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SPEECH

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OF

SAM HOUSTON, OF TEXAS,

ON

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THE BILL FOR THE RELIEF OF YUCATAN.

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DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, MAY 8, 1848.

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# SPEECH

OF

SAM HOUSTON, OF TEXAS,

ON

## THE YUCATAN QUESTION.

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Could I have believed that the vote would now be taken upon the bill that is before the Senate, I should not have ventured to occupy the time of this body for one moment. But having observed that some degree of excitement has existed, and there being a reasonable probability, to my apprehension, that the debate will not speedily close, I avail myself of the privilege to state what reasons I may have for the vote which I shall give upon the bill.

I grant that the proposition is somewhat novel. It has not been the policy of the Government of the United States to intermeddle in foreign politics, but to avoid as far as possible all entangling alliances, or whatever might lead to difficulty in our relations with foreign countries. We are at present necessarily involved in a war with Mexico, of which, Yucatan is an integral part, geographically regarded, but politically separated from the country. It has been since 1840, virtually a Government of itself, maintaining a separate and independent existence. A war existed between the other States of Mexico and Yucatan in the years 1841-42, and, indeed, up to 1843. We are aware of the relation that Yucatan has borne to Mexico during the present contest between Mexico and this country. The people of that Province have claimed an exemption from the burdens of the war, upon the ground of not being in any way involved in the differences which led to its commencement. This consideration should have some weight with us. I think, therefore, she must be regarded as entirely separated from the Mexican Republic.

I regret to see that anything foreign to the discussion of this single proposition, either in connection with the present war, or with other matters

equally irrelevant, has been introduced into this discussion. No matter what latitude may be given to debate, we cannot eschew one important truth, that we are bound to protect the interests of our country—and it matters not, whether they are immediate or remote. Our relations are extensive and varied. Our position is of such a character, that it requires unceasing vigilance to obtain for it, security. While we ought not interfere with the policy of other nations which is disconnected with our own, we should pursue that course in the preservation of our interest, which is best calculated to prevent the intervention of foreign powers in the affairs of this continent. Such was the principle laid down—clearly to my mind—by President Munroe, in his message to Congress in 1823. It was hailed with pleasure at that time by the statesmen of the Democratic party, and has been acknowledged and acquiesced in, as a correct principle up to the present moment, and can only now be regarded as an axiom of Government, which has directed our declarations, and must, if we are to remain free from difficulty with other powers, be regarded as the directory of our future course as a nation. It has been the subject of the direct exercise of the faculty of this Government by its distinguished functionaries. We may go as far back as 1825, two years subsequent to the declaration by Mr. Monroe, and we will there find the principle recognized and avowed by Mr. Clay, the then Secretary of State to Mr. Adams, in a despatch addressed to Mr. Salarzar, Minister of Colombia, and resident in Washington; and in duplicate of said despatch, dated 20th December, 1825, delivered to Mr. Obregon, Minister of the Republic of Mexico, Colombia and Mexico had it in contemplation, to make a descent upon the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico. For this, they had concerted measures, and were to unite their efforts. Their objects were, to place arms in the hands of the servile population of those Islands, and thus destroy the interests of Spain. In full view of these circumstances, Mr. Clay uses the following language, when speaking of the meditated movement :

“ The suspension is due to the enlightened intentions of the Emperor of Russia, upon whom it could not fail to have a happy effect. It would also postpone, if not forever render unnecessary, all consideration which other powers may, by any resistable sense of their essential interests, be called upon to entertain of their duties, in the event of the contemplated invasion of those islands, and of other contingencies which may accompany or follow it. I am directed, therefore, by the President, to request that you will forthwith communicate the views here disclosed, to the Government of the Republic of Colombia, which he hopes will see the expediency, in the actual posture of affairs, of forbearing to attack those islands, until a sufficient time has elapsed to ascertain the result of the pacific efforts which the great powers are believed to be now making with Spain.”

This occurred at a time when other powers were endeavoring to bring about a pacification between Spain and her colonies. But the principles laid down in the extract, are conclusive, to my mind, that if it should become necessary, the Government of the United States was prepared to interpose force to prevent the contemplated invasion of those islands, or, why did the Secretary speak of “ and irresistable sense of essential interest, or say that the Government of the United States would be called upon to entertain of their duties in the event of the contemplated invasion of those islands?” The truth is, the Government of the United States were determined that

the attack should not be made by those Governments. And why so? Because it was to affect our interests, either immediately or remotely; and, if the kind language of diplomacy had not proved influential, an armed force would have restrained those powers. If similar movements had been contemplated by any of the European powers, on islands connected with that continent, is it to be supposed that the Government of the United States would have interfered with any designs connected with them? Then why was this interest manifested in relation to Colombia or Mexico? Upon one ground only; and that is, that it was connected with the principle declared by Mr. Monroe, and the interests of this Republic. Upon any other ground, it would have been regarded as officious intermeddling in the affairs of other powers. Other declarations were made, of a similar character at that day, recognizing the principles laid down by Mr. Munroe, and the same which have been reiterated by the present Executive. It is a principle that never has been questioned by an American statesman. And, although the extent to which interference may be proper, has not been defined, we must be regulated by our true policy, that is not violative to our Constitution.

To my apprehension, true policy would enforce upon the United States the propriety of taking possession of Yucatan, if there is even the slightest possibility of its falling into the hands of any other nation. If a foreign power should possess it, with an able force at its command, it could at any time cut off our commerce with the Atlantic, and render it insecure, even within the Gulf of Mexico. From the Sisal, in Yucatan, to Havana, in Cuba, the distance is little more than an hundred miles; but from its cape to the nearest part of Cuba, it is little more than sixty miles. Around the Peninsula of Yucatan, there are various harbors in which steamers of convenient draught of water could shelter. To the north of it, the roadstead is excellent. Hence the outlet from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic, through the bay of Honduras, would be subject to whatever power might have possession of Yucatan. From Havana to the Cape of Florida, embracing the great eastern outlet to the Atlantic for our commerce, will be subject to the control of any power which may have the greatest interest with the Government of Cuba. The ascendancy which England holds of Spain, would secure to her all the benefits, commercial, or warlike, which she could desire, or which could arise from the enjoyment of the facilities afforded by the ports and harbors of Cuba. Thus is easily discovered the inconvenience and detriment which might arise to the commerce of the United States from the possession of Yucatan, by any power which may by possibility, be placed in a hostile attitude to the United States. It is nearer to the mouth of the Mississippi river, than even Vera Cruz, or any important port of Mexico. Any great naval power engaged in a war with the United States, would have the means of effectually cutting off our commerce with the Atlantic, by the possession of Yucatan and the occupation of Cuba—and we know that nations in war are unscrupulous as to the means employed to insure success. What would be the condition of the great West and South, if the mighty egress from the Mississippi to our commerce was entirely prevented? It would be ruinous. Then it is our duty to prevent every probable impediment which might remotely affect that great interest.

No case can possibly arise, that will more directly appeal to the true policy of the country, or the humanity of a nation, than that which is now under discussion. Yucatan has appealed to this country for relief. She has offered to us in return, her "dominion and sovereignty." Her existence is dependant upon our action. We are to decide in favor of civilization or barbarism. The war raging in Yucatan, is not only one of desolation and rapine, but of unheard of cruelty and extermination. It seems to me, if any circumstance, independent of the true policy of this Government, could claim our consideration, it would be the sufferings of the unhappy Yucatacos. Laying aside their appeals to our humanity, the highest political considerations present themselves to the Patriot's mind. In the desperation of the affairs of those people, they have not only appealed to the Government of the United States, and made a tender of their dominion and their sovereignty; they have made a similar tender to England and to Spain. They have first appealed to us; and we are now discussing the propriety of interposing in their behalf. Some power must interpose. It is true they are not entitled to our consideration as a recognised member of the family of nations, for they have been abandoned by their natural ally, with whom we are at war. If we refuse aid, and England or Spain, or any other power should interpose in their behalf, how can we say to them—You have no right to interpose. If England should acquire peaceable possession, with the right of dominion and sovereignty, will we not be precluded from all interference hereafter, in relation to that territory? If, in consequence of delay on the part of this Government, or a want of action, a foreign power should take possession of it, we are precluded forever from all interference with that country, unless by an act of open war; nor will we have a right to question their title to it. No matter whether they are prompted by a love of dominion or feelings of humanity; if they acquire possession of it, owing to delinquency on the part of this Government, we never can question their right, as connected with the affairs of this continent? as embraced in the declaration of Mr. Monroe. That declaration either meant something, or it meant nothing; and if this Government does not take action in behalf of Yucatan, we must regard that proud sentiment of a Revolutionary patriot as idle gasconade. It was no idle threat, nor has it been so understood. The history given of that declaration, by the Senator from Indiana, (Mr. HANNEGAN.) upon this floor, derived from a distinguished member of the cabinet of Mr. Monroe, leads the mind to a clear conclusion that it was the avowal of a great principle, upon which this Government would act in all future time. If we do not aid Yucatan in this emergency, it will be an abandonment of all pretext for resisting any encroachment that may be made upon this continent, upon any territory not within the defined boundary of the United States. Hence, I believe the true policy of this country, aside from motives of humanity, should induce us to act promptly and efficiently. The course which we ought to pursue is consistent with the safety and well-being of our country. No time would be more propitious than the present, for the practical application of the principle, inhibitory of the intervention of foreign powers upon this continent. When again will the state of Europe be found so auspicious to the upbuilding of free institutions upon this continent? Since the exist-



ence of this Government, no such opportunity has been afforded to us in the establishing of our free institutions as the present. Europe is convulsed. England has to guard her own position. She has perplexities at home. Her complicated colonial system must be kept in operation, and will call in requisition all the ability of her most enlightened statesmen. Under these circumstances, we are left to the accomplishment of the great object of our mission here, if she were even disposed to raise objections to our taking possession of Yucatan. But she can have no ground of complaint. Our intervention has been invoked, and I can apprehend no reason why we should withhold it. But gentlemen have discovered imaginary dangers. They apprehend that it might be a cause of war with France or England. A cause of war if we choose to assist a neighboring people, overwhelmed by calamity? Would it be a just cause? Would the community of nations countenance such a pretext? I cannot believe that there is a nation of the earth that would raise its voice against the interference of this country for the protection of Yucatan. If we were to usurp her territory for self-aggrandisement—if we were seeking to conquer them for spoil, then there would be some pretext for supposing that any foreign power might interpose to prevent the extension of our dominion. I cannot believe that the Executive contemplates any object, unless it is to prevent the intervention of a foreign power, and to interfere in behalf of humanity. He has not the power to assist Yucatan, or to arrest the carnage now carrying on in that country, and he has presented the measure for the consideration of Congress. Whilst the United States is engaged in a war with Mexico, and necessarily occupying her territory—until a peace—with all the available forces of the army, it would be unwise in him to withdraw any portion of the forces from the service in which they are now engaged.

It is to be regretted that obstacles are thrown in the way of the proposition to supply a force and means necessary for the alleviation of the sufferings of Yucatan. The President requests this aid and support from Congress. Is it to annex Yucatan to the United States? No, sir. It is to render such aid as may be necessary to defend the white population of that country against the savages, and to enable them to maintain their position until the Indians can be repulsed, or peace is restored, and then to leave the country in the enjoyment of liberty, after making such arrangements as will reimburse the United States for the aid rendered. This, I understand to be the object of the President; and, whether it be his meaning or not, it is the design which I would entertain myself.

Are the evidences before us sufficient to induce a belief that the people of Yucatan are borne down by superior numbers, by a "majority," as the gentleman from Kentucky, (Mr. CRITTENDEN,) has said? "Are the savages the majority?" Yes—perhaps ten to one. And is that any reason why the white inhabitants, "who have occupied the country for three hundred years," should be given up to slaughter and indiscriminate butchery? No, sir! It is a reason why they should be assisted. It is a reason why those savages should have their bloody hands stayed from slaughter. It is a reason why we should interpose in defence of the whites, who bear upon them the impress of civilization and brotherhood with ourselves. Because their number is small in comparison with that of their destroyers, is a po-

tent reason why I would sustain them. If they outnumbered their enemies, they would not imploringly beseech your support. It is because they are a minority, feeble, defenceless, oppressed, and hunted down by barbarians, that we should not hesitate in the course suggested; and our humanity is appealed to in behalf of age and sex; nor is even helpless infancy spared from the massacre; neither is there hope but in our protection. It is said by gentlemen that "we do not know what will be the end of it; that it cannot be seen." No, sir; it cannot be seen. Are we to await the catastrophe before we act? Suppose the question had been asked of the British Government, who planted the first colony upon this continent, when the difficulties first arose between the colonists and the savages of the forest, and when assistance was demanded in behalf of the Pilgrims, "Do the Indians form a majority?" and they had postponed all action upon the appeal until that fact was ascertained, or had refused all aid to their necessities, what would have been the estimate of its character? What would have been the decision of the civilized world upon it character? Suppose the colonies had applied to France, or Spain, or some other friendly Power, for protection, would they have stopped to ask are the savages a majority? When answered affirmatively, and they had been surrendered to their fate, and extermination had been the consequence, what would the fiat of history have been upon such delinquency? Would it not have been a worthless inquiry? Would it not have been considered so by those who were suffering beneath the fury of the ferocious savages?

In portions of Mexico the Indians are not savages. The Indians that Cortez met were not like the aboriginal inhabitants of Yucatan. They had a knowledge of the arts. They were, to a great extent, civilized and improved. The Indians on the south of the Gulf of Mexico are cannibals, who live upon fish, and feed upon their captive enemies, and, when assailed, fly to their mountain fastnesses for safety. Such people inhabited the southern portion of Texas. They were of gigantic size, ferocious in their dispositions, loathsome in their habits, and rioted on human flesh. Such are the natives against whom the people of Yucatan appeal to you for protection. I grant you that we are at war with Mexico, and that an amistice now exists. That might form an obstacle to our interference if Yucatan were really a portion of Mexico. It cannot be so regarded, for it has been separated for eight years from that distracted country. Therefore, it should be no obstacle. I admit there is no modern precedent for our interference in behalf of the people of Yucatan. Are we to wait for a precedent? Are we to stand with our arms folded, until we can send and ascertain the cause of the quarrel between the whites and the savages? Are we to wait until we ascertain the probability of the success of the Indians in the extermination of the whites? Shall we maintain our composure, undisturbed, until all this is done, before we act upon this bill? If so, we had better reject the bill at once, and give to it no further consideration.

Gentlemen have expressed apprehensions and fears lest this subject should enter into the Presidential election, as I understand them. Sir, I discover that every thing here, to the minds of some gentlemen, enters into the Presidential elections. Nothing is exempt from its influence, nor is it exempt from other influences in their estimation. Are we to avoid

the discharge of our duty, and abandon an object of national policy, or the cause of humanity, because in its prosecution a Presidential election may be incidentally involved? I should be sorry to participate in the legislation of this hall, if honorable Senators were to so far forget themselves as to huckster in a Presidential canvass, or render aid to the aspirations of any candidate for that high office. This is not the appropriate sphere for electioneering. These halls are dedicated to a higher and nobler object. The legislators who meet here are expected to promote the public weal, but not to minister to personal ambition. Elections appropriately belong to the people. Their intelligence enables them to bestow their suffrages aright. The present is a subject in which the whole nation is either to be benefited or involved. It is a national interest, and rises far above all the influences of party. I trust we shall never be so chained down to party that we cannot legislate for the whole American people. Ill-fated would we be, if we could not avoid the influence of cliques, and legislate independently for the whole community, and, rising above every consideration, which is unworthy of a proud mind, never stoop; but making rectitude our standard, be governed by intelligence and patriotism. We should proceed boldly, firmly, and promptly, until we had relieved the people of Yucatan from their fearful adversaries. Our aid could then be withdrawn from that country, after making such regulations and securing such commercial privileges as would repay us for the benefits which we had conferred upon them. I would not desire to act either upon the principle of annexation or absorption; but I would have a just care for our interests. The Balize is already in possession of England. It is a portion of the peninsula of Yucatan. I do not see any possible objection which can arise on the part of any Government, to the course suggested. Mexico cannot object, for if it be an integral part of that republic, it must acknowledge itself to be under obligations to us for defending a portion of their country which they cannot protect. They have been careful to petition the United States to prevent the Comanchies from depredating upon their northern borders. If it be a matter of favor to them, that they should be protected upon the north, why not protect them in the south against the Indians of Yucatan? I remember as far back as 1832, a treaty existed between the United States and Mexico, in which the former engaged to restrain her Indians from incursions into Mexico; and I well recollect an unfortunate circumstance which was most calamitous to that country which has but recently been a portion of Mexico. Every Texean will sympathise most feelingly with Yucatan in her present misfortune; for, during the existence of the treaty to which I refer, and subsequent to the declaration of Texean independence, while the benefits of the treaty still inured to her, the Government of the United States was woefully delinquent in performing, on her part, the obligations which that treaty imposed upon her. It was an obligation of the treaty, devolving upon the United States, to restrain their Indians from incursions into the territory of Mexico. Instead of discharging her duty, a treaty was negotiated by this Government with the Caddo Indians; and one of the conditions of that treaty was, that they should remove south of the Red river, thereby throwing them upon the soil of Texas. Was this contrived by delinquent agents, and consummated

mated by their mismanagement? Or was it by the connivance of the Government? At all events, remonstrances were made to the Government of the United States by the authorities of Texas, and they were disregarded. This Government, so far from redeeming the pledges by which she was bound in honor, permitted her agents to pay the annuities to those Indians in rifles, ammunition, and instruments of war. The consequence was that the inhabitants of our frontier were massacred from the Red river to the Rio Grande. We felt the calamities of savage warfare. It is natural that we should sympathise with the sufferers of Yucatan.

The question recurs: Shall we aid Yucatan? At one time the case of Texas was similar to that which is now before us. In 1843, owing to the character of the war waged upon Texas by Mexico, and the frequent molestations of the former to the latter, application was made to the United States, England, and France, invoking their interposition in behalf of Texas; and the interposition was solicited on the ground that the war conducted by Mexico was contrary to the principles and usage of civilized warfare. They had united with their regular troops the wild Indians, and with them made incursions from the west to the Rio Grande, upon our villages and settlements. After this application was made to the powers above referred to, they all concluded that it was a matter of too much delicacy in which to interfere, and left Texas to her fate. If either of the powers appealed to had separately stepped forward in aid of Texas, after the other two had declined, or turned a deaf ear to, her solicitations, could they have urged it as a ground of complaint against that power which had magnanimously interposed. Why do Americans love France? Because she was the friend of this nation in calamity. Why do Americans now rejoice in her triumphs? Because Frenchmen participated in the achievement of our independence. The gratitude of nations is like that of individuals, because they are composed of individuals, and gratitude is the offspring of a noble heart in return for generous benefits conferred. Sir, let us not be laggard upon this occasion. Let us not be alien in feeling towards a people that look to us for an act of friendship. Let us make them fast friends by acts of justice if not of munificence. All remember the period, and it is not long since, when there were sympathizers on this floor, and every manifestation of generous feeling was evinced. The subjects of suffering were more remote from us in their locality, than those now appealing for American aid. I recollect when the tidings of Ireland's sufferings reached our ears. Senators then came forward and eloquently advocated the cause of suffering humanity there. The heart of every Senator in this body seemed to sympathise with poor Ireland. Disease and famine were sweeping off the inhabitants of that green isle, by tens of thousands. No one could hear of her calamities without the most acute sympathy. Now, I appeal to honorable Senators, and ask them to draw a distinction between those who fall by famine, or who fall and perish by the ruthless butchery of the savage. They alike appeal to our humanity. They both demand our interposition that they may be saved. We have generously rendered assistance to unfortunate Ireland; it is now left for us to save Yucatan. If the war raging now with the Yucatacoes were conducted upon civilized principles, I would say, unless an alliance were formed according to political motives, Stand aloof. Then would be a time for deliberation and hesitancy.

But gentlemen insist that we have no precedent ; that it is novel in its character. I trust no parallel will be found to it in the annals of after time. I have not attempted to urge this measure upon the ground of feeling alone. I would, if gentlemen desire it, let policy go hand in hand in its accomplishment. I would not—as gentlemen have said—make it a Quixotic expedition. In it I would unite reason with humanity, policy with mercy—policy, so far as this Government is concerned, and humanity as far as the necessities of that people are involved.

This responsibility I would not shrink from, My support of this measure does not arise from a love of war. I am no advocate of national involvement. I would support no war that was not necessary to the national honor or national interest. I am opposed to entangling alliances. I would adopt no measure for the sake of experiments alone ; for I believe nations are most happy which enjoy the most peace, and that country most prosperous whose productions are greatest—its commerce more extensive—and where all the arts incident to peace are most flourishing. But, we have the history of no nation that has ever existed, without being visited by the calamities of war. The age of man perhaps has never passed, in the history of nations, but what they have experienced war, or it has been prevented by negotiation. Peace is not the natural element of man ; nor have we any right, so long as human passions remain implanted in us, to suppose that all occasions for war will be obviated. Wars and disunions necessarily grow up between nations, as differences arise between individuals. Their interests are different, and often adverse to each other. If we recur to the the history of the past, there is little reason to believe that wars will soon cease to exist ; at least not in our generation. I am not permitted to believe from the aspect of the affairs of the world, that the wars in Europe and in America will cease with our present war with Mexico. But unless we interpose on this occasion, I am led to believe that the white race of Yucatan will be exterminated, and war, in that quarter at least, will cease for awhile.

The Hon. Senator from South Carolina, (Mr. CALHOUN,) has thought proper to introduce into the discussion of this subject, that of the annexation of Texas to the United States. Although it may not legitimately come within the range of discussion, it is perhaps as legitimate as the discussion of the war with Mexico. The honorable Senator has declared his opinion to be, that annexation was not the cause of war with Mexico. To that subject, I had no disposition to advert. It had been so often discussed, that few ideas on the subject remain unexpressed. I expect to be able to do but little more than reiterate what has been before, in substance, stated ; nor, am I vain enough to believe, that I can add any new interest to a matter which has employed the minds of the members of this enlightened body. I had, however, hoped and believed that no Senator, upon reflection, and who had carefully examined the facts, could doubt that annexation was the cause, and the sole cause, of the war with Mexico. It was declared by the Mexican functionaries, that it would be considered a cause of war. The recognition of Texean independence, by the United States, was the first ground of serious complaint ; and it was virtually protested against by Mexico. Subsequently to that, when the treaty of annexation was negotiated in 1844, the Mexican Minister declared, that if the treaty should be

signed, he would regard it as a cause of war, and take his passports to leave the United States. Annexation took place, although it had been maintained throughout by Mexico, that it would be regarded as a *casus belli*, and war would result. War has resulted. The negotiations between Texas and the United States caused the breaking off of an armistice between the former and Mexico. When annexation was proposed by the United States, Texas and Mexico were at war. Texas was a sovereign and independent nation. When the Joint Resolutions were passed by the Congress of the United States inviting annexation, the relations between Texas and Mexico had not changed. Before they were presented to the Texan Government, the recognition of Texan independence by Mexico had arrived at the capitol of Texas; and that recognition was to take effect upon condition that Texas was not to become annexed to the United States. She was recognized according to her declared boundary. It had been defined by her statutes; and Mexico acknowledged Texas as she then claimed to exist, as a Government, conceding to her everything by the act of her recognition, on condition that she should not become annexed to the United States. By the acceptance on the part of Texas of this recognition, there was no cause of war existing between the two countries. But, if she did not accept the terms of Mexico and eschew annexation, it left the two nations in the same condition in which they had been for eight years previously. Texas rejected the proposed recognition by Mexico, and accepted the terms of annexation proposed by the United States. The moment that the resolutions were accepted by Texas, by that very act she had claim upon the protection of the United States.

If Texas had not become a part of the United States, would she have had a claim upon their protection? Or would there have been any necessity for the troops of the United States to have passed into her territory? If annexation had not taken place would the troops of the United States have been within the territory of Texas? If you strike annexation from the record, you remove all cause of war between the two countries. Congress concurred in the removal of the troops into the territory of Texas. After this concurrence in, and sanction of, the acts of the President, the troops of Mexico passed the boundary of Texas, and attacked the troops of the United States, thus continuing the war which had existed with Texas, and incorporated by annexation into the national affairs of the United States. The occupancy of Texan soil by American troops, was no cause of war on their part, but it afforded an opportunity to Mexico of putting her reiterated threats into execution. No objection was ever made, or any question raised as to the propriety of the course adopted and pursued by the President. This must be the conclusion that it not only met the sanction of Congress, but the approval of every friend of annexation. It is insisted by the honorable gentleman (Mr. CALHOUN) that Congress alone has the power to declare war. In this case it was useless. War had never ceased between Texas and Mexico, and Texas had then become a part of the United States, so that the war existing with one State of the Union, must, of necessity, involve the whole Union. It was not possible to separate Texas from her responsibilities, before she became a part of the Union; and so far as war was concerned; her responsibilities were incurred by the

United States, by her act of annexation. Her political relations to Mexico had been changed, and the war was, therefore, the consequence of that political change. Of necessity the United were bound to give Texas protection, and that could not be done without an army, as she had no authority to raise an army for her defence. It is urged that if an attack was made by Mexican troops upon those of the United States, it was not by order of the Mexican Congress, nor had it made any formal declaration of war. There is no Mexican Congress. That was only known to the Constitution from 1824, and that was subverted in the year 1834. Iturbide, when he was in power, kicked the Congress out of doors, and then he had what he called a Congress, of his own selection, and to do his bidding. There has never been a Congress in Mexico that deserved the name. Their Constitution requires that the people shall elect a President; but I ask you to tax your memories, and then tell me when a constitutional election has taken place in Mexico. There have been extraordinary Congresses; and they have invested with extraordinary powers an extraordinary President; yet while he had an army to enforce his decrees, they submitted to him as the supreme authority. They regarded him as a ruler; but no Mexican knows any thing of a Constitution, unless it is theoretically. They negotiate and write as well as any people in the world, but they cannot act, and they know it, and they feel it. When Paredes, who was an usurper, was at the head of affairs, there was an *interregnum* in the Government. It was a sort of revolutionary misrule. He gave his authority to the act of war. There was no Congress to declare war. He was Congress and everything else. By his authority the Mexicans attacked the army of Gen. Taylor. So, sir, I must believe that annexation did bring about the war. In fact, by the annexation, the United States adopted the war. There was no way of creating a war; for there was no cessation of hostilities, except for a few months, between Texas and Mexico, and that was broken off in anticipation of annexation, or in consequence of negotiation leading to that object. It is a waste of time to talk about a question of boundary. Who ever made a question about the boundary from the time of the declaration of independence by Texas, until it was started in the United States, and grew out of political agitations here. The Rio Grande was the admitted and acknowledged boundary of Texas—acknowledged by whom? By Mexico? Why? Because she never thought of any other than the natural boundary of the Rio Grande, and the original boundary of the Province of Texas. Mexico knew that the Texean Government exercised jurisdiction up to the line of the Rio Grande, and they never raised the question. Mexico was acquainted with the laws of Texas. An act was passed for their translation and publication. And would not that country particularly examine every act that was passed in Texas, when they were eagerly watching to take every possible advantage? Can it be believed that Mexico had not, from the year 1836 to the year 1844, known of the act declaring the boundary of Texas? Our recognition by the great powers of the earth was made in the face of that boundary enactment. The boundary never was disputed. Texas never had but one boundary, and that was the Rio Grande.

Mr. DAVIS, of Massachusetts. Will the Senator permit me to ask him a question?

Mr. HOUSTON. Certainly.

Mr. DAVIS. Does the Senator know who exercised jurisdiction from Santa Fe up to the Rio Grande? Who held jurisdiction over all the territory of New Spain, down the valley of the Rio Grande, to the mouth of the Brazos?

Mr. HOUSTON. From the Presidio de Rio Grande, the country was occupied by the cavalry of Texas, for the purpose of protecting the traders, and of resisting the Comanche Indians. Above that, it was occupied by bands of Indians and perhaps some half civilized Mexicans—Texas waiting until she was in a situation to occupy it more conveniently. That Texas considered that country as a portion of her Republic, was never doubted. An unfortunate expedition was directed to that country, but it was so thoroughly mismanaged, that those connected with it were captured and taken to Mexico as prisoners. Had orders been given differently, and had the expedition been placed under sagacious and wise leaders, they would have possessed themselves of the country. This circumstance, however, which occurred, as nearly as I can recollect, in 1840, did not change the relations of Texas to that country. Overtures had been made to the Government of Texas by the people residing there, who desired to come under our jurisdiction, to have the benefit of our laws and institutions. The matter was conducted without the caution that was necessary, and without the wisdom proper for its guidance to a successful result. This was anterior to entering into negotiations between the United States and Texas, for annexation. The United States were under no obligations to Texas, until they assumed those obligations, and then the army and navy of the United States had been placed at the disposal of the President of Texas. He had the control of both the army and navy. The squadron was sent to the Gulf, and subjected to the order of the President of Texas. Mexico was continually fulminating threats of extermination. Texas would have been unwise in her state of insecurity to have hesitated about providing for her safety. It was her duty to secure herself, that in the event of the failure of annexation, she might have a guarantee to fall back upon; and this she obtained during Mr. Tyler's administration, and before negotiations ever commenced.

I am aware that this has but little connection with the subject of Yucatan, but the remarks of the honorable gentleman have caused this digression, which I have reluctantly made. I do trust that it will be regarded as consistent with every sense of duty and propriety, to render the aid to Yucatan, which she desires. I regard it as our duty, on the score of policy, as well as of humanity, to accord to her the protection which her necessity demands.





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