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OUR is the place of fair & cheerful peace, Unwar'd by party rage, to live like Brothers.

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SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. GILES, IN THE Senate of the United States,

On the 13th February, 1809, in support of the following Resolution, moved by him on the 26th of the same month.

Resolved, That the several laws laying an embargo on all ships and vessels in the ports and harbors of the United States, be repealed on the 4th day of March next, except as to Great Britain and France, and their dependencies; and that provision be made by law for prohibiting all commercial intercourse with these nations and their dependencies, and the importation of any article into the United States, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either of the said nations, or of the dominions of either of them.

(Continued.)

Permit me, sir, to enquire into the pretexts upon which the British ministry undertake to justify these extraordinary orders in council, and I will venture to assert, that they will be found both false and insincere. The pretext set up for the justification of these orders, is suggested to be founded on the right of retaliation upon their enemy. The right to retaliate through the United States is said to be founded on the culpable neglect of their government to resist the French aggressions upon their neutral rights, by which it is pretended that Great-Britain has sustained an injury, and thus claims a right to counteract the injury through the United States. Upon the same pretext, France claims and exercises what she calls the same right in consequence of the culpable neglect of the United States in not resisting the aggressions of Great Britain. The suggestion of each is false, in fact. The United States have not been guilty of any culpable abandonments of its rights in relation to either of the aggressing belligerents. The government has constantly interposed all reasonable resistance to the aggressions of both; of which reasonable resistance it was the proper judge, at least it was entitled to its full share in the decision, and any forcible resistance to that decision when made was an act of war. I do not, therefore, propose to enter into the question, whether Great-Britain or France first commenced their aggressions, since both were properly and reasonably resisted. But if I were to express an opinion upon this question, I should have no hesitation in saying that Great-Britain first began, and so far France has more pretexts for her conduct. There were many acts of the most serious aggressions committed by Great-Britain under pretended blockades, before the Berlin decree; and the impressment of American seamen was contemporaneous with the commencement of the war. This was not, and is not, the less an act of aggression, because it is stale, has been long practiced, and because we are habituated to it, but it was not acquiesced in. It was met by reasonable remonstrance and resistance, and, therefore, is no justification of the French decrees; but at the same time, it takes away even the shadow of a pretext from Great-Britain upon the question of who began to do wrong first; there is a reciprocal condemnation of each other, and so far a joint exculpation of us, at least, from the commencement of the wrong to either. But, sir, let me now examine the pretext of the British ministry, according to Mr. Canning's own exposition of it. The acts of France complained of are admitted by Mr. Canning now to be merely nominal in relation to Great-Britain, that they are utterly harmless and contemptible, that they have ceased to be mischievously operative, &c. &c. Yet he tells you that he will not revoke the orders in council, for fear his motives in doing so may be mistaken; not that it is not in itself just and proper to revoke them, according to the principle of retaliation upon which they were originally adopted; but merely for fear his motive in doing an act of justice and propriety may be mistaken or misconceived by others. But, sir, let us hear him in his own words. "The struggle has been viewed by other powers, not without an apprehension that it might be fatal to this country. The British govern-

ment has not disguised from itself, that the trial of such an experiment, might be arduous and long, although it has never doubted the final issue. But if that issue, such as the British government confidently anticipated, has providentially arrived sooner than could even have been hoped; if "the blockade of the continent," as it has been triumphantly styled by the enemy, is raised, even before it has been well established, and if that system, of which extent and continuity have been the vital principles, is broken up into fragments, utterly harmless and contemptible, it is nevertheless important in the highest degree to the reputation of this country, (a reputation which constitutes a great part of her power) that this disappointment of the hopes of her enemies should not have been purchased by any concession; that not a doubt should remain to distant times of her determination and of her ability to have continued her resistance, and that no step which could even mistakenly be construed into concession, should be taken on her part, while the smallest link of the confederacy remains undissolved; or while it can be a question, whether the plan devised for her destruction has, or has not, either completely failed, or been unequivocally abandoned." [Canning to Penney, Sept. 23, 1808] The purpose of this letter is not to renew the discussion upon the subject of your proposal, but merely to clear up any misunderstanding which had existed between us in the course of that discussion. I cannot conclude it however, without adverting very shortly to that part of your letter, in which you argue that the failure of France in the attempt to realize her gigantic project of the annihilation of this country, removes all pretext for the continuance of the retaliatory system of Great-Britain. This impotency of the enemy to carry his projects of violence and injustice into execution, might, with more propriety, be pleaded with him, as a motive for withdrawing decrees at once so indefensible, and so little efficacious for their purpose, than represented as creating an obligation upon Great Britain to desist from those measures of defensive retaliation, which those decrees have necessarily occasioned. If the foundation of the retaliating system of Great-Britain was (as we contend it to have been) originally just, that system will be justifiably continued in force, not so long only as the decrees which produced it are mischievously operative; but till they are unequivocally abandoned; and if it be thus consistent with justice to persevere in that system, it is surely no mean motive of policy for such perseverance, that a premature departure from it, while the enemy's original provocation remains unrepented, might lead to false conclusions, as to the efficacy of the decrees of France, and might hold out a dangerous temptation to that power to resort to the same system, on any future occasion. [Canning to Pinkney, Nov. 22, 1808.] What, sir, does Mr. Canning here tell us? Why, sir, on the 23d of September last, that the French blockading decrees were then broken up into fragments utterly harmless and contemptible, and on the 23d of November following, that they had ceased to be mischievously operative &c. &c. Retaliation may be defined, an injury returned for a wrong received. Well, sir, if the United States had done no other wrong to Great-Britain but neglecting to repeal the wrong of France, and the wrong of France ceased to produce any injurious consequences, why not revoke the orders inflicting the most destructive injuries upon the United States? Why, Mr. Canning, in substance, tells us, not that it would be wrong to do so, but he is afraid the world would mistake his motive for doing right. And, sir, is the commerce of the United States to be destroyed—he people to be colonized and taxed, and the nation insulted and degraded, merely because Mr. Canning fears, if he should cease to inflict these wrongs, his motive for ceasing to do so may be misconceived or mistaken!!—And are the people of the United

States to be told that all these injuries and insults are to be continued merely to expiate Mr. Canning's side and pretended fears, that his motive for his conduct may be mistaken?—What, sir, can be more derogatory to the character?—What more injurious to the interests?—What more insulting to the understandings of the American people? Yet, sir, we are told, there are no causes of war!! We must wait for more degradation!! Sir, Mr. Canning tells us he thinks this is no mean motive of policy for continuing these orders after the original causes ceased. Sir, I will not pretend to think against Mr. Canning upon this subject; but, sir, I think, and I know, that it will be a mean, an infinitely mean motive of policy on our part to submit to his injuries, his insults and his degradations, as well as his absurd & sophisticated exposition of his motives for them. But, sir, permit me again to ask if the United States had not a right to judge of the extent and mode of resisting the French decrees? They certainly had, and did so; and after having made their decision in those respects, a contrary hostile decision by Great-Britain was an act of war against the United States, and according to her own principle of retaliation, the proper act of retaliation on their part was an act of war, not indeed through the ribs of a third innocent, unoffending party, but directly back upon herself, and ought instantly to have been resorted to upon her refusal to revoke her hostile orders. But, sir, permit me to put this doctrine in a still stronger point of view. The right of retaliation, I presume, is equal and reciprocal amongst all nations, and when the British ministry ventured to retaliate upon their enemy through us, they admitted that policy upon their own responsibility; they subjected themselves to all its consequences; we certainly had a right to adopt a counteracting policy; war would have been the natural, legitimate & correct act of retaliation. But, sir, suppose I were now in a spirit of mitigated retaliation, to propose to pass a law imposing a duty equal to one half of the value of all the original productions of Great-Britain, and direct that all her vessels sailing with such productions either to Spanish America, or any of the American Indies or isles, or to any other place under the protection of the laws of nations, should first call at some port of the United States, either Boston, N. York, Baltimore or Charleston, and there pay the tribute; and if they failed or refused so to do, to authorize our armed ships to capture and bring them in for condemnation; would not the proposition be thought extravagant and monstrous? the proposition of a madman? Yet, sir, it would be more reasonable than the orders in council, which are the same in substance, but were adopted without provocation or pretext. Yes, sir, the pretext is false, it is insincere. The real ground of the orders in council will be found in the settled determination of the British cabinet, to monopolize the commerce of the world, or to render it subservient to their own views and interests, and particularly to involve in this general destruction, the commerce of the United States. Sir, I draw this conclusion not only from Mr. Canning's own prevaricating letters, and sophisticated expositions; but from various intimations to that effect by the British jurists, and particularly from a late pamphlet, written it is said, under the direction of the ministry, and for the express purpose of preparing the British nation and the world for the monstrous pretension. Indeed the production is ascribed to the elder Mr. Rose, one of the most influential advisers of the cabinet, and it is extremely probable we shall see the doctrine openly avowed in the British parliament, now expected to be in session. The pamphlet is entitled "Hints to both parties," from which I beg leave to read a few extracts. "The orders in council have been stigmatized, as being at once absurd and contemptible, in relinquishing the principle of right on which their justification is founded, for a paltry

consideration, of pounds, shillings and pence. But how can that measure be deemed absurd, which at once unites interest and policy? And so far from rendering Great-Britain contemptible, how can she possibly assume a more dignified character, than in thus shewing the world that Bonaparte, with all his dependent kings, are but her tributaries: that they can receive no article either of comfort or necessity, without paying an acknowledgment to her maritime supremacy, and contributing to the expense of carrying on that war, which the ambition, injustice and aggressions of their tyrant have rendered necessary." Here, sir, we see a picture of the fantastic and gigantic attitude which the inflated pride of Great-Britain has assumed. Bonaparte and all his dependent kings are her tributaries, paying tribute to her treasury, and homage to her pride. Why, sir, to be sure, this dreaming delusive vision, must be very fascinating to British pride, and gratifying to British cupidity, and I should have said nothing about the ministry's indulging themselves in these delightful reveries, if they had not included the United States in the magnificent train of their humble tributaries. It is true, sir, they are not expressly included in this sentence, but they are made so in fact and it was intended they should be so included, as I shall presently shew by another quotation from this ministerial production. Yes, sir, I will presently shew you one single word, which is the key that unlocks the whole views of this energetic ministry in relation to the United States. But let me first present you another passage, sir, which will serve to shew you how far the ministry calculates upon effecting their objects by interfering in our political concerns, and by fomenting divisions and discontents amongst us? After speaking with apparent exultation of the assassination of the emperor of Russia, in consequence of his interruptions of the trade of his subjects with Great-Britain, an event impliedly admitted to have been produced by British stratagem, the author thus proceeds in page 37: "If any further elucidation of the principle to which this event is ascribed were wanting, it promises to be found in the United States of America, where the cultivators of the soil are deprived of the fruits of their labors, and the merchants of their commercial gains, by the present embargo. This forced state of things cannot be long continuance. Already have the Vermontese set the constituted authorities at defiance, and persist in carrying on their trade with the Canadians, across Lake Champlain, while the Northern states manifest strong symptoms of discontent." I shall only remark upon this sentence that it serves to shew how greedily these events were seized upon, and how greatly they were overrated, and proceed to the 39th page: "From what has been adduced upon the subject of privations, it may be inferred that the attempts of other powers to injure Great-Britain by pursuing this system, must be abortive. But it is not so with the same system adopted by Great-Britain, in retaliation upon them. What they can only threaten, she can execute. While they can only partially restrict her commerce, her naval superiority gives her the means of annihilating theirs. The people thus reduced to misery and distress, will consider their rulers as the authors of their sufferings, and this sentiment once excited, will lead to revolt; through revolt to revolution; through revolution to a change of measures, and ultimately to peace." "Let then the principle of the orders in council be strictly enforced. When the enemy feels the pressure of our retaliations, and relaxes his decrees, we should reject, instead of admitting those commodities, by the sale of which he procures resources for his revenue, gives relief to his subjects, encourages them to the continuance of the war, and reconciles them to his authority." Here, sir, we see the vital principle of all our wrongs, of all our sufferings. It is the supremacy of the

British navy. What others threaten; Great-Britain can execute. While her commerce is protected, she has the means of annihilating the commerce of others. But this is not all of the horrid picture which is here exhibited. Although the British navy is admitted to be the destructive machine for inflicting all the wrongs upon the people of the United States, they will be told to look from the real cause of their sufferings to their rulers, as the authors of them; and the sentiment once excited, will lead to revolt, through revolt to revolution, through revolution to a change of measures, &c. and thus the people are to be deluded & made the unsuspecting instruments of their own slavery and sufferings. And Mr. President, permit me with the most humiliated feelings as an American citizen, to ask, whether the course of events in this country has not corresponded precisely with these anticipations? and whether there can be a doubt that the authors of these anticipations have not also been instrumental in practising these delusions upon the people, for the purpose of effecting their objects, and realizing their calculations and predictions? But, Mr. President, may we not indulge the pleasing hope, that these unfortunate decisions of the people are nearly at an end? or that they will be so, as soon as the real authors of their decisions & sufferings are pointed out to them? I will now turn over to the next page, and there you will find the key which unlocks the whole iniquitous views of this energetic ministry towards the United States. The author is urging the country gentlemen in England to unite with the ministry in this gigantic project of universal dominion on the ocean, and thus he expresses himself: "Many gentlemen connected with the landed interest, opposed the substitution of sugar for corn in the duties, as a discouragement to the agriculture of Great-Britain. How much more strongly ought they to oppose these licenses to trade in the staple commodities of France and Holland; not only on the same principle, but on every consideration of sound policy? The former measure is temporary, the latter is permanent. The former gives relief and encouragement to our own subjects; the latter gives relief and encouragement to our enemies. The former promotes the agriculture of our own colonies; the latter promotes the agriculture of our enemies. The former enables us to consume an additional quantity of sugar, which is paid for in British corn, or manufactures; neither of which are taken in exchange for the commodities imported under the latter. The sugars imported under the former, are brought home in British ships; and add to that carrying trade which is the nursery of our naval strength; the articles imported under the latter, are brought in foreign vessels, & increase the naval strength of other powers. Let the country gentlemen, then, unite their efforts, and support the cause of British agriculture, British commerce, and the British navy, against the agriculture, the commerce, and the navy, of our enemies or rivals." Here the United States are expressly included in this scene of general destruction, meditated against commerce. Enemies or rivals!!! The word rivals, sir, is the key which unlocks the designs of the ministry against the United States. Do you suppose, sir, the author did not know the meaning of the word rivals, of that it was slipped in without design? No, sir, it was intended to tell the British nation that they must not stop at the destruction of the commerce of their enemies. The destruction must be indiscriminate; it must extend to rivals as well as enemies. And, sir, who are the rivals of Great-Britain in commerce? The United States, and the United States alone. The term rivals, is as descriptive of the United States as we term United States itself. I think, sir, from the combined influence of all the preceding circumstances, it is demonstrated beyond a doubt, that all our sufferings arise from the settled determination of the British ministry to exercise exclu-