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CONGRESSIONAL.

SPEECH OF MR. CASS,

OF MICHIGAN,

In the Senate of the United States, May 10, 1848.—On the bill to enable the President to take temporary military possession of Yucatan.

Mr. CASS addressed the Senate as follows:

Mr. PRESIDENT: Before I proceed to the direct consideration of the subject before the Senate, I beg leave to recall a remark made by the honorable senator from Connecticut in the discussion of yesterday, and to correct an error into which I think he has fallen. In deprecating the prompt action of Congress in this matter, the honorable senator justified our delay by the delay of the Executive; and I thought with an appearance of harshness, if not of severity. He said the subject had been before the President for some weeks, perhaps for some months, without any decision; and he seemed to draw the conclusion, that we might now require an equal time to determine upon our legislative course. There is an essential difference, however, between the action of the executive and of the legislative departments upon this subject. I believe it is about two months since the melancholy state of things in Yucatan was first made known to this government, and its interposition implored. It was a new question, involving very serious considerations. We all feel this; for they are pressed upon us more and more at every step of our progress. However urgent were the claims of humanity, the necessary information for discreet action was not in the possession of the Executive. The commissioner of Yucatan had indeed made his representation; but it required to be fortified by less partial information—by the reports and opinions of our own officers, who were acting upon the coasts of that country, and who were acquainted with its present condition, and the causes that led to it. Well, sir, it took time to procure these facts through this channel, and, as soon as they were procured, the President determined upon his course, and transmitted the message now under deliberation. Certainly gentlemen do not desire the same time to discuss such a question as this, as was necessarily consumed in the collection of information. The great points of the case are before us, and the application now comes, not merely from the Yucatese commissioner, but from the legislative department of the government in a solemn decree, and from the Executive of the country. It is a case of overwhelming, overpowering necessity. While we are deliberating, the sad action is going on; and however prompt we may now be, we may not be prompt enough for the circumstances. The fate of the country may be decided before we can send any relief. At any rate, let us redeem ourselves from the reproach of indifference or unnecessary delay. This is one of those great cases for human action, where to do well is to do promptly, and where too much caution will show that we are unequal to the position in which we find ourselves placed.

I need not recall the condition of Yucatan. The message itself, with the accompanying documents, the information which daily reaches us through the public journals, and the discussion here, have put us in possession of the true state of things in that unhappy country. It is divided between the two races of Spanish and of aboriginal descent, and the Indians have obtained the superiority—have descended from the high country upon the low, and are driving the white race before them to death or to the ocean. It is a war, if that can be called a war, where the fighting seems to be all upon one side, of destruction and extermination. Not figuratively, because here and there a man is killed or a plantation laid waste, but literally, rigidly; for nothing is spared, neither man nor his works, and fire and the sword accompany the Indian army, and do their work without pity as without remorse. Aid, under such circumstances, is a duty of humanity, which no one in this country calls in question. But, owing to the peculiar features of our own constitution, many doubt whether this government has the power to grant it. Though I believe, sir, we may clearly interpose in such an extreme case of national suffering, as was done many years since for Caraccas; yet, as this question does not lie in my way, I shall not turn aside to seek it. All may hold the claims of humanity to be a strong inducement for action, when conjoined with other motives for legislative interposition, which render our action equally constitutional and expedient. This question intimately connects itself with the prosperity and (I had almost said) the safety of our country. We have reached one of those epochs in the progress of nations to which the historian looks back with interest, and whence he traces much of the good or evil they encounter in their career,—one of those epochs which impress themselves upon the character of a country, and when vigorous counsels are equally dictated by justice and by wisdom, while timid and irresolute measures are sure to be followed by political weakness and by the contempt of the world.

The principle advanced by Mr. Monroe, many years since, in two of his messages to Congress, which denounced any future attempt of the European powers to establish new colonies in this country, has been brought into this discussion, and, in fact, necessarily connects itself with it. This principle has been reasserted by the present Executive, upon the same general considerations which influenced the action of his predecessor. It was a wise measure, fully justified by received principles of the law of nations and by the actual circumstances of our country. The honorable senator from Connecticut [Mr. NILES] considers the reiteration of the principle by the present Executive, and perhaps its original annunciation by Mr. Monroe, as *the* claim of a right to regulate all the affairs of this continent, so far as respects Europeans. But this, sir, is an entire misconception of the whole subject. It has, however, prevailed somewhat extensively, both here and elsewhere, though it seems to me that the slightest consideration of the messages referred to would have corrected, or rather prevented, this flagrant error. Neither of these Presidents, the past nor the present, assumed to interfere with any existing rights of other nations upon this continent. Neither of them called in question their right to hold and improve the colonies they possessed, at their own pleasure. Such an assumption would have been equally obtrusive and ineffectual; and how the opinion could have prevailed that it has been advanced, no one can tell, for in the documents themselves the true doctrine is cautiously guarded and existing rights considered as unassailable. The object which these statesmen had in view was to prevent the recolonization of any portion of this hemisphere; to announce to the world, that when any of the colonies planted upon it escaped from European thraldom, they should not be again subjected to that comparatively humiliating condition. The Spanish colonies had shaken off the yoke of Spain, and had asserted their independence. The struggle had been going on some time, and it was apparent to all the world, except to the world of Spanish obstinacy, that, if not prevented by external force, it would terminate, as it has terminated, in their admission into the great family of nations. It was obvious that European complications might arise, in consequence of the necessities of Spain, and of her recklessness in pushing the contest, which might affect the fate of these countries. French or English assistance might be asked for, and rights conveyed which would induce these powers to take part in the struggle, with a view to take part in the spoils that might result from it. This was the evil foreseen, and the declaration of this country was one of the remedies to avert it. On this, as upon many other occasions, we halted in our course, and did not come up to our own work. Such declarations as those referred to, when made by the head of a European nation, are made authoritatively, because he who pronounces them has the power to enforce them. They become settled maxims of policy, and other nations are aware that they cannot be interfered with, except at the hazard of war. But it is far different here. Great principles of conduct depend essentially upon public sentiment, and can only be enforced by the action of Congress. Public sentiment in this country has, I believe, with unusual unanimity, approved this principle; but Congress has never, by action or declaration, given it the sanction of its authority. It has rested, therefore, barren among our archives, only to bear fruit when the legislature of the country adopts it as its own. My honorable friend from Ohio, [Mr. ALLEN,] with that sagacity and energy which mark his political course, seeing this state of things, and foreseeing its consequences, endeavored some two years since to draw the attention of Congress to this subject, and to procure its authoritative action. But he failed—not, however, from the want of those exertions which ought to have insured success; and we have come down to the present day with this great principle—recommended, indeed, but not asserted, by the only body which has the power to give effect to the assertion.

Mr. President, a few brief reflections will, I think, satisfy us that this measure is as just as it is important; and now, when we must discard or embrace it, it is our duty to examine the considerations which are connected with it. That law which regulates the intercommunication of nations, is not rigid and stationary. It rests, indeed, upon certain fundamental principles of right and wrong; but many of its principles change with the changes of nations, and accommodate themselves to the progress of society and to the existing opinions of mankind. Illustrations of this principle are familiar to every reader of modern history. They are to be found in the questions which have been agitated about the Baltic; the Black sea; the right of England, claimed and exercised at one time, to control the navigation of what she called her narrow seas; about the equally absurd claim of Spain, which she actually enforced for many years, to prevent the vessels of other nations from sailing within the neighborhood of her American colonies; and about the right of the Pope to partition the new continent among the powers of the old. I have not had time to advert to the historical authorities, but I am strongly impressed with the conviction, that when the Portuguese government had been transferred to Brazil, and the permanent condition of the two countries became the subject of consideration in Europe, it was contended, and, I believe, admitted, that the two nations must be eventually separated if the government remained in Brazil, as the principle could not be admitted that European nations might become the colonial establishments of the American powers. This was assumed as a kind of family law belonging to the nations of that hemisphere, necessarily arising out of their condition.

When this continent was first settled, its true destiny seems never to have occurred even to the most sagacious statesman. The colonial establishments were formed and settled for the purpose of commerce and profit, and were held only for the benefit of the metropolitan governments. The memory of this condition of things survives in the word *plantations*, yet retained as the name of one of our States, and indicating the object of its early establishment; and, in the term *general court*, the appellation of the legislature of several members of the confederacy, identical with the name of the directing power of large corporations in England—such as the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company—and which belonged to the corporations whose powers were transferred to New England, but without the slightest apparent conception of the true consequences that were to follow. This *utilitarian* principle is manifest in the whole course of English legislation, and of Executive administration, respecting these States, then colonies of that country. Why, sir, it has been said—rather I suppose in illustration and reproach, than as a literal fact, but still true enough to a great extent—that even a horse-shoe nail could not, by law, be made in America, but must be manufactured in England. Every war in Europe was a war upon this continent. Governments, comparatively imbecile, like those of Spain and Portugal, and in the last stages of political decrepitude, owned and controlled half the world. Magnificent regions, destined by God to be inhabited by millions of human beings, penetrated by great arteries, divided by lofty mountains, where were emboweled the riches of the earth—prairies and pampas, and forests, as boundless in extent as they might be rendered fertile in their productions—all these gifts of nature to man were locked up, rendered useless by the wretched policy or the little miserable intrigues of the courts of Madrid and of Lisbon.

Such was the condition of this continent, when we came upon the scene of political action as one of the independent powers of the world. New interests then arose, and a new party to assert and protect them. With the change in our situation, came changes in our rights and duties. It was obvious that *many old things must pass away*. The first link in the chain of servile connexion between Europe and America was broken. When the whole connexion should be dissolved, became thenceforth only a question of time. For a while, however, we had too much to do with the present, to take any accurate survey of the future. Emerging from a terrible war, our first object was to repair its ravages, and recover from its material effects. We had then to consolidate our government, and to accommodate our institutions, state and general, to the new circumstances of our position; and while we were doing this, that tremendous storm arose in Europe, which swept over the Old World, and, during its progress, involved all the nations of the earth, directly or indirectly, either in its operation or its effects. Until this passed away, the government of the United States had no opportunity to investigate and assert the new principles arising out of their independence and their connexion with the other communities of the American continent. But the revolution of the Spanish colonies gave them this opportunity; and their increased power gave to the Executive—if it did not give to Congress—the confidence necessary for decisive action. There was an American interest upon this hemisphere, separate from the European interest. The powers inhabiting it, besides their more general relation with the nations of the earth, had a policy more peculiarly their own. The questions leading to war in Europe were almost as endless as many of them were futile. They were wars of succession, of interest, of aggrandizement, of resentment, and of almost every other passion which sways the human breast. Minions and favorites and mistresses acted upon imbecile sovereigns and corrupt cabinets, and the peace of the world was sacrificed to the most despicable motives. It would really appear in some of the wars of modern times as though power were sometimes placed in unworthy hands, to show how far human forbearance can be carried, and the dignity of human nature degraded. We desired to live out of the sphere of such operations, and we could not do so if they were brought into close contact with us. Political propagandism has no place in our policy. We prefer our own form of government, from a conviction that it is best calculated to promote our happiness; and we rejoice when other nations are willing and prepared to adopt it, from an equal conviction that it will promote theirs. But with a determination to judge for ourselves, we leave to them the same right. Certainly it is interesting to us that the States of this continent should be republican as well as independent. We can assimilate more readily with them, and we believe their condition will be safer and more permanent. But whatever form of government they might choose to adopt, it was for their interest and ours that they should advance in all the elements of improvement, moral and material; that their powers should be developed, and their own industry opened to the world, and that of the world to them. Connected with the uncertain and ever-changing fate of European sovereigns, their condition would not only be precarious, continually exposed to war, but the sources of their prosperity would be locked up, as the miser locks up his treasures, which he will neither use himself nor suffer to be used by others. The honorable senator from Connecticut has put to us the *argumentum ad hominem*, and has said that we are inconsistent in our principles, because we do not interfere with France and England in their operations in the La Plata. Certainly the war which has been waging there is one of the most unjust in modern times; but still it is an open, public-avowed war—not, it is said, for the purposes of aggrandizement, but with the professed view to terminate the hostilities which had long been going on between the independent States on that river. The honorable gentleman, as I before said, has misconceived the nature of the principle. We do not deny the right of the powers of Europe to go to war with the American States, when they have cause to do so; and of this they must judge for themselves. When these wars, however, are undertaken for the purpose of recolonizing any portion of this continent, or when that consequence is obviously to flow from them, then will come the time to test the true principles of our action.

Beside these considerations, arising out of the material and intellectual progress of the American States, there was another more immediately affecting us, and which we could not neglect. One of these States, and the most important among them, was coterminous with us along the whole extent of our southern frontier. Any convulsion, internal or external, affecting her, could not fail to engage our attention, as it could not fail to affect our interest. Continually attached to a European sovereignty, she would be continually exposed to the vicissitudes which such a state of things must necessarily bring with it; and war upon the ocean and the land would expose our borders to ever-renewing dangers. And she, too, is intimately connected by position and character with the States south of her, and their dangers would be hers.

But it is objected that this principle is at war with the salutary rule of non-intervention laid down by Mr. Jefferson, and now regarded as one of the received maxims of our policy. Sir, this is not so. These declarations on the subject of European recolonization are not for the purpose of interfering with other powers, but to prevent other powers from interfering with us. No man will carry this doctrine of non-intervention so far as to say that it prohibits us from preventing the action, united or single, of other nations, who seek the adoption of measures affecting our interest and safety. If a league were forming among the great powers of Europe, which, under whatever pretence, was seeking the establishment of a principle which would give to England the control of the commerce of the world, must we sit still and calmly await its consummation, because, if we do not, we shall *interfere* in the affairs of other nations? and then, when the time of trial comes, be compelled to resist by arms, when a firm interposition and declaration of our resolution during the progress of the diplomatic measures might have thwarted the objects of ambition, disguised under the pretence of philanthropy? Thus to interfere is no improper intervention, but a high dictate of duty, demanded by the true principles of public safety.

We desire no union of the American States; no league to involve us in their difficulties, or them in ours; no Panama mission, to open a grand negotiation, and to open likewise a career of complicated diplomatic relations, as difficult to define in their principles as to control in their practical operations. We desire the most perfect independence for all of them, and the most amicable relations among themselves and with us. But we are determined, so far as depends on us, that no European family principles shall come to find an abiding place upon this continent, and to involve in wars, that do not interest them, the various States which occupy it.

And, thanks to this "wretched," and "miserable," and "unjust," and "rash and precipitate war," our voice will now be heard and heeded through the world. Yes, sir, that war thus characterized has shed a flood of glory upon this country which will irradiate its history for generations yet to come. Its cost! its cost! is daily dinned into our ears, as though there were nothing to be regarded but money in the conduct and character of nations. It has cost much money—I do not deny it; though I believe it has been prosecuted with as much economy as is practicable in such distant and extensive operations. I regret the cost, as I regret the necessity of the war which led to it. But should we never get one foot of territory from Mexico as an indemnity—and appearances seem now to indicate that infatuated counsels may prevail in that unhappy country, and that we may be compelled to hold on to the whole—but if we should never get one foot, as an American citizen, loving my country, and having cause to love her, I would not sell my share of the glory we have acquired for many times my share of the expense it has cost. It is not mere glory which this war has brought us, though that is one of the essential elements of national power; but it is character, and distinction, and position, and beyond these strength and safety. Our territory is henceforth holy ground. No hostile foot will pollute it. No foreign power will attack us. No other war, I verily believe, will be necessary for long years to come. Paradoxical as it may appear, we shall have fought ourselves out of war. We were comparatively unknown. Our flag, indeed, was everywhere the emblem and the evidence of our commercial activity and enterprise. But our power to defend it was little understood—I might rather say, utterly disregarded. But the great experiment has been made, and we take our acknowledged rank among the powerful nations of the earth. The decree has gone forth, and he who runs may read it. The entire political separation of this continent from Europe is not a question of fact, but of time. That event must come, and appearances augur that it will come speedily. We may well leave it to its own fullness of time without any improper interference on our part.

But we are now called upon to make a practical application of the great principle I have been considering. The condition of Yucatan, and the considerations connected with it, bring this subject directly before us. We can enforce the doctrine; but we cannot enforce it without discharging the duties which it brings with it. And if we do not enforce it, we shall expose ourselves to eternal self-reproach and to the contumely of the world.

I have already briefly alluded to the condition of Yucatan. Its civilized population is placed, not between the ocean and the frowning battlements which drive it back, and where no human being can live; but between the ocean and ruthless barbarians, possessing as little mercy as the sea into which they are driving their wretched victims. It is one of those great cases in human affairs which override all other considerations. Yucatan has a right to go where she can, with her sovereignty in her hand, and demand protection from the powers of the earth, and offer her own allegiance in return for it. She has gone to England and to Spain, and she has come to us. She prefers our action to theirs; but if she cannot get the one, she must accept the other. As to Spain, any effective aid or any design of aggrandizement is probably equally out of the question, and we have England alone to look to in the solution of the question presented to us. If we do not act, will she render the assistance demanded, and accept the consideration which may accompany it? That she may do so, without giving us any just cause of offence whatever, and thus accomplish her mission without being involved in any controversy with us, is too clear to be called in question. Interest, therefore, and humanity, as well as the principles which from all time have regulated her political conduct, prompt her to accede to the demands of the government of Yucatan. The distinguished senator from South Carolina [Mr. CALHOUN] thinks she will not; but whether he comes to this conclusion from the facts in her past history or from the circumstances of her present position, it seems to me it is erroneous and unsafe.

I shall not enter into any review of the system of English acquisition. I shall briefly allude to the subject, not in the spirit of censure, though, indeed, there is too often reason enough for that feeling, but merely to recall the principles of her policy, and to judge what she will do by what she has done. The distinguished senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] asks, and with some emphasis, *what England wants of such a barren country as Yucatan?* I ask him, in return, what she wants of such barren rocks as Gibraltar, and St. Helena, and Aden, and all the other barren rocks, and islets, and positions which she has seized, and now occupies through the world? Why, sir, they are towers—some of them watch-towers, and others towers of safety—upon that wall of circumvallation thus beautifully designated the other day by the honorable senator from Mississippi, [Mr. DAVIS,] with which she has surrounded the world.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Will the honorable senator allow me to make an inquiry?

Mr. CASS. Certainly.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Will the senator be pleased to tell me—for I am uninformed and ignorant upon this point—how near a man-of-war or seventy-four gun ship can approach the promontory of Yucatan?

Mr. CASS. I intended to advert to the subject connected with the inquiry of the honorable senator in another part of my remarks; but I will now anticipate it. The application of steam power to armed vessels has introduced an improvement which may occasion an entire change in naval warfare. It is difficult to foresee its consequences, or the effect it may hereafter produce. One thing, however, is certain—that armed steam vessels, of a size and draught suitable to the navigation they are designed to encounter, will take a decisive part in naval operations. Depots for fuel become, therefore, of paramount necessity for commercial nations. Without them their steam navigation will be circumscribed and inefficient. With them, to furnish the supplies required to vessels as they call for them, the world may be circumnavigated, and steam power everywhere used. Now, sir, we have no places of deposite anywhere but at home, and England has them everywhere. She has selected her positions for that purpose with that foresight which marks her character; and she will keep them at all times supplied with abundance of necessary fuel. The advantage she will derive from this system of policy are sufficiently obvious; and we must depend upon our energy to meet them as we best can when the proper time comes. Now, sir, if England possesses the promontory of Yucatan and the island of Cuba, she will build steam vessels suitable to the harbors which may be found there: vessels of a light draught of water, but carrying a few heavy guns, and capable of commanding the outlet of the gulf—floating batteries, in fact, almost equal in efficiency to permanent batteries, ready to be stationed in the narrow channel, and completely to command it.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. The honorable gentleman has not answered my question. Again I would inquire whether there is any port in Yucatan into which a seventy-four can enter?

Mr. CASS. I am aware, sir, that the water in the neighborhood of Yucatan is shallow, and there are places where large vessels cannot approach within some miles of the land. But I repeat, that this consideration becomes comparatively unimportant when we look to the nature of the vessels which will be employed, and upon the protection they will find even upon a shallow coast.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Again I ask the honorable senator, how near a seventy-four gunship can approach the promontory of Yucatan?

Mr. CASS. Mr. President, I cannot give a direct and professional answer to the question of the honorable senator. Our maps of Yucatan are imperfect; and how near ships-of-the-line can approach its coast I do not know. But I beg the senator to recollect that no government in its senses, possessing the point of Yucatan, and the opposite point of Cuba, would employ heavy ships-of-the-line permanently to command the channel between them. It would employ steam vessels of light draught, but of great power, which might find protection in the various inlets to be found there. In looking at the eastern point of the promontory of Yucatan, it will be seen that the island of Cosamel stretches along it for some miles, with a considerable channel between the island and the main, which has probably a depth of water for vessels of a medium burden, and which would afford them adequate protection.

[Since this colloquy, an official copy of a recent British survey of the coast of the promontory has been received at the office of the coast survey, in this city, and Lieut. Porter has been good enough to furnish me with the following memoranda from it, which answer the inquiries of the senator from Kentucky, and place in a stronger light than I had even anticipated, the value of the points of Yucatan and Cuba:

"There is a fine harbor for any size vessels under the island of Muheres, the easternmost point of Yucatan; and it is protected from the winds in every direction."

"Both the harbors of Ascension and Spiritu bay are good; the latter capable of holding a large fleet of the heaviest kind of English frigates and war-steamers. These positions may be made to command the outlet of the Gulf."

"There is good anchorage off the northeast point of the island of Cosamel; this island appears on incorrect charts as 'False Cape,' but there is no such place."

"Spiritu bay would contain a hundred steamers of the largest class, and any number of the smaller class."

"There is also fine anchorage at the northwest point of the island of Cuba for any size vessel—6½ to 7 fathoms."]

The territorial acquisitions which England has made through the world, have been selected with great sagacity; some for the purposes of power and commerce, and others as positions where her vessels can find protection and be refitted, and where supplies for their necessities can always be found. She holds the southern points of four continents, and entire possession of the fifth. The whole commerce of the world passes before her gates. The Falkland islands, near Cape Horn, give her the command of the passage round our hemisphere. The Cape of Good Hope gives her an equal control of the navigation of Southern Africa. Aden is the key to the Red sea. The southern points of Asia, Cape Comorin, on the east side of the bay of Bengal, and the Malacca cape, on the west, are commanded; the former by Ceylon, and the latter by Singapore; and to these she has recently added a part of Borneo and Labuan, in the Indian Archipelago. New Holland, in the great Southern Pacific ocean, is one of her colonial dependencies, and its harbors are essential to the navigation of that region. Hong-Kong is her foothold upon the Chinese empire, equally available for the purposes of commerce now, and of ambition hereafter. The rock of Gibraltar, which frowns over the entrance into the Medditerranean, is at the southern extremity of Europe, and has been held by her for a century and a half, to control its commerce, and is among the last positions from which she will retreat.

So much for the policy of England, as deduced from her conduct. If the distinguished senator from South Carolina draws his conclusion that she will not interfere in the concerns of Yucatan from the circumstances of her present position, I think his views are quite as unsafe as if it were drawn from her established system of action. Certainly there is much in her existing condition to excite her own solicitude, and the attention of the world. The honorable senator from Connecticut thinks she has reached, as he says, her culminating point. Perhaps she has; but I shall not venture to speak dogmatically upon that question. I leave to a rasher or to a wiser man than I am, to pronounce what is to be her future fate. I sincerely hope that the political convulsions which seem now to be shaking the frame of the English government, if not of English society, may pass away, leaving the principles of freedom and equality perfectly established, and those exclusive privileges which elevate the hundreds and press down the millions forever abolished. To free England from many of the arbitrary tendencies which prevail there, would be to do more for human liberty than almost any other political measure now to be attained. She is yet the stronghold of many principles at war with human happiness; and if she surrendered to the advancing spirit of the age, the example would exert a most salutary effect upon the other nations of Europe. But however this may be, sir, England is not to be annihilated, nor her spirit, nor intelligence, nor energy destroyed. She will have a government, be it monarchical or republican; and she is not going suddenly to change the identity of her character—an identity which belongs as much to nations as to individuals—to relinquish all her projects of aggrandizement, and to abandon, without effort, the high position she holds in the world. Why, sir, republics are as jealous of their rights, and as firm in their determination to defend them, as the proudest monarchies. Every schoolboy can tell us of the bright days of Greece and Rome, when power was exercised by all, and when all were equally interested in the glory and prosperity of their common country. And we see the prevalence of the same spirit in modern times, when Venice, and Genoa, and Holland, almost governed in succession the commerce of the world, and when the French republic marched over Enrope, prostrating the ensigns of royalty in its victorious career. The nations of the old hemisphere will come out of their internal struggles fitted, I trust, to enjoy free institutions, and prepared to maintain them, and determined to be rivals henceforth—not in war, but in intelligence, in industry, and in productiveness.

In recalling the history of English territorial acquisition, I do not recollect one in the long list—except, perhaps, Scotland, which was joined to her, or rather which she joined by succession—which was not made by the sword. And is it probable she would reject one, if peacefully and voluntarily offered to her? When did she put aside, even with the affectation of coyness, the crown of territorial aggrandizement? When did she say *Nolo episcopari*, with the mitre within her reach? And think you, sir, that she will commence her career of moderation, when the functions of conqueror and protector can be united without guilt and without reproach? when she can gratify at once her ambition and her philanthropy? and when the same act will elevate her character and extend her dominion? To believe all this, is to reject the lessons of experience and the motives of human conduct, whether personal or national. History, we are told, is philosophy teaching by example. If the examples of aggrandizement in the history of England, furnished by her conduct under ever-varying circumstances, and too often with an utter disregard of the dictates of justice and the opinion of the world, do not teach us the philosophy of her past action and the probability of her future, we may as well close the records of human experience, and abandon events to the doctrine of chances, seeking neither to control nor direct them. I think, sir, we might have safely arrived at the conclusion, even prior to this debate, that Yucatan would not apply to England for assistance in vain, unless there were controlling circumstances to forbid her interference. But, as if to rebuke us for any doubt upon the subject, since this discussion commenced, it has been ascertained that at least four companies of British troops have marched into the Yucatan territory from Balize. This is the act of the colonial authority; and the movement itself is not sufficient to excite any apprehensions as to ulterior designs. But it is one of the signs of the times, and shows pretty clearly that the colonial government expected support at home. What the several West India governments may do, is not known. If they follow the same course, a formidable force may be collected in Yucatan. Now I do not undertake to say what the English government will do under existing circumstances. Much may depend upon considerations, both external and internal, not to be appreciated here. The honorable senator from Connecticut asks if we could complain, should England grant the assistance which we refuse? Certainly not, sir; and it is this very view of the matter which excites my solicitude. I have no belief that England, at this moment, when the waters around her are all troubled, would take possession of Yucatan by force. But, invited there by the Yucatese people, under a pressing emergency, she has a right to go there—and to remain there, too, if she will—as a proper consideration for her services.

I now come, Mr. President, to other, and perhaps graver considerations, directly or indirectly involved in this question. The Gulf of Mexico is the reservoir of the great river of the North American continent, whose importance it is as difficult to realize, as it is the value of the country which must seek an outlet to the ocean through its waters. That country is nearly equal to all Europe in extent, embracing twenty-five degrees of latitude and thirty-five of longitude upon the great circles of the globe. This vast basin extends from the summit of the Alleghany to the summit of the Rocky mountains, and its population now equals eight millions. The man yet lives who was living when almost the first tree fell before the woodman's stroke in this great domain, and the man is now living who will live to see it contain one hundred millions of people. Already the hardy western pioneer has crossed the barrier of the Rocky mountains, and the forest is giving way before human industry upon the very shores that look out upon China and Japan. The Mississippi is the great artery of this region, which, drawing its supplies from the fountains of the north, pours them into the ocean under a tropical sun, and drains in its own course, and in the course of its mighty tributaries—tributaries in name, but equals and rivals in fact—the most magnificent empire which God, in his providence, has ever given to man to reclaim and enjoy. I have myself descended that great stream two thousand miles in a birch canoe, admiring the country through which it passes in a state of nature, and lost in the contemplation of what that country is to be when subdued by human industry. The statistics of such a region in years to come is a subject too vast for calculation. Its extent, fertility, salubrity, means of internal navigation, and the character of the people who will inhabit it, baffle all efforts to estimate its productiveness; the tribute which its industry will pay to the wants of the world, and the supplies which the comfort and habits of its people may require.

During the palmy days of Napoleon, it is said, that one of his projects was to convert the Mediterranean into a French lake. England has nearly done what defied the power and ambition of the great conqueror. She has almost converted it into an English lake in time of war. Gibraltar commands its entrance, Malta the channel between Sicily and Africa, and the Ionian islands the waters of the Levant. There were good reasons for believing, a short time since, that England was seeking to obtain a cession of the island of Crete, the ancient kingdom of Minos, which would give her the port of Canea, that I found one of the most magnificent harbors in the world, equally capacious and secure. If England, in the pursuit of the same system, should acquire similar commanding positions on the Gulf of Mexico, that great reservoir would become a *mare clausum*, and no keel would plough it, nor convass whiten it in time of war, but by her permission. Now, sir, looking to the extent of our coast in that direction—to the productions which must pass there to seek a market—to the nature of our population—and to the effect upon all these, which a permanent naval superiority would produce—where is the American who is not prepared to adopt any measures to avert such a calamitous state of things? Who can fail to see the nature of the predatory warfare which England would carry on, in all times of hostilities, from her various positions, which would encircle the Gulf, from the Bahamas to Cuba and to Yucatan? and who also can fail to see that even in time of peace, her many harbors would become places of refuge for a certain class of our population, and that perpetual collisions would occur, involving the peace of the two countries?

The Gulf of Mexico, sir, must be practically an American lake for the great purpose of security—not to exclude other nations from its enjoyment, but to prevent any dominant power, with foreign or remote interests, from controlling its navigation. It becomes us to look our difficulties in the face. Nothing is gained by blinking a great question. Prudent statesmen should survey it; and, as far as may be, provide for it. We have, indeed, no Mount Carmel, like that of Judea, nor prophet to ascend it and to warn us against a coming storm. But the home of every citizen is a Mount Carmel for us, whence he can survey the approaching cloud, even when no bigger than a man's hand, which threatens to overspread the political atmosphere, and to burst in danger upon his country. It should be a cardinal principle in our policy, never to be lost sight of, that the command of the Gulf of Mexico must never pass into foreign hands. Its great geographical features indicate at once our safety and our danger. From the southern point of Florida to Yucatan, the chord of the arc does not probably exceed 250 miles—a shorter distance than that from Yucatan to Vera Cruz. From the southern point of Florida to Cuba, it is not more than forty miles; and from the western extremity of Cuba to the peninsula of Yucatan, it is not more than sixty miles. These two outlets—the latter into the Caribbean sea, and the former into the Atlantic ocean—do not, therefore, exceed 100 miles in their united width, and together make the exit and entrance of the Gulf. Opposite the mouth of the Mississippi is the noble harbor of Havana, almost within sight of which the whole commerce of the Gulf passes. England has already got the Bahama islands, with the port of Nassau, and other positions. So long as Cuba and Yucatan are held by their present possessors, neither we nor the commercial world have anything to fear from English projects, whatever they may be. But let their dominion be transferred to England, and where are we? The mouth of our great river might at any time be hermetically sealed, and the most disastrous injuries inflicted upon us. One important step in the command of the outlet of the Gulf of Mexico she has already taken by the possession of the Bahamas. If she gets peaceable possession of Yucatan, by our remissness, she will have taken the second. Cuba may be the last. I will ask the distinguished senator from South Carolina if he would advocate the interference of this country by force, if England were attempting by force to take possession of Yucatan? And if he would—as I believe he would—how can he consent to permit her to do peacefully what we may peacefully prevent? I have already, sir, alluded to the effects which steam-navigation is to produce upon the commercial and military marine of the world; and the various harbors and inlets of these possessions would be rendezvous whence armed steam-vessels would issue to prey upon our commerce, to close the great channels of communication, or to carry on marauding expeditions against our coast. England has recently extended her possessions south of Belize by the acquisition of Indian territory. The honorable senator from New York [Mr. DIX] brought this subject before us some time since, and exposed the details of her tortuous policy. The Mosquito king, as he is called—the chief of a tribe of Indians occupying a portion of the coast—somehow or other passed under English pupilage. It is said that he made the Queen his residuary legatee, and thus the country and its inhabitants have gone to increase the dominion of England. A cheap mode, this, of acquisition—much more economical than Indian councils, Indian presents, and Indian annuities.

Mr. President, many of the great principles of national action depend on existing circumstances. There are few mere questions of abstract right in the intercourse of nations. Peaceable acquisitions of territory, or acquisitions in a just war, can give no offence, unless to nations whose safety they endanger. Where this is the case, they may be protested against, or resisted if necessary. It is a question which each nation must judge for itself, and upon its own responsibility, but one which it ought to judge fairly. Much of the public law of the world is founded upon this principle of safety, and the elementary works abound with its illustrations. Traces of it are to be found in all the questions about the balance of power in Europe,—in the disputes concerning Malta, and Algiers, and Belgium, and many other subjects which have engaged the attention of governments, and formed the labors of diplomatists. Its perversion has, no doubt, led to abuses, as has the perversion of many other principles; but its foundation rests in the nature of things. Self-defence is as incident to communities as to individuals, and a provident forecast requires us to watch any dangerous projects of domination, and to provide for them as we can. I repeat, that a nation under these circumstances must judge for itself. Proximity of situation, the nature of the intercourse resulting from it, commanding positions to do injury, and other considerations, are all elements to be taken into view. In my opinion, we owe it to ourselves to avow distinctly to the world, that the attempt to procure the transfer of Cuba from Spain to any other nation, whether peaceably or forcibly, would be resisted by the whole power of this country. To others, it may be a question of territorial aggrandizement, or of mercantile cupidity. But to us, it is a question of necessity; I had almost said of political life or death. It would become the gate to close the great river of our country. The waters of that river, thereafter as heretofore, would reach the Gulf, but its commerce would never reach the ocean. The distinguished senator from Kentucky says that while we reproach the ambition of England, we go on acquiring; and asks, where we shall stop. I do not know where we shall stop. That decree is probably not yet written. But we seek no acquisition which can injure England, and we desire in turn that she should seek none which will injure us.

The principles involved in this system of policy have already been asserted and acted upon by the United States. They will be found in the proceedings respecting Florida, in the acts of Congress of 15th January, 1811, of March 3, 1811, and of February 3, 1813. It was then declared that *the influence which the destiny of territory adjoining the United States may have upon their security, tranquillity, and commerce, is a just motive for interference;* "and that the United States cannot see any part of the territory pass into the hands of any foreign power; and that a due regard to their own safety compels them to provide, under certain contingencies, for the temporary occupation of the said country."

I understand from one of our associates in this body, who is not likely to be deceived, that either in the biography of Mr. Jefferson, or in his correspondence, similar views are expressed by him respecting the condition and importance of Cuba, and the interest which the United States have in its ultimate fate. I have not had time to ascertain the fact by reference to the works referred to. If it is so, it is but one proof the more of the sagacity of that great patriot and statesman, and of the decision of character which marked his course through life. I have run my eye, however, over his correspondence on the subject of Florida, and I find the true doctrine enunciated and defended, there as distinctly as it is asserted in the acts of Congress I have quoted, and which received the sanction of his friend and successor, Mr. Madison.

I trust that the intrigues of no nation will ever compel us to take forcible possession of Cuba. But it seems to me, that the more the subject is examined, both here and in Spain, the more obvious it will be, that it is in the interest of both countries that the island should be ceded to us for a reasonable consideration. But the details of such a question are better fitted for diplomatic arrangement than for legislative discussion. I shall therefore not enter into them here, contenting myself with expressing the hope that the whole subject will not fail to engage the attention of every existing administration till a successful result is obtained. Such negotiations are delayed or hastened by the condition of things in Europe, and by events, which, though they cannot be foreseen, yet exert a decisive influence when they occur. And our Executive should be ready to give to these a proper direction.

Unfortunately for the stability of the Spanish monarchy, for almost a century and a half—since the death, indeed, of the last king of the house of Austria—Spain has been convulsed by questions of succession and by family difficulties, which have exhausted her power, and almost ruined her prosperity. The vast empire acquired by the romantic but barbarous exploits of Cortez and Pizarro and Almagro, has fallen to pieces, and but a fragment of it remains—a sad memorial, as it were, of departed greatness. The jewels in her crown have been reft from it, and it has lost all its splendor. Looking at the present condition of Spain, there is no reason to hope that the difficulties immediately before her are less grave than those she has passed through. Internal tranquillity seems yet far off, and external circumstances are equally unfavorable. The disposition of the few colonial dependencies she yet retains, will come up for discussion every time she is involved in a domestic or a foreign war. The fate of the island of Cuba will be thus uncertain, to its own injury and to our danger.

Doubts have been expressed here as to the designs of England upon Cuba. Well, sir, we have no direct evidence upon that subject, nor can we expect to have it. England is wary in her negotiations; and they have often become known but by their consummation. But rumors—those precursors of coming diplomatic events—have prevailed for many years, that she entertained this design, and they have been firmly believed both in Europe and in this country. It has been repeatedly said that she had demanded the island, either in absolute conveyance, or as a mortgage for the payment of the debts due to her people, and also to satisfy the claims she herself had for expenditures made on account of Spain in her great struggle with Napoleon. These rumors have been credited by our own government; and in 1840, during Mr. Van Buren's administration, Mr. Forsyth, who then presided over the Department of State, so honorably for himself, and so usefully for his country, called the whole subject to the attention of our diplomatic agent at Madrid. He stated the conviction that these efforts had more than once been made; and then bringing to the notice of our chargé the great importance of Cuba to the United States, and to their indisposition to see it transferred to any other power, he directed him to make proper representations to the court of Madrid upon the subject.

Mr. WESTCOTT here asked leave to interrupt Mr. CASS, and went on to make some remarks respecting a letter written by Mr. Calhoun, when Secretary of State, to Mr. King, then the American minister in Paris, which contained some allusion to slavery. Mr. W. also took the opportunity to express the opinion, that England meditates the acquisition of Cuba and Yucatan, and among other reasons, in order to assail the domestic institutions of the south.

Mr. CALHOUN defended his letter, and said that he might add, with an honest pride, that it had contributed to produce a change of sentiment in England, which had diminished her attachment to abolition to such an extent, that she is now attempting to resuscitate a trade very much like the slave trade, with a view to the restoration of the prosperity of her West India colonies.

Mr. CASS continued: More recently, sir—indeed, during the present session of Congress—a discussion arose in the British House of Commons, confirming all the rumors to which I have alluded, and which may well excite our apprehensions, and call upon us for decisive action. On the 4th of February last, Lord George Bentinck, one of the principal statesmen of England, and the leader of the Tory party in the House of Commons, in a discussion on the slave trade, said: "He had read in the Times an extract from a United States paper, in which it was stated that if the United States did not possess herself of Cuba, Great Britain would; and that England had a greater claim by one hundred fold to Cuba than the United States had to Mexico, because a sum of £45,000,000 was due to British subjects, and Cuba was hypothecated for the debt, &c. He would therefore say at once, let them take possession of Cuba, and settle the question altogether: let them distrain upon it for the just debt due—and too long in vain—from the Spanish government." He added: "They would put an end to the slave-trade if they could emancipate the slaves of Cuba." *Credat Judæus Apella.* Let him who will believe that any motive of philanthropy enters into this system of policy. The cloven foot peeps out below, where the speaker says, "Then, depend upon it, when Great Britain possessed the Havana, as once she did in 1762, when she held it for about a year, and then exchanged it for the Floridas, and WHEN SHE COULD CUT THE TRADE OF AMERICA IN TWO, no more boasts would be heard of what the United States could do," &c. These are plain thoughts, sir, and plainly spoken, and spoken by a high man in a high place.

Mr. CALHOUN. The design was disavowed by the British minister.

Mr. CASS. I do not find it so, sir. What the British minister said was anything but a disavowal. Here it is—all he said upon this subject. The speaker is the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the organ of the British cabinet upon subjects of commerce: "Neither did he propose to follow his noble friend through his arguments in support of the proposition that we should foreclose upon Cuba, and take possession of that dependency as a lien for the benefit of the Spanish bondholders."

Mr. CALHOUN. There is somewhere a more direct disavowal.

Mr. CASS. I cannot find it, sir, and I think the senator from South Carolina is in error. But it matters little whether it is so or not. Formal disavowals cost but little, and prove nothing.

Mr. CALHOUN. Lord George Bentinck is not a member of the British cabinet, nor is he at the head of the Tory party.

Mr. CASS. I know he is not in the cabinet, sir; but he certainly leads the Tory interest in the House of Commons, and speaks the sentiments of a large portion of the English politicians. My object is to show that the acquisition of Cuba is one of the objects of British policy. And I certainly do show it, when I show that the project is distinctly avowed and recommended by a leading member of the House of Commons, exerting a powerful influence over one of the two great parties into which the country is divided, and who, in the mutation of English politics, may be prime minister to-morrow.

I do not know, sir, that any one proposes, under existing circumstances, to send forces to Yucatan with any design of holding permanent possession of the country. The President in his message openly disclaims any such view, and our proceedings here are based upon the same determination. We go there to aid the Yucatecos in this their day of extremity; not only in obedience to the dictates of humanity, but as a great measure of public policy, to prevent that region from falling into other hands. Our duty fulfilled, tranquillity restored, and the government of the country placed in the exercise of its legitimate functions, we shall have discharged our trust, and can then retire with safety and with honor.

A great deal has been said here, sir, respecting the connexion between Yucatan and Mexico, and of the difficulties which this connexion places in the way of our action. I am not going to enter into the casuistry of politics upon this subject. It is no place for subtle distinctions—into the "sophisms and abstruse speculations" (to use the language of Mr. Sierra) *by which equity and justice are mystified.* The political bonds which have heretofore united those two countries, always sat loosely upon both; and he who forms his judgment of their connexion by the principles of our own confederation, will sacrifice truth to a false analogy. Yucatan was a sovereign State. It joined the Mexican confederacy, and became one of its members upon the terms prescribed in the act of union. How often those terms have been violated, and that union virtually dissolved, I do not stop to inquire. One-tenth part of the abuses perpetrated in the name of the Mexican government, if perpetrated here, would long ago have rent this league asunder, and would have reduced it to its original elements. The State of Yucatan is now overrun by a domestic enemy. Protection is due to her from the Mexican confederation. It is one of the very cases for which she yielded up her sovereignty, and almost the principal one where the aid of the general government can be needed. But that protection is not granted. Perhaps it cannot be; and perhaps it would not be, if it could. Be this as it may, the result to Yucatan is the same. She bartered her allegiance for protection. They must go together; and this principle is now everywhere acknowledged. The rights of the Mexican confederation are (if I may so speak) artificial, and the confederation itself destructible. But the rights of the States are permanent, and their sovereignties indestructible. Their governments are responsible for the safety and happiness of their people, and they must control the measures which are necessary to secure them. In this case, the government of Yucatan is endeavoring to fulfil its duty: and as they have a right to go anywhere for aid, so any one has a right to aid them, unless prevented by paramount considerations. If we were at peace with Mexico, as England and Spain are, we should have the same right which they have to render this assistance. The very extremity of the case creates its own principles. Does the existing war with Mexico limit our rights or control our duties in this respect? Certainly not, while the war is going on; for during that time we can carry on our operations wherever we please, and for what purpose we please, throughout the whole Mexican confederacy. But it has been objected, during the course of this discussion, by the senator from Delaware, [Mr. CLAYTON,] and the senator from Kentucky, [Mr. CRITTENDEN,] and the senator from Maryland, [Mr. JOHNSON,] that the existing armistice with Mexico interposes insuperable obstacles to our action. I think this opinion is founded in error, which a little reflection will remove. The object of an armistice is to keep two military parties within given positions, and to prohibit any operations or increase of