

THE RALEIGH MINERVA.

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

[HALF OF WHICH IN ADVANCE.]

Vol. 17.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1813.

No. 880.

Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Friday, January 29.

FOREIGN RELATIONS.

Mr. GRUNDY, from the Committee of Foreign Relations, made the following report:

The Committee to whom was referred so much of the President's Message, of the 4th day of November last, as relates to our Foreign Affairs, REPORT—

That in presenting to the house at this time a view of our relations with Great Britain it is deemed unnecessary to recite the causes which produced the war. The wrongs which the U. States had received from that power, for a long series of years, had already been laid before the public, and need not again be enumerated; they were too deeply felt to have been forgotten, although they may be forgiven by the American people. The U. States having engaged in the war for the sole purpose of vindicating their rights and honor, that motive alone should animate them to its close.—It becomes a free and virtuous people to give an useful example to the world. It is the duty of a representative government to render a faithful account of its conduct to its constituents. A just sensibility to great and unprovoked wrongs and indignities will justify an appeal to arms, an honorable reparation should restore the blessings of peace; every step which they take should be guided by a sacred regard to principle.

To form a correct estimate of the duties which the United States have to perform, it is necessary to take a view of the communications which have passed between the Executive of the U. States and the British government since the declaration of war.—Such a view, the committee is persuaded will show distinctly the existing ground of controversy between the two nations, and the indispensable obligation on the U. States to maintain it.

Your committee has seen with much satisfaction that at the moment of the declaration of war, the attention of the Executive was engaged in an effort to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination. As early as the 26th of June last, the charge des affaires of the U. States at London was instructed to propose to the British government an armistice, to take immediate effect, on conditions which it is believed the impartial world will consider safe, honorable and advantageous to Great Britain. They were few in number and limited to positive wrongs daily practised. That the orders in council should be repealed, and that our flag should protect our seamen, were the only indispensable conditions insisted on. Other wrongs, however great, were postponed for amicable negotiation. As an inducement to the British government to forbear these wrongs, it was proposed to repeal the non-importation law and to prohibit the employment of British seamen, in the public and private vessels of the United States. Particular care was taken that these propositions should be made in a form as conciliatory as they were amicable in substance.

Your committee cannot avoid expressing its astonishment at the manner in which they were received. It was not sufficient to reject the proposed armistice; terms of peculiar reproach and insult were adopted to make the rejection offensive.

It happened that almost on the same day in which the United States, after having been worn out with accumulated wrongs, had resorted to the last and only remaining honorable alternative in support of their rights, the British government had repealed, conditionally, its orders in council. That measure was unexpected, because every application for it had failed, although repeated to the very moment it was decided on. Conditional as the repeal was, it was admitted to have removed a great obstacle to accommodation.

The other only remained:—the practice of impressment. It was proposed to the British government to open an amicable negotiation to provide a substitute to it, which should be considered an ample equivalent. The substitute proposed was defined, and of a character so comprehensive as to have removed, as was presumed, every possible objection to an accommodation. The proposition before made to exclude British seamen from our service was enlarged, so as to comprehend all native British subjects not already naturalized or entitled to naturalization under the laws of the U. States. This was likewise rejected.

Your committee have sought with anxiety some proof of a disposition in the British government to accommodate on any fair condition the important difference between the two nations, relative to impressment, but they have sought in vain; none is to be found either in the communications of the British minister to the American charge des affaires at London, or in those of the commander of the British naval forces at Halifax, made by order of his government to the Department of State.—They have seen with regret that although Lord Castlereagh professed a willingness in his government to receive and discuss amicably any proposition having in view either to check abuse in the practice of impressment, or to provide a substitute to it, he not only declined entering into a negotiation for the purpose, but discountenanced the expectation that any substitute could be proposed which his government would accept. It merits notice also, though it ceased to be a cause of surprise, that in the communication of Admiral Warren to the Department of State the subject of impressment was not even alluded to.

Had the Executive consented to an armistice on the repeal of the orders in council, without a sa-

tisfactory provision against impressment, or a clear and distinct understanding with the British government to the effect, in some mode entitled to confidence, your committee would not have hesitated to disapprove it.

The impressment of our seamen being deservedly considered a principal cause of the war, the war ought to be prosecuted until that cause was removed. To appeal to arms in defence of a right and to lay them down without securing it, on a satisfactory evidence of a good disposition in the opposite party to secure it, would be considered in no other light than a relinquishment of it. To attempt to negotiate afterwards, for the security of such rights, in the expectation that any of the arguments, which have been urged before the declaration of war and been rejected, would have more weight, after that experiment had been made in vain, would be an act of folly which would not fail to expose us to the scorn and derision of the British nation and of the world.

On a full view, therefore, of the conduct of the Executive, in its transactions with the British government since the declaration of war, the committee consider it their duty to express their entire approbation of it. They perceive in it a firm resolution to support the rights and honor of their country, with a sincere and commendable disposition to promote peace, on such just and honorable conditions as the United States may with safety accept.

It remains therefore for the United States to take their final attitude with Great Britain and to maintain it with consistency, and with unshaken firmness and constancy.

The manner in which the friendly advances and liberal propositions of the Executive have been received by the British government has in a great measure extinguished the hope of amicable accommodation. It is, however, possible, that the British government, after instructing Admiral Warren to communicate to the Department of State the repeal of the orders in council, may have declined the arrangement proposed by Mr. Russell in the expectation that that measure would have been satisfactory to the United States. Be this as it may, your committee consider it the duty of this House to explain to its constituents the remaining cause of controversy, the precise nature of that cause, and the high obligation which it imposes.

From what has been stated, it appears that however great the sensibility to other wrongs, the impressment of our seamen, was that alone which prevented an armistice, and in all probability an accommodation. Had that great interest been arranged in a satisfactory manner, the President was willing to rely on the intrinsic justice of other claims, and the amicable spirit in which the negotiation would have been entered into, for satisfaction in their favor. G. B. claims a right to impress her own seamen and to exercise it in American vessels. In the practice British cruizers impress American citizens, and from the nature of things, it is impossible that that abuse should not be carried to great extent. A subaltern or any other officer of the British navy ought not to be the violator in such a case. The liberty and lives of American citizens ought not to depend on the will of such a party.

The British government has insisted that every American citizen should carry with him the evidence of his citizenship, and that all those not possessed of it might be impressed. This criterion, if not otherwise objectionable, would be so as the document might be lost, destroyed or taken from the party to whom it was granted; nor might it in all cases be entitled to respect, as it might be counterfeited, transferred, or granted to improper persons. But this rule is liable to other much stronger objections. On what principle does the British government claim of the United States so great and shameful a degradation?—Ought the free citizens of an independent power to carry with them on the main ocean, and in their own vessels, the evidence of their freedom? And are all to be considered British subjects and liable to impressment who do not bear with them that badge? Is it not more consistent with every idea both of public as well as private right, that the party setting up a claim to any interest, whether it be to persons or property, should prove his right? What would be the conduct of G. Britain under similar circumstances? Would she permit the public ship of any other power, disregarding the rights of their flag, to enter on board her merchant vessels, take from them such part of their crews, as the boarding officer thought fit, often her own subjects, exposing by means thereof their vessels to destruction? Would she suffer such an usurpation to derive any sanction from her patient forbearance?

With the British claim to impress British seamen, the U. States have no right to interfere, provided it be in British vessels or in any other than those of the United States. That American citizens should be exempted from its operation, is all that they demand. Experience has shewn that this cannot be secured otherwise, than by the vessels in which they sail. Take from America citizens this barrier, which ought to be held sacred, and there is nothing to protect them against the rapacious grasp of the British navy. This then is the extent of the demand of the U. States, a demand so just in itself, so consistent and inseparable from their rights, as an independent nation, that it has been a cause of astonishment, that it should ever have been called into question. The foundation of the British claim is, that British seamen find employment in the service of the U. States; this is represented as an evil affecting essentially the great interests of the British nation.

This complaint would have more weight if sanctioned by the British example. It is known on the contrary, that it is in direct repugnance to it. G. Britain does not scruple to receive into her service all who enter into it voluntarily.—If she confined herself within that limit, the present controversy would not exist. Heretofore the subjects of even the most despotic powers have been left at liberty to pursue their own happiness, by honest industry, wherever their inclination led them. The British government refuses to its seamen that privilege. Let not this, then, be a ground of controversy with that nation. Let it be distinctly understood, that in case an arrangement should be made between the two nations, whereby each should exclude from its service the citizens and subjects of the other, on the principles and conditions above stated, that this House will be prepared, so far as depends on it, to give it effect, and for that purpose to enact laws, with such regulations and penalties as will be adequate. With this pledge, it is not perceived on what ground the British government can persist in its claim? If the British seamen are excluded from the service of the United States, as may be effectually done, the foundation of the claim must cease. When it is known that not one British seaman could be found on board American vessels, it would be absurd to urge that fact as a motive for such impressment.

In declaring a willingness to give effect to the proposed arrangement, your Committee consider it equally the duty of the House to declare, in terms the most decisive, that should the British government still decline it, and persevere in the practice of impressment from American vessels, the U. States will never acquiesce in that practice, but will resist it unceasingly with all their force. It is not necessary now to enquire what the course would have been with respect to impressment, in case the orders in council had been repealed before the declaration of war—or how long the practice of impressment would have been borne, in the hope that that repeal would have been followed by a satisfactory arrangement with respect to impressment.

War having been declared, and the case of impressment being necessarily included as one of the most important causes, it is evident that it must be provided for in the pacification. The omission of it in a treaty of peace, would not leave it on its former ground; it would in effect be an absolute relinquishment, an idea at which the feelings of every American must revolt. The seamen of the U. States have a claim on their country for protection, and they must be protected. If a single ship is taken at sea, and the property of an American citizen arrested from him unjustly, it rouses the indignation of the country. How much more deeply then ought we to be excited, when we behold so many of its gallant and highly meritorious class of our fellow-citizens snatched from the bosoms of their families and of their country, and carried into a cruel and afflicting bondage. It is an evil which ought not, which cannot be longer tolerated. Without dwelling on the sufferings of the victims, or on that wide scene of distress which it spreads among their relatives thro' the country, the practice is in itself in the highest degree degrading to the U. States as a nation. It is incompatible with their sovereignty—it is subversive of the main pillars of their independence. The forbearance of the U. States under it has been mistaken for pusillanimity.

The British pretension was maturing fast into a right. Had resistance been longer delayed, it might have become one. Every administration remonstrated against it, in a tone which bespoke the growing indignation of the country. Their remonstrances produced no effect. It was worthy the illustrious leader of our armies, when called by the voice of his country to the head of the government, to pause, rather than to recommend to his fellow-citizens a new war before they had recovered from the calamities of the late one. It was worthy his immediate successors to follow his example. In peace our free system of government would gain strength, and our happy union become consolidated. But at the last session, the period had arrived when forbearance could be no longer justified. It was the duty of Congress to take up this subject in connection with the other great wrongs of which they complained, and to seek redress in the only mode which became the representatives of a free people. They have done so by appealing to arms, and that appeal will be supported by their constituents.

Your committee are aware that an interesting crisis has arrived in the U. States but they have no painful apprehension of its consequences. The course before them is direct. It is pointed out equally by a regard to the honor, the rights and the interests of the nation. If we pursue it with firmness and vigor, relying on the aid of Heaven, our success is inevitable. Our resources are abundant; the people are brave and virtuous, and their spirit unbroken.—The gallantry of our infant navy bespeaks our growing greatness on that element, and that of our troops when led to action inspires full confidence of what may be expected from them when their organization is complete. Our union is always most strong when menaced by foreign dangers. The people of America are never so much one family as when their liberties are invaded.

The report concludes by recommending the passage of a bill for the regulation of seamen on board the public vessels and in the merchant service of the U. S.

[The object of this bill is to prohibit, after the conclusion of the present war, the employment

of any seamen in vessels of the U. S. other than citizens, native or naturalized, provided this stipulation shall extend only to such nations as shall have entered into similar stipulations not to employ American seamen, and not to claim or exercise the pretended right to impress from vessels of the U. S. This provision however, is not to preclude the Executive of the U. S. from stipulating, by treaty with any foreign power, for the reciprocal employment of the seamen of each nation by the other. The bill consists of several sections.

The bill was twice read, and referred to a committee of the whole, and made the order of the day for Wednesday.

Foreign.

TWENTY-NINTH BULLETIN OF THE GRAND ARMY.
Moiadetschno, 2d December, 1812.

The weather was very good till the 6th Nov. and the movements of the army were executed with the greatest success. The cold weather commenced the 7th; from that time, we have lost every night many hundred horses, which died while mounted on guard. Since our arrival at Smolensk, we have lost many horses belonging to the cavalry and artillery. The Russian army of Volhynia was opposed to our right. Our right quitted the line of operations on Minsk, and took for it that of Warsaw.—The Emperor was apprized at Smolensk, on the 9th, of this change in the line of operations, and presumed how the enemy would act. However difficult it appeared to him to put himself in motion in this severe season, the new state of things compelled him to do so. He hoped to arrive at Minsk, or at least on the Beresina, before the enemy—he left Smolensk on the 13th, the 16th he arrived at Erasmov. The cold weather which commenced the 7th, increased daily, and from the 14th to the 15th and 16th, the thermometer was at 16 and 18 degrees below freezing (Reaumur.) The roads were covered with ice, the horses of the cavalry, artillery and baggage, perished every night, not by hundreds, but by thousands, particularly those of France and Germany. More than 30,000 horses perished in a few days; our cavalry were dismounted, our artillery and our baggage waggons were without horses. It became necessary to destroy a great part of our artillery, provisions and munitions of war. This army, in so fine a condition on the 6th, was very different on the 14th, almost without cavalry, without artillery, and without waggons—we could not guard without cavalry more than a quarter of a league—notwithstanding, without artillery we could not risk a battle or maintain a position, we must march, not to be forced to a battle, which the want of artillery and cavalry prevented us from wishing—we must occupy a certain space not to be turned, and that without cavalry which protects and unites the columns. These difficulties, together with excessive cold, rendered our situation distressing. Men whom nature had not gifted with that fortitude which places them above the frowns of fortune, appeared alarmed, lost their gaiety, their good humor, and saw nothing before them but misfortunes and catastrophes; those whom she had created superior to every thing, preserved their gaiety and ordinary manners, and saw a new glory in the various difficulties they had to surmount.

The enemy who saw on the roads the traces of this awful calamity which attended the French army, sought to profit by it. They filled up all their columns with Cossacks, who carried off, like the Arabs in the deserts, the carriages and train that were lost. The contemptible cavalry, who make nothing but noise, and is not capable of breaking one company of Voltiguers, rendered themselves formidable by favor of circumstances. Notwithstanding the enemy had reason to regret all the serious enterprises which they undertook. They were beaten by the Vice King and lost many men. The Duke of Elchingen, with 3000 men, composed the rear guard, and scaled the ramparts of Smolensk. He was surrounded and found himself in a critical situation—he extricated himself with that intrepidity which distinguishes him. After having kept the enemy at a distance the whole of the 18th, and constantly repulsed them, he made a movement at night, by the right flank, passed the Borystenes, and disappointed all the calculations of the enemy. The 19th, the enemy passed the Borystenes at Orza, and the Russian army fatigued after having lost many men, gave over this enterprise. The army of Volhynia had marched since the 15th upon Minsk—and was going against Borisow. Gen. Dombrowski defended the head of the bridge of Borisow with 3000 men. The 23d they were attacked and forced to evacuate that position. The enemy then passed the Beresina marching upon Boli, the divisions of Lambert composing the van guard; the second corps commanded by the duke of Reggio, who was at Tcherin, had received orders to advance to Borisow, to insure the passage of the Beresina. The 24th the duke of Reggio encountered the divisions of Lambert, 4 leagues from Borisow, attacked and beat them, made 2000 prisoners, took 6 pieces of cannon, 500 waggons of the baggage of Volhynia's army and drove the enemy to the right bank of the Beresina. Gen. Berthier, with the 4th cuirassiers, distinguished himself by a handsome charge, the enemy only saved themselves by burning the bridge, which was more than 300 toises long.

Nevertheless the enemy occupied all the passages of the Beresina, this river is 40 miles broad