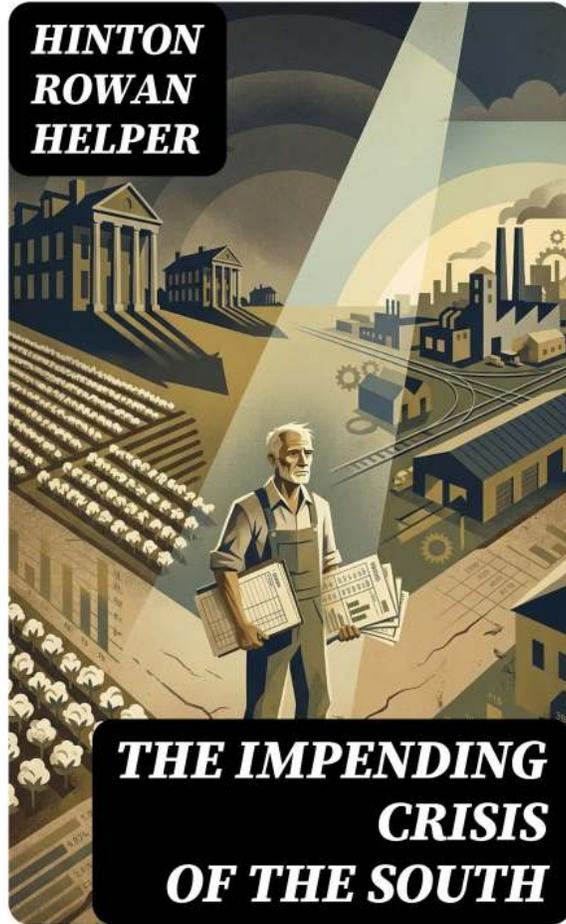


**HINTON
ROWAN
HELPER**



**THE IMPENDING
CRISIS
OF THE SOUTH**

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**THE IMPENDING
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OF THE SOUTH**

Hinton Rowan Helper

The Impending Crisis of the South

Enriched edition. How to Meet It

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Cameron Price

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Introduction

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A social order built on human bondage, Helper contends, ultimately starves its own majority to feed a privileged few. *The Impending Crisis of the South* by Hinton Rowan Helper is a forceful antebellum indictment that fuses economic argument and political warning. Across its pages, the author marshals comparisons between regions and classes to argue that slavery distorts markets, suppresses education and enterprise, and concentrates power. Rather than an appeal to sentiment, it aims to persuade skeptical, nonslaveholding white Southerners with numbers and blunt rhetoric. The book's central tension lies between the promise of broad-based prosperity and the reality of a plantation oligarchy, urging that structural change is necessary and urgent.

Published in 1857, in the mounting uncertainty of the late antebellum United States, this work belongs to the polemical tradition of political economy and social critique. Helper, a North Carolinian, writes as a Southern dissenter addressing the economic and civic conditions of the slave states. The setting is not fictional but the lived geography of plantations, towns, and trade corridors across the nation, with particular emphasis on the South's material trajectory. The book positions itself within public debate rather than academic study, treating statistics and reportage as instruments for civic persuasion and pressing its case to readers who must decide how their region will modernize.

At its core, the premise is straightforward: examine the relative performance of slave and free societies and infer causes and remedies. The reading experience is brisk and confrontational, alternating between recitations of data and sharpened denunciations of entrenched interests. Helper's voice is assertive and insistent, using repetition and accumulation to turn numbers into argument. The tone is urgent rather than reflective, impatient with hedging and designed to rally rather than soothe. Stylistically, the book privileges clarity, tabulation, and comparison over ornament, producing a text that feels at once like a ledger and a pamphlet, a hybrid of social analysis and political agitation.

Thematically, the work advances a sweeping economic critique of slavery's inefficiencies and its drag on innovation, infrastructure, and education. It argues that a narrow ruling class benefits while a far larger body of nonslaveholding whites is consigned to stagnation, thereby weakening the region's competitiveness. The focus on productivity, wages, immigration, and literacy frames slavery not only as a moral wrong but as a structural impediment to prosperity and republican governance. Helper links household fortunes to regional destiny, describing how labor systems shape opportunity and civic health. The result is a portrait of an oligarchic order set against the ideal of broadly shared advancement.

Reading the book today requires attention to its ethical contradictions. Helper's assault on slavery is rooted primarily in the economic interests of whites, and his rhetoric is steeped in racial hierarchy and exclusionary

proposals. The text therefore documents a strand of antislavery thought that rejected human bondage while refusing egalitarian conclusions. Engaging it critically clarifies how reformist programs can be driven by partial sympathies and how racial prejudice can coexist with calls for structural change. This complexity makes the book a revealing primary source for understanding the intersecting currents of race, class, and political economy in the era that preceded war.

Upon publication, the work provoked intense controversy and became a flashpoint in sectional debate. It was denounced across the South and circulated in Northern political discourse, sharpening arguments about labor, representation, and regional futures. As a historical artifact, it captures the mood of impending rupture and the ways data and polemic were mobilized to sway public judgment. The book's title signals danger, but the text itself functions as a campaign to redirect policy and power. Its reception underscores how information, when weaponized in a polarized climate, can galvanize constituencies while deepening existing divides.

For contemporary readers, *The Impending Crisis of the South* matters as both analysis and caution. It demonstrates the persuasive force—and limits—of data-driven argument in struggles over freedom, work, and citizenship. It exposes how economic reasoning can challenge injustice while simultaneously entrenching other forms of exclusion. It illuminates the politics of inequality, the vulnerability of democratic institutions to oligarchic capture, and the high stakes of regional development choices. Above all, it invites

reflection on how evidence, rhetoric, and moral imagination interact when societies confront entrenched systems of exploitation and must decide whether to reform, replace, or defend them.

Synopsis

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The *Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (1857), by North Carolinian Hinton Rowan Helper, is a polemical work aimed primarily at non-slaveholding whites in the slave states. Framed as an economic and social analysis rather than a moral treatise, it argues that slavery undermines Southern prosperity, civic health, and future growth. Helper assembles comparative statistics and plainspoken commentary to show how a labor system based on human bondage disadvantages the many for the benefit of a small owning class. The book proceeds by setting out data, interpreting regional contrasts, and proposing a program of reform designed to alter Southern policy.

Drawing heavily on the 1850 federal census, Helper juxtaposes Northern and Southern measures of population growth, literacy, immigration, manufacturing output, transportation networks, and urbanization. He contends that the free-labor North advances faster across nearly every indicator, while the slave South lags despite abundant natural resources. Tables and enumerations anchor his claim that widespread, remunerated labor, diversified industry, and open competition generate wealth more broadly than plantation agriculture. He stresses that the greatest economic losers under slavery are non-slaveholding whites, who face curtailed opportunity, depressed wages, and limited social mobility, while political power and capital concentrate in the hands of relatively few planters.

Turning to agriculture, Helper describes how staple-crop monoculture and coerced labor deplete soils, discourage innovation, and tie communities to volatile markets. He links the scarcity of manufacturing and local enterprise to weak internal improvements and a narrow commercial base. The analysis extends to education, where he highlights meager public schooling and high illiteracy in many slave states, which he associates with policy choices that prioritize the plantation regime. Throughout, the argument insists that the region's material constraints are not inevitable but policy-driven, and that diversified agriculture, better infrastructure, and broader access to learning are essential to any durable Southern prosperity.

Helper's critique is political as well as economic. He portrays a planter oligarchy that dominates legislatures, shapes the press, and suppresses dissent to protect slavery. In his account, legal penalties and social intimidation limit free discussion, while structural rules entrench the influence of large slaveholders. He also warns that efforts to expand slavery into federal territories would deepen these imbalances nationwide. Addressing Southern voters directly, he urges them to recognize how patronage and prestige bind the region to policies that hinder most white citizens. The core conflict becomes one between a closed, slaveholding power and a broader public interest.

Examining social and moral effects, Helper argues that slavery degrades the status of labor, deters immigration, and distorts community life, including religious institutions. He emphasizes the civic value of free labor—wages, contracts, and voluntary association—as the basis for

dignity and progress. At the same time, his program is framed by the racial attitudes of his era. He denounces slavery while also advocating measures, including colonization schemes, that would remove Black people from the United States after emancipation. The book thus couples an economic attack on slavery with a white supremacist vision of the South's future, revealing its author's stark limitations.

From diagnosis he moves to prescription. Helper calls for non-slaveholding whites to organize politically, refuse support to slaveholding candidates, and press for policies that foster education, commerce, and internal improvements. He favors restricting slavery's reach and using constitutional means to diminish its power within the states, expecting that free labor's advantages will hasten slavery's end. His approach rests on lawful agitation, voting, and economic development rather than insurrection. The proposed remedy is gradual and programmatic: diversify industry, attract free workers, elevate schools and the press, and realign public policy so that the South's laws reflect the interests of its majority.

The *Impending Crisis of the South* provoked immediate controversy. It was widely condemned in the slave states, where circulation was often suppressed, and it gained attention among antislavery politicians in the North, where abridged editions appeared in the late 1850s. Beyond its moment, the book matters for crystallizing a data-driven, class-conscious critique of slavery that was not rooted in egalitarianism. Its pages register the entanglement of antislavery economics with racist ideology, highlighting

tensions that would reverberate during and after the Civil War. Read today, it remains a stark document of sectional argument, political mobilization, and the uses—and limits—of statistics.

Historical Context

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Published in 1857, *The Impending Crisis of the South* arose amid the United States' sectional decade of the 1850s. The cotton kingdom dominated the lower South, anchored by plantations, enslaved labor, and export credit networks tied to Atlantic markets. The federal Union balanced free and slave states in Congress, while state legislatures enforced slave codes and restricted antislavery speech. The North experienced rapid urbanization, railroad growth, immigration, and manufacturing expansion, tracked by the decennial U.S. Census. Newspapers, pamphlets, and lecture circuits spread partisan arguments, making print a primary arena of conflict. Against this backdrop, economic comparisons became political weapons.

Southern society rested on a rigid hierarchy centered on enslavers, yet most white households owned no enslaved people. Wealth, political power, and access to credit concentrated among planters and cotton factors, while yeoman farmers and artisans navigated limited schools, few towns, and sparse transportation in many areas. Immigration from Europe largely bypassed the slave states, keeping wages, skills, and votes concentrated in the North. Internal slave trading shifted people from the Upper to the Deep South, sustaining plantation expansion. Measurable disparities—in literacy, manufacturing output, banking capital, and urban population—emerged in official tallies, inviting data-driven critiques of slavery's economic effects.

National politics repeatedly tried—and failed—to tame the issue. The Mexican-American War expanded U.S. territory, provoking disputes over slavery's extension. The Compromise of 1850 admitted California free, reshaped Texas's claims, and enacted a stringent Fugitive Slave Act that compelled participation in recapture efforts and galvanized northern resistance. Enforcement controversies, personal liberty laws, and courtroom battles kept slavery visible in daily life. Churches and national parties, once cross-sectional institutions, fractured under the strain. Within this climate, antislavery arguments diversified: moral abolitionism, free-soil opposition to expansion, and economic criticisms that faulted slavery for stunting development and limiting opportunity for non-slaveholding whites.

In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the Missouri Compromise line and proposed popular sovereignty, igniting violent struggle in "Bleeding Kansas." The Republican Party formed by 1854–1856 to halt slavery's expansion, fusing antislavery Whigs, Free Soilers, and some anti-Nebraska Democrats around a free-labor platform. The Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision in 1857 denied Congress's authority to bar slavery in the territories and limited Black people's claims to citizenship, intensifying sectionalism. That same year, the Panic of 1857 shook credit and trade. Economic distress and legal setbacks gave special urgency to arguments that measured slavery's regional costs in income, industry, and innovation.

Hinton Rowan Helper, born in 1829 in North Carolina to a non-slaveholding family, wrote from a southern white

perspective shaped by proximity to plantations without sharing their wealth. After a stint in California during the Gold Rush, he turned to authorship. *The Impending Crisis of the South* drew heavily on the 1850 U.S. Census and official compendia, arranging statistics to compare free and slave states in agriculture, literacy, commerce, and manufacturing. Framed as an appeal to nonslaveholding whites, it urged political mobilization against planter dominance. Helper's critique remained explicitly racist; he supported Black colonization and rejected Black equality while attacking slavery's power.

The book's method and message provoked fierce southern resistance. Authorities seized shipments, and legislatures condemned the volume; in several states, circulating such literature risked prosecution. Public meetings denounced the author, and proslavery editors portrayed the work as incendiary class agitation aimed at destabilizing slave society. University and public libraries in the South often restricted access to antislavery writings. The controversy fit a longer pattern of controlling the mails and the press to suppress perceived threats. By casting economic underdevelopment as slavery's consequence, Helper challenged planter prestige and invited poor and middling whites to question the political monopoly of slaveholders.

As the 1860 election approached, Republicans promoted a condensed *Compendium of the Impending Crisis* to spread its tables and conclusions. Dozens of Republican members of Congress endorsed the publication, and Democrats seized on their association with "Helperism" to depict the party as

revolutionary. In the House of Representatives in 1859–1860, southern opposition to an endorser, John Sherman of Ohio, helped spark a prolonged speakership contest that ended only with William Pennington’s election. The uproar showed how a data-driven economic critique of slavery, detached from abolitionist theology, could still convulse national politics and harden the sectional lines within Congress.

Helper’s book epitomized an antebellum turn toward statistical argument, using government data to contest the South’s self-image and the “King Cotton” claim that slavery underwrote national prosperity. By highlighting disparities in schools, infrastructure, immigration, and industry, it framed slavery as a system that enriched a minority while burdening regional growth and nonslaveholding whites. The hostile southern reception and the campaign uses in the North illustrated the era’s polarized print culture and the fusion of numbers with partisanship. As a work of its moment, it critiques institutions and policies that defined the 1850s, registering the mounting crisis they helped create.

THE IMPENDING CRISIS OF THE SOUTH

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If my countrymen, particularly my countrymen of the South, still more particularly those of them who are non-slaveholders, shall peruse this work, they will learn that no narrow and partial doctrines of political or social economy, no prejudices of early education have induced me to write it. If, in any part of it, I have actually deflected from the tone of true patriotism and nationality, I am unable to perceive the fault. What I have committed to paper is but a fair reflex of the honest and long-settled convictions of my heart.

In writing this book, it has been no part of my purpose to cast unmerited opprobrium upon slaveholders, or to display any special friendliness or sympathy for the blacks. I have considered my subject more particularly with reference to its economic aspects as regards the whites—not with reference, except in a very slight degree, to its humanitarian or religious aspects. To the latter side of the question, Northern writers have already done full and timely justice. The genius of the North has also most ably and eloquently discussed the subject in the form of novels. Yankee wives have written the most popular anti-slavery literature of the day. Against this I have nothing to say; it is all well enough for women to give the fictions of slavery; men should give the facts.

I trust that my friends and fellow-citizens of the South will read this book—nay, proud as any Southerner though I am, I entreat, I beg of them to do so. And as the work, considered with reference to its author's nativity, is a novelty—the South being my birth-place and my home, and my ancestry having resided there for more than a century—so I indulge the hope

that its reception by my fellow-Southerners will also be novel; that is to say, that they will receive it, as it is offered, in a reasonable and friendly spirit, and that they will read it and reflect upon it as an honest and faithful endeavor to treat a subject of enormous import, without rancor or prejudice, by one who naturally comes within the pale of their own sympathies.

An irrepressibly active desire to do something to elevate the South to an honorable and powerful position among the enlightened quarters of the globe, has been the great leading principle that has actuated me in the preparation of the present volume; and so well convinced am I that the plan which I have proposed is the only really practical one for achieving the desired end, that I earnestly hope to see it prosecuted with energy and zeal, until the Flag of Freedom shall wave triumphantly alike over the valleys of Virginia and the mounds of Mississippi.

H. R. H.

JUNE, 1857.

CHAPTER I

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COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FREE AND THE SLAVE STATES.

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It is not our intention in this chapter to enter into an elaborate ethnographical essay, to establish peculiarities of difference, mental, moral, and physical, in the great family of man. Neither is it our design to launch into a philosophical disquisition on the laws and principles of light and darkness, with a view of educing any additional evidence of the fact, that as a general rule, the rays of the sun are more fructifying and congenial than the shades of night. Nor yet is it our purpose, by writing a formal treatise on ethics, to draw a broad line of distinction between right and wrong, to point out the propriety of morality and its advantages over immorality, nor to waste time in pressing a universally admitted truism—that virtue is preferable to vice. Self-evident truths require no argumentative demonstration[1q].

What we mean to do is simply this: to take a survey of the relative position and importance of the several states of this confederacy, from the adoption of the national compact; and when, of two sections of the country starting under the same auspices, and with equal natural advantages, we find the one rising to a degree of almost unexampled power and eminence, and the other sinking into a state of comparative imbecility and obscurity, it is our determination to trace out the causes which have led to the elevation of the former, and the depression of the latter, and to use our most earnest and honest endeavors

to utterly extirpate whatever opposes the progress and prosperity of any portion of the union.

This survey we have already made; we have also instituted an impartial comparison between the cardinal sections of the country, north, south, east, and west; and as a true hearted southerner, whose ancestors have resided in North Carolina between one and two hundred years, and as one who would rather have his native clime excel than be excelled, we feel constrained to confess that we are deeply abashed and chagrined at the disclosures of the comparison thus instituted. At the time of the adoption of the Constitution, in 1789, we commenced an even race with the North. All things considered, if either the North or the South had the advantage, it was the latter. In proof of this, let us introduce a few statistics, beginning with the states of

NEW YORK AND VIRGINIA.

In 1790, when the first census was taken, New York contained 340,120 inhabitants; at the same time the population of Virginia was 748,308, being more than twice the number of New York. Just sixty years afterward, as we learn from the census of 1850, New York had a population of 3,097,394; while that of Virginia was only 1,421,661, being less than half the number of New York! In 1791, the exports of New York amounted to \$2,505,465; the exports of Virginia amounted to \$3,130,865. In 1852, the exports of New York amounted to \$87,484,456; the exports of Virginia, during the same year, amounted to only \$2,724,657. In 1790, the imports of New York and Virginia were about equal; in 1853, the imports of New York amounted to the enormous sum of \$178,270,999; while those of Virginia, for the same period,

amounted to the pitiful sum of only \$399,004. In 1850, the products of manufactures, mining and the mechanic arts in New York amounted to \$237,597,249; those of Virginia amounted to only \$29,705,387. At the taking of the last census, the value of real and personal property in Virginia, including negroes, was \$391,646,438; that of New York, exclusive of any monetary valuation of human beings, was \$1,080,309,216.

In August, 1856, the real and personal estate assessed in the City of New-York amounted in valuation to \$511,740,491, showing that New-York City alone is worth far more than the whole State of Virginia.

What says one of Virginia's own sons? He still lives; hear him speak. Says Gov. Wise^[1]:

"It may be painful, but nevertheless, profitable, to recur occasionally to the history of the past; to listen to the admonitions of experience, and learn lessons of wisdom from the efforts and actions of those who have preceded us in the drama of human life. The records of former days show that at a period not very remote, Virginia stood pre-eminently the first commercial State in the Union; when her commerce exceeded in amount that of all the New England States combined; when the City of Norfolk owned more than one hundred trading ships, and her direct foreign trade exceeded that of the City of New-York, now the centre of trade and the great emporium of North America. At the period of the war of independence, the commerce of Virginia was four times larger than that of New-York."

The cash value of all the farms, farming implements and machinery in Virginia, in 1850, was \$223,423,315; the value of the same in New-York, in the same year, was \$576,631,568. In about the same ratio does the value of the agricultural

products and live stock of New-York exceed the value of the agricultural products and live stock of Virginia. But we will pursue this humiliating comparison no further. With feelings mingled with indignation and disgust, we turn from the picture, and will now pay our respects to

MASSACHUSETTS AND NORTH CAROLINA.

In 1790, Massachusetts contained 378,717 inhabitants; in the same year North Carolina contained 393,751; in 1850, the population of Massachusetts was 994,514, all freemen; while that of North Carolina was only 869,039, of whom 288,548 were slaves. Massachusetts has an area of only 7,800 square miles; the area of North Carolina is 50,704 square miles, which, though less than Virginia, is considerably larger than the State of New-York. Massachusetts and North Carolina each have a harbor, Boston and Beaufort, which harbors, with the States that back them, are, by nature, possessed of about equal capacities and advantages for commercial and manufacturing enterprise. Boston has grown to be the second commercial city in the Union; her ships, freighted with the useful and unique inventions and manufactures of her ingenious artisans and mechanics, and bearing upon their stalwart arms the majestic flag of our country, glide triumphantly through the winds and over the waves of every ocean. She has done, and is now doing, great honor to herself, her State and the nation, and her name and fame are spoken with reverence in the remotest regions of the earth.

How is it with Beaufort, in North Carolina, whose harbor is said to be the safest and most commodious anywhere to be found on the Atlantic coast south of the harbor of New-York, and but little inferior to that? Has anybody ever heard of her?

Do the masts of her ships ever cast a shadow on foreign waters? Upon what distant or benighted shore have her merchants and mariners ever hoisted our national ensign, or spread the arts of civilization and peaceful industry? What changes worthy of note have taken place in the physical features of her superficies since “the evening and the morning were the third day?” But we will make no further attempt to draw a comparison between the populous, wealthy, and renowned city of Boston and the obscure, despicable little village of Beaufort, which, notwithstanding “the placid bosom of its deep and well-protected harbor,” has no place in the annals or records of the country, and has scarcely ever been heard of fifty miles from home.

In 1853, the exports of Massachusetts amounted to \$16,895,304, and her imports to \$41,367,956; during the same time, and indeed during all the time, from the period of the formation of the government up to the year 1853, inclusive, the exports and imports of North Carolina were so utterly insignificant that we are ashamed to record them. In 1850, the products of manufactures, mining and the mechanic arts in Massachusetts, amounted to \$151,137,145; those of North Carolina, to only \$9,111,245. In 1856, the products of these industrial pursuits in Massachusetts had increased to something over \$288,000,000, a sum more than twice the value of the entire cotton crop of all the Southern States! In 1850, the cash value of all the farms, farming implements and machinery in Massachusetts, was \$112,285,931; the value of the same in North Carolina, in the same year, was only \$71,823,298. In 1850, the value of all the real and personal estate in Massachusetts, without recognizing property in man, or setting a monetary price on the head of a single citizen, white or black, amounted to \$573,342,286; the value of the

same in North Carolina, including negroes, amounted to only \$226,800,472. In 1856, the real and personal estate assessed in the City of Boston amounted in valuation to within a fraction of \$250,000,000, showing conclusively that so far as dollars and cents are concerned, that single city could buy the whole State of North Carolina, and by right of purchase, if sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States, and by State Constitutions, hold her as a province. In 1850, there were in Massachusetts 1,861 native white and free colored persons over twenty years of age who could not read and write; in the same year, the same class of persons in North Carolina numbered 80,083; while her 288,548 slaves were, by legislative enactments, kept in a state of absolute ignorance and unconditional subordination.

Hoping, however, and believing, that a large majority of the most respectable and patriotic citizens of North Carolina have resolved, or will soon resolve, with unyielding purpose, to cast aside the great obstacle that impedes their progress, and bring into action a new policy which will lead them from poverty and ignorance to wealth and intellectual greatness, and which will shield them not only from the rebukes of their own consciences, but also from the just reproaches of the civilized world, we will, for the present, in deference to their feelings, forbear the further enumeration of these degrading disparities, and turn our attention to

PENNSYLVANIA AND SOUTH CAROLINA.

An old gentleman, now residing in Charleston, told us, but a few months since, that he had a distinct recollection of the time when Charleston imported foreign fabrics for the Philadelphia trade, and when, on a certain occasion, his mother

30 The boundary established by the 1820 Missouri Compromise (commonly cited as the 36°30′ north latitude line) which was used to limit the spread of slavery in territories of the Louisiana Purchase north of that line.

31 Cassius Marcellus Clay (1810–1903) was a prominent Kentucky politician and abolitionist publisher in the mid-19th century, known for anti-slavery speeches and service as U.S. Minister to Russia; he is a different historical figure from the 20th-century boxer Muhammad Ali (born Cassius Clay).

32 A document purportedly proclaimed in Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 20, 1775, asserting local independence from Britain; its authenticity and exact text have been debated by historians, with some regarding it as a celebrated local tradition rather than an uncontested contemporary declaration.

33 Refers to the mid-1850s nativist political movement in the United States usually called the Know-Nothing or American Party; the author uses “brig” metaphorically to liken the party to a two-masted sailing vessel, implying it is unseaworthy or dangerous.

34 An American explorer, military officer, and the first presidential nominee of the Republican Party in 1856; he ran on an anti-slavery expansion platform and polled significant Northern support in that election.

35 The African man at the center of the 1772 English case *Somerset v. Stewart*, in which Lord Mansfield ruled that slavery had no basis in English common law and that an enslaved person brought to England could not be forcibly removed as a slave.

36 Thomas Scott (1747–1821) was an English Anglican clergyman and Bible commentator best known for his multi-volume

37 The General Assembly is the highest legislative body of Presbyterian churches; the reference indicates that this national governing body adopted a unanimous anti-slavery resolution in 1818 (an early-19th-century denominational action).

38 Pope Gregory XVI (pontificate 1831–1846) issued a papal declaration in the 1830s condemning the traffic in enslaved people and urging Christians to abandon the slave trade; the passage quoted here is from that papal document.

39 Abbé (Abbe) Raynal refers to Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (1713–1796), a French Enlightenment writer whose histories and essays criticized colonial abuses and slavery and were frequently cited by later abolitionists.

40 A French-derived phrase used here to mean sunstroke or heatstroke; the author uses it (spelled unusually, more commonly as "coup de soleil") to mock claims that Southern heat incapacitates white laborers.

41 Refers likely to Cassius Marcellus Clay (1810–1903), a well-known Kentucky politician and outspoken antislavery advocate who served as a publisher, legislator, and later as U.S. minister to Russia.

42 Gerrit Smith was a wealthy New York philanthropist and prominent abolitionist in the mid-19th century who funded antislavery societies, emigration and relief efforts, and donated money to help make Kansas a free territory.

43 A contemporary term for pro-slavery missouri-based militants in the 1850s who crossed into Kansas Territory to intimidate Free-State settlers, cast illegal votes, and otherwise try to force Kansas to adopt slavery (active primarily circa 1854–1858).

44 Refers to Jean Ribault (active 1560s), a French naval officer and Huguenot leader who organized early French Protestant expeditions and attempted settlements in present-day Florida in the 1560s.

45 A spelling used here for Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (1519–1574), the Spanish admiral who founded St. Augustine in 1565, often cited as the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in what is now the continental United States.

46 Refers to New Bedford, Massachusetts, a mid-19th-century Atlantic port best known for its whaling industry and growing textile trade; the chapter's table lists its population at about 21,000 in the 1850s.

47 George Rowland Jr. is the individual signing the New Bedford letter as Mayor, indicating he was the city's mayoral official in 1857.

48 Wilmington, North Carolina, a port city in a slaveholding state; the letter from its mayor in the text estimates the town's inhabitants at about 10,000 in the 1850s.

49 A chapter heading used by the author to list nine cities located in slaveholding states; in this context 'slave cities' means municipalities where slavery was legal and enslaved people were counted as property in wealth tallies.

50 Refers to the final stage of British emancipation in the West Indies when the apprenticeship system ended and formerly enslaved people in British colonies (including Barbados) became legally free on August 1, 1838.

51 Refers to undoing the federal Fugitive Slave Act (commonly the 1850 law) that required escaped enslaved people be returned to their enslavers and penalized those who aided escape; opponents sought its repeal in the 1850s.

52 Refers to rescinding the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), which created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska and allowed 'popular sovereignty' for slavery, a law that inflamed sectional tensions.

53 A member or supporter of the Free Soil movement/party (active c.1848-1854) that opposed expansion of slavery into U.S. territories and promoted 'free labor' principles.

54 A mid-19th-century St. Louis newspaper (often styled the Democrat) cited here for its editorials; local papers like this were influential in regional politics and public opinion.

55 Alludes to the Mason and Dixon Line, the surveyed boundary (1763-1767) between Pennsylvania and Maryland that later became a cultural shorthand for the divide between Northern (free) and Southern (slave) states.

56 An illustrated weekly news magazine published by Harper & Brothers, first issued in 1857, known for wide circulation and political and cultural commentary in the late 19th century.

57 James Gillespie Birney (1792-1857) was an American abolitionist and political activist best known as the Liberty