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CONGRESSIONAL.

SPEECH OF HON. W. W. BOYCE,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

On the annexation of Cuba; delivered in the House of Representatives, January 15, 1855.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union,

Mr. BOYCE said: Mr. Chairman, I propose to make some observations on the annexation of Cuba. I consider it the great question in our foreign relations.

A Spanish impatience seems to be seizing upon our people for territorial extension. In some quarters the cry is for the Canadas. Upon this point, we have been informed by a leading member from Ohio [Mr. CAMPBELL] that the people upon the northern frontier look with deep feeling to the annexation of the British provinces of North America. In other quarters the cry is for the Sandwich islands; some are wishing for another partition of Mexico; others are looking to the regions watered by the mighty Amazon; more are bent upon the acquisition of Cuba, and some have such mordinate stomachs that they are willing to swallow up the entire continent. These are all but various phases of the manifest-destiny idea. I must confess, I do not sympathize with this idea. I think our true mission is conservatism, not indefinite extension.

Why do we desire further extension? Do we need any more territory? On the north we lose ourselves upon the verge of eternal snows; on the south we penetrate to the fierce heats of the equator; upon the east and the west we pause only on the beach of the two great oceans of the world. If we apply the instruments we find that the United States are ten times as large as Great Britain, Ireland, and France combined; three times as large as the whole of France, Great Britain, Ireland, Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark—nearly equal to the whole of Europe; as large as the Roman empire when its eagles dominated from the Euphrates to the pillars of Hercules. If it be possible for a nation to have territory enough, we certainly have it, and whatever else we may need, we do not need any more space. If any one were to propose placing the whole of Europe—one of the great divisions of the globe—under a single government, he would be deemed a madman; yet we realize, territorially, this idea, and still crave more. What a madness!

Do we need any more population? Why, our population is already near thirty millions, and increasing at a velocity so fearful that the boldest must tremble at the future. Our annual increase is a million. If we had the same density of population over our entire surface as in Massachusetts, our population would be four hundred and twenty millions; and if we increase for the next century in the same ratio we have for the last sixty years, our population will be within a fraction of five hundred millions. What a prospect, and how short a time; for what is a hundred years to a nation? The Roman empire existed twelve centuries; there are noble families in England who date back the lustre of their houses four hundred years. A century to a nation is not more than a year to an individual. When we look beyond the present, and pierce the future, the increase of our population presents a great problem. When the vast surface of our territory shall be in a blaze with the fires of civilization; when the living tides of human beings flowing from the shores of the Atlantic shall be met by the returning tides from the Pacific; when the very gorges of the Alleghanies and the Rocky mountains shall be full of people; when population shall be pressing upon the means of subsistence, what will become of the republic, what will be the fate of liberty itself? Instead of desiring more population, we would be most fortunate if we could remain at what we are. A nation has sufficient population when it is able to protect itself from external force. We have already fully reached this point.

A republic, a federal republic in particular, cannot exist without external pressure. It is the fundamental idea upon which the whole theory rests. Take away the pressure from without, and a confederacy necessarily goes to pieces. As long as Carthage stood a rival to be dreaded by the Roman people, the republic flourished in its greatest vigor; but when Carthage was overthrown, the republic, relieved from external pressure, became the prey of factions; the Gracchi, Sylla and Marius, Pompey and Cæsar, passed over the stage, convulsing the State with their struggles for power, making it bleed at every pore, and trampling under foot the glory and the liberty of Rome. The history of our own country is instructive on this point. Before the war of 1812, while the State was in dread of English power, sectionalism was unknown. We were one people. Patriotism was an American plant, indigenous to the soil. It grew as well on the bleak hills of New England as in the swamps of the South. Great men and great *ideas* made our history. But after that war had demonstrated our entire security from external force, sectional ideas and sectional parties arose. Factions usurped the stage. Narrow ideas loomed up into gigantic proportions. The North and the South became two hostile camps; and the gulf of separation has gradually been widening as we advanced in our career of greatness and power.

It is very clear that, do what else we may, we have nothing to gain by annexing more territory, to increase our population by a foreign supply. If we do not need any more territory, or any extraordinary addition of population by acquisition of territory, then the annexation of Cuba cannot be urged on either of these grounds. Then, upon what grounds can it be urged? Perhaps it may be urged on the ground that it is necessary to us as a military position to protect our commerce. But I cannot admit this; and, in considering this point, I must assume that it is the settled policy of our government not to permit Cuba to pass from Spain into the hands of any of the great European powers. Taking this for granted, I say we have nothing to fear from Cuba. We have strong positions at Key West and Tortugas, which we are now fortifying, and which can be rendered impregnable. Our naval power is infinitely superior to that of Spain; we can effectually command the outlets to the Gulf of Mexico; and the idea of our commerce being in any danger from Cuba is, I think, without the slightest foundation. Experience is the most conclusive argument on this point. Our commerce never has been disturbed from Cuba; and if we have not been disturbed in the infancy of our power, what have we to fear now in its maturity?

But I go further: so far from the acquisition of Cuba strengthening us in a military point of view, I think it would be a source of infinite weakness. And if the history of the contests in Europe between the great powers demonstrates any fact, it is that maritime colonies to a nation of secondary naval force are great drawbacks. Where did England strike her great rivals, France and Holland? Not in the heart of their dominions, but in their extremities—their colonies. The contest now going on between the allies and Russia is most instructive on this point. If Russia had isolated maritime possessions, the allies would wound her severely; but, as it is, she has no such vulnerable points. She is compact, massy, solid; and in vain, with frantic rage, the allies dash their proud fleets and well-appointed armies against her huge bulk.

We are now in the position of Russia, with all her advantages; we are the Russia of the western continent; we have a vast territory; we are compact and invulnerable, defiant of the world in arms. Shall we weaken our position by the acquisition of maritime colonies? That is the question. I think not.

Before we determine on the policy of acquiring maritime colonies, there is a prior question we should consider. It is this: Are we willing to pour out indefinite millions to build up such a navy as will enable us to contend with the great powers for the supremacy of the seas? If not, then, indeed, would it be a short-sighted policy to acquire such colonies, which we would hold by the uncertain tenure of European tolerance. For my own part, I am unwilling to increase the navy a single gun beyond what is necessary for the service of the country in its present condition. The people are already sufficiently taxed, and the navy is already, in my opinion, a moth of adequate appetite. The conviction that we cannot acquire Cuba securely without a vast increase of the navy is an additional obstacle to my taking any steps in that direction.

But it may be said it will extend our commerce. I admit this. The annexation of Cuba would furnish an increased market for certain agricultural productions of the middle and northwestern States, and the manufactures of the eastern States; and to the extent of this increased trade, and even beyond it, under the preference given to our own vessels in the coasting trade, the shipping interest of the North would be benefited. Under the influence of these several causes, and others which could be presented, I have no doubt the free States would make a great deal of money out of Cuba, if annexed. Though I see the North would reap a golden harvest from Cuba, yet I cannot, however great may be the interest I take in the increase of northern wealth, forego the objections I have to the annexation of Cuba on other grounds. Besides, while I consider the advantage certain great forms of industry at the North would derive from the admission of Cuba, I cannot forget that the admission of Cuba might paralyze the vast slave interest at the South engaged in raising sugar. When I am told that the annexation of Cuba will extend our commerce, I reply—

First. This mere moneyed motive is outweighed, in my mind, by other more important and more elevated considerations.

Second. That this advantage may be attained, to a considerable extent, by a course of policy short of annexation, by the modification of our own commercial regulations and those of Spain and Cuba. To understand my meaning on this point, I must briefly refer to the nature of our commercial relations with Cuba. The duties on foreign vessels in Cuba is $1 50 per ton; on Spanish vessels, sixty-two and a half cents per ton. The duties on foreign merchandise imported under the Spanish flag are from seven to nine per cent. less than in foreign vessels, except a few articles paying specific duties, one of which is flour, the duty on which, in favor of the Spanish flag, is from $1 to $1 50 per barrel.

The United States, in order to coerce a repeal of these regulations, in 1832 passed an act by which Spanish vessels coming from Cuba were required to pay the same rate of duty on tonnage that was levied on American vessels in Cuba. In the same mistaken spirit of retaliation, the United States, in 1834, enacted that Spanish vessels coming from Cuba should pay, in the ports of the United States, such further tonnage duty, in addition to the tonnage duty already payable, as should be equivalent to the amount of discriminating duty that would have been imposed on the cargoes imported in the said vessels, if the same had been exported from the port of Havana, in American bottoms; and, further, that before such Spanish vessel should be permitted to depart from a port of the United States with a cargo for Cuba, such vessel should pay such further tonnage duty as should be equivalent to the amount of discriminating duty that would be payable for the time being upon the cargo, if imported into the port of Havana in an American vessel. The discriminating duties above alluded to amount to about eight per cent. The result is, that Spanish vessels leaving our ports with cargoes for Cuba have to pay eight per cent. more than if they imported the same cargoes from any other foreign port. In our anxiety to monopolize the freights, we have lost, to a very great extent, the sale of the merchandise. Under the influence of our acts of 1832 and 1834 the imports into Cuba, in Spanish vessels, from the United States, amounted in 1849 to only $11,000, whereas the imports from England for the same period, in Spanish vessels, amounted to $4,345,300. That this striking difference is mainly attributable to our own regulations is obvious, from the fact that England stands on no more favored footing in reference to the commercial regulations of Cuba than the United States, except her freedom from our own enactments. For ten years preceding 1832 the average of foreign merchandise exported from the United States to Cuba was $1,563,000; in 1849 the same class of exports amounted only to $276,000, of which only $11,000 was in Spanish vessels. In 1851 the value of cotton goods sent to Cuba from the United States amounted only to $26,000, while the amount for the same period from Europe was nearly $3,000,000.

It is evident we have greatly affected our commerce with Cuba by our acts of 1832 and 1834. Let us repeal them at once. It is time to abandon this policy of retaliation. We should further exercise our diplomacy with Spain to get some modification of her restrictions. Let us seek commercial reciprocity with Cuba instead of annexation. The first, I believe, by judicious conduct, we might attain; the second we cannot but by force. By the first we will attain substantially all the moneyed advantages of annexation, and escape its political objections and dangers.

The whole argument for the annexation of Cuba, in a national point of view, may be summed up in the four propositions I have been considering:

1. More territory.
2. More population.
6. Military position.
4. More commerce.

The first three have no merit; on the contrary, are full of disadvantages. The last has some merit, but is entirely outweighed by other adverse considerations. I conclude, therefore, on national grounds, that it is inexpedient to annex Cuba.

I propose now to consider the annexation of Cuba as a southern measure; for it is supported by many at the South on this ground; and, unless I greatly deceive myself, I hope to be able to show that it would be, under existing circumstances, a most perilous measure to the South.

How could the annexation of Cuba benefit the South? To answer this question understandingly I would refer to the case of Texas. How did the annexation of Texas benefit the South? for I admit it did so greatly. The entire advantages to the South from the annexation of Texas may be comprehensively stated in two propositions: First, it furnished a wilderness where the people of the South could go and improve their conditions. Second, it furnished a stable political community, reliable upon the slavery issue. Would Cuba fulfil these requisites? I think not; clearly not the first; because Cuba is an old settled country, settled before any part of the United States. It was discovered by the great Columbus himself, and has been the favorite seat of Spanish power for centuries. It is not only civilized, but populous: the population is variously estimated from one million two hundred thousand to one million five hundred thousand, and that on an area the size of the State of Tennessee. In order to realize a graphic idea of the extent and population of Cuba, we have only to imagine Tennessee with a range of mountains running longitudinally from east to west, instead of across, and with a population of one million two hundred thousand to one million five hundred thousand, instead of her present population of one million two thousand seven hundred and seventeen. The mere statement of the case in this light is sufficient to show that emigrants would go on a wild-goose chase if they went to Cuba expecting to get lands for nothing. Our people would stand a better chance to get such lands in Tennessee. The lands in Cuba must necessarily, to a very great extent, be in the hands of private holders, and our people moving to Cuba would have to buy lands at the prices of an old community. Cuba, therefore, could not fulfil the requisite of a wilderness to which southern men might go to get lands at nominal rates.

Would Cuba be a stable political community, or, in other words, competent to self-government? I doubt it. Self-government involves two considerations—the race and the training. There is only one race of people in modern times who have shown the capability of self-government—that is the Anglo-Saxon race, the race to which we belong; and with us it is still, in some degree, an experiment. But whatever question there may be as to other races, there can be but one opinion as to the incompetency of the Spanish race. At no time, and under no circumstances, have they been able to preserve republican institutions. The Spanish-American republics, whose populations are of the same race and grade as the whites of Cuba, have become the by-word of history; every step in their insane career has been the melancholy blot and blur of free institutions. The Spanish Creole race of Cuba are the worst kind of materials with which to build up republican institutions. What has their political training been?—the worst imaginable. They have always lived under the sternest despotism. For the last thirty years in particular they have lived under martial law. They have had no political privileges, and are utterly ignorant of the machinery of free institutions. The touching picture which Tacitus draws of the Roman State under the tyranny of Tiberius is the condition of Cuba. "Men," he says, "were afraid of knowing each other; society was at a pause; relations, friends, and strangers stood at gaze; no public meetings, no private confidence; things inanimate had ears, and roofs and walls were deemed informers." What could we expect from suddenly investing such a people with self-government but a disastrous failure? But it may be said that our own people would go in upon annexation, and control the Cubans. But I do not think the American emigration would be large; at the South it would not, because agricultural emigrants never go in large numbers to an old country; from the North the emigration would be mostly commercial men for temporary sojourns. Whilst the emigration from the United States would not be large, its influence would be greatly weakened by the prejudice of the Creoles to our people—the prejudice of race and religion, which is intense in Cuba. If Cuba were annexed, and a slave State, but proved incompetent to self-government, she would not only be no benefit to the South, but a great calamity. If we are met at the threshold with this difficulty, we might, perhaps, forbear to go further, considering this as conclusive. But I shall pass on.

The next question is, would Cuba be a reliable slave community; that is, would slavery be likely to continue there?

In order to determine this question, we must consider the nature of the population and institutions of Cuba.

I shall put down the population at the lowest estimate—one million two hundred thousand. Of these, two hundred thousand are free negroes. I pause involuntarily at this startling fact; it is worthy to be pondered on by southern men. This army of free negroes are not such free negroes as ours are. Our free negroes are American free negroes, dwarfed by being in contrast with the greatest white race on the globe, the Anglo-Saxon race. There is a vast interval with us between the two races. The free negroes of Cuba are Spanish free negroes, elevated relatively by being in contrast with an inferior white race. There is no abrupt separation between the two races; they approximate and assimilate. Everything is relative in this world. When Gulliver was among the Lilliputians he towered above them like a huge Titan. He could put whole armies in his pockets; take fleets with no weapons but his spectacles; when he ate a hearty dinner the corn market was excited; when he turned over, government securities fell. But when he got among the Brobdinags, he was as harmless as an insect; he was the toy of children; he liked to have been drowned in a bowl of milk; a monkey took him on the top of a house and frightened him out of his wits; the young princess used to put him in her bosom, like a little bird, very much to his alarm, however; for it would have been certain death to him if he had fallen from this pernicious height. Thus we can understand the difference between the free negroes of Cuba and our own free negroes. Of course there are, among the white race in Cuba, many individual exceptions which stand out in bold relief from the free-negro race; but the remark I make is, nevertheless, true in reference to the Creole masses.

To illustrate my meaning more fully, I take it, that the Creole masses are about equal to the Mexican masses; between the Mexican masses and their free negroes is no abrupt line of demarkation—the same state of things exists in Cuba. The free-negro race stand, in a great degree, upon an equality with the Creole masses—neither have any political privileges. This equality, which I have been dwelling upon, between the races, is fostered by the Spanish government, as a great political idea, to check any tendencies on the part of the Creoles to revolution. In pursuance of this policy, in some instances, the free negroes have had special and exclusive advantages of schools; marriages between the two classes have been encouraged; and, what is a more striking fact still, free negroes have been enrolled in the army, taught the use of arms, and instructed in military tactics, while the Creoles have been regularly excluded from the army. From these various considerations, I cannot but consider the free negro element in Cuba as most dangerous, and not auguring well for the institution of slavery there. Two hundred thousand Spanish free negroes! They strike me more like two hundred thousand half-lit torches, which a single flash may light up, and set the whole island in a flame at any moment. When I remember that it was this same free-negro race, under the workings of Spanish and French ideas, which upturned the entire social fabric in St. Domingo, and wreaked such infinite slaughter on the white race, my apprehensions from this source are not, by any means, diminished. Twenty thousand Spanish troops preserve the peace of Cuba now; but under different circumstances, and in the absence of a standing army, would the whites of Cuba be safe? They would, I think, be sleeping over a volcano.

The next element in the population of Cuba is the slaves; there are four hundred thousand of them. These slaves are not Christianized, humanized, or civilized, to the same extent as our slaves. A large portion of them have been imported from Africa, and are still half savage. They cannot be relied upon for fidelity and loyalty to anything like the same extent as our slaves. Such are the slaves of Cuba.

I would now refer briefly to some of the slave regulations of Cuba. By the laws of Cuba every slave has the right, on complaint of ill-usage, once every year, to hunt a purchaser, and his master is bound to permit him to be absent for a sufficient time for that purpose. When the slave finds a purchaser, his master is obliged to sell him, not at his own price, but, in case of disagreement between the master and purchaser, at a price to be fixed by a certain public functionary. The slave who can change his master when he pleases is hardly a slave; he is almost free. In populous portions of Europe the free laborer has no other privilege of freedom than the right to change his employer. Not only has the slave a right to change his master, but he has the right to buy himself; and not only the whole of himself, but any part of himself, the one-fourth, or one-third, or one-half of himself; if he buys one-fourth of himself, then for three months every year he is free to work for himself and do as he pleases. Every mother, before a child is born, has the right, on paying twenty-five dollars, to have the child declared free. These facts are full of meaning, and they show how the Spanish government keeps the African idea impending over Cuba, like a portentous cloud, which she flashes up at intervals to retain dominion by the terror of its lurid glares.

There is another consideration on this branch of the case to which I would allude: the slaves brought into Cuba since 1820, Spain, by treaty of September 23, 1817, in consideration of £400,000 paid by England, engaged that the slave trade should be abolished throughout the Spanish dominions from the 30th May, 1820. By the ordinance of the King of Spain of December, 1817, it is directed that every African imported into any of the colonies of Spain, in violation of the treaty with England, shall be declared free. By the treaty between Great Britain and Spain of June 28, 1835, for the purpose of "rendering the means for abolishing the traffic in slaves more effectual," the slave trade is again declared to be totally abolished. Yet, in spite of the treaties and ordinance of the King of Spain, Africans, in vast numbers, have been imported into Cuba. One writer whom I have consulted puts down the number of these Africans, who are called Bozal negroes, now in the island, at two-thirds of the entire number of slaves. He says they abound in the rural districts, and may be easily recognised by their language and the marks of the tattoo. An intelligent Cuban has lately informed me that nearly all the slaves in Cuba are Africans imported since 1820, and their descendants; that until recently it was estimated the entire slave population died out every ten years. Now, I wish to ask what would be the condition of this class if Cuba were annexed, and they brought, without any modification of their condition by any supreme authority intermediate between the Spanish power and our own, under the influence of the law of our federal government? This very question has already been decided by our courts. The Supreme Court of the United States, in the celebrated case of the Amistad, 15 Peters, 593, sustaining the decision of the circuit court, hold that "these negroes were unlawfully transported to Cuba, in violation of the laws and treaties of Spain, and the most solemn edicts and declarations of that government. By those laws, and treaties, and edicts, the African slave trade is utterly abolished; the dealing in that trade is deemed a heinous crime, and the negroes thereby introduced into the dominion of Spain are declared to be free." If Cuba were directly annexed from Spain, without an intermediate state of separate independence in which a new fundamental law could be passed, great difficulties might arise on this point from the efforts of the abolitionists.

The next item in the population is the white race. This is estimated at six hundred thousand, of which a small proportion are European Spaniards, the residue are Creoles—about equal, as a class, to the people of Mexico. Now, can these people be relied upon to preserve slavery? The country being an old settled country, there would be, as I have already said, no great tide of emigration from the South; the comparatively few southern men who would go there would be counterbalanced by an equal and adverse emigration from the North. The continuance of slavery would, therefore, depend on the Creoles of Cuba. I would consider this bad security. Slavery is never secure where the masters are an inferior white race. There is, too, a marked tendency in the Spanish Creole race to emancipation. This is owing to several causes:

1st. The equality of the two races. They assimilate without difficulty; there is no gulf between them. The philosophy of African slavery consists in the superiority of the white race; where this superiority is wanting, there is no basis for the institution to rest upon, and it crumbles like a house without a foundation.

2d. The tendency of the Spanish democratic idea is to ultraism; they carry liberty to the extreme of anarchy. Every Spanish revolution is a socialistic revolution.

3d. Their inability to govern themselves produces bloody struggles, the leaders in which seek the aid of the slaves. Hence it has resulted that the Spanish American colonies, who have set up for themselves, though under Spain they were slave communities, have all gone into emancipation. Have we any right to expect anything more from the Creoles of Cuba than the Creoles of Central America? I think not.

From the rapid summary thus taken of the population and institutions of Cuba, I doubt whether Cuba would be reliable upon the slavery issue. Looking at the question of annexation in all its bearings, I doubt exceedingly whether it would be to the interest of the South to annex Cuba now, if it could be done without money or blood. But no one has any idea that Cuba can be thus easily acquired at the present time.

There are only three modes by which Cuba could be acquired, viz: 1. By purchase. 2. By war. 3. By treaty with Cuba as an independent power.

The first method is impracticable, because Spain will not sell. The recent debate in the Spanish Cortes sets that point at rest. I go further, not only Spain will not sell, but no Spanish administration would dare to sell. The announcement of such a treaty would revolutionize Spain, and the ministry who would have the temerity to sign a treaty so humiliating to the pride of the nation would be torn to pieces by the infuriated mob. And hence I have always looked upon the mission of Mr. Soulé for this purpose as a sterile idea, fruitless in itself, and unfortunate, from his European birth, in the agent selected. But, supposing this difficulty overcome, the price would be so enormous—$150,000,000, or $200,000,000—that I would not be willing to give it. I look upon the advantages to the South as too precarious to give so much money, especially when I see that the necessary effect of such an expenditure would be to fasten a high tariff upon us indefinitely. There is no practical measure within the scope of government power, from which the South would derive so vast a benefit as from the reduction of the tariff to the lowest revenue standard. I should be very unwilling to abandon this great practical measure of deliverance to the South for the uncertain hazards of annexation.

As to the second mode—war—I say nothing of the shocking injustice of wresting from a feeble power, without provocation, her most valuable possession. I have no doubt we could succeed in this way, but at great cost of money and men. The Spanish troops would make some resistance, the climate more. I cannot forget, too, that a large portion of the treasure expended would be wrung from the hard earnings of the southern people, and much of the blood shed would be the best blood of the South; for our system of taxation is unequal; and this being looked upon as a southern measure, the gallant young men of the South would volunteer with alacrity. But of all modes which could be devised for the acquisition of Cuba, for the benefit of the South, war is the most fatal; for no one who has any knowledge of the Spanish character, its pride, obstinacy, and revenge, can for a moment imagine that Spain would stop at any steps to blast the acquisition in our hands. The policy of Spain is obvious: she would cling to Cuba with the tenacity of a dying convulsion, and when she could hold on no longer, she would decree universal emancipation. But, it may be said, we would reverse this state of things in our Territory of Cuba. But just at this juncture the people of the North, who have the control of the federal government, would, by a unanimous voice, bid us stay our hands; that non-intervention was their doctrine; that, by the Spanish law, there were no slaves in Cuba. The result would be that the South, after all her sacrifices, would have acquired a free-negro colony, the greatest curse imaginable. This result would be very amusing to the abolitionists, but not to me. I have, therefore, no idea of blindly travelling a road which leads nowhere but over a precipice.

Another motive which makes me still more determined not to go to war with Spain for Cuba is, that we of the South are upon the eve of a great struggle with a hostile majority of the North, and we will need all our resources, not to make foreign conquests, but to defend the very ground upon which we stand. I am, therefore, unwilling to weaken our resources or complicate our position by an attack on Cuba; others, who hear only the songs of peace in the future, may take a different course.

As to the third mode—treaty with Cuba—this implies that Cuba has thrown off the Spanish yoke, and established independence. If it were desirable to acquire Cuba, this seems to me to be the only mode it could be done beneficially to the South. By this mode we would escape the agitation of the slavery question in the territorial condition of Cuba. The question would be in a nut-shell—annexation or no annexation? The Wilmot proviso might precede and prevent annexation; it could not succeed annexation and mar it. Cuba would have organized her institutions. We would be enabled to judge, with some degree of confidence, as to her capability for self-government, and her reliability upon the slavery issue. We would know what we were getting, and run less risk of getting what we did not want. We would have gotten rid of the embarrassing questions arising out of the treaties, ordinances, and decrees of Spain. And then, nationally speaking, she would cost us nothing, neither men nor money.

It may be supposed, from these considerations, that I favor fillibustering. Not so. An impassable gulf intervenes between me and this policy—duty. I cannot interfere with the domestic institutions of other people, for I wish other people not to interfere with the domestic institutions of our people. On the other hand, I cannot shut my eyes to the inevitable future. I see the world is in a transition state, and I feel that the independence of Cuba is only a question of time. The final decision of this great question of annexation belongs appropriately to the future. I say, take no step now in that direction; wait and watch the course of events, and profit by them. I do not wish to shackle the ultimate action of the country. When the future rolls round, and Cuba emerges independent from its bosom, when the fruit is ripe, then let this great question be decided under the light of all the surrounding circumstances. I might stop here, but several hypothetical cases must be disposed of to manifest myself truly.

It may be said, suppose England or France seize Cuba—what then? There are some things so improbable they need hardly be considered, and this is one. After England and France are done with Russia they will not be in a mood to disturb anybody, much less will they want to jar on the United States. But neither England nor France wants Cuba; in their hands it would be necessarily a free-negro colony, and, therefore, worthless; but if either of them should want it, their mutual jealousy would prevent either from taking it. But if, in violation of all possibility, they should make the attempt, I say at once I would draw the sword and drive them into the sea.

Again: it may be said, suppose Spain refuses to satisfy our claims against her—what then? My answer is direct. I would not mingle up these claims with the question of Cuba. I would act towards Spain with extreme forbearance, for she is weak and we are strong. The truest greatness consists in great ideas. I would exhibit the country in this light towards Spain. I would act towards her with generosity and magnanimity. I would urge our claims in the most respectful manner. If, after a reasonable time, they were still disregarded, I would propose arbitration. If this failed, then, after assuring myself that our claims were well founded, and after sufficient and final notice, I would send out a fleet of steamers, seize some Spanish ships, pay the claims, and give a receipt in full.

But, it may be said, suppose Spain should attempt to Africanize Cuba—what then? For my part, I am clear that our government should use every possible means to prevent this. I would stop at nothing, not even war. There is, however, an old saying, and a true one, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I would act upon this maxim. I would remove the causes leading Spain to this course. They are two—the fear of our designs upon Cuba, and the pressure of England. Let us take such a line of conduct as will remove the first cause; the Russians are removing the second cause, in which operation our government could co-operate efficiently by encouraging Spain. That, in my opinion, is the true line of our diplomacy. It is the interest of Spain to preserve slavery in Cuba—her interest and our policy concur. We would be bunglers, indeed, if, under such circumstances, we could not produce the desired result. The policy of the South is not so much to have more slaves as to have more people interested in slavery. Spain is so interested; we should let her continue thus.

I am glad to be able to fortify my opinions upon this subject by the authority of Mr. Calhoun. As late as May, 1848, he said, in his speech upon the "proposed occupation of Yucatan:"

"So long as Cuba remains in the hands of Spain, a friendly power—a power of which we have no dread—it should continue to be, as it has been, the policy of all administrations ever since I have been connected with the government, to let Cuba remain there."

I assume what he says as an axiom. I deduce from it a corollary that we are not to buy Cuba, or go to war for it; because, if our policy is for Cuba to remain with Spain, it is against our policy to change that possession, with or without the consent of Spain.

This disposes of every mode of acquisition, except by treaty with Cuba as an independent power. This is, from its very nature, a question for the future. When the contingency arises, then, and not till then, we should render a definite judgment.

Mr. Chairman, the acquisition of Cuba will open a new volume in our history. Former acquisitions were the necessities of location or of circumstance. This is not. By this step we are fairly launched in the career of conquest, from which there is no outlet but to storm the future, sword in hand. From this career we have nothing to hope and everything to fear; for our greatest success would be our greatest disaster.

The history of nations has been the history of their imaginations. The pomp of power, the thirst for dominion, the glare of glory, have been the empty baubles for which they have exhausted their energies, and slaughtered each other. These have been the dim lights by which poor humanity has hitherto advanced. Who can estimate the infinite miseries, the multitudinous slaughters, these barren vanities have entailed upon the human race! The book of time is bloody on every page with the horrid recital. Shall we learn nothing from it? Shall the past turn its sorrowing features upon us in vain? Shall we be insensible to the tears and agonies of history; or shall we furnish another instance of stupendous folly by embarking in the same insane career? I trust not. I trust we shall turn with aversion from the deceitful seductions of false glory, and be instructed by the disasters of universal humanity.

We may extend our dominion over the whole continent, our navies may ride triumphant on every sea, our name may be the terror of kings, our decrees the destinies of nations, but be assured it will be at the price of our free institutions. I know not how it may be with others, but for my own part, I would not pay this price for all the power and all the glory that ever clustered around all the banners and all the eagles emblazoned in the pantheon of history.

Let us turn from the line of vulgar conquerors to the fathers of the republic; let us learn from them that the truest patriotism is the preservation of our institutions, the truest wisdom is moderation. In short, let our history be not the history of our imagination, but the history of our common sense. By this course we may not vaunt so many statues, so many triumphal arches, so many trophies of victory, and boundless dominion, but we shall have what is more glorious than these—we shall have our institutions preserved; we shall have the conquests of peace; the mighty march of civilization; Christianity working out, unimpeded, her divine mission; these will be our statues; these our triumphal arches; these the trophies of our victories; and they will be such as no nation before us have ever had.

IN CONGRESS OF THE U. STATES.

Thirty-Third Congress—Second Session.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1855.

SENATE.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS.

The PRESIDENT *pro tem.* laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States, in answer to a resolution of the Senate of December 11, 1854, asking for copies of correspondence relative to the late difficulties between the consul of the French government at San Francisco and the federal authorities of the State of California; which was read; and, on motion by Mr. WELLER, it was ordered to lie on the table and to be printed.

The PRESIDENT *pro tem.* also laid before the Senate a communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, in answer to a resolution of the Senate of the 10th instant, calling upon him to communicate to the Senate a statement showing the amount of silver purchased by the department for re-coinage in the United States Mint at Philadelphia during the year 1854, and the price paid therefor, and similar information with regard to the branch mint at New Orleans; and, also, to state the reasons for any difference in price which may have been paid for silver recoined at the said Mint in Philadelphia and at the branch mint in New Orleans; which was referred to the Committee on Finance and ordered to be printed.

The PRESIDENT *pro tem.* also laid before the Senate a communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, all the original papers, including the report of the commissioner of customs, in relation to the claim of Gibbons & Kelley, contractors for building light-houses in Oregon and California; which was referred to the Committee of Claims and ordered to be printed.

MEMORIALS, PETITIONS, ETC.

Mr. SHIELDS presented joint resolutions of the legislature of Illinois, instructing their senators and requesting their representatives in Congress to oppose any bill for the renewal of patents heretofore granted to Cyrus H. McCormick, Obed Hussey, and Moore & Hascall, for improvements in mowing and reaping machines; which were ordered to lie on the table.

Mr. SEWARD presented the memorial of the Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad Company, remonstrating against the passage of the joint resolution from the House of Representatives to disapprove and disaffirm an act of the legislative assembly of the Territory of Minnesota entitled "An act to incorporate the Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad Company; which was referred to the Committee on Territories.

Mr. SHIELDS, Mr. DODGE of Iowa, and others, presented petitions praying for pensions for military services; which were referred to the Committee on Pensions.

Mr. CLAYTON and Mr. BRODHEAD presented several petitions, numerously signed by citizens of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, praying an appropriation for the erection of a building for the accommodation of the United States courts and post office in the city of Philadelphia, and in favor of a particular location for the same; which were referred to the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads.

Mr. SUMNER presented a petition remonstrating against the admission of more slave States into the Union, and another petition praying the repeal of the fugitive-slave law; which were laid on the table.

Mr. JONES, of Iowa, and others, presented petitions praying the establishment of various mail-routes; which were referred to the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads.

Mr. DODGE, of Iowa, presented resolutions of the legislature of Iowa, in favor of an appropriation to compensate the citizens of Iowa who were called into service by the government thereof to repel a threatened invasion of that Territory by the people of Missouri; also, in favor of certain mail-routes; also, in favor of reducing the rates of ocean postage; also, in favor of the establishment of a regular line of steamers to be employed in the trade between the United States and the coast of Africa; also, concerning the protection of settlers and emigrants between the Mississippi valley and the Pacific ocean, including the establishment of postal and telegraphic communications across the American continent; which were appropriately referred.

Mr. D. also presented memorials of the legislature of Iowa, praying that the duties on sugar and molasses may be abolished, and also praying the construction of a railroad between the States bordering on the Mississippi river and the Pacific ocean.

Mr. D. also presented a memorial of citizens of Keokuk, Iowa, praying that ten thousand acres of the public lands may be set apart for the purpose of colonization on scientific and equitable principles; which was referred to the Committee on Public Lands.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES.

Mr. ALLEN, from the Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill to pay the heirs of Stephen Morill, deceased, the amount due their father for a pension, reported adversely thereon.

Mr. JONES, of Iowa, from the Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill from the House of Representatives increasing the pension of Anthony Walton Bayard, of Bellefont, in the State of Pennsylvania, reported it without amendment, and recommended its passage.

Mr. BRODHEAD hoped that there would be no objection to the immediate consideration of that bill; and it was then read a third time and passed.

Mr. TOUCEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary, reported a bill to protect officers and other persons acting under the authority of the United States; which was read and passed to a second reading.

Mr. STUART, from the Committee on Commerce, reported a bill making appropriations for the improvement of certain harbors on the northern lakes; which was read twice and made the special order for Monday next.

Mr. S., from the same committee, to whom were referred several bills making appropriations for the improvement of particular harbors, asked to be discharged from the further consideration thereof, as they were embraced in the general bill just reported. The motion was agreed to.

Mr. BENJAMIN, from the Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the joint resolution in relation to the New Orleans custom-house, reported it without amendment, and asked its immediate consideration. No objection being made, it was read a third time and passed

Mr. SHIELDS, from the Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill from the House of Representatives making an appropriation for military defences at Proctor's Landing, in Louisiana, reported it without amendment, and recommended its passage.

Mr. SEWARD, from the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, to whom was referred the bill to aid in the transportation of the mails, reported it with an amendment in the form of a substitute.

Mr. S., from the Committee on Pensions, submitted an adverse report on the petition of Thomas H. Bingham.

Mr. SLIDELL, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, submitted an adverse report on the memorial of Robert M. Hamilton.

Mr. STUART, from the Committee on Public Lands, submitted an adverse report on the memorial of James Harper and Robert W. Harper.

Mr. HUNTER, from the Committee on Finance, reported back the House bill making appropriations for the payment of invalid and other pensions of the United States for the year ending the 30th June, 1856, with the recommendation that the Senate concur in the amendments of the House to the amendments of the Senate to the above-named bill.

Mr. ADAMS and Mr. HAMLIN opposed the motion to concur in the House amendments; and after some debate, the further consideration of the subject was postponed.

Mr. BENJAMIN, from the Committee on Private Land Claims, to whom was referred the bill for the relief of the heirs and legal representatives of Pierre Cazelan, deceased, reported it without amendment.

Mr. B., from the same committee, to whom was referred the petition of Cephise Piseros, widow of Louis Labranche of the parish of St. Charles, La., praying the confirmation of her title to a certain tract of land, reported a bill for her relief; which was read and passed to a second reading.

Mr. GWIN, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, reported a bill for the relief of Charles J. Swett.

Mr. HAMLIN, from the Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred the memorial of William V. Martin, reported a bill to change the name of the American-built steamer Fanny Fern to that of Thomas P. Stuart, and to grant her a new register; which was read three times by unanimous consent, and passed.

Mr. H., from the same committee, reported a bill authorizing the