

Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

From the Spirit of the Times.

Sketch of Mr. Randolph's First Speech On the Report of the Committee of Foreign Relations.

The order of the day being called for, the speaker observed, that the gentleman from Virginia on the right of the chair was entitled to the floor.

Mr. Randolph said that if any other gentleman had any observations to make on the question, he would feel obliged to him if he would offer them; as he was much exhausted by the fatigues of the morning, and would be glad of a little time to recruit his wasted strength and spirits.—After a considerable pause, no gentleman having manifested a disposition to speak,

Mr. Randolph rose. He expressed his sense of the motive which had induced the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) to move the adjournment yesterday, & of the politeness of the house in granting it; at the same time declaring that in point of fact, he had little cause to be thankful for the hour, well intended as he knew it to have been, since he felt himself even less capable of proceeding with his argument, than he had been on the preceding day.

It was a question, as it had been presented to the house, of PEACE or WAR. In that light it had been argued; in no other light could he consider it, after the declarations made by members of the committee of Foreign Relations. Without intending any disrespect to the Chair, he must be permitted to say, that if the decision yesterday was correct, that it was not in order to advance any arguments against the resolution, drawn from topics before other committees of the House.—The whole debate, say, the report itself on which they were acting, was disorderly; since the increase of the military force was a subject at that time of agitation by the select committee raised by that branch of the President's message, but it was impossible that the discussion of a question so broad as the wide ocean of foreign concerns—involving every consideration of interest, of right, of happiness and safety at home—touching, in every point, all that was dear to Freedom—"the lives, their families, and their sacred honour"—could be tied down by the narrow rules of technical routine. The committee of Foreign Relations had indeed decided that the subject of arming the militia (which he had pressed upon them as indispensable to the public security) did not come within the scope of their authority. On what ground, he had been and still was unable to see, they had felt themselves authorized (when that subject was before another committee) to recommend the raising of standing arms, with a view (as had been declared) of conquest, of aggrandizement, of ambition, of a war foreign to the best interests of this country, to the interests of humanity itself.

He knew not how gentlemen, calling themselves republicans, could advocate such a war. What was their doctrine in 1798-9, when the command of the army, that highest of all possible trusts in any government, he the form what it may—was reposed in the bosom of the father of his country!—the sanctuary of a nation's love—the only hope that never came in vain! When other worthies of the revolution—Hamilton, Pinkney and the younger Washington, men of tried patriotism, of approved conduct & valour, of untarnished honor, held subordinate command under him. Republicans were then unwilling to trust a standing army, even to his hands who had given proof that he was above all human temptation.—Where now is the revolutionary hero to whom you are to confide this sacred trust?—to whom you will confide the charge of leading the flower of our youth to the heights of Abraham? Will you find him in the person of an ACQUITTED FELON? What! when you were unwilling to vote an army where such men as had been named held high command; when Washington himself was at the head!—did you then shew such reluctance, feel such scruples; and are you now nothing loth, fearless of every consequence? Will you say that your provocations were less then than now? When your direct commerce was interdicted, your ambassadors hooted with derision from the French Court—tribute demanded—actual war waged upon you.

Those who opposed the army then, were indeed denounced as the partizans of France; as the same men—some of them at least—are now held up as the advocates of England: those firm undeviating republicans, who then dared, and now dare, to cling to the ark of the constitution, to defend it even at the expense of their fame, rather than surrender themselves to the wild projects of mad ambition. There was a fatality attending plenitude of power. Soon or late, some mania seizes upon its possessors—they fall from the dizzy height through the giddiness of their own heads. Like a vast estate, heaped up by the labour & industry of one man, which seldom survives the third generation—Power gained by patient assiduity, by a faithful and regular discharge of its attendant duties, soon gets above its own origin. Intoxicated with their own greatness the federal party fell. Will not the same causes produce the same effects now as then? Sir, you may raise this army, you may build up this vast structure of patronage, this

mighty apparatus of favoritism; but—lay not the flatteringunction to your souls!—you will never live to enjoy the succession. You sign your political death-warrant.

Mr. R. here adverted to the provocation to hostilities from shutting up the Mississippi by Spain in 1803—but more fully to the conduct of the House in 1805-6, under the strongest of all imaginable provocations to war—the actual invasion of our country. He read various passages from the President's publick message of December 3, 1806.

"Our coasts have been infested and our harbours watched by private armed vessels; some with illegal commissions, others with those of legal form, but committing acts beyond the authority of their commissions." [These Mr. R. stated to have been Spanish and French Corsairs, fitted out chiefly in the western ports of Cuba—the English cruisers complained of in the same message, having regular commissions and carrying their prizes into port for adjudication.] "They have captured in the very entrance of our harbours, as well as on the high seas, not only the vessels of our friends coming to trade with us, but our own also. They have carried them off under pretence of legal adjudication, but not daring to approach a court of justice, they have plundered and sunk them by the way, or in obscure places, where no evidence could arise against them; maltreated the crews and abandoned them in the open sea, or on desert shores without food or covering."

"With Spain our negotiations for a settlement of differences have not had a satisfactory issue. Spoiliations during the former war, for which she had formally acknowledged herself responsible, have been refused to be compensated but on conditions affecting other claims" [this for French Spoiliations carried into Spanish ports] "in no wise connected with them. Yet the same practices are renewed in the present war, and are already of great amount. On the Mobile, our commerce passing through that river continues to be obstructed by arbitrary duties, & vexatious searches. Propositions for adjusting amicably the boundaries of Louisiana have not been acceded to. While however the right is unsettled, we have avoided changing the state of things, by taking new posts or strengthening ourselves in the disputed territories, in the hope that the other power would not, by a contrary conduct oblige us to meet their example, and engage conflicts of authority, the issue of which may not be easily controlled. But in this hope we have now reason to lessen our confidence. Inroads have been recently made into the territories of Orleans & the Mississippi." [Bourbon county—part of the state of Georgia—of the good old thirteen states!] "Our citizens have been seized and their property plundered, in the very parts of the former which had been actually delivered up by Spain, and that by the regular officers and soldiers of this government.—I have therefore found it necessary to give orders to our troops on that frontier, to be in readiness to protect our citizens, and repel by arms any similar aggressions in future."

Mr. R. said that on the 6th of December, (three days afterwards) a secret message was received from the President, which was referred to a committee of which it was his fate to be chairman. Its complexion might be gathered from the Report upon it, for the message itself is not inserted in the secret Journal, since ordered to be printed. He read the report.

"The committee have beheld, with just indignation, the hostile spirit manifested by the court of Madrid towards the government of the United States, in withholding the ratification of its convention with us, although signed by its own minister under the eye of his sovereign, unless with alterations of its terms, affecting claims of the United States, which, by the express conditions of the instrument itself, were reserved for future discussion; in piratical depredations upon our fair commerce; in obstructing the navigation of the Mobile; in refusing to come to any fair and amicable adjustment of the boundaries of Louisiana; and in a daring violation, by persons acting under the authority of Spain, and, no doubt, apprized of her sentiments and views of our undisputed limits, which she had solemnly recognized by treaty.

"To a government having interests distinct from those of its people, and disregarding their welfare, here is ample cause for a formal declaration of war, on the part of the United States; and such, did they obey the impulse of their feelings alone, is the course which the committee would not hesitate to recommend; but to a government identified with its citizens, too far removed from the powerful nations of the earth for its safety to be endangered by their hostility, peace must always be desirable, so long as it is compatible with the honor and interest of the community.

"Whilst the United States continue burthened with a debt which annually absorbs two thirds of their revenue, and duties upon imports constitute the only resource from which that revenue can be raised, without resorting to systems of taxation not more ruinous and oppressive than they are uncertain and precarious, the best interests of the union cry aloud for peace. When that debt shall have been discharged, and the resources of the nation thereby liberated, then may we rationally expect to raise, even in time of war, the supplies which our frugal institu-

tions require, without recurring to the hateful and destructive expedient of loans; then and not till then, may we bid defiance to the world. The present moment is peculiarly auspicious for this great and desirable work. Now, if ever the national debt is to be paid by such financial arrangements as will accelerate its extinction, by reaping the rich harvest of neutrality, and thus providing for that diminution of revenue which experience teaches us to expect on the general pacification of Europe. And the committee indulge a hope, that in the changed aspect of affairs in that quarter, Spain will find motives for a just fulfilment of her stipulations with us, and an amicable settlement of limits, upon terms not more beneficial to the United States than advantageous to herself; securing to her an ample barrier on the side of Mexico, and to the countries watered by the Mississippi, & to the eastward of it. But whilst the committee perceive, in the general uproar of Europe, a state of things peculiarly favorable to the peaceable pursuit of our best interests, they are neither insensible to the indignity which has been offered on the part of Spain, nor unwilling to repel similar outrage. On the subject of self defence, when the territory of the United States is insulted, there can be but one opinion whatever differences may exist on the question, whether that protection which a vessel finds in our harbours, shall be extended to her, by the nation in the Indian or Chinese seas? Under this impression the committee submit the following resolution: the annexed letter from the Secretary of War will explain why it is not more explicit.

"Resolved, That such number of troops (not exceeding) as the President of the United States shall deem sufficient to protect the southern frontiers of the United States, from Spanish inroad and insult, and to chastise the same, be immediately raised."

Mr. R. said that the peculiar situation of the frontier, at that time insulted, had alone induced the committee to recommend the raising of regular troops. It was too remote from the population of the country for the militia to act, in repelling and chastising Spanish incursion. New-Orleans, and its dependencies, were separated by a vast extent of wilderness from the settlements of the old United States; filled with a disloyal and turbulent people, alien to our institutions, language and manners, and disaffected towards our government. Little reliance could be placed upon them, and it was plain, that if "it was the intention of Spain to advance on our possessions until she should be repulsed by an opposing force," that force must be a regular army, unless we were disposed to abandon all the country south of Tennessee; that if "the protection of our citizens and the spirit and honour of our country required that force should be interposed," nothing remained but for the legislature to grant the only practicable means, or to shrink from the most sacred of all its duties—to abandon the soil and its inhabitants to the tender mercy of hostile invaders.

Yet this report, moderate as it was, had been deemed of too strong a character by the House. It was rejected;—and, at the motion of a gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. Bidwell) [who had since taken a great fancy also to Canada, and marched off thither, in advance of the Committee of Foreign Relations] "two millions of dollars were appropriated towards" (not in full of) "any extraordinary expense which might be incurred in the intercourse between the United States and foreign nations;" in other words, to buy off at Paris, Spanish aggressions at home.

Was this fact given in evidence of our impartiality towards the belligerents? that to the insults and injuries and actual invasion of one of them we opposed not bullets, but dollars; that to Spanish invasion we opposed money; whilst for British aggression on the high seas we had arms—offensive war. But Spain was then shielded, as well as instigated, by a greater Power. Hence our respect for her. Had we at that time acted as we ought to have done in defence of our rights, of the *natale solum* itself, we should (he felt confident) have avoided that series of insult, disgrace and injury, which had been poured out upon us in long unbroken succession. We would not then raise a small regular force for a country, where the militia could not act, to defend our own territory; now, we are willing to levy a great army, for great it must be, to accomplish the proposed object, for a war of conquest and ambition—and this too at the very entrance of the "Northern Hive" of the strongest part of the union.

An insinuation had fallen from the gentleman from Tennessee, (Mr. Grundy) that the late massacre of our Brethren on the Wabash had been instigated by the British government. Has the President given any such information? has the gentleman received any such, even informally, from any officer of this government? He had cause to think the contrary to be the fact; that such was not their opinion. This insinuation was of the gratest kind—a presumption the most rash—the most unjustifiable. Shew but good ground for it; he would give up the question at the threshold—he was ready to march to Canada. It was indeed well calculated to excite the feelings of the western people particularly, who were not quite so tenderly attached to our red brethren as some modern Philosophers; but it was destitute of any foundation, beyond mere sur-

mise and suspicion. What would be thought of, without any proof whatsoever, a man should rise in his place and tell us, that the massacre at Savannah, a massacre perpetrated by civilized men with French connivance in their ports, was excited by the French government? There was an easy and natural solution of the late transaction on the Wabash, in the well known character of the aboriginal savage of North America,—with- out resorting to any such mere conjectural estimate. He was sorry to say that for this signal calamity and disgrace, that House was in part at least, responsible. Scarcely after their table had been piled up with Indian treaties for which the appropriations had been voted as a matter of course, without examination. Advantage had been taken of the spirit of the Indians, broken by the war which ended in the treaty of Grenville. Under the ascendancy then acquired over them, they had been pent up by a subsequent treaties into nooks, straitened in their quarters by a blind cupidity, seeking to extinguish their title to immense wildernesses—for which (possessing, as we do already, more land than we can sell, or use) we shall not have occasion, for half a century to come. It was our own thirst for territory, our own want of moderation, that had driven these sons of nature to desperation, of which we felt the effects.

Mr. Randolph although not personally acquainted with the late col. Daviess, felt, he was persuaded, as deep and various a grief for his loss as the gentleman from Tennessee himself. He knew him only through the representation of a friend of the deceased (Mr. Rowan) sometime member of that House: a man, who, for native force of intellect, manliness of character, and high sense of Honour, was not inferior to any that had ever sat there. With him he sympathized in the severest calamity that could befall a man of his cast of character. Would to God! they were both then on the floor. From his personal knowledge of the one, he felt confident that he would have his support—and he believed, judging of him from the representation of their common friend) of the other also.

He could but smile at the liberality of the gentleman, in giving Canada to New York, in order to strengthen the Northern balance of Power, while at the same time he forwarded her that the western scale must preponderate. Mr. R. said he could almost fancy that he saw the Capitol in motion towards the falls of Ohio—after a short sojourn taking its flight to the Mississippi, and finally alighting on Darien; which, when the gentleman's dreams are realized, will be a most eligible seat of government for the new Republic (or empire) of the two Americas! But it seemed that in 1803 we talked and acted foolishly, and give some colour of consistency to that folly, we must now commit a greater. Really he could not conceive of a weaker reason offered in support of a present measure, than the justification of a former folly. He hoped we should act a wiser part, take warning by our follies, since we had become sensible of them, and resolve to talk and act foolishly no more. It was indeed high time to give over such preposterous language and proceedings.

This war of conquest, a war for the acquisition of territory and subjects, is to be a new commentary on the doctrine that republics are destitute of ambition—that they are addicted to peace, wedded to the happiness and safety of the great body of their people. But it seems this is to be a holiday campaign—there is to be no expense of blood, or treasure, on our part—Canada is to conquer herself—she is to be subdued by the principles of fraternity. The people of that country are first to be subdued from their allegiance, and converted into traitors as preparatory to the making them good citizens. Although he must acknowledge that some of our flaming patriots were thus manufactured, he did not think the process would hold good with a whole community. It was a dangerous experiment. We were to succeed in the French mode by the system of fraternization—all is French!—but how dreadfully it might be retorted on the southern & western slave-holding states. He detested this subordination of treason—No! we must have them, let them fall by the valour of our arms, by fair legitimate conquest; not become the victims of treacherous seduction.

He was not surprised at the war spirit which was manifesting itself in gentlemen from the south. In the year 1805-6, in a struggle for the carrying trade of belligerent-colonial-produce, this country had been most unwisely brought into collision with the great powers of Europe. By a series of most impolitic & ruinous measures, utterly incomprehensible to every rational, sober-minded man, the southern planters, by their own votes, had succeeded in knocking down the price of cotton to seven cents, & of tobacco (a few choice crops excepted) to nothing—and in raising the price of blankets (of which a few would not be amiss in a Canadian campaign) coarse woollens, & every article of first necessity, 3 or 4 hundred per cent. And that by our own acts we have brought ourselves into this unprecedented condition, we must get out of it in any way, but by an acknowledgment of our own want of wisdom and forecast. But is war the true remedy? Who will profit by it?—Speculators—a few lucky merchants, who draw prizes in the lottery—commissaries and contractors.—Who must suffer by it? The People. It is their blood, their taxes, that must flow to support it. (To be Continued)