

Willsborough Recorder.

UNION, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE LAWS—THE GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTY.

Vol. XVII.

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 1836.

No. 812.

IN THE SENATE.

DEBATE ON MR. BENTON'S RESOLUTIONS

Wednesday, February 3

Mr. MANGUM rose, and said that, until very recently, it had not been his purpose to participate in this debate. Indeed, the resolutions immediately under consideration admitted of but little discussion and slight diversity of opinion.

The first resolution, in its original form, was novel, bold, and decided, and, in his opinion, eminently inexpedient. It bore the impress of a paternity. As it is now modified at the suggestion of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy), it embodies one of that gentleman's felicitous conceptions, importing nothing definite, presenting nothing tangible, disarming resistance, because it disarms itself. It is a smooth juggle of words, awakening no precise idea, indicating no defined practical views, and sinking entirely out of sight those bold and novel features that characterized its original form. It now presents one of those comfortable positions on which either wary or scrupulous gentlemen may stand well screened from responsibility, and say "ay" or "no" with equal impunity. It is now like nothing but itself, unless it may be likened to the Senator from Tennessee, so far as it affords that things "ought not to stand exactly as they are." When we shall come to divide upon it, if we shall vote upon it at all in its present form, gentlemen will find it difficult, having regard to its merits, to discover any motive for its support, or to suggest any precise and decisive reason wherefore it should be rejected. Unimportant as are these resolutions in themselves, they have been made the occasion of discussing much higher and graver matter. Gentlemen had taken a wide and discursive range, and touched every topic that could supply materials for taunt, crimination, and injurious comment.

The Senate had been assailed for refusing the supply of the three millions on the last night of the last session. Our foreign relations, and especially the French war, had been elaborately discussed, and the surplus revenue had been assailed with a vigor proportioned to the magnitude of the prize. In truth, thirty millions of surplus revenue, and the future surpluses accruing from year to year, are a great prize. To retain the surplus, and an unchecked control of it, is to retain power in the hands of the present holders, and to wield it with an unresisted and irresistible domination, in defiance of constitutional right, in scorn of ancient usages, and in contempt of a dignified moderation.

Mr. M. said he had disapproved the direction given to most of the debate by those with whom he usually acted. He had all along felt that Senators exposed themselves to the suspicion of being a sense of weakness in their position, when they suffered themselves to be arraigned here by a Senator, and they seriously and gravely set about defending themselves against the charge. As to his vote upon the three million supply, it was right. His first impression, strong as it was, had been strengthened by mature reflection and subsequent developments. Upon that vote of the Senate depended the uniform usage of Congress, the integrity of the Constitution, and the peace of the country. He would not, therefore, submit to be arraigned either by Senators here, or by the other House, or, strange as it might sound to willing ears, by the Executive itself. He would submit to arraignment by no power under Heaven, save that constituent body in North Carolina to which he always felt amenable, and to which he owed and cherished all duty and respect. Nor would he undertake the disgusting task of delineating the history of the three million supply, its rise, progress, and fall; his career was brief and eventful, conceived in profligacy, nurtured by empiricism, and brought to its death by sinister designs and crooked policy. The fabled god that devoured his offspring was not more cruel than the projectors of this outrage upon the Constitution, the treasury, the pacific relations, and the patience of a betrayed and insulted people. Who doubts that this fruit of intrigue was crushed by the hand of its parent?

Mr. M. said he should take his stand upon higher ground. There was no necessity for any extraordinary appropriation. To the close of the last session there had not been a word or movement, on the part of France, indicating hostile purpose; nor has there been, to the present moment. Not a man, woman or child in the United States apprehended war at that time, and least of all, that the first hostile demonstration would be made on the part of France. It is true that at the opening of Congress in December, 1834, the President had thrown a

fire-ball into the Halls of Congress. The question of reprisals upon French commerce was distinctly submitted to Congress. Every one of the least intelligence knows that reprisals by one Power upon the commerce of another, supposing them to be at all equal in the resources of defence and annoyance, are as necessarily connected with war, as is the shadow with the substance.

Did that message find an echo in either branch of Congress? Did its recommendations find favor with any party, either in or out of Congress? Did not the Senate, by a unanimous vote, resolve that no legislative measure, under the existing circumstances, was necessary? Was there a single individual in this body found pliant enough to flatter the peculiar views of the Executive by compromising the peace of the country?

Did not the other House, at the very close of the session, by unanimous vote, abstain from any specific recommendation indicating the slightest apprehension of collision? Above all, did the Executive itself, high strung as it was, indicate to Congress any new cause of apprehension, or new development, requiring extraordinary appropriations for defence and protection? If any such new cause existed, was it not the bounden duty of the Executive, charged as he is by the Constitution with the care of our foreign relations, to make it known officially to Congress? Will Senators press upon us a state of the question that must necessarily imply a defect of sagacity in the Executive, or a plain dereliction of duty? Such is the inevitable consequence. For, if cause for extraordinary defences existed, the Executive either did know, or ought to have known it. If he did know it and failed to apprise Congress of it, it was a flagrant dereliction of duty. If he did not know it, he was discreditably deficient in vigilance, sagacity, and forecast. The truth is, no such cause existed, nor is there the least ground for imputing to the President, in this respect, either dereliction of duty or deficiency in sagacity.

Whence came the recommendation for the supply of the three millions, and for what purpose did it come? It did not come from the Executive; it did not come from any head of department; nor did it come reinforced by the deliberative judgment of any committee. It came under cover of the darkness of the last night of the session, upon the individual responsibility of a member of another body (Mr. Cambreleng.) As it was sprung upon us under the cover of night, so its mysterious end is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. Half of the whole truth has not been told, sir, it will never be told. And, sir, what sort of authority is this, upon which the Senate is required to vote this appropriation? To vote a supply extra-ordinary in amount, unconstitutional in its form, in the absence of estimates, and, above all, in the entire absence of the least necessity, either shown or alleged, upon any exhibition of fact? This sort of authority may be deemed sufficient by the "faithful." To me it comes with no title to respect, and scarcely with claim to a decent forbearance. And for what purpose did it come? Was it to soothe the roused sensibilities of the Executive? Was it designed as balm for feelings wounded and pride chafed by discomfiture? Was it intended as an equivalent for the refusal of reprisals? As a delicate mode of flattery, by the strong expression of unlimited confidence, implied in the unconditional surrender of the purse, the sword, and the Constitution? Did it look incidentally to the providing of a contingent fund for the summer campaign? To enlist recruits, and to carry the ballot-boxes by fraud or by force? And did it not look to the embarrassing of an eminent Senator on this floor (Mr. White), "the Cat of East Tennessee?" Sir, the position of this pure and distinguished Senator may well arouse the fears, excite the hatred, and put in motion all the puppets, "Punch, the Devil, and all of them," that play in this great Presidential game. Well may intrigue be afoot, and under the cover of night. It never had more motive and greater necessity to make a desperate push. The watch-fires are kindling on every hill, from the Potomac to the Balize. The White banner is unfurled; countless crowds are thronging to that standard. The Albany banner yet waves its motley folds over the "disciplined and the faithful." But even discipline begins to quail before superior numbers. That banner begins to bow, and will yet be dragged in the mire, if the Hero of New Orleans come not to the rescue. Yes, sir, to the rescue. To turn his back upon the honest the steadfast friend of forty years; a friend through good and through evil report; the same firm, fast friend in the log cabin of the wilderness as in the marble walls of a palace; a friend too proud and too pure to stoop to sycophancy, too honest to flatter, and too

straightforward for the crooked ways of modern policy. To turn his back upon this friend, and for whom? For one that the hero took to his bosom as of yesterday. One who spurned him in the hour of tribulation; who would have trod upon him in his first painful struggles for power, but who has a quick eye for the rising sun, and the smooth tongue of flattery for the ear of power. If such injustice shall be found in the heart of man, I feel a strong assurance that it will find no echo in the bosoms of a just and generous people. Give us but an open field, a fair contest, the people's money locked in the strong box, and the hands of power off, and we promise to give a good account of the intrigues on the south of the Potomac. We shall drive them out. They will find no foothold in Maryland, in Delaware, and, least of all, in the great and glorious "Key-stone State." They may be safe in the North, and strongholds of the Empire State, but the Presidency and the country will be safe from the contamination of their systems, and the blight of their tortuous and sinister policy. But to return. Suppose the three millions had been granted, does any one doubt that we would have been in war? By the phraseology of the grant, both the means and the implied discretion would have been placed in the hands of the President.

The French Chambers had taken a false position. The French Government had solemnly stipulated the payment of the twenty-five millions of francs. It had not complied; the delay had produced irritation; the message of 1834 had taken very strong ground; strong expressions were used. The French Government took offence—recalled its minister here—offered passports to ours at that court. The law for complying with the stipulations of the treaty was passed, with a condition annexed not found in the treaty, nor contemplated by it; with a condition that satisfactory explanation of the President's message should be given before the payment should be made. All this was clearly wrong. The position is utterly untenable. I, for one (said Mr. M.) as an honorable American citizen, protest against all or any explanations, in any manner or form whatsoever. If France has any ground of complaint, let her first perform her own duty, pay the money solemnly stipulated by treaty, and then, and not till then, demand reparation for any injury, real or imaginary, to the French Government and people.

In that event, I doubt not that the justice and magnanimity of this government will do every thing compatible with its honor to remove heart-burnings and ill-will. In that event, we may well do it, without seeming to be stimulated by low and mercenary considerations. Looking to the actual position which France assumed, suppose the three million supply had been granted, accompanied with unrestrained discretion, what would have been the consequence? Is not the probability strong, nay, is it not almost certain, that measures would have been adopted that would have brought war? Look to the history of this matter. On the 15th September last, the Duc de Broglie caused to be laid before the Executive of this country a paper drawn with signal ability and fairness, and obviously designed as a pacific overture to this Government, and seeking the means of escape from a false position. What was the reception given it? High, cold, and haughty. Breathing any thing but the calm and conciliatory spirit of that overture. In three days afterwards, on the 14th, this Government sent peremptory instructions to our *charge des affaires* at Paris to leave that Government forthwith, in case the money should not be paid; an order hastily, and in my judgment, rashly given—cutting off every channel of communication between the two Governments. Sir, if the three millions, with the implied discretion contained in the proposition for the grant, had been at the disposition of the Executive, might we not have looked for measures as strong as those recommended at the previous session? And would not those measures have brought war? Sir, what have been the conduct and tone of Senators in the confidence of the Administration during this session?

The Senator from Missouri (Mr. Benton) has brought forward resolutions looking not only to the thirty millions now in the Treasury, but to the expenditure of all accruing surpluses in future years, for the fortification and the arming of our Atlantic frontier; contemplating a gigantic scheme, hitherto not dreamed of, and the expenditure of countless millions for defence alone, as if, in this enlightened age, war were the only object and purpose of mankind. The teeming abundance of the times, instead of seeking investment in those great lines of internal communication; instead of giving strength, wealth, happiness and ornament to the finest country under the sun, and impulse to the spirit of enter-

prise; in a word, instead of being distributed among the States for the purpose of consolidating and strengthening all the permanent interests and ties of social life—this abundance is to be poured out upon the maritime frontier, in the construction of fortifications, to frown defiance towards all the world. A scheme well worthy of the spirit of the iron age! And these resolutions are accompanied with a speech mild, subdued, and guarded in language, but breathing the furious war spirit of Mars himself. Then follows the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy.) It is difficult to determine whether his voice is for war, or still for peace. There is no one but must perceive that he means to whip up, and keep in the front ranks of the Administration, go where they may. We learn the fact, portentously announced, that he is not willing "that things shall remain exactly as they are." In the midst of this discussion, which seems well pitched to bring the public mind up to the war point, there comes the offer of mediation by the Government of Great Britain.

Never has so beautiful a scheme of operations been so completely marred by an unlucky incident. War, war, horrid war, engrossed every mind, and employed every tongue. A French war was preferred, if we could have the good luck to get it. At all events, we must have a war. If not a French war, the Treasury has charms—a war upon that, as well as the Senate, may afford an amusing interlude in these dull piping times of peace. This magnanimous offer of mediation on the part of Great Britain, it is understood, has been accepted by this Government; indeed, it could not be refused. In this state of things, when every consideration of delicacy, in connection with our own honor, as well as the feelings of the mediator, would seem to dictate, if not profound silence, yet entire abstinence from every topic of irritation or offensive allusion, the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. Buchanan) rises in his place, and delivers the most elaborated and high-toned war speech that has been heard in the Capitol since 1812. He charges, directly and unequivocally, dishonorable equivocation and bad faith upon the French Government, in terms the harshest and most offensive. He goes a bow shot beyond any thing said by the Executive.

Sir, I regard the Senator's speech as an exposition of the views and feelings of the Executive. We perfectly understand the division of labor among the leaders of the party in power. Is it not known that the Senator from Missouri (Mr. Benton) has in charge "the better currency," the bank rags, the yellow jackets and the public domain? The Senator has strangled the monster, more fearful than the fabled Lernaean hydra, or, rather, he has cut off his head; but I fear he has not skilfully cauterized the wound. The monster seems to be in a process of resuscitation, as well as hundreds of other lesser but pernicious monsters that seem to have sprung from its blood, sprinkled by the Hercules in the struggle for its decapitation.

I trust the Senator will inform us, at some early day, how the experiment of suppressing bank rags, and increasing the circulation of the gold currency, succeeds. I suppose the proportion of paper money to the precious metals in circulation does not now exceed more than three or four times that which existed half a dozen years ago. In other words, I suppose the fictitious capital is not more than three or four times greater in reference to the actual capital than it was six or seven years ago. As this is an interesting experiment under the scientific superintendence of the Senator, I trust he will give us such lights from time to time as his leisure and convenience may allow. I frankly confess that I am not without fear that the rapid and unexampled augmentation of fictitious banking capital portends throes and convulsions that may shake the prosperity of this country with the force and destructiveness of an earthquake.

Do we not likewise understand that the Senator from New York (Mr. Wright) has in charge all the peculiar and special interests of the Albany Regency throughout the Union? And have we not all admired the skill and dexterity with which he manages and controls this intricate and complicated machinery?

And who does not know that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. Buchanan) has charge of our foreign relations? His wary sagacity and polished diplomacy, deriving strength and ornament, as they do, from a long experience, indicate the wisdom and fitness of the choice. Therefore, upon this subject, I take his speech as indicating truly the tone and temper of the Executive. I have alluded to the harshness and offensiveness of the matter and manner of that speech, as well as to the time and the circumstances under which it was delivered. Sir, Mark Anthony's speech over the dead body of

Cæsar was a perfect failure compared with that of the Senator. But Mark Anthony was a "plain, blunt man," whereas the Senator is an eloquent and practiced diplomatist. He shows us the wounds of our sweet country's bleeding honor, "poor, poor dumb mouths," and, surpassing the skill of Anthony, he "puts a tongue in every wound," which aforesaid tongue discourses so eloquently that they "move the very stones to mutiny;" and my friend from Kentucky (Mr. Crittenden) may look out for his "ploughshares," lest they be converted, in the twinkling of an eye, into Bowie knives and the most approved hairtriggers; and, strange to tell, all this display of eloquence and exhibition of elaborate skill in fixing perfidy upon the French Government at the very instant that our Government is accepting, yes, accepting perforce, the offered mediation of the British Government. Does the Senator suppose that when his speech shall assume a neat pamphlet form, if the President, amusing himself with his franking privilege, as is his wont, should perchance frank a copy to his brother Louis Philippe, it would materially contribute to the success of the mediation? Does the Senator desire war, or does he desire peace? If the latter, I can perceive no reason for keeping up this show of war, unless it be to subject the surplus revenue to a sort of legislative plunder. Sir, war is resolved on, if war can be had under circumstances to carry with it the patriotic feeling and the enthusiasm of the country. But war will not come. Thank God! war cannot now come. I have never felt a stronger reliance than at this instant, that an overruling and favoring Providence which has made this great country what it is, will continue to it prosperity and greatness.

I think I see, in the divided and peculiar interests of the great sections of the dominant party, the surest guarantee of continued peace. I think I see, what I never expected to see, much good, yes, the blessings of continued peace, likely to come from the peculiar and selfish interests of the worst party that has ever threatened the prosperity of this country with its terrible scourge. Such are the glorious ends that a gracious and benign Providence works out by the employment of the meanest and basest instruments. But, sir, if, contrary to all my anticipations, war shall come, whatever may be my opinions of the wretched bungling or wicked designs of its authors, I shall regard it as no longer a party matter, but as a great national question, demanding the zealous co-operation and the best energies of every American citizen. I shall feel it my duty, in whatever position I may stand, to lend my humble aid to the concentration of all the resources of the country to give vigor to the public arm, and to sustain, gloriously sustain the national character.

But, sir, I repeat, that war will not come. The heads of the dominant party have peculiar and divided interests, and consequently divided and conflicting counsels. The present head of the Government, high-toned, bold, daring, impatient, and eminently warlike, is obviously bent upon bringing France to his feet, or trying the hazards of war. His peculiar views are reinforced and sustained by a numerous, powerful, and, for the most part, interested corps. Almost the entire official corps, the anxious expectants of place, and the greedy seekers of jobs and contracts, will be found on the side of the strongest executive measures. War necessarily brings with it vast accessions of power to the Executive branch of the Government—vast accessions of officers and employees to the public service, and a corresponding increase in the expenditure of public money. Besides, the Army and the Navy, opposite in every thing to the mercenary tribe to which I have alluded, will be found on the side of war. Their high military spirit, their love of enterprise, their aversion to the "cankers of a calm world," and their devotion to glory, naturally and necessarily place them on the side of war. "Tis their vocation." "The pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war" have charms for the soldier not to be resisted. We are upon the eve of a Presidential election. The present head of the Government, brave, bold and warlike, is yet surrounded with the halo of glory won in many a stricken field. I have not heard that the nominee for the succession is particularly distinguished either for military spirit or military achievement. Though he reposes under the shade of the laurels that have sprung upon the glorious field of New Orleans, yet I have not learned that he has moistened their roots with either his sweat or his blood.

Suppose war should come, and the Presidential election at hand—who would be placed at the helm of the vessel of state, that she might ride out, in safety, the storm and the breakers ahead?