

APPENDIX to the *CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE*

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29th Congress 2nd Session  
THE MEXICAN WAR

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SPEECH OF MR. CORWIN  
OF OHIO

IN THE SENATE, February 11, 1847.

The Bill making further appropriations to bring the existing war with Mexico to a speedy and honorable conclusion being under consideration—

Mr. **CORWIN** said:

Mr. **PRESIDENT**: I am not now about to perform the useless task of surveying the whole field of debate occupied in this discussion. It has been carefully reaped, and by vigilant and strong hands; and yet, Mr. President, there is a part of that field which promises to reward a careful gleaner with a valuable sheaf or two, which deserve to be bound up before the whole harvest is gathered. And still this so tempting prospect could not have allured me into this debate, had that motive not been strengthened by another, somewhat personal to myself, and still more interesting to those I represent. Anxious as I know all are to act, rather than debate, I am compelled, for the reasons I have assigned, to solicit the attention of the Senate. I do this chiefly that I may discharge the humble duty of giving to the Senate, and through this medium to my constituents, the motives and reasons which have impelled me to occupy a position, always undesirable, but in times like the present, painfully embarrassing.

I have been compelled, from convictions of duty which I could not disregard, to differ, not merely with those on the other side of the chamber, with whom I seldom agree, but also to separate, on one or two important questions, from a majority of my friends on this side—those who compose here that Whig party, of which I suppose I may yet call myself a member.

Diversity of opinion on most subjects affecting human affairs is to be expected. Unassisted mind, in its best estate, has not yet attained to uniformity, much less to absolute certainty, in matters belonging to the domain of speculative reason. This is peculiarly and emphatically true, where we endeavor to deduce from the present, results the accomplishment of which reach far into the future, and will only clearly develop [sic] themselves in the progress of time. From the present state of the human mind, this is a law of intellect quite as strong as necessity. And yet, after every reasonable allowance for the radical difference in intellectual structure, culture, habits of thought, and the application of thought to things, the singularly opposite avowals made by the two Senators on the other side of the chamber, (I mean the Senator from South Carolina, Mr. **CALHOUN**, and the Senator from Michigan, Mr. **CASS**,) must have struck all who heard them as a curious and mournful example of the truth of which I have spoken. The Senator from Michigan, [Mr. **CASS**] in contemplating the present aspects and probable future course of our public affairs, declared, that he saw nothing to alarm the fears or

depress the hopes of the patriot. To his serene, and as I fear too apathetic mind, all is calm; the sentinel might sleep securely on his watchtower. The ship of State seems to him to expand her sails under a clear sky, and move on, with prosperous gales, upon a smooth sea. He admonishes all not to anticipate evil to come, but to fold their hands and close their eyes in quietude, ever mindful of the consolatory text, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. CALHOUN,] summoning from the depths of his thoughtful and powerful mind all its energies, and looking abroad on the present condition of the Republic, is pained with fearful apprehension, doubt, distrust, and dismay. To his vision, made strong by a long life of careful observation, made keen by a comprehensive view of past history, the sky seems overcast with impending storms, and the dark future is shrouded in impenetrable gloom. When two such minds thus differ, those less familiar with great subjects affecting the happiness of nations, may well pause before they rush to a conclusion on this, a subject which, in all its bearings, immediate and remote, affects certainly the present prosperity, and probably the liberty, of two republics, embracing together nearly thirty millions of people. Mr. President, it is a fearful responsibility we have assumed; engaged in flagrant, desolating war with a neighboring republic, to us thirty millions of God's creatures look up for that moderated wisdom which, if possible, may stay the march of misery, and restore to them, if it may be so, mutual feelings of good will, with all the best blessings of peace.

I sincerely wish it were in my power to cherish those placid convictions of security which have settled upon the mind of the Senator from Michigan. So far from this, I have been, in common with the Senator from South Carolina, oppressed with melancholy forebodings of evils to come, and not unfrequently by a conviction that each step we take in this unjust war, may be the last in our career; that each chapter we write in Mexican blood, may close the volume of our history as a free people. Sir, I am less inclined to listen to the siren song the Senator from Michigan sings to his own soul, because I have heard its notes before. I know the country is at this moment suffering from the fatal apathy into which it was lulled a few years ago. Every one must recal [sic] to his mind, with pleasing regret, the happy condition of the country in 1843, when the other question, the prelude to this, the annexation of Texas, was agitated here; we remember how it attracted the attention of the whole Union; we remember that the two great leaders of the two great parties, agreeing in scarcely any other opinion, were agreed in that. They both predicted that if Texas were annexed, war with Mexico would be the probable result. We were told then by others, as now by the senator from Michigan, that all was well, that all was calm, that Mexico would not fight; or, if she would, she was too weak to wage the struggle with any effect upon us. The sentinel was then told to sleep upon his watchtower; "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," was sung to us then in notes as soft and sweet as now. Mr. President, "the day has come, and with it has come war, the most direful curse wherewith it has pleased God to afflict a sinful world. Such have been the fatal effects of lulling into apathy the public mind, on a subject which agitated it, as well it might, to its profoundest depths.

I repeat, sir, the day has come, as was then predicted, and the evil predicted has come with it. We are here, sir, now, not as then, at peace with all the world—not now, as then, with laws that brought into your treasury everything adequate to its wants—not

now, as then, free from debt, and the apprehension of debt and taxation, its necessary consequences. But we are here with a treasury that is beggared—that lifts up its imploring hands to the monopolists and capitalists of the country—that sends out its notes and “promises to pay” into every mart and every market in the world—begging for a pittance from every hand to help to swell the amount now necessary to extricate ourselves from a war—inevitable, as it now seems it was, from that very act which was adopted under such flattering promises two years ago. Mr. President, it is no purpose of mine to arraign the conduct of the united States upon that occasion. It is no purpose of mine to treat this young and newly adopted sister—the State of Texas—as an alien or stranger in this family of republics. I allude to this only to show how little reliance is to be placed upon those favorable anticipations in which gentlemen indulge, which may low from measures to which [p211-212] they are strongly wedded, either by feeling or party attachment.

Is there nothing else in our history even of the past year to justify the Senator from South Carolina in the pregnant declaration, that in the whole period of his public life, comprehending the most eventful in the history of the republic, there had never been a time when so much danger was threatened to the interests, happiness, and liberties of the people? Sir, if any one could sit down, free from the excitements and biases which belong to public affairs—could such an one betake himself to those sequestered solitudes where thoughtful men extract the philosophy of history from its facts, I am quite sure no song of “All's well” would be heard from his retired cell. No, sir, looking at the events of the last twelve months, and forming his judgment of these by the suggestions that history teaches, and which she alone can teach, he would record another of those sad lessons which, though often taught, are, I fear, forever to be disregarded. He would speak of a republic, boasting that its rights were secured, and the restricted powers of its functionaries bound up in the chains of a written Constitution; he would record on his page, also, that such a people, in the wantonness of strength, or the fancied security of the moment, had torn that written Constitution to pieces, scattered its fragments to the winds, and surrendered themselves to the usurped authority of ONE MAN.

He would find written in that Constitution, *Congress* shall have power to declare war; he would find everywhere, in that old charter, proofs clear and strong, that they who framed it intended that Congress, composed of two Houses, the representatives of the states, and the people, should (if any were pre-eminent) be the controlling power. He would find there a President designated; whose general and almost exclusive duty it is to *execute*, not to *make* the law. Turning from this to the history of the last ten months, he would find that the President alone, without the advice or consent of Congress, had, by a bold usurpation, made war on a neighboring republic; and what is quite as much to be deplored, that Congress, whose high powers were thus set at naught and defied, had, with ready and tame submission, yielded to the usurper the wealth and power of the nation to execute his will, as if to swell his iniquitous triumph over the very Constitution which he and they had alike sworn to support.

If anyone should inquire for the cause of a war in this country, where should he resort for an answer? Surely to the journals of both Houses of Congress, since Congress

alone has power to declare war; yet, although we have been engaged in war for the last ten months, a war which has tasked all the fiscal resources of the country to carry it forward, you shall search the records and the archives of both Houses of Congress in vain for any detail of its causes, any resolve of Congress that war shall be waged. How is it, then, that a peaceful and peace-loving people, happy beyond the common lot of man, busy in every laudable pursuit of life, have been forced to turn suddenly from these and plunge into the misery, the vice and crime which ever have been, and ever shall be, the attendant scourges of war? The answer can only be, it was by the act and will of the President *alone*, and not by the act or will of Congress, the war-making department of the Government.

Mr. President, was it not due to ourselves, to the lofty character for peace as well as probity which we profess to be ours, and which till recently we might justly claim—was it not due to the civilization of the age that we, the representatives of the States and the people, should have set forth the causes which might impel us to invoke the fatal arbitrament of war, before we madly rushed upon it? Even the Senator from South Carolina, attached as he has been by party ties to the President, and therefore, as we may suppose, acquainted with his motives for his war with Mexico, was compelled to say the other day in debate, that up to that hour the causes of this war were left to conjecture. The reason of this singular anomaly, sir, is to be found in the fact that the President and not Congress declared and commenced this war. How is this, Mr. President? How is it that we have so disappointed the intentions of our fathers, and the hopes of all the friends of written constitutions? When the makers of that Constitution assigned to Congress alone, the most delicate and important power—to declare war—a power more intimately affecting the interests, immediate and remote, of the people, than any which a Government is ever called on to exert—when they withheld this great prerogative from the Executive and confided it to Congress alone, they but consulted in this, as in every other work of their hands, the gathered wisdom of all preceding times. Whether they looked to the stern despotisms of the ancient Asiatic world, or the military yoke of imperial Rome, or the feudal institutions of the middle ages, or the more modern monarchies of Europe, in each and all of these, where the power to wage war was held by one or by a few, it had been used to sacrifice, not to protect the many. The caprice or ambition of the tyrant had always been the cause of bloody and wasting war, while the subject millions had been treated by their remorseless masters, only as “tools in the hands of him who knew how to use them.” They therefore declared that this fearful power should be confided to those who represent the people, and those who here in the Senate represent the sovereign states of the republic. After securing this power to Congress, they thought it safe to give the command of the armies in peace and war to the President. We shall see hereafter, how by an abuse of his power as commander-in-chief, the President has drawn to himself that of declaring war, or commencing hostilities with a people with whom we were on terms of peace, which is substantially the same.

The men of former times took very good care that your standing army should be exceedingly small, and they who had the most lively apprehensions of investing in one man the power to command the army, always inculcated upon the minds of the people the necessity of keeping that army within limits, just as small as the necessity of the external

relations of the country would possibly admit. It has happened, Mr. President, that when a little disturbance on your Indian frontier took place, Congress was invoked for an increase of your military force. Gentlemen came here who had seen partial service in the armies of the United States. They tell you that the militia of the country is not to be relied upon—that it is only in the regular army of the United States that you are to find men competent to fight the battles of the country, and from time to time when that necessity has seemed to arise, forgetting this old doctrine, that a large standing army in time of peace was always dangerous to human liberty, we have increased that army from six thousand up to about sixteen thousand men. Mr. President, the other day we gave ten regiments more; and for not giving it within the quick time demanded by our master, the commander-in-chief, some minion, I know not who, for I have not looked into this matter until this morning, feeding upon the fly-blown remnants that fall from the Executive shambles and lie putrifying [sic] there, has denounced us as Mexicans, and called the American Republic to take notice, that there was in the Senate, a body of men chargeable with incivism—Mexicans in heart—traitors to the United States.

I trust, Mr. President, that our master will be appeased by the facility with which, immediately after that rebuke of his minion, the Senate acted upon the bill, and gave him the army which he required. I trust that he will now forget that law which, as commander-in-chief of the army of the United States and President of this great North American Republic for the time being, he promulgated to us in the message, and those commands which he was pleased to deliver at the opening of this session to his faithful and humble servitors in both branches of the American Congress, admonishing us that we would be considered as giving “aid and comfort” to his enemy—not ours!—his—if one word should be said unfavorable to the motives which have brought the royal will to the conclusion that he would precipitate this Republic into a war with Mexico! I trust his Majesty, in consideration of our faithful services in augmenting the forces of the Republic agreeably to the commands we have received from the throne, will be induced to relax a little when he comes to execute that law of treason upon one at least so humble as myself! I do remember, Mr. President—you will remember, Mr. President—your recollection of [col2-col3] history will furnish you with a case which will, I think, operate in my favor in a question of that sort.

Some time in the history of the royal Tudors in England, when a poor Englishman, for differing from his majesty, or her majesty, on some subject, it might be religious faith—was condemned to be hanged and quartered, and embowelled, out of special grace, in a particular case where penitence was expressed, the hangman was admonished to give the culprit time to choke before he began to chop up his limbs and take out his bowels.

Now, Mr. President, I have already stated that I do not intend to occupy the Senate with a discussion of those varieties of topics which naturally enforce themselves upon my attention in considering this subject. It must have occurred to everybody how utterly impotent the Congress of the United States now is for any purpose whatever, but that of yielding to the President every demand which he makes for men and money, unless they assume that only position which is left—that which, in the history of other

countries, in times favorable to human liberty, has been so often resorted to as a check upon arbitrary power—withholding money, refusing to grant the services of men when demanded for purposes which are not deemed to be proper.

When I review the doctrines of the majority here, and consider their application to the existing war, I confess I am at a loss to determine whether the world is to consider our conduct as a ridiculous farce, or be lost in amazement at such absurdity in a people calling themselves free. The President, without asking the consent of Congress, involves us in war, and the majority here, without reference to the justice or necessity of the war, call upon us to grant men and money at the pleasure of the President, who, they say, is charged with the duty of carrying on the war and responsible for its result. If we grant the means thus demanded, the President can carry forward this war for any end, or from any motive, without limit of time or place.

With these doctrines for our guide, I will thank any Senator to furnish me with any means of escaping from the prosecution of this or any other war for a hundred years to come, if it pleased the President who shall be, to continue it so long. Tell me, ye who contend that being in war, duty demands of Congress for its prosecution all the money and every able-bodied man in America to carry it on if need be, who also contend that it is the right of the President, without the control of Congress, to march your embodied hosts to Monterey, to Yucatan, to Mexico, to Panama, to China, and that under penalty of death to the officer who disobeys him—tell me, I demand it of you—tell me, tell the American people, tell the nations of Christendom, what is the difference between your American Democracy and the most odious, most hateful despotism, that a merciful God has ever allowed a nation to be afflicted with since government on earth began? You may call this free government, but it is such freedom, and no other, as of old was established at Babylon, at Susa, at Bactriana, or Persepolis. Its parallel is scarcely to be found when thus falsely understood, in any even the worst forms of civil polity in modern times. Sir, it is not so; such is not your Constitution; it is something else, something other and better than this.

I have looked at this subject with a painful endeavor to come to the conclusion, if possible, that it was my duty, as a Senator of the United States, finding the country in war, to “fight it out,” as we say in the common and popular phrase of the times, to a just and honorable peace! I could very easily concede that to be my duty if I found my country engaged in a just war—in a war necessary even to protect that fancied honor of which you talk so much. I then should have some apology in the judgment of my country, in the determination of my conscience, and in that appeal which you and I, and all of us must soon be required to make before a tribunal, where this vaunted honor of the Republic, I fear me, will gain but little credit as a defence to any act we may perform here in the Senate of the United States.

But when I am asked to say whether I will prosecute a war, I cannot answer that question, yea or nay, until I have determined whether that was a [p212-213] necessary war; and I cannot determine whether it was necessary until I know how it was that my country was involved in it. And it is to that particular point, Mr. President—without

reading documents, but referring to a few facts which I understand not to be denied on either side of this chamber—that I wish to direct the attention of the American Senate, and so far as may be, that of any of the noble and honest-hearted constituents whom I represent here. I know, Mr. President, the responsibility which I assume in undertaking to determine that the President of the United States has done great wrong to the country, whose honor and whose interest he was required to protect. I now the denunciations which await every one who shall dare to put himself in opposition to that high power—that idol god—which the people of this country have made to themselves and called a President.

But it is my very humility which makes me bold. I know, sir, that he who was told in former times how to govern a turbulent people, was advised to cut off the tallest heads. Mine will escape! Still, holding a seat here, Mr. President, and finding it written in the Constitution of my country that I had the power to grant to the President at his bidding, or not, as I pleased, men and money, I did conceive that it became my duty to ascertain whether the President's request was a reasonable one—whether the President wanted these men and this money for a proper and laudable purpose or not; and with these old-fashioned ideas—quite as unpopular I fear with some on this side of the Chamber as we find them to be on the other—I set myself to this painful investigation. I found not quite enough along with me to have saved the unrighteous city of old.

There were not five of us, but only three! And when these votes were called, and I was compelled to separate myself from almost all around me, I could have cried, as did the men of Uz in his affliction in the elder time—”What time my friends wax warm they vanish, when it is hot they are consumed out of their places!”

I could not leave the position in which it had pleased the State of Ohio to place me, and I returned again and again to the original and primary and important inquiry—how is it that my country is involved in this war? I looked to the President's account of it, and he tells me it was a war for the defence of the territory of the United States. I found it written in that message, Mr. President, that this war was not sought nor forced upon Mexico *by the people* of the United States. I shall make no question of history or the truth of history with my master, the commander-in-chief, upon that particular proposition. On the contrary, I could verify every word that, he thus utters. Sir, I know that the *people* of the United States neither sought nor forced Mexico into this war and yet I know that the President of the United States, with the command of your standing army, did seek that war, and that *he* forced war upon Mexico. I am not about to afflict the Senate with a detail of testimony on that point. I will simply state facts which few I trust will be found to deny.

One of the facts, Mr. President, is this: That in the year of grace 1836 the battle of San Jacinto was fought. Does anybody deny that? No one here will doubt that fact. The result of that battle I was, that a certain district of country, calling itself Texas, declared itself a free and independent republic. I hope the Senate will pardon me for I uttering a thought or two which strike me just now I while I see the Senator from Texas, the leader of the men who achieved that victory, before me. I wish to say a word or two about the

great glory, the historical renown, that is to come to the people of the United' States by the victories which we shall obtain over the arms and forces of the republic of Mexico. I suppose, Mr. President, like all other boys, in my early youth, when I had an opportunity of looking at a book called history, those which spoke of bloody battles and desolating wars were most likely to attract my attention, and with very limited means of ascertaining that portion of the history of the human race, it nevertheless has impressed itself very vividly upon my mind that there have been great wars, and, as the old maxim has it, “many brave men, before Agamemnon.”

Sir, the world's annals show very many ferocious sieges, and battles, and onslaughts, before San Jacinto, Palo Alto, or Monterey. Generals of [col1-col2, p213] bloody renown have frightened the nations before the revolt of Texas, or our invasion of Mexico; and I suppose we Americans might properly claim some share in this martial reputation, since it was won by our own kindred, men clearly descended from Noah, the great “propositus” of our family, with whom we claim a very enduring relationship. But I confess I have been somewhat surprised of late that men, read in the history of man, who knew that war has been his trade for six thousand years, (prompted, I imagine by those “noble instincts” spoken of by the Senator from Michigan [[CASS]], who knew that the first man born of woman was a hero of the first magnitude, that he met his shepherd brother in deadly conflict, and most heroically beat out his brains with a club—I say, sir, I am somewhat puzzled when I hear those who knew all these things well, nevertheless shouting paeans of glory to the American name for the few deeds of death which our noble little army in Mexico have not yet been able to achieve.

But sir, let me recur again to the battle of San Jacinto. The Senator from Texas [General HOUSTON,] now in his seat, commanded there. His army consisted of about seven hundred and fifty men. These were collected from all parts of the United States, and from the population of Texas, then numbering about ten thousand souls. With this army, undisciplined, badly armed, and indifferently furnished in all respects, the Senator from Texas conquered a Mexican army of about 3,500 men, took their commander, Santa Ana, then President of Mexico, prisoner, with the whole of his forces. Texas declared her independence, and alone maintained it against the power of Mexico for seven years, and since that time has been a State under the shield of our protection. It is against this same Mexico that twenty millions of Anglo-Saxon Americans send forth their armies. The great North American Republic buckles on her armor, and her mighty bosom heaves with the “*gadia* [sic] *certaminis*,”<sup>1</sup> as she marches under her eagle banners to encounter a foe, who ten years ago was whipped by an army of seven hundred and fifty undisciplined militia, and bereft of a territory larger than the Empire of France, which her conqueror held in her despite for seven years, and then quietly transferred her territory and power to you. Sir, if the joint armies of the United States and Texas are to acquire renown by vanquishing Mexico, what honors are too great to be denied to Texas for her victory over this Mexico ten years ago? If, by vanquishing such a foe, you are to win renown in war, what laurels should you not wreath around the brows of those who fought at San Jacinto, especially when history tells of the killed and wounded in the latter fight, she records that just three were killed in mortal combat whilst two died of their wounds “when the battles was done!!!” Oh, Mr. President, does it indeed become this great Republic to cherish the



heroic wish to measure arms with the long since conquered, distracted, anarchic, and miserable Mexico?

Mr. President, I trust we shall abandon the idea, the heathen, the barbarian notion, that our true national glory is to be won, or retained, by military prowess or skill, in the art of destroying life. And, whilst I cannot but lament, for the permanent and lasting renown of my country, that she should command the service of her children in what I must consider wanton, unprovoked, *unnecessary*, and therefore, unjust war, I can yield to the brave soldier, whose trade is war, and whose duty is obedience, the highest meed of praise for his courage, his enterprise, and perpetual endurance of the fatigues and horrors of war. I know the gallant men who are engaged in fighting your battles possess personal bravery equal to any troops, in any land, anywhere engaged in the business of war. I do not believe we are less capable in the art of destruction than others, or less willing, on the slightest pretext, to unsheath the sword, and “consider revenge a virtue.” I could wish, also, that your brave soldiers, whilst they bleed and die on the battle-field, might have, (what in this war is impossible) the consolation to feel and know, that their blood flowed in defence of a great right, that their lives were meet sacrifice to an exalted principle.

But, sir, I return to our relations with Mexico. Texas, I have shown, having won her independence, and torn from Mexico about one-fourth part [[col. 2-col. 3]] of her territory, comes to the United States, sinks her national character into the less elevated, but more secure position of *one* of the United States of America. The revolt of Texas, her successful war with Mexico, and the consequent loss of a valuable province, all inured to the ultimate benefit of our Government and our country. While Mexico was weakened and humbled, we in the same proportion were strengthened and elevated—all this was done against the wish, the interest, and the earnest remonstrance of Mexico.

Every one can feel, if he will examine himself for a moment, what must have been the mingled emotions of pride, humiliation, and bitter indignation, which raged in the bosoms of the Mexican people, when they saw one of their fairest provinces torn from them by a revolution, moved by a foreign people; and that province, by our act and our consent, annexed to the already enormous expanse of our territory. It is idle, Mr. President, to suppose that the Mexican people would not feel as deeply for the dismemberment and disgrace of their country as you would for the dismemberment of this union of ours. Sir, there is not a race, nor tribe, nor people on the earth, who have an organized social, or political existence, who have clung with more obstinate affection to every inch of soil they could call their own, then [sic] this very Spanish, this Mexican, this Indian race, in that country. So strong and deep is this sentiment in the heart of that half savage, half civilized race, that it has become not merely an opinion, a principle, but with them an unreasoning fanaticism. So radically deep and strong has this idea rooted itself into the Mexican mind, that I learn recently it has been made a part of the new fundamental law, that not an inch of Mexican soil shall ever be alienated to a foreign Power; that her territory shall remain entire as long as her Republic endures; that if one of her limbs be forcibly severed from her, death shall ensue, unless that limb should be restored to the parent trunk. With such a people, not like you, as you fondly, and I fear vainly boast yourselves, a highly civilized, reasoning, and philosophical race, but a

people who, upon the fierce barbarism of the old age, have ingrafted the holy sentiments of patriotism of a later birth; with just such a people, the pride of independence and the love of country combine to inflame and sublimate patriotic attachment into a feeling dearer than life, stronger than death.

What were the sentiments of such a people towards us when they learned that at the battle of San Jacinto there were only seventy-five men of their own country, out of the seven hundred and fifty who conquered them on that day; and that every man of that conquering army, who fought that battle and dismembered the republic of fourth part of its territory, had but recently gone there from this country, was fed by our people, and armed and equipped in the United States to do that very deed.

I do not say that Mexico had a right to make war upon us, because our citizens chose to seek their fortunes in the fields of Texas. I do not say she had a right to treat you as a belligerent power, because you permitted your citizens to march in battalions and regiments from your shores, for the avowed purpose of insurrectionary war in Texas; but I was not alone at the time in expressing my astonishment, that all this did not work an open rupture between the two republics at that time. We all remember your proclamations of neutrality: we know that in defiance of these, your citizens armed themselves and engaged in the Texas revolt; and it is true that without such aid Texas would this day have been, as she then was, an integral portion of the Mexican Republic. Sir, Mexicans knew this then; they knew it when, seven years after, you coolly took this province under your protection and made it your own. Do you wonder, therefore, after all this, that when Texas did thus forcibly pass away from them and come to us, that prejudice amounting to hate, resentment implacable as revenge towards us, should seize and possess and madden the entire population of a country thus weakened, humbled, condemned?

Mr. President, how would the fire of indignation have burned in every bosom here, if the Government of Canada, with the connivance of the Crown of England, had permitted its people to arm themselves, or it might be, had allowed its regiments of [p213-214] trained mercenary troops stationed there to invade New York, and excite her to revolt, telling them that the Crown of England was the natural and paternal ruler of any people desiring to be free and happy—that your government was weak, factious, oppressive—that man withered under its baleful influence—that your stars and stripes were only emblems of degradation, and symbols of faction—that England’s lion, rampant on his field of gold, was the appropriate emblem of power, and symbol of national glory—and they succeeded in alienating the weak and wicked of your people from you—should we not then have waged an exterminating war upon England, in every quarter of the globe where her people were to be found?

If, sir, I say, old mother England had sent her children forward to you with such a purpose and message as that, and had severed the State of New York from you, and then, for some difficulty about the boundary along between it and Pennsylvania and New Jersey, running up some little tide-creek here, and going off a little degree or two there, should have said: “We have a dispute about this boundary; we have some forty thousand

regular troops planted upon the boundary, and I wish you to understand that I am very strong—that I have not only thirty millions of people upon the soil of Great Britain that own my sovereign sway, but away upon the other side of the globe, right under you, there the Lion of England commands the obedience of a hundred and twenty millions more. It becomes you, straggling Democrats, here in this new world, to be a little careful how you treat me. You are not Celts exactly—nor are you quite Anglo-Saxons; but you are a degenerate, an alien, a sort of bastard race. I have taken your New York; I will have your Massachusetts.” And all this is submitted to the American Senate, and we are gravely discussing what ought to be done. Would we be likely to ratify a treaty between New York and the Crown of England, permitting New York to become a part of the colonial possessions of England?

I should like to hear my colleague [Mr. ALLEN] speak to such a question as that. I should like to hear the voice of this Democracy that you talk about, called upon to utter its tones on a question like that. If he who last year was so pained lest an American citizen away—God knows where—in some latitude beyond the Rocky Mountains—should be obedient to British law—if he whose patriotic and republican apprehension was so painfully excited lest the right of *habeas corpus* and trial by jury, which every Englishman carries with him in his pocket wherever he goes, should be made to bear upon an American citizen—were called upon to speak upon such a proposition as that which I have supposed, I should certainly like to hear how he would treat it. Yet, the question being reversed, that is precisely the condition in which Mexico stood towards you after San Jacinto was fought, and on the day Texas was annexed.

Your people did go to Texas. I remember it well. They went to Texas to fight for their rights. They could not fight for them in their own country. Well, they fought for their rights. They conquered them! They conquered a peace! They you're your citizens—not Mexicans. They were recent immigrants to that country. They went there for the very purpose of seizing on that country, and making it a free and independent republic, with the view, as some of them said, of bringing it into the American confederacy in due time. Is this poor Celtic brother of yours in Mexico—is the Mexican man sunk so low that he cannot hear what fills the mouth and ear of rumor all over this country? He knows that this was the settled purpose of some of your people. He knows that your avarice had fixed its eagle glance on these rich acres in Mexico, and that your proud power counted the number that could be brought against you, and that your avarice and your power together marched on to the subjugation of the third or fourth part of the Republic of Mexico, and took it from her. We knew this, and knowing it, what should have been the feeling and sentiment in the mind of the President of the United States towards such a people—a people, at least in their own opinion, so deeply injured by us as were these Mexicans?

The Republic of Texas comes under the Government of the United States, and it happens that [col. 1-col. 2, p214] the minister resident at your court—and it is a pretty respectable court, Mr. President—we have something of a King—not for life it is true, but a quadrennial sort of a monarch, who does very much as he pleases—the minister resident at that court of yours stated at the time that this revolted province of Texas was

claimed by Mexico, and that if you received it as one of the sovereign states of the Union, right or wrong, it was impossible to reason with his people about it—they would consider it as an act of hostility. Did you consult the national feeling of Mexico then?

The President has now to deal with a people thus humbled, thus irritated. It was his duty to concede much to Mexico—everything but his country's honor or her rights. Was this done? Not at all! Mexico and her minister were alike spurned as weak and trivial things, whose complaints you would not hear or heed; and, when she humbly implored you not to take this province, declared that it might disturb the peace subsisting between us, you were still inexorable. During this time, she was forcing loans from her citizens to pay the debt she owed yours, fulfilling her treaties with you by painful exactions from her own people. She begged of you to let Texas alone. If she were independent, let her enjoy her independence. If free, let her revel in her new-born liberty, in defiance of Mexico, as she alleged she would and could. Your stern reply was, no; we will, at your expense, strengthen our own arms, by uniting to ourselves that which has been severed from you by our own citizens; we will take Texas; we will throw the shield of our Constitution over her rights, and the sword of our power shall gleam like that of Eden, "turning every way,"<sup>2</sup> to guard her against further attack.

Her minister, his remonstrance failing, leaves you. He tells you that he cannot remain, because you had created, by this act, hostile relations with his Government. At last you are informed that Mexico will receive a commissioner to treat of this Texan boundary, if you will condescend to negotiate. Instead of sending a commissioner to treat of that, the then only difficult question between the two republics, you send a full minister, and require that he be received as such. If he could not be styled minister plenipotentiary, and so accredited, why then we must fight, and not negotiate for a boundary. The then Mexican President, the representative of some faction only, was tottering to his fall. His minister besought Mr. Slidell not to press his reception then. He was told that the excited feelings of the Mexican people were such that he must delay for a time. To this petition what answer is returned? You shall receive me now; you shall receive me as minister and not as commissioner; you shall receive me as if the most pacific relations existed between the two countries. *Thus*, and not otherwise, shall it be. Such was the haughty, imperious tone of Mr. Slidell, and he acted up only to the spirit of his instructions. Let any one peruse the correspondence I have referred to, and he will see that I have truly represented its spirit, be its letter what it may. This is done under the instructions of a cabinet here, who represented themselves in our public documents as sighing, panting for peace; as desiring, above all things, to treat these distracted, contemned Mexicans in such a way, that not the shadow of a complaint against us shall be seen. From this correspondence it is perfectly clear, that if Mr. Slidell had been sent in the less ostentatious character of "*commissioner*," to treat of the Texas boundary, that treaties and not bullets would have adjusted the question. But this is not agreeable to the lofty conceptions of the President. He preferred a vigorous war to the tame process of peaceful adjustment. He now throws down the pen of the diplomat, and grasps the sword of the warrior. Your army, with brave old "Rough and Ready" at its head, is ordered to pass the Nueces, and advance to the east bank of the Rio Grande. There, sir, between these two rivers lies that slip of territory, that chaparral thicket, interspersed with

Mexican haciendas, out of which this wasteful, devastating war arose. Was this territory beyond the river Nueces, in the State of Texas?

Now I have said that I would not state any disputable fact. It is known to every man who has looked into this subject, that a revolutionary government can claim no jurisdiction anywhere when [col2-col3, p214] it has not defined and exercised its power with the sword. It was utterly indifferent to Mexico and the world what legislative enactments Texas made. She extended her revolutionary government and her revolutionary dominion not one inch beyond the extent to which she had carried the power of Texas in opposition to the power of Mexico.

It is therefore a mere question of fact; and how will it be pretended that that country, lying between the Nueces and the Del Norte, to which your army was ordered, and of which it took possession, was subject to Texan law and not Mexican law? What did your general find there? What did he write home? Do you hear of any trial by jury on the east bank of the Rio Grande—of Anglo-Saxons making cotton there with their negroes? No; you hear of Mexicans residing peacefully there, but fleeing from their cotton-fields at the approach of your army—no slaves; for it had been a decree of the Mexican Government, years ago, that no slaves should exist there. If there were a Texas population on the east bank of the Rio Grande, why did not General Taylor hear something of these Texans hailing the advent of the American army, coming to protect them from the ravages of the Mexicans, and the more murderous onslaught of the neighboring savages?

Do you hear anything of that? No! On the contrary, the population fled at the approach of your army. In God's name, I wish to know if it has come to this, that when an American army goes to protect American citizens on American territory, they flee from it, as if from the most barbarous enemy? Yet such is the ridiculous assumption of those who pretend that, on the east bank of the Rio Grande, where your arms took possession, there were Texas population, Texas power, Texas laws, and American (United States) power and law! No, Mr. President; when I see that stated in an executive document, written by the finger of a President of the United States; and when you read in these documents, with which your tables groan, the veracious account of that noble old General Taylor, of his reception in that country, and of those men—to use the language of one of his officers—fleeing before the invaders; when you compare these two documents together, is it not a biting sarcasm upon the sincerity of public men—a bitter satire upon the gravity of all public affairs?

Can it be, Mr. President, that the honest, generous, Christian people of the United States will give countenance to this egregious, palpable misrepresentation of fact—this bold falsification of history? Shall it be written down in your public annals, when the world, looking on, and you yourselves, know that Mexico, and not Texas, possessed this territory to which your armies marched? As Mexico had never been dispossessed by Texan power, neither Texans nor your government had any more claim to it than you now have to California, that other possessions of Mexico over which your all-grasping avarice has already extended its remorseless dominion.

Mr. President, there is absent to-day a Senator from the other side of the House, whose presence would afford me, as it always does, but particularly on this occasion, a most singular gratification. I allude to the Senator from Missouri who sits furthest from me [Mr. BENTON.] I remember, Mr. President, he arose in this body and performed a great act of justice to himself and to his country—of justice to mankind, for all men are interested in the truths of history—when he declared it to be his purpose, for the sake of the truth of history, to set right some gentlemen on the other side of the House in respect to the territory of Oregon, which then threatened to disturb the peace of this republic with the kingdom of Great Britain. I wish it had pleased him to have performed the same good offices on this occasion.

I wish it had been so, if he could have found it consonant with his duty to his country, that now, while engaged with an enemy whom we have no reason to fear as being ever able to check our progress or disturb our internal peace, for the sake of justice, as then he did for the sake of justice and his interest and peace of those two countries, England and America, he had come forward to settle the truth of history in respect to the territorial boundary of Texas, which our President said was the Rio Bravo—the “Rio del Norte,” as it is [p214-215] sometimes called. I express this wish for no purpose of taunting the Senator from Missouri, or leading him to believe that I would draw his name into the discussion for any other than the most sacred purposes which can animate the human bosom—that of having truth established; for I really believe that that is true what the Senator from Michigan stated yesterday, that the worst said in the Senate is, that much might be said on both sides! I cannot view it in that way. Much may be said, much talk may be had on both sides on any question; but that this is a disputable matter, about which a man could apply his mind for an hour, and still be in doubt, is to me an inscrutable mystery.

I wish to invoke the authority of the Senator from Missouri. When about to receive Texas in the Union, he offered a resolution to this effect:

“That the incorporation of the left bank of the Rio del Norte (Rio Grande) into the American Union, by virtue of a treaty with Texas, comprehending, as the said incorporation would do, a part of Mexican departments of New Mexico, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas, WOULD BE AN ACT OF DIRECT AGGRESSION ON MEXICO, *for all the consequences of which* the United States would stand responsible.”

I beg, Mr. President, to add to this another authority which I am sure will not be contradicted by any calling themselves Democrats. In the summer of 1844, Mr. Silas Wright, in an elaborate address delivered at Watertown, New York, said:

“There is another subject on which I feel bound to speak a word—I allude to the proposition to annex Texas to the territory of this republic. I felt it my duty to vote as Senator, and did vote, against the ratification of the treaty for the annexation. I believed that the treaty, from the boundaries that must be implied from it, if Mexico would not treat with us, *embraced a country to which Texas had no claim—over which she had never asserted jurisdiction, and which she had no right to cede.* On this point I should give a brief explanation.

“The treaty ceded Texas by name, *without an effort to describe a boundary.* The Congress of Texas had passed an act declaring, by metes and bounds, what was Texas within their power and

jurisdiction. It appeared to me, then, if Mexico should tell us, 'We don't know you—we have no treaty to make with you'—and we were left to take possession by force, we must take the country as Texas had ceded it to us—*and in doing that, or forfeiting our own honor, we must do injustice to Mexico, and take a large portion of New Mexico, the people of which have never been under the jurisdiction of Texas; this to wit was an insurmountable barrier—I could not place the country in that position.*

How did your officers consider this question? While in camp opposite to Matamoros, being then on the left bank of the Rio Grande, between the latter river and the Nueces, a most respectable officer thus writes to his friend in New York:

“CAMP OPPOSITE MATAMOROS, *April* 19, 1846.

“Our situation here is an extraordinary one. *Right in the enemy's country, actually occupying their corn and cotton fields, the people of the soil leaving their homes*, and we, with a small handful of men, marching with colors flying and drums beating, right under the guns of one of their principal cities; displaying the star-spangled banner, as if in defiance under their very nose; and they with an army twice our size at least, sit quietly down, and make not the least resistance, not the first effort—to drive the invaders off. There is no parallel to it.

Sir, did this officer consider himself in Texas? Were they our own Texas citizens, who, in the language of the letter, “*did not make the first effort to drive the invaders off.*” If it had been Texas *there*, would that state have considered it invasion, or her people fly *from* your standard? “*The people of the soil leaving their homes!*” Who were these “*people of the soil!*” Sir, they were Mexicans, never conquered by Texas, and never subject to her laws, and, therefore, never transferred, by annexation, to your dominion; and, therefore, lastly, your army, by order of the President, without the comment or advice of Congress, made war on Mexico, by invading her territory, in April, 1846.

Mr. President, the Senator from Missouri was right. “The incorporation of the left bank of the Rio Grande into the American Union” was “an act of direct aggression on Mexico,” as his resolution most truthfully alleged. We, or at least the President, has attempted to incorporate the left bank of the Rio del Norte, or the Rio Grande, into the Union, and the consequence, the legitimate consequence, war, has come upon us. The President, in his message, asserts the boundary of Texas to be the Rio Grande. The Senator from Missouri asserts the left bank of that river to be Mexican territory. Sir, it is not for me, who stand here an humble man, who pretend not to be one of those Pharisees who know all the law and obey it, but who, like the poor Publican, would stand afar off [col. 1-col. 2, p215] and smite my breast, and say, God be merciful to me, a poor Whig,—when the anointed High Priests in the Temple of Democracy differ on a point of fact, it is not for me to decide between them. Is it for me to say that the Senator from Missouri was ignorant and the President omniscient? Is it for me to say that the President was right and the Senator from Missouri wrong? If it were true that Texan laws had been, since 1836, as the President's action seemed to declare, how happened it that, when General Taylor went to Point Isabel, the people set fire to their houses and fled the place? And how did it happen that there was a custom-house there, *there*, in Texas, as you now allege? A Mexican custom-house in Texas, where, ever since 1836, and for one whole year after the State of Texas became yours, a Mexican officer collected taxes of all who traded there, and paid these duties into the Mexican treasury! Sir, is it credible that this

State of Texas allowed Mexican laws and Mexican power to exist within her borders for seven years after her independence? I should think a people so prompt to fight for their rights, might have burned some powder for the expulsion of Mexican usurpers from Texan territory. Sir, the history of this country is full of anomalies and contradictions. What a patriotic, harmonious people! When Taylor comes to protect them, they fire their dwellings and fly! When you come in peace, bristling in arms for protection only, your eagle spreading its wings to shield from harm all American citizens, what then happens? Why, according to your own account, these Anglo-Saxon republicans are so terrified at the sight of their country's flag, that they abandon their homes and retreat before your army, as if some nomad tribe had wandered thither to enslave their families and plunder their estates!

All this mass of undeniable fact, known even to the careless reader of the public prints, is so utterly at war with the studiously contrived statements in your cabinet documents, that I do not wonder at all that an amiable national pride, however misplaced here, has prevented hitherto a thorough and fearless investigation of their truth. Nor, sir, would I probe this feculent mass of misrepresentation, had I not been compelled to it in defense of votes which I was obliged to record here, within the last ten days. Sir, with my opinions as to facts connected with this subject, and my deductions, unavoidable, from them, I should have been unworthy the high-souled State I represent, had I voted men and money to prosecute further a war commenced, as it now appears, in aggression, and carried on by repetition only of the original wrong. Am I mistaken in this? If I am, I shall hold him the dearest friend I can own in any relation of life who shall show me my error. If I am wrong in this question of fact, show me how I err, and gladly will I retrace my steps; satisfy me that my country was in peaceful and rightful possession between the Nueces and the Rio Grande when General Taylor's army was ordered there; show me that at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma blood was shed on American soil in American possession, and then, for the defense of that possession, I will vote away the last dollar that power can wring from the people, and send every man able to bear a musket to the ranks of war. But until I shall be thus convinced, duty to myself, to truth, to conscience, to public justice, requires that I persist in every lawful opposition to this war.

While the American President can command the army, thank Heaven I can command the purse. While the President, under the penalty of death, can command your officers to proceed, I can tell them to come back, or the President can supply them as he may. He shall have no funds from me in the prosecution of a war which I cannot approve. That I conceive to be the duty of a Senator. I am not mistaken in that. If it be my duty to grant whatever the President demands, for what am I here? Have I no will upon the subject? Is it not placed at my discretion, understanding, judgment? Have an American Senate and House of Representatives nothing to do but obey the bidding of the President, as the army he commands is compelled to obey under penalty of death? No! The representatives of the sovereign people and sovereign States were never elected for such purposes as that.

Have Senators reflected on the great power which the command of armies in war confers upon [col2-col3, p215] any one, but especially on him who is at once the civil



and military chief of the Government? It is very well that we should look back to see how the friends of popular rights regarded this subject in former times. Prior to the Revolution of 1688 in England, all grants of money by Parliament were general. Specific appropriations before that period were unknown. The King could, out of his general revenues, appropriate any or all of them to any war or other object, as best suited his own unrestrained wishes. Hence, in the last struggle with the first Charles, the Parliament insisted that he should yield up the command of the army raised to quell the Irish rebellion to such person as Parliament should choose. The men of that day saw that, with the unrestricted control of revenue, and the power to name the commander of the army, the King was master of the liberties of the people. Whereas Charles, after he had yielded up almost every other kingly prerogative, was (in order to secure Parliament and the people against military rule) required to give up the command of the forces. It was his refusal to do this that brought his head to the block. "Give up command of the army!" was the last imperative demand of the foes of arbitrary power then. What was the reply of that unhappy representative of the doomed race of the Stuarts? "Not for an hour, by God!" was the stern answer. Wentworth had always advised his royal master never to yield up the right to command the army; such, too, was the counsel of the Queen, whose notions of kingly power were all fashioned after the most despotic models. This power over the army by our Constitution is conceded to our King. Give him money at his will, as we are told we must, and you leave set up in this republic just such a tyrant as him against whom the friends of English liberty were compelled to wage war. It was a hard necessity, but still it was demanded as the only security for any reasonable measure of public liberty. Such men as Holt and Somers, had not yet taught the people of England the secret of controlling arbitrary power by specific appropriations of money; and withholding these when the King proclaimed his intention to use the grant for any purpose not approved by the Commons—the true representatives of popular rights in England.

When, in 1688, the doctrine of specific appropriations became a part of the British constitution, the King could safely be trusted with the control of the army. If war is made there by the Crown, and the Commons do not approve of it, refusal to grant supplies is the easy remedy—one, too, which renders it impossible for a king of England to carry forward any war which may be displeasing to the English people. Yes, sir, in England, since 1688, it has not been in the power of a British sovereign to do that, which in your boasted republic, an American president, under the auspices of what you call Democracy, has done—make war without consent of the legislative power. In England, supplies are at once refused, if Parliament does not approve the objects of the war. Here, we are told, we must not look to the objects of the war, being in the war, made by the President, we must help him to fight it out, should it even please him to carry it to the utter extermination of the Mexican race. Sir, I believe it must proceed to this shocking extreme, if you are, by war, to "conquer a peace." Here, then, is your condition. The President involves you in war without your consent. Being in such a war, it is demanded as a duty, that we grant men and money to carry it on. The President tells us he shall prosecute this war till Mexico pays us, or agrees to pay us, all its expenses. I am not willing to scourge Mexico thus; and the only means left me is to say to the commander-

in-chief, "Call home your army—I will feed and clothe it no longer—you have whipped Mexico in three pitched battles—this is revenge enough—this is punishment enough."

The President has said he does not expect to hold Mexican territory by conquest. Why then conquer it? Why waste thousands of lives, and millions of money, fortifying towns and creating governments, if, at the end of the war, you retire from the graves of your soldiers, and the desolated country of your foes, only to get money from Mexico for the expense of all your toil and sacrifice? Who ever heard, since Christianity was propagated amongst men, of a nation taxing its [p215-p216] people, inlisting [sic] its young men, and marching off two thousand miles to fight a people merely to be paid for it in money! What is this but hunting a market for blood, selling the lives of our young men, marching them in regiments to be slaughtered and paid for, like oxen and brute beasts? Sir, this is when, stripped naked, that atrocious idea first promulgated in the President's message, and now advocated here, of fighting on till we can get our indemnity for the past as well as the present slaughter. We have chastised Mexico, and if it were worth while to do so, we have, I dare say, satisfied the world that we can fight. What now! Why, the mothers of America are asked to send another of their sons to blow out the brains of Mexicans, because they refuse to pay the price of the first who fell there, fighting for glory! And what if the second fall too? The Executive, the parental reply is, "we shall have him paid for; we shall get full indemnity!" Sir, I have no patience with this flagitious notion of fighting for indemnity, and this under the equally absurd and hypocritical pretense of securing an honorable peace. An honorable peace! If you have accomplished the objects of this war, (if, indeed, you had an object which you dare to avow,) cease to fight, and you will have peace! Conquer your insane love of false glory, and you will "conquer a peace." Sir, if your commander-in-chief will not do this, I will endeavor to compel him, and as I find no other means, I shall refuse supplies—without the money of the people, he cannot go further. He asks me for that money; I wish him to bring your armies home, to cease shedding blood *for* money; if he refuses, I will refuse supplies, and then I know he *must*, he will cease his further sale of the lives of my countrymen. May we not, *ought* we not now to do this? I can hear no reason why we should not, except this, it is said that we are in war, wrongfully it may be, but, being in, the President is responsible, and we must give *him* the means *he* requires! He responsible! Sir, we, we are responsible, if, having power to stay this plague, we refuse to do so. When it shall be so—when the American Senate and the American House of Representatives can stoop from their high position, and yield a dumb compliance with the behests of a President, who is for the time being commander of your army; when they will open the treasury with one hand, and the veins of all the soldiers in the land with the other, *merely because* the President commands, then, sir, it matters little how soon some Cromwell shall come into this Hall and say, "the Lord hath no further need of you here." When we fail to do the work "whereunto we were sent," we shall be, we ought to be removed, and give place to others who will. The fate of the barren fig-tree will be ours—Christ cursed it and it withered.

Mr. President, I dismiss this branch of the subject, and beg the indulgence of the Senate to some reflections on the particular bill under consideration. I voted for a bill somewhat like the present at the last session—our army was then in the neighborhood of

our line. I then hoped that the President did sincerely desire a peace. Our army had not then penetrated far into Mexico, and I did hope, that with the two millions then proposed, we might get peace, and avoid the slaughter, the shame, the crime, of an aggressive, unprovoked war. But now you have overrun half of Mexico—you have exasperated and irritated her people—you claim indemnity for all expenses incurred in doing that mischief, and boldly ask her to give up New Mexico and California, and, as a bribe to her patriotism, seizing on her property, you offer three millions to pay the soldiers she has called out to repel your invasion, on condition that she will give up to you at least one-third of her whole territory. This is the modest, I should say, the monstrous proposition now before us as explained by the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, [Mr. SEVIER,] who reported the bill. I cannot now give my assent to this.

But, sir, I do not believe you will succeed. I am not informed of your prospects of success with this measure of peace. The chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations tells us that he has every reason to believe that peace can be obtained if we grant this appropriation. What reason have you, Mr. Chairman, for that opinion? “Facts which I cannot disclose to you—correspondence [[col1-col2]] which it would be improper to name here—facts which I know, but which you are not permitted to know, have satisfied the committee, that peace may be purchased, if you will but grant three millions of dollars.” Now, Mr. President, I wish to know if I am required to act upon such opinions of the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, formed upon facts which he refuses to disclose to me? No! I must know the facts before I can form my judgment. But I am to take it for granted that there must be some prospect of an end to this dreadful war—for it is a dreadful war, being, as I believe in my conscience it is, an unjust war. Is it possible that for three millions you can purchase peace with Mexico? How? By the purchase of California? Mr. President, I know not what facts the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs may have had access to. I know not what secret agents have been whispering into the ears of the authorities of Mexico; but of one thing I am certain, that by a cession of California and New Mexico, you never can purchase a peace with her.

You may wrest provinces from Mexico by war; you may hold them by right of the strongest; you may rob her; but a treaty of peace to that effect with the people of Mexico, legitimately and freely made, you never will have! I thank God that it is so, as well for the sake of the Mexican people as ourselves; for unlike the Senator from Alabama, [Mr. BAGBY,] I do not value the life of a citizen of the United States above the lives of an hundred thousand Mexican women and children—a rather cold sort of philanthropy in my judgment. For the sake of Mexico, then, as well as our own country, I rejoice that it is an impossibility, that you can obtain by treaty from her those territories, under the existing state of things.

I am somewhat at a loss to know on what plan of operations gentlemen having charge of this war intend to proceed. We hear much said of the terror of your arms. The affrighted Mexican, it is said, when you shall have drenched his country in blood, will sue for peace, and thus you will indeed “conquer peace.” This is the heroic and savage tone in which we have heretofore been lectured by our friends on the other side of the

Chamber, especially by the Senator from Michigan, [Mr. **CASS**.] But suddenly the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations comes to us with the smooth phrase of diplomacy, made potent by the gentle suasion of gold. The chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs calls for thirty millions of money and ten thousand regular troops; these we are assured, shall “conquer peace,” if the obstinate Celt refuses to treat till we shall whip him in another field of blood. What a delightful scene in the nineteenth century of the Christian era! What an interesting sight to see these two representatives of war and peace moving in grand procession through the halls of Montezuma! The Senator from Michigan, [Mr. **CASS**.] red with the blood of recent slaughter, the gory spear of Achilles in his hand and the hoarse clarion of war in his mouth, blowing a blast “so loud and deep” that the sleeping echoes of the lofty Cordilleras start from their caverns and return the sound, till every ear from Panama to Santa Fé is deafened with the roar. By his side, with “modest mien and downcast look,” comes the Senator from Arkansas [Mr. **SEVIER**.] covered from hand to foot with a gorgeous robe, glittering and embossed with three millions of shining gold, putting to shame “the wealth of Ormes or of Ind.” The olive of Minerva graces his brow; in his right hand is the delicate rebeck, from which are breathed in Lydian measure notes “that tell of nought but love and peace.” I fear very much you will scarcely be able to explain to the simple, savage mind of the half-civilized Mexicans, the puzzling dualism of this scene, at once gorgeous and grotesque. Sir, I scarcely understand the meaning of all this myself. If we are to vindicate our rights by battles—in bloody fields of war—let us do it. If that is not the plan, why, then, let us call back our armies into our own territory, and propose a treaty with Mexico, based upon the proposition that money is better for her and land is better for us. Thus we can treat Mexico like an equal, and do honour to ourselves. But what is it you ask? You have taken from Mexico one-fourth of her territory, and you now propose to run a line comprehending about another [col. 2-col. 3, p216] third, and for what? I ask, Mr. President, for what? What has Mexico got from you, for parting with two-thirds of her domain? She has given you ample redress for every injury of which you have complained. She has submitted to the award of your commissioners, and up to the time of the rupture with Texas, faithfully paid it. And for all that she has lost (not through or by you, but which loss has been your gain,) what requital do we, her strong, rich, robust neighbor make? Do we send our missionaries there “to point the way to Heaven?” Or do we send the schoolmasters to pour daylight into her dark places, to aid her infant strength to conquer freedom, and reap the fruit of the independence herself alone had won? No, no, none of this do we. But we send regiments, storm towns, and our colonels prate of liberty in the midst of the solitudes their ravages have made. They proclaim the empty forms of social compact to a people bleeding and maimed with wounds received in defending their hearthstones against the invasion of these very men who shoot them down, and then exhort them to be free. Your chaplains of the navy throw aside the New Testament and seize a bill of rights. The Rev. Don Walter Colton, I see, abandons the Sermon on the Mount and betakes himself to Blackstone and Kent, and is elected a justice of the peace! He takes military possession of some town in California, and instead of teaching the plan of the atonement and the way of salvation to the poor ignorant Celt, he presents Colt’s pistol to his ear, and calls on him to take “trial by jury and habeas corpus,” or nine bullets in his head. Oh, Mr. President, are you not the lights of the earth, if not its salt? You, you are indeed opening the eyes of the blind in Mexico with a most

emphatic and exoteric power. Sir, if all this were not a sad, mournful truth, it would be the very “ne plus ultra” of the ridiculous.

But, sir, let us see what, as the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations explains it, we are to get by the combined processes of conquest and treaty.

What is the territory, Mr. President, which you propose to wrest from Mexico? It is consecrated to the heart of the Mexican by many a well-fought battle with his old Castilian master. His Bunker Hills, and Saratogas, and Yorktowns, are there! The Mexican can say, “There I bled for liberty! And shall I surrender that consecrated home of my affections to the Anglo-Saxon invaders? What do they want with it? They have Texas already. They have possessed themselves of the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. What else do they want? To what shall I point my children as memorials of that independence which I bequeath to them when those battlefields shall have passed from my possession?”

Sir, had one come and demanded Bunker Hill of the people of Massachusetts, had England's Lion ever showed himself there, is there a man over thirteen and under ninety who would not have been ready to meet him? Is there a river on this continent that would not have run red with blood? Is there a field but would have been piled high with the unburied bones of slaughtered Americans before these consecrated battle-fields of liberty should have been wrested from us? But this same American goes into a sister republic and says to poor, weak Mexico, “Give up your territory, you are unworthy to possess it; I have got one-half already, and all I ask of you is to give up the other!” England might as well, in the circumstances I have described, have come and demanded of us, “Give up the Atlantic slope—give up this trifling territory from the Alleghany [sic] Mountains to the sea; it is only from Maine to St. Mary's—only about one-third of your republic, and the least interesting portion of it.” What would be the response? They would say, we must give this up to John Bull. Why? “He wants room.” The Senator from Michigan says he must have this. Why, my worthy Christian brother, on what principle of justice? “I want room!”

Sir, look at this pretence of want of room. With twenty millions of people, you have about one thousand million acres of land, inviting settlement by every conceivable argument, bringing them down to a quarter of a dollar an acre, and allowing every man to squat where he pleases. But the Senator from Michigan says we will be two hundred millions in a few years, and we want [p216-217] room. If I were a Mexican I would tell you, “Have you not enough room in your own country to bury your dead men? If you come into mine, we will greet you with bloody hands, and welcome you to hospitable graves.”

Why, says the chairman of this Committee on Foreign Relations, it is the most reasonable thing in the world! We ought to have the Bay of San Francisco. Why? Because it is the best harbor on the Pacific! It has been my fortune, Mr. President, to have practiced a good deal in criminal courts in the course of my life, but I never yet heard a thief, arraigned for stealing a horse, plead that it was the best horse that he could

find in the country! We want California. What for? Why, says the Senator from Michigan, we will have it; and the Senator from South Carolina, with a very mistaken view, I think, of policy, says you can't keep our people from going there. I don't desire to prevent them. Let them go and seek their happiness in whatever country or clime it pleases them.

All I ask of them is, not to require this Government to protect them with that banner consecrated to war waged for principles—eternal, enduring truth. Sir, it is not meet that our old flag should throw its protecting folds over expeditions for lucre or for land. But you will say you want room for your people. This has been the plea of every robber chief from Nimrod to the present hour. I dare say when Tamerlane descended from his throne built of seventy thousand human skulls, and marched his ferocious battalions to further slaughter, I dare say he said, “I want room.” Bajazet was another gentleman of kindred tastes and wants with us Anglo-Saxons—he “wanted room.” Alexander, too, the mighty “Macedonian madman,” when he wandered with his Greeks to the plains of India, and fought a bloody battle on the very ground where recently England and the Sikhs engaged in strife for “room,” was, no doubt, in quest of some California there. Many a Monterey had he to storm to get “room.” Sir, he made quite as much of that sort of history as you ever will. Mr. President, do you remember the last chapter in that history? It is soon read. Oh I wish we could but understand its moral. Ammon's son, (so was Alexander named,) after all his victories, died drunk in Babylon! The vast empire he conquered to “get room,” became the prey of the Generals he had trained; it was disparted, torn to pieces, and so ended. Sir, there is a very significant appendix; it is this: The descendants of the Greeks, of Alexander's Greeks, are now governed by a descendant of Attila! Mr. President, while we are fighting for room, let us ponder deeply this appendix. I was somewhat amazed the other day to hear the Senator from Michigan declare, that Europe had quite forgotten us, till these battles waked them up. I suppose the Senator feels grateful to the President for “waking up” Europe. Does the President, who is, I hope, read in civic as well as military law, remember the saying of one who had pondered upon history long: long, too, upon man, his nature and true destiny. Montesquieu did not think highly of this way of “waking up.” “Happy,” says he, “is the nation whose annals are tiresome.”

The Senator from Michigan has a different view of this. He thinks that a nation is not distinguished until it is distinguished in war. He fears that the slumbering faculties of Europe have not been able to ascertain that there are twenty millions of Anglo-Saxons here, making railroads and canals, and speeding all the arts of peace to the utmost accomplishment of the most refined civilization! They do not know it! And what is the wonderful expedient which this Democratic method of making history would adopt, in order to make us known? Storming cities, desolating peaceful, happy homes; shooting men—ay, sir, such is war—and shooting women too.

Sir, I have read, in some account of your battle of Monterey, of a lovely Mexican girl, who, with the benevolence of an angel in her bosom, and the robust courage of a hero in her heart, was busily engaged, during the bloody conflict—amid the crash of falling houses, the groans of the dying, and the wild shriek of battle—in carrying to slake

the burning thirst of the wounded of either host. While bending over a wounded American soldier, a cannon ball struck her, and blew her to atoms! Sir, I do not charge my brave, generous-hearted countrymen, who fought that fight, with this. No, no. We who send them—we who know that scenes like this, which might send tears of sorrow “down Pluto’s iron cheek,” are the invariable, inevitable attendants on war—*we* are accountable for this; and this—*this* is the way we are to be made known to Europe. This—this is to be the undying renown of free, republican America: “She has stormed a city, killed many of its inhabitants of both sexes—she has room!” *So* it will read. Sir, if this were our only history, then may God of his mercy grant that its volume may speedily come to a close.

Why is it, sir, that we of the United States, a people of yesterday, compared with the older nations of the world, should be waging war for territory, for “room?” Look at your country, extending from the Alleghany Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, capable itself of sustaining in comfort a larger population than will be in the whole Union for one hundred years to come. Over this vast expanse of territory your population is now so sparse, that I believe we provided at the last session a regiment of mounted men to guard the mail, from the frontier of Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia; and yet you persist in the ridiculous assertion, “I want room.” One would imagine, from the frequent reiteration of the complaint, that you had a bursting, teeming population, whose energy was paralyzed, whose enterprise was crushed, for want of space. Why should we be so weak or wicked as to offer this idle apology for ravaging a neighboring republic! It will impose on no one, at home or abroad.

Do we not know, Mr. President, that it is a law, never to be repealed, that falsehood shall be short-lived? Was it not ordained of old, that truth only shall abide forever? Whatever we may say today, or whatever we may write in our books, the stern tribunal of history will review it all, detect falsehood, and bring us to judgment before that posterity which shall bless or curse us, as we may act now, wisely or otherwise. We may hide in the grave (which awaits us all) in vain; we may hope there, like the foolish bird that hides its head in the sand, in the vain belief that its body is not seen; yet even there, this preposterous excuse of want of “room” shall be laid bare, and the quick-coming future will decide that it was a hypocritical pretence, under which we sought to conceal the avarice which prompted us to covet and to seize, by force, that which was not ours.

Mr. President, this uneasy desire to augment our territory has depraved the moral sense, and blighted the otherwise keen sagacity of our people. What has been the fate of all nations who have acted upon the idea that they must advance! Our young orators cherish this notion with a fervid but fatally mistaken zeal. They call it by the mysterious name of “destiny.” “Our destiny,” they say, is onward; and hence they argue, with ready sophistry, the propriety of seizing upon any territory and any people that may lie in the way of our “fated” advance. Recently these progressives have grown classical; some assiduous student of antiquities has helped them to a patron saint. They have wandered back into the desolated Pantheon, and there, among the Polytheistic relics of that “pale

mother of dead empires," they have found a god whom these Romans, centuries gone by, baptized "Terminus."

Sir, I have heard much and read somewhat of this gentleman Terminus. Alexander, of whom I have spoken, was a devotee of this divinity. We have seen the end of him and his empire. It was said to be an attribute of this god that he must always advance and never recede. So both republican and imperial Rome believed. It was, as they said, their destiny. And for a while it did seem to be even so. Roman Terminus did advance. Under the eagles of Rome he was carried from his home on the Tiber to the farthest East on the one hand, and to the far West, among the then barbarous tribes of western Europe, on the other. But at length the time came when retributive justice had become "a destiny." The despised Gaul calls out the contemned Goth, and Attila with his Huns answers back the battle-shout to both. The "blue-eyed nations of the North," in succession or united, pour forth their countless hosts of warriors upon Rome and Rome's always-advancing god Terminus. And now the battle-axe of [col2-col3, p217] the barbarian strikes down the conquering eagle of Rome. Terminus at last recedes, slowly at first, but finally he is driven to Rome, and from Rome to Byzantium. Whoever would know the further fate of this Roman deity, so recently taken under the patronage of American Democracy, may find ample gratification of his curiosity in the luminous pages of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." Such will find that Rome thought as you now think, that it was her destiny to conquer provinces and nations, and no doubt she sometimes said, as you say, "I will conquer a peace," and where now is she, the Mistress of the World? The spider weaves his web in her palaces; the owl sings his watch-song in her towers. Teutonic power now lords it over the servile remnant, the miserable memento of old and once omnipotent Rome. Sad, very sad, are the lessons which time has written for us. Through and in them all I see nothing but the inflexible execution of that old law, which ordains as eternal, that cardinal rule, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor anything which is his." Since I have lately heard so much about the dismemberment of Mexico, I have looked back, to see how, in the course of events which some evil "Providence," it has fared with other nations who engaged in this work of dismemberment. I see that in the latter half of the eighteenth century, three powerful nations—Russia, Austria and Prussia—united in the dismemberment of Poland. They said, too, as you say, "it is our destiny." They "wanted room." Doubtless each of these thought, with his share of Poland, his power was too strong ever to fear invasion, or even insult. One had his California, another his New Mexico, and the third his Vera Cruz. Did they remain untouched and incapable of harm? Alas! No; very far, from it. Retributive justice must fulfil its destiny too. A very few years pass off, and we hear of a new man, a Corsican lieutenant, the self-named "armed soldier of democracy"—Napoleon. He ravages Austria, covers her land with blood, drives the northern Caesar from his capital, and sleeps in his palace. Austria may now remember how her power trampled over Poland. Did she not pay dear, very dear, for her California?

But has Prussia no atonement to make? You set this same Napoleon, the blind instrument of Providence, at work there. The thunders of his cannon at Jena proclaim the work of retribution for Poland's wrongs; and the successors of the Great Frederick, the drill-sergeant of Europe, are seen flying across the sandy plain that surrounds their



capital, right glad if they may escape captivity or death. But how fares it with the autocrat of Russia? Is he secure in his share of the spoils of Poland? No. Suddenly we see, sir, six hundred thousand armed men marching to Moscow.

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And now the mighty Napoleon, who had resolved on universal dominion, *he* too is commanded to answer for the violation of that ancient law, [p217-218] “Thou shalt not covet anything which is thy neighbors [sic].” How is the mighty fallen! He, beneath whose proud footstep Europe trembled, he is now an exile at Elba, and now finally a prisoner on the rock of St. Helena, and there, on a barren island, in an unfrequented sea, in the crater of an extinguished volcano, there is the death-bed of the mighty conqueror. All his annexations have come to that! His last hour is now come, and he, the man of destiny, he who had rocked the world as with the throes of an earthquake, is now powerless still—even as the beggar, so he died. On the wings of a tempest, that raged with unwonted fury, up to the throne of the only power that controlled him while he lived, went the fiery soul of that wonderful warrior, another witness to the existence of that eternal decree, that they who do not rule in righteousness, shall perish from the earth. He has found “room” at last. And France, she too has found “room.” Her “eagles” now no longer scream along the banks of the Danube, the Po, and the Borysthenes. They have returned home to their old eyry, between the Alps, the Rhine, and the Pyrenees; so shall it be with yours. You may carry them to the loftiest peaks of the Cordilleras, they may wave with insolent triumph in the Halls of the Montezumas, the armed men of Mexico may quail before them, but the weakest hand in Mexico, uplifted in prayer to the God of Justice, may call down against you a Power, in the presence of which the iron hearts of your warriors shall be turned into ashes.

Mr. President, if the history of our race has established any truth, it is but a confirmation of what is written, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” Inordinate ambition, wantoning in power, and spurning the humble maxims of justice, has, ever has, and ever shall, end in ruin. Strength cannot always trample upon weakness—the humble shall be exalted—the bowed down will at length be lifted up. It is by faith in the law of strict justice, and the practice of its precepts, that nations alone can be saved. All the annals of the human race, sacred and profane, are written over with this great truth, in characters of living light. It is my fear, my fixed belief, that in this invasion, this war with Mexico, we have forgotten this vital truth. Why is that we have been drawn into this whirlpool of war? How clear and strong was the light that shone upon the path of duty a year ago! The last disturbing question with England was settled—our power extended its peaceful sway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Alleghenies we looked out upon Europe, and from the tops of the Stony Mountains we could descry the shores of Asia; a rich commerce with all the nations of Europe poured wealth and abundance into our lap on the Atlantic side, while an unoccupied commerce of three hundred millions of Asiatics waited on the Pacific for our enterprise to come; and possess it. One hundred millions of dollars will be wasted in this fruitless war. Had this money of the people been expended in making a railroad from your northern lakes to the Pacific, as one of your citizens has begged of you in vain, you would have made a highway for the world between Asia and Europe. Your Capitol then would be within thirty or forty days travel of any and every point on the map of the civilized world. Through this great artery of trade you would

have carried through the heart of your own country, the teas of China, and the spices of India, to the markets of England and France. Why, why, Mr. President, did we abandon the enterprises of peace, and betake ourselves to the barbarous achievement of war? Why did we “forsake this fair and fertile field to batten on that moor.”

But, Mr. President, if further acquisition of territory is to be the result either of conquest or treaty, then I scarcely know which should be preferred, eternal war with Mexico, or the hazards of internal commotion at home, which last I fear may come if another province is to be added to our territory. There is one topic connected with this subject which I tremble when I approach, and yet I cannot forbear to notice it. It meets you in every step you take, it threatens you which way soever you go in the prosecution of this war. I allude to the question of slavery. Opposition to its further extension, it must be obvious to everyone, is a deeply-rooted determination with men of all par- [col1-col2] ties in what we call the non-slaveholding States. New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, three of the most powerful, have already sent their legislative instructions here—so it will be, I doubt not, in all the rest. It is vain now to speculate about the reasons for this. Gentlemen of the South may call it prejudice, passion, hypocrisy, fanaticism. I shall not dispute with them now on that point. The great fact that it is so, and not otherwise, is what it concerns us to know. You nor I cannot alter or change this opinion if we would. These people only say, we will not, cannot consent that you shall carry slavery where it does not already exist. They do not seek to disturb you in that institution, as it exists in your States. Enjoy it if you will, and as you will. This is their language, this their determination. How is it in the South? Can it be expected that they should expend in common, their blood and their treasure, in the acquisition of immense territory, and then willingly, forego the right to call thither their slaves, and inhabit the conquered country if they please to do so? Sir, I know the feelings and opinions of the South too well to calculate on this. Nay, I believe I they would even contend to any extremity for the mere right, had they no wish to exert it. I believe (and I confess I tremble when the conviction presses upon me) that there is equal obstinacy on both sides of this fearful question. If, then, we persist in war, which, if it terminate in anything short of a mere wanton waste of blood as well as money, I must end (as this bill proposes) in the acquisition of territory, to which at once this controversy must attach—this bill would seem to be nothing less, than a bill to produce internal commotion. Should we prosecute this war another moment, or expend, one dollar in the purchase or conquest of single acre of Mexican land, the North and the South are brought into collision on a point where neither will yield. Who can foresee or foretell the result! Who so bold or reckless as to look such a conflict in the face unmoved! I do not envy the heart of him who can realize the possibility of such a conflict without emotions too painful to be endured. Why then shall we, the representatives of the sovereign States of this Union—the chosen guardians of this confederated Republic, why should we precipitate this fearful struggle, by continuing a war, the results of which must be to force us at once upon it? Sir, rightly considered, this is treason, treason to the Union, treason to the dearest interests, the loftiest aspirations, the most cherished hopes of our constituents. It is a crime to risk the possibility of such a contest. It is a crime of such infernal hue, that every other in the catalogue of iniquity, when compared with it, whitens into virtue. Oh, Mr. President, it does seem to me, if Hell itself could yawn, and vomit up the fiends that inhabit its penal

abodes, commissioned to disturb the harmony of this world, and dash the fairest prospect of happiness that ever allured the hopes of men, the first step in the consummation of this diabolical purpose would be, to light up the fires of internal war, and plunge the sister States of this Union into the bottomless gulf of civil strife. We stand this day on the crumbling brink of that gulf—we see its bloody eddies wheeling and boiling before us—shall we not pause before it be too late? How plain again is here the path, I may add the only way of duty, of prudence, of true patriotism. Let us abandon all idea of acquiring further territory, and by consequence cease at once to prosecute this war. Let us call home our armies, and bring them at once within our own acknowledged limits. Show Mexico that you are sincere when you say you desire nothing by conquest. She has learned that she cannot encounter you in war, and if she had not, she is too weak to disturb you here. Tender her peace, and my life on it, she will then accept it. But whether she shall or not, you will have peace without her consent. It is your invasion that has made war, your retreat will restore peace. Let us then close forever the approaches of internal feud, and so return to the ancient concord and the old ways of national prosperity and permanent glory. Let us here, in this temple consecrated to the Union, perform a solemn lustration; let us wash Mexican blood from our hands, and on these altars, in the presence of that image of the Father of his Country that looks down upon us, swear to preserve honorable peace with all the world, and eternal brotherhood with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaudia certamini*, joy of struggle.

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis* 3:24