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Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31.

The bill supplementary to the act laying an embargo was discussed in the House, when, about 1 o'clock, on motion of Mr. Randolph, it was postponed.

Mr. Randolph then rose for the purpose of making a motion, and giving information to the House which he had just received. This was a duty which he owed not only to himself, but to the enlightened and independent freeholders who gave him a seat on this floor, and to the country at large. Within a few days information had been put into his possession, of a nature and on a subject which he deemed it proper for the constituted authority to enquire into. Had this information come earlier into his possession, he should not till now have delayed giving it publicity. He would first state certain facts, and those facts would be the ground of his motion, on which he should offer no argument. Mr. R. then read the following documents,

TRANSLATION.

In the gallery the Victoria, Bernardo Molina, Patron, there have been sent to Don Vincent Felch, nine thousand six hundred and forty dollars, which sum, without making the least use of it, you will hold at my disposal to deliver it at the moment that an order may be presented to you by the American general, Don James Wilkinson. God preserve you many years.

News-News, 29th January, 1796.

The Baron de CARONDELET.

To Senr. Don Thomas Portell
I hereby certify that the foregoing is a copy of its original to which I refer.
(Signed) THOMAS PORTELL.
New-Madrid, 27th June, 1796.

Port of San Juan, Sept. 22, 1796.

All health and many pressing engagements must be my apology for a short letter. I must refer you to my letter to the Baron for several particulars and for a detail of my perils and losses. I must beg leave to refer you to my friend Power whom I find a youthful enterprising and a fidelity; he is a worthy lawyer well of the court and I don't doubt that he will be rewarded.

When political crisis is the present and how deeply interesting its probable results, in all its tender cities, and truly, must hope it may not be carried into execution. It is an evil reform in the office and the military establishments of Louisiana will be found immediately indispensible to the security of the Mexican provinces. I beg to write me fully on this question in cypher by Power, as the office of Philadelphia is necessary, as well to the character, attacked by Wayne, as to support the cause of the outrage recently offered to the Spanish crown in person, and to bring me either the person or the despatch of a man now under your command, who had been taken by Wayne, to bear false witness against me, and afterwards for fear he should recant, bribed him to leave Kentucky. Power will give you the effect of this information, and I conjure you to all the necessary friends of policy to assist him on this occasion. If Spain does not resent the outrage offered to Powers in the face of all Kentucky. My letter to the Baron will explain the motives, such carry me to Philadelphia, from thence I will write you. Power will explain to you circumstances which justify the belief of the great treaty of the late treaty with respect to the money lately sent. For the love of God and friendship enjoy great secrecy and caution in your councils. Never suffer my name to be written or spoken. THE SUSPICION OF WASHINGTON IS WISE AWAKE! Beware of Bradford, the Fort and refuge, he seeks to make peace—the e are spies everywhere. We have a report that you are appointed governor of Louisiana. God Grant it, as I presume the Baron will be promoted. I am your affectionate friend.

W.

Copy of a letter in cypher received from general Wilkinson. Natchez, 6th of February, 1797.

(Signed) Manuel Goyosa de Lemus.
In a separate paper he says what follows: This was delivered to you by Noland whom you know is a thief of his own raising, true it is the profession of a man in the attachments to Spain. I consider him a powerful instrument in our hands, should occasion offer, I will answer for his conduct. I am deeply interested in whatsoever concerns him, and I confidently recommend him to your warmest protection. I am eventually your affectionate friend.
WILKINSON.

A copy,

Manuel Goyosa de Lemus.

N. B. Don Goyosa was then governor of Natchez and the same year was made governor of Louisiana.

Mr. Randolph stated the following to be an extract of a letter signed T. Power, whose handwriting he understood could be identified:

"On the 27th of the same month [October last] appeared in the Richmond Enquirer a certificate given by myself to Gen. Wilkinson in New-Orleans on the 16th of May preceding, immediately on my getting sight of his piece, which was the same of the next day, I addressed a note to his Excellency Gen. Wilkinson [N. B.] On this I did not keep a copy and therefore dare not touch that it is an exact literal transcript of the original. But I will be bold to say that it is every (or to make use of the General's own language) substantially the same.

Between my repeated declarations to many of my friends and acquaintances (I must say to with a blush) and this certificate there is a manifest contradiction. And between this same certificate and the deductions to be drawn from my declaration before the Richmond Enquirer, there is an apparent inconsistency which it is now my task to clear up.

During Gen. Wilkinson's residence in New-Orleans last winter, I used occasionally to visit him. A few days before he left Orleans I waited upon him one morning, and after some conversation on certain transactions that had taken place at a former period in the western country, and on the delicate situation in which his conduct during the winter was likely to place him, he asked me if I had any objection to give him a certificate that I had helped him to secure that foul mouthed Bradford, and

relate the assertions of the editor of the Western World. I replied without hesitation that I had done, and would give him one with pleasure, provided he promised me it should not be published. On this he assured me that the only use he proposed to make of it, was to lay it before the President, with the view to prove the falsehood of the charges circulated against him, vindicate his character and secure the confidence of the Executive. This it not exactly, a substantiality with the general and. He then desired me to sit down and write the certificate. I observed that I might not make it out entirely to his satisfaction; and that the best way would be to let him see it, and if he had better make it out himself, and I would copy it. To this he agreed. Next morning I waited on his Excellency, and he presented me the certificate, which I copied, as I has been published with a few alterations. One, a very material one, is that after these words, "do not mention my name, or that I have, at no time, a red or a white directly or indirectly." I erased the words "either directly or indirectly." He did not insist, I mentioned himself with saying that he wished me to insert them if my conscience would allow it, but not otherwise. This is ingeniously, exactly what passed between the general and myself at that time.

Now let me with the same frankness and ingenuousness, without referring to any preceding or subsequent event, narrate the transaction of 1796, alluded to in my certificate, and concerning which I offered to give testimony on the Federal Circuit court in Richmond. It is the same that is the subject of the affidavits of Messrs. De Bigny and Mercer. That of the former gentleman is correct as to substance, for I actually did receive from Capt. Don Thomas Portell, commandant of New Madrid, the sum of 9,400 dollars for General Wilkinson, towards the latter end of June or beginning of July, 1796, which was packed up in the morning, and delivered by Mr. De Bigny, a day when I was stopped, and was searched on the Ohio by Lt. Col. Steele, under the orders of Gen. Anthony Wayne, I had a letter from London, but this was the only one I had received from General Wilkinson. On my arrival at Louisville, determined not to expose myself a second time to military insult and fear, I being overtaken by Steele on his return and being again overhauled, I made my cargo, purchased a horse, and proceeded by land to Cincinnati. As I passed through Lexington, I published in Stewart's Kentucky Herald my affidavit concerning this outrage, supported by the signatures of the spectators of the transaction, Welsh, White and Sisson; preceded by a few pictures on this military piracy, signed in parallel. And I now take the opportunity of clearing Gen. Wilkinson of the charge of being the author of it, as is asserted by Bradford of New-Orleans, and declared to be written by myself, and that, excepting Captain Campbell Smith, no person else had it before it was put into the hands of the printer.

At Cincinnati I acquainted Gen. W. with the circumstances that had occurred, and he gave me orders to deliver the money to Mr. Philip Nolan. I therefore immediately executed. Mr. N. has conveyed the orders of sugar and coffee, that contained the dollars to Frankfort a wagon, I there saw them opened in Mr. Montgomery's store. The sugar and coffee, I afterwards sold to Mr. Abijah Hunt of Cincinnati.

I shall give no notice of Mr. McDonough's affidavit. It does not refer to any thing alluded to in my certificate. That part of mine that has reference to my mission to Kentucky and Detroit in 1797, I shall pass over in silence as it has no connection with the present subject.

I will not endeavor in a few words to recite to you what may appear a long and inconsistent in my certificate, and the declaration I have just made to you.

Was I base, and dishonorable enough, to descend to a gift of money, a bribe, a capricious bribe, and that I never did carry or deliver to Gen. Wilkinson any cash, bills, or property of any species. It is true, I delivered a certain sum of money by his order to Mr. Nolan; but Philip Nolan is James Wilson on my own; I was with a rate conscience, &c. but I mean to make use of such a sum, contemptible and degrading mode of defence, and will allow for a moment, that I did deliver to Gen. Wilkinson the money in question. It is generally admitted that in judicial trials is not to be measured by the same narrow scale, that which ought to regulate the moral conduct of men in their private concerns. The rigid stick would on a long run make but a bungling politician; and the most austere moralist, if he has his country's interest at heart, and is acting in a public capacity, would not hesitate to do that which a private man, and in private concerns would shrink and recede from with horror and trembling precipitation.

Let us now for a while suppose that I was a secret agent of the Spanish government, and that Gen. Wilkinson was a pensioner of said government, or had received certain sums to co-operate with and promoting its views, and that the views and projects were inimical to that of the United States, should I be worthy of the trust reposed in me by my government, were I to refuse to give Gen. W. any documents that might contribute to raise him in the good opinion of the administration of his country, honor his integrity and patriotism, and thereby him in their confidence, and by their means engage his power of injuring them and serving us? Surely not; or if I did, I should deserve to be hoodwinked as an idiot.

Mr. Randolph then said, it would be waste of time to comment on what he had read; but he conceived it his duty to tell the House that he had good cause to believe that there was a member of this body, who had it in his power, if the authority of the House were exercised upon him, if he were coerced, to give the House much more full, important, and damning evidence, than that which had already appeared. He alluded to the gentleman from the territory of Orleans (Mr. Clark) whom he had now the pleasure to see in his seat. If the United States were in the critical situation which had been so often represented, and in which all considered them to be placed, in what position was the military force of the U. States at this moment? Was it not proper that this business should be enquired into? He had been given to understand long ago that an enquiry on this subject was to be courted; it had not taken place. He had no more to say, but moved the following resolution:

Resolved, That the President of the United States be requested to cause an enquiry to be instituted into the conduct of Brigadier Gen. James Wilkinson, commander in chief of the

armies of the United States, in relation to his having, at any time, while in the service of the United States, corruptly received money from the government of Spain, or its agents.

Mr. Clarke said he unexpectedly heard himself named, and he would observe, that it had been long supposed, from his residence in Louisiana, his acquaintance with military officers, and the various means of information which he might have possessed while consul at Orleans, that he was acquainted with certain transactions which had taken place in that country. The knowledge which he had possessed, he had endeavored to impart to the administration at different times, both verbally and by a written correspondence, to which a deaf ear had been turned. As this information had not been attended to, he had refused to gratify curiosity on the subject. And notwithstanding the gentleman's casting upon him, he felt himself bound to say, that he would not be influenced by fear, favor or affection, to give any information on the subject, except compelled by a resolution of the House. [A further detail in our next.]

A debate ensued, which continued till past 5 o'clock, almost entirely on the mode proper to be pursued, whether to refer the resolution to a select committee or a committee of the whole, or to pass it without reference. No decision was however made. The further consideration of the subject was postponed on motion of Mr. Smilie till Monday.

BORTIFICATION OF PORTS AND HARBORS.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16.

House in committee of the whole. Debate on Mr. Gardner's motion to fill the blank in the bill with two millions of dollars, instead of one million as proposed by Mr. Blount.

Mr. Quincy (Mass.) Mr. Chairman—In filling this blank, you put the heart to this bill. If, in doing it, you inquire not what are the exigencies of the commercial cities, but what is the least possible, which will stay popular clamour, you may as well pass the act. It will be useless. It will be lifeless. It will be worse than useless and lifeless. It will mislead and deceive the people. Thinking themselves under your guardianship, they will neglect to resort to their own resources. The amount of this appropriation is the vital principle—it is the spirit of the bill. All the rest is wind, and water, and earth. Reduce this to less than is sufficient for effectual defence; or make it wholly inadequate, and you may call the bill on the table an active being, if you please; but it is more like a living man, than a corpse is like a living man. It has, indeed, the form and appearance of power; but it conveys no hope. It will be followed only by distress and despair. Here then the advocates of the commercial cities must make a stand. Here they must be victorious or their cause is lost.

It is impossible, rightly to appreciate our duties to this nation on the subject now before the committee, without making some reference to the general situation and prospects of this country. Whether any defence, for our sea coast, is necessary, depends upon our perception of present, or our anticipation of future danger. The nature and degree of that defence; whether the scale of appropriation, shall be liberal, or limited, depends upon our view of the nature of the evils which surround us; and has a strict and necessary connexion with their number, their species and extent. And although the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Sturges) has been interrupted and called to order, for taking an enlarged survey of our national relations upon this question, I shall not be deterred from pursuing a similar course. I shall not ask the leave of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Nicholas) nor shall I apologise to this committee, for tracing national obligations to their natural though distant sources. The features of our times, the characters of the nations which interfere with our interests, our relative strength and weakness have all an inevitable influence, in deciding the nature of the preparation to be made, and of consequence, the amount of the sum to be appropriated.

I shall also adopt this course, the rather, because the principles from which gentlemen have generally drawn the duty, and the extent of sea coast, and frontier defence, have seemed altogether too contracted for the magnitude of the object. I am not satisfied that the great interests of the nation

* There is manifestly something defective in this sentence; but it is conformable to the manuscript of our reporter.

should be placed on so narrow a basis. I cannot consent to deduce permanent duties, from temporary pressure. Let us not appear to be stung by insult, into the fulfilment of the highest and the most perpetual obligations.

The views I shall present for the consideration of the committee will be neither local, nor sectional. Nor shall they have a party texture. It shall not be my fault if in the present crisis of our country, the spirit of party be not crushed upon this floor. We all stand upon the brink of a precipice. It is no time to jostle one another. The fates of our country, are suspended over a gulph, so dark, that no human eye can penetrate to its bottom; nor has any spirit came up from its depths to tell us, if there be any thing there, which will break our fall.

It is very obvious, from the whole course of debate, that our duties are deduced from the hazards, immediately impending. British aggressions make men alive to the dangers which surround our commercial cities. British insults inspire whatever will this house evinces, to open the treasury to their necessities. The power, and inclination of that nation to injure us are the themes of every argument. Thence spring our propositions for defence; and they all have a single reference to the evils seeming to spread from that quarter. I blame not this temper. It is the nature of our species. It is the daily practice of men in his individual character. Thoughtless of the past. Careless of the future. Deeply impressed only by what is present. Never wise from the experience of others. Always half taught, by his own starting, with a wild and over hasty speed, at the first touch of the spur of necessity. Dull and callous to the urgency of general obligations.

But will national wisdom be caught in this common snare? Will men acting in high stations, rich in the confidence of their countrymen—will statesmen, stumble on blind and deaf to the aspects and warnings of nature; take no step, which is not forced by some incumbent pressure? Such weakness and folly far exceed any things individuals can exhibit. These are often saved from the effects of their conduct, by friends, by the influence or laws of society; even death itself sometimes intervenes and rescues them from the experience of all the consequences of their errors. But it is not so with nations. Compared with the life of an individual their existence is an immortality. They have neither associates to watch over them, nor any superintending sovereignty to preserve them from the results of their misdeeds. They never fail to gather, in full harvest the fruit of the wisdom or folly of their rulers.

While, therefore, I honor the patriotism which keenly feels the insults offered our country, I cannot follow the common example, and suffer passion to evaporate, in vain expressions of indignation. The use I would make of recent injuries, is not limited to mere utterance of anger. "From this too ugly and venomous, I would extract a precious jewel." There is a general truth, which, altho' it be the lesson of all history, men seem not to realize. Truth, which the events of our time are adapted deeply to impress. Without reference to names, or nations, uncontrolled power will always be insolent; when the strong and the weak meet together on the same plain, without other restraint than natural law, the one must suffer and the other will oppress. If weakness be the allotment of Providence, or the condition of our nature, we have only to take resignation to our bosom, & to bend to the Supreme will. But if our imbecility be artificial, if it result from our want of sense or want of spirit, however inclined we may be to cast the odium of unprovoked injury upon the oppressor, we are in truth, half-worked in our own destruction; we are the panders to our own shame. Have we not sense? Have we not intelligence? Have we not numbers? Have we not riches? Have we not a people, to whom their constitution and liberties are dear? Why, then, should we be content with any thing less than a full protection to our rights and most important interests? Why should not the wealthy, the populous and the exposed parts of our nation, be covered by the national shield, not according to the niggardly scale of existing surplusses, in your treasury, but upon the liberal principle of giving certain security and rational content? The morality of nations ever was, and ever will be like the morality of John Falstaff. "If the young dace be the known bait of the old Pike, there is no law in nature to prevent his snapping at him." We have the wisdom of former times, we have the experience of our own, in concurrence, testifying to the great truth, of which I am speaking. If we listen