

Mr. CAMBRELENG thought the act of the British authorities to which allusion had been made most atrocious and reprehensible, but deemed the debate upon it at present to be premature. He was in favor of the motion of Mr. Thompson, to refer to the committee the different portions of the message.

Mr. HAYNES rose to say that he did not agree with the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Thompson, that the communications of the Secretary of War were too tame for the occasion. He made but a few remarks, which, owing to his back being turned to the reporters were almost entirely inaudible to him.

Mr. GRAY, of New York, sent to the Chair a newspaper, containing the letter of McNabb, before referred to, which was read from the chair.

Mr. Fillmore asked the date of that document.

The Clerk answered, the 29th of December.

Mr. Gray said he had it read to show that there had been some exasperating circumstances, in the conduct of the people on the frontier, on the side of the United States.

Mr. FILLMORE stated extremely if any thing had taken place upon the part of any portion of the people of the State of N. Y., to justify or palliate, an outrage like that committed by the British troops. But that was a point into which it was not now his wish to go at all. The letter just read by the Clerk, at his colleague's request, was written in reply to one from the District Attorney as to the reported intention of the British to invade Grand Island, and in it is the declaration that there was no such intention. Now, Mr. F. would call the attention of the House to the fact that that letter was written on the 29th of December; and that it was on the very night succeeding the date of it that this gross outrage was committed on the Caroline. Moreover, he would call the attention of the House to the well-authenticated fact, that after burning the boat, and sending it over the falls, the assassins were lighted back to McNabb's camp, where he was, in person, by beacons lighted there for that purpose.

Mr. F. certainly deprecated a war with Great Britain as sincerely as any gentleman on that floor could possibly do, and hoped, as earnestly, that these difficulties would be amicably adjusted between the two nations. Yet, he must say, that the letter of McNabb, instead of affording grounds for a palliation, was, in reality, a great aggravation of the outrage. It held out to us the assurance that there was nothing of the kind to be apprehended, and yet, a few hours afterwards, this atrocity was perpetrated by an officer sent directly from the camp of that McNabb.

Mr. F. expressed his surprise that there was nothing said in this message of the President of the United States in regard to the means of protecting the forts on that frontier. On the 20th of December, he (Mr. F.) had informed the Secretary of War that there was great danger of difficulties arising between the Canadians and the People of the States residing on that frontier; and he had been then told by that officer that all the available force of the country was concentrated at Florida, and that it would be impossible to withdraw any portion of them immediately. A fort upon our own frontier (Mr. F. said) had been left entirely unguarded, and the cannon had actually been taken away from thence, and carried to Grand Island by people there, who were thus permitted, by the culplessness of this Government, to provoke war between this country and Great Britain.

Mr. Gray said that he was by no means disposed to apologize for the conduct of the British officer, or officers, who had caused this outrage upon the persons and property of American citizens. But he was averse, at this time, to precipitating this country into a war with Great Britain.

Mr. TILLINGHAST hoped and trusted that there was no ground for the anticipation that war between the United States and Great Britain could possibly arise out of this unfortunate affair; and he also trusted that no such feeling would be fastened in that house by any thing which gentlemen might feel called upon to say. The consequences of such an event would indeed be disastrous, as would, indeed, be those upon the frontier, were it understood that such an event were anticipated by Congress. Mr. T. confessed that he did not see that there was, necessarily, any more danger of such an event now than before. For he did not see how any one, who rightly understands the established feeling between the two countries could possibly imagine that the government of Great Britain would ever sanction a deliberate murder, committed under such circumstances as those attending the late atrocious act upon the Northern frontier. It was an act of assassination—a crime, for which this Government had the power and the right to insist upon the most rigorous punishment of the perpetrators. That such a punishment would be inflicted he could not for a moment doubt. He could not believe that the Government of Great Britain will permit an act so

outrageous to permit a prompt and efficient measure of redress. But, in the mean time, (continued Mr. T.) this highly excited People on the Northern frontier must not be left to the sway of their own unchecked impulses in this state of affairs. Injuries were committed on both sides.—Exasperation follows; retaliation comes next; and there should be a sufficient force stationed there to prevent these irregularities, these outbreaks of feelings.—There should have always been permitted to remain there a sufficient force to prevent these disturbances.—If the necessity for this was not foreseen, at least since it has been impending, it should have been cared for.—The arms of the United States left unguarded, her posts neglected, and no force left there to protect them against pillage and violence—all this certainly shows great and culpable neglect on the part of our Government. But, at all events, this subject (Mr. T. remarked) is now before the House in a proper form for its action, and he hoped that that action would be prompt and decisive. He was in favor of the motion of Mr. Thompson to refer the several portions of the Message to the two committees named.

Mr. Howard accepted the suggestion as a modification of his own opinion.

Mr. BRONSON, of N. Y., regretted to perceive that there was as great a disposition, in some quarters, to make war upon the Administration, as in others, to pursue a hostile course towards Great Britain. For himself, he could not see wherein the Administration had been at all to blame in the matter. How was the Administration to be blamed because the Canadians had come across the lines and made war upon some of the citizens of the United States? Until within thirty days there had been no hostile demonstrations on that frontier. No one had supposed, until very recently, that there would be any occasion there for troops. Every thing was quiet and peaceful on that border forty days ago. And now, gentlemen say that Government is to blame because that frontier is not fortified and garrisoned. He would ask the gentlemen of the South why this is so. Is it not because the whole force of the country is concentrated at the South, and protecting that frontier, as, indeed, they rightfully should be doing? Why is this? Why is there no adequate force at the North? Because, until now, there has existed no necessity for their presence there; and it has been absolutely impossible to withdraw troops from the South for that service, if such necessity had existed. He, himself, had represented the great need of such measures, had they been practicable, and every thing that could be done, has been done, to protect that frontier. And he repeated, that he could not possibly conceive wherein the administration had shown itself blameworthy in the affair.

He would say a single word as to the allegation that the measures of the government were characterized by tameness, in reference to this question. He would remind gentlemen of the old proverb, that "they who live in glass houses must not throw stones." And he asked, supposing that it should turn out that this government were in a "glass house" in this matter? Suppose it should turn out that some of our own people had raised, upon Navy Island, the flag of revolution, "of piracy," as McNabb calls it, against the British government, and that this same steamboat Caroline had been engaged in carrying munitions of war, provisions, and men, to aid the forces on that island, against the Government,—perhaps there might have been something previous to the destruction of that boat to palliate its destruction. He disclaimed any intention of justifying the outrages committed upon that occasion, but he thought it best to suggest that there might be some palliative circumstances, which were not yet all known. He was for a calm and dispassionate inquiry into the whole case.

Mr. RHETT, of South Carolina, observed that it was the first duty of those who would speak upon the agitating subject before the House, to inquire, who was to blame in this affair? The blame had by some gentlemen been laid at the door of the Administration, but surely without just cause. There was no force at its disposal; in fact, there was not one regular soldier on the ground, and those officers of the Government to whom it had a right to look for the preservation of our neutrality had been among the most forward in contributing to the existing state of things on that frontier. We had none to blame but ourselves. A rebel chief, a fugitive from his country, had crossed the frontier, and in open day, by violent and inflammatory speeches, had instigated American citizens to take up arms. This individual, a traitor in the view of British authorities, had been permitted openly to recruit men in the public streets of Buffalo. And this while we are at peace with the British Nation and its Government. Was this all? No.—A body of men, 99 out of 100 of whom were Americans, had gone over upon a neutral island, and established themselves in a hostile attitude, and in open defiance of the British Government and of the laws of nations. Under such a state of things, Great Britain could not look to the inefficiency of the powers of our Executive to prevent such aggressions; it would look at the fact alone. We were bound to

control our citizens, and were responsible for their conduct. Besides, there was kept up a constant communication with this insurgent body from the American shore, from which they were supplied with provisions and munitions of war, and this boat which had been destroyed, it was said, had been engaged in an intercourse of this very character. Before he could be in circumstances to pronounce any opinion on the character of the transaction which had created so great a sensation among our People, he must first know the fact, whether that boat was engaged in carrying over to Navy Island articles contraband of war. If she was, Mr. R. would not say that the representatives of the British Government had no right to seize and destroy her. At all events, it was a gallant enterprise, and if he had been in the situation of Col. McNabb, and had reason to believe that the boat was engaged in such a proceeding, he believed he should have done the same, and so, he suspected, would any other man of any intrepidity.

Gentlemen ought not to forget the ground taken by General Jackson with the Spanish authorities at Pensacola, and maintained so ably by the gentleman from Massachusetts, then Secretary of State. Then we held, that if the Spanish officers received refugees from the American lines and suffered them to remain and to have protection within Spanish fortresses, we had a right to seize upon them by the strong hand. Gentlemen must all remember how many Indians were found there when Pensacola was taken. Were we not now in a similar situation with Spain? Had not we received, cherished, and encouraged refugees from Canada, and suffered them to muster men and arms within our own territory?—Mr. R. insisted that this nation was in the wrong. Our own People, without any authority or permission from their own Government, had plunged into this Canadian contest; on them rested the responsibility, and not on Congress or the Administration. And he would here declare, in his place, that it would be to our lasting shame and dishonor, should we be driven into a war under such circumstances. In a state of profound peace between the two nations, our citizens had risen up and invaded the soil of a British province with the avowed purpose of putting down the institutions of Government existing there. What should we think, were the case our own, and British citizens were to gather upon our frontier with the avowed purpose of extinguishing our republican institutions? Would we tolerate such an attempt for a moment? Never. Before, then, we wrought ourselves up into fury for imaginary wrongs, let us look at the matter fairly, and mark with whom the aggression lies. He was not going to war on any such ground. He thought 180 millions of public debt was quite enough for one generation to incur for war, unless the national honor demanded it in the clearest manner. Until we knew the facts of this affair, no man could express a correct opinion—but appearances were clearly against us. He was for preserving an honorable bearing toward a friendly Power, and treating with that fairness and just consideration which we should demand from others. If war should ensue from what had thus far transpired, it would not be because of any aggressions now complained of, but from a spirit of defiance and menace, but too recklessly, he thought indulged upon that floor.

Mr. MENEFFEE next addressed the Chair, but the first part of his remarks were inaudible at our reporter's desk. He was understood to press for the consideration of the existing juncture of affairs with calmness and dignity. The act of those who destroyed the Caroline had not been avowed by the British authority; it was thus far merely an inchoate state of things; and it was incumbent on that House to set to the country an example of moderation and of a statesman like manner of viewing and of discussing a topic on which so much excitement had unfortunately been already manifested. He regretted to hear sentiments advanced and declarations made here which were calculated to have on the People of the United States, an influence of the worst kind. It was to be presumed, as a thing of course, that this nation would vindicate, at all times, its own rights, and those of every one of its citizens; but he was opposed to uttering bravadoes beforehand as to what deeds of daring we would do in the way of vengeance and punishment.—Inasmuch as the language and feelings manifested in this House were calculated to give tone to public feeling generally, he must protest against the infractions, at this stage of affairs, of a belligerent spirit that might lead to passion in legislation. Gentlemen ought to reflect that there was no great principle at stake, no right of search, no question of blockade, none of those great and essential questions of international policy or rights which might justify a resort to force; and he should be utterly unwilling to see two countries like Great Britain and the United States precipitated into a war by the excited passions of men acting without the authority of either Government. But he had no such fears. We were going to have no war with England; and it might be as well to proclaim it now as at any other time. The remotest fears of

such an issue were in his view perfectly preposterous: it was not to be thought of.

Gentlemen seemed to forget who Great Britain and the United States were in the scale of nations. They forget that a resort to war was now growing unfashionable, and that nations were beginning to regulate their intercourse and to settle their occasional differences on grander principles than those of mere physical and relative force—the noble principles of civil liberty, justice, and the advance of civilization. It would be to make war on the spirit of the age, if, by a sort of legislative madness, gentlemen should insist on precipitating us into a national contest for matters like the present. But they never could do it; they could not force war between two nations, standing, as they did, toward the rest of the world, unless they could first roll back the spirit of the age. These nations had, it is true, fought against each other; but even in the midst of their contest, there were still so many kindred principles in the bosoms of both, as to triumph over their temporary hostility, and unite them as friends of human freedom and the civilization of the species. Why, then, would gentlemen, under an imperfect and doubtful state of information, on grounds of acknowledged passion, rather than of ripe political consideration, insist upon putting their country in a false position?

But Mr. M. went on to observe, there had been a cause much deeper than the seizure of this steamboat Caroline, to produce the existing state of excitement among our people. The Government of the United States had, by indirect force on the country, the difficulties under which it was now laboring.

Mr. M. now held, here in his place, and the whole civilized world would hold this Administration accountable, to a most atrocious extent, for whatever consequences should grow out of what had happened on the frontier. For what had been its course in regard to the Government of Mexico, with whom, as with Great Britain, this country was at peace? It was an ungrateful task to a man who loved his country to prove that it was in fault; but truth demanded it. He charged the Government of the United States with having, during the last four years, been guilty of the most discredit and cowardly non-enforcement of the neutral relations it owed to a foreign Government to be found in the history of civilized nations. Scarce a village was there in the whole Western and South western portion of the Union in which the enlistment of men, or some other hostile preparation, had not been going on with a view to the invasion of that country, and a forcible interference in her contest with the revolted province of Texas. It was very true that, in word, in from, the thing was discouraged, orders were issued prohibiting it. Yet, the officers of the Government had not only connived at, but almost become, themselves, parties to such a course of conduct. Now if this conduct, on the part of the American Government could terminate on those who were its authors, Mr. M. would say, let them go down to merited infamy; he had no tears to shed over their fall; but it was not so: the nation, its honor and its interest, were involved. Instead of observing, with scrupulous care, the obligations of our neutral position, obligations which the very weakness of that infant Republic entrusted to our honor as much as our duty, the Government of this country had encouraged a lawless spirit among our own People, which availed itself of that which ought to have addressed our magnanimity as the means of violating the sacredness of treaties, and trampling on the rights of a nation with whom we were in profound peace and amity.

The gentleman from South Carolina had laid all the blame of the present difficulty on the People of the United States alone; but Mr. M. contended that much of the blame was justly due to the impunity, and even indirect encouragement which they had met with at the hands of their own Government in open breaches of the law of nations and the sacred obligations of treaties. But the time was now come when these violations of neutrality must have an end. Mr. M. had as lief that this should be effected by a regard to the dignity and the power of the British Government as in any other way. We were now likely to be brought to our senses. We had met with an equal, and that equality would be so presented to our consideration as to force us to look at our own course of action. It was better for us, that the infamy of our conduct toward a Government on our Southwestern frontier should at once be openly exposed, than reluctantly confessed after the national strength and resources should have been frittered away by a profitless contest. On this Administration must rest the responsibility of having violated all that was statesmanlike and all that was moral.

But Mr. M. had no purpose to enter into a discussion of this matter now; let us first have all the facts, we were not prepared to act with understanding, and he was unwilling to have the nation precipitated into a false position either by the friends or the enemies of the Administration. He desired to have the national honor stand like a

mighty mountain, with its peak above the clouds; but never would this be its foundation, instead of resting on the everlasting rock of justice and truth, was based on the quicksands and the floods of passion, and of rash and headlong excitement. He longed to see a total regeneration of the Administration of our country in its whole course of conduct towards foreign Powers.

Mr. Waddy Thompson rose in reply. He believed that he had heretofore given some evidence to the House that he was not over anxious to hurry the country into a war, and some evidence of firmness in daring to protest against what he believed to be unjust. And in the few remarks he had made when last up, he had endeavored to say, in as strong language as he knew how to use that none could look with more earnest deprecation toward a war with England, as infinitely injurious to both nations; yet he had that there were alternatives which would induce him to submit to extermination, ay, to the destruction of the world, before he would consent to dishonor. He had been astonished to hear the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. Menefee) say that in this case there was no principle involved. Great God! were they to be told on the floor that American citizens, within the lines of American jurisdiction, might be murdered in their sleep by foreign mercenaries, and yet no principle involved.

Mr. Menefee asked whether the gentlemen knew such to be the facts of the case?

Mr. T. said he had spoken, from the first, expressly on the hypothesis that the account which the House had received (of the outrage at Schlosser) was a true account. He trusted in God there would be no necessity for war; he prayed as devoutly that it might be averted as any other member of that House; but if the alleged outrages had actually been perpetrated, then we had but one alternative redress or war. He should hold himself as lost to every principle of personal honor, could he hold any other sentiment. The statement, such as it was, had been sent to that House from the Executive Department: it was prima facie evidence; but he trusted it would turn out to be true; at least, not to the full extent. The conduct of our own people, how blameable soever could furnish no excuse, scarce an extenuation of conduct so outrageous. Gentlemen had reproached the Administration as being chargeable with this unhappy state of things by its neglect of the frontier. God knew that amidst the perpetually changing phases of the times, where, indeed, nothing seemed to be certain but change; he little expected to become the apostle of the Administration; but he felt that as great a change must pass upon himself, before he could fail to defend this Administration against a foreign Power.

Mr. T. never would consent to surrender the national honor. He never could use a question of national glory as an instrument to break down even this Administration. He believed the charge of having neglected the frontier to be unfounded. All had been done by the Government which, with its means, could be done. Letter on letter had been addressed to the District Attorney, urging him to be vigilant in the application of the laws against all violations of neutrality. Had the Executive any preventive power? He was glad his colleague (Mr. Ruff) had not laid this charge at the door of the Administration, but at that of the People on our Northern frontier; and in this he agreed with him in opinion. As to the dereliction of the Government in not enforcing our neutrality with Mexico, the same difficulty occurred. Who could forbid a man's expatriating himself, and going to reside in Texas, if such were his pleasure? Or who could forbid him to carry with him whatever he pleased? It was very true that treaties were the supreme law of the land, and it was the duty of all to observe them with the most sacred regard. But there was no such thing as executing a law against the public will. All had been done by the Government which could be done; but where they were neither informers to lodge a complaint, nor grand juries to bring in a bill, how could offenders be brought to punishment?

Mr. T. regretted the conduct of persons on the frontier: it had been undoubtedly criminal; it had produced a state of things which had been well summed up by a speaker in the other end of the Capitol, who said that the People were at war while their Governments were at peace. But how was the right of expatriation, and of volunteering in the service of another nation or a portion of it as had been done by De Kalb and Lafayette, in our own Revolution, to be put down? But allowing all this to be ever so wrong, Great God! what a difference was there between such a state of things and the case of a band of armed men, attacking a helpless, unarmed company in the unsuspecting hours of sleep, massacring them amidst cries for quarter? He trusted that the fact was not so; he hoped there were great mitigations of its atrocity; but where things of this kind were once commenced among a people mutually irritated and inflamed against each other, there was no telling where it was to end.

Mr. T. said he had the fullest confidence that the whole affair would be so conducted as to preserve inviolate

the national honor. Though he had ever had been, opposed to the Administration, he had no doubt that it would be the case. Possibly the Secretary of State had, upon the question far enough; but what he meant to say was, that if all was as which had been stated by the commander of the steamboat, and the Secretary had gone farther in his communication than he did, Mr. T. was ready to sustain him. Thus much he considered due to himself; but he knew nothing of the actual facts in the case. He desired the Executive communication might be referred, and matter thoroughly investigated.

Mr. WISE hoped this discussion would stop. This was not the time to discuss a question of peace and war with Great Britain. It was admitted on all hands that the House had the facts before it; nor had the House acts on either side been avowed by the respective Governments. He feared there was *war de facto*, though it had been declared. They heard of wars, and rumors of wars with Mexico, war with England, war with the abolitionists; but he greatly feared the end was not yet. He feared that there were, at this moment, four individuals in the United States who had it in their power to place us at war with Great Britain at any moment. He referred to the President, the Secretary of War, the Governor of New York, and the Major General who had been sent upon the lines.

The question should be treated with more delicacy than some gentlemen seemed to suppose. In what a situation should we be placed if the militia should be called out for the defence of the frontier? The President, as he had told the House in his message, had no power to prevent, beforehand, aggressions by our citizens on the British territory or subjects; and it was here said a man might expatriate himself when he pleased, and take what he pleased with him. The Patriots, therefore, could get supplies, arms and munitions, from the American side, nor could our people be withheld from crossing in any numbers. But as soon as the British should do the same, there were the militia to oppose them. If this state of things was to take place, it was war *de facto*.

As to the question who was in the wrong, he should not now go into it. He agreed, in part, with the gentleman from Kentucky, (Mr. Menefee) that the Government had been restraining men from passing into the Mexican territory. He had heard no Executive call for more power to prevent men from going over the lines at that end of the Union.

But though this may, to some extent, be one cause of what we now hear, there were others of more ancient date, which lay deeper in the breasts of the People on the frontier. There was still ranking at their heart memory of their houses burnt, their estates ravaged, and their kindred slain; in the late war with Great Britain. All the prejudices growing out of such a state of things were now called up and revived, and on the smallest provocation, were ready with the cry "to arms!" This was, to some extent, the apology for the violence of the feelings which now agitated that portion of the Union. Thus far the Government had recognised none of the hostile acts on either side; he trusted it would discourage and take effectual means to prevent them. He could not, as yet, hold the Government of Great Britain responsible for what had taken place; and he had no doubt that enough of wisdom and prudence would pervade the councils of both countries to prevent the occurrence of war. He knew, however, that it was a delicate and unpopular course to hold pacific language at such a time. The time for arguing the question had not, however, yet arrived; and to put an end to a discussion, which was premature, he moved the previous question.

The House seconded the call, ayes 80; noes 77.

The previous question was then put and carried, and the main question referring so much of the message as related to an appropriation of money to the Committee of Ways and Means, and the residue to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, it was agreed to without objection.

IN SENATE.

Tuesday, Jan. 9.

In the Senate, the same documents which were yesterday presented to the House of Representatives, were read, and appropriately referred.

A little skirmish, (amounting to nothing definite but showing the way pulses beat in that body, just now) arose upon this matter. The whole thing took but five minutes, and was, of course, but a passing cloud.

Mr. Clay spoke eloquently, but briefly, denouncing the atrocious acts of the Schlosser murderers in a very decided terms. But he was of the opinion that such acts were hardly to have been wondered at, considering the situation of that frontier, and the inducements and provocations to such outrages, as had been afforded by the excited state of popular feeling, on our own side of the line. A precedent had been afforded for these breaches of neutrality, perhaps in our own annals, alluding, probably to some passages in the military history of one of our own "great and best" generals.

To this Benton thought fit to take very indignant exception, and the Hall-roller declared a while stentorally