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CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Mr. CAMPBELL's SPEECH

ON THE

Resolution for authorising the President under certain conditions to suspend the Embargo law.

(CONTINUED.)

There were some remarks made by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) with respect to an expression in the letter of Champagny to Mr. Armstrong our minister at Paris which I think proper to notice in this place. I am not certain I understand the application of those remarks or the object the gentleman had in view in making them. If not I shall willingly be corrected in this respect. He seemed to infer that the letter contained a threat or menace against the United States; and some of his remarks were calculated to make an impression that there was some mysterious understanding between the French government and that of this country in regard to the measures that have been adopted by the latter—I cannot concur with him on either of those points. In regard to the first, I do not understand the letter in the same light which that gentleman seems to do, as if intended to awe or menace the Union—and with respect to the second, I feel confident in asserting there is not the slightest ground for such an insinuation, nor is it countenanced by any thing contained in that letter, when fairly understood. In saying this much I would not be understood as in the least degree palliating the harshness of the expressions used in that letter; I have no such intention—they breath a spirit which I do not now, and never shall approve in that or any other government; but I am still willing to do it justice. The expressions particularly alluded to, are these—"He (the Emperor) has ordered that they (the vessels that had been brought into French ports) should remain sequestered until a decision may be had thereon, according to the dispositions which shall have been expressed by the government of the U. S." The gentleman seemed to place particular stress on the words "shall have" and gave us to understand that he considered them as relating to such measures as our government had adopted previous to the time of writing the letter in question. He further stated that the letter alluded to was written on the 15th January; and that the embargo was laid in this country on the 22d of December before; and he hoped the embargo was not the measure which it was wished according to that letter should have taken place. Here is, sir, an attempt to give plausibility to an erroneous *suggestion* founded on mere conjecture, by placing a forced & ungrammatical construction on the expression above cited from the letter in question. According to the known rules of the English language, and the best authors on the subject with which we are acquainted the words "shall have" are used to designate an event or transaction, which is to take place, before some other event which is also to take place in future, and are never used to express an event which had actually occurred at the time of speaking them. In the letter in question Mr. Champagne is speaking of American vessels which had been taken and brought into French ports under their decrees, upon which no decision had taken place, and respecting the release of which he had been addressed by Mr. Armstrong. He says the Emperor had ordered that they should remain sequestered (instead of being condemned according to the decrees) until a decision may be had thereon according to the dispositions which shall have been expressed by our government. That is, evidently, the dispositions that shall have been expressed previous to such decision, not those which had been expressed previous the time of writing that letter; if such had been his meaning he would have used words calculated to express it, as it is not to be presumed he was unacquainted with the use of language. What pretence then was there for insinuating, (as the gentleman was understood to do,) that the embargo, which was laid nearly a month before, and was not known there until nearly two months after, was the measure alluded to in that letter—and that there must have been some secret understanding between the two governments, by which the measure was adopted to accommodate France? If this was the meaning of what was said and intended to be conveyed to the public, it is an additional proof of the extreme inconsistency of gentlemen's arguments and objections to measures; who at one moment tell you the embargo was laid to accommodate France, and in the next, insist it was the very measure Great Britain wished you to adopt. But the idea that this House or any branch of the government acted under the influence of the French Emperor, or in pursuance of any known wishes on his part, is too absurd to require refutations, and too ridiculous and improbable to gain belief among men possessing any tolerable portion of information. There is not a solitary fact which can be adduced to support the assertion, nor will any fair construction of the letter in question give it the least plausible countenance.

With regard to the style of the letter in question, I feel no disposition to justify it. I disapprove its tone and harshness as much as any man ought to do—but I cannot see in it that threatening or commanding language which some have pretended to discover. The object of the letter appears evidently to be to induce this nation to join France in the war, rather than Great Britain; and in order to effect this purpose, the writer attempts, by strong representations of the conduct of Britain towards us, to convince our minister, that we ought to go to war with her, and says that Bonapartes' believing this to be the case, concluding that we are already at war with that nation, is willing to consider us associated with France and the other powers of the continent who have to defend themselves against England. This does not appear to me contain a mandate, a threat, or menace, but only an endeavor to persuade this nation that it was her interest and consistent with her duty to join in the contest against Britain, and as an inducement for her to do so, it was stated that the French Emperor has ordered the vessels and property taken not to be condemned, but only to be retained sequestered, until it is known what the disposition of this country may be on the subject. What did Great Britain tell two years ago? That unless you *resisted* the decrees of France she would, notwithstanding the treaty then proposed, reserve the right to act as circumstances might require towards you (as well as other neutrals) and to adopt measures of retaliation. Is not this the same in substance, only in different language, with with what is contained in the above letter? Has not Mr. Canning repeated the same thing to your ministers at London? That his majesty had not discovered in the conduct of the American government such a disposition to resist the decrees of France as would induce him to withdraw the note containing the above sentiments, which had been annexed to the rejected treaty—and although he stated, that, if the treaty had been ratified by us, he would have carried it into effect, yet he would still reserve the right to retaliate by imposing restrictions on neutral commerce, because our government had not resisted, in the manner he expected, the French decrees. To me therefore the conduct of those two powers appears precisely in the same point of view in this respect; with no other difference except as relates to the commencement of their system of restrictions on our commerce, (and this point I shall not examine at this time,) but after that system was once commenced, each power appeared to use every mean it possessed to get us involved in the war against the other. This was the principal object they seem to have had in view, & in this they have hitherto failed.

It has been stated on this floor, upon what authority, or for what purpose is not very obvious, that the embargo has been better received in England than in France. This may or may not be the case; for we have no correct information how it was received in France; and very little respecting the manner in which it has been received in Great Britain; nor can it be very material to this nation which of those powers thinks most favorably of the measure. The best information from England states that, it does and will press very severely on her manufacturing interest; and that thousands will be thrown out of employ and reduced to a state of famine for want of the ordinary means of support. That our importations from that country, which are estimated there at nearly sixty millions of dollars annually, have been almost entirely stopped in consequence of the embargo; no orders being sent for them by our merchants. This immense sum will therefore no longer flow into that country, in supplies or specie; their goods will remain in the hands of the manufacturers, and not in their ware houses; there being no other part of the world to which they can send them for consumption. This will carry the effects of the embargo home to every class of society in that country; the people will sensibly feel them, will see the causes that produced them, and speak to their government in a tone of language, that will command their attention In addition to this, that country will be deprived of about fifteen millions of pounds of cotton, which she annually received from us, being about one half the amount of that article required to supply her manufactories. This cannot be furnished her from any other part of the world, and of course her trade will be palsied; her manufactories must stop; a great portion of those engaged in this business will be thrown out of employ, and encrease the general scenes of ruin and distress in the nation. These circumstances have already alarmed the people of that country, made very serious impressions on the best informed men there, and produced numerous applications to their government, for peace with America. A distinguished member of their parliament has given notice that he would move to repeal the orders in council If we wanted evidence of the effects of the embargo, we have here the strongest proofs that could be expected on the subject. And further, with respect to the causes that produced this measure, the ablest statesmen in England have stated on the floor of parliament in direct contradiction of what has been stated here, that the orders of council were to this country just cause of war. They were therefore certainly sufficient to authorise the embargo.

But you have been told that the present state of our public affairs is not to be attributed to the proceedings of the belligerent powers, but to the conduct of your own government in rejecting the proposed treaty with Great Britain. That treaty has been examined in this House already, in a manner which renders it unnecessary for me to go at large into the subject; but it may be proper to notice some circumstances attending that instrument, and draw the attention of the House to some of the provisions it contained. In the first place that treaty was presented to your government for their acceptance, accompanied by a mandatory note annexed thereto, containing a threat, that if you did not resist the French decree of Nov. 1806, in a manner agreeable to the views of Great Britain, she would at your expense adopt measures of retaliation, and expressly reserving the right to do so, notwithstanding you should ratify the treaty; while on your part you would have been bound by the terms of the treaty, without any condition or reservation whatever. Thus she would have had the power to adopt such measures of retaliation as she might chuse to consider your conduct required, might let loose all her engines of destruction against your commerce, while you were bound by the treaty, not to adopt a single measure that would really affect her trade or interest. To accept a treaty under such circumstances, would disgrace the government of any independent nation; the American people would spurn within diguation those who should succumb in such a manner to any foreign power, and agree to ratify a treaty, accompanied by conditions so humiliating to this nation, even supposing there had been no other objections to the instrument itself; but upon examining that instrument, as shall be more particularly noticed hereafter, it will be found that this government is there bound not to prohibit importations from, or exportations to Great Britain, being thereby deprived of the only means we possessed of coercing that nation, while she is not bound in a single instance in which you are materially interested. To place your government in this situation, therefore, by ratifying that treaty, would be to sacrifice the best interests, the honor and dignity of the nation.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. R.) further stated, that the want of a provision respecting the impressment of our seamen, was alleged by our government, as the principal objection to ratifying the treaty; and he observed that the informal arrangement agreed upon by the commissioners of the two powers, contained in an unofficial note, written by those of Great Britain to our ministers, was such as ought to have satisfied our government on this point. Upon examining this part of the subject, we shall find that this informal note so much relied upon, if it was calculated to have any effect, left the principle of impressment in a situation more unfavorable on our part, than it was before, and did not in any respect go to correct the practice. The American government never did admit that Great Britain had a right to impress her own seamen from on board our merchant vessels; she insisted she had such right; and the question rested thus undecided; it being insisted on by the one side strenuously, and it is believed correctly denied by the other, that such principle or practice was sanctioned by the laws of nations. In this celebrated unofficial or informal note, so satisfactory on this subject to the gentleman, Great Britain insists on the right, and also on the practice; and only says that instructions have been given, and shall be repeated to exercise that right with caution, &c. still retaining the right to impress those she may call her own seamen from on board your ships—G. Britain has made similar professions for years past; these are no new professions, but a repetition of the former ones, and under those she has incessantly impressed your seamen, and thereby, as well as by other means embarrassed and harrassed your commerce. It was stated that this informal note corresponded with the project proposed by our ministers on this subject in conformity with the instructions they had received from their own government; and it was also stated that the only objection to this arrangement was, that this note was not formal or official. This statement will be found upon examination, not to be correct. There were two projects under discussion, the one proposed by our ministers, under the directions of our government, and the other a counter project proposed by the commissioners of G. Britain, and entirely disagreed to by our ministers. The former of these after some unimportant amendments proposed by the said commissioners and agreed to by our ministers was laid before the British government and by them rejected. This is the only project that had the assent of our ministers or the approbation of our government. By this project, the pretended right set up by G. Britain to impress her seamen when found on board our vessels is entirely abandoned, the principle is laid out of the question; and it is stipulated that the contracting parties shall respectively enact laws, whereby it shall be made penal for the commanders of vessels of either of the said parties to receive deserters from the vessels of the other; and it also provides for delivering up such deserters, when the vessel having them on board shall arrive at any port of the party to which they belong. This project provides completely against the British practice of impressing seamen; relinquishes the right to impress claimed by her, and provides against abuses on either side. The unofficial note alluded to so far from containing stipulations corresponding with those in this project, has not a single provision of a similar nature, or any one calculated to afford our seamen the like security; on the contrary it expressly recognizes the principle and reserves the right to impress their seamen on board our vessels; and only gives assurances that instructions shall be given and enforced for the observance of the greatest caution in exercising that right, &c. It may be proper here to read this note so highly approved of by the gentleman; it will merit the attention of the House, and shew what kind of provision he is willing to accept for the security of American citizens. [Here Mr. Campbell read the note, and the project and counter project.] The House must now see (said Mr. C.) that this note contains no stipulations in any manner corresponding with those in the project in question. It provides no remedy against the evil complained of, it promises no additional security to our seamen. G. Britain always pretended she was willing to give up our impressed seamen when their citizenship was proved, and that she only claimed the right to impress her own seamen and not ours; this note does no more; it makes no new provision; but merely repeats the same professions and promises that had been made and disregarded in practice, for years before. It does not therefore in my view place the subject of impressments on any ground more favorable to us than it was on before. It would not then be considered as any substantial inducement to agree to the rejected treaty; and the merits of that instrument rested on precisely the same grounds they would do, if no arrangement whatever had been made on this subject—and I apprehend no American will venture to assert that our government ought to have ratified a treaty, which made no provision to guard our citizens against impressment, which left unadjusted by far the most important matter of difference that was in discussion, and the *principal object at least*, if not the only one for which an extraordinary mission was sent to that country.

There is another provision in this treaty that has been already alluded to, which deserves more particular attention. It is that by which this government is prevented from prohibiting the exportation or importation of any articles to or from G. Britain. It is contained in the 5th art. and is in the following words—"Nor shall any prohibition be imposed on the exportation or importation of any articles to or from the territories of the two parties respectively, which shall not equally extend to all other nations," &c. This provision at first view might seem to be reciprocal, but upon examination it will be found, that in practice it would have no reciprocity in it. The articles we receive from Great Britain are chiefly luxuries, that we could without much serious inconvenience dispense with, and which might be obtained from other countries, with nearly the same advantages and equal facility that they are from her; whereas those articles which she receives from us are of the first necessity to her, without which her territories could not well subsist, and such as she could not be supplied with from any other quarter of the world; neither could she find customers for those articles of manufactures which we receive from her to the amount of about sixty millions of dollars—while on the other hand the whole continent of Europe, and other parts of the world would furnish markets, nearly if not altogether equal to those of G. Britain for our productions. In this view of the subject there is no reciprocity in this provision—its advantages are entirely on the part of G. Britain. It never can be her interest to prohibit the exportation of her manufactures to this country, or the importation of most of our productions into her territories, for which there is always a great demand; she never could produce any serious impression on us by such a measure—she would herself feel it much more severely than we would, and it would prove much more destructive to her interest than it would to ours. But it might be vastly important for us to prohibit importations from that country, as well as exportations to it—we could supply ourselves from other countries, and find other markets for our produce, while at the same time we would by such a measure produce the most serious impression upon that nation, and affect her interests in the most vital part. Nothing can prove this more clearly than the present state of our public affairs, the necessity we have been under of resorting to the embargo, and the effect it is likely to produce. If circumstances had rendered it proper to confine its operation to one nation only, its pressure would have been equally severe