500,000 square miles to the area of the United States ; Texas itself made up some 375,000 square miles more. The settlement of the north-west boundary between Oregon and British Columbia (§ 221), giving its own share to each country (1846), with the Texas and Mexican cessions, gave the United States the complete territorial form retained until the annexation of Alaska in 1867.

1. In the new territory slavery had been forbidden under Mexican law ; and its annexation brought up the question of its status under American law. He who re­members the historical fact that slavery had never been more than a custom, ultimately recognized and protected by State law, will not have much difficulty in deciding about the propriety of forcing such a custom by law upon any part of a territory. But, if slavery was to be ex­cluded from the new territory, the States which should ultimately be formed out of it would enter as free States, inclined to take an anti-slavery view of doubtful questions; and the influence of the South in the senate would be decreased. For the first time the South appears as a dis­tinct *imperium, in imperio* in the territorial difficulties which began in 1848.
2. The first appearance of these difficulties brought out in the Democratic party a solution which was so closely in line with the prejudices of the party, and apparently so likely to meet all the wishes of the South, that it bade fair to carry the party through the crisis without the loss of its Southern vote. This was “ squatter sovereignty,” the notion that it would be best for Congress to leave the people of each territory to settle the question of the exist­ence of slavery for themselves. The broader and demo­cratic ground for the party would have been that which it at first seemed likely to take—the “ Wilmot proviso,” a condition proposed to be added to the Act authorizing acquisitions of territory, providing that slavery should be forbidden in all territory to be acquired under the Act. In the end apparent expediency carried the dominant party off to “ squatter sovereignty,” and the Democratic adherents of the Wilmot proviso, with the Liberty party and the anti-slavery Whigs, united in 1848 under the name of the Free Soil party. The Whigs had no solution to offer ; their entire programme, from this time to their downfall as a party, consisted in a persistent effort to evade or ignore all difficulties connected with slavery.
3. Taylor, after the battle of Buena Vista, resigned and came home, considering himself ill-used by the ad­ministration. He refused to commit himself to any party ; and the Whigs were forced to accept him as their candidate in 1848. The Democrats nominated Cass ; and the Free Soil party, or “ Free-Soilers,” nominated Van Buren. By the vote of the last-named party the Democratic candidate ost New York and the election, and Taylor was elected president. Taking office in 1849, he had on his shoulders the whole burden of the territorial difficulties, aggravated by the discovery of gold in California and the sudden rise of population there. Congress was so split into factions that it could for a long time agree upon nothing ; thieves and outlaws were too strong for the semi-military govern­ment of California ; and the people of that Territory, with the approval of the president, proceeded to form a con­stitution and apply for admission as a State. They had so framed their constitution as to forbid slavery; and this was really the application of the Wilmot proviso to the richest part of the new territory, and the South felt that it had been robbed of the cream of what it alone had fought cheerfully to obtain.
4. The admission of California was not secured until September 1850, just after Taylor’s sudden death, and then only by the addition of a bonus to Texas, the division of the rest of the Mexican cession into the Territories of Utah and New Mexico without mention of slavery, and the passage of a Fugitive Slave Law. The slave trade, but not slavery, was forbidden in the District of Columbia. The whole was generally known as the compromise of 1850. Two of its features need notice. As has been said, slavery was not mentioned in the Act ; and the status of slavery in the Territories was thus left uncertain. Congress can veto any legislation of a Territorial legislature, but, in fact, the two houses of Congress were hardly ever able to unite on anything after 1850, and both these Territories did establish slavery before 1860, without a Congressional veto. The advantage here was with the South. The other point, the Fugitive Slave Law, was a special demand of the South. The constitution contained clauses directing that fugitive criminals and slaves should be delivered up, on requisition, by the State to which they had fled (§ 124). In the case of criminals the delivery was directed to be made by the executive of the State to which they had fled ; in the case of slaves no delivering authority was specified, and an Act of Congress in 1793 had imposed the duty on Federal judges or on local State magistrates. Some of the States had passed “ personal liberty laws,” forbidding or limiting the action of their magistrates in such cases ; and the Act of 1850 transferred the decision of such cases to United States commissioners, with the assistance of United States marshals. It imposed penalties on rescues, and denied a jury trial. All the ill-effects of the law were not felt until a year or two of its operation had passed (§ 244).
5. The question of slavery had taken up so much time in Congress that its other legislation was compara­tively limited. The rates of postage were reduced to five and ten cents for distances less and greater than 300 miles (1845); and the naval school at Annapolis was established the same year. The military school at West Point had been established in 1794. When the Democratic party had obtained complete control of the government, it re­established the “sub-treasury,” or independent treasury (1846), which is still the basis of the treasury system. In the same year, after an exhaustive report by Robert J. Walker, Polk’s secretary of the treasury, the tariff of 1846 was passed ; it reduced duties, and cut out all forms of protection. With the exception of a slight additional re­duction of duties in 1857, this remained in force until 1861.
6. Five States were admitted during the last ten years of this period,—Florida (1845), Texas (1845), Iowa (1846), Wisconsin (1848), and California (1850). The early entrance of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Florida had been due largely to Indian wars,—the Black Hawk war in Iowa and Wisconsin (1832), and the Seminole war in Florida (1835-37), after each of which the defeated Indians were compelled to cede lands as the price of peace. The ex­tinction of Indian titles in northern Michigan brought about the discovery of the great copper fields of that region, whose existence had been suspected long before it could be proved. Elsewhere settlement followed the lines already marked out, except in the new possessions on the Pacific coast, whose full possibilities were not yet known. Railroads in the Eastern States were beginning to show something of a connected system ; in the South they had hardly changed since 1840 ; in the West they had only been prolonged on their original lines. The telegraph, which was to make man master of even the longest and most complicated systems, was brought into use in 1844 ; but it is not until the census of 1860 that its effects are seen in the fully connected network of railroads which then covers the whole North and West (§ 273).
7. The sudden development of wealth in the country gave an impetus to the spirit of invention. Goodyear’s method of vulcanizing rubber (1839) had come into use. M'Cormick had made an invention whose results have