ciation with him, nor can any gentleman say where it would stop; for merchants are so much like bricks, which little boys set up in rows for their amusement, knock one down and they all go; when a merchant fails, all within the vortex of his endorsments and his interest fail with him.

I mean not to be presumptuous, it is with great diffidence I ask, what would be the effect of a course of conduct somewhat like this? Let the Congress of the United States declare, in a manly and dignified manner, what are the rights of the citizens of this country, which they are determined to maintain; let the President of the United States be requested to open a new negociation with the court of St. James', and in addition to such representations as he shall think proper to make, to lay this declaration before that court, together with such commercial regulations as may be adopted. The commercial, the manufacturing interest of that country, understand so thoroughly their connection with this, it is reasonable to believe, their influence, which is admitted to be very great with the ministry, will induce it to tread back those steps of wanton and unprovoked injuries they have made upon our fellow-citizens and to which their own sense of justice may not otherwise lead them.

I cannot refrain from entreating the attention of the committee to an act which passed the last session of Congress, at the special influence of that particular description of merchants, who are now loudest in their complaints. It is dated 22d February, 1805. The second section reads thus; "That it shall be lawful for any ship or vessel to proceed with any goods, wares or merchandise, brought in her, and which shall in the manifest delivered to the collector of the customs, be reported as destined or intended for any foreign port or place, from the district within which such ship or vessel shall first arrive to such foreign port or place, *without* paying or securing the payment of any duties upon such goods, wares or merchandise, as shall be actually re-exported in the said ship or vessel," &c. From this act may be fairly dated the British doctrine. Not content with the then facilities of their carrying trade, with which they were growing wealthy, they must have them increased; they grew covetous of the small duty they paid to government, for the neutral character it gave their cargoes; they were unwilling, that the poor day laborer, who unloaded and re-laded his vessel, should partake of the blessings of this trade, they grasped at that pittance too. Is it to be expected, sir, that we shall thus extend this branch of commerce, with which we are always clashing with Great Britain, and she will sit still an idle spectator? Here then the merchants, understand me, the carrying merchants, and their friends, have dished up their own injuries; for one, I am determined not to work out their salvation, at the expense of every thing dear to the nation.

SPANISH AFFAIRS.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5.

Debate on the motion of Mr. J. RANDOLPH to amend the Secret Journal by inserting in it the message of the President of the 6th of December.

MR. J. RANDOLPH. I rise to execute the purpose which I intimated yesterday. On the first page of this journal [holding in his hand the journal of the secret proceedings of the House] I find it stated that the Speaker laid before the House a letter and communication from the President of the U. S. which were read, that they were referred to a select committee, and I find that then follows the report of that committee without any notice of the message of the President on which it was grounded. This I take to be a departure from the regular system of keeping the journal; because I perceive in other parts of it messages, tho' of a private nature, accompanying other communications, inserted. I deem it not less important to the character of those who compose the select committee, of which I had the honor to be one, than to the character of the government of the U. S. that a full and fair view should be given to the public of the conduct of the government on the one hand, and of the legislature on the other. I beg pardon for using the phrase government, by government I meant the executive department. I shall feel it incumbent on me, in order to impress on the House, the sense I entertain of the importance of this motion, to enter into some little history of the transactions which have taken place with closed doors, in which, tho' I may not undertake to say what the message of the President contains, I shall feel myself at liberty, according to the course pursued here, to say what it does not contain.

It is true that on the 6th of December that message was referred to a select committee. That committee met, and one of the members, a gentleman from Massachusetts, whom I do not now see in his place, as soon as the committee met proposed that they should recommend to the House the making an appropriation of money to enable the executive to negociate abroad. I understood, though it may not have been so expressed, that the object was the purchase of the Floridas. There was a great variety of sentiment in the committee, and other gentlemen of the committee, of whom I was one, objected, that in the confidential message of the President, there was not a syllable about the purchase of the Floridas, or an appropriation of money for foreign negociation, that there was not a word in it to induce us to believe that Spain was willing to make the sale or to come to an amicable adjustment of differences with us; but that on the contrary, a direct and opposite inference could only be drawn from its contents.

On coming to town, and conversing with gentlemen of this House, I was apprized of the existence of a project for the purchase of the Floridas from Spain; and I was prepared to have considered any expressions in the executive message as having this meaning, which could at all warrant it. There was such a difference of opinion in the committee that they came to no direct conclusion. Circumstances of an imperious nature called me to Baltimore; where I staid, I think, six days. On my return on Saturday, I found, from the information of a gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Nicholson) that there had been considerable excitement in consequence of the committee not reporting. Without even changing my clothes or going to my lodgings, I immediately met the committee, and it was agreed to write to the secretary of war, and learn from him the number of troops necessary to protect the southern frontier from Spanish inroad and insults. But altho' in the public message of the President at the opening of the session, we heard much of Spanish outrages and insults, and though the private message held a language in consonance with the public, I found a backwardness in the head of the war department, and generally of the executive government on taking a decided attitude as to Spain; and I found what was worse, before I left town to go to Baltimore, from a conversation with what has been considered the head of the first executive department under the government, that France was the great obstacle to the compromise of Spanish differences; that France would not permit Spain to come to any accommodation with us, because France wanted money, and that we must give her money. From the moment I heard that declaration, all the objections I originally had to the procedure were aggravated to the highest possible degree. I considered it a base prostration of the national character, to excite one nation by money to bully another nation out of its property, and from that moment, & to the last moment of my life my confidence in the principles of the man entertaining those sentiments died, never to live again. Well, sir, during my absence in Baltimore, the dispatches contained in the message of the 17th of January arrived. This I shall have occasion to mention again. The House began to act on the subject of our foreign relations. Gentlemen who in select committee had declared they considered the executive message as a requisition to buy the Floridas, though there was not a word in it about the Floridas or about money, took a different ground in the House. They said that though the executive did not recommend to Congress to purchase the country, yet that they were adequate to give the business this direction; that if they chose, they were at liberty to do it. But unfortunately for this new doctrine, and the previous one broached, and unfortunately for the whole system, gentlemen stepped forward to enforce, one gentleman asserted that he was ready in his own person to vouch that the course in question was in consonance with the secret wishes of the executive; and this is one of those reasons which calls most imperiously for the motion which I am about to make. What was afterwards done the House will perceive. I pass over the motion made to restrict the purchase to the country not in dispute with Spain, and to exclude from that purchase the country in dispute, thereby testing the principle, whether we were actually buying land or peace. In spite of every obstacle, of all opposition, and the contradictory votes given, the bill was sent to the Senate, and on the next day, the 17th of January, after the business was out of our possession, we received dispatches from our minister at London, which had arrived before Christmas. It will be recollected that it was attempted to be insinuated by individual members, that inasmuch as we received the original paper and not a copy, the dispatches had just arrived, and there had not been time for transcribing them. But in returning from the House, I was so well convinced to the contrary, for I had myself received letters from London of a contemporaneous date, that I made enquiry of the secretary of state, and was told that they had been received the week before Christmas, at the same time with my letters.

While I am up, I will undertake to rectify a trivial inaccuracy (for I wish every thing which I state on this floor to be literally exact) which on some former occasion escaped me. I said that the existence of these dispatches was unknown to a high cabinet minister; although it is certain that I so understood, it is no less so that I was mistaken. But though their existence was not unknown, yet their contents were. That minister had no reason to believe that they contained, on the contrary he had every reason to believe that they did not contain, any thing relative to our differences with Spain; and as to their being sent to the House, he knew nothing of it until after they had been received. They were no sooner opened here, than they excited an instantaneous sensation, and produced a declaration that the course we had taken was wrong; they produced also an impression that it would be in vain on the subject of our differences with England to assume a manly attitude towards her, if we became the panders and caterers of the lustful appetite of France.

The question is now reduced to this point—whether the public shall read the secret journal without understanding one word about it, or shall read it intelligibly. For it is impossible to decide how far the report of the select committee is consistent with the message of the President, unless that message is also published. A difficulty may be raised, by saying this is a confidential message. But this is got over by the publicity given to the proceedings on it. It was confidential, because the proceedings on it were so. For instance—let us suppose that the U. S. were preparing for some strong and decisive measure against Spain which it was politic to conceal from her till taken; but as to any thing decisive in the message, no man can contend that it contains any thing of this nature. When I speak of the message, I do not allude to the communications of the minister of the U. S. with the authorised agents of Spain. Though I see no reason why even those should not be published, as the negociation has been entirely closed by the abortion in which it has terminated. I however restrict my present motion to the message.

The public, from this vague and desultory sketch, may acquire some principles by which to appreciate the conduct of members in this House. They will see what members were disposed to have adopted that course which the most authentic information from Europe recommended. They will see who were indisposed to acting through the intervention of any foregn power, and more especially in the shape of a bribe, and when such a course was not asked for by the Executive. They will see who were these members; and I believe there are now but few who would be willing to take the responsibility on themselves which properly belonged to another department of the government; and to do all the dirty work, which would otherwise have soiled their fingers. They will see and beware.

MR. J. RANDOLPH concluded by moving that the message of the President of the 6th of December last be printed; that it be inserted in the Journal of the secret proceedings; and that a new edition of that journal should be printed for the use of the members

Mr. JACKSON. I think it highly probable that a majority of this House will be disposed to take of the injunction of secrecy, not only on this document, but on all their proceedings; that the people may be enabled to judge for themselves whether the representations made from time to time are correct; but I submit whether it is correct in point of order to act in this way. What is the resolution adopted by this House? That the injunction of secrecy, relative to the proceedings, not the messages or other communications, shall be taken off. This is not the proper course to effect the object in view. I, for one, am willing to go into conclave, and have the injunction on the whole taken off. It is not my wish to see the eyes of the people hoodwinked any longer. It has been declared by the gentleman who has offered this resolution, that we have not an inch of territory beyond the Iberville. It was therefore that I considered it all important to have the Floridas, and it was therefore I voted, as Congress did in the memorable instance of the purchase of Louisiana. And it was the fear that taking off the injunction of secrecy might affect the issue of this all important negociation that induced me some time since to vote against it. But during the whole of the discussion we have had on this subject, no proof has been adduced, that the money we have appropriated is to be given to France, although the gentleman from Virginia has declared there is no Spain, no Pyrenees; although he has declared that Spain is confessedly merged in France; although he he has declared France would not permit Spain to settle her differences with us, and although this has been adduced as an argument to shew that we can do nothing with Spain; and although the gentleman has further said that if we could see the dispatches of the Spanish minister, we should see them signed "Charles Maurice Talleyrand;" and although he has alledged that a negociation could not be opened with a government reduced to a mere nonentity; as I did not anticipate the motion of my colleague, I cannot be expected to be prepared to go into an examination of the motives, as has been done by my colleague, which influenced the decision of the House. This could not be done unless all the documents on this subject were printed. Some gentlemen appear to me to have given an importance to a certain document which it does not merit; and it has been said it was withheld until our vote was taken for the purpose of trepanning us. I have heard of but two gentlemen who have declared it would have affected their votes. On me it would have had a different tendency. I wish it published. I will say for one, that I think, had it been received before the passage of the bill, it would have had a tendency to increase the majority, stupendous as it was, because —but I am not at liberty to say why. I hope the Speaker will decide this question not proper to be discussed with open doors.

MR. J. RANDOLPH said that he had to his astonishment, found a detailed report on the journal, which it was not usual to enter upon it. He found also three messages, and this was the *only* instance in which a message was not entered upon it.

MR. LEIB asked whether it was consistent with the rules of the House to have the message now read? If it were not, he could not concur with the gentleman from Virginia in voting for the motion under consideration, though he agreed with him in the propriety of taking off the injunction of secrecy from all the papers.

MR. J. RANDOLPH asked, whether, when the journal was read, the clerk had not begun to read the message, when the reading was dispensed with? This was his recollection, and if so, it must be considered as a part of the journal, respecting which the injunction of secrecy had been taken off.

The *Clerk* said this was the fact.

MR. LEIB then said, before he decided on the resolution, he wished to hear the message read.

The *Speaker* said it would be most acceptable that the House should decide whether the reading were proper.

MR. ALSTON. I merely riſe to remind the Speaker of the deciſion he gave, and of the queſtion I put to him when the injunction of ſecrecy was removed. I well recollect the deciſion of the chair that the meſſage of the Preſident and the letters of our miniſter were not embraced in the motion for taking off that injunction. And I have not a doubt on my mind that it was in conſequence of that deciſion that the vote of the Houſe was ſuch as it was. As to the publication of the meſſage, it is immaterial to me. I voted againſt giving publicity to the ſecret journal until we had heard the reſult of the negotiation. To act conſiſtently on this ſubject with that vote, I am for going no farther. I believe however for the juſtification of thoſe who voted as I did, the publication of all t e documents will be advantageous. In voting therefore againſt publiſhing this meſſage, I ſhall make a ſacrifice of my feelings to the public intereſt. For this vote the good of the nation will be my only motive. But when a negotiation is about to be opened for an object ſo important as the Floridas, I aſk whether it is not right, I appeal to the American people whether they do not think it right to uſe every neceſſary means for enſuring it ſucceſs? With regard to the appropriation of two millions with a view to this purchaſe, I voted for it as a ſet-off to the reſolution reported by the ſelect committee. I voted for it in preference to a ſtanding army. I would rather ſtrengthen the arm of the executive with money than with a ſtanding army, ſo fatal to liberty. And I believe a majority of the republicans in this nation will uphold me in this opinion. Every body knows the importance of this country. Has it not been ſaid on this floor that there does not belong to you a foot of ground between the Miſſiſſippi and the Perdido? I recollect when this country was ceded to the United States, to have had a converſation on this ſubject with a gentleman from Virginia, for whoſe opinion I have a high reſpect, and he was of opinion with me that it was very doubtful whether this country was included, indeed we rather thought it was not in the treaty. Will any man ſay that it is not of vaſt importance to us to have the ſmall territory that divides our people, and by a fair purchaſe remove all grounds of future quarrels If it has entered into the minds of gentlemen to make other than a fair purchaſe of this country from its rightful owner, this is not my opinion, nor have I any recollection that any ſuch motive has been avowed. A particular document has been referred to, the receipt of which I have heard one or two gentlemen ſay, might have altered their [illegible] on the bill paſſed by the Houſe. But I was aſtoniſhed to hear ſuch a declaration. It could not have altered my opinion; it had in my mind no bearing on the meaſure. I have one farther obſervation to make. If it was doubtful whether this country belonged to us, what would have been the effect of adding one or two additional regiments to your ſtanding army? and placing them on a territory you acknowledge you do not believe to be rightfully yours? I would rather put down a regiment of the preſent ſtanding army than add one man to it. When our rights are invaded we ſhall not require a ſtanding army to defend them—it will be the militia that will defend them. I am oppoſed to a ſtanding army, and ever will be oppoſed to it. For theſe reaſons I was in favor of ſtrengthening the arm of the executive by an appropriation, inſtead of ſtrengthening it by a ſtanding army.

MR. CLARK requested the Speaker to examine the secret journal, and see whether this message were in it.

The *Speaker* said it was, and might therefore be discussed with open doors.

MR. J. CLAY. I was astonished when I found this journal without the message. Five messages appear to have been received, all of which appear on the journal, excepting this, which is the only message of any consequence. I did believe when the injunction of secrecy was removed, it applied to all the papers received by the House, and I did not conceive myself bound to conceal one tittle of what occurred while we had locked doors. I should therefore wish my friend from Virginia, so to amend his motion, as to include all the documents. I consider this essentially necessary to elucidate the transactions of this House. It seems to have been fashionable for gentlemen to declare what were their motives, for the several votes they have given during the time our doors were shut. I had but one motive, which I hope will continue to govern me as long as I have a seat in this House. My object was to be prepared for war while I endeavored to maintain peace. I voted for the resolution for the increase of the army because every body knows, who is the least acquainted with the state of the south and south western frontier, that the militia in that quarter are not able to defend it. They are indeed but a people of yesterday—aliens to your habits & language—and indeed aliens in every sense of the word. We had seen that frontier invaded by Spain—I was not willing therefore to withold from the executive the means of chastizing this aggression, I therefore voted for the resolution. I also voted for the appropriation of money, because I was willing to show Spain that while we were prepared to chastize her aggressions, we were also willing, by amicable negociation to adjust our differences. I therefore voted for an appropriation for the purchase of a country which I deemed highly valuable to us. Whether the money appropriated was to go to France or Spain did not influence the vote I gave. I did not know then that any circumstances were concealed from the House calculated to throw light upon the subject, and of the contents of the message of the 17th of January I was totally ignorant, as it was handed in the day I went to Philadelphia, and was immediately afterwards returned to the President. I could have wished that between the 24th of December and the 17th of January, there had been found time to make an official copy of it, since we have heard that it would have a considerable bearing on the votes of the members of this House; and I should conceive that it would be very important as forming an item in the transactions of the session. When we came here the public expectation was highly excited. We had been injured and insulted by Spain on land and by England at sea. The nation required the adoption of measures to procure redress, and to prevent similar aggressions in future. What have been the consequences? We have passed an act appropriating two millions to purchase the Floridas and to chastise Spain, and we have passed an act prohibiting the importation of certain goods from Great Britain as a peace offering to her. It is in my opinion necessary that all the documents should be published to give the people an opportunity of judging whether their representatives have been faithful to their trust. There are parts of those documents which I suppose will not be published, which had a considerable influence on my mind on the votes which I gave. I allude to the threat of hostility by France.

Mr. Speaker here called to order.

Mr. Clay concluded by observing that as they had published five messages which had contained nothing, he hoped they would publish the one that contained something.

MR. DAWSON expressed himself in favor of giving publicity to the message, which he believed could do no possible injury. So far as it went, he thought it favored both the resolutions —as well that for raising an army, as that for conducting a negociation by the appropriation of money.

The reading of the message being called for, Mr. Speaker said he thought it was in order to read it, as it was inserted on the private journal.

MR. BLACKLEDGE appealed from the decision of the chair.

MR. ALSTON observed that his colleague would better get at his object by taking a question on the reading of the message, and Mr. Blackledge so modified his motion.

MR. SMILIE said a regard to consistency would prevent him from voting to give publicity to the message. He could not vote for it, because he did not wish to take on himself that responsibility which might flow from the publicity defeating the negociation. It rested with those who voted for the taking off the injunction of secrecy to take that responsibility on themselves. At the same time, however, that he must vote against it, he hoped a majority would be found in its favor, because he saw it would be necessary to publish this document, to place their conduct in a proper point of light. So far was the message of the 17th of January, which had been alluded to, from having any influence in changing his vote, that it tended strongly to confirm him in the propriety of it.

On the *Speaker* reminding Mr. Smilie of the question before the House, he declined saying any thing further than requesting the Yeas and Nays to be taken.

MR. ELMER said if he understood the decision of the Speaker, the motion of the gentleman from Virginia was altogether useless. He had understood from a former decision that the journal did not include the message; but other gentlemen appeared to have considered it in another way. He was perfectly willing that it should be published, and he did not think any ill could arise from it. For reasons already assigned by other gentlemen he had been against taking off the injunction of secrecy at this time. He should therefore vote against every question of this kind.

MR. JACKSON. Is it not competent, Mr. Speaker, to any member of the House to demand an official copy of the message? You have decided it to be a part of the journal ordered to be made public, and now it is said it shall not be read, because the reading it will give it publicity. I am not now prepared to make a motion, which I shall do at some future time, unless anticipated by some other gentleman, that the President be requested to communicate to the House all the papers heretofore communicated from him, with a view to giving them publicity. I hope, however, that the message will now be read to give it publicity. I wish on all occasions to give publicity to my conduct, as well in conclave, as when these doors are open. I will take this occasion to express my sense of an insinuation made the other day, in a debate on the Yazoo question, which I am told applied to me. I was charged with deserting my seat through fear of voting upon it. I will candidly confess that in the year before the last,