WASHINGTON CITY.

MONDAY, MAY 5.

REMARKS

On the measures of the last session of Congress.

(CONTINUED.)

In the discussions relative to the measures adopted by Congress, various incidental views have been presented which merit elucidation. Some of them have been urged in the shape of objections, while others have been made the foundation of criminations against the administration.

I. The *expence* of the purchase of the Floridas has been objected to. This objection can only lie against the measure in case the negociation shall prove successful. If it fails, no extraordinary expence will have been incurred. If, on the contrary, it succeeds, we shall have acquired a large district of country, several most important outlets for a large part of the present U. S. an accession of commerce, with a concomitant augmentation of duties, and an exemption, at least for a considerable time, from war. These advantages, viewed in a moral light, are incalculably valuable. We have every reason to believe that a war with Spain would have been accompanied by a war with France. We shall not attempt to estimate the complicated evils of this result—we shall leave this to the imaginations of our readers; only observing that one of its probable effects would have been an alliance with England. Such an event would, certainly in some degree, probably in a high degree, have checked the progress of improvement and settlement in the western country, and consequently the growth of that strength which would spring from a compact population.

But putting aside the injuries we should have suffered, let us attend, for a moment, to the positive benefits that are likely to ensue from the acquisition of the Floridas. It is a low estimate to compute the additional annual duties that would immediately come into our treasury at 300,000 dollars, and the proceeds of the sales of land at a like sum—There is every reason to believe that the aggregate amount of these two sums will more than pay the interest of the sum paid for the Floridas. In making this remark, we admit that we have formed but vague ideas; nor has there, we believe, been any expression of opinion on this point by those who have the public affairs in their hands. But if the clear receipts from these sources should only pay the interest of the debt incurred, calculating, as we are authorised to do from our experience in other quarters, that they would double in a period of seven years, it will be found that the whole new debt incurred will, without costing the U. S. one dollar, be discharged in a period of about fourteen years.

Compare this result with the effects of the proposition for raising additional troops. We have seen a circular letter written by a friend of this measure, [Mr. Garnett,] which states that it was contemplated to raise four thousand additional troops. These could not have cost less than an annual sum of a million of dollars; while it is but too probable from the remote position they would have occupied, and the nature of the climate, the expense would have greatly exceeded this amount. In the one case, then, we should have sustained a positive loss, requiring probably the imposition of new taxes, or involving the retarded extinguishment of the national debt; while in the other, a flattering prospect is held out of acquiring, after a few years, a new fund of wealth, free from all mortgage or incumbrance.

Willing to contemplate the proposition for raising additional troops in its most favorable light, we have considered it as a measure not only *meant* to be, but which *actually* would have been, *strictly defensive*. Had a different issue ensued, which is but too probable, the expense would have been vastly increased.

II. Among the charges brought against the Executive, that which criminates them with having withheld an important document, until the bill making an appropriation for the purchase of the Floridas had passed, and was out of the power of the House of Representatives, is entitled to some notice. It is to be regretted that on this point we can at best glean but imperfect information, as the document alluded to still remains confidential. This document is a letter from Mr. Munroe to the secretary of state. It is said that its contents might have changed the vote of the House. But by whom is this said? By those who either opposed the appropriation, or who voted for the raising additional troops. Has it been admitted by a single member who voted for the former and against the latter measure? On the contrary several members of this description unequivocally deny that it could have had any such effect. They have gone further, and even said that it confirmed their convictions of the soundness of the measure adopted. Who than are to be considered the best judges on this point, and are the most to be relied on—those who are competent to decide from their own convictions, which must be, relatively to their own conduct, unerring; or those who undertake to pronounce on the *probable* convictions of others, in doing which they almost necessarily blend their own feelings with those of others.

Further—Had this document any effect on the Senate? Did it produce a different vote in that branch of the legislature from that which obtained in the House? On the contrary, the bill passed by a considerable majority. We have here, then, another strong presumption that the contents of it would not have had the effect ascribed to them.

This presumption is still further corroborated by an assurance we have received, on which we place the most implicit reliance, that the Senate obtained a copy of the dispatches, which have been alleged to be thus important, and that although they lay on their table during the whole period of the discussion that ensued on the bill making an appropriation of two millions, they were considered so little relevant to our affairs with Spain, that they were scarcely, if at all, noticed.

Further—Why did the President, if he dreaded the effects of this letter, communicate it at all? Had he dreaded its impression on the House of Representatives, he could not the less have dreaded its effects on the Senate; and if he had dreamt that the non-communication of it at an earlier period would have justly exposed him to the reproach of intentionally withholding it, surely the same impure motive that led him to this would have suggested the policy of keeping out of view the means of inevitable detection.

Further—Whence did this document come? From Mr. Munroe, resident in London, and engaged in conducting a negociation with the British government. Is it to be presumed that any *new facts* relative to our affairs with Spain would be disclosed by a document emanating from such a place, and dated at a period so remote from the discontinuance of our negociations with the government of Spain? Is it not most probable that it contained, on this point, little more than mere opinion, and that this opinion bore as much, if not more, on British than Spanish relations?

We violate no confidence when we express the belief, derived from what we have heard, that these dispatches contained no facts relative to Spain not before known to the legislature.

That they contained opinions, whose justness, however undisputed when they were expressed, had, from a material change of circumstances, become extremely doubtful.

That they were considered as so irrelevant to the pending discussions as to have rendered the propriety of their communication to Congress extremely questionable.

And that it is owing to these circumstances alone that they were not communicated at an earlier period.

But why, it will be enquired, were they, although received in December, not communicated before the 17th of January, the day subsequent to the passage of the bill making an appropriation for the purchase of the Floridas in the House of Representatives? For this plain and satisfactory reason. The papers relative to Spain were communicated in the first instance, and when they had been acted upon, and not before, the President submitted to the House of Representatives the papers relative to Great Britain, *of which number were these celebrated dispatches*, written by our minister, not at Madrid, but at London, on our differences with the British government, and only incidentally noticing our affairs with Spain.

Let these circumstances be duly weighed: connect with them the unblemished integrity of the President of the U. S. and the secretary of state; the folly of surreptitiously withholding from one branch of the legislature (until they had decided) a paper, which was given to the other at the commencement of their discussions, and the certainty of the detection and exposure of any unworthy conduct by the Senate; and we have no hesitation to declare our firm belief that the conduct of the Executive in this instance has been strictly correct.

III. It has been said that the money appropriated for the purchase of Spanish territory is intended for France, and it has been insinuated, if not affirmed, that France has made such a demand, or that we have made a proposition to her to this effect; thereby passing by the rightful owner, and unjustly giving money to France for the property of Spain. Such a subserviency to what have been denominated the base views of France is represented as conclusive evidence of the disposition of the government to crouch to the power of France, howsoever it may be exerted in violation of moral principle.

How such an allegation or insinuation came to be made is to us a matter of extreme astonishment. On a point so serious we have thought it our duty to seek for the best information within our reach. And on this information we do not hesitate to pledge ourselves in saying—*that no money has been directly or indirectly demanded by France of the United States; that none has been offered, or is now intended to be offered to France;—that no other intention has existed, or any measures been taken by the Executive of the United States, except for the purchase from Spain of her possessions east of the Mississippi;— and that the only interposition, which can be expected from France, must consist in the* GOOD OFFICES *she may tender, resulting from her general relative situation with the two countries, from her peculiar connections by treaty with Spain, and from her having been the party from whom we purchased Louisiana.*

That this is the fair and honest path trodden by the government of the United States, appears indeed from those circumstances which have already been disclosed to the public.

If we examine the Journal of the secret proceedings of the House of Representatives we shall find that the two resolutions passed, and presented to the President as indicative of its views, expressly recognise, one of them, "the purchase of the Spanish territories lying on the Atlantic ocean and gulph of Mexico, and eastward of the Mississippi"—and the other "the exchange of territory between the United States and Spain"—as "the most advantageous mode of settlement of existing differences between the United States and the court of Madrid." And so circumspect were the House of Representatives on this point, that as if not satisfied with the terms of these resolutions, pointed as they are, on sending their bill to the Senate they expressly say, "we transmit you a bill which has passed this House, entitled "An act making provision for defraying any extraordinary expences attending the intercourse between the U. S. and foreign nations," and in which we request your concurrence. This bill has been passed by us to enable the President of the U. S. to commence with more effect a negociation for *the purchase of the Spanish territories*, lying on the Atlantic ocean & Gulph of Mexico, & eastward of the river Mississippi." It is true, that the bill making the appropriation neither specifies the territory to be purchased, or the power with whom the negociation is to be conducted; but silence on this point probably arose from the expectation that, although the preliminary proceedings might be kept secret, the act of appropriation would be made public, and might, if it specified the object, frustrate a negociation to the successful issue of which secrecy was then deemed essential. It is also to to be observed that a similar course was pursued in the year 1803, on which occasion the resolution passed by the House was *specific*, and the bill *general*. This precedent may have had considerable influence. These facts sufficiently manifest the views of the legislature.

Secondly—The nomination of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Bowdoin, who were named commissioners to negociate with Spain, and not with France, furnishes equally conclusive evidence of the intentions of the Executive.

We have remarked that the "only interposition, which can be expected from France, must consist in the good offices she may tender, resulting from her general relative situation with the two countries, from her peculiar connections by treaty with Spain, and from her having been the party from whom we purchased Louisiana." Such an interposition might originate in either of the causes assigned without the slightest departure from the ordinary course pursued by independent nations. The general good understanding of France towards the United States and Spain might naturally lead a government, even less powerful and active than the former, to offer her mediation to adjust existing differences between her mutual friends; and this is, in fact, an event which constantly takes place, and is far from being an uncommon mode of restoring a good understanding between powers temporarily alienated from each other.

But, in addition to this consideration, the existing treaty stipulations between France and Spain require the interposition of mutual *good offices*. According to these—"The two contracting powers reciprocally guarantee, without any reservation or exception, all the estates, territories, islands, and places which they respectively possess, or may possess," and if either power "finds itself, under any pretext whatever, menaced or attacked, the other promises, engages, and obliges itself to assist with its GOOD OFFICES."

And lastly, France having been the party from whom we purchased Louisiana, it is natural to infer, as a large share of our controversy with Spain has arisen out of that purchase, and more especially that part of it which respects boundaries, not only that we should look to France for aiding us with her good offices in securing to us the undisturbed enjoyment of rights acquired from her, but that France herself would be solicitous to give validity to her engagements with us.

But we are told, on this head, that the money for the purchase of Spanish territory will inevitably go to France; that France will have it; that we know this, and that under the cover of paying Spain money for her property, we are in fact bribing France to bully Spain out of it.

The whole force of this argument rests on the assumed fact that Spain is under the control of France. For if she is not, she is an independent nation, a free agent, and may consequently do what she pleases with the price of the purchase, or altogether decline acceding to it. But if she is thus completely under the control of France, and is consequently not free to act as she sees fit, are we on that account to remain eternally embroiled with her, and are our hands thereby tied against every effort to adjust our differences? To what absurd lengths would not this argument carry us? She does us an injury. But we are told she has no will of her own, and ought not to be answerable for consequences; that she is impelled by France. Are we then, passing her by, instantly to retaliate on France? When one nation menaces us, are we with more than Quixotic indiscretion to attack another? If the argument be sound, instead of proposing to repel any Spanish inroad on our frontier, we ought to have sent an invading army to France.

The true answer to such remarks is, that so long as Spain asserts the character of an independent nation, she must submit to all the consequences that follow in its train. If she commits outrages on others, she must expect retaliation from them; and if she is called upon to make an arrangement which will greatly advance the interests of another, she has a right to expect a correspondent benefit. Having received the boon, it is with her either to keep it herself, to participate it with another, or entirely to part with it. Whether, in the last case, she receives an equivalent, must rest exclusively with her to judge. If in the present instance, it be true that France has a control over her, whence can this influence arise, but from the great importance to her of the protecting arm of France; and whether she pays for this in money drawn from her own mines, or from a purchase made by us, is altogether immaterial. We are bound to pursue our interests. Let her pursue hers.

IV. France has been represented as having threatened us with war in case we engaged in hostilities with Spain; and this allegation is set forth in the shape of an argument against any further negociation with Spain, which it is contended, would, under such circumstances, be in the highest degree humiliating. Under what circumstances the alleged threat was made, or whether it was unqualified, we are not informed. We have, however, no hesitation in averring that no such threat has been made by France, and in saying *that what has been distorted into a threat was nothing more than a candid answer of the French government to an application from ourselves, as to what she might do, in case of a war between the United States and Spain*; which we knew before as necessarily resulting from her treaty with Spain. By that treaty we find, after laying down, generally, the assistance which each government shall have a right to demand from the other, the following conclusive stipulation, which is so applicable as to seem to have been provided for the present case.

"The required power shall likewise furnish, on the demand of the requiring power, within the term of three months from the requisition, eighteen thousand infantry, and six thousand cavalry, with a proportionable train of artillery, *to be employed solely in Europe, or in defence of the colonies, which the contracting powers possess in the gulf of Mexico.*"

When then the question was put to the minister of France, if the United States go to war with Spain, what part will you take, what other reply could he make, than that a war with the one power would produce a war with both. It was a question which need not have been asked; but being put, the answer given, so far from being a threat, was the only answer which could, with sincerity, have been rendered. It announced the truth, and nothing but the truth, in a style neither arrogant nor offensive.

V. A distinguished member of the executive government has been charged with having made an application to the Secretary of the Treasury for money to aid in the negociation for the purchase of the Floridas, previous to any appropriation having been made for this purpose by Congress.

This is indeed a serious charge. Were it true, it would have become the representatives of the people, the guardians of the national treasure, to have instituted a rigid enquiry. We will not undertake to say that there are not cases in which it would not be the duty of the executive to lay his hand, without a legislative sanction, on every dollar in the treasury. Such cases not only may exist, but actually have occurred. They are, however, such as involve the dearest interets of the country, and they can only spring from those great & critical emergencies in which deep and impending evils are ready, unless averted by immediate and decisive measures, to burst with destructive fury on communities. No one will pretend to say that the Florida purchase was of this description. But is the charge true? Let any man read the following extracts from the journals of the House of Representatives, and judge for himself.

The charge was made—when Mr. Jackson offered the following resolution, which was agreed to:

Resolved, That the secretary of the treasury be requested to communicate to this House any information which he may possess in relation to an application said to have been made to draw money from the treasury for the purchase of the Floridas before an appropriation made by law for that purpose.

A few days afterwards the following letter was received from the secretary of the treasury:

Treasury Department,

Sir, *April 15, 1806.*

In answer to the request contained in the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 8th instant, I have the honor respectfully to state, that "no application has been made to draw money from the treasury for the purchase of the Floridas before an appropriation made by law for that purpose."

The circumstances, which may have produced an impression that such an application had been made, being unconnected with any matter pertaining to the duties of the office of the secretary of the treasury, are not presumed to come within the scope of the information required from this department by the House.

I have the honor to be,
With great respect,
Sir, your obedient servant,
Albert Gallatin.

The honorable,
the Speaker of the
House of Representatives.

So far from any such application having been made, it appears from a statement before us made by a member of Congress to his constituents, "that in a consultation of the members of administration on public affairs, a proposition was made, whether under the favourable circumstances for negotiating with Spain, presented by the then war in Europe, it would not be well to give immediate instructions to our minister to commence negotiation, on the ground of purchase, and depend on Congress for giving effect to the stipulation for money, which might be made."—"This," adds the writer, "the executive had the most undeniable constitutional power to do; but it was decided to be most advisable to defer the instructions till they could be backed by the concurrence of the legislature."

The American Citizen has very appropriately republished the following correspondence between Mr. Neilson, the President of an insurance company, and Mr. Barclay, the British consul, to shew the inconsistency of some of those men who are among the most clamorous on the late outrages offered by the British ships of war. This unpardonable conduct on the part of a few federal merchants is no extenuation of British violence; but it shews how regardless these men are of justice, when they do not scruple to denounce the motives and measures of an administration, which has employed all the means it possesses for maintaining the rights of its citizens, while they themselves have so far lost sight of their duty as to invite the very aggressions of which they now complain. The spirit which these outrages excite is honorable to our countrymen. We are glad to see it. It will convince the European world that their wrongs are felt by us as they ought to be; and this conviction will aid us in obtaining reparation for the past and security for the future. Such, at least, might be expected to be the effect, but for one circumstance—that those very men, who cry the loudest against British insolence and British wrongs, are, at the same time, equally vehement against their own government. The denunciation of the one is not less strong than that of the other. Is this politic, is it just, is it patriotic? Is it the best way of obtaining redress to hold up their own government to the contempt of those who are inflicting these injuries upon us? Is it policy to shew them that we are a divided people? Have we not strong reason to doubt the sincerity of those professions of patriotism, which are thus connected with a sovereign contempt of the only means of obtaining justice? We apply these remarks exclusively to the federalists of New-York. We rejoice to see the republicans true to their principles. We rejoice to see them among the foremost for pursuing proper measures, and relying with confidence on their government.

From the vehement denunciations of the present administration, it would be inferred by uninformed men, that they have been criminally neglectful of their duty, and that their conduct is directly opposed to that of the preceding administrations. The manes of Washington and Hamilton are solemnly invoked—and the *tame* and *pusilanimous* spirit of a Jefferson is compared with their lofty sensibility to the wrongs inflicted on their country. This language sounds extremely well.—But it is *vox et preteria nihil*—splendid nonsense. Facts are stubborn things; they will not, like our passions, bend to our wishes—now, it is a fact that more liberal appropriations have been made, in a given time, by the present administration, for the protection of trade, and the defence of our ports and harbors, than were made by any preceding administration. Calumniators! hear this, and confounded, hide your faces.

From the American Citizen.

The murdered Pierce!—That which has long been anticipated by the republicans has at length, unhappily occurred. From *insult* "his majesty's ships at the Hook, *within our very waters*, have proceeded to MURDER! The British government——British theory——British practice—British justice—British magnanimity—and British valour, have been the everlasting themes of FEDERAL eulogy. When British ships of war have before come within the Hook—impressed our seamen—insulted our country, and violated its laws, who have CARRESSED the very officers that have committed these outrages? The FEDERALISTS! When during the reign of John Adams, capt. Jessup was stopped on the high seas, visited by a British lieutenant and his gang, and, on the quarter deck of his own ship, was stripped, tied up, and deliberately, cruelly, and inhumanly FLOGGED, who were the apologists of the degrading and atrocious act? The FEDERALISTS!—Capt. Jessup appealed to his country, appealed to his government for justice, and, on *oath*, recited the humiliating fact. And what was the consequence? Why, Timothy Pickering, a FEDERALIST, John Adams' secretary of state, wrote to the miscreant who had FLOGGED the American captain, on his American ship, procured from him a half-way denial of the flogging & then declared officially, that the *declaration* of the *British officer* was to be believed before the *oath* of an *American captain*! Are not these things remembered? Can they ever be forgotten?

Well: what has been the more recent conduct of the federalists? How long is it since the Leander was here before—that very British ship Leander whose officers have now committed the Horrid Murder? My readers will recollect that the Leander, the Driver sloop of war, &c. were at the Hook in June, July and August of 1804, and that then in our own waters, they insulted our independence—violated the laws of the United States—resisted the authority of the marshal in serving process, and heaped upon us contempt upon contempt. Who invited these pirates hither then? NEILSON an OLD TORY, but a *modern Federalist*—Neilson, yes, that very Neilson who in the year 180[illegible]