

and from motives of complete independence the command of the navigation of that river ought to be in our hands. We are now wantonly provoked to take it. Hostility, in its most offensive shape, has been offered by those who disclaim all right to the soil and sovereignty of that country,—an hostility fatal to the well-being of the western world. Why not seize then what is so essential to us as a nation? Why not expel the wrongdoers?—Wrongdoers by their own confession, to whom we can therefore do no injury. Paper contracts or treaties have proved too feeble: Plant yourselves on the river—fortify the banks; invite those who have an interest at stake to defend it; do justice to yourselves, when your adversaries deny it, and leave the event to HIM who controuls the fate and fortune of nations.

Why submit to a tardy, uncertain negotiation as the *only means* of regaining what you have lost? A negotiation, with those who declare they have no right, at the moment they strip you of yours? When in possession, you will negotiate with more advantage—You will then be in a condition to keep others out—You will be in the actual exercise of jurisdiction over your whole claim—Your people will have the benefits of a lawful commerce—When your determination is known, you will make an easy and honourable accommodation with any other claimant. The present possessors can have no pretence to complain, for they have no right to the country by their own confession—The western people will discover that you are making every effort they could desire for their protection. They will ardently support you in the contest, if a contest becomes necessary.—Their all is at stake, and neither their zeal nor their courage can be doubted.

Look at the memorial from the

legislature of the Mississippi Territory now on your table. That speaks a language and displays a spirit not to be mistaken. Their lives and fortunes are plighted to support you. The same may with equal truth be asserted of Kentucky, Tennessee, and the western people of Virginia and Pennsylvania. Is this a spirit to be repressed or put asleep by negotiation? If you suffer it to be extinguished, can you recal it in the hour of distress when you want it? After negotiation has failed; after a powerful, ambitious nation shall have taken possession of the key of your western country and fortified it—after their garrisons are filled with the veterans who have conquered in the East; will you have it in your power to awake the generous spirit of that country, and dispossess them? No.—Their confidence in such rulers will be gone. They will be disheartened, divided, and will place no further dependence upon you. They must abandon those who lost the precious moment of seizing, and forever securing their sole hope of subsistence and prosperity. From necessity they must then make the best bargain they can with the conqueror.

It may be added, that the possession of the country on the east bank of the Mississippi will give a compactness, an irresistible strength to the United States; and in all future wars, we shall be more dreaded, and of course more courted and more respected, than we can ever hope to be without it.

Suppose that this course be not now pursued. Let me warn gentlemen how they trifle with the feelings, the hopes, and the fears of such a body of men as inhabit the western waters. Let every honourable man put the question to himself, how would half a million round him be affected by such a calamity, and no means taken by the government to redress it.