

these men were for, these Southern leaders: they were seeking nothing more nor less than the reopening of the African slave trade. That is what they were for, and they knew they could not have that so long as the Constitution and the laws of the United States were in force. I have reason to know that this is true, that they were for the reopening of the African slave trade; and I know it from Mr. Clay himself, a man they always hated, and one they dogged with their persecution to his grave.

Several members. That is true.

Mr. SANDS. And I will tell you how I know it. I desire gentlemen of the Convention to know it, for it is authentic, and of interest. Mr. Clay's statement was this: That from the earliest times of his association with these Southern gentlemen, these Southern politicians, there were two questions to which they especially devoted their attention. The first of these questions was that of cheap labor for their cotton fields—just mark this statement, for I have the means of authenticating it; the first question was cheap labor for the cotton field. The second was, how to retain in their own hands, all such political power as would enable them to use the Government of the United States in the interest of slavery. Those were the two questions they were seeking to solve. And I aver that the method they adopted to solve them was the most ingenious and alluring that ever was conceived by the mind of man.

What did they say among themselves in their private consultations? Why, said they, the Constitution forbids the African slave trade; the laws passed by Congress make the African slave trade piracy, and punishable with death. How are we to avoid this atrocious Constitution and these iniquitous laws? For, mark you, if what they called their natural source of supply of labor was opened to them—the African coast—they could get negroes for \$30 a head. If it was not for this terrible Constitution, which they all professed to love so much, and the laws of Congress passed in pursuance of it, then instead of paying you \$1,000 for every negro they bought of you to put in the cotton field, they could get one from Africa for \$30. Now how did they act about getting around this Constitution and these laws?

Mr. BERRY, of Prince George's. I would ask the gentleman if nearly all who were engaged in the African slave trade, while it existed, were not people of the North?

Mr. SANDS. All I have to say to gentlemen who desire to ask questions of me is, that the books are open to them as to me. As to this question, all I have to say is that a slave-trader, whether he be of the North or of the South, is to me an object of revulsion and horror; all slave-trading is vile and iniquitous, and ought to be abolished.

These Southern politicians wanted a plan

to avoid the Constitution and the laws. Said they, if there was some territory contiguous to our borders, which we could control, then the African slave trade might be legalized there, and we could eventually reap the benefit of it. Said they, here is the territory of Texas, one immense cotton field; if we can revolutionize that and seize it, declare it independent, run it full of slaves—for the slave-trade is not against international law; only against treaty stipulations and local laws—seize Texas, run it full of slaves from Africa, and then all we will have to do will be to annex it to the United States, and then *eo instanti* the laws and Constitution of the United States would be over it, and every \$30 of slave property would be turned into the value of \$1,000; and we would have two Senators pledged to slavery, and three or four representatives in the popular branch of Congress, pledged irrevocably to the maintenance and support of slavery; and while increasing in the proportion of \$30 to \$1,000 slave property there, we would have a new accession of political power in the counting of five imported savages as three voters. Was not the plan ingenious? Why, the Constitution they so loved was set at naught; the laws passed under it became a dead letter. They went to work, and it is a matter historically notorious that the battles in Texas were fought by men from the States, led by generals from the States. They revolutionized Texas, filled it with negroes, and then stood ready to carry out their nefarious scheme.

Then it was that they sent a formal deputation to Mr. Clay and informed him what they were seeking to accomplish, after obtaining from him first a promise of secrecy in regard to what they were about to tell him. They told him and then proposed to him that if he would give the benefit of his great influence in the Senate of the United States, in support of their scheme, he should have, though he had theretofore contributed nothing towards it, his share of the monetary proceeds and his share of the political power which they should control. Mr. Clay's reply to them was worthy of the man. Listening to them until they had laid bare before him their vile scheme in all its details, he said to them: "Gentlemen, you have my promise not to betray you; nor do I believe that you meant me a personal affront in thus approaching me. But to me your plan appears to be the giant infamy of the age, for it is nothing more nor less than the practical re-opening of the African slave-trade; and that, too, not only in violation of our Constitution and laws, but in the face of the moral and religious sentiments of mankind." That is what the noble old Kentuckian said to them. I have his statement in manuscript here in my desk, and gentlemen can see it whenever they please. He said to them: "No, gentlemen; no monetary consid-