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The Bombardment of Greytown.

In the House of Commons June 19th, Lord G. Hamilton rose to ask what steps had been taken by Government had taken to obtain compensation for the British subjects residing at Greytown, when that town was shelled in 1854; and if it would be with the house a copy of the communications that had taken place on the subject with the government of the United States. He said some persons in New York formed a company called the Transit Company. This company obtained on certain terms a piece of land which speedily became covered with buildings. Not content with this piece of land, they were constantly asking for large grants, though they refused to fulfil the conditions on which the first piece of land was granted. It appeared that the government at Washington appointed a gentleman to represent them at Greytown, and the gentleman was connected with the company. The consequence was that he was constantly promoting squabbles between the company and the local authorities, and went so far on one occasion as to withdraw from the local authorities a person who had committed murder. The authorities had no power to resist the encroachments of the company, and they resigned en masse, and requested the British Consul to carry on the government. The Americans then busied themselves with raising up cases of grievance. These were (9) submitted to arbitration, but the president of the American was taken, and claims were made for alleged injuries to American property. The local authorities could only remonstrate, and the American Consul said he had referred the matter to the government at Washington. Nothing was heard of this reference till on the 12th of July, 1854, an armed corvette arrived in front of the town, and the captain sent a message to the authorities, that if they did not pay twenty-four thousand dollars within twenty-four hours the town would be bombarded. The authorities drew up a protest as did also the British vice-consul, and these protests were sent on board the corvette. Within 24 hours, however, the corvette began to bombard the place, and continued so to do until they had fired 250 to 300 shells into the unresisting town. Not content with that, the captain landed a party of men, who destroyed what remained of the town, and among other property set fire to the residence of the English Vice Consul, who had his flag flying at the time. This account was not from the British residents only, but the French and the Italian residents drew up a similar account. In consequence of this outrage the whole population were driven to take shelter in the neighboring forest. This transaction took place three years ago. No attempt, as far as we could learn, had been made to offer any explanation, still less any compensation. He had told the House that a number of fictitious claims were made by the Americans, but that no attempt was made to submit them to arbitration. In the meantime a document had fallen into the hands of some of the parties, which showed that these claims were mere pretences. It was a letter written by Mr. White, the agent of the Transit Company, addressed to the American representative at Greytown, as follows:—"Capt. Hollins (the officer in command of the corvette) leaves here next Monday. You will see from his instructions that much discretion is given to you, and it is to be hoped that it will be so exercised as not to show any mercy to the town or the people. If the scoundrels are soundly punished we can take possession and build it up as a business place, put in your own officer, transfer the jurisdiction, and you know the rest. It is of the last importance that the people of the town should be taught to fear us. Punishment will teach them after which you must arrange with them as to the organization of the government." That was the statement, and he asked the noble lord if any steps had been taken to obtain compensation for the wrong done to the United States government. He believed that they were not originally cognizant of what was going to be carried on in their name, but they had involved themselves by not punishing the perpetrators of the outrage. Public opinion in the United States had strongly manifested itself against this outrage, which they had denounced as a violation of the law of nations.

Viscount Palmerston said he was bound to say that the transaction was one which must be characterized as a very violent and cruel proceeding. It was however, authorized by the government of the United States, though whether they meant it to be carried out with such severity as took place, or whether the officer (who, he believed, was a distinguished and honorable officer in the United States service) in took his instructions, he could not say, but he was bound to state that the severity which was exercised reflected no credit on the government which ordered or on the officer which executed it. (Hear, hear.) But the question which her Majesty's government had to consider was the international law which bore upon the point. Now, it was an unquestionable principle of international law that when one government deemed it right to exercise acts of hostility against any part of the territory of another Power, the subjects or citizens of a third Power who might happen to be resident in the place so attacked, had no claim whatever upon the government which, in the exercise of its natural rights, committed those acts of hostility. When for instance, it was deemed necessary by us to destroy the town of Sebastopol although there might have been there Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese or Americans, none of those parties had any ground whatever upon which to found a claim for compensation for the losses they might have sustained. Those who went to a foreign country must abide by the chances which might befall that country. If they had any claim at all it must be upon the country in which they were; but they had certainly no claim upon the government which thought right to commit the acts of hostility. Her Majesty's government had therefore been advised, and he thought rightly, that British subjects had no grounds upon which a claim could be made upon the government of the United States for compensation for the injuries they had suffered in that attack upon Greytown.—They might think that that attack was not justified by the cause which was assigned for it; but we had no right, as an independent State, to judge of the motives which might have actuated another independent State to assert rights or to vindicate injuries which its citizens or subjects might have been supposed to have sustained. There was nothing, too, in the relation between Great Britain and Greytown which gave us an exceptionable right to interfere. Greytown was a port of the Mosquito territory, which was under our protectorship. That was a protectorship which carried with it an obligation to protect the country from conquest, but it did not give us a right to interfere in any disputes which might arise between that country and any other. There were two sorts of protectorship. There was one of the kind which we exercised over the Ionian Islands, where nothing was done except by the advice and consent of a British representative. In a case like this, where we were responsible for everything done, we were entitled to require redress for any injuries, and to vindicate any attack. Not so with Greytown. Greytown was administered by a self-constituted and self-elected municipality, consisting of Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians and Germans. They acted upon their own responsibility, and they must bear the consequences. He