

THE MINERVA.

TWO & A HALF DOLLARS PER ANNUM. Payable half Yearly.

PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY WILLIAM BOYLAN.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM. Payable in Advance.

Vol. 11.]

RALEIGH, (N. C.) MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1866.

[No. 543.]

POLITICAL.

From the RICHMOND ENQUIRER.

(Concluded from our last)

On the morning of Saturday the 21st of December, the chairman of the select committee returned from Baltimore.—The committee were immediately convened. As they were about to assemble, the chairman was called aside by the secretary of the treasury, with whom he retired, and who put into his hands a paper headed "Provision for the purchase of Florida." As soon as he cast his eyes on the title, the chairman declared that he would not vote a shilling. The secretary interrupted him, by observing, with this characteristic caution, that he did not mean to be understood as recommending the measure; but if the committee should deem it advisable, he had devised a plan for raising the necessary supplies, as he had been requested (or directed) in that case to do. The chairman expressed himself disgusted with the whole of this procedure, which he could not but consider as highly disingenuous. He said, "that he was as sensible of the importance of Florida to the United States, and as willing to acquire it honorably as any man, but he never would consent to proceed in this way: that the most scrupulous care had been taken to cover the reputation of the administration, while congress were expected to act as if they had no character to lose: that whilst the official language of the executive was confident and dignified; while the president warned us of the "determination of Spain to advance upon our possessions until she should be repelled by an opposing force," and pronounced "that the protection of our citizens, as well as the spirit and honor of our country, rendered the interposition of that force necessary," declaring at the same time "his determination to pursue the course which the wisdom of congress should prescribe;" congress was privily required to take upon itself all the odium of shrinking from the national honor and national defence, and of delivering the public purse to the first cut-throat that demanded it. From the official communications—from the face of the record, it would appear that the executive had discharged his duty in recommending many and vigorous measures, which he had been obliged to abandon, and compelled by congress to pursue an opposite course, when in fact congress itself had been acting all the while at executive instigation." The chairman further observed, "that he did not understand this double set of opinions and principles: the one offensive, to go upon the journals and before the public; the other efficient, and the real motives to action; that he held true wisdom and cunning to be utterly incompatible in the conduct of great affairs; that he had strong objection to the measure in itself; but in the shape in which it was presented his repugnance to it was insuperable." And in a subsequent conversation with the president himself, in which those objections were recapitulated, he declared "that he too had a character to support, and principles to maintain, and avowed his determined opposition to the whole scheme."

The committee now assembled, and instructed their chairman to write to the secretary of war for his opinion as to force which it would be requisite to raise for the defence of the southern frontier, and requesting, at the same time, to be informed what number of troops were already stationed in that quarter. In his answer, the minister stated the force which the United States had on the Mississippi and its branches, ready to defend the river at a short notice, to be somewhat less than a thousand men; that he had intelligence that Spain was collecting an army on the frontiers of New Mexico, and transporting troops from the Havana to Peninsola, and that the force requisite on our part, would depend upon that which would be opposed to us, which he estimated (vaguely) to be superior to our own.

About this period the sea-fight of Trafalgar reached America, the event of which alarming the Spanish ministry

for the safety of their West-India colonies, forbade the weakening of the important post of the Havana, and suspended the hostile movements on the part of Spain against the United States. And to this circumstance we have been probably indebted for the undisturbed possession of N. Orleans and its dependencies.

When the secretary of War's letter was laid before the committee, Mr. Bidwell moved the same proposition which the Secretary of the Treasury had some days before put into the hands of the chairman, and which he (Mr. B.) afterwards introduced into the chair, viz. a note of two millions and a continuance of the duties, the proceeds of which constituted the Mediterranean fund. It was rejected and the chairman directed to draft the report which has been printed with the secret journal, and published in all the newspapers. The committee saw, in the multiplied aggressions of Spain, ample cause of war, on the part of a government with which the welfare of its citizens was not paramount to every other consideration. But conceiving that the true interests of the American people (which alone it behoved them to consult) required peace, they forbore to recommend offensive measures. They believed it to be our policy to reap the neutral harvest, and seize the favorable occasion of extinguishing the public debt—at once the price of our liberties, and the badge of our ancient servitude. So long as this debt remains unpaid, we can scarcely be considered as a truly independent people. The sense of the committee was, neither to make war, nor purchase peace, but to provide for the defence our actual territory, which the highest authority had announced to have been violated and to be menaced with fresh invasion. On this point they conceived there could be but one sentiment, whatever difference of opinion might exist as to the wisdom of pledging the nation to protect its flag in remote seas, or its ability to afford such protection. A poor attempt has been made to reproach the committee with a want of reliance on the militia, and a preference for the standing army. When it is considered that all the protection then and since extended to the country in question, consists of regular troops, and that the nearest states from which the militia could be marched for its defence, are separated from it by many hundred miles of intervening Indian country (not to mention that these states themselves are amongst the weakest in the union) the incompetency of the militia to the service in question, and the futility of the objection, must become manifest to all. Besides, the president had no occasion to apply to congress for power to call out the militia to repel invasion, that force being, under such circumstances, already at his disposal; and it is worthy of remark, that the far greater number of those would be partizans of the militia, refused to adopt the measure recommended by the executive, (or indeed any other) for giving efficient operation to that great constitutional defence.

The report of the committee, alth' in strict union with the official recommendation of the Executive, was rejected by 72 to 58 votes; and the proposition to appropriate—dollars for the purpose of defraying any extraordinary expences of foreign intercourse, which had been previously laid on the table by a member of that committee, before their report was made to the house, was immediately taken up. The avowed object of this measure was to enable the president to open a negotiation for the purchase of Florida. A motion was then made by Mr. J. Randolph to confine the appropriation to that object, and agreed to, yeas 78, nays 58. Another motion was by the same gentleman to render the debt which was proposed to be incurred, redeemable at the pleasure of the U. States. This was carried without a division. But afterwards, when the bill was brought in, the house rescinded its vote for a specific appropriation; & the money was left applicable at the discretion of the Executive, to any extraordinary purpose of foreign intercourse whatsoever. Mr. J. Randolph also moved to limit the amount which the government might stipulate

to pay for the territory in question; upon the ground, that if congress were disposed to acquire Florida by purchase, they should fix the extent to which they were willing to go, and thereby furnish our ministers with a safeguard against the rapacity of France; that there was no probability of our obtaining the country for less, but every reason to believe, that, without such a precaution on our part, she would extort more. This motion was overruled. When the bill came under discussion, various objections were urged against it by the same gentleman: Among others, that it was in direct opposition to the views of the Executive, expressed in the president's official communication, (it was on this occasion that general Varnum declared the measure to be consonant to the secret wishes of the executive;) that it was a prostration of the national honor at the feet of our adversary; that a concession so humiliating would paralyze our efforts against Great Britain, in case the negotiation then and now pending between that government and ours should prove abortive: that a partial appropriation towards the purchase of Florida without limiting the president to some specific amount, would give a previous sanction to any expence which he might incur for that object, and which congress would stand pledged to make good: that, if the executive, acting entirely upon his own responsibility, and exercising his acknowledged constitutional powers, should negotiate for the purchase of Florida, the house of Representatives would in that case, be left free to ratify or annul the contract: but that the course was proposed to be pursued, (and which eventually was pursued) would reduce the discretion of the legislature to a mere shadow: that at its ensuing session, congress would find itself, in relation to this subject, a deliberative body but in name: that it could not, without a manifest dereliction of its own principles, and perhaps without a violation of public faith, refuse to sanction any treaty entered into by the Executive under the auspices of the legislature, and with powers so unlimited; that, however great his confidence in the chief magistrate, he would never, never consent to give any president so dangerous a proof of it; that his duties as a member of that house, as the independent representative of an independent people, were paramount to every other consideration; and that he never would preclude himself, by any previous sanction, from the unbiassed exercise of his judgment on measures which thereafter were to come before him; that the house had no official recommendation from the Executive for the step which they proposed to take, on the contrary it was in direct opposition to its sentiments as expressed in the confidential message; that the responsibility would be exclusively their own; that, if the president deemed it advisable to purchase foreign territory, he was free to enter into stipulations for that purpose, whilst congress would remain equally free to sanction or disapprove such stipulations; or that if he thought proper to ask for an appropriation for that object, the responsibility of the measure would rest upon him: but when the legislature undertook "to prescribe the course which he should pursue, and which he had pledged himself to pursue," the house could have no chance through which it could be made acquainted with the opinions of the Executive, but such as was official, responsible, and known to the constitution; and that it was a prostration of its high and solemn functions to act upon an unconstitutional suggestion of the private wishes of the Executive, irresponsibly announced by an irresponsible individual, and in direct hostility to his avowed opinions.

To every objection, the "Louisiana precedent," as it was called, formed the only answer, although in the latter stages of the discussion, no reply was attempted. The doors were closed, and the minority whose motives were impeached, and whose persons were almost denounced, were voted down without debate. In reply to the case of Louisiana, it was said that it was no precedent at all; that every argument drawn from that source was utterly inclusive in the present instance; that no two cases were

more dissimilar; that except the parties being the same, there was no point of resemblance; that, when Spain withheld from the right of deposit at New Orleans, Congress had acted on its own instigation alone; they had not been apprized by the executive of any hostile movement on the part of Spain; the territory of the U. S. had not been insulted, nor the persons of our citizens within our own jurisdiction, violated: It had not been officially announced to congress, that "their protection, as well as the spirit and honor of our country rendered the interposition of the national force indispensable." The chief magistrate declared that the act of aggression in question was committed by persons acting by the orders and under the sanction of the court of Madrid: on the contrary, the house of representatives had expressed by a formal resolution, their belief, that the wrong in question, had proceeded from the unauthorized misconduct of certain Spanish officers, and declared their determination in case it should be sanctioned by their government, to redress the injuries, and vindicate the rights of our citizens. On that occasion, congress avowed, that they would resort in the first instance, to an amicable explanation with the Spanish court; on this, the fair experiment of negotiation had been tried, and "after five months of fruitless endeavor, on our part, to bring them to some definite and satisfactory result, had entirely failed. It could not escape the recollection of the house, to how great an excitement, the denial of a conventional right had, at that day, roused the minds of our citizens. And it must be remembered that the acquisition of Louisiana, which put a stop to these aggressions of Spain, (for which no satisfaction had as yet been rendered) was made, not from the party by whom those offences had been offered, but from one in no wise connected with them. And admitting at the juncture the propriety of our making overtures for the purchase of a country, the possession of which, it was conceded on all hands, was highly desirable to us;—yet, what measures had we taken, or did we propose to take, for the refusal on the part of Spain, to "ratify her convention with us, signed by her own minister under the eye of his sovereign, pledging her to make compensation for the spoliation committed on our commerce during a preceding war;—to indemnify our citizens for the removal of the same practices, already of great amount, during the present war; for the obstruction of the navigation of the Mobile; for refusing to come to a fair and amicable adjustment of the boundaries of Louisiana; and for a daring violation, by persons acting under the authority of Spain, and no doubt apprized of her sentiments and views of our undisputed limits, which she had solemnly recognized by treaty."—None!—The denial of the stipulated compensation for the spoliations of a former war; the reiteration of the same practices during the present; the obstruction of the Mobile; the peremptory refusal to adjust the boundaries of Louisiana; the insults committed on our territory, and the violation of the property and persons of our citizens within our acknowledged limits; all seemed forgotten, in the zeal to purchase Florida, or thrown with the national purse into the scale.

The bill nevertheless passed by a great majority. A motion was then made to transmit, by a committee, the following message to the senate:

"By the house of representatives, Jan. 16th, 1866.

Gentlemen of the Senate,

We transmit you a bill which has passed the house, entitled "An act making provision for defraying the extraordinary expences attending the intercourse between the U. S. and foreign nations" and in which we require your concurrence. The bill has been passed by us to enable the president of the U. S. to commence, with more effect, a negotiation for the purchase of the Spanish territories lying on the Atlantic ocean, and gulph of Mexico, and eastward of the river Mississippi. The nature and importance of the measure contemplated have induced us to act upon the subject with closed doors. You will of consequence, consider this communication as confidential. Mr. John Randolph then moved to strike out the words "river Mississippi," and to insert "Gulf of Perdido," upon this ground—that the country between the Mississippi and the Perdido was in dispute between the U. S. and Spain, being a part of Louisiana, "such as it was as possessed by