



AND

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Ours are the plans of fair and lawful peace,
Unwarped by party rage, collie like brother's.

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Debate on the DISPUTE with G. BRITAIN. MR. GREGG'S RESOLUTION.

Continued from our last.

Mr. J. CLAY was opposed to the passage of this resolution, because, if carried into effect, it would place greater means in the hands of G. Britain of injuring us than she already possesses; for while we are prohibited from importing her manufactures, she will be at liberty to receive our produce, which will accumulate in the hands of the British merchants, and they will have no means of paying for it; and he doubted even, at present, whether there were not greater sums due to this country from G. Britain, than there are recoverable debts due from American citizens to them. He also insisted that the resolution would not be carried into effect, as the articles we get from G. Britain, could not be got from any other country. But the greatest injury it would occasion was the destruction of our revenue.

Mr. CROWNINSHIELD spoke in favour of the resolution. He said the balance of trade with G. B. was betwixt 11 and 12 millions, against us, which we had to make up by remittances in cash or bills from other countries; when if we did not purchase to a greater amount than we sell her, this amount would be returned to the United States, probably in cash from other European Nations. He had no idea that the proposition would have an injurious effect on this country, but would materially affect the country it is aimed at. But it is said it will lead to war. He had no such idea, but if it did, the United States would have greatly the advantage. Our privateers would make two captures to their one. He hoped however, the resolution would never go into effect, but that the British would give us back the property they have wrongfully taken from us, and liberate our seamen. But if Britain persists in her captures and impressments, he would not hesitate to meet her in war. In such an event, she knows that she would lose her Eastern provinces Canada and Nova Scotia. She knows also that her subjects would lose immense sums which they hold in our government stock. Knowing this, he had no doubt, when Britain saw the proposed measure adopted, she would come to terms.

Mr. J. RANDOLPH. I am extremely afraid, sir, that so far as it may depend on my acquaintance with details connected with the subject, I have very little right to address you, for in truth, I have not yet seen the documents from the Treasury, which were called for some time ago, to direct the judgment of this house in the decision of the question now before you: and indeed, after what I have this day heard I no longer require that document or any other document—indeed I do not know that I ever should have required it—to vote on the resolution of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. If I had entertained any doubts they would have been removed by the style in which the friends of the resolution have this morning discussed it. I am perfectly aware, that on entering upon this subject, we go into it manacled—handcuffed, and tongue tied; gentlemen know that our lips are sealed on subjects of momentous foreign relations, which are indissolubly linked with the present question, and which would serve to throw a great light on it in every respect relevant to it. I will, however, endeavor to hobble over the subject, as well as my fettered limbs and palsied tongue will enable me to do it.

I am not surprised to hear this resolution discussed by its friends as a war measure. They say (it is true) that it is not a war measure; but they defend it on principles which would justify none but war measures, and seemed pleased with the idea that it may prove the forerunner of war. If war is necessary—if we have reached this point, let us have war. But while I have life, I will never consent to those incipient war measures, which, in their com-

mencement breathe nothing but peace, though they plunge us at last into war. It has been well observed by the gentleman from Pennsylvania behind me (Mr. J. Clay) that the situation of this nation in 1793, was in every respect different from that in which it finds itself in 1806. Let me ask, too, if the situation of England is not since materially changed? Gentlemen, who, it would appear from their language, have not got beyond the horn-book of politics, talk of our ability to cope with the British navy, and tell us of the war of our revolution. What was the situation of G. Britain then? She was then contending for the empire of the British channel, barely able to maintain a doubtful equality with her enemies, over whom she never gained the superiority until Rodney's victory of the 12th of April. What is her present situation? The combined fleets of France, Spain, and Holland are dissipated, they no longer exist. I am not surprised to hear men advocate these wild opinions, to see them goaded on by a spirit of mercantile avarice, straining their feeble strength to excite the nation to war, when they have reached this stage of infatuation, that we are an overmatch for G. Britain on the ocean. It is mere waste of time to reason with such persons. They do not deserve any thing like a serious refutation. The proper arguments for such statesmen are a strait waistcoat, a dark room, water gruel, and depletion.

It has always appeared to me that there are three points to be considered, and maturely considered before we can be prepared to vote for the resolution of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. First. Our ability to contend with Great Britain for the question in dispute: Secondly. The policy of such a contest: and Thirdly, In case both these shall be settled affirmatively, the manner in which we can, with the greatest effect, react upon and annoy our adversary.

Now the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Crowninshield) has settled at a single sweep, to use one of his favorite expressions, not only that we are capable of contending with Great Britain on the ocean, but that we are actually her superior. Whence does the gentleman deduce this inference? Because, truly, at that time when Great Britain was not mistress of the ocean, when a North was her prime Minister and a Sandwich the first Lord of her admiralty, when she was governed by a counting house administration, privateers of this country trespassed on her commerce. So, too, did the cruizers of Dunkirk at that day. Suffren held the mastery of the Indian seas. But what is the case now? Do gentlemen remember the capture of Cornwallis on land, because De Grasse maintained the dominion of the ocean? To my mind no position is more clear, than if that we go to war with Great Britain, Charleston and Boston, the Chesapeake and the Hudson will be invested by British squadrons. Will you call on the Count de Grasse to relieve them, or shall we apply to Admiral Gravina, or Admiral Villeneuve to raise the blockade? But you have not only a prospect of gathering glory, and what seems to the gentleman from Massachusetts, much dearest profit, by privateering; but you will be able to make a conquest of Canada and Nova Scotia. Indeed! Then, sir, we shall catch a Tartar. I confess, however, I have no desire to see the Senators and Representatives of the Canadian French, or of the Tories and refugees of Nova Scotia sitting on this floor, or that of the other House. To see them becoming members of the union, and participating equally in our political rights. And on what other principle would the gentleman from Massachusetts be for incorporating those provinces with us? Or on what other principle could it be done under the constitution? If the gentleman has no other bounty to offer us for going to war, than the incorporation of Canada and Nova Scotia with the United States, I am for remaining at peace.

What is the question in dispute?

The carrying trade. What part of it? The fair, the honest and the useful trade, that is engaged in carrying our own productions to foreign markets, and bringing back their productions in exchange? No, Sir. It is that carrying trade which covers enemy property, and carries the coffee, the sugar, and other West India products to the mother country. No, Sir, if this great agricultural nation is to be governed by Salem and Boston, New-York and Philadelphia, and Baltimore and Norfolk and Charleston, let gentlemen come out and say so; and let a committee of public safety be appointed from those towns to carry on the government. I, for one, will not mortgage my property and my liberty to carry on this trade. The nation said so seven years ago, I said so then, and I say so now. It is not for the honest carrying trade of America, but for this mushroom, this fungus of war, for a trade which as soon as the nations of Europe are at peace, will no longer exist, it is for this that the spirit of avaricious traffic would plunge us into war.

I am forcibly struck on this occasion, by the recollection of a remark made by one of the ablest (if not the honestest) ministers that England ever produced. I mean Sir Robert Walpole who said that that the country gentlemen (poor meek souls!) came up every year to be sheared—that they laid mute and patient whilst their fleeces were being taken off—but that if he touched a single bristle of the commercial interest, the whole sty was in an uproar—It was indeed shearing the hog—"great cry and little wool." But we are asked, are we willing to bend the neck to England; to submit to her outrages? No, Sir, I answer, that it will be time enough for us to tell gentlemen what we will do to vindicate the violation of our flag on the ocean, when they shall have told us what they have done, in resentment of the violation of the actual territory of the United States by Spain—the true territory of the United States, not your new fangled country over the Mississippi, but good old United States—part of Georgia, of the old thirteen states—where citizens have been taken, not from our ships, but from our actual territory. When gentlemen have taken the padlock from our mouths, I shall be ready to tell them what I will do, relative to our dispute with Britain, on the law of nations, on contraband, and such stuff.

I have another objection to this course of proceeding. Great Britain, when she sees it, will say the American people have great cause of dissatisfaction with Spain. She will see by the documents furnished by the President, that Spain has outraged our territory, pirated upon our commerce and imprisoned our citizens; and she will enquire what we have done? It is true, she will receive no answer, but she must know what we have not done. She will see that we have not repelled these outrages, nor made any addition to our army and navy—nor even classed the militia. No, sir, not one of your militia Generals in politics has marshalled a single brigade.

Although I said it would be time enough to answer the question which gentlemen have put to me when they shall have answered mine, yet, as I do not like long prorogations I will give them an answer now. I will never consent to go to war for that which I cannot protect. I deem it no sacrifice of dignity to say to the Leviathan of the deep, we are unable to contend with you in your own element, but if you come within our actual limits we will shed our last drop of blood in their defence. In such an event I would feel, not reason, and obey an impulse which never has—which never can deceive me.

France is at war with England, suppose her power on the continent of Europe no greater than it is on ocean. How would she make her enemy feel it? There would be a perfect non conductor between them. So with the United States and England—she scarcely presents to us a vulnerable point. Her commerce is

now carried on for the most part in fleets—where in single ships they are stout and well armed—very different from the state of her trade during the American war, when her merchantmen became the prey of paltry privateers. Great Britain has been too long at war with the three most powerful maritime nations of Europe not to have learnt how to protect her trade. She can afford a convoy to it all—she has 800 ships in commission, the navies of her enemies are annihilated. Thus this war has presented the new and curious political spectacle of a regular annual increase (and to an immense amount) of her imports and exports and tonnage and revenue, and all the insignia of accumulating wealth, whilst in every former war, without exception, these have suffered a greater or less diminution. And wherefore? Because she has driven France, Spain, and Holland from the ocean. Their marine is no more. I verily believe that ten English ships of the line would not decline a meeting with the combined fleets of those nations. I forewarn the gentleman from Massachusetts and his constituents of Salem, that all their golden hopes are vain. I forewarn them of the exposure of their trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope (or now doubling it) to capture and confiscation—of their unprotected sea port towns, exposed to contribution or bombardment. Are we to be legislated into war by a set of men, who in six weeks after its commencement, may be compelled to take refuge with us up in the country? And for what? A mere fungus, a mushroom production of war in Europe, which will disappear with the return of peace—an unfair trade. For is there a man so credulous as to believe that we possess a capital not only equal to what may be called our own proper trade, but large enough also to transmit to the respective parent states for the vast and wealthy products of the French, Spanish and Dutch colonies? 'Tis beyond the belief of any rational being. But this is not my only objection to entering upon this naval warfare. I am averse to a naval war with any nation whatever. I was opposed to the naval war of the last administration, and I am as ready to oppose a naval war of the present administration, should they meditate such a measure. What! shall this great Mammoth of the American forest leave his native element and plunge into the water in a mad contest with the shark. Let him beware that his proboscis is not bitten off in the engagement. Let him stay on shore, and not be excited by the muscles and periwinkles on the strand, or political bears, in a boat to venture on the perils of the deep. Gentlemen say, will you not protect your violated rights? And I say, why take to water, where you can neither fight nor swim. Look at France, see her vessels stealing from port to port on their own coast, and remember that she is the first military power of the earth, and as a naval people second only to England. Take away the British navy, and France to-morrow is the tyrant of the ocean.

This brings me to the second point. How far is it politic in the United States to throw their weight into the scale of France at this time; from whatever motive, to aid the views of gigantic ambition, to make her mistress of the sea and land, to jeopardize the liberties of mankind. Sir, you may help to crush Great Britain, you may assist in breaking down her naval dominion; but you cannot succeed to it. The iron sceptre of the ocean will pass into his hands who wears the iron crown of the land. You may then expect a new code of maritime law. Where will you look to for redress? I can tell the gentleman from Massachusetts, that there is nothing in his rule of three that will save us, even although he should out-do himself and exceed the financial ingenuity which he so memorably displayed on a recent occasion. No, sir—Let the battle of Actium be once fought and the whole line of sea coast will be at the mercy of the conqueror. The Atlantic, deep and wide as it is, will prove just as good a barrier against

his ambition directed against you, as the Mediterranean to the power of the Caesars. Do I mean (when I say so) to crouch to the invader? No—I will meet him at the waters edge, and fight every inch of ground from thence to the Mississippi. But after tamely submitting to an outrage on your domicile, will you bulge and look big at an insult on your flag 3,000 miles off?

But, sir, I have a yet more cogent reason against going to war, for the honor of the flag in the narrow seas or any other maritime punctilio. It springs from my attachment to the principles of the government under which I live. I declare in the face of day, that this government was not instituted for the purpose of offensive war. No. It was framed (to use its own language) for the common defence and the general welfare, which are inconsistent with offensive war. I call that offensive war, which goes out of our jurisdiction and limits for the attainment or protection of objects, not within the limits of that jurisdiction. As in 1798 I was opposed to this species of warfare, because I believed it would raze the constitution to the very foundation, so in 1806 am I opposed to it, and on the same grounds. No sooner do you put the constitution to this use, to a test which it is by no means calculated to endure, than its incompetency to such purposes becomes manifest and apparent to all. I fear if you go into a foreign war for a circuitous unfair carrying trade, you will come out without your constitution. Have not you contractors enough yet in his House? Or do you want to be over-run and devoured by commissaries and all the vermin of contract. I fear, sir, that what are called the energy men will rise up again—men who will burn the parchment. We shall be told that our government is too free—or as they would say weak and inefficient. Too much virtue, sir, in terms. That we must give the President power to call forth the resources of the nation—that is to fish the last shilling from our pockets, to drain the last drop of blood from our veins. I am against giving this power to any man, be him who he may. The American people must either withhold this power or resign their liberties. There is no other alternative. Nothing but the most imperative necessity will justify such a grant—and is there a powerful enemy at our doors? You may begin with a first Consul—from that Chrysalis state he soon becomes an Emperor. You have your choice. It depends upon your election whether you will be a free happy, and united people at home, or the light of your executive majesty shall beam across the Atlantic in one general blaze of the public liberty.

For my part, I will never go to war but in self defence. I have no desire for conquests—no ambition to possess Nova Scotia—I hold the liberties of this people at a higher rate. Much more am I indisposed to war, when among the first means for carrying it on I see gentlemen propose the confiscation of debts due by government to individuals. Does a bona fide creditor know who holds his paper? Dare any man ask himself the question? 'Tis hard to say whether such principles are more detestably dishonest than they are weak and foolish. What, sir, will you go about with proposals for opening a loan in one hand, and a sponge for the national debt in the other. If on a late occasion you could not borrow at a less rate of interest than 8 per cent. when the government avowed that they would pay to the last shilling of the public ability, at what price do you expect to raise money with an avowal of these nefarious opinions. God help you! if these are your ways and means for carrying on war—if your finances are in the hands of such a chancellor of the exchequer. Because a man can take an observation, and keep a log-book and a reckoning, can navigate a cock boat to the West Indies or the East, shall he aspire to navigate the great vessel of state, to stand at the helm of public councils? *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.* What are you going to war for? For the carrying trade. Already