

16
REFLECTIONS,

ON THE

CESSION

OF

LOUISIANA

TO THE

UNITED STATES.

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BY

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1851

REFLECTIONS

ON THE CESSION OF LOUISIANA TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE cession of Louisiana to the United States is an event, of which the most sanguine speculative politician could scarcely have ventured to indulge a hope: When the treaty of peace in 1763, left the French nation in possession of that part, only, of its former territory in North America, it became an object with the Spanish government to possess it; probably, not from the expectation of any immediate profit to be drawn from it, but rather with a view to retain it as a barrier against the growing power of the British colonies; by interposing between them and her Mexican dominions, either the natural obstacles of a vast uncultivated wilderness, or a line of military posts, whenever the occasion might require it. This we may suppose to be one of the principal inducements to Spain to obtain it; which she did by treaty with France about the time of the conclusion of the peace, or not very long after.

So long as Louisiana appertained to Spain, whose pacific and unenterprising character promised to make her a quiet neighbour; and whose weakness and valuable possessions on the western coast of North America might be considered as a perpetual guarantee of the same line of conduct on her part; the acquisition of that immense country was by no means a desirable object to the United States, who are already possessed of more than ten times as much land as they have hands to cultivate.

For wealth does not consist in the possession of lands, unless we have also the means of cultivating them, and of obtaining a ready and convenient market for all our superfluities: Without these, the borders of the Nile are of no more value than the sands of Africa; population, only, can furnish them: Consequently to a people already possessing a superabundance of land, the acquisition of as much more, without any increase of population, offers no present advantage; on the contrary it would rather serve to depreciate that which they already possess; and, what is worse, may operate to diminish the national strength, by dispersing the people over an immense wilderness, instead of drawing them together, as closely as may be consistent with the fertility of our lands, and other natural advantages; a measure which sound policy will always recommend in all countries.

The re-cession of Louisiana by Spain to France, a few years past, was a measure dictated probably by constraint, rather than by choice. For it seems difficult to conceive what benefit the former could promise to herself from it; and it is equally difficult to imagine that she could not foresee the danger to be apprehended from a flourishing colony established so near to her weak and rich possessions in Mexico: to the final conquest of which such an acquisition by an ambitious, powerful, and warlike nation would seem to be almost an immediate step. And such a purchase by a government of that character, possessing at the time no other territory on the North American continent, might be considered as an indication of views by no means favourable to those already established in the neighbourhood; and which it would not very readily be brought to abandon.

The proposed establishment of a military colony in Louisiana by the French government, under such circumstances was therefore a subject of serious alarm, not only to our western brethren, but to

every good citizen of the United States: for independent of the considerations already hinted, arising from the contiguity of Louisiana to the western states, the free navigation of the Mississippi, the right to which had been solemnly recognised and established by our treaty with Spain, might have been rendered extremely precarious when the territory on both sides of that river towards its mouth became the property of a military republic; and the conduct of the intendant at New Orleans at once manifested how much it was in the power of the owners of that spot to annoy the interests of our western brethren, and to involve the whole confederacy in a war with one of the most powerful nations in Europe. Nor did the preparations in France and Holland for the immediate establishment of a *military colony* in Louisiana leave any room in the breast of many to doubt that the intendant acted according to instruction, and that the first fruits of these proceedings on the part of France would be a rupture with the United States.

Happily these preparations for the establishment of *such* a colony in Louisiana had not been carried into effect, when the alarm excited by the unauthorised conduct of the intendant at New-Orleans prompted the present administration, instead of listening to the suggestions of ardent and intemperate politicians, to commence a negociation for the purchase of this important territory. In this attempt they have (most happily for America!) succeeded even *beyond expectation*: For I can scarcely believe that even the advisers of the measure ventured to cherish expectations of so speedy and prosperous an issue; the cession being not only as extensive and compleat as it was in the power of France to make, but the terms extremely advantageous to the United States. It is not my intention, however, to enquire to what combination of circumstances, or to whose diplomatic skill this successful negociation is to be attributed. It is suffi-

cient for me, that the object has been fully obtained.

This cession comprehends “the complete sovereignty of the town and territory of New-Orleans, as well as Louisiana, as the same was heretofore possessed by Spain:” * by which I understand the whole of the Spanish territory lying between lake Pontchartrain, lake Maurepas, and the river Mississippi; and between the Mississippi and the ancient boundaries of Louisiana to the westward, northward and southward; with the precise limits of which I do not pretend to be acquainted †: yet

* Letter from Rufus King, Esqr. our ambassador at London, to Lord Hawkesbury.

† Before the war which terminated in the year 1763, France, then in possession of Canada and Louisiana, under the name of Louisiana, laid claim to the whole territory, now constituting a part of the United States, and lying between the Mississippi on the west, the lakes on the north, and the Alleganey, or Appalachian Mountains on the east; as also to the territory west of the Mississippi, from the river of the north, which empties itself into the Gulph of Mexico, in the latitude of 26 : 12, north, to the Canadian boundary on the north; and, as may be presumed, to the line of the Spanish dominions of Mexico, on the west, as far as the head waters of the river of the north, and those of the Missouri, the principal branch of the Mississippi yet known, towards the north west, extend. These limits have never been precisely ascertained, so far as is known to us.

By the treaty of peace in 1763, the entire province of Canada was ceded and guaranteed to the English, with all that part of Louisiana, as theretofore claimed by France, which lies east of the Mississippi, and of the peninsula of New-Orleans, separated from the Floridas by the river, canal, or gut of the Ibberville, lake Maurepas, lake Pontchartrain, and that part of the Mexican Gulph communicating with those lakes. France having ceded to Spain the day before the treaty of peace was signed, in full property, and without any exception, the whole country *known by the name of Louisiana*, the river Mississippi from its source to the canal or river of Ibberville, together with that river, lake Maurepas, and lake Pontchartrain, as above described, was established as the perpetual boundary between England and Spain. The Floridas as then ceded to England having at the peace of 1783, been receded to Spain, the boundary established in 1763, between Louisiana and West Florida was probably continued, and may be regarded as the subsisting boundary at this day, between those countries.

there is reason to believe that it contains an extent of territory little, if at all, inferior to that of the United States. The terms upon which this immense cession has been made are, eleven millions two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to be paid to France, in six per cent stock, within three months after the exchange of the ratifications, and delivery of possession. Secondly, the United States assume the payment of three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars to our own merchants for debts due to them, and captures provided for under the convention of 1800, between the United States

When France, a few years past, obtained from Spain the cession of Louisiana, it was intimated, and is highly probable, that the cession was made according to her former extensive claims; whether any precise, or general boundary was designated by that treaty, is probably unknown on this side of the Atlantic; but being ceded to the United States as fully and amply as the cession was made to France, whatever her claims were under that treaty, the United States are now entitled to claim.

Louisiana, then, as ceded by Spain to France, and by France to the United States, may be supposed to extend from the river of the north, in the latitude of 26: 12, on the south, to the head branch of the Mississippi, in the latitude of 47: 38, north, and longitude of 95: 6, west, as the same is said to have been ascertained by a Mr. Thompson, astronomer to the north-west company, who, according to the late traveller Mackenzie, was sent expressly for that purpose, in the spring of 1798, comprehending a distance of nearly fourteen hundred miles from south to north. Its western limits are not so easy to be described; but it is probable that a chain of mountains partially laid down by Mackenzie in his map, and running nearly parallel to the Mississippi, about the longitude of 112: 30, west, (in which it seems probable that the heads both of the river of the north, and of the Missouri may be found,) will be considered as the proper and natural boundary between the Spanish dominions in Mexico, and the territory of Louisiana; a distance probably not less than eight hundred miles from east to west. These limits may describe an area of more than a million of square miles; and comprehend a territory more than equal to the whole of the United States, as settled by the peace with Great Britain in 1763.

See the king of Great Britain's proclamation for the settlement of Canada, and the Floridas, October 7, 1763. Belsham's Memoirs of the House of Hanover, and of the reign of George the third; and Mackenzie's travels through the continent of north America, and Carver's travels.

and the French Republic, if the same, when liquidated, shall amount to so much; making in the whole fifteen millions of dollars. Thirdly, French and Spanish vessels and merchandizes directly from their own ports, for a period of twelve years, are to pay no higher duties than American citizens, after which they are to be upon the same footing with the most favoured nation. Fourthly, the inhabitants of Louisiana are to be incorporated with the United States, as soon as can, consistently with the constitution of the United States, be effected: and in the mean time are to be secured in their liberties, property, and religion.

Such are the terms upon which this important cession has been made to the United States; upon which I shall make a few remarks, before I proceed to consider what may be regarded as the solid and permanent advantages which the United States may derive from this most fortunate negotiation.

From a statistical table of the United States (for which the public is indebted to the labours of Mr. S. Blodget,) I find the quantity of land therein is estimated at six hundred and forty millions of acres; and, if I have not been misinformed, the territory of Louisiana contains at least an equal quantity of land, and it is by many believed to be of at least equal, or superior, quality. If there be six hundred millions of acres, only, the purchase at fifteen millions of dollars amounts to twenty-five *milles*, (or the fortieth part of a dollar,) only, per acre:—consequently, one dollar purchases forty acres of land. I believe that none of our *balloon-land-mongers* have purchased their lands at *quite* so low a rate. Consequently, regarding the transaction, merely as a speculation with a view to a pecuniary profit, the most experienced financier in the land-jobbing business would be obliged to acknowledge it to have been a *lucky bit*. When a former Secretary of the Treasury intimated to Congress that *twenty cents* per acre,

was as much as could reasonably be expected for our western lands, many who were in the habit of thinking only as he thought, supposed they could not possibly be made to yield any more. Nevertheless, when Congress fixed the lowest price of them at two dollars per acre, it was soon discovered that there would be purchasers at that price, and even *more*. But, without adopting this estimate, let us recur to that of the former Secretary, and we shall find that what we have paid for this territory, is but the *eighth part* of his estimate. Consequently, we may venture to pronounce, that this acquisition regarded as a mere pecuniary transaction, is a *good bargain*.

Little need be said as to the terms of payment; they are as easy as we could possibly have expected. By paying stock, instead of ready money, we are relieved from the payment of the principal at present, and it is probable the purchasers of the stock will not wish to receive it until we force it upon them. This turn of the transaction shews something of more importance, not immediately connected with this business, which I cannot help mentioning, *en passant*; I mean the high state of the public credit of the United States, among foreign nations; for unless that was the case, the court of France would probably have excused itself from the trouble of turning our stock into cash, in order to pay themselves, and insisted that we should have paid down the money.—Another important consideration is, that by the *payment of stock*, instead of assuming the payment of money at a future day, the debt will be transferred from the *French government*, to *individuals*; with whom it may be more easy to treat about the payment of the principal, than with a powerful nation in need of money. The payment of the interest annually will probably be directly or indirectly reimbursed from the consumption of foreign articles in the western states. If the impost be not collected at New-Orleans, it will

probably be paid at New-York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and reimbursed from the states on the Mississippi and Ohio, who will thus pay (perhaps exclusively) for those benefits which may at first seem to operate exclusively for their advantage.

These few remarks have been introduced for the sake of those politicians who calculate the loss and gain upon any transaction in the same manner as they would the contents of a hogshead of molasses, or a bale of oznaburgs; and who would as soon think of lending a friend money without security, or without interest, as they would of aiding one part of the confederacy at the expence of the whole.

Having, as I hope, thoroughly satisfied this class of politicians, I shall address the remainder of these remarks to those sober and reflecting persons, who, without any view to their own personal emolument, or that of their friends and connexions, examine the measures of government impartially, as they tend to promote, and to secure the general happiness of the confederacy; making that criterion, *and that only*, the general standard of their support, or opposition. To men of such characters, even the reflections of an individual far removed from the political theatre, and wholly unconnected with those in office, or who wish to be in office, if dictated by similar motives with their own, can not be wholly unacceptable. I shall therefore proceed to state what I conceive to be the solid and permanent advantages, which may be derived to the United States, either immediately, or remotely, in consequence of this important negotiation.

The *first*, and most obvious advantage which accrues from this transaction, is the happy removal of the recent and imminent danger we were in, of an immediate rupture with France. Events are too recent to require that this danger should be strenuously insisted on, or formally demonstrated. They are recorded, not only in the Journals of Con-

gress, but in the multifarious productions of the press for many months past; had the propositions made in the Senate of the United States for levying an army for the purpose of seizing New-Orleans been carried into effect, the issue must have been an immediate war with France; the expence of such a war for a single year would probably have exceeded the sum paid for Louisiana. But who could count the probable duration, or issue of such a war, with one of the most powerful nations in Europe? I pretend not to do it. Yet if we take into consideration the probable views of the French government in obtaining the cession of Louisiana from Spain, and the vigorous preparations they were making for the establishment of a military colony in that quarter, we can not but be surprised that they should have been prevailed on to abandon them altogether for so small a sum as fifteen millions of dollars.

Secondly; we have not only averted the impending danger of an immediate war with France, but we have obtained a perpetual guarantee against similar danger from the same quarter in future; a quarter, where we were weakest, and on many accounts most vulnerable.

There is no political axiom more just, than that neighbouring nations are seldom very cordial friends. And this extends to colonial neighbours, as well as others. Until the peace of 1763, the hostilities between the French and English colonists within the limits of the United States as now settled, were incessant. Even Spain, since the American revolution, has sometimes indicated an unfavourable disposition towards us. Had France taken possession of Louisiana, and made grants of land there, (as was probably her intention) as a remuneration to the officers and soldiers of her immense armies employed during the late war, and established a military government, either there, or at New Orleans, it is probable that the United States

would never have enjoyed any permanent state of tranquility in that quarter: and hostilities there would have led immediately to a general war with that nation. The issue of such contests I must again decline the attempt to calculate, or to foresee: but we may venture to affirm that in no event whatsoever could we hope for the possession of Louisiana upon such advantageous terms as we have obtained it.

Thirdly; we have secured, without the possibility of future annoyance or interruption the free navigation of the river Mississippi; both sides of which we now possess, I presume, from New-Orleans to its mouth; as also all the advantages of an excellent port, and deposit for the imports and exports of the western states.

When we reflect that the depriving us of a place of deposit for our western commodities was thought by our warm politicians, of itself, a sufficient cause of war; and when that object is acquired, without any expence of blood, at a price less than the probable expenditure of one year during a war; we must be satisfied the acquisition of these advantages alone, without regard to the territory of Louisiana, is of immense value to the United States. The perpetual removal of the means of annoyance to the commerce of the western states, can only be estimated by recurrence to the history of those countries, where those means have either been the successful engines of oppression, or the cause of almost incessant wars, between neighbouring nations, for ages.

Fourthly; by this cession we have obtained for the western states and their commerce, a strong and, in effect, an impassable barrier against invasion, or annoyance from the west, or south: since it will now be impossible for any attack to be made upon them from either of those quarters, without first reducing New-Orleans; which from its situation is capable of affording them powerful protec-

tion against hostilities from the sea, should any attempt from that quarter be meditated, which is now rendered altogether improbable. And in this point of view, as it respects the United States in general, this important acquisition may be regarded as the most momentous object which has been achieved on the part of the United States since the final establishment of their independence by the treaty of peace with Great Britain in 1783, with the single exception of the adoption of the present constitution of the United States. For now the United States are, as it were, insulated from the rest of the world. Divided from Canada by extensive lakes, or a bold and rapid river, which we are precluded by treaty, from navigating, no causes of misunderstanding are likely to arise from that quarter; nor can any danger be apprehended from the weak and barren province of Nova Scotia. Past experience has shewn us the value of our barrier on that side of the United States: The Floridas, whilst they remain in the possession of Spain, will, from their weak, and uncultivated state, always be a barrier to us in the opposite quarter of the Union: Louisiana now affords us a barrier (instead of a frontier,) of one thousand miles on the west, extending completely from Canada to the Floridas.* Our eastern frontier is the only part of the United States which will now remain exposed to the immediate attacks of foreign nations; and on that side, it is our happiness to be divided from

* If Great Britain in the course of the present, or any future war with France, should have obtained the possession of Louisiana, the United States would have been encompassed by that power, entirely, except on the side of Florida, and the Atlantic. Had she been disposed to render the acquisition formidable, to us, it was in her power to have injured us more than France. The similarity of manners, of laws, and of language would have aided all her projects against us, and we never could have hoped for the possession of Louisiana, unless by the events of a war which would have cost ten times the purchase money.

the warlike nations of the earth by an ocean near a thousand leagues in breadth. Never since the commencement of the annals of mankind did any civilized nation possess so advantageous a position. Never was there a people who had their happiness so much in their own power. Far removed be the day, when in speaking of them it may be said,

O fortunati, nimium, sua si bona norint!

The advantages of these barriers, respectively, are incalculable. The object, or pretended object of almost all the wars which have distracted Europe for more than a century, has been the securing effective barriers for some, against the power, ambition, and encroachments of others. For this purpose, not only the most bloody wars have been waged, but peaceful and extensive dominions have been subjugated and divided between their more warlike neighbours, without the shadow of excuse, except the pretence of preserving the balance of power between themselves; or some other pretext equally frivolous and unjustifiable. When I think of these things, I am almost led to break out into strains of rapture and enthusiasm, which might seem inconsistent with the calm and dispassionate view that I have proposed to take of the subject before me.

Intimately connected with this view of the subject, is the *fifth* benefit which we may hope will be secured to the United States by the acquisition of Louisiana; which is, the preservation of the Union, among the present states, for a period far beyond that which it would probably have lasted if Louisiana had been retained and settled by France. For it is not improbable had a flourishing colony been established there, that means would have been adopted to seduce the people of the western states into an opinion that a more advantageous alliance, or confederacy could be formed with the possessors of that country, than with the United States. That a similarity of situation in respect to their com-

merce with the rest of the world must create a similarity of interests; for the promotion of which by vigorous and united measures, it would be advisable to separate from the Atlantic states, and form an union with each other, in that quarter. Even at this early day there have not been wanting characters, by whom these ideas of a western confederacy appear to have been cherished. If the proper use be made of our acquisition of Louisiana, such notions will not be revived for centuries; the United States will continue to find their interests the same, however diversified in appearance; they will discover that the moment of separation will commence the never ending period of their misfortunes.

Should these ideas be considered as merely Utopian, (which with a certain class of my readers is not improbable) there yet remain some other benefits which may probably result from the success of this negotiation, which may not be regarded altogether in so fantastical a light: one of these consists,

Sixthly; in having effectually secured ourselves against future rivalship in the sale of our lands on this side the Mississippi. Our western lands now command two dollars per acre, at the lowest. This price they will continue to command, unless, following the example of Virginia, we chuse to throw them away for an hundredth part of that sum. But, if France had settled Louisiana, it is probable that she would have offered her lands there on much lower terms. For having ten or twenty times as much land to dispose of as the United States, she could afford to undersell them, and by these means put a stop to the sale of our western lands, unless we should reduce the price to a level with what lands of equal quality might be had for there. In this competition we must have been entirely defeated, so that our present waste lands would have

remained in that state, but for this event, which has put the market completely in our own hands; and it will be our own faults if we do not avail ourselves of the benefit, which wisdom, discretion, and foresight are capable of deriving from so fortunate a circumstance.

Seventhly; a still more important consideration, inseparably connected with the last, is, that it secures us against the danger of depopulation, by migrations from these states to Louisiana; and furnishes us with the means of regulating our own population; besides giving us the exclusive benefit of emigrations from Europe.

Both these may be deemed objects of the first importance; if France had retained the possession of Louisiana, nothing is more likely, than that she would have adopted every measure for the promotion of that colony, which her well known skill in policy could have suggested. None was more obvious than offering to emigrants bounties in lands, and other advantageous terms of settlement, sufficiently captivating to allure many of the citizens of the United States to remove thither. Success in such a scheme would operate doubly to our disadvantage, since we should lose a citizen whenever they gained a new settler. A few years might have transferred the whole population on the east of the Mississippi to the western side of that river; for, those whom the spirit of adventure, or the desire of bettering their fortunes, might prompt to remove from the Atlantic to the *transmontane* states, would probably no longer stop there, but cross the Mississippi at once, in quest of better lands, or more advantageous terms of purchase, or of settlement. Emigrants from Europe would also have been probably tempted to look for settlements in this new land of promise, for the same alluring and substantial reasons. Thus not only the disposal of our public lands, but our population, itself, would have been at the mercy of the French government. It

would be inconsistent with every idea of sound policy in that government to suppose it would discountenance such an influx of inhabitants from the United States to Louisiana; or rather, we must suppose it utterly blind to the best interests of that colony, if the opportunity of thus advancing them should have been neglected.

The attainment of so many great and important objects, at the expence of little more than one year's revenue, must impress every man of reflection with a thorough conviction of the peculiar felicity of the United States, in thus securing the means of benefits which every moment must more fully develope, and which it depends upon ourselves, only, to perpetuate for ages. If, however, future events shall shew that we are not *satisfied with them*, from that period we may confidently pronounce, that if we had obtained Louisiana without paying a single cent for it, we should have made *a bad bargain*.

This reflection I have been induced to make as a prelude to the remarks I mean to offer upon one remaining advantage, which may eventually result from this acquisition, and which many of my readers may deem to be of the first magnitude, and importance; but which I am inclined to consider in a very different point of view: doubting, whether that of which they may think so highly, may not at first weaken, and then dissolve our present happy federal union, and finally subvert and destroy the happiness of this western world.

Eighthly, then; this immense territory may be regarded as a *treasure in bank*; the amount of which is at present altogether incalculable, and which must depend upon the progress of population, on the one hand, and on the other, upon the wisdom, moderation, energy, and firmness of our government, in resisting the allurements of an insidious and captivating policy, to which it may be urged by the solicitations of its false friends, and

the clamours of its open enemies, at the same time. In considering this part of the subject, I shall unavoidably be led to refer again to some things which I have already advanced: the reader, I hope, will pardon the repetition.

The first project that will be thought of by a certain class of men among us, probably will be the settlement of the new colony, and, for that purpose, the immediate opening of a *land-office* for the disposal of our newly acquired territory. It will be urged, plausibly enough, “ that we ought to reimburse ourselves for the cost, by the immediate sale; that it is unreasonable to burthen the people of the United States with the payment of the purchase money, when so many persons may be found ready to take the lands at an advanced price, and even advance the amount of the original purchase, without calling upon the people at all, for that purpose; that we ought to encourage migrations from other countries, by offering the lands at a cheap rate to all that are willing to settle them.” These arguments and perhaps an hundred others equally specious may seem perfectly convincing, and incline many to approve of a measure, which I apprehend would be attended with most pernicious effects, both immediate and consequential.

The author of the statistical table before referred to, calculates that there are now thirty-eight millions of acres of improved land within the United States, out of six hundred and forty millions which he supposes them to contain: if this estimate be correct (though I am inclined to think it much too high) there is upwards of fifteen times as much land lying waste within the United States, as there is of improved land. Now, if we suppose that there are not more than two-fifths, or two hundred and sixty millions of acres of the lands within the United States, unfit for cultivation, there will remain three hundred and eighty millions of acres, (or

ten times the present quantity of improved lands,) that are capable of it; and consequently there is land enough, even according to the present unprofitable mode of cultivation, for ten times the present number of inhabitants within the United States. Now, the value of land may be computed to increase in a ratio at least equal to the population of a country; of course, it may be reasonably supposed, that whenever the United States arrive at their due state of population, the value of lands therein will be full ten times as great as at present. And if agriculture in the United States should ever be brought to as great perfection as in many parts of Europe, we may venture to affirm that both our population, and the price of our lands, would be advanced much higher than this estimate. But, if an equal quantity of lands as what the United States contain be brought into the market, those which we now possess must inevitably depreciate, instead of advancing daily in price, (as must happen in proportion as our population encreases) if no addition to the quantity at market be made; it will therefore be far more advantageous to the landholder to pay his quota of the annual interest upon the purchase of Louisiana, which he will probably never feel, than suffer the value of his lands to be depreciated, by opening a land-office in that immense territory, the consequences of which both he, and his posterity will be sure to feel. Upon this ground, then, it would be highly impolitic to dispose of the lands in Louisiana, at present.

But if it be still insisted upon, that the people of the United States ought not to be *taxed* to raise the money to pay for this acquisition, yet this will not prove the expediency of opening a land-office *there*.

For the United States have now probably fifty millions of acres of land to dispose of; and they are daily disposing of them at the price of two dollars per acre, for the lowest: seven millions and a half

of acres, sold at that price amounts to the principal sum to be paid for the purchase of Louisiana; and four hundred and fifty thousand acres, sold annually, will amount to the interest, which is all we are at present called upon to pay. If then we must sell lands to pay this interest, let us continue to sell those first, which are nearest home, and which will command the best price. By so doing we shall not depreciate the value of the remainder, as we shall if we begin with selling those at a distance, and at an inferior price. Besides, the interest of the United States requires that our population, already infinitely too much dispersed, should, instead of being rendered still more dispersed, become as compact as the fertility of our lands and other natural or accidental advantages will admit of.—Possessing already one hundred and twenty acres of land for every individual in the United States, would it not be folly in the extreme to invite any of them to remove beyond our present limits? Ought we not rather to encourage, to the utmost, population within the present states until there shall be people enough to cultivate and improve the whole? Then, and not till then, would it seem prudent to turn our attention to the settlement of a remote territory, whose advancement must, till that period, inevitably retard the settlement and improvement of the country which we already occupy.

If it be admitted that a dispersed population is a disadvantage to a state, (and surely it requires no argument to prove it) nothing can contribute more to such a dispersion than throwing into the market so immense a quantity of land. Every day's experience shews us that whenever new settlers, or purchasers of lands, are permitted to locate their purchases as they please, they make choice of the most fertile spots, only, neglecting the rest. Thus a very large portion of valuable land lies still waste and uncultivated;—whereas if new lands were only

granted when population requires it; and if one of the conditions of the grant were, that the grantee should make a permanent settlement thereon; all the lands in the country which are capable of cultivation and improvement would be settled, cultivated and improved: and population and the price of lands would be advanced accordingly. More especially if in addition to the condition of a permanent settlement upon the lands granted, no single grant should be made for more lands than might be sufficient for the occupation of one wealthy farmer. Let those who are disposed to set at nought these observations compare the state of agriculture and population in the New-England states with those of Virginia and North Carolina. In the former, barren spots are made productive, whilst in the latter vast tracts of arable lands lie wholly waste and uncultivated; and five miles square in the first, can often produce as many hardy militia for the defence of their country, as five and twenty miles square can furnish in the latter. Invite the inhabitants of a compact township in Connecticut to disperse over an equal extent of country; they would immediately find the difference in all the comforts and conveniences of life, domestic and political. Let them remove themselves into the howling wildernesses of Louisiana, and all the advantages which the United States might derive from their removal thither, would not recompense an hundredth part of the loss. And if the spirit of migration thither should seize the people of the New-England states generally, it might prove of fatal consequence not only to their agriculture, but to their commerce. For if once that hardy race of men who are now engaged in navigation in those states, should be allured by bounties in land, or by the cheapness of it, to turn their attention from the ocean to this new land of promise, it might change the face of their native country altogether; and even their most flourishing commercial seaports

might be successfully rivalled by others more conveniently situated for an intercourse with the productive, and consuming parts of the United States. Nor does it require the spirit of prophecy to foresee that a rage for acquiring lands in Louisiana, and migrating thither to settle, if encouraged, must at no very distant period weaken and reduce the population in the Atlantic states, and not improbably all that lie eastward of the Mississippi. The consequences of such a seduction must prove ultimately fatal to the United States: for we may boldly pronounce, that, “*the CONFEDERACY can never be permanently extended beyond the MISSISSIPPI; nor preserved among its PRESENT MEMBERS, whenever LOUISIANA shall become a populous country.*” Whenever that event takes place the constellation of the present United States will probably set for ever.

Must we then never dispose of this immense quantity of valuable lands, which we have purchased at such a price? No:—Never, as long as the United States have lands to dispose of and settle on this side of the Mississippi; nor until we have a population more than equal to the cultivation of all our lands, to the best advantage.* For until that period shall arrive there cannot be as much labour employed within the United States as may be advantageously employed therein; and so long as there is room for advantageous employment at home, it cannot be our interest to send abroad those who are necessary to the cultivation, improvement, and strengthening of our own country. That colonies are always expensive to the parent state in their first settlement, and that as soon as they acquire strength enough to help themselves they are unwilling to continue in subjection, our

* It is possible that there may be places on the banks of the western side of the river, that may be more favourable for vessels to stop at than any that can be found on the eastern side. My objections would not go to the exclusion of settlements at such places, provided they were limited to that object.

own recent conduct and experience fully shew. To colonise Louisiana would probably soon produce this effect; to extend the confederacy as far as to the limits of Mexico would probably produce a dissolution of the Union, and eventually change the type and character of our government. In proportion as we advance towards Mexico, we shall view its golden mines with the same cupidity that the Spaniards first beheld them; and this will no doubt lead to the nefarious project of conquering the Spanish dominions, first on this side, and then beyond the streights of Darien. To thousands among us such a project might even now appear as desirable as the original conquest of those countries did to the Spaniards. But, when we are willing to exchange our present constitutions and government, and our present enviable state of liberty, with all its attendant blessings, for the riches and the wretchedness of Spain, we shall deserve all the miseries which such an achievement would entail upon us, and our posterity, forever.

But, if these dissuasives, powerful as they appear to my mind, be not sufficient to deter us from opening a land office in Louisiana, let us view the subject in another light. The terms upon which those lands must be granted must be comparatively high, or low. If high, those who are disposed to purchase lands will prefer them on this side of the Mississippi, and will consequently not purchase *there*; if low, the lands which the United States now have for sale will remain unsold. Thus no advantage, either way, can possibly result from the measure.—If the lands be sold in large tracts they may be acquired and held by persons who do not owe allegiance to the United States.—or, the foundations of future principalities may be laid by successful speculators. If in small parcels laid out into townships (as the lands north-west of the Ohio) it will only serve to allure those to settle *beyond* the limits of the United States, who would settle *within* them, if the temptation be withheld. Thus in no

possible view can I perceive any benefit likely to result to the United States by opening a land office in Louisiana, whilst a thousand mischiefs threaten to flow from any attempt of the kind.

But, when the population of the United States shall render it no longer wise, or practicable, to restrain emigrations from them, then this immense treasure in bank may be called up from the vault in which, until that time, it will be adviseable to keep it locked up; and, wonderful to behold! then shall we find that our talent has increased to ten talents, without merchandising with it, or lending it out at usury.—But to this period, he that values the happiness of the United States can only look forward with a sigh, at the painful reflection, that the price of all this treasure will be the present unrivalled happiness of his country.

As some atonement for these unfashionable Utopian ideas, I shall proceed to consider another advantage which may possibly accrue to the United States from this acquisition, if a proper use be made of it: that is,

Ninthly; we now shall have it in our power to propose to the Indian nations now settled within the United States an exchange of lands beyond the Mississippi, for those which they now hold*; by this means we shall be able to dispose of all the lands on this side the Mississippi to those who will cultivate them, who are already civilized, who speak the same language with us, and who will be ready and willing to harmonize and become one people with us, if they be not so already. The lands which we may acquire in this manner will probably be amply sufficient to pay for ten times the purchase of Louisiana. and this remote treasure, so dangerous to be touched whilst it remains at a distance, may be brought with safety to our doors, and

* There are probably two hundred millions of acres of land in the United States to which the Indian title has not yet been extinguished.

used as occasion shall require, without fear of the consequences.

Such an exchange, if it can be effected, of which I presume there can be little doubt, will strengthen and cement our union beyond any other event of which I am able to form an idea. Our whole country, except the ports on the Atlantic, and at the mouth of the Mississippi, will consist of an extensive and numerous agricultural people, detached from all the other civilized nations of the globe, forming one general and powerful confederacy of republican states, nursed in the lap of liberty, sprung from one common stock, cherishing the same fraternal sentiments towards each other, and the same devotion to their common country, liberty and happiness. The demon of discord is the only enemy from whose effects or malignity the United States could have just cause of apprehension; and he might be chained for centuries, beyond the Mississippi, if the policy which is here recommended be adopted.

Of the same nature, though of less practicable aspect, is another Utopian idea, which I presume to suggest to the genuine friends of freedom, yet, I confess, without any sanguine hope, that it will receive countenance. The southern parts of Louisiana bordering upon the gulph of Mexico lie under a climate more favourable for the African constitution than any part of the United States. Thither, if under the auspices of a divine Providence, the great work of the abolition of slavery should be accomplished in Virginia, or other southern states, we may colonize those unhappy people, whom our ancestors have brought in chains from their native country, and we continue to hold in bondage. Would to God, that I could flatter myself that this was not a mere visionary project!—Thither, at least, it may be adviseable to entice those to remove who have already, or may hereafter obtain their freedom, through the benevolence of their

masters, and a relaxation of the rigid laws, which have heretofore existed to prevent emancipation. Thither, also, delinquents, whose lives may be forfeited to the considerations of self-preservation, may be banished for attempts to regain their native freedom. The distance of that part of Louisiana from the United States might recommend it as a place of exile, also for other criminals.—There they might form settlements, and perhaps repent, and become useful members of society among each other; but I am not more sanguine upon this subject, than the former. Time and experiment may enable us to judge better.

It formed no part of my plan in this essay to consider what temporary arrangements it might be necessary to adopt on this truly important occasion: many will no doubt be necessary.—But if what I have offered against the settlement of Louisiana be worthy of attention, I would beg leave to hint, that a measure intimately connected with those already mentioned, would be to invite those, who are now settled in Louisiana, to remove into the United States, by proposing to them an advantageous exchange of lands. Thus should we make them a full recompense for whatever they might abandon on the other side of the Mississippi, and gain an accession of population in the United States, and at the same time relieve ourselves from any expence necessary for the preservation of civil government among them. This, if it can be effected, will be a happy counterpart of the proposed exchange with the Indian tribes.

The island of New-Orleans will no doubt claim the immediate attention of Congress. If we can obtain from Spain a cession of that part of West Florida which lies to the west of the Mobile, or even of the Pearl river, or of the river Amitic, it might be worthy of an amendment of the constitution to incorporate that territory, together with the territory of New-Orleans, with the present

United States government upon the Mississippi; and admit the whole into the Union as a new state, as soon as the population of it may entitle it to such admission. Such an arrangement would probably immediately conciliate the affections of the people of the ceded territory, and prove an additional motive to those beyond the Mississippi to remove to this side, where they might at once experience all the benefits of civil government, and the participation of the freest and happiest constitution upon the face of the globe.

Homer tells us that Ulysses on his return from Troy paid a visit to Eolus, the God of the winds; who, out of his great favor to that illustrious chief presented him with a bag, in which all the adverse winds and storms, which might retard or endanger his passage to his native kingdom, were tied up: his companions, fancying that this bag contained some precious *treasure*, took the first opportunity, whilst the Ithacan sage was asleep, to *open it*;—upon which, the winds and storms instantly making their escape, the ship with all his indiscreet companions was immediately swallowed up in the ocean.

May no imprudent use of our late successful negotiation with France induce the application of this fable to the people of the United States!

August 10, 1803

THE END.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
 discussion of the problem. It is shown that the
 problem is equivalent to the problem of finding
 the minimum of a certain functional. This
 functional is defined as follows:

$$J(u) = \int_{\Omega} |\nabla u|^2 dx + \int_{\Omega} u^2 dx - \int_{\Omega} f u dx$$

where Ω is the domain of interest, ∇ is the gradient operator, and f is a given function. The
 minimum of this functional is attained at a function u which
 satisfies the following boundary value problem:

$$\Delta u + u = f \text{ in } \Omega, \quad u = 0 \text{ on } \partial\Omega$$

where Δ is the Laplace operator and $\partial\Omega$ is the boundary of Ω . The
 existence and uniqueness of the solution of this problem is
 established by the method of the calculus of variations.

In the second part of the paper, the problem is
 solved numerically. The domain Ω is discretized
 by a finite difference grid. The functional $J(u)$ is
 approximated by a discrete functional $J_h(u_h)$. The
 minimum of $J_h(u_h)$ is found by the method of
 steepest descent. The numerical results are compared
 with the exact solution of the problem.

The numerical results show that the method of
 steepest descent converges rapidly to the minimum
 of the functional. The error of the numerical
 solution is of the order of 10^{-4} .

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