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Editor & Proprietor.

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NATIONAL FOUNDERY.

SPEECH OF HON. JOHN A. GILMER,
OF NORTH CAROLINA,
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February, 21, 1859.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—
Mr. GILMER said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: In offering any views in support of the claims of my native State, North Carolina, to a share of the public patronage and disbursements in the establishment of national works, I am at once struck with two important reflections. First, that, of the many millions invested in magnificent Government structures, distributing so much capital among the people where they are erected, and, at the same time, strengthening the band of commerce and enterprise in their respective localities, and from which all of the sea-board States have derived more or less advantage, the old North State though one of the most faithful of the thirteen sisters who pledged their jewels, treasure, and honor upon the altar of liberty, and never broke the vow, has yet to be rewarded with the first particle of Government patronage to any respectable degree; and second, and perhaps more astonishing, that mineral wealth of such almost boundless extent, as is proven to exist there, should not long ere this have been called into active use by well directed individual enterprise. Here are two manifest derelictions of duty of some sort, and should claim the immediate attention of every true son of North Carolina.

The first neglect, I fear, has resulted from the want of proper attention, and vigilance on the part of her representatives on this floor, who have spent too much of their time upon abstract propositions, in fostering the mere political issues of the day; which, with advancement or renown of place is to be the result, are never wanting for ardent, if not furious advocates, while the real interest of the constituency, and the State they represent, have been to much neglected.

Days, weeks, months and years, have been wasted or labored away, urging in the political forum, matters wholy abstract and often incapable of even a practical test; while in which fact consists, in many instances, the major part of the apparent dignity and effect of such issues, while real, practical, useful questions, of the development and improvement of the material resources, agricultural, commercial, and mineral, of their State, have been completely overlooked.

Now, I do not propose to strain any one man for a failure in duty who has so heretofore, or now represents my State, for their reasons for their previous course of legislative action have doubtless been to the main satisfactory and sufficient. But I do propose to ask them, and all others, to unite with me in giving some attention to the real material interests of North Carolina. In fact, I light cannot my remarks beyond my purpose, and cause them to apply to many of the southern States; but, in doing so, I would not only assume the duties of others more competent to do so, but would, at the same time, transcend the courtesy extended to me by the House on this occasion.

Nor can I now do full justice to my State on this important matter, both for the want of time and all the information I could wish even were I not limited by this particular subject of the establishment of a national foundery, to which I shall advert directly. So immense, and almost boundless, are the mineral and manufacturing resources of North Carolina, that a volume may be filled with their variety, quality, and utility. I speak not now of the gold and silver, existing in such large quantities, and which are so much more actively sought, but I mean to allude more particularly to the more solid, abundant, and I will add, more valuable deposit of coal and iron. These are the articles of universal use, which everybody pays tribute to in some shape, and ever must, so long as commerce and agriculture, and their natural offspring, manufacturers, are the leading objects of man's attention. I care not who holds the purse, while I hold the articles of indispensable use, such as coal and iron. The former will loosen its strings and bow to the latter, as naturally as the magnet is attracted by the poles. Every man who inhabits a house or shelters under a roof, uses, either directly or indirectly, the fabrics or produce of coal and iron, and pays for them, in some shape; therefore, every man is a contributor to the use of these great staple materials. While Spain and other European Powers held and absorbed, as it were, the so called precious metals, then known both to the Old and the New World England being dispossessed of the solid coal and iron, the real precious metals, has risen the gold and silver of Spain and other countries into her national coffers, where they are yet safely locked up, and are likely to be, while England's domestic and commercial policy is observed, and until otherwise, equally blessed with material, shall adopt the same policy; therefore, despite of all of all their real resources, their solid wealth, their coal and iron.

North Carolina is beautifully blessed by Providence with these solid staple minerals of coal and iron, and equally blessed with water-power and other natural elements for bringing them into use and which must come into use, in spite of present or inherited neglect. Her water-power, I can almost say is the best in the universe. Her Yadkin, Ararat, Mitchell's, Fishery, Dan, Rocky, North and South Tow, Caney, Ivy, French Broad, Swanoana, Pigeon, Tuckaseege, Tennessee, New, Catawba, Uwharie, Haw and Deep rivers furnish streams for manufacturing purposes, which will last inexhaustible, beyond the power of man to consume, so long as the mountains from which these streams flow, shall stand to attest the work and glory of a beneficent Creator. But, like most of manufactures which are of a truly practical and commercial character for a southern State, it has been permitted to linger till it is about forgotten. It is my purpose to revive the subject, and claim for my State a fail and fair bearing on the premises. I promise then by saying that the Deep river valley, in the State of North Carolina, is a suitable place for a national foundery, and that the State of North Carolina has peculiar claims for its location within her borders.

What constitutes a suitable place for a national foundery?

1. Minerals and other materials for use in such a work ; and of these, principally coal and iron ore.

2. Locality, accessibility to tide water, and in accessibility to an enemy in time of war.

3. Climate, and means, for subsisting a population of mechanics and workmen.

On the first I can safely say, without disparagement to other places, that the Deep river valley has no superior. It has coal of the best and most abundant quality. It is bituminous coal totally free from sulphur, or other noxious element militating against its free use for manufacturing purposes of the best iron coal to the world, and yields the greatest abundance of the best coke for smelting and forge work, and is well adapted for making what is called hollow-fires, to the heavy wrought-iron work. Its iron ores, too, are equally superior, embracing every variety. The specular, brown-hematite, magnetic, and blue clay ores, are all bedded together in a narrow compass. And here, over any other place known on the continent the only workable vein of black-band ore interlines the coal field themselves; not only so, but are deepest in thickness and extent ever yet discovered in any country. This is not assumption, but fact, proven and visible to all eyes. A shaft, lately sunk by one of the companies engaged in operating these mines, to the depth of two hundred feet, discloses no less than seven feet of coal, and over eleven feet of black-band ore, all confined in a stratum of some forty feet. This is only one spot, but others are equally favored. But this important malleable article of ore, for the purpose of making all the description of fabrics for war and naval use, cannot be over-estimated, and should give a controlling influence in the selection of the locality for such a national work. With the use of the deposit, exclusively, as yet, found in workable quantities in the deep river valley, combined with the other and harder ores found in such great abundance, will enable the Government to make every description of iron fabrics, from the hardest. Steel cannon or shaft, down to the softest band band that can be demanded for any part of the naval or military departments.

Several very able and lucid reports have been made by eminent geologists, who base their statements upon actual explorations, made with the greatest caution and attention to the facts, among whom I may mention prominently Professors Johnson, Jackson, and Emmons—the latter being authorized State geologist for North Carolina. From their untired opinions and statements in their several reports, the following are some of their conclusions:

1. The coal is of a quality equal to the best coal of the same specific gravity for making gas, for which purpose it would bring in New York six or seven dollars per ton.

2. It is very easy to work, and free of fault.

3. It is admirably suitable for smelting iron, being free from sulphur.

4. Black-band iron ores overlies and underlies the coal, and can be mined from the same pits and openings.

5. The black-band is in deposits eighteen inches to six feet thick, and of a better quality than any found in Scotland, containing such a large portion of bitumen, and of so peculiar a character that from twelve to sixteen gallons of kerosene oil can be extracted from it while it is being calcined to fit it for the blast furnace. Six to sixteen inches is the usual thickness of the black-band in Scotland.

6. Hematite iron ore, clay-band, and also magnetic iron ores are in enormous deposit within ten miles of the coal and black-band.

7. Pig iron can be made from the above deposits of a quality superior to any made in Scotland, in any quantity, and at prices less than in Scotland, the proximity of the minerals to each other more than compensating for the higher wages in mining. Says a practical Scotch iron-master speaking of the Deep river valley :

"I am satisfied that pig iron can be made at a cost of nine dollars per ton in Chatham county, on the banks of the Deep river. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars would suffice to buy enough of mineral land to supply two furnaces for some generations. It would suffice to sink the pits, and erect two furnaces on the Scottish principle; and the same minerals are the same as in Scotland, the plans ought to be imported from thence. The two furnaces could make four hundred to five hundred tons a week—say twenty thousand tons per annum—at a cost of about ten dollars per ton, ($200,000.) Price in New York and Boston varies from twenty-two dollars to twenty-eight dollars per ton."

In addition to these materials, there is fire clay of the best quality, in great abundance, interlining the seams of coal and black-band ore; thus affording, from the same pit or shaft, coal, iron ore, and fire clay, and the other descriptions of iron ore, to wit, hematite, specular and magnetic, being immediately contiguous, leaves nothing to be done but to develop and use them to any extent and in every shape that the Government can wish or require the use of.

The second supposed requisite for a suitable site for a national foundery—the locality, its accessibility to tide water, and inaccessibility to an enemy—I will briefly state, is advantageously presented in these North Carolina coal-fields. The Deep river flows through the coal and iron deposits. It is a capacious stream, highly adapted to slack water work, which are now being constructed. The distance from the site of the works to the sea-board, or mouth of the Cape Fear river, into which Deep river flows, is only about one hundred and sixty miles, and tide-water, in the spirit down to twelve feet, comes to within seven miles of the place where a national foundery could be advantageously erected. With the slack water works completed, as they soon will be, besides a railroad to Fayetteville, now under construction, the fabrics for war, now inaccessible and too safely and conveniently can be carried out on the adjacent navigable water, either by railroad; whilst no enemy's fleets can ascend the stream, or an armed force for a national foundery.

French Broad alone, without even making an impression on the abundant supply. Besides the over abundance of water in the limpid streams of the old North State, they are exempt from the bitter frosts and freezing winters, which congeal at times the best streams in New England, obstructing their greater utility, while in North Carolina they rarely freeze, and are at the same time blessed with an elevated locality, and wholesome mountain atmosphere, rendering her valley not only safe for man's habitation but equally desirable.

But iron ores, the best and most abundant as I have stated, abound throughout the whole State. It would astonish one not familiar, to see or learn their quantity and extent. To attempt to describe their precise locality and extent with minuteness, would lead me into too great detail; but before confining myself to the particular subject designed in these remarks, this much I will say; you may cast your eye on the map of North Carolina, and start with me from the county of Stokes, where you have an abundant supply of coal and iron in immediate proximity ; you may go westward, bordering hard on the Virginia and thence the Tennessee line, till you reach the mountain, and from thence bearing southward till you reach King a mountain, which continually calls to mind much of the heroism of the Revolution ; and from those named localities till you run into the Deep river valley, and you will have travelled over deposits of iron, so abundant, of such superior quality that not a similar scope of the country on the earth can surpass it. Forming, as it were a great reserve treasure of up to nature's storehouse waiting for the trained hand of the enterprising utilitarian to quietly unlock and use, to the benefit and wealth of mankind. I cannot contemplate the vastness and value of these mines of wealth and grandeur of my native State without being greatly moved and longing to see the day when a better directed industry and wiser political economy shall with fostering policy, call them forth, and bid North Carolina be in practical fact what she is by nature designed, one of the best and most extensive iron producing countries in the world. Once developed, the mines will sustain themselves, and the southern forge and rolling-mill, will sustain and supply meet the southern demand, and every car-wheel that traverses their soil, bearing the products of her soil, will wind their way over iron rails taken from the same soil without the aid of tariffs or protection; and thus, indeed, may we talk of and about southern independence.

It has long been a growing conviction on the part of the Government, that a national foundery should be established, not only for the certain supply of a better article of certain kinds of fabrics of iron for naval use, and now to be more safe against the effect of combining, the various descriptions of iron, and other kindred metallicores. This important subject at once attracted the attention of the present able Secretary of War, upon his installment into office, and in his first annual report he spoke of and recommended the subject, in the following earnest and emphatic manner :

"The importance to the public service of establishing a national foundery has been so often brought to the attention of Congress by my predecessors, that nothing but a conviction of its great consequence to the public and private interests of the whole country encourage me to mention it again.

"A well managed national foundery would very speedily develop and establish facts, which would add immensely to our national wealth. It is certainly to be credited that, with the infinite variety of iron ore, and their boundless extent in the United States, we should not have yet discovered a mine capable of making the very best gun, if such be discovered, that there are no means by which the public service can be benefited by it ; but such is the fact.

A national foundery would serve as a great laboratory at which the quality, and value of metals throughout the whole Confederacy would be tested and fixed. Every variety of iron, with its special adaption to particular uses, would, in a few years, be familiarly known in the country and individual enterprise would be saved, in experiments, many times the amount which the works would cost ; whilst a great national branch of industry might, by this means, receive a legitimate and efficient encouragement.

"There is but little doubt that many American iron ores are equal, at least, to those of Norway, and yet the national armories are driven by necessity to purchase from abroad the Norwegian iron for the manufacture of small arms. Choosing to have the best quality of iron, a national foundery would soon teach to improve the manufactured iron, and to would beard the mortification of bringing the iron from abroad, and the money, too, we have to pay for it.

"The cost of heavy guns would presently be diminished, and their quality would be, undoubtedly, very materially improved.

"It therefore appears to me that every consideration of sound policy and economy demands the establishment of a national foundery, which I accordingly respectfully recommend."

So soon as I discovered that this subject was again recommended to the attention of Congress, I at once felt convinced that North Carolina was the State, and the Deep river valley the locality, which offered the best facilities for erecting such a work ; and when my colleague, [Mr. BRANCH,] at the last session, offered a bill to this effect, I was in hopes the effort would more steadily forward, and that the claims of North Carolina, and the facilities she offered on this subject, would be well considered, and, if well sustained, as I believe they can be conceded and allowed. But, like most of measures which are of a truly practical and fair bearing for a southern State, the facilities can be moved by the regular waters of the

invade the establishment without marching to and a considerable journey ; which is about as high security as can be obtained. The locality I claim to be a good one.

Thirdly, climate, and means of subsisting a population of mechanics and workmen.—In this respect the Deep river valley certainly possesses superior advantages. It is forms, indeed, the dividing line between what are peculiarly southern and northern products. Extending south from the locality of the mines, you traverse the cotton and rice regions where those staples are produced for export to all parts of the world ; while moving towards the north and west from these mineral deposits, you are greeted with the wheat, corn, and other vegetable-producing region, adorned with beautiful scenery. And besides this, the climate itself is excellent, being elevated and healthy, abounding in fresh water springs of the purest quality. No region is more healthy than that of which I am now speaking.

There is also an abundant supply of oak and timber, either suitable for such purposes as will be needed about a national foundery, within convenient reach. There are also limestone and other suitable materials for practical use in a foundery in abundant supply, in the country round about. Then, may I not ask, what more is needful for supplying all the demands requisite for a national foundery? Can as much as I have here attempted to state, be said of any other named locality? It is true, other places may possess some particular articles of material to an equal, and perhaps greater, degree than is to be found in the Deep river valley ; but then, can all the materials be found in the same extent, variety, and quality ! The better informed, I assure the counsel, that the same varieties of iron ore, with the same supply of coal, with all the other materials I have enumerated, suitable for making every description of iron fabrics for Government or national use, are yet to be found in such connection in any one place. And I then ask the question, why will not the Government pay proper deference to a place so suitable and favored by nature, in selecting its site for a national foundery ! Why shall not North Carolina number within her borders some one of the Government structures, she who offers at least enough, if not more, than any other, derive, to compensate the thing bestowed, some of the advantage of trade and commerce of her citizens, resulting from increased expenditures ! This matter considered would not be proper if North Carolina did not offer equal facilities for the erection of a national foundery to any other State or locality ; but when it is so clearly demonstrated that she does, I feel warranted to claim for her the full benefit of an equality in the distribution of the public patronage ; and I invoke the voice of every Representative who has in this Capitol to unite with me in the demand. I truly regret that the opportunity has not been favorable for my colleagues to urge the bill introduced at the last session, or that better progress could not have been made. But there is yet time and opportunity, and let the future improve it. It is shall be my province to wield a voice in the deliberations which will finally dispose of this question, I shall be found earnest in insisting upon both the advantage and rights of North Carolina to the premises. I shall keep my eye steadily upon the movements of things in their behalf ; and shall not fail to urge for my native State all that is so justly due from this Government to her long-neglected resources, so far as this measure can but right and power to aid.

In fact, I wish to see a new era open up in the South generally. I wish to see less fustian and parade of new-fledged and broken-down politicians, in the shape of so-called southern commercial conventions, and something more practical and available set forward. Here is better, as well as more productive, work before us than the mere echoing of high-sounding resolutions, without a feasible feature in them, or a possible benefit in their provisions, to the South or anybody else, beyond the fancy of those who pass them. I wish to see our rivers and mountains brought into actual use. I wish to see our streams studded with mills, whose nameless spindles and looms shall echo back an eternal response to their ever and onward flowing current. I wish to see the blast of the furnace, and hear the stroke of the forge, denting the fact that commerce and manufacture are in ripe development. I wish to see the mountains of the South, pregnant with their mines of wealth, disgorging their hidden treasures, and furnishing to our prosperity as certain tribute as they afford delightful retreats and abodes to our sickly invalids. In short, I wish to roof the South, in fact, what nature has eminently designed her to be, a commercial and manufacturing, as well as an agricultural people. We can boast most of our greatness, because we will then be great and prosperous.

JOHN HUNTER'S COFFIN.—The remains of the great John Hunter were discovered in the vaults of the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Field, England, on the 7th, after a search of two days, by Frank T. Buckland, assistant surgeon 2d Life Guards, son of the late Dean of Westminster. The coffin was in No. 3 vault, under the Church, at the bottom of many others, being in fact almost the last one of the last to be removed. It is indeed preservation, the black upon it only having decomposed in places. The brass plate upon the coffin, having been originally engraved. The coat of arms is unimpaired, and the inscription silver and distinct. It runs as follows :—John Hunter Esq., died October 16, 1793, aged 64."

It is a singular fact that the watch which was carried by Mr. Thurston the unfortunate balloonist, when he fell from the balloon near Adrian, Michigan, on the 14th of September, was not broken by the fall of more than half a mile to the earth. Both the crystal and works were uninjured. It continued to go until it is run down—twenty-four hours after.

☞ Some evidence has lately been discovered in England showing that in early life Napoleon the Great offered his services as a volunteer to the commander of the English Navy in the Mediterranean, but were not accepted because of his apparent want of capacity.