

way they work reciprocity with us. They are perfectly willing to set up a fair and equitable agreement, and then they quietly and secretly go to work and put discriminations upon our commerce which give them the advantage.

And I lay it down as a fundamental proposition that the St. Lawrence is of more importance to us ten times over to-day than the Mississippi was in 1802-'03, when we acquired it. I have no doubt it is carrying twenty times the volume of trade that the Mississippi carried when we bought Louisiana and the Floridas.

And, as illustrating a great principle in connection with that subject, I would like to read to the committee a letter written by Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Livingston, our minister abroad, immediately after he received the news of the transfer of those territories by France to Spain. It strikes me as being quite appropriate to this question. It is published in volume I. of Wharton's Digest, page 554, and is dated April 18, 1802. Mr. Jefferson says:

The cession of Louisiana and the Floridas by Spain to France works most sorely on the United States. On this subject the Secretary of State has written to you fully; yet I cannot forbear recurring to it personally, so deep is the impression it makes on my mind. It completely reverses all the political relations of the United States and will form a new epoch in our political affairs.

Of all nations of any consideration France is the one which hitherto has offered the fewest points on which we could have any conflict of right, and the most points of a communion of interests.

From these causes we have ever looked to her as our *natural friend*, as one with which we never could have an occasion of difference. Her growth, therefore, we viewed as our own, her misfortunes ours. There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market, and from its fertility it will ere long yield more than half of our whole produce, and contain more than half of our inhabitants.

France, placing herself in that door, assumes to us the attitude of defiance. Spain might have retained it quietly for years. Her pacific disposition, her feeble state, would induce her to increase our facilities there so that her possession of the place would hardly be felt by us, and it would not, perhaps, be very long before some circumstance might arise which might make the cession of it to us the price of something of more worth to her.

Not so can it ever be in the hands of France; the impetuosity of her temper, the energy and restlessness of her character, is placed in the point of eternal friction with us and our character, which, though quiet and loving peace and the pursuit of wealth, is high-minded, despising wealth in competition with insult or injury, though enterprising and energetic as any nation on earth.

These circumstances render it impossible that France and the United States can long continue friends when they meet in so irritable a position. They, as well as we, must be blind if they do not see this, and we must be very imprudent if we do not begin to make arrangements on that hypothesis.

The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to retain her forever within her low-water mark. It seals the union of two nations who, in conjunction, can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation. We must turn all our attention to a maritime force, for which our resources place us on very high ground, and having formed and connected together a power which may render reinforcement of her settlements here impossible to France, make the first cannon which shall be fired in Europe the signal for the tearing up of any settlement she may have made, and for holding the two continents of America in sequestration for the common purposes of the United British and American nations.

This is not a state of things we seek or desire. It is one which this measure, if adopted by France, forces on us as necessarily as any other cause, by the laws of nature, brings on its necessary effect.

It is not from a fear of France that we deprecate this measure proposed by her, for, however greater her force is than ours, compared in the abstract, it is nothing in comparison to ours when to be exerted on our soil; but it is from a sincere love of peace, and a firm persuasion that, bound to France by the interests and strong sympathies still existing in the minds of our citizens, and holding relative positions which insure their continuance, we are secure of a long course of peace, whereas the change of friends, which would be rendered necessary if France changes that position, embarks us necessarily as a belligerent power in the first war of Europe.

In that case France will have held possession of New Orleans during the interval of peace, long or short, at the end of which it will be wrested from her. Will this short-lived possession have been an equivalent to her for the transfer of such a weight into the scale of her enemy? Will not the amalgamation of a young, thriving nation continue to that enemy the health and force which are now so evidently on the decline? And will a few years possession of New Orleans add equally to the strength of France?

She may say she needs Louisiana for the supply of her West Indies. She does not need it in time of peace, and in war she could not depend on them because they would be so easily intercepted.

I should suppose that all these considerations might in some proper form be brought into view of the Government of France. Though stated by us, it ought not to give offense because we do not bring them forward as a menace, but as consequences not controllable by us, but inevitable from the course of things. We mention them not as things which we desire by any means, but as things we deprecate, and we beseech a friend to look forward and to prevent them for our common interest.

These views were communicated to the French Government by our minister, and shortly thereafter France sold the territories in question to us and thus avoided the complication which would have arisen at that time if it had

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