

THE RALEIGH MINERVA.

[THREE DOLLARS PER YEAR.]

RALEIGH, N. C.—PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY LUCAS AND A. H. BOYLAN.

[ON \$2.50 CENTS IN ADVANCE.]

Vol. 16.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1812.

No. 828.

Congress of the U. States.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3.

Mr. SHEFFY's Speech on the Bill for raising an additional military force of 25,000 men.

Mr. SPEAKER.—It was not my intention to have disturbed the tranquility with which this measure has hitherto progressed through the House; but considering the deep interest which this country has at stake, and which is so intimately connected with the present question, I have thought it my duty to state the reasons which influence my vote. I feel the greater solicitude to do so because, as will have been perceived in the several stages of the bill under consideration, I differ essentially with a great majority of the representatives of the people of the United States. They suppose that this course is indispensable to maintain the rights and honor of the country, and that the means which they are about to provide by this bill, are calculated to attain the ends in view; while I conceive their projects pregnant with every mischief—witness the ruin of our liberties. In the expression of this opinion, let me not be understood as disposed in any degree to impeach the purity of their motives. I have no doubt that every member acts under the high sense of duty which he owes to his country, and which the occasion is particularly calculated to inspire. While I make this sincere and unsophisticated declaration, I hope a corresponding indulgence and liberality will be extended to me.

I had hoped if it was seriously intended to change the state of this nation, and to barter the blessings of peace, which we have enjoyed for so many years, for the evils and calamities of war, that the question would have been propounded to us in a direct and unequivocal shape—that we should have been called upon to determine whether the injuries of which we justly complain, are to be redressed by the employment of the physical force of the country. If such had been the explicit determination of a majority—much as I deplore the evils which must inevitably attend a state of war, I should have cordially united with them in calling forth our energies and providing the means calculated to terminate it speedily and successfully. I should have done so under the guidance of the same motives which actuate me in the opposition which I make to the bill on your table. Viewing war as attended with every evil which ambition, corruption, and the indulgence of the malignant passions can give birth to—I should have been inclined to have voted to terminate its existence as soon as an honorable peace could be secured—that the body politic might not be wholly corrupted by protracting the disease, but restored to its healthful state with as little delay as possible. It has, however, pleased those who direct the affairs of this nation in this House, to pursue a different course. Instead of designating the object for the attainment of which the force provided by the bill under consideration is to be employed—so far as it respects any declaration of this House, that is still unascertained; so that we are reduced to the necessity of opposing the grant of the means, because we are opposed to the object to which they are probably to be applied. Through this bill, we must perceive the ulterior intention of the majority; which as avowed is nothing more or less than an offensive war against Great Britain.

On a question of so much moment to the country, whose peace and happiness is so directly involved, I had expected that a full, systematic and statesmanlike development would have been made by some friend of this measure—not only of the causes of complaint which we have against G. Britain, and the injuries which we have received at her hands; but of the objects of the war about to be undertaken, and the means and probabilities of securing them. There is a self-evident distinction between the causes and the objects of war. The one may exist without the other. And there may be both good causes and substantial objects, and yet it would be the grossest folly to precipitate the nation into a war, unless a full reflection, aided by all the wisdom and experience we could collect, there appeared a fair prospect, that after the waste of our blood and treasure, we could either realise the object in controversy, or obtain some substantial equivalent. We had therefore right to expect, to have had placed before us, a view of this subject, calculated to convince us that we were not foregoing the blessings of peace without a rational object, or without the most distant prospect of making the war any thing but a curse to this nation. But instead of such a course which the occasion seemed naturally to require, (if our reason is to have any share in the decision,) nothing has been presented to us but highly colored statements of the injustice which has been measured out to us by Great Britain. The many injuries which we have received at her hands, have been detailed, and repeated by almost every one who has spoken in favor of this bill; but there they have stopped.

On this part of the subject (the only part which gentlemen have been pleased to touch) there is very little difference between us. I have no difficulty in believing, that ever since the year 1806, not only Great Britain, but France also, have given us real causes of war, which, according to the former usages of nations, is justified whenever an indignity is offered, or a national right violated. I am not one of those, therefore, who suppose that Great Britain has done us no essential injury. Far from it! I am fully sensible of the indignities offered to us, and the repeated violations of our rights as a neutral nation on her part; but this is

not enough for me. I must be persuaded that there is a rational hope that war will remedy the evil which we experience, and that it does not bring with it others much more to be dreaded than that under which we labor. Were these things as little questionable, as the course of the British government has been in just, I should have no hesitation in uniting my efforts to obtain justice by force.

So far am I from admitting that the British government is justified in adopting her order in council (the great cause of complaint), that I deny both their premises and conclusion. The principle upon which they purport to be founded, is the right which G. Britain claims to retaliate upon her enemy the evils meditated against her by the decree of Berlin &c. I do most explicitly deny the doctrine, that a belligerent can justifiably annihilate the unquestionable right of a neutral, because it may be calculated to distress an enemy, or seem retaliatory of some unjust regulation adopted by him. It is neither justified by reason or by any principle of public law. Nor do I believe G. Britain more correct in her conclusion, "that the orders in council in their effect would retaliate upon her enemy the evils meditated against her by him;" on the contrary, it seems to me that they had a direct opposite tendency. The most important feature in the French Berlin decree, was that which was intended to exclude from France & the countries under her control and influence, British produce and manufactures (the blockading part being merely nominal). It would be either rigorously executed; or it would not. If it could not be executed, as was then generally believed, the American flag afforded the best means of introducing the articles interdicted to the continent; so that the enterprise of our citizens, seconded by the habits and wants of the people who had been accustomed to this commerce, would have reduced the decree to a mere shadow. Should, however, the vigor of the French government be competent to effect the anti-commercial system and execute the Berlin decree, so as to exclude British products and manufactures; there then remained no prospect that France could be distressed by the destruction of the remaining commerce with her; left to us. We furnished her with none of the great necessities of life. Our principal trade was in the colonial products, which, by the Berlin decree, and subsequent municipal regulations, were totally excluded, with a view to encourage their growth or substitutes in her own dominions. So that the order in council, as to the retaliatory object, could have very little, if any practical effect.

men, much has been said in the course of this debate. The distresses of fifty thousand American citizens on board the British ships of war, have been described in feeling language, and painted in glowing colours; particularly by an honorable member from Kentucky (Mr. Johnston.) With out believing that the actual number approaches that supposed, I feel for our unfortunate countrymen in that situation, and readily admit that there is cause of complaint against G. Britain arising from that source. But on this subject it is important to view the question on both sides, to enable us to ascertain whether we are not claiming more than we can ever ever rationally expect to obtain. Our native citizens, or those who were members of this community at the close of the revolutionary war, are unquestionably entitled to exemption from impressment. But we claim it for every person who shall sail under our flag—at least for those who have been naturalized since the period mentioned. I confess I am not disposed to enter into a war for the security on the high seas of the latter class. I think we do enough (more than any other government on earth does) when we place those persons upon a perfect equality; as it respects the enjoyment of every right within our territorial jurisdiction. So far no other nation has cause to complain, because we do not interfere with any right claimed by them; either sanctioned by public law, or of a questionable character. But further we cannot go, without interfering with the claims of other sovereign powers; sanctioned by long practice and acquiescence. Allegiance is due from every person in a social state to some government. In the dark ages of superstition and despotism, it was claimed as due by divine right; but since the dawn of civil liberty, it has been considered as a duty growing out of an implied compact between the governors and governed, and indissoluble like other compacts, without the mutual assent of the contracting parties. On this principle is founded the doctrine of perpetual allegiance, recognised throughout Europe; and the British pretensions, by which they reclaim their subjects found on board our merchant vessels; when they allege they are not entitled to protection, no more than enemy's property and contraband goods, for which they have an unquestionable right to search. Thus while they claim the right of impressing their own subjects only; the similarity of manners and language, and the abuses of power by British officers, causes the impressment of many of our native citizens.

In considering this part of the subject, I deem it unnecessary to investigate the justice of the doctrine for which G. Britain contends, or how far it corresponds with the abstract "right of man;" I speak of the fact. It is enough for us to know that these pretensions exist; have long existed, and will not be abandoned. We must be conscious that we cannot impose our principles on other nations, with whom it is our interest to cultivate a good understanding; but that on every subject where our rights or pretensions may conflict, both parties must cherish a spirit of conciliation & concession,

as the only mode by which we can be brought together to prevent collision from which neither can derive any substantial benefit. The question is not what we want, but what under all circumstances it is possible we can get. I have, therefore, long since thought that our government ought to abandon the high pretensions of affording security to every person (even aliens) who should sail under our flag; and propose some arrangement to G. Britain, which, while it gave protection to our own native citizen, would prevent our merchants from employing any other during the present war. If these stipulations were reciprocal, every substantial object would be answered. Should Great Britain refuse an overture so manifestly just, it would afford additional cause of complaint, and then we might indulge in the better invectives which have been uttered against her.

From what I have said it will be apparent that I do not oppose this measure on the ground that there is ample cause of war against Great Britain. The reverse is explicitly admitted. But shall the blood and treasure of this nation be lavished against the orders in council, as so much paper—or are we contending for some substantial good, which we should otherwise enjoy, and of which their operation deprives us. I presume there is scarcely a man in this country however infected he may be with the war mania, who could act so madly, as to propose a warfare to procure the mere nominal repeal of the orders in council. When it was evident, it would be unattended with a single practical benefit. No! the nominal repeal of the orders in council is not your object. It is the substantial commercial benefit which you conceive will follow that act, that forms the essence of the controversy. The unmolested commerce to France and her dependencies is the boon for which we are going to war. This is the real object, disguise it as you will. And it is not the commerce which we formerly enjoyed (as gentlemen would seem to suppose) which is in controversy. Your export commerce to France now consists of our own products only, as appears by the letter of the French minister on your table. I say our own products, because I suppose the privilege which has been graciously extended to us, of exporting other articles in certain cases, under French licenses, will scarcely be insisted on as being any thing else but an indignity. The municipal regulations which have been substituted for the Berlin decree, so far as it respects the practical effect, have destroyed by far the most profitable and important branch of our trade to the French empire—which consisted in the product and manufactures of other countries. The principal exports were our wool and exporting to the West Indies our flour, beef, pork, live stock, lumber, &c. for which they received in return the products of those islands. The surplus beyond the consumption of this country, was exported to the continent of Europe for which we received in return French wines, brandies, silks, German linens and bills on London.

Of so much more importance, was this export trade to us, than that of our own products, that in 1807, before the British orders in council existed, the domestic exports to France, (including Belgium) amounted to about two millions seven hundred thousand dollars only—while the amount of exports to the same country of foreign manufactures and products (chiefly colonial) was nearly ten millions. In the same year the whole of our domestic exports to every part of the world, amounted to about forty eight millions and a half; of which the amount I have stated, was exported to France, and about twenty eight millions to Great Britain and her possessions and dependencies, in the four quarters of the globe. Since that time she has acquired the French West Indies, the Isles of France and Bourbon in the Indian Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope, the Dutch possessions in Asia and America. To these countries in 1807, while under their former dependence, the exports of domestic products from the U. States, amounted to upwards of four millions of dollars, so that estimating our exports to G. Britain and her present possessions and dependencies, as they stood in 1807, the amount would be about thirty-two millions; about two thirds of the whole amount of our domestic exports to every part of the world. Thus while we are about engaging in a war for commerce, we abandon the greater, absolutely; and contend for the lesser. We relinquish our commerce with Great Britain and her possessions at the threshold (for during hostilities I presume we shall have none) and go to war for what we can get, of the commerce of France, Italy, Holland, Hamburg and the Hanse Towns; I leave Spain and Portugal and their American provinces out of the question, as the fate of those countries hangs in suspense.

But this is not all. We may expect to see, and the day is not distant, when the dominions of France shall not afford us a market for a single article, but all commerce with her shall either be interdicted by her own government or abandoned by our merchants as unworthy their pursuit. Ever since the date of the Berlin decree and the position of the Prussian monarchy, those who gave themselves the trouble to think—and could think, saw that a great and radical change in the state of Europe was intended by the imperial conqueror, who wielded the destinies of the continent. Whatever the ultimate object might be, it was early perceivable—that that mutual dependence which exists between commercial states, so far as it respected the French empire, was about to be dissolved, and that it was to be dependant no longer upon foreign nations for any supplies. To this every regulation (extra-territorial or municipal) adopted by its government has kept a steady eye. They

are now staring you full in the face. You see you trade in the colonial products, formerly the most profitable branch of our foreign commerce, to ally annihilated. The consumption of your tobacco, a great staple of the middle states, reduced to one fifteenth of the whole quantity consumed in France—and that monopolized by the French government who pays your merchants what its rapacity dictates. You see your cotton, once the great and profitable staple of the south, subjected to such enormous import duties—as almost amount to a prohibition for the avowed purpose of encouraging the culture of that article in Italy and the south of France—your flour and provisions find no market there, because she has a surplus of her own production. The other articles in which we are permitted to trade are so inconsiderable in value that they form no serious item in the account. Besides all this—you see your merchants, after having submitted to the injustice of French regulations, and the rapacity of French officers—compelled to invest the little remnants of the proceeds of their cargoes in French silks, wines, and brandies, in regulated proportions. Nay this detail ought to convince us—that a commerce thus shackled and limited, is not worthy the crusade which is meditated—and that the prospect as to its future value is still more gloomy. I believe were the orders in council repealed to-morrow—our commerce to France would not be worth two millions, and circumscribed as it already is, as long as the anti-commercial system continues—we may expect, that it will daily diminish.

But we have been told that all calculations, as to objects, means or consequences, are to be laid out of the question, as sound and low minded. That feeling our country's rights violated and her honor assailed—we ought to march heedlessly on to seek redress at every hazard. I confess I was astonished to hear such a course recommended. In the most unimportant concerns of life, a prudent man calls to his aid his best reason and deliberate judgment. But it seems in the great concerns of the nation—where its peace is at stake and its future destiny hazarded, we must close our eyes, set all prudence at defiance, and now boldly on to our object and not disgrace ourselves by consulting the lessons of wisdom and experience which lie in our way. Sir, this nation's honor is the prosperity and happiness of the people. I cannot consent to purchase national misery, even should it be accompanied with what gentlemen call national honor. The abstract notions of honor which regulate the conduct of individuals and which are valuable in private life, ought not to control the affairs of nations—otherwise we might wage perpetual war. In the whole history of our government, prudence has been considered as essential for regulating our measures, particularly those which affect foreign nations. We have not suffered ourselves to be led away by our feelings, but were governed by the very calculations which gentlemen now affect so much to despise. If we had not, we should have waged a Quixotic war long since against France. Her decrees were executed with the utmost severity upon our commerce for several years—to which has been superadded every indignity and insult to which a nation can be subjected; yet has it ever entered into the imagination of any one—that our honor required we should avenge ourselves on the imperial wrong doer by carrying war into his own dominions? No! It would be considered as a mad and hopeless attempt. You have been in the habit of paying tribute (considered as a badge of dependence) to the Dey of Algiers and other Barbary powers, for the express purpose of securing the property of your merchants from capture and your citizens from slavery, when engaged in a commerce, to which you have the most unquestionable title. You have lately entered into a compact (for so you will call it) with the Emperor of France, by which it was stipulated, that in consideration of his permission to us, to trade to England (a right which we held independent of his consent) we would cause our rights to be respected by her. Why were all these things suffered and done? Where was this honor that is now goading us on to a war with Great Britain? Why was war the only balsam to heal our injured honor, not resorted to? There is but one answer that I can give consistent with the respect I owe to the government. Prudence forbade it. War was not calculated to cure the evil which affected us, but to make it worse. I think so now. Can the waste of our blood and treasure heal the wounds which the nation's fenced honor may have received? Are we to draw upon us all the miseries that attend war, and all the dangers with which it is surrounded, without any practical good in prospect—when perhaps at the end of seven years we shall be compelled to sit down and acquiesce under the system against which the war is waged—merely to have it to say, that we acted like men of spirit?

Sir, I fear we have not been sufficiently attentive to the progress of events which have passed before our eyes—events which have effected a radical change in the aspect of the civilized world. We have attributed the injuries and indignities which we have experienced, to causes distinct from the true ones—we have supposed that to the abstract and individual injustice of the men who are the rulers of Great Britain and France, was to be traced all our evils; when in fact that injustice was the inevitable result of existing circumstances, and when the true sources lay much deeper. The present state of the European world, is the primary cause from which these principles that have so seriously affected our commerce have received their origin. And to me it appears vain