



“Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace,
“Unwrap’d by petty rage, to live like Brothers.”

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SPEECH
ON THE NEW ARMY BILL.

Having already inserted two or three excellent Speeches in support of the cause of our Country, in this Debate, we had not intended to have given any others, until we met with the following excellent Speech of our old worthy Representative, which we could not refrain from publishing:

Mr. MACON said, after failing in his attempt to amend the bill, he had considered it of very little importance—indeed, in its present form, he was not anxious whether it passed or not; and he had intended not to have troubled the committee on the subject, but the strange course which the debate had taken had called him up almost against his own consent. He could truly say, that he would not have offered a word to the committee, had not those who oppose the bill have brought into the discussion French influence, operating by a sort of magic on every act of the executive. The conduct of the executive had undergone the strictest scrutiny by these gentlemen, and their own arguments would, in his opinion, convince every impartial man, that it had been perfectly fair and upright to all foreign nations; the least attention to the documents which have from time to time been published would also convince every man of it, and satisfy all that the great object of the government had been peace, and that peace was maintained until it could no longer be done without surrendering almost every national right worth preserving.—Mr. M. said he would endeavor in his observations to follow the example which had been set the two last days—not to utter a word to wound the feelings of any one; nor would he refer to the documents, because every member possessed them, and they had been published for the information of the people; and he was sure that the committee must be tired with hearing a sentence here, and a paragraph there, read from them. The true way to understand them was to read the whole. But he had never been in the practice of making many quotations from books or documents, and he thought it unnecessary to make any now. He was clearly of opinion that the gentlemen who were opposed to the administration had the right to say what they thought of it, and to select the subject on which they would speak; and as they had made the selection, he hoped they would have an opportunity now of delivering their sentiments. He, however, regretted that they had selected this bill; because, of all the bills which may be brought before the House the present session, not one, he thought, would require dispatch more than this. The loss of a day now, may be the loss of the next campaign. He had expected that this general debate, which seems to include every thing but the bill, should have been delayed until the bill should be under discussion.

The points made in the debate seem to be—impressment; the right to expatriate; the right to naturalize, and French influence; neither of which have any connection with the bill, which is to raise troops for one year. Sir, said Mr. M. I will not retort a charge of British influence, and so balance one assertion against another, because I do not believe there is much of either in the nation; but if I was to say there was none, I should not say what I believe. People may honestly differ in opinion as to the effect which the success of England or France over the other might have on the interests of the U. States, without being under the influence of either, and this, no doubt, is the case with thousands.

I will, before I proceed farther, notice some of the observations made by the gentleman from N. York (Mr. Emott.) If I have not understood him or any other gentleman correctly, I hope that I shall be corrected; because it is my sincere desire to state their sentiments truly—and it is not always possible to take down their own words. He said, if there was any English influence, it was the influence of Locke and Sidney; and what more ought to have been done, he did not tell us. I ask, did any nation ever do more? Besides, has not the U. States over and over again offered to make an arrangement with

the influence of which we have heard so much, and which I intend hereafter to notice.

He also mentioned the influence which drove the first settlers to Plymouth.—Yes, sir, that influence was truly British; and that sort of influence G. Britain has been exercising ever since the first settlers, by their own industry and exertions, got into a situation to be useful to her; and that influence, or rather that persecution, compelled the first settlers of Carolina to leave the other provinces, and to settle a second time in the woods, and as soon as they were able, to pay taxes. That same influence followed them and made their condition much worse—it pursued the people in every part of the continent, until they declared themselves independent; and from that day to this she has not treated the United States as she has treated other independent nations.

Mr. Chairman, I was astonished when the gentleman told us he was not a friend to standing armies; and, almost in the same breath, said that at the last session he voted for raising the 25,000 men, and that he did not mean to go to war when he gave the vote. For what purpose then, could they be wanted? Experience had already shown that the old establishment was quite sufficient in time of peace; indeed a very considerable part of that was raised soon after the affair of the Chesapeake, and under an expectation that war would follow, and not for a regular peace establishment.

The same gentleman told us, that impressment by the British government was no new thing. This is certainly true as far as regards her own subjects and from her own vessels; but the systematic impressment of foreigners from foreign ships, is a new thing—and that, too, when the men and the ships both belong to the same nation. That government never attempted to impress Spaniards, Dutch, French, Swedes or Danes from vessels belonging to the same nation with the person; and it is this new doctrine, which operates solely on us, of which we complain. The question between us and England has nothing to do with the doctrine that free ships shall make free goods—or free men, if gentlemen please. And why draw that into the debate on the impressment of American citizens from American vessels? No law or precedent can be produced for this abominable and wicked practice. It was never attempted to be justified, notwithstanding impressment is no new thing with her. Every sovereign, said the gentleman, has a right to the service of all his subjects in time of war. But this right is like some others which sovereigns claim—it is without a remedy. Of what avail is the proclamation of the Prince Regent in this country, ordering the British subjects home? None. Many of them are still here; and will, probably, remain here until the termination of the war, and the British government will never dream of punishing one of them for disobedience. But, admit this right in sovereigns to its fullest extent, and it does not give one sovereign the right to impress the citizens or subjects of another; nor does it justify such an act—of course it does not touch the act of which we complain; that is, the impressing of American seamen from American vessels.

It is curious that, throughout this whole debate, there seems to have been drawn a distinction between the rights of a man who cultivates the soil, and of him that follows the sea; and that this distinction should have been drawn by those who claim to be the champions of commerce and of a navy, and who have told us that agriculture and commerce are inseparable; ought it not then to follow, that the rights of those employed on land or water should also be inseparable? This strange doctrine, as was observed by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. Robertson) may dust the eye but cannot stagger the understanding of any one.

The same gentleman said, that we had taken no measures to exclude British seamen from American vessels—for what purpose was protections given to American seamen? Surely to protect them against impressment and to show that we had no desire to protect others; and what more ought to have been done, he did not tell us. I ask, did any nation ever do more? Besides, has not the U. States over and over again offered to make an arrangement with

G. Britain on the subject of sailors, which should be satisfactory to both by securing to each the use of their own sailors? and has she not always refused to make any arrangement about them? And it may be fairly asked here, what measures G. Britain has taken to prevent her officers from impressing our seamen? None, that I have heard of, and she is the aggressor—we have not injured her, while she has been impressing our sailors wherever she could find them and wanted them. If the U. States wanted sailors ever so much, they could not impress one of hers, and she knows this; and she would not suffer one of them to be impressed by any foreign power; and we must determine to defend the rights of ours, or it will be idle to talk about navigation, commerce and a navy. Indeed, if commerce and agriculture be inseparable, you must defend the rights of the persons concerned in both, or both must be injured. There are no neutrals able to carry our products to market, and if you will not protect your seamen they will not carry them.

It is worthy of remark, that for twenty years past, the government of the U. States has been trying to settle the question of sailors with Great Britain, and that every attempt has failed, and that it is just now discovered, that we have always begun wrong. My colleague (Mr. Pearson) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Pitkin) it appears, could settle this great question without much difficulty. If they can, I wish most sincerely they would; I am however apprehensive they are a little mistaken; because Gen. Washington, when President, having Major Pinkney, now Major General Pinkney for minister at London, tried without effect; Mr. Adams renewed it with Mr. King for minister; Mr. Jefferson with Col. Monroe and Mr. Pinkney, now the Attorney General; and Mr. Madison with the last named Pinkney; all these Presidents and ministers with the aid of every cabinet have failed. Every description of political opinion with the greatest talents, has been employed and have done nothing; at the end of 20 years we have gained nothing and lost our labor, the question is as unsettled as ever; and we have been worsted in this way, that while we were negotiating they were impressing.

We have been told by my colleague, that it is not the right, but the abuse of impressment of which we complain. It is true, sir, that we do not complain of G. Britain impressing her own subjects; she may do as she pleases with them, that is no concern of ours; all we ask of her is to keep her hands off our people; and we deny her right to impress American citizens, and if the abuse be the impressing them, of that we do complain and not without just cause, because she has impressed many of them, and compelled them to fight her battles; and I have understood, after we had declared that war existed between her and us, that she detained those she had before impressed as prisoners of war, and this may be a part of her public law. Indeed we have heard much about universal law and public law, neither of which from the statements made, seem to have much regard to right or justice, which ought to be the foundation of all law. One universal law seems to be, that sovereigns can command their subjects to return home in case of war, another, that no person can expatriate himself; and G. Britain is no doubt willing to acknowledge another, by which she might impress sailors from all the world. As to the first, we need not trouble ourselves about it, and the second the U. States have not acknowledged; and we are now contending against impressment; and permit me here to observe, that the Republicans have always considered the impressment of citizens a more serious injury than the spoliation of property.

Is it not strange, sir, that some of the gentlemen should talk so much about public law, and that others should say there is now no public law, that the Emperor of France had destroyed it? That he and the British navy together have destroyed it, is certainly true—in the work of destruction they are united—force with them now constitutes reason, and they are each of them endeavoring to make their will a new law of nations—and if we suffer American citizens to be impressed from American vessels to serve on board the British navy, we ought never to talk about law again. If ever there was a universal law, it was that of expatriation—the right to live in the country men prefer. In every age and in every nation, men have left their native countries and settled in others, and so expatriated themselves—and from the days of Joseph to the present time, all nations have naturalized foreigners. If I am mistaken in this, I will thank any gentleman to put me right; but it would seem by the present debate that sailors had not the same right to expatriate themselves which other men had—if this be true, it would follow that they could not be naturalized; and yet the constitution of the United States does not except them from the general rule—I should really like to hear how a man loses his right by going to sea.

But does Great Britain admit, that she cannot naturalize? Certainly not—she naturalizes sailors by hundreds and thousands, while she denies that any of her subjects can expatriate themselves and be naturalized in another country. Nay, does she not naturalize by impressment, provided the person impressed serves a certain time on board her navy? And does not every government in Europe naturalize? Prince Eugene was not a German; Marshal Saxe was not a Frenchman; and the celebrated Keith was not a Prussian:—there is no end to examples which might be produced. The very man who now commands in Canada is believed to be the descendant of a naturalized Swiss. We all recollect D'Ivernois, who has written so much against this country and France—he was not only naturalized, but also knighted, if I may make a word; Dumont and others might be mentioned, but it is useless, we have examples enough in our own country: the Germans in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, when provinces—the Greeks in Florida, when Great Britain owned that country. And has she not also naturalized citizens of the United States in Canada—and is she not indebted to the Hugonots, whom she naturalized, for much of her prosperity? With respect to naturalization, she may be compared to a gulf, which takes every thing in and lets nothing out. We have been told that France does not admit the right of expatriation. We all know that some years past she was very anxious to naturalize the fishermen of the United States; and very lately she has naturalized Irishmen; indeed at one time she seemed willing to naturalize or fraternize with all the world. The truth is, they are both willing to get subjects by naturalizing, but unwilling to lose one by expatriation.—The Irish have gone into the service of almost every government in Europe, and we have not been informed that the English government punished them for it. But the sailors of all countries are poor, though liberal and generous, and it may be added almost friendless—they appear even to want friends on the other side of the House: their poverty and want of friends, is no doubt the reason why the universal law or public law, or some other law, forbids them the rights of expatriation and naturalization. But, admit all we have heard about England and France not permitting their subjects to expatriate themselves, and it only proves that they have municipal laws to that effect, which it is impossible to execute; and their having laws on the subject

shows plainly that they do not consider them deprived of the right by the law of nations. While on the subject of universal law, permit me to notice another which has not been mentioned, and which, like the others, is not regarded.—It is this, that no government shall assist rebels—to assist those whom monarchs deem rebels is with them the sin not to be forgiven. Each of them is always willing to have it enforced in his own case, and generally willing to aid those that another may deem rebels. The governments of G. Britain and France have both acknowledged this law, and have both violated it whenever an opportunity offered, and they thought it their interest to do so. Great Britain assisted the Dutch and the Vendéens—France the Scotch and the U. States. Monarchs are not apt to be very nice about their actions, though they make a great fuss about their principles; except Francis the First of France. They have generally been willing to benefit themselves by taking advantage of any commotion in a neighboring kingdom, or any other circumstance which may happen. England and France have been remarkable for taking part in the rebellions which have existed in each other—and if one existed in either at this moment, the other would be as willing to take part as ever. I have brought this subject into view, to show that the notions about universal law are illusory, to say the least of them, and that the great powers of Europe have never, in their acts, respected them, and we shall always find ourselves mistaken, if we look for public law any where but in the actions of nations. Treaties are only law between the persons which make them. Indeed public law can only be collected from facts, that is, from what nations have done. But, admit I am mistaken in this, and that it is a settled code derived from reason, the result will not be changed; because reason would justify the right to expatriate and to naturalize; and the facts prove that all nations have naturalized, and no one more than England, who, we have been told, never gives up her pretensions—so that, let us do as we will, she will continue to naturalize and to declare that her subjects cannot expatriate themselves.—But this same England has yielded the point in the case of Napper Tandy—and France did not punish the great Conde or Marshal Turenne—and she has in a case very similar, yielded to the United States, I mean the case of Gen. Charles Lee: he was saved from her pretensions—and the same energy, decision and unanimity, which saved him, would now save our seamen from impressment.

My colleague has stated that the orders in council were repealed in six days after the declaration of war.—The fact is undoubtedly so, if their modification, as I understand it, be a repeal. However, be this as it may, it is easy to discover the cause of the change in the British policy. This will be best done by going back to the embargo—there can be no question but that produced the arrangement with Mr. Erskine, which she refused to carry into execution, notwithstanding we now hear so much of her good faith. The non-importation, together with the message of the President to Congress, at the last session, and the act to raise 25,000 men, which passed the 11th of last January, produced the modification of the orders in council. Having mentioned the non-importation act, it is due to truth to say, that it has produced effects on Great Britain which I did not expect. Can it be supposed that the orders in council were modified without a cause? No one will suppose so, who is the least acquainted with the plundering which took place under them; as long as we would suffer ourselves to be plundered under them, so long they would have continued in force; and so long as we suffer her to impress American citizens, so long she will continue to impress them. Is she not acting towards us in the mo