



"Ours are the Plans of fair delightful Peace,
"Unwarp'd by Party Rage to live like Brothers."

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No. 28.

CONTINUATION OF THE DEBATE

ON
Mr. Nicholas's Proposition
For repealing certain Parts of the Act for raising an additional Army.

MR. HARPER asked what would be the effect of this motion, if adopted, on the negotiation now depending between this country and France, and on the state of this country, should the negotiation fail? So strongly was he impressed with the magnitude of these questions, that he should regard himself a traitor to that country which gave him birth, and in defence of which he drew his sword before fifteen years had passed over his head, and dead to every feeling of that patriotic affection for it which he drew in with his mother's milk, were he to pass over, with a silent vote, questions so deeply interesting to its honour and welfare.

These questions, indeed, had been so ably discussed, that he was far from hoping to urge any new reasons, or to adduce any additional information; but if he could renew the impressions formerly made, which the length of the discussion might, in some degree have obliterated, he should consider the time which he might occupy as not wholly milpient.

Gentlemen told them most explicitly, that it was not on the success, but on the failure of the negotiation, that their motion became altogether necessary; because in that case, the army, by the very terms of its establishment, and of the act under which it was raised, was to be disbanded. It was this view of the subject which struck his mind with awful alarm. It was not foreign force that he dreaded, but internal division; it was not an attack from without that filled him with apprehension; but a weakness within, arising from timid counsels, which might prevent us from exerting our strength; from party animosity, which might render one half of the country the instrument for destroying the other; from jealousy of our own government, which might prevent them from entrusting it with the means of defending itself against the enterprises of another. He had heretofore been charged with endeavouring to spread alarm; and he had confessed the charge; for when he felt alarm, he held it his duty, as one of the persons to whom this nation had confided the task of watching over its safety, to spread that alarm. When dangers were abroad, it was the duty of the Sentinel to give the alarm; and it is by being alarmed alone, that we can be saved.

But to return, what must be the effect of this motion, should it succeed, upon our negotiation with France? Out of this question would arise two others, which ought to be separately considered. In what manner might the French government be affected in the pending negotiation, from this measure? How might it affect the conduct of our own government? He allowed the fear of 10,000 men would not induce her to treat with us: she would not consider this as the only force which we could oppose to her attacks: she would not advert to the mere amount of force to be reduced, but to the spirit to be displayed by the reduction. What inference with regard to our situation and our counsels, would France draw from the disbandment of our army at this moment? How will that influence affect her conduct in the negotiation? Will France consider this disbandment as an indication of a want of strength, or a want of means, to support this force? No, for she well knew the extent of our means, and the greatness of our strength. In what light then will she consider this measure? She would consider it as a most decisive proof that our divisions had arisen to such an height, as to render us incapable of exerting our strength: that although we were, for a moment, roused into something like spirit, by the unheard-of insults and indignities wherewith she loaded us in the walters of her pride, we were of a character too feeble and timid to support, with persevering courage and unshaken firmness, the hazards of a great conflict; that our people were

too jealous of each other, to unite for a length of time, in vigorous measures; too lazy to support the fatigues of a continued exertion: or too avaricious to pay its expences. That our government was feeble in itself; destitute of confidence in the magnanimity, the patriotism of the nation; or so clogged in all its movements, by the opposition of a powerful party, as to be rendered incapable of adhering with steadiness to any great and manly system, for the protection of its own honour or national rights. That there existed among us a great and powerful party, which is impelled by party spirit, by animosity against its rivals, by jealousy of the administration, by its own political system, or by whatever other motive, to exert all its force with unabated zeal, and at length with complete success, for wresting from the government every means of defence, for depriving it of every means of exerting national force, for robbing it of all hopes of public support, by withdrawing from it, completely, the public confidence: That this party, in fine, about whose existence she was but too well informed, and whose principles and views it is not natural for her to mistake, has at length obtained an ascendancy in our councils, and would not fail in the pursuit of its own plans, whatever they might be, to serve effectually her cause, by tying up the hands of the administration, separating the nation from the government, and neutralizing, by means of that division, the national force. Believing these circumstances to exist, she would consider our wealth, our population, our commerce, our capital, our shipping, in fine, our national means, not as a force to be dreaded, but as a prey to be seized.

But resist the motion, and all these indications were at once wrecked; she would then consider our national means, not as a prey to be seized, but as a force to be overcome; and knowing, as she did, the extent of those means, she would be induced to put an end to a quarrel from which she would see there was so little to be gained. We know, he said, the men who guide the counsels of France. We have seen their conduct for six years past. Unfortunately for mankind, they have acted a most conspicuous part on the theatre of the world. We have been enabled to discover their characters, their views, and the means, as well as the object of their political system. We know that it was by fomenting eternal discontent, by availing themselves of the weakness resulting from the jealousy of government and party divisions, that they have triumphed over other countries. If France found a party among us, which stripped us of our defence in the midst of a quarrel with her; which disbanded our regular disciplined force at the moment when our negotiation shall have failed; it was the same thing, in her view, whether this be done through a mean parsimony and foolishness: though versatility and weakness of character, through party spirit, animosity against the administration, jealousy of the government, or a direct intention to promote her views. In either case she will consider her views as promoted; because in either case, the country would appear to her, to be left at her mercy. She would have ground for this opinion—the ground of experience: for she had found her views most effectually promoted by a similar state of things in other countries. The example of other countries could not be too often recurred to, for it was from the misfortunes and errors of others, that, if we are wise, useful lessons for our conduct will be drawn.

Mr. H. then took a very particular view of the revolution effected by France in Switzerland, and particularly of the canton of Berne, which he considered as particularly applicable to the situation of this country, and whose ruin he attributed to a band of misguided and timid men, led on and instigated by a faction of modern patriots, not such as Cato, as Hampden, or as Washington; but of that hard race of patriots of the present day, whose patriotism consists in devotion to the will of France.

In Switzerland, France saw her views accomplished by the aid of a party, which did not intend to aid her; by the feebleness, the timidity, the divisions, and the sickleness, which the efforts of that party, guided, most probably, by upright, though mistaken views, were able to introduce into the councils of Berne. That party was not a French party. It was not even a democratic party. It called itself a PEACE PARTY. It talked of the expence of defensive preparations; of the horrors of war; of the improbability, not to say the impossibility, of an attack by France. When France saw the same measures pursued, found the same language held by a party here; and saw the efforts of that party so far successful as to effect a disbandment of the army at a moment like this, might she not, say, would she not expect the same final result?—must not her conduct in the negotiation be guided by that expectation? She will say, "the conduct of this party, like that of the party in Berne, proceeds, perhaps, not from attachment to me, but from jealousy of their own executive, from the spirit of opposition, from animosity against their rivals who are in power; but from whatever cause it proceeds, its effect is to stop the government of all means of defence, and to lay the country at my mercy."

Let the mournful, the instructive truth be again repeated, and never forgotten; it was in the council of Berne, that the conquest of Switzerland had been achieved: and it was on this floor, that from the example of Switzerland, France would expect to achieve the conquest of the United States, should she see a measure like the present adopted. Such must be the effect of this resolution, if passed, on the government of France: and what must be its effect on the conduct of our own government?

The language of this resolution to our executive, is this—"We cannot trust you with the means of defending the country. Even in case of a conflict with France, we will deprive you of those means left you should abuse them. Besides, we cannot afford the expence of those means. We cannot pay for an army capable of defending the country, even should it be invaded, and therefore, you must arrest the danger as well as you can, by submission." Whatever different explanation gentlemen might give; whatever they might say about the want of motive, or the want of means to invade us, on the part of France; whatever they may say about the insufficiency of a sudden effort of Militia, hastily collected together, without officers, without discipline, and without the possibility of acquiring it, to defend their country against the attacks of disciplined and veteran armies; this was the plain language of the resolution; this is the manner in which all men of sense must understand it.

The tendency, and perhaps the effect of these things, must be, to strip the executive of all that manly energy, that lofty, magnanimous spirit, of that unshaken firmness, which are essential for the preservation of the national rights and honour, in a negotiation with such a power as the French Republic.

Such would be the effect which this resolution must have on the success of our negotiation. What must be its effect on our situation should that negotiation fail?

In discussing this question, gentlemen had affirmed, and made it the ground-work of their reasoning, that there could be no danger of invasion from France, even should the negotiation fail. What object, they ask, could France have for invading this country? What means has she of effecting such an enterprise, were it her desire? He trusted and believed, that these contemptible and malignant acts will, in the end, recoil on the heads of the authors, and he was firmly persuaded that in the mean time they would produce, at most, but some partial disturbances, which the patriotism and good sense of the neighbouring districts, would, as heretofore, put down without bloodshed or painful exertion. But while, said he, I entertain this persuasion, still it

must be admitted, that there is some danger of a contrary result. Should that danger be realized; should any considerable portion of the people at length be made to regard their government as the greatest enemy of republicanisim, and the public good, and of course, to look with favour on an invading French army, where would be the reliance on the Militia about which they heard so much? He repeated that this was a most serious question.

A gentleman from Virginia had advanced one reason for disbanding the army, on which he must be allowed to make a remark. He had told them that in his part of the country, the very appearance of the troops excited the gall of the people. He trusted that the gentleman himself had no gall. That sense of decorum and respect for himself, which they had seen him so strongly display, had indeed permitted him to bestow the harsh and unmerited epithet of *Raggamuffins* on the army; but he was persuaded he did not mean to apply it to the whole army. Some handful of recruits, perhaps, whom the honourable gentleman had seen lately picked up in a town, not yet clothed or drilled, might have suggested the term to his mind, and, in the warmth of debate, he had applied it in a manner more extensive than he intended. But even admitting that the army were raggamuffins, they could not excite the gall of the honourable gentleman's neighbours, or of himself! They ought to excite compassion, not gall. Congress that voted them, or the administration that had raised them, might excite gall, but as for them, they only did their duty, and no part of the gall could fall on them. Instead of finding abuse and exciting gall, they would, he was persuaded, receive hospitality and kindness in the houses of that honourable gentleman and his neighbours.

Mr. H. observed much had been said of the deficit of our revenue. Last year, having occasion to prepare for war, we were forced to expend five millions more than the product of our taxes, and this sum we borrowed. Being compelled to continue those preparations, till we know the success of the negotiation with France, we shall have occasion for another loan this year, because our expences would still exceed our revenue, while we remain in a warlike attitude. Gentlemen calculated very erroneously indeed, as would soon appear, at five millions for the present year; and they call it a deficit. "What, they exclaim, a deficit of five millions upon a revenue of nine! Was such a thing ever heard of before!"

Mr. H. said the word "deficit" did not mean the extraordinary expences which a nation was forced to incur by a state of war or preparation. These expences always are, and must be, far beyond the revenue of every nation. The war expences of England, for instance, have sometimes amounted to thirty millions, when her revenue was only sixteen. The same thing, and in a much greater degree, might be said of the war expences of France. But the word deficit, which was intended, or brought into use by Mr. Necker, applies, exclusively to times of peace, and signifies a deficiency in the revenue from taxes, to meet the ordinary and permanent expences of the government. But we have no deficit. When we were forced by the injustice of France into war preparations, we were so far from a deficit, that we had a clear surplus of a million. The moment peace is made, and we can lay down our war preparations, we shall again have a surplus, to be applied to the extinguishment of the debt, which those preparations might oblige us to contract. While those preparations continue, our present taxes, with perhaps some small additions, will defray our ordinary expences, and supply a fund for the interest of the loans which we might be compelled to make.

Mr. H. then laid before the committee a view of our revenue for the present year, leaving a balance to be paid for, by a loan of 2,778,901 dollars.

Suppose we say four millions, said Mr. H. how inconsiderable is the expence compared with the object, and with the resources of this country! The object is to defend our rights, and our national honour, which is above price, to protect our flag, and secure the fruits of their industry and enterprise, to our citizens of all classes and descriptions. With a revenue increasing, and a population, which, according to the best calculation, doubles itself in twenty-five years, were we to fear incurring a debt of a few millions in the defence of the country? When this increasing revenue, too, arises from taxes the lightest that are paid by any people on earth? Our people not paying more than a dollar and a half for each soul, while the people of Great Britain pay six dollars. And yet they are paid with ease, and her people are prosperous and happy.

And with this example before us, continued Mr. H. shall we say we cannot afford money for our own defence? We never need be, and he was persuaded we never should be, taxed as the English are. A very great portion of their permanent burdens arose from the interest of a debt which her government, most unwisely suffered to accumulate almost a century, without one serious effort, or systematic plan for its reduction. Her present Minister, at the commencement of his administration in 1783, established a permanent sinking fund, which now produces very great effects; and profiting by the example of England, we had provided a fund, which was now in constant operation for the extinguishment of our debt; by which means, we shall gather all the roses of the funding system without its thorns.

Supposing the worst that could happen; that we should be compelled to continue our defensive preparations, our present warlike attitude for four years; and to borrow, in each year, as much as we want for the present, that is four millions of dollars. This would be sixteen millions; and added to the last year's loan, would produce a debt of twenty one millions. Suppose, what he hardly thought probable, that we should be forced to make all these loans at 8 per cent. the whole amount of interest would be something less than 1,700,000 dollars; and 500,000 dollars as a sinking fund for the extinguishment of the debt, which that sum would effect in the course of sixteen or 17 years, and it would produce an annual charge on the people of the U States of 2,200,000 dollars for about 16 years! He would not dishonour them by admitting the supposition that it would be grudged.

He said he would now close his speech, by repeating a maxim advanced under circumstances nearly similar, in another country, by one of the greatest statesmen that had ever adorned the world, a maxim, he said, which could never be too often repeated, or too deeply impressed on the minds of those who are called to the direction of public affairs. "A nation which forbears to defend itself through fear of expence, bribes its neighbours, with its own money, to attack and destroy it."

As to the objects for invading this country, Mr. H. asked if the plunder of America would not be as inviting an object to a French army, as the plunder of Egypt? Would not the conquest of America be as fine a feather in the cap of the old, or some new Buonaparte, as the conquest of Egypt or Syria? Gentlemen said, that there was nothing for France to get by invading us. Is the worth of our towns nothing? Would it be nothing to her to gain the entire disposal of our means, as she has gained that of the means of Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, and, till very lately, of Italy.

But Gentlemen said, that she could not gain all this without conquering the country, and that such a conquest she could not effect. He granted she could never effect it; but she might hope to effect it, by the same means which she has found successful elsewhere; and that hope will be sufficient to induce the attempt, where the prize is so