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SPEECH OF MR. M'DUFFIE, MEMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES, April, 1850.

Mr. Chairman, I have the honor to be permitted to say a few words in relation to the condition of the Southern States under the operation of the tariff system. I have no picture of the imagination, present a few decisive facts that will speak for themselves, and will not be subject to one interpretation. For the twelve years, the condition of the Southern States has been steadily progressing, and the price of cotton has fallen from thirty to ten cents a pound, every thing else in corresponding proportion. This state of things is certainly distressing. Almost any country, where there is permanent peace, will be reconciled to it by habit. But our calculations and pecuniary interests are not to be reconciled to it. But a tariff is passed after tariff, extending further and further the oppressive influence of the system, constant pecuniary embarrassment is the almost unavoidable result. No produce can be sold. An unexpected decline in the price of produce baffles the calculations of the most cautious, and in this unusual tendency of things, the planter almost invariably finds, each successive year, his means of meeting his pecuniary engagements, less than he really calculated when he made them. The profits of the cotton planter, with the natural advantages with which Providence has favored him, are now actually less than those of any other description of capitalists in the Union. I think what I personally know, when I see that the labor of a slave in the field does not yield the owner more than 124 cents per day, on an average, Sir, I leave it to any gentleman in the Middle or Eastern States, to say whether the price of common field labor is not three or four times as high. Taking the average of the various kinds of labor in those States, I feel authorized to say, it may be set down at fifty cents. I am aware of the prevalence of an idea, that slave labor is not as cheap as free labor; but, as regards agricultural pursuits it is entirely erroneous. No white man from New England, or any where else, can do more field work than a South Carolina slave. Taking the average of the year, the Southern planter has greatly more labor performed by each hand, than the Northern farmer. With us, there is no season lost from one end of the day, or from one end of the year, to the other. The winter season, which is a period of idleness and rest with the Northern farmer, is, with our planters, a period of busy and laborious preparation for the coming spring. If, notwithstanding the fact, that the most valuable staple in the world, and works thus incessantly throughout the whole year, the labor of the Southern planter is not one-fourth part as productive as the average of Northern labor, does it not furnish a striking commentary upon the ruinous and exhausting effects of your oppressive system of taxation? If the soil and climate of Pennsylvania or New York are as well adapted to the culture of cotton as those of South Carolina or Georgia, I am well satisfied, a Pennsylvania or New York farmer could not only cultivate cotton for less than fifty cents a pound, with all the industry and economy he could use. Let me man acquainted with the business of cotton planting, make an estimate of the price for which he could afford to raise cotton, using hired labor at fifteen cents a day, and he will find the result. I have made amply confirmed the result.

price of any agricultural production, so that which has taken place in the Southern States. From century to century, the price of cotton, for example, maintains almost a uniform price, because the cost of its production—the actual labor required to produce it, cannot, as in the case of manufactures, be materially diminished by machinery. Thirty years ago, the price of cotton was nearly three times as high as it is at present, although the same quantity of manual labor is necessary to produce it now as at the former period. A corresponding reduction in the price of labor is the necessary consequence. On the contrary, the price of grain is very nearly as high in the grain growing States, taking an average of several years, as it was thirty years ago. No reduction, therefore, has taken place in the price of the labor employed in producing it. In fact, the average price of labor in the Southern States—including all pursuits—has evidently advanced, during the period under consideration. It cannot be otherwise, under a system of taxation and oppression, which annually drains from the Southern planters one-third of their incomes, to be distributed in bounties and disbursements among the people of the other States of the Union. It is the natural result of that system, and God only knows at what point of depression, short of absolute ruin, it will stop, if this government shall persevere in the course it has hitherto pursued.

Mr. Chairman, a great and solemn crisis is evidently approaching, and I am anxious gentlemen, that it is the part of wisdom, as well as of justice, to pause in this course of legislative tyranny and oppression, before they have driven a high minded, loyal and patriotic people to something bordering on despair and desperation. Sir, if the ancestors of those who are now enduring—too patiently enduring, the oppressive burden, unjustly imposed upon them—could return from their graves, and witness the change which the Federal Government in one quarter of a century, has produced in the entire aspect of the country, they would hardly recognize it, as the scene of their former activity and usefulness. Where all was cheerful and prosperous, and flourishing, and happy, they would behold nothing but decay, and gloom, and desolation, without a spot of verdure to break the dismal continuity, or even a ray of the wilderness left on the stalk. To tell where the garden had been.

Looking upon this sad reverse in the condition of their descendants, they would naturally inquire what moral, or political pestilence had passed over the land, to blast and wither the fair inheritance they had left them? And, sir, when they should be told, that a despotic power of taxation, infinitely more unjust and oppressive than that from which the country had been redeemed by their toil and sacrifices, was now assumed and exercised over us by our own brethren, they would indignantly exclaim, like the ghost of the murdered Hamlet, when urging his afflicted son to avenge the tarnished honor of his house, "If you have nature in you, hear it not."

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what course South Carolina may deem it her duty to pursue, in this great emergency. It is enough to say, that she perfectly understands the ground which she occupies, and be assured, sir, that whatever attitude she may assume, in her highest sovereign capacity, she will firmly and fearlessly maintain it, and the consequences what they may. The responsibility will not rest upon her, but upon her oppressors.

And here, sir, I beg leave to offer a few remarks on the subject of the celebrated resolutions of Virginia and Kentucky, about which much has been recently said, in Congress and out of it. It is not my object to give any opinion upon those resolutions, but to show what they really are, and the principles they distinctly avow.