

THE MINERVA.

PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY WILLIAM BOYLAN.

Vol. 11.]

RALEIGH, (N. C.) MONDAY, JUNE 2, 1806.

[No. 529.]

From the New York Evening Post.

INTERESTING.

The following letter, written by a man of the first respectability, is entitled to the earnest perusal of every one desirous of being acquainted with the state of our national affairs. Read it, electors, and blush for your dishonoured country.

Extract of a letter from a Member of Congress, to his friend in the Western part of the State of New-York dated April 15, 1806.

DEAR FRIEND,

As your situation is somewhat remote from the centre of information, I have for some time, contemplated sending you, towards the close of the session, a sketch of some of the most prominent measures concerning our foreign relations, which have occupied the attention of Congress during the present session. As Congress will adjourn in a few days, I embrace the present opportunity to fulfil, in some measure, my purpose. Considerable information you have received from the papers which I have sent you from time to time. Their contents I shall not repeat. The secret journal of Congress while sitting in convocation, is now before the public. When the matter comes out to public view, it proves to be nothing more than that a proposition for enabling the President to raise some additional troops when he should find it necessary for repelling Spanish aggressions on our southern frontiers, which was discussed and was negatived. Another motion was introduced, for an appropriation of two millions of dollars towards the expense of a negotiation for the purchase of the Floridas, which, after considerable debate and opposition was adopted, and a law passed making the appropriation accordingly. An attempt, as you have seen by the papers, has been made to print the President's secret message of December 6th. But whether it was because some thought they had already gone too far, in consenting to print the journal, and to give back, or for some other cause, a vote for that purpose, could not be obtained. It would be a pretty thing to travel freely, with the journal already published. And if these secret intimations from the Executive, the backstairs communications, which I have reason to believe guided the decisions of a majority of the house, in all questions relating to our disputes with Spain, could be published in connexion with the public message of Dec. 31 and the private one of the 6th, it would perhaps form as singular an association as has of late appeared in any country. But it seems the private message cannot be published at present. I shall, however, make no scruple in referring to it. Not that I would insinuate there was any clashing between the public and private messages, in far as Spanish affairs were alluded to in the public message, the private one which related to nothing else, was perfectly in unison with it. But the comparing these messages would be of some use in noticing, a course of conduct pursued by the legislature, and finally sanctioned by a majority, at variance with both, but which was, I have reason to believe, perfectly in unison with secret unofficial communications from the executive.

Our disputes with Spain were on various grounds, as follow, for spoiliations on our commerce, by the subjects of Spain; spoiliations by French privateers, where the prizes were carried into, and disposed of, in Spanish ports; damages sustained by a suspension of right of deposit at New Orleans, guaranteed by the treaty between the United States and Spain, and concerning the boundaries of Louisiana. The nature of the former grounds of controversy, is probably sufficiently before the public, but perhaps I can explain to you the grounds of our territorial disputes a little more plainly than you can find in such public papers as may come within your knowledge. By the treaty of Paris of 1803, our government bought a pig in a poke, as the saying is, i. e. a certain undefined something, called Louisiana, without either metes or bounds. When our agents who negotiated the treaty wished to have the territory defined by metes or bounds, it was evaded; & they were told that they could hereafter adjust the boundaries with Spain. Our agents considered that the ancient boundary of Louisiana, when in the hands of France, before the peace of 1763, included the country in question, acceded; but by a secret article in the treaty of St. Ildefonso, which transferred the country to France, and was the basis of the treaty of Paris, or by a secret understanding between France and Spain, the country to the eastward of the Iberville was denied to be a part of Louisiana, and was reserved in the hands of Spain. So that what our agents understood to be included in the plain language and meaning of the treaty, French agents had no intention that it should include, and, if possible, still less intention that it should be known what it did include. By this means the United States have been completely swindled into a bargain to purchase they did not know what. Presuming on the same ancient bounds which had duped our agents in Europe, our executive set up a claim to the country as far eastward as the river or bay of Perdido, including a large portion of what has

of late been more generally known as a part of West Florida; and accordingly a collection district was by law established on the same shores and waters of the Mobile, where although the Collector's Office is situated within the former boundaries of the United States, yet the principal part of the district was included within what was before the treaty of Paris of the 30th of April, 1803, acknowledged Spanish territory. The western boundary of Louisiana was acknowledged to be undefined. But here a claim both extraordinary and dishonourable has been set up, extending it as far west as the Rio Bravo, or de Noire, on which the capital of New Mexico stands. There was a strong inducement on the part of government for this extraordinary extension of a claim for boundaries, in order to impress on the minds of the people of the United States that they had obtained an extraordinary bargain for their fifteen millions. This operated with a peculiar force as it respected an eastern boundary; for, exclusive of the island of Orleans, and the free navigation of the Mississippi, which is a valuable acquisition to our western country, the territory between that river and the Perdido was the only part of the supposed purchase worth a single cent to the United States.

The paradise of Louisiana, i. e. the country to the westward of the Mississippi, is a large proportion of it uninhabitable by any thing human, or even by the wild beasts of the wilderness, or the fishes of the deep. It is a drowned impassible bog, properly speaking, neither land nor water, fit only for the habitation of crocodiles, otters, minks, and musquitos, or some other species of animal to whom land or water is equally indifferent. In some places, particularly in the vicinity of New Orleans, & for a considerable distance up and down the river, perhaps 150 or 200 miles, its borders are flanked with a narrow strip of land from 1 to 3, 4, 5, and 6 miles wide, capable of cultivation, & very fertile. Back of this there is an extensive impassible swamp, covered with water in time of the floods, sometimes to the depth of 20 or 25 feet, and never thoroughly dry. It is a circumcumstance almost invariably, that the lands immediately on the bank of the river, are much higher than they are a number of miles back. Above this narrow tract, which I believe to be general highly cultivated, the impassible swamp, which is of various breadths, in some places a wide as 30 or 40 miles, approaches so close to the river that for 5 or 600 miles there is scarcely a habitable spot on the western bank, and admits of no passage to the high grounds to the west, unless by water, where it happens to be intersected by navigable streams. This must completely shut up that country from cultivation for centuries to come, even if the natural fertility of the soil was little if any inferior to the Garden of Eden. But so far as any discovery of that extensive country has been made, the soil is by no means above mediocrity. Much of it is a perfect barren, and a large proportion so entirely destitute of timber for either building, fuel, or any necessary use, as to render the country scarcely habitable, were it even practicable to get at it. By late travellers, some of the settlements upon the Red River, which I believe have been of nearly as much as one hundred years standing, are represented as miserable beyond description, and the inhabitants sunk into the lowest degree of wretchedness, of which poverty and ignorance is capable, among a people who have the most distant ideas of civilization. While the country was in the hands of Spain, the settlements were distinguished into those of Upper and Lower Louisiana. The latter comprising the city of New Orleans, and the settlements on the parts of the Mississippi adjacent, and those on the Red River, now denominated the territory of Orleans. The former including the settlements on the Missouri, and those on the Mississippi immediately above and below this junction, now denominated the Louisiana territory. Between these settlements there is an unexplored wilderness of nearly 700 miles in extent, on the greater part of which the foot of civilized man never trod, and which from the disadvantages of its situation, must be uninhabited for ages to come. Part of this, particularly what is watered by the several branches of the Arkansas river, the most considerable western branch of the Mississippi, between the Missouri and the Red river is said to be an excellent country, but excepting the Aborigines no person that I know of has ever seen it. The Mississippi floods dam up the rivers emptying into it from the west, so as to inundate the low country adjacent to their banks in such a manner as to render it uninhabitable for hundreds of miles above their junction.

A late publication which has been printed here by order of government, mentions that in the year 1799 an inundation of the Mississippi dammed up the Washita, a branch of the Red river, at a place several hundred miles above the junction of the Red river with the Mississippi, in such a manner as to cause such a stagnation and corruption of its waters, as to occasion such a mortality among the fish, as almost entirely to destroy the species. I do not enjoin it upon you to place implicit faith in the truth of this, notwithstanding the high authority under

which it is published. It stands in point of credibility, pretty much on a level with some other things related in the same works, particularly of some lakes near Natchitoches, where there is such a prodigious quantity of fish and fowl that it is not uncommon in winter, for a single man to kill from two to four hundred fowls in an evening, shooting them upon the wing as fast as he could load and discharge, without taking any particular aim. And fish are so plenty that a single Indian, with a bow and arrows, will kill them faster than another with two horses could carry them off. What should prevent the waters of the Washita descending from incorporating with those below, so that the floods themselves would remain sweet, while the waters of the river above where they mingled with the same, should not only stagnate, but putrify, is a subject which I shall leave to the investigation of my philosophic neighbours, or some of his correspondents who are perpetually imposing on his credulity, by informing him of wonders which never existed, only in imagination. Such is the Paradise of Louisiana to the west of the Mississippi, according to the best intelligence I have been able to obtain.

Spain is disposed not only to exclude us from the country to the eastward of the Iberville, but to restrict the boundary to a narrow strip, beyond the Mississippi, the principal part of which is of no value, on account of its drowned situation. The United States grasp at a territory, almost unbounded to the west, which although it would in fact give no additional value to the purchase, makes a fine show upon paper. In order to obtain an adjustment of limits, both our eastern and western boundary, as well as a settlement of other difficulties with Spain, Mr. Munroe has been sent envoy extraordinary to the court of Spain, to act without reticent mission. Their mission has in every particular, whether relating to spoiliations, to a suspension of the right of deposit, or a settlement of boundaries, completely failed of success. Every pacific proposition made by our minister, has been rejected, and the Spanish court has refused to admit any propositions in return, so that the mission has completely failed, and our ambassadors every thing but kicked out of doors—where a determination was implied, if not directly expressed, on the part of Spain, to continue their encroachments until repelled by force. Accordingly, last summer Spain was strengthening at the Havana, in order to the convenient reinforcement of Pensacola, and on the frontiers of Mexico, in order to the gathering points, near Natchitoches on the Red River. Her determination was probably impeded for a time by the battle of Trafalgar, to disconcert the marine of France and Spain. From the course of events since, we may reasonably suppose it to be only a suspension.

With respect to a claim as far eastward as the Perdido, it is plain either that our government was basely swindled in the bargain, if we have obtained no title, or that a gross attempt has been made to blindfold the nation, by inducing the public to believe that a fair purchase was made of a valuable territory, to which we had not obtained the title to a single foot. This I cannot suspect. Still before an attempt was made to palm upon the public such a belief, our executive certainly ought to have known that L'Auffat the French prefect, who received the country from Spain and transferred it to the United States, never received nor transferred a single acre, eastward of the Iberville and Lake Ponchartrain.

In order to do away the difficulties relating to the establishment of an eastern boundary, an appropriation has been made of two millions of dollars; and to avoid the appearance of repurchasing a territory we had heretofore claimed and paid for, East Florida, to which we never laid any claim, is to be coupled in the negotiation. It is not expected that the two millions appropriated will complete the purchase; it is only to be an earnest or a first payment towards it. Probably, should the negotiation prove successful, a Rock of six or seven millions more must be created. And when all this is effected, the western boundary will be as open to litigation as ever. A settlement of this will probably cost seven or eight, and perhaps ten millions more, some two or three years hence. But the secret has at length leaked out. France will not permit Spain to adjust her difficulties with us; she must be the mediator and have money. The money to be paid for the Floridas is to pass into French coffers. And if we bid him enough and our treasury will hold out to make the payment, to comport with French rapacity and avarice, we may purchase not only the Floridas, but Mexico itself, & Spain dares not refuse. So that the present appropriation may be considered in a light which I have not hesitated, and do not hesitate to consider it, viz. As a bribe to France, to induce her to bully Spain into a new settlement of her difficulties with us; and if, whenever France wants money of us, she has nothing to do but to stir up disturbances on our frontiers, and then extort money for stepping in as a mediator to settle them by inducing Spain to cede away a portion of useless territory, in California or elsewhere, pretences will never be wanting, and we are in

a fair way to be justified to a lasting, odious and oppressive tribute.

I should not be surprised if demands should be made on other pretences than territorial disputes with Spain. Should a few millions be demanded as a price of peace, in reparation of the injury of our trading so long with St. Domingo; and a few more for indemnification for a supposed injury offered to the Spanish ambassador; it would be no more strange than many things which happen every day.

In addition to a variety of circumstances, all tending to show that our disputes with Spain have in a great measure been promoted, if they did not wholly originate from the officious interference of France. Randolph has repeatedly alluded on the floor of the House, and challenged a contradiction, and it has not been as yet contradicted, that the secretary of State, Mr. Madison, told him that the reason why we could not settle our disputes with Spain was, that France would not permit Spain to settle with us; that nothing would settle the dispute but money; that our only alternative was money or a war; that France must have money, and we must give it. He added, with emphasis, I never placed unbounded confidence in that officer; but from the moment he made that declaration, whatever I had formerly placed was gone forever. To bring our government into a proper temper to pay money, a reasonable threat thrown out by France, through her organ Talleyrand, that in case of a rupture with Spain, France would unquestionably take the part of Spain, was not wholly without effect. I am aware of the evasions that are, and may be used, to explain away this threat. The best way for the public to decide, would be to publish the communications themselves. By this rule I believe every one who understood Talleyrand's language, as not barely implying, but expressing a threat, would be willing to have the matter tested.

According to understanding, if one nation assumes a peremptory tone towards another saying, Your claim, whatever it is, against a third nation must be abandoned in case of a rupture we will unquestionably join your enemy, common sense unadulterated by the wise drawing of sophistry would consider it as a threat. But although the rod was held up in view, it was unimposed officially, in a back stairs way, by some X. Y. Z agent, who happened to be more fortunate in the man than those who had to deal with Pickney and Marshall on a former occasion; that money would answer all things; & that a negotiation might be commenced at Paris.

You know the language of the President's public message, particularly with regard to Spain. The private one was in perfect unison with it; notwithstanding all the flummery held up to view of the public about vigorous measures, it does not admit of a doubt but the subject of commencing a negotiation, which, in the event, was to involve the United States, and I don't know how many millions of additional public debt, had been proposed in the cabinet, leading to a future appropriation at the meeting of Congress to meet the expense.

This measure was supported in the cabinet, not however by our martial chief, for I believe it was he who first proposed it, notwithstanding the gasconading language held up to the public at the commencement of the session. It has been said, although I do not vouch for the truth of it, that this has nearly or quite caused a schism in the cabinet. It has occasioned the secession of John Randolph from the party. You have seen his two speeches on Gregg's resolution, I could wish you to see his speeches delivered since, as well as those delivered while Congress sat in convocation. The publication of this, however, is not to be expected. The substance of a sentence or two from a speech delivered after the adoption of the resolution to appropriate the two millions, I shall transcribe. "After the adoption of this measure, you will bring forward some patry expedient or another in order to blindfold the nation, and make a show of preparing for the public defence; but gentlemen, you may propose what you please and I will fount it from one end of the continent to the other; for you are doing nothing and will do nothing but bubble the nation. Yes, I say you are bubbling the nation." (To be continued.)

A great Bargain will be sold in a Tract of Land,

INC (well county, containing between 11 and 1200 acres, lying on Country Line creek, about 10 miles from the court house, adjoining the lands of Mr. Jethro Brown.— There is on the premises, on a beautiful situation, an elegant two story Brick Dwelling House, with other buildings necessary for the accommodation of a genteel family. The soil is well adapted for the culture of wheat, corn, tobacco or cotton, and is equal in fertility, if not superior, to any in that county.

For terms apply to Mr. James Williamson, the present tenant, or to the subscriber.

Benjamin Williamson, Northampton, May 14, 1806.