



AND

NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace,  
"Unwarped by party rage, to live like Brothers."

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FOREIGN RELATIONS.

Friday, Jan. 29.

The Committee to whom was referred so much of the President's Message of the 4th day of November last, as relates to our Foreign Affairs,

REPORT—

That in presenting to the House at this time a view of our relations with Great Britain, it is deemed unnecessary to retrace the causes, which produced the war. The wrongs which the U. States had received from that power, for a long series of years, have already been laid before the public, and need not again be enumerated, they were too deeply felt to have been forgotten, although they may be forgiven by the American people. The United States being engaged in the war for the sole purpose of vindicating their rights and honor, that motive alone should animate them to its close. It becomes a free and virtuous people to give an useful example to the world. It is the duty of a representative government, to render a faithful account of its conduct to its constituents. A just sensibility to great and unprovoked wrongs and indignities will justify an appeal to arms, an honorable reparation should restore the blessings of peace; every step which they take, should be guided by a sacred regard to principle.

To form a correct estimate of the duties which the United States have to perform, it is necessary to take a view of the communications, which have passed between the Executive of the United States and the British government since the declaration of war.—Such a view, the committee is persuaded, will show distinctly the existing ground of controversy between the two nations, and the indispensable obligation on the United States to maintain it.

Your committee has seen with much satisfaction, that at the moment of the declaration of war, the attention of the Executive was engaged in an effort to bring it to a speedy and honorable termination. As early as the twenty-sixth of June last, the Charge des Affairs of the U. States at London was instructed to propose to the British government an armistice, to take immediate effect, on conditions which it is believed the impartial world will consider safe, honorable and advantageous to G. Britain. They were few in number and limited to positive wrongs daily practised.—That the orders in council should be repealed, and that our flag should protect our seamen, were the only indispensable conditions insisted on. Other wrongs, however great, were postponed for amicable negotiation. As an inducement to the British government to forbear these wrongs, it was proposed to repeal the non importation law and to prohibit the employment of British seamen, in the public and private vessels of the United States; particular care was taken that these propositions should be made in a form as conciliatory, as they were amicable in substance.

Your committee cannot avoid expressing its astonishment at the manner in which they were received. It was not sufficient to reject the proposed armistice; terms of peculiar reproach and insult were adopted to make the rejection offensive.

It happened, that almost on the same day, in which the United States, after having been worn out with accumulated wrongs, had resorted to the last and only remaining honorable alternative in support of their rights, the British government had repealed, conditionally, its orders in council. That measure was unexpected, because every application for it had failed, although repeated at the very moment it was decided on. Conditional as the repeal was, it was admitted to have removed a great obstacle to accommodation.

The other only remained: the practice of impressment. It was proposed to the British government to open an amicable negotiation to provide a substitute to it, which should be considered an ample equivalent. The substitute proposed was defined, and of a character so comprehensive, as to have removed, as was presumed, every possible objection to an accommodation. The proposition before made to exclude British seamen from our service was enlarged, so as to comprehend all native British subjects not already naturalized or entitled to naturalization under the laws of the U. States; this was likewise rejected.

Your committee have sought with anxiety some proof of a disposition in the British government, to accommodate on any fair condition, the important difference between the two nations relative to impressment, but they have sought in vain; none is to be found either in the communications of the British minister to the American Charge des Affairs at London, or in those of the commander of the British naval forces at Halifax made by order of his government to the Department of State. They have seen with regret, that altho' Lord Castlereagh professed a willingness in his government to receive and discuss amicably any proposition having in view either to check abuse in the practice of impressment or to provide a substitute to it, he not only declined entering into a negotiation for the purpose, but discountenanced the expectation that any substitute could be proposed, which his government would accept. It merits notice also, though it ceased to be a cause of surpris, that in the communication of Admiral Warren to the Department of State, the subject of impressment was not even alluded to.

Had the Executive consented to an armistice on the repeal of the orders in council, without a satisfactory provision against impressment, or a clear and distinct understanding with the British government to that effect, in some mode entitled to confidence, your committee would not have hesitated to disapprove it.

The impressment of our seamen being deservedly considered a principal cause of the war, the war ought to be prosecuted until that cause is removed. To appeal to arms in defence of a right and to lay them down without securing it, or a satisfactory evidence of a good disposition in the opposite party to secure it, would be considered in no other light, than a relinquishment of it. To attempt to negotiate afterwards, for the security of such right, in the expectation that any of the arguments, which have been urged before the declaration of war and been rejected, would have more weight, after that experiment had been made in vain, would be an act of folly which would not fail to expose us to the scorn and derision of the British nation and of the world.

On a full view therefore of the conduct of the Executive in its transactions with the British government since the declaration of war, the committee consider it their duty to express their entire approbation of it. They perceive in it a firm resolution to support the rights and honor of their country, with a sincere and commendable disposition to promote peace, on such just and honorable conditions as the U. States may with safety accept.

It remains therefore for the United States to take their final attitude with G. Britain, and to maintain it with consistency, and with unshaken firmness and constancy.

The manner in which the friendly advances and liberal propositions of the Executive have been received by the British government has in a great measure extinguished the hope of amicable accommodation. It is, however, possible that the British government, after instructing Admiral Warren, to communicate to the Department of State the repeal of the orders in council, may have declined the arrangement proposed by Mr. Russell in the expectation that that measure would have been satisfactory to the U. States. Be this as it may, your committee consider it the duty of this House to explain to its constituents the remaining cause of controversy, the precise nature of that cause, and the high obligation which it imposes.

From what has been stated, it appears that however great the sensibility to other wrongs, the impressment of our seamen, was that alone, which prevented an armistice, and in all probability an accommodation. Had that great interest been arranged in a satisfactory manner, the President was willing to rely on the intrinsic justice of other claims, and the amicable spirit in which the negotiation would have been entered into, for satisfaction in their favor. G. Britain claims a right to impress her own seamen and to exercise it in American vessels. In the practice British cruisers impress American citizens, and from the nature of things, it is impossible that the abuse should not be carried to great extent. A substitute, or any other offer of the British navy, ought not to be the arbiter in

such a case. The liberty and lives of American citizens ought not to depend on the will of such a party.

The British government has insisted that every American citizen should carry with him the evidence of his citizenship, and that all those not possessed of it might be impressed. This criterion, if not otherwise objectionable, would be so, as the document might be lost, destroyed or taken from the party to whom it was granted, nor might it in all cases be entitled to respect, as it might be counterfeited, transferred, or granted to improper persons. But this rule is liable to other and much stronger objections. On what principle does the British government claim of the United States a great and shameful degradation? Ought the free citizens of an independent power to carry with them on the main ocean, and in their own vessels, the evidence of their freedom? And are all to be considered British subjects and liable to impressment who do not bear with them that badge? Is it not more consistent with every idea both of public as well as of private right, that the party setting up a claim to any interest, whether it be to persons or property, should prove his right? What would be the conduct of G. Britain under similar circumstances? Would she permit the public ship of any other power, disregarding the rights of their flag, to enter on board her merchant vessels, take from them such part of their crew, as the boarding officers thought fit, of ten her own subjects, exposing by means thereof their vessels to destruction? Would she suffer such an usurpation to derive any sanction from her patient forbearance?

With the British claim to impress British seamen, the U. States have no right to interfere, provided it be in British vessels or in any other than those of the U. States. That American citizens should be exempted from its operation, is all that they demand. Experience has shewn that this cannot be secured otherwise, than by the vessel in which they sail. Take from American citizens this barrier, which ought to be held sacred, and there is nothing to protect them against the rapacious grasp of the British navy. This then is the extent of the demand of the U. States, a demand so just in itself, so consistent and inseparable from their rights, as an independent nation, that it has been a cause of astonishment, that it should ever have been called in question. The foundation of the British claim is, that British seamen find employment in the service of the United States; this is represented as an evil affecting essentially the great interests of the British nation. This complaint would have more weight if sanctioned by the British example. It is known on the contrary, that it is in direct repugnance to it. Great Britain does not scruple to receive into her service all who enter into it voluntarily.—If she confined herself within that limit, the present controversy would not exist. Heretofore the subjects of even the most despotic powers have been left at liberty to pursue their own happiness, by honest industry, wherever their inclination led them. The British government refuses to its seamen that privilege. Let not this, then, be a ground of controversy with that nation. Let it be distinctly understood, that in case an arrangement should be made between the two nations, whereby each should exclude from its service the citizens and subjects of the other, on the principles and conditions above stated, that this House will be prepared, so far as depends on it, to give it effect, and for that purpose to enact laws, with such regulations and penalties as will be adequate. With this pledge, it is not perceived on what ground the British government can persist in its claim? If British seamen are excluded from the service of the U. States, as may be effectually done, the foundation of the claim must cease. When it is known that not one British seaman could be found on board American vessels, it would be absurd to urge that fact as a motive for such impressment.

In declaring a willingness to give effect to the proposed arrangement, your Committee consider it equally the duty of the House to declare, in terms the most decisive, that should the British government still decline it, and persevere in the practice of impressment from American vessels, the U. States will never acquiesce in that practice, but will resist it unceasingly with all their force. It is not necessary now to

enquire what the course would have been with respect to impressment, in case the orders in council had been repealed before the declaration of war—or how long the practice of impressment would have been borne, in the hope that that repeal would have been followed by a satisfactory arrangement with respect to impressment.

War having been declared, and the case of impressment being necessarily included as one of the most important causes, it is evident that it must be provided for in the pacification. The omission of it in a treaty of peace, would not leave it on its former ground; it would in effect be an absolute relinquishment, an idea at which the feelings of every American must revolt.—The seamen of the United States have a claim on their country for protection, and they must be protected. If a single ship is taken at sea, and the property of an American citizen arrested from him unjustly, it rouses the indignation of the country. How much more deeply then ought we to be excited, when we behold so many of this gallant and highly meritorious class of our fellow-citizens snatched from the bosoms of their families and of their country, and carried into a cruel and afflicting bondage. It is an evil which ought not, which cannot be longer tolerated. Without dwelling on the sufferings of the victims, or on that wretched scene of distress which spreads among their relatives through the country, the practice is in itself in the highest degree degrading to the U. States as a nation. It is incompatible with their sovereignty—it is subversive of the main pillars of their independence.—The forbearance of the United States under it has been mistaken for pusillanimity.

The British pretension was maturing fast into a right. Had resistance been longer delayed, it might have become law. Every adminisrator remonstrated against it, in a tone which bespoke the growing indignation of the country. Their remonstrances produced no effect. It was worthy the illustrious leader of our armies, when carried by the voice of his country to the head of the government, to pause, rather than to recommend to his fellow-citizens a new war, before they had recovered from the calamities of the late one. It was worthy his immediate successors to follow his example. In peace our free system of Government would gain strength, and our happy union become consolidated. But at the last session, the period had arrived when forbearance could be no longer justified. It was the duty of Congress to take up this subject in connexion with the other great wrongs of which they complained, and to seek redress in the only mode which became the representatives of a free people. They have done so by appealing to arms, and that appeal will be supported by their constituents.

Your committee are aware that an interesting crisis has arrived in the U. States, but they have no painful apprehension of its consequences. The course before them is direct. It is pointed out equally by a regard to the honor, the rights and the interests of the nation. If we pursue it with firmness and vigor, relying on the aid of Heaven, our success is inevitable. Our resources are abundant; and the people are brave and virtuous, and their spirit unbroken.—The gallantry of our infant navy bespeaks our growing greatness on that element, and that our troops when led to action inspires full confidence of what may be expected from them when their organization is complete. Our Union is always most strong when menaced by foreign dangers. The people of America are never so much one family as when their liberties are invaded.

The report concludes by recommending the passage of a bill "for the regulation of seamen on board the public vessels and in the merchant service of the U. States."

[The object of this bill is, to prohibit after the conclusion of the present war, the employment of any seamen in vessels of the United States, other than citizens, native or naturalized, provided this stipulation shall extend only to such nations as shall have entered into similar stipulations not to employ American seamen, and not to claim or exercise the pretended right to impress from vessels of the U. States. This provision, however, is not to preclude the Executive of the U. States from stipulating, by treaty with any foreign pow-

er, for reciprocal employment of the seamen of each nation by the other.]

BRITISH IMPRESSMENTS.

In the course of the Debate on the Bill for raising 20,000 additional men, Mr. GRAY, of Tennessee (the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations) produced, in support of the course pursued by the present Administration for obtaining Relief in regard to the impressment of our Seamen by the British, the opinions of the former Presidents of the United States and Secretaries of State. The following are passages from his Speech:

Upon some of these subjects in controversy, for instance that of impressment, negotiation had been tried unsuccessfully for twenty years, as I will shew before I sit down, from the public records of the country—on others it had been tried for a shorter period. At the last session of Congress, when every hope of obtaining justice in any other way was lost, the United States declared war; not to procure a repeal of the Orders in Council only, but to obtain redress for the unjust spoliation which had been committed on the property of American citizens, and to cause Great Britain to cease the practice of impressment. Other causes of irritation existed, but these were the prominent causes of the war. It may be taken as granted, in this discussion, that those orders are revoked, notwithstanding the objectionable manner of the revocation. You are now asked to lay down the sword, before you have obtained any of the objects of the war, except the abolition of these obnoxious orders. I request gentlemen to reflect, whether this is not in point of fact an abandonment of the other points in dispute? Do you not, by ceasing to prosecute the war which is already commenced, declare in the strongest possible terms that you will not make war for the injuries which remain unredressed? Can any man persuade himself, that you will obtain that by negotiation, for which you have determined you will not fight; and that too from a nation at all times disposed to depress this growing country? That politician must have a very imperfect knowledge of the considerations which influence all cabinets, who does not know that the strongest inducement which can be brought to operate in favor of an injured nation, is the apprehension of retaliation or fear of war, entertained by the other party. I cannot perhaps establish this more clearly in any other way than by recurring to the history of a transaction which took place between the United States and Great Britain.—Immediately after the attack on the Chesapeake, this government demanded reparation. The terms proposed were reasonable, and such as a nation inclined to act justly would promptly have acceded to. For five years or more did the British government refuse or rather fail to make that arrangement, which at the last session produced a satisfactory adjustment on that subject. Why, sir, was justice so long delayed, and why was it at last obtained? The British minister discovered a determination in Congress to submit no longer. He saw, that unless something was done, friendly relations between the two countries must immediately cease. He saw that public sentiment called so loudly for an opportunity of obtaining that justice by force which had been refused to fair argument, that he granted us that reasonable satisfaction which had been so long withheld. Sir, had he not seen the approaching storm, no atonement for that wanton outrage on our national sovereignty had yet been made. If you now say, you will not prosecute the war, the enemy must view it as a decision pronounced by this government that war shall not be waged by the American nation for the impressment of her citizens, or for depredations committed on commerce. It might as well be said, in plain, intelligible language, that the ocean is to be abandoned by the people of the United States except so far as depends on the will of Great Britain.—If both the property and liberty of American citizens on the ocean are subject to her disposal, you cease to possess the rights of a sovereign and independent nation. For my own part, if we have the right to claim security for the liberty and property of our citizens against that nation, of which no man dare express a doubt, I am for asserting it until the object is attained or the ability of this nation fails—of the latter I have no fear.

It is pretended, that this government