

# THE MINERVA

ter to have which dif-  
returned to England, but finally anchored in America, and purchased an estate in Virginia. On the rupture between this country and Britain, he was called to take

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## CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

TUESDAY, March 6.

DEBATE.

On Mr. Gregg's Resolution.

Mr. J. RANDOLPH'S second speech, (Continued.)

A gentleman from Pennsylvania has told us that Great Britain is our commercial rival.—But does not the gentleman know that the very term implies a correlative. That if she is your commercial rival, you are her commercial rival also. This is the very view that I have been endeavouring to take of the subject, to impress on the committee;—to warn the nation against being drawn into a war of commercial rivalry. Sir, when men fall out about women they are not apt to call in some learned doctor to decide the dispute—they yield to feeling or instinct—just so with nations, commercial nations especially differing on interest, which is their instinct. And would gentlemen wish to excite this young nation, as yet in the gristle, to a foreign contest with G. Britain, in the full strength of manhood? I speak of foreign war.—The will and ability to defend ourselves is one thing,—to act 3000 miles off, another. They may rely as much as they please upon the French emperor's making a separate peace with the continent, to the exclusion of Great Britain. If she puts out her strength, you will feel it. This proposition will subject her to all the evils of an American war without any of the concomitant advantages. And can you expect a tame acquiescence on her part? If her minister be not a bastard; if he has one drop of the blood of Chatham in his veins he will die contending for the liberties of his country sooner than surrender her independence.—He will do it. No, sir, whatever I may think of the vices and corruptions of the government of that country, I must applaud her intelligence and spirit, must admire her ability, wisdom and strength.

But another gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Smilie) asks if it is not astonishing that a man, whom he allows to possess common sense, whom he represents as trembling at the power of Great Britain, should be making calculations of the future power of France, instead of guarding against the immediate danger? Sir, France may become a naval power.—Great Britain never can be a military one. I ask any practical man if the day can ever arrive when Great Britain will be able to threaten the safety of the continent of Europe or America, or dictate to either of them. Is it my fault that the gentleman cannot, or will not see this, because (as he tells you) fools and madmen can never be brought to believe that the spirit of God hath puffed them by, and enlightened the understandings of other men. But to shew that this is not just cause of war we are referred to the time of the Stamp act and the non importation agreement of 1774, which did not (it seems) produce immediate war. Is there any analogy between the two cases? We then formed one nation. A man may make a great sacrifice to preserve his friend, but when he has lost him, he will (as has been seen to-day) be denounced as the bitterest enemy.

The other intinaces are equally defective and inapplicable. You may as well go back to the flood. The same gentleman enquires, are you indeed so peaceable towards England, who has trampled upon you, and hostile to France who has offered you no injury? Wherefore? On this occasion I must repeat the old proverb, to the still hog that drinks the swill. She finds it convenient to make a miserable jangling horse, scarce crow of Spain. The gentleman enquires how long Great Britain has acted upon these philanthropic principles; this generous benevolent policy ascribed to her. But is any man so weak, or so wicked as to pretend that there is any principle of action between nations except interest? Give Great Britain the power, and she will to-morrow play the same part. Sir, we are not the philanthropists, but politicians; not dreamers and foolscayers, but men of flesh and blood. 'Tis idle to talk of a sense of justice in any nation.—Each pursues its sense of interest, and if you calculate on their acting upon any other principle, you may be very amiable, but you will prove a dupe. We are asked what G. Britain can do to annoy us. We answer, at this moment more than any other nation of the world, because she commands the ocean, the sole medium of communication between us. But draw her off from that element, and France is not less omnipotent upon it. She is a great military power, and it is because Britain is not, cannot be such a power, that it is impolitic to keep her down. Go to war when you will, you will not become the ally of France, you will only put off, by enhancing it, the danger you would guard against. You will but clap a torse under your elephant.

The same gentleman tells you that the gigantic power of France hangs on the brittle life of an individual. But do you believe it? Are you such drivellers in politics as to believe that the fate of such a military despotism hangs on the life of one man. If Mahomet II. had been killed under the walls of Constantinople, would

the destiny of the Greek empire have been changed? Would not the power have passed into the hands of some Solyman or Simon, the terror of the civilized world? Shall we abandon practice for theory?

In some respects we are situated as the successors of Alexander were placed in relation to Rome and Carthage. Here is an iron republic, or call it what you will, that threatens the liberties of mankind: The government above all others, in Europe, to which our own is most hateful and obnoxious. This is beyond dispute. Does it become us to facilitate its designs? I do not enquire as to motives, nor will that government care about them. If you give it facilities to effect its purposes, those purposes are obtained so far as depends on you. Is this wise, is it proper, is it right? Am I asked for my plan? If I meant to act efficiently, I would have begun with an embargo—I would now do what was done before—I would treat with G. Britain, and for the very reason that I would not have treated with her, in the year 1794; for the same reason that the gentleman, whose resolution is now under discussion, then treated with her, I would not: now, he is for war, I am for negotiation and peace. And why? Because the state of nations has since undergone a momentous change: disastrous changes indeed have been effected in the face of things. We often hear of the abuses and corruptions of the British government; whilst the continental despotisms pass unnoticed and unregarded. Let us beware of introducing such abuses into our own.—We have no farther concern with them. Do gentlemen think worse of the character and motives of William Pitt than of Robespierre, and yet, monster as he was, Robespierre—that cannibal of his own countrymen, was in his day the sole bulwark of the human race. And what ever led to his motives, or profusions, G. Britain now stands exactly in the place of France twelve years ago. Take her navy out of the way to-morrow, and where are you? The secretary of the navy has indeed reported that the Chesapeake is in a state of thorough repair, but would the real Chesapeake, the bay, be fit for use in that case, and what would be the operation on the actual constitution of the U. S.? Sir, I am opposed to a French war as well as to a war with England. I would treat with England for another reason. I will we had had a commercial treaty with any nation whatever. I am opposed to them on principle; but the principle is already settled. We have them. By your treaties with her enemies your hands are tied up from taking against them, any such measure as the one proposed: they are to be admitted on the terms of the most favoured nation. This is probably one of the principal causes of disgust to England. Again, she made an offer to repeal her discriminating duties, if you would do so too; to trade with us upon even terms.—Be mercantile clamour you were deterred from meeting her half way: moreover, you have refused to ratify treaties with her, after they had been signed by your own minister. No doubt you had the right to do so. But can you be surprised under such circumstances that a haughty commercial rival has been irritated? After your obligations to France, who cannot receive a single pound of sugar, or coffee, but under cover of your flag, who is dependent upon you for services which she cannot render herself, who is not your rival in commerce, what can you expect from a jealous competitor in trade who stands not in need of your navigation—whose every advance towards a good understanding has received a mortifying repulse? Sir, you have at this moment a negotiation pending with G. Britain. You have no cause to despair of its success; for otherwise, the plain question is, will you await its issue, or will you, *pendente lite*, precipitate yourself into a measure, which must put all negotiation aside, which must eventually lead to war. If you want war, there is no doubt that you may have it. Great Britain will not submit to all the hardships and mischiefs of war, because you choose to call it peace. She will prefer open war to war in disguise; and I, sir, have no hesitation in saying that I am for no half measures. Begin that system when you will, war, or disgrace must grow out of it. I am for neither. The gentleman indeed says that this, which has been denounced as a war measure, is a measure of peace. Let us have no more *quasi* wars I beseech you, sir—no half measures, no intermediate rage, but open war, or peace. I abhor this political quackery.—Give us war, or negotiation—if you resort to the one, let us abandon the other. But we are asked if American virtue will so far degrade and debase itself as to treat with the old and corrupt government of England. There is a plain answer to this. You have a treaty with her now, with every government, I believe, that would make one with you. But while we boast of our virtue, let us beware that our own fins are not cast into our teeth. Let us see how far these punishments are warranted by the conduct of our own agents. Look to the management of the convention of Paris, of the 30th April, 1803. You have all seen the case of the New Jersey, Nicklin & Griffith's ship. It has created a general sensation. And yet what is the fact.—

Compared with others, they have almost nothing to complain of. But as that case is, it is a monument the least excusable instance of mismanagement in your ministry at Paris. It is true Nicklin & Griffith's claim was cut down, I believe one half, because the sum appropriated would not otherwise (it was feared) be sufficient to answer all the drafts of chicanery upon it.—These men were therefore mulcted fifty per cent.—They are rich merchants—able to make their case known. It has been heard, and has rung through the continent. There are hundreds of cases even worse than this. The claims intended to be provided for are set aside. Why? Because government has been represented abroad by unskillful, dishonest agents. Have they been called to account for their conduct? Three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars stipulated to be paid, to bona fide American citizens—where have they gone? Into the pockets of rogues and the bureaux of Paris.—Yes, the traders in neutral character have divided the spoil with the harpies of the French bureaux. What are they, in whose favour the bills have been drawn on the treasury of the U. States by their own minister. Take the case of the *Pagon*—There was no question, indeed as to her being American property—but she was captured *flagrante bello*:—(when we were taking the *Imogene* and *Berean*) she was therefore good prize, and condemned accordingly. Yet the decision of the inferior court was reversed by the council of prizes, and this case brought within the convention—to the exclusion no doubt of bona fide claims for neutral American property captured and condemned, and for which the convention was intended to provide. This is a specimen of the mismanagement of the convention at Paris. If gentlemen would upon the subject, let them call for John Mearns, one of those commissioners, a man inferior to few in point of talents; in point of character to none. Put him to the bar and examine him.

Paraded as it is to me, I must demand my principles and those of its friends. Open your statute book—what does it say? That the shores and waters of the river Mobile shall form a limit—I brought in the bill myself. The executive had informed us, that we had purchased from France as far as the Perdida to the East—We legislated upon it. Where have arisen your disputes with Spain—From Pensacola or St. Augustine? No—from the very country which the statute book says is yours—in your own collection district are Spanish duties exacted and paid.—From this very quarter incursions have been made in the old U. States. Do gentlemen believe that this fact will be lost on G. Britain? But we are asked (by Mr. Smilie) what has been done with differences between us and Spain? What right has she to interfere, to enquire, or even to know, to form conclusions of what has passed in this quarter? Is this intended as a serious question? Because you have slipped a paddle upon your own mouths and willfully shut your eyes, do you expect to hood-wink an avowed adversary? 'Tis in vain to expect that any nation in her intercourse with you, will be blind to your conduct towards others—Great Britain must shut her eyes, and ears too, not to understand the state of things here—at least negatively speaking. She must know that you have taken an imposing attitude towards Spain, done nothing to strengthen the Spanish frontiers—made no addition to your naval or military force, left even the *matrimonial* *plata quatuor*. Because the doors have been shut, can people be brought to believe that we have raised armies and equipped fleets in concealment? I never heard, sir, of one army more, and that was levied by the factious Mr. Bays for the service of the flag, and not of the state—and from some dramatic specimens, which I have lately seen, I should not be surprised to hear of a similar project being started on this floor. G. Britain will see, then, what has not been your proceeding towards Spain.—She will say, shall I suffer myself to be brow-beaten by a nation, clamouring for the right of highway, that has not spirit enough to defend her own domicile? If A acts like a poison towards B who has committed a gross outrage upon him; and shall have a subsequent controversy with C shall he pretend to bully him, and expect C not to call to mind his cowardly behaviour with B and treat him accordingly? One foreign nation will be influenced, will be governed in her concerns with you by your concessions to another,—and it is the idlest thing in the world to expect that your treatment by one government will not have an effect on the deportment of others towards you.

One word more, sir, before I conclude.—Gentlemen—miscellaneous if they suppose that mere *anterior* (much less at second hand) will do for us. They must shew us something better before we follow their resolution. 'Tis an infirmity, sir, of my nature that I cannot yield to the imposing sound of great names; they never did and they never shall put me to silence, or drive me from my purpose. I am apprized of the secret denunciations which are on foot, and I despise them. They shall never affect me. I came into public life with these principles, and I will leave it with them, leave it when I may.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Chairman, I came into the House this morning with an intention not to trouble you with any observations on the interesting subject, which has been several days under consideration; and I do not now intend to enter into a discussion of the particular measure proposed in the resolution on your table. But the debate has taken such a course, that I am induced to request your attention, a few minutes, to the extraordinary view, which has been exhibited of our dispute with Great Britain.

A gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Early) yesterday told us that a general clamour had indeed pervaded the nation, respecting our relations with G. Britain; but it had been excited by incorrect views of the state of the dispute, and when the subject should be fairly explained and rightly understood, the alarm would subside. He added, that the carrying trade, out of which our differences have grown, is of little value and not worthy of national protection. The same opinion, in substance, was expressed, on a former day, by a gentleman from Virginia, (Mr. J. Randolph) and you have just heard it repeated by the gentleman from S. Carolina, (Mr. D. R. Williams,) who left addressed you.

I agree with these gentlemen, that, in order to determine what legislative measures, if any, are necessary to be adopted, it is important, in the first place, to understand the true nature and extent of the controversy between the two governments; and, as their understanding of it is very different from mine, I beg the committee to accompany me in a concise review of it. The injuries complained of are all on one side, and are entirely without provocation. G. B. has no cause of complaint against us. Our government has conducted in such a manner, as to give her no occasion for offence. The claims, on our part, relative to two classes of injuries, the imprisonment of our seamen, & the seizure and condemnation of our vessels engaged in a neutral trade. The acts, thus complained of as injuries, are undeniable facts. It is certain that G. Britain does impress our citizens and compel them to serve on board her ships of war; and that she does also seize and condemn vessels flying to citizens of the U. States and their cargoes, being the bona fide property of American citizens, not contraband of war, and not proceeding to places besieged or blockaded; under the pretext of their being engaged, in time of war, in a trade with her enemies, which was not allowed in a time of peace.

Against these injuries, our executive, through the proper organ of negotiation, has offered repeated remonstrances, and made a determined stand, in behalf of the U. States. These are the two great points in dispute. They were in general terms communicated to us in the President's message at the commencement of the session, and more particularly in his subsequent message of the 4th of January, to which I beg leave to recall the attention of the committee. It is in these words—"In my message to both Houses of Congress, at the opening of their present session, I submitted to their attention, among other subjects, the oppression of our commerce and navigation by the irregular practices of armed vessels, public and private, and by the introduction of new principles, derogatory to the rights of neutrals, and unacknowledged by the usage of nations. The memorials of several bodies of merchants of the U. States are now communicated, and will develop these principles and practices, which are producing the most ruinous effects on our lawful commerce and negotiation."

"The right of a neutral to carry on commercial intercourse with every part of the dominions of a belligerent, permitted by the laws of the country (with the exception of blockaded ports and contraband of war) was believed to have been decided between G. Britain and the U. States, by the sentence of their commissions mutually appointed to decide on that and other questions of difference between the two nations; and by the actual payment of the damages awarded by them against G. Britain, for the infractions of that right. When, therefore, it was perceived that the same principle was received with others more novel, and extending the injury, instructions were given to the minister plenipotentiary of the U. States at the court of London, and respectfully made by him on the subject, as will appear by the documents transmitted herewith. These were followed by a partial and temporary suspension only without any disavowal of the principle. He has, therefore, been intrusted to urge this subject anew, to bring it more fully to the bar of reason and to insist on rights too evident and too important to be surrendered. In the mean time, the evil is proceeding, under adjudications founded on the principle, which is denied.—Under these circumstances, the subject presents itself for the consideration of Congress."

On the imprisonment of our seamen, our remonstrances have never been intermitted. A hope existed, at one moment, of an arrange-

(Continued in last page.)