⁵⁴ and Jefferson Davis, "a marvellous proper man," was making speeches in the North in favor of the Union.

Buchanan's southern expansionist views are best illustrated by his attitude towards the acquisition of Cuba. In the Cabinet on June 6, 1848, he spoke in favor of the acquisition of Cuba. His views on the subject were clearly expressed when he was minister to England. He wrote to Secretary of State Marcy in November, 1853, that he was glad to hear Lord Clarendon tell him that England was not encouraging Spain to emancipate the Cuban slaves. He sent Col. Sickles, Secretary of the London Legation, to urge the head of the Spanish Republicans at Barcelona not to emancipate the slaves in Cuba if his party secured control of Spain. But Buchanan wrote to Marcy, "All the arguments which the Colonel could employ were urged in vain against the adoption of such a course."⁵⁵ Since Buchanan was "opposed to slavery in the abstract," why should he not rejoice to see another nation emancipate her slaves?

His report (October 18, 1854) to Marcy of the Ostend Manifesto is one of our most disgraceful State documents. He declares, "After we shall have offered Spain a price for Cuba . . . and this shall have been refused, . . . then, by every law human and Divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power." He did not want a second St. Domingo, as it would bring "the flames . . . to our

⁵⁴ Moore, *op. cit.*, X, p. 225.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IX, p. 215.

neighboring shores.”⁵⁶ In a word, he realized that slavery must expand if it was to endure.

AFTER THE ELECTION OF LINCOLN

Having viewed Buchanan’s attitude towards slavery as a moral, constitutional, and sectional issue, his actions after the election of Lincoln become more intelligible. The phases of his attitude become more accentuated. His moral blindness is pitiful. In his last annual message to Congress on December 3, 1860, he notes the general *material* prosperity, and asks, “Why then, discontent now so extensively prevails, and the union of the States, which is the source of all these blessings, is threatened with destruction?”⁵⁷ If the North would only let the South alone, all would be well. On December 16, he wrote to G. M. Wharton, “I have been warning them (the North) for years of what would finally be the result of their agitation, but all in vain.”⁵⁸ His only alternative is a constitutional amendment “*defining the rights of the South.*” In his annual message above quoted he would have the amendment declare that slaves were property, to be protected as such in the territories; and affirm the constitutionality of the fugitive slave law. He had the temerity to suggest for a serious consideration that “such an explanatory amendment would, it is believed, forever terminate the existing dissensions, and restore peace and harmony among the States.”⁵⁹

As we have seen, Buchanan did not believe that the South had the right to secede. Even on the question of expediency he believed that the South should not have seceded. As a slaveholding Confederacy, it would have the world against it, but the “peculiar institu-

⁵⁶ Moore, *op. cit.*, X, p. 266.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, XI, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

tion" of the South would be protected by the Constitution as long as it remained in the Union. "The true policy, even in regard to the safety of their domestic institution was to cling to the Union."⁶⁰

But when the Southern states *did* secede, he did not love the Union well enough to try to force them back, but in the crisis presented strict constitutional views against coercion. "Congress possesses many means of preserving the Union by conciliation; but the sword was not placed in their hand to preserve it by force."⁶¹ He declared that the Act of 1795 gave the President power under certain conditions to suppress insurrections against States, but that Congress must make a new provision for an insurrection against the United States before he could act. He threw the whole responsibility upon Congress. "They alone possess the power to remove grievances which might lead to war, and to secure peace and union to this distracted country. On them, and on them alone rests the responsibility."⁶² He blamed Congress for not passing the Crittenden Compromise, or giving him a military force to repel attack. He was correct when he said that "all history proves that inaction in such an emergency is the worst possible policy, and can never stay the tide of revolution."⁶³ But the fault lay primarily in himself, not in Congress. He did not use all the force at his command. His actual policy was frankly one of inaction. He allowed the South control the United States custom-houses in their territory, refused to take offense when the supply ship was driven away from Fort Sumter, and delayed all action while the Charleston officials were demanding the surrender of Fort Sumter. He was afraid of offending the South. He

⁶⁰ Moore, *op. cit.*, XII, p. 91.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

wanted to treat the South gently, so that it might be coaxed back into the Union.

Buchanan favored the North during the war, as he believed that the South was unjustified in taking the aggressive at Fort Sumter. Although he had a heated debate with General Scott during the war period, he refrained from comment which would hinder the Administration, and did not publish his vindication of his own Administration until after the death of Lincoln.

CONCLUSION.

In July, 1860, Buchanan wrote to J. T. Henry, "I am one of the last of a race of men who were in their day the faithful guardians of the Constitution and the Union. This sacred duty has now descended to a new generation."⁶⁴ He was one of the last of the generation of those who felt that it was absolutely necessary to preserve the equal balance of the sections on the slavery issue and to keep the issue in the background in order to preserve the Union. But he lacked the breadth of *national* vision and sympathy of a Webster, Clay, or Cass. The new generation *did* preserve the Constitution and the Union, but they had the moral vision to see that slavery had to be whipped out of existence, and the higher law of freedom recognized in the Constitution before a real and lasting Union could be effected.

⁶⁴ Moore, *op. cit.*, X, p. 465.