

SPEECH OF THE  
HON. JOSEPH PEARSON,

In the House of Representatives, December 29.

The bill "Supplementary to the act for the more perfect organization of the army of the United States" and the bill "in addition to the act for raising an Additional Military Force" being under consideration.

Sir, in politics as well as in morality, the sin of omission is equal to the sin of commission—if others are injured by our neglect, with what propriety can we complain if that injury should happen to be made to recoil upon ourselves; unless, indeed, effectual means are taken to prevent its recurrence. If this position is true let it be applied to the question now in dispute. I conceive it must irresistibly follow that our own hands are entirely clear, and that it is our duty to make them so before they are further steeped in blood. Before I enter into the examination of the question of impressment—the only avowed existing object of the war—permit me to declare as the firm conviction of my understanding, that if this question, as it at present stands, under the peculiar circumstances of the two nations could be fully and fairly understood by the people of this country, they would not sustain the war in which we are involved for one single hour. No sir, a war never can, it never ought to be sustained for the protection of British subjects, or foreigners of any description who may come among us, unless they remain within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States. On the contrary, if G. Britain will not be satisfied to arrange this subject fairly, so as to exempt us from the abuse of the practice of impressing from our vessels, when such security as is in our power to give, and such as she ought to ask, is given her, that none of her seafaring subjects shall be employed in our public or merchant vessels, then we shall have a cause of war (and be united in it) more worthy of the energies of this nation. How far we have the right, or how expedient it may be for the legislature to restrict the claims of one, the very innumerable class of seamen, viz those British seamen who have previously to the existing war, been regularly naturalized agreeably to the laws of the United States, how far, I say, it would be constitutional and just to interfere with the claims and privileges now enjoyed by this particular description of persons, I am not at this moment prepared to say—I believe, however, the number is so inconsiderable, that it would not produce any ruinous obstacle to an arrangement which would be otherwise desirable to the two nations.—The whole number of seamen of this description during the whole period from 1796 to 1811, agreeably to a report of the secretary of state, amount only to 1332, and from the opinion of gentlemen well informed on this subject, it is highly probable at the period of the declaration of war, and perhaps at this moment, there are not one hundred regularly naturalized British seamen in our service. It is probable, therefore, that in a negotiation commenced and prosecuted with friendly dispositions—the abstract question of right might not arise—and if it did, both parties regarding and looking to the future, rather than the past—would not permit so inconsistent a practical and past evil, to become a serious subject of contestation. As to those foreigners who may be hereafter naturalized—we have complete controul over the subject—they ought not to have a claim on protection, if they are not content with the blessings of our law and our land, without placing themselves in the power of their native sovereign. Sir, it would seem, if indeed, any reliance is to be had on a very extraordinary document furnished by the executive during the present session of congress, purporting to be a detail of an interesting conversation between Mr. Russell and Lord Castlereagh, on the 6th Sept. last, that Mr. Russell, though not authorized by his government so to do, did propose, that the laws to be passed by us, and to take effect on the discontinuance of the practice of impressment, should prohibit the employment of the native subjects or citizens of the one state, excepting such only as had already been naturalized, on board the private or public ships of the other. This proposition, although not authorized, and not considered as binding on the executive, is certainly entitled to due consideration by us, from the time and manner of its being made, and the sanction most unquestionably implied from the silence of the executive in relation to this proposition. Thus the subject is induced by the showing of our own cabinet, not so much to the violation of a right, as the occasional abuse of the exercise of a right.

How then does the question really and fairly stand, for which it is alleged this war is & ought to be prosecuted, at the hazard of every thing dear to a prosperous and happy people. The claim of the British government is to take from the merchant vessels of other countries British subjects. We complain that in the practice, commanders of British ships of war often take from merchant vessels of the U. States, American citizens. If then the right of search is denied—if the invariable principle of national allegiance and protection is admitted, so far as gives to the sovereign a right to their services, or when the exigencies of the state may require them, it follows that this practice of impressment from our vessels springs from our employment of her seamen in our merchant service regardless of the injury inflicted by depriving her of the services of that class of her subjects, more than all others essential to her safety in time of war—and at all times to the general prosperity of that nation. This practice being induced and defended for the reasons above stated, will not be relinquished till something is done, some plan adopted which will remedy the evil complained of, for which impressment is now resorted to. We will have to give something in exchange as the price of such a relinquishment, and nothing can be cheaper than the plan I have proposed.

Will it be contended that this is granting too much? Will it be contended, that a neutral flag shall protect every thing that sails under it? Surely, gentlemen, will except articles deemed contraband of war, and except enemies of a belligerent. They must go furnished—they must abandon the protection of native territory—they must give up the power when they trust themselves beyond our territorial jurisdiction and thus fall into the hands of their original sovereign. If this is not done this war must be interminable, at least whilst Great Britain has a flag on the ocean. Should we be successful in the contest, the principle will not be sanctioned by any nation regardless of its maritime power, and probably be a curse to ourselves. Moreover, in the assertion of such a right, we are entering the list against the law and practice of perhaps every nation in the world, which pretends to regard civilization or law. For, although I admit, that all civilized nations recognize, in some form or other, the rights and privileges of naturalization, yet they equally agree in the doctrine of perpetual allegiance, and deny that naturalization by a foreign power gives to the person naturalized any new power gives to protection against his own sovereign. Merch claims to protection against his own sovereign, who are less, therefore, are persons to be protected, who are bound by no tie to any country, except the tie resulting from allegiance and protection which is only due to and from the native state.

This sir, is the doctrine of approved writers on the subject, and is the uniform doctrine of G. Britain, and of all nations, and only by the practice of France,

statutes and edicts of that country. The revolution—she not only of protection to the naturalized person, but denies to neutrals the right to naturalize her enemies as to protect her against her arms—and authorizes the seizure of her own seamen on board neutral vessels at sea. If, sir, these practices and these pretensions have been enforced upon us by the officers of the French government in a variety of instances, and so far from those officers considering it an offence, they have reproached our government for not sending their seamen to our service—nor have I heard a whisper of complaint on this subject against the French government. Who is there that has paid any attention to the proceedings of France on this subject, that is ignorant of the rigid vigilance with which she has endeavored to secure to herself the services of her own seamen both in peace and war, and the little ceremony with which neutral or naturalized seamen have been treated by her—she makes it a crime in her seamen to serve on board vessels of other nations whether enemies or friends—she punishes as pirates, all masters of vessels, whether naturalized or settled in other countries, who take commissions or use any other flag than that of France—if her seamen are found in foreign ships in time of peace, they are doomed to confinement and service, if in time of war, they are sentenced to three years in the galleys. These are some of the regulations which exist and had their origin previous to the revolution. Since that period and in the tide of French principles (for I will not prostitute the term liberty) other regulations have taken place which clearly shew of what avail our certificates of naturalization or our protection to foreigners would have been, had that nation been able to keep any thing like a fleet at sea. By this modern champion of maritime rights, all captains of neutral vessels were punished as spies, unless they could pass by our minister near the French court that they were born in an allied or neutral country—all English sailors on board neutral flags in the ports of France, were ordered to be arrested, and every man who spoke the English language was to be considered English, unless he could prove by authentic documents that he was an American.

These, sir, are some of the doctrines and practices of France: their cruelty and injustice in many respects must be admitted by all; they transcend any British pretensions which have ever come to my knowledge; they are adduced not to palliate the conduct of the British government but to shew the conduct of other nations on the subject for which the war is now continued, and principally to shew, that whilst we assert the principle that our flag shall be the shield of protection to every foreigner who may take refuge under it, this war will be eternal, if not universal.

One word more, sir, on this part of the subject—it is this: independent of the existence of the war and the intrinsic delicacy and perplexity of the question of which I have been treating, and setting aside all considerations of injury and abstract right both in relation to ourselves and others, there is something of superior encouragement and patronage due from us to our native tars. National honor and national safety require, that your navies and your armies too should be composed of the natives of our soil. It ill befits us to share the toils and honors of defending our country with those who have no interest in it—already has the glory of the late brilliant naval achievement, the capture of the Guerriere by the Constitution, under command of Capt. Hull, been somewhat tarnished by the fact, or at least the belief, that great part of our crew were Britons. Call not foreigners to your aid, let American battles be fought by America's sons; to them impart the honor or the shame. As to the bill under consideration, I consider it a perfect nullity in point of practical efficiency. It will add to the expenses already too great for the people to bear or this legislature fairly to propose. For, sir, so tottering are the props of this war, they will fall the instant you touch the pockets of the people in any way, your resources are exhausted, to stand—know your resources are exhausted, to stand, providing for the expenditures of the present year, which, if this bill passes will exceed thirty-five millions of dollars. This mode of getting money may fail, and if it does not, little comfort is afforded by it to those who look forward to the day of payment. No honest man can derive much consolation from being relieved from prompt payment if a mortgage is rivetted on himself and his posterity. Already you have officers in number sufficient to command thirty-five thousand men, independent of the six hundred which have just sprung up by the bill that was passed yesterday. Suppose (for the sake of argument) that there are at this moment not more than fifteen thousand men enlisted in the present establishment: it follows already that there are supernumerary officers sufficient for the command of 20,000 men, besides the additional 600 exclusively intended for the recruiting service.

Why then, with so many unemployed officers in commission and pay (a number almost sufficient to admit of a recruiting officer opening a rendezvous in every county, town or village in the United States) shall we have entailed upon us the curse of this additional mass of useless expense? If there is any peculiar charm in the period of twelve months to produce rapid enlistments, alter the law which at present exists, authorizing the enlistment of 15,000 men for 18 months, let these 15,000 and 5,000 more if you please, be enlisted for 12 instead of 18 months, and you will have all the men contemplated by the unnecessary multiplication of officers.

I understand, sir, the present campaign is broken up, no more fighting or attempts on Canada are intended during the winter. Let your officers, instead of loitering in the tents, or spending their time in amusement, exert themselves in providing a force for the spring, and if men are disposed to enlist at all, as many can and will be had, in the manner I have mentioned, as there would be if you had a recruiting officer at every man's door in the country.

But, sir, when I consider the intrinsic objections to short enlistments for distant offensive operations; when I reflect on the theatre where this war is to be prosecuted, and the consequence of opposing raw undisciplined troops in contest with veteran soldiers, I cannot avoid expressing my astonishment at the imbecility and wisdom of the project contemplated by this bill, and almonish gentlemen of its total inefficiency in bringing nearer to them the object of their wishes.

From the Federal Republican of the 13th ult.

On Friday the house sat with closed doors for more than an hour. When the doors were opened, D. R. Williams, the thunder and lightning man, appeared to be just cooling off from a tremendous paroxysm of passion, and was all over of a tremour. In a few minutes he was conducted out of the hall by two friends, and taken into a committee room, where he was bled. Nothing is ever gained in argument, or battle, by giving oneself up to rage. If the artillery man fills himself up to the muzzle with combustible matter, he may some day burst & fly to flinders, like an overcharged blunderbuss.

Late Foreign Intelligence,

Received at Baltimore from France.

Extracts from the French Bulletins.  
TWENTY-FIFTH BULLETIN OF THE FRENCH GRAND ARMY.

Warsaw, 20th Oct. 1812.

All the sick, who were in the hospital at Moscow, were removed on the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, to Mojaisk and Smolensk. The ammunition waggons and all the munitions, together with prizes and articles of curiosity, and trophies, have been packed up, and were sent off on the 15th. The army received orders to make bread for 20 days and to get in readiness to depart. The Emperor quitted Moscow on the 19th.

PARIS, November 17.  
TWENTY-SIXTH BULLETIN OF THE FRENCH GRAND ARMY.

Berzinsk, Oct. 25, 1812.

After the battle of Moskwa Gen. Kutusow took a position one league in front of Moscow, a ser having formed several redoubts for the defence of the city, with a hope of holding out to the last moment. The 14th Sept. seeing the French army marching towards him, he evacuated his position, and passed through Moscow, with his head quarters, at 9 in the morning. Our advanced guard passed through at one, same day.

The commander of the rear guard of the Russians asked permission to defile thro' the city without being fired upon; the request was granted: but on our arrival at the Kremlin, the rabble, armed by the Governor, making some resistance, were instantly dispersed. Ten thousand Russian soldiers were, the next and several succeeding days, picked up in different parts of the city, where they had wandered from an impulse of plunder. They are experienced good soldiers, and have served to augment the number of our prisoners.

The 15th, 16th and 17th, the commander of the Russian rear guard said, that no more fighting should take place, and spoke much of peace. He proceeded on the road of Kolonna, and our advanced guard took a position at the bridge of Moskwa, five leagues from Moscow. In the mean time the Russian army quitted the road of Kolonna, and took that of Kalouga. The most profound silence pervaded their whole army.

It was soon observed that the enemy were on a march. The Duke of Istria immediately went to Desna with a corps of observation. The King of Naples followed the enemy towards Podol, and afterwards placed himself in the rear, with an intention to prevent the retreat of the enemy had with him only the advanced guard the enemy had only time to evacuate the entrenchments they had made, and were driven six leagues, after a combat which terminated gloriously for the advanced guard. The Prince of Poniatowski took a position in the rear of the Nara, at the confluence of the Istia.

It being intended that Gen. Lauriston should go to the Russian head quarters on the 3d October, communications were established between our advanced posts and those of the enemy, who mutually agreed not to attack each other without three hours previous notice; but, on the 18th, at 7 A. M. 4,000 Cossacks rushed from a wood situate about half a cannon shot from Gen. Sebastiani's corps, which formed the extremity of the left of the advanced guard. They surprised this corps of light cavalry, who were dismounted, and in the act of receiving their rations of flour; and was thereby unable to form until they had retreated a quarter of a league. The enemy, emboldened, took possession of 12 pieces of cannon and 26 caissons of General Sebastiani's, and 30 baggage waggons; in all they took 65 waggons, instead of 100, reported in the last bulletin.

In the mean time, the enemy's regular cavalry, and two columns of infantry also arrived, and were in hopes of gaining the woods and the vicinity of Voronsvo before us; but the King of Naples was already there. He marched forward, and rushed upon the the Russian regular cavalry, making ten or twelve different charges.

Since Moscow had ceased to exist, the Emperor had it in contemplation, either to abandon that mass of rains, or to occupy the Kremlin, only with 8000 men; but the Kremlin, after fifteen days labor, was not deemed sufficiently strong to be maintained; its occupation would have weakened and protracted the movements of the army, in lieu of being beneficial.—To protect Moscow from beggars and plunderers, would require a force of 20,000 men. Moscow is this day a very unwholesome place. A population of 200,000 souls, wandering in the neighboring woods dying with hunger, and lurking about the gardens in quest of vegetables to subsist upon. It was needless to retain a place which was neither of military nor political importance.

All the stores found in the city taken care of, the Emperor caused the Kremlin to be mined. The Duke of Treviso blew it upon the 2d at 2 o'clock in the morning. The arsenal, barracks, warehouses were all destroyed. The Duke of Treviso then marched for Veria.

Of 4,000 stone houses in Moscow 200 only remain—of 8,000 wood buildings, only about 500 remain.

TWENTY-SEVENTH BULLETIN OF THE FRENCH GRAND ARMY.

Veria, Oct. 27.

The original Russian army was destroyed. The Russian army at present chiefly of Cossaks and recruits. Men of information state that the Russian infantry only the best is composed of experienced soldiers. Russians have had three Generals killed. Count Pina on our part, was slightly wounded.

Paris, Nov. 10.  
TWENTY-EIGHTH BULLETIN OF THE FRENCH GRAND ARMY.

Smolensk Nov. 11, 1812.

The Imperial Head-Quarters were on the 1st Nov at Wiasma and on the 9th at Smolensk. The weather proved very bad until the 6th; but on the 7th the weather commenced; the ground being covered with snow. The roads became very slippery, and difficult for horses of draught. We have lost a number by cold and gages, caused by extra service.

Since the setting in of the bad weather, we have lost upwards of 3000 horses and nearly 100 of our cavalry.

The Russian General Wittgenstein

has been reinforced by some divisions from Finland, as well as by a great number of militia attacked on the 18th Oct. Marshal Gouyon St. Cyr; but was repulsed by said Marshal; seconded by the Polish General Wrede, who took 3000 prisoners, and covered the field of battle with their dead.

On the 20th, Marshal St. Cyr being informed that Marshal Duke of Belluno (Victor) with the 9th corps, was marching to reinforce him; recrossed the Dwina in order to meet him; and by forming a junction, attacked and beat Wittgenstein and forced him to recross the Dwina—Marshal St. Cyr speaks in the highest terms of the good conduct of his troops, particularly the Swiss division Colonel Guelencue of the 28th regiment of light infantry, who was wounded. Marshal St. Cyr received a musket ball in his foot, which caused him to quit this field; Marshal Duc de Reggio arrived in time to take his place, and so the Emperor never enjoyed the health of his army.

The Turkish army still occupied Scutaria. The Grand Vizier had been reinforced by 20,000 men, and a spirit of enmity against the Russians still prevailed through the Turkish empire. Three columns of Russian prisoners who were in their return home, from Constantinople, were arrested, and confined in the Barracks Silistra, Nicopoli, Ruschink. It appears, indeed, from these circumstances that a new era of hostilities between Turkey and Russia is not very distant. A British gate appeared a the Dardanelles, and related entrance.

PHILADELPHIA, Jan.

Latest from England.—Arrived yesterday the cartel ship Tontine, Capt. C. in 45 days from Liverpool. She left London on the first of December and arrived in London papers to the 28th of November.

News has been received of an unhappy nature from Lord Wellington, who is still retreating, and pursued by the French, but without having been engaged with them.

A formidable naval force is preparing in England destined for America. It is often said of the British fleet that it is fifteen times the size of the French.

Letters from the East.

The following is a list of the most disastrous events which have occurred since the commencement of the present year.

The news by the sea Express, at Annapolis from Nantz, which was received in the regular way.—It is never rumoured that a corps of the army amounting to 42,000 men, and that cold, had surrendered to the Russians, and that Bonaparte had proposed an armistice to the Emperor, and refused it.