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Extract of a letter from Washington to the Editor of the Gazette of the United States.

"Though you find, in the National Intelligencer, a correct statement of the most important votes which are taken in the house of representatives, and a very smooth account of the course of proceedings, yet you get no adequate idea of the ministerial mode of transacting business.—You will indeed, occasionally find very unwarrantable statements in that paper, whenever, in the opinion of the editor, the character of his party requires from him that kind of aid. In the Intelligencer of Wednesday the twenty fourth of March, it is asserted, that the discussion of the bill, for relieving the luxuries of life from the burthen of taxes, continued with little intermission for six days, during which the house sat to a late hour, notwithstanding repeated motions made by the minority to adjourn. In this unusual devotion to public business, the citizens will discern a laudable solicitude to terminate the session at the earliest period."

"It is to be hoped that this indecent misrepresentation is chargeable only upon the Editor of the Intelligencer, and that he has not been put upon it by some man of more consequence."

"Notwithstanding repeated motions made by the minority to adjourn."—The fact is, that on four successive days, out of the six here mentioned, the ministerial party adjourned in great confusion, for the purpose of devising ways and means to extricate themselves from the embarrassments into which they were thrown by their own proceedings.

"Inasmuch as an examination of the subject has been provoked, I will give you a history of this bill, which, in the opinion of the Intelligencer, reflects much honour upon the industry, skill, and perseverance of the ministerial party."

"The committee of ways and means, which reported this bill, and of which Mr. Randolph of Virginia is chairman, was appointed on the second day of the session. After a good deal of delay which exhausted the patience of several of the party, Davis of Kentucky moved a resolution for the repeal of the internal taxes, and stated as his reason, the delay of the committee of ways and means upon this subject. Even the Aurora thought some apology necessary, and informed us that the committee had resolved to mature the business before they brought it forward, and to introduce it to the house in a perfect state, so that it might be acted upon with promptness and without embarrassment."

"At length, after sitting precisely 3 months, Mr. Randolph introduced his well matured bill to repeal the internal taxes. The bill was referred to a committee of the whole house on Monday the 15th of March. Some discussion took place upon the merits of this perfect bill, and Mr. Randolph was convinced that it might be rendered yet more perfect by some slight alteration. He consequently introduced an amendment which he thought ought to be printed for the use of the members before acting upon it. Mr. Randolph said that was his object; but he had several other amendments to propose, and thought it best to have them all printed at once. It was mentioned that no other amendment could be submitted while that was pending; but the gentleman might withdraw his first amendment, and offer the others with it, after which the whole might be printed."

"Mr. Randolph accordingly withdrew his long amendment; but not exactly understanding what was to be done next, he moved that the committee rise, and as soon as the speaker had resumed the chair moved that the long amendment be printed."

"Mr. Griswold observed, that he had no objection to an order for printing; but it must be an order to print a paper in that gentleman's pocket. No amendment was before the house—none had been reported by the committee of the whole. The ministerial gentleman knew not how to proceed. Mr. Randolph made a long speech—but the difficulty still remained.—At length Mr. Randolph moved to go back into committee of the whole, for the purpose of starting anew. The house accordingly resolved itself into a committee of the whole, and the long amendment was again proposed, upon which the committee rose, and the house ordered the amendment to be printed."

"Mr. Randolph did not chuse to hazard

another step that day, and accordingly moved for an adjournment at an early hour, and the motion was carried. Of course, this was not a "motion by the minority."

"On Tuesday the bill for repealing the internal taxes was again resumed. A number of new objections were urged against this perfect bill, and Mr. Randolph and his friends finding themselves unable to obviate them were again disconcerted. A motion was made to recommit it to the committee of ways and means. It was said to be impossible that the committee of the whole and the house could not advantageously proceed upon it in its present form. Mr. Randolph admitted the force of the objections, complained that gentlemen on the other side of the house only pointed out errors without affixing to correct them, but objected to the recommitment. Such was the imperfect state of the bill and so evident was the necessity of drawing it anew, that the little David of Legislation, after one or two long speeches, finding that the question could be no longer evaded, called for an adjournment, after the speaker had arisen and stated the question to the house, but before the vote could be taken. The adjournment was carried by the ministerial party though the other side of the house voted against it."

"When the house met on Wednesday, Mr. Randolph introduced another long string of amendments which he hoped would remedy the faults complained of, and spare him the mortification of a recommitment. A great part of the day was spent in hearing the argument of the ministerialists to prove that their amendments would answer the purpose; and finally, after the amendments had been amended by an entire new section which Mr. Goddard introduced, and by an alteration of several others, they were adopted. Mr. Dennis then moved to strike out of the first section, the words "sales at auction," and to insert "coffee," and gave notice that he intended to move further amendments by substituting brown sugar, tobacco tea, and salt in place of some of the reformed articles named in the bill, for the purpose of trying the principle whether the surplus revenue should be spared exclusively from luxuries or in part from the necessities of life. The ministerial party did not wish to have this comparison appear upon their journals, and, as the best expedient which occurred to them to avoid it, called for a division of the question, so that the votes upon striking out and inserting should be taken separately. This was objected to, as not in order; it was said that the motion was a simple proposition, and consequently not divisible by the rules of the house. It was referred to the speaker, who decided that the question was not divisible. The party not to be thwarted in the course by rules of the house and decisions of their own speaker, appealed from the decision of the chair. The question being put, "Is the decision of the chair in order?" the ministerialists, tenacious of their purpose, and willing to compass their end, whenever might be the means, determined in the negative. Here a wretched farce commenced respecting the second part of the motion. These wise legislatures, with the little man of slings at their head, had imagined that by carrying the first part of the motion in the negative, and leaving no place designated for the insertion of the word coffee, they would be able to evade that part of the question, and pursuing the same course with the amendments which they knew were to follow, congratulated themselves upon a new discovery by which they expected to keep their journals free from the mention of those articles of necessity which the constitutionalists wished to substitute for the luxuries named in the bill. But here again they were brought up, as the sailors say, all standing, by another rule of the house, and by a positive declaration of the speaker that the question must be put. After nearly an hour had been consumed, and no way discovered to get out of the perplexity, a reconsideration of the vote for dividing the question was moved and seconded. After a variety of remarks upon this motion, the speaker rose to put the question, when an adjournment was called for and carried by the ministerial side of the house."

"On Thursday, after commencing the proceedings of the day in a very curious and novel manner, which will be noticed further on; the house proceeded to consider some further amendments offered by

Mr. Randolph, and Gen. Smith of Maryland. After the usual time of adjournment, and when the members appeared to be exhausted by the labours of the day, an adjournment was asked for by one of the constitutionalists, in order, as is believed, to give Mr. Griswold an opportunity of submitting to the house a number of arguments, against the bill, but which he thought would not be heard with patience at so late an hour. On this solitary occasion, it is true that a motion was made by the constitutionalists to a journal, and was not carried. Mr. Griswold went into a very able and conclusive argument which detained the house to a very late hour. A motion was then made further to amend the bill, by inserting, after the words, "stamped vellum, parchment and paper," the words "and the duties on imported brown sugar." Mr. Randolph had now got through with all the amendments which he had to offer. He began to look, with extreme solicitude, upon this favourite child of his legislative labour. It had cost him many hours and convulsions in the production, and much anxiety and perplexity in calculating; and he became every moment, more and more desirous of seeing it out of the reach of those who had been all along, unkindly pointing out to him its errors, which his paternal eye had not discerned, and who for ought that he knew might discover as many more, should one be given them to examine it. He therefore hoped that the bill would be ordered to be engrossed before the house adjourned; and for the purpose of saving time and coming at a prompt decision, he laid he would move for the previous question upon the amendment last proposed. The motion being seconded it was put by the speaker in these words: "Shall the main question be now put?" And it was carried in the negative by the ministerial side. Having thus cut the business short, and as they already imagined, surmounted all obstacles they triumphantly called for the question to be put.—"But here again, like an illomen, a rule of the house, thwarted their course and once more put them at a stand. The speaker declared that the bill could not be engrossed while a motion to amend was pending, and this motion, he said, had been hung up by the previous question just taken. Upon this, the ministerial gentlemen began to manifest some doubt of the expediency of the mode which they had adopted for saving time, and coming at a prompt decision. They attempted to retrace their steps, and called for the question on the amendment upon which the previous question had been taken. Here also they were equally entangled; for the speaker declared, in conformity with the rules of the house, that it was not in order to put the main question on any motion the same day on which the previous question on such motion had been put and carried in the negative. It was now evident, that nothing further could be done without getting rid of these rules, and for that purpose Mr. Edmunds, who has sometimes been called the Bird of Wisdom, demanded an appeal from the decision of the speaker. Here again the sect were reduced to the perplexing alternative either of going directly in the teeth of all rules of order, and again deserting their speaker, or else of flopping short, and abandoning the triumph of a prompt decision. In this dilemma an adjournment was called for, and carried; but not by the minority."

"Having thus stated to you the manner in which the ministerialists closed their session upon four of the days occupied in the business of repealing the internal taxes, I will now give you an account of the manner in which some of those sessions commenced. The Intelligencer continues:

"In this unusual devotion of public business the citizens will discern a laudable solicitude to terminate the session at the earliest period."—It is a very hard thing to decide upon men's intentions, and I will not undertake to say that the ministerial gentlemen are not solicitous to expedite public business; but if I were disposed to write their eulogium, knowing the progress which they have made during the present session, and particularly knowing the history of the bill now under consideration, I should never mention that solicitude, lest I should be thought either to satirize them or to impeach their talents.—Will the Intelligencer place to the account of this solicitude the two hours and a half spent by these gentlemen on Thursday, in making, debating,

and withdrawing motions to amend the minutes of the day before? The parts which they wished to have stricken out were those which recorded the decision of the chair on the indivisibility of Mr. Dennis's motion, and that which says that a debate arose upon a question of order. It was said by the ministerialists, who were in favour of striking out, that the journals ought not to contradict the positive rules of the house, and those rules direct that no debate shall be had upon a question of order. On this occasion Mr. Davis, who is rather stubborn, and not so well broken in as the generality of the sect, rebelled, and declared that if the journal was not consistent with the rules of the house, it was consistent with truth, and with the proceedings which it recorded, and that he should vote against striking out. Several of the constitutionalists opposed the motion. They said that the constitution compelled the house to keep a journal, and the sole object was to enable the public to judge whether their proceedings were correct and proper or not. The precedent of striking out what all acknowledged to be a true statement of facts was dangerous in the extreme. If the majority were at liberty to record only such parts of their proceedings as they might chuse, the intention of the constitution would be frustrated, and the house might as well keep no journals. Mr. Davis said, that if gentlemen would run themselves into excesses and contravene the rules of order for the purpose of coming at an object which they had in view, and after sleeping upon it, could come into the house and new model their journals in conformity with their cooler judgment, it would be better to keep no journals, for they could answer no purpose but to deceive the public and posterity. He insisted, that though the majority have the physical power of controlling their own journals and rendering them what they please, yet, in justice and propriety, they can exercise that power only in rendering the record conformable with the facts which it records.

He was acknowledged on all hands to be the case in the present instance. He said in the principle now contended for by the other side of the house should prevail, he should not be surprised at seeing a motion brought forward to erase from the journals the yeas and nays, whenever the majority might wish to conceal the names of those who had voted for or against any particular measure.—It was said in reply, that the journals are entirely in the power of the house, and I think it was Edmunds, but it was certainly some one of the sect, who declared that the majority might, if they pleased, expunge the yeas and nays.—After many other remarks, which it would not be convenient for you, nor very honorable for our national legislature, to lay before the public, the motion was withdrawn.

Mr. Randolph moved to amend that part of the journal which stands in these words:

Another motion was then made and seconded, farther to amend the bill, by striking out in the said first section thereof, the words "sales at auction," for the purpose of inserting in lieu thereof the word coffee."

The proposition was to strike out of the journal the words "for the purpose of," and the words "in lieu thereof," in order to insert the word "and," so as to make the journal read, "by striking out in the said first section thereof, the words sales at auction, and inserting the word coffee." Upon this motion Mr. Bacon made a long speech, and apparently proved to his own satisfaction that a very nice distinction ought to be taken between the import of the words, "and inserting," and the words "for the purpose of inserting." He said that as the motion stood recorded upon the journal, there could be no doubt that it was a simple proposition: that it could not be divided; and that he, on the appeal from the decision of the chair, had voted wrong in declaring that decision to be not in order. But the case, he insisted, would be very different upon a question put in the other form.—If you had ever heard this old gentleman speak, you would feel no inclination to see his arguments recapitulated in this place.—Suffice it to say that he made a long speech, and so convincing was it, that as soon as he sat down, Mr. Randolph withdrew his motion. The motion made the evening before to reconsider the vote for dividing Mr. Dennis's motion was then