



AND

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Ours are the plans of fair & delightful peace,
Unwar'd by party rage, to live like brothers.

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

Continued from our last.

MR. MASTERS. I shall not deny that Great-Britain has insulted us by impressing our seamen, neither shall I deny that this nation has committed wanton aggressions and deprecations on our commerce, and that commerce ought to be protected. That the resolution under consideration, is the best course to be pursued for the interest of this nation, I shall contend against.

Restraints and prohibitions between nations have always arisen from two circumstances; the first to promote their home industry or manufactures. The liberal price of wages, joined with the plenty and cheapness of land, which induces the laborer to quit his employer and become planter or farmer himself, who rewards with the same liberality which induces his laborers to leave their employment for the same reasons as the first, therefore it is impossible for manufactures to flourish in our present situation. The case in most other countries is very different, where the price of labour is low, and the rent and the profit consumes the wages of the laborer, and the highest order of people oppress the inferior, which I hope never to see in this country.

It may rationally be calculated that some of the eastern and middle states will eventually become manufacturing states: some of those states are nearly filled with people, and many individuals have large capitals employed in foreign commerce, to the amount in many instances, of two and three hundred thousand dollars each. When peace takes place in Europe, and things come down to their natural standard, and they can no longer employ that capital to advantage in commercial speculations; they will withdraw the same from that employment; they must make use of those capitals some where, they cannot vest them, to any advantage in our public funds, Bank stock or other corporations beyond a certain extent, they therefore by the aid of water works and machinery, will naturally employ those capitals in manufactures, and I trust the time is not many years distant. That is not now the case, and can have no bearing on the present question, indeed it is hardly contended that the resolution is brought forward for that purpose, it must therefore be brought forward for some other purpose.

The other circumstances, which gives rise to prohibitions between nations, arise from the violence of national animosity, which generally ends in war. This circumstance has brought this resolution into existence, the preamble speaks warlike language, and the whole taken together is a prelude to war with a nation who has two hundred ships of the line, four hundred frigates, besides gun brigs and other armed vessels, whose revenue is between forty and fifty millions sterling, who can go to war with us, without any additional expence to themselves, who will sweep the ocean of American commerce, amounting to nearly one hundred millions of dollars. What then will be the situation of our carrying trade? what then will be the situation of your commerce and your country.

It appears to me a matter of great deliberation how far we ought to adopt the present resolution by prohibiting the importation of British manufactures; in every country it ever was, and always must be the interest of the great body of the people to buy whatever they want of those who sell it cheapest. We cannot procure the same articles so cheap elsewhere; even should the measure not involve us in a war, prohibitions and revenge naturally dictate retaliation, and nations seldom fail to do it. The hon. mover of the resolution, asks us, "how it is to be inferred, we cannot abide by and execute this system." It is to be inferred from retaliation, and observation of nations who have preceded us. When France in the year 1667

laid discriminating duties on Holland the Dutch retaliated by the prohibition of French wines, brandies and the like: a war followed, and the peace of Nimuegen regulated their commercial disputes. About that time the English prohibited the importation of lace manufactured in Flanders; the government of that country, which was then under the dominion of Spain, immediately retaliated and prohibited all importation of English woollens. Soon after this the French and English mutually began their heavy duties and prohibitions, and have ever since been in commercial disputes, quarrels and hostilities; and we with our eyes open are going into the same system. The same hon. Gentleman has also said it will attack Great-Britain in her vitals, in her manufactures and warehouses, it seems a bad method of compensating injuries done to us, to do another worse injury to ourselves, which I believe will be the case by adopting the present resolution; it will have a natural tendency to retaliation and revenge.

It is very problematical whether the carrying trade is advantageous to this nation. Our merchants in that employment transporting foreign produce from Batavia, and the West Indies to the U. States, and storing the cargoes for some time in warehouses and re-shipping the same to Holland, the Hanse towns, Antwerp in French Flanders, and other ports, and in some instances taking the avails of those cargoes and proceeding to China, from whence they return with teas; in other instances proceed to England and buy out the avails in British goods, and the making circuitous voyages, of two and three years, with those large capitals out of our country, and before they can realise those cargoes so as to purchase our domestic produce.

My worthy colleague from N. Y. who has just sat down (Mr. Williams) has observed 'that commerce is essential to this country and agriculture naturally goes with it.' This proposition taken abstractedly I shall not deny, and then asks us 'where is the revenue to support government?' I will answer that gentleman, by asking the same question, where is the revenue to support government when one half of that revenue is derived from G. Britain and her dependencies? I would ask that gentleman where is to be the market for 25,000,000 yds. of cotton annually exported, (it is not to be presumed they will not retaliate in every particular) where is to be the market for your tobacco, potashes, flaxseed, provisions and other domestic produce, exported from this country to Great-Britain, the British East and West Indies and Newfoundland, to the annual amount of between 20 and 30,000,000? Reply on it if you will embarrass all the operations of government, all the operations of the community, and must have recourse to direct taxation on the farmer, who will be unable to pay, for the want of a price for his produce; your merchants become bankrupt, and you distress the agriculturalist.

The same honorable gentleman from Pennsylvania has further observed 'it will be such a shock upon Great-Britain, she will not be able to endure it.' Let that gentleman reflect on the wealth and maritime power of that country. Ever since my memory, the approaching ruin of Great-Britain has been frequently foretold, after all the vain attempts, they yet regulate the commerce of the world. I must confess, I have but little faith in undertaking commercial regulations with that nation, and I believe we shall shew a very petty figure in the attempt, and be obliged to recede with disgrace, and I cannot vote for the present resolution.

MR. J. RANDOLPH.—Mr. Chairman, I did expect on coming to the House this morning, that the friends of the resolution under discussion, would have brought forward some arguments to shew (what they had studiously avoided)—that the ability to coerce G. Britain is within the compass of this nation's power; that this power ought now to be exerted

and that the proposed measure is equal to the desired effect. It behoves them to demonstrate all this, before they ask for our support. I did not come down to the House with the expectation of listening to a gross misrepresentation of my expressions yesterday; loose and desultory as I allow them to have been, much less was I prepared to hear such misrepresentations from the lips of a gentleman, whom I have treated with invariable and guarded respect—between whom and myself there has long existed a political friendship—real on my part, apparent on his. I did not indeed expect to hear particular expressions, used by me in the ardor of debate broken and gulled from their connecting members, and mutilated and tortured into meanings, which cold blooded malice alone could have devised. Sir, in this way of proceeding (without intending any profane comparison) the Bible itself may be made to preach atheism, to declare that there is no God. "The fool saith in his heart there is no God." Taken together, it is inspired wisdom: dismember it, it is impiety.

It has not been denied by any member on this floor, that the carrying trade—that the commerce and navigation of these states ought to be protected. The only question is *quo modo*? Have you the ability to protect them by war, and are they of sufficient value to justify the expence of such protection? We say no—they cannot pay for so dear a defence, rich as they may be:—but above all, they cannot repay us for the loss of our constitution. It is above all price. We go farther: we affirm that trade is now protected by the most efficient means within our power, by discriminating duties, laid by the votes of southern men, and yet, sir, we are threatened with schism, with a dissolution of the union, if we do not adopt particular systems, devised by chance begotten of ignorance or imbecility.

But whilst I acknowledge the carrying trade to be valuable to a certain extent, I must, unless I abandon every pretension to the character of a politician, act on existing circumstances, on things as they are, not as I believe they ought to be. In casting about, the first thing (or one of the first) to be considered is revenue. Almost our whole revenue is derived from commerce; that is, from the domestic consumption of imports from abroad. How much comes from the carrying trade? Your statements (I am told) say 800,000 dollars. But if our whole consumption were imported in foreign bottoms, the impost would exceed its present amount by 11 or 1200,000 dollars. I warn gentlemen against a misrepresentation of this fact. Am I therefore desirous to gain this increase at the expence of our navigation? Far from it. It would be to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. But what is this branch of the carrying trade, for which gentlemen would sacrifice not only our whole navigation and commerce, but the agriculture and constitution of our country? Look at this trade which is to be guarded at every risk and the men who follow it. Do they carry your products abroad, and bring back goods for home consumption? No, they plunge their hands into your pockets for drawback—during this very session they threatened to plunder the treasury of millions, by a bill happily arrested on its passage. If our fair trade is not protected, how comes it that it has grown with a rapidity before unknown in any nation? That growth has been nourished by protecting duties, fostered by our neutral position.

I am accused too with stigmatizing the merchants of the U. S. I deny the charge. Every profession and calling of human life is disgraced by unworthy members. The law has its 'pettifoggers, the church its hypocrites, medicine and politics too, sir, have their empirics—and if there be two professions in the world, which can be selected for a tendency to develop the pre-existing germ of imperfection planted in our nature, they are the profession of the lawyer and the occupation

of the trader. And wherefore? Because they open the wide field of temptation. The wisest prayer that ever was or can be devised for human infirmity, is that which teaches us to deprecate such trials—"We beseech thee, lead us not into temptation!" What is the fact? Whilst we boast of our honor on this floor, our name has become a by-word among the nations. Europe, and Paris especially, swarms with pseudo-Americans, with Anglo and Gallo-Americans, and American French and English, who have amassed immense fortunes by trading in the neutral character, by setting it up to auction and selling it to the best bidder. Men of this description—striplings, without connexions or character, have been known to buy rich vessels and their cargoes, in Amsterdam and Antwerp, and trade with them, under American name, to the Indies. Neutral character has constituted one of the best remittances for colonial produce, or the goods which purchase it; and the trade in this commodity of neutrality has proved a most lucrative branch of traffic. This it is that has sunk and degraded the American name abroad, and subjected the fair trader to vexatious seizure and detention. But I am asked, if we shall submit to a tame and dastardly abandonment of our rights?—and by those, too, who have made a cowardly surrender of our best interests and our honor when we were well able to have maintained them. I beg leave to reply to this question by asking another. Are you prepared to assert them? to go all lengths to enforce them? In what consists true dignity? In vapouring in the newspapers? In printed handbills and resolutions? Or in taking ground which you can and will maintain,—which no change of fortune shall compel you to desert? *Aut nunquam tentes, aut perfee.* Does the gentleman want an explanation? Here is one truly American: "*Stick, or go through.*" This is true dignity: can he give a better definition? And what constitutes false dignity? Playing the part of a Bobadil—bullying England and truckling to Spain—I beg pardon, there is no Spain:—bullying England and truckling to France. This you have done—You know it. When gentlemen tell us of their willingness to publish our proceedings, why do they not clear the galleries and take off the injunction of secrecy? Let their private vote correspond with their public profession. And let me tell the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Smilie) that I would rather have his vote than his speech at any time. Who would suppose, if he had not averred it, that he held silence and good sense in such high respect, that he preferred the calm decisions of quiet wisdom, to the effusions of empty garrulity.

The gentleman from New-York has told us, that after the call of the Executive for firm measures, he did not expect this opposition. And does he call this a firm measure? What would have been a firm measure? An embargo. That would have gone to the root of the evil. But that, sir, would not have suited your Proteus politicians. There could have been no evasion of that. But your slippery mercantile 'eels can slide over or under this provision, and leave the whole burthen of suffering to fall on the planter; the farmer, and the real American. The whole revenue (we are told) is derived from commerce. Who pays it ultimately but the consumer, and with as large a profit on the merchants' advance of the duties (often a mere advance of credit) as he receives from any other part of his capital. These new ideas of firmness are either above or below my comprehension. And because we are anxious to see the public debt paid off and the true interests of the nation maintained—because we will not abandon the plough, and struggle to restrain Executive influence, we are charged with hostility to all commerce, with insensibility to the honor of our country. When our doors were shut (this is no breach of confidence) one of my colleagues called for the reading of a Message

from the President, soon after he came into office. It was the most severe and cutting satire that man ever listened to. I say it was a bitter satire on your proceedings, then and now. It recommended the application of our resources to a speedy discharge of the public debt, a rigid adherence to specific appropriations, tying down executive officers to the letter of the law, restricting them to the literal objects and amount of our appropriations. What is the commentary? In time of peace (for I trust no one will call this wind mill attack on Tripoli, war) the expenditures of the navy department (so far from each item of expence being limited by the specific appropriation for that object) have exceeded the gross sum appropriated for that branch of the public service sixty per cent! And if this is a specimen of the yearly cost of hulks rotting in the mud, what estimate can you make of the disbursements in time of actual war against a powerful maritime state—when your seventy-fours are ready for sea? This is naked truth. It rests on figures—if it be not true, how comes it that we have passed two appropriation laws, to the amount of six hundred thousand dollars, during the present session, to cover the deficiencies of the last year—almost the only bills that we have passed. Yes, sir, I am for paying one debt off (the cost of a former war) before I enter into another and score up a second. I confess myself to be among the number of those politicians (gentlemen may style them visionary if they please) who hailed the President of the United States as the political Messiah, sent to convince an unbelieving world that a debt once funded, might be paid off, without the intervention of a sponge. If in this I was visionary, at least I was not alone. The promise has been large, the nations calls for its performance. Look at the measures of the government, and when you reckon the Louisiana debt, that created under the British Treaty and some others, it will appear that you have nearly scored up as much new debt as you have paid off the old. I speak of principal: for paying the interest of a debt is not diminishing it—and my friend from Pennsylvania, (Mr. J. Clay) must have taken the interest into his large account of yesterday. The amount of principal redeemed less than 18,000,000. But you will be told, for your money you have value received, at least. This I freely acknowledge. I would have given the sum for the Delta of the Mississippi, if it could not have been honourably acquired for less. Of whom did we purchase—from Spain who had wrongfully withheld our right of deposit? So far from it, that we tell her she has yet to make satisfaction for that injury and insult; we bring it into account against her—No, sir, we purchased from France, the rightful proprietor, against whom we then had no subject of complaint.

I am accused by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. Smilie) this I suppose is a specimen of his candor (I am reluctant to say any thing whilst he is absent—I am sorry he has filled his seat)—of designedly passing over one of the most important considerations presented by the present subject—the impressment of our seamen—And yet what did that gentleman tell you? That he himself (long as he had trespassed on your time) had been compelled to omit many important things, that he intended to say. This realises the proverb. "One man may steal a horse, whilst another must not look over the hedge." I will tell the gentleman, if I did omit this topic, I had scarce thrown myself into the carriage that carried me home, before I recollected and regretted it. The gentleman may say what he pleases, but he never had, no man ever shall have cause to upbraid me with finching from any question that may be brought on this floor. Now, sir, let gentlemen lay their hands on their hearts and answer sincerely if they do believe this resolution has the power to take

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