



Oppose the plans of this deluging Peace, Unwieldy by party rage, to live the Brothers

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MR. INGERSOLL'S SPEECH.

Friday 14th January.

DEBATE ON THE ARMY BILLS.

Mr. Speaker.—I regret that there should be a necessity for any member on this side of the house to deny the positions assumed by the gentleman from New Hampshire, (Mr. Webster) who has just taken his seat, and I more especially regret that the task should have devolved upon me, as I think it does, in justice to my constituents, to contradict more particularly his positions with respect to the popularity of the conquest of Canada. He has totally denied the prevalence of such a sentiment, announced the project as odious and impracticable in the present state of public feeling, and, while he recognised the facility of the conquest, he nevertheless prophesied a continued abortion to the American arms in every such attempt. Sir, meeting his assertions as I do without previous consideration, it must be expected that any answer will be desultory and incomplete.

The gentleman from New Hampshire appears to have taken the floor with an argument, the fruit of some study of its subject; and it is due to candor to promise that he has argued his case honorably as well as elaborately, with propriety as well as ability. I can assure him, in the first place that whatever may be the temper of the community in that state which he in part represents, that however impolitic, immoral or impossible they may consider the conquest of Canada, the popular feeling is very different in that portion of the country which sends me to this house—a portion undoubtedly as populous, as enlightened and as patriotic as the immediate section of that gentleman's residence—I will not presume to say, sir, more populous, more enlightened, or more patriotic. The delays, disasters and disgrace our arms have sustained in the endeavor to invade the Canadian provinces, we do not consider, in Pennsylvania, as reasons for abandoning the attempt. We do not account our misfortunes irremediable. We do not see in these difficulties attending the American military apprenticeship, the evidences discovered by that gentleman of national indelible discredit; nor motives for closing with any terms that may be offered of peace; but, on the contrary, we hold them to be a calamitous proof of an ignorance of the art of war, which it is high time to overcome, and most powerful incitements to perseverance and fortitude in hostilities. As a separate cause of war, independent of all others, I will not undertake to say what the popular sentiment may be with regard to the invasion and conquest of Canada.—But as an instrument for waging it effectually, and as a desirable acquisition in the course of its prosecution, most certainly we do look upon those British provinces in our neighborhood as all important in the account. It can hardly be doubted that Canada hereafter will be as well defended as it has been in the present contest: nor can it any more be drawn into question that our efforts to possess ourselves of these territories will invariably be as unfortunate and disastrous as they have been, unless we persist long enough to oppose discipline to discipline; otherwise we may postpone the conquest to the next generation, who may try it as we have done, fail as we have done, and hand it over to a third descent, always expensive, always sanguinary, always mortifying and always unsuccessful. We recollect, sir, and take to consideration, in all our views on this subject, what it cost England to wrest it from France, how many disastrous campaigns succeeded each other, when the whole population of the New England states was

embodied for the conquest under the most experienced military men Great Britain could place at their head; how they nevertheless failed year after year, till Wolf at last achieved it, what said the English nation of its worth? Turn, sir, to those histories to which the gentleman from New-Hampshire has referred, with which he is no doubt so much more conversant than I can pretend to be; ask the annals of the times—they will tell you that the acquisition was accounted a rich indemnity for all the blood and all the treasure it had cost. They will inform you the English deemed it a prize inestimably valuable. If such was their view of this conquest, such their perseverance to accomplish it, shall we reckon it so little worth when its importance has been so much enhanced? Shall we forego the endeavor to obtain it without exertions commensurate with those made so long ago by England? It is true that our arms have failed—failed repeatedly—failed most disreputably—failed almost unaccountably. But have not the arms of England been as often and as signally reversed? It is now more than a century since England has been striving to become a considerable military power—and what has been her fate? Look to Flanders, to Holland, to Walcheren during the present war—without recurring further back—to Portugal, to Spain. Where have they not been defeated and disgraced? Till finally after three years of continued overthrows and failures in Spain, they have at last been beaten by their masters in the military art into an equality with those masters. Let it always be recollected, sir, that our present misfortunes in the field are the natural result of thirty years of peace and prosperity—thirty years of total neglect of every thing like military science or acquirement. I am given to understand, sir, by officers of unquestionable merit, that in the late affair at Williamsburg, on the 11th of November, the superiority of British discipline was as manifest on the one side, as that of American enthusiasm was on the other; and that but for this ardent, tho' ill regulated spirit, we should probably have sustained a total defeat. The knowledge of war is not to be obtained in a day, nor thro' any theory. If labor, mortification and constancy are indispensable to the mastery of any art, surely they must be, and be expected to be, in that of military affairs. How was it, sir, when soon after the organization of the present government, an attempt was made to subdue the Indians on our borders? When General Washington was the President, Gen. Knox, at the head of the War Department, and Generals Harmer, St. Clair and Wayne, the commanders of the several expeditions—I forget which of the two former went first; but they were both entirely unsuccessful; nor was it until the third attempt was made, that with all the supposable advantages of such an administration, this petty foe was ultimately overcome. Have gentlemen forgot the first blow of the war of the revolution, even before the declaration of independence, was aimed at Canada? When Gen. Washington sent Col. Arnold to penetrate with his detachment thro' the district of Maine, while Gen. Montgomery advanced to the co-operation by another route. The course and termination of that expedition are familiar to every body. Gen. Montgomery fell in the attack on Quebec, after the subjugation of Montreal, & when the conquest of the province was so near its accomplishment. He fell at a season of the year too, and under circumstances, which cannot be called to mind, without contrasting them with the present situation and latter constitution of our armies, who fortified all summer and huddled all winter, appear to have lost the spirit of enterprize and hardihood by which American officers and soldiers were formerly characterised. Several years after this invasion, in the

year 1779, that Congress, whose constancy, patriotism and talents cannot be too much applauded, whose eulogium has been resigned to our enemies & omitted by our own annalists, made every arrangement preparatory to a second incursion. The Marquis La Fayette was sent into the state of N. York to take the preliminary measures; and the design was finally suspended for reasons which it is not now essential that I should enumerate. Many years succeeding this period, at the adoption of the federal constitution, a clause was placed in that instrument, as is well known, for the express purpose of making adequate provision for the future incorporation of the Canadas, at any time into the union. But the conquest of Canada is said to be unpopular; and that is the reason why it will never succeed. A defensive and a maritime sphere is alone to be occupied by American hostilities. With a large majority of the country, the conquest, I am confident is not unpopular, but looked upon as even a strong independent inducement to the war. The embargo, of which the gentleman from New-Hampshire deprecates the existence even for a day, will not interrupt the prosecution of those maritime adventures he recommends. Your public vessels are not restricted. They are hastening abroad. Your privateers will not be confined. They are gliding down your rivers and bays to the ocean—Within a very short time, I am told a considerable number has effected their clearance out to sea from the waters of the Chesapeake; and no doubt from other quarters others will not be backward in going forth. The gentleman from New Hampshire is not correct when he avers that the present war has not added a single ship to our navy. Ships of the line, the favorite scheme of that gentleman, I presume, are in the process of construction. Several frigates and several sloops of war are also in progress; some nearly finished; others not so far advanced. Large ships are not the creation of a day; but I imagine as much industry has been exerted upon those now building as could be of any use. I was surprised, however, at the broadness of the honorable gentleman's avowment in this respect, when the conquest of Canada was his topic, and when therefore the Lakes should have been full in his view. The ships with which Com. Chauncey conquered the command of lake Ontario are the production of the present war; and so are those with which Commodore Perry obtained his transcendent victory, unparalleled by any achievement on the high seas. Mr. Speaker, this of all others is not a moment for relaxation from the exigencies of the crisis. Most unexpectedly, within these few days, a flag of truce has arrived from England, bearing, as is supposed, pacific overtures to this country. Whether this advance is to be considered as sincere or insidious, it equally behoves us to strengthen the belligerent arm of the nation. When we advert to the date at which these despatches left England, there is certainly something to be gathered which seems to indicate that our cause there is not deemed a hopeless one. Within not many days after the most signal success that ever the allies of Great Britain, according to their account, have gained on the continent of Europe during five successive coalitions, suddenly & somewhat strangely, a flag of truce is despatched to accost us. Information has been received, I am told, that the American loans are at an advance of twelve per cent. in the London stock market—no evidence certainly of their entertaining doubts of our national resources, unanimity or determination. I infer from all these circumstances, that the Emperor of Russia, whose proffered mediation Great Britain declines, having at last crowned his invincible resistance to the continental dominion of France with suc-

cess, has indicated symptoms of a resolution to turn the same unconquerable spirit against England, and to curb in like manner her maritime usurpation—a balance unquestionably to be desired for the peace, welfare and security of the world. Should such be the case, sir, it opens upon us prospects of peace and maritime prosperity infinitely beneficial. I trust it may be so, sir. I hope the Gottenburg negotiation may end in an adjustment of our difficulties. But to be thrown off our guard by such a reliance would be the most fatal impolicy; to rest on our arms in the mean while, every way deplorable. Let us strengthen them, increase our bounties, multiply our soldiers, instruct our officers, improve the interval to redeem and establish our military reputation. Above all, let us not be deluded by the prospect of peace into a dilapidation of the means of war. If the English are sincere, so are we and there can be no difficulty to a fair accommodation. But lest they should be insidious in this dangerous proposition, let the motto of every man be, at least for the present, *Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes.* On a succeeding day, Mr. Ingersoll said, We want Canada and the mouths of the St. Lawrence now, as we wanted Louisiana and the mouths of the Mississippi ten years ago. We want the latter for reasons similar to those which induced our desire for the former. The same policy which dictated the necessity in the one case dictates it in the other. We were anxious formerly to be liberated from the neighborhood, the contiguity of the great France. We are anxious now to be liberated from the neighborhood the contiguity of the Great Britain. We want no such flanks to our body politic, on either side. We have possessed ourselves of the one, and we need the other, to consummate the continental integrity of the American republic. As to a pecuniary value, that gentleman indeed may mention it. But what would the reception be of such an intimation from this side of the house? What was said, when, in time of profound peace, and when our policy was immoveably pacific, the wish was expressed to purchase Louisiana. Out upon it, cried an honorable Senator from New York.—For shame, added another, at that time from Pennsylvania. Contemptible, pitiful, wretched policy! Buy what you ought to take by force! Meanly purchase what is yours by the right of nature! Never! Call out your troops, your regulars and your volunteers—March down upon the province—take it—keep it, conquer it—and enjoy the conquest. Sir, we cannot purchase Canada while waging war upon its owners, or I do not know whether such a bargain might not be worth considering. We did purchase Louisiana when we had the opportunity; and all succeeding experience has tended to establish the inestimable value of that acquisition. I cannot leave this part of the subject without observing, that should the annexation of the Canadas to our confederacy, by any means, ever give us on this floor republican representatives from that quarter of the continent willing and able to repel the colonial ideas of English precedent, and to assert the independent positions of American principles in as masterly a manner as we have this day heard from the gentleman from Louisiana, I am free to say for one, that a new and interesting inducement is superadded to the many already existing and familiar to us, why we should persevere in every endeavor to accomplish the object. The honorable gentleman, from New York, (Mr. Grovenor) has engrated an importance on this attainment, greater, I must confess, than I was prepared to subscribe to. I had not considered the Canadas so natural an insertion into our union, as it appears to thial; them, nor their final-

ly falling into our embrace an event, so much within the ordinary and inevitable course of things. I had regarded them rather as only one of the present means, while hostilities prevail with England, for forcing the recognition of those great maritime immunities, the flag of whose protection the honorable gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Stockton) whose views I now proceed to consider, rejoices has been struck, the flag of whose gallant and inimitable champions, which have never been tarnished, amidst all our disasters and depressions—I mean our disasters on the land—has never ceased to wave the unrivalled banner of triumph and renown. Gracious God! defend my mind from the entertainment of such a sentiment! Keep me at all events from giving it utterance in this Hall of the Representatives of the American people, sacred to the assertion of their rights and the redress of their grievances. What are those principles, sir, what are they? at the prospect of whose abandonment that gentleman rejoices? at the thought of whose desertion any gentleman can indulge in public exultation? They are; 1st. A regulation of the British extension by construction of blockade. 2d. A limitation of their inordinate catalogue of contraband. 3d. No search for men. 4th. A qualified, ascertained and moderated search for things. They are the lineal offspring of those precious birthrights for which our forefathers invincibly contended, till they wrung from Gt. B. their most reluctant acknowledgement.—They are the privileges which she now invades and spoils; principles which are so dear to the people of this country, that I trust in God they will never be abandoned, while a man remains for their defence. And is it to strike the flag of these rights that the presiding officer of this house is to be taken from his elevated station, a gentleman whose private work and public eminence are the fairest type of that majority to which he belongs, and sent three thousand miles to the uppermost end of Europe, on the errand of his country's degradation? Is it to strike this flag, to prostrate it in the dust at the feet of our oppressors, in sight of all Europe, that the principal representative of the whole body of the people's representatives, imbued with all their feelings, pledged to all their principles, is to be dispatched from Washington to Gottenburg? Is the Speaker of this House to be made to repair to where the vestiges are still unobliterated of the Northern Confederacy, there to lay down before the maritime tyrants of the world, those inalienable maritime rights, which we hold in common with all independent nations, by the same universal charter? Can this be so? Should it be so?—Need it be so?—We have been told more than once that Admiral Warren is on the American coast, authorized and ready to receive at any time those concessions which we forsooth prefer to blazon forth in a solemn mission over the Atlantic.—If then the flag of the country is to be struck, would it not be better, safer, cheaper, easier, less galling, to strike it nearer home? To save ourselves the costly misery of passing over seas with its capitulation? No, sir, no; such is not the motive to the mission, Such is not the subdued spirit in which the English overtures have been met and acceded to. The American flag has not been struck. It never must be struck. It never will be removed from that mast, where it floats and will ever float, the glorious banner of Free Trade and Sailors' Rights.

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