

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

We presume our readers will be gratified by a perusal of the following excellent Speech of Mr. CALHOUN, from South Carolina, on the Loan Bill. It is therefore given at length.

MR. CALHOUN'S SPEECH.

MR. CHAIRMAN—It is now more than two weeks since the commencement of this debate; most of which time has been consumed by the opposition in attempting to prove the loan bill, poverty, folly and injustice of our government and country; for all of their arguments and declamation, however variant and contradictory, are reducible to two objections against the passage of this bill. First, that such is the want of capital, or of public credit, that the loan cannot be had, or it must be at an extravagant interest; and secondly, if it could, the bill ought to be rejected, because in their opinion the war is unjust and inexpedient. The last of these objections, I propose to discuss. To examine both at large would occupy too much time. Without, therefore, discussing the question whether the loan can or cannot be had, I will merely offer a few reflections incidentally connected with it. It is a little remarkable that not one of the minority has discussed the material points on this part of the subject; I mean the question, is the money proposed to be raised by this bill indispensable for the service of the year? and, if so, is a loan the only, or best mode of obtaining it? The chairman of the committee of ways and means has presented an estimate of the expenses already ordered, or which must be, by which it appears that the sum proposed to be raised by this bill, with the other sources of revenue, will be absolutely necessary to meet them. The silence of the opposition sanctions the correctness of the estimate; and as no other mode has been indicated of obtaining the necessary supplies, this may be presumed to be the only one. It ceases then to be a question, whether the loan can be had at this or that interest. It is necessary; it must be had; and the rate per centum will depend principally on the state of the money market—and not on the arguments here. Again; on comparing the two objections, to the passage of this bill, one of them destroys all confidence in the other. Our opponents contend not only that the loan cannot be had, but that it ought not to be granted. To defeat the passage of this bill, or to prevent the successful operation out of this house, are declared objects of their policy. It is true that all have not made the latter declaration; but none, as far as my memory serves, have disavowed it. When, then, they argue that the loan must fail, they may be considered either as dupes to their wishes, or what is more probable, as aiming to destroy the confidence of honest men in the public faith; for it cannot be presumed that they have any hope to defeat the passage of the bill.

But to proceed to the objection which I propose to discuss. The war, say our opponents, is unjust and inexpedient, and therefore this bill ought to be rejected. The facts of the supposed injustice and inexpediency of the war, on which this objection rests, have claimed the exclusive attention of the opposition. The inference deduced from them, that they justify the rejection of this bill, though far from being an intuitive proposition, has received no part of their arguments or considerations. For my part, I consider it not only false but dangerous; and shall, therefore, not only consider the alleged injustice and inexpediency of the war, but the inference as deduced from those charges. I trust with the attention of the committee to prove that both are equally unfounded. I must beg an attentive and deliberate hearing; for a correct mode of thinking on this subject, I do sincerely believe to be necessary to the lasting prosperity of our country. I

say an attentive and deliberate hearing, for it is not sufficient that the mind be fixed on the discussion; but it should also be free from those passions and prejudices unfavorable to the reception of truth. The fact that discussion here assumes the form of debate produces a state of things unfavorable to dispassionate attention. In debate here, as between two individuals, the opposite sides are much more disposed to find objections to an argument, be it ever so clear, than to receive it with a proper degree of assent. In their zeal the interest of the country is too often forgot. Mutual recrimination, and not to discover and persuade to do what is right, is but too commonly the object. I hope what I have to say will not be viewed as a mere exercise of skill in a discussion, in which those who hear me have little or no interest; but as containing principles believed to be essential to the public interest. I trust I hold in proper contempt the spirit of idle debate. Its heat and zeal are momentary. Not so with our principles and measures. On them must depend our future prosperity and happiness.

Is the war unjust and inexpedient? This is the question which I now propose to discuss. The eagerness and zeal with which our opponents endeavor to prove this point, seem to me not at all inconsistent with sound principles, or due love of our country. In their zeal they often presume that we are wrong and our enemy right; and that on us is the burden to prove that their charges are false, before they have attempted to prove them to be true. How contrary this to the maxims of Roman wisdom! That wise and virtuous people, so far from presuming their country to be wrong, considered it as a crime in a citizen to doubt of the justice of the public cause. In a state of war how worthy of our imitation! It was at the root of Roman greatness. Without it a free state will ever lose much of its peculiar and native strength; the spontaneous and concurring zeal of its citizens.—The charge of injustice and inexpediency against the war necessarily leads me to investigate its cause. It originated, as agreed on all sides, in certain commercial aggressions on the part of England, and her practice of impressing American seamen from American vessels on the high seas. Though I have named commercial injuries first, it is my intention to give impressment the preference in the order of discussion; not only because the war is continued for it, but because it is of greater intrinsic importance. The life and liberty of a citizen are more important to him and his country than his property; and consequently the obligation to protect the former more sacred than the latter. To the truth of this position, our political institutions bear testimony. A single judicial process determines on a question of property; but it requires a double investigation, first before a grand jury and then a petit jury, before the humblest and most suspected citizen can be deprived of life or liberty. This is a mode of thinking worthy of free people, and in fact is essential to the permanent existence of their freedom. Yes, life and liberty, those precious gifts of Heaven, are by your laws and constitutions granted to all. They may be abused and forfeited to the country; but cannot be torn away by the hand of arbitrary power. Let us bear these sentiments in our minds and bring them in our bosoms to the discussion of this subject.

It is fortunate, that the facts connected with impressment are few and undoubted. Let aside for the present the pretext and principle on which Great Britain acts in relation to it. None can deny that a great number of American sailors have been impressed from on board American vessels on the high seas, & by force compelled to serve a foreign to whom they owe no allegiance, and to fight battles in which they have no interest.

It is equally certain, that the practice is of long continuance; and that negotiation has often and in vain been resorted to for redress. I say a great number, rather than specify any particular, because I do not conceive the exact number to be material; and also, because I do not wish to incorporate any thing the least doubtful in the statement. On this point, however, the two governments are pretty well agreed. Ours estimates the entire number taken at something more than 6000; and the British government acknowledged that at the breaking out of the war, they had sixteen hundred at least on board their public vessels. After deducting from our list the dead by battle and disease, the deserters and the liberated, it will be found that theirs exceeds our estimate. To the shame of the minority, they alone have attempted to throw any doubt upon this point—and to diminish the injury of the enemy below their own acknowledgement. On this simple statement, there are two inferences so clear, that I feel it almost an insult to the understandings of this committee to state them. I must seek for my apology in the efforts of our opponents to render that doubtful which in itself is so manifest; I mean the violation of the rights and liberties of the impressed American seamen, and the correspondent duty imposed on their country to defend them. I know of no illustration of a proposition so perfectly clear. No head can be so impenetrable as not to perceive its truth; no heart so callous as not to feel its obligation. For, who is there in the community of freemen that is willing to renounce the claim of protection which he has on all, or withhold the duty which he is under to all? It is the essence of civil society. Such and so simple is the truth on which the cause of our country stands. On those essential facts and inferences we are then on all sides agreed. The obligation of the government is established. How then are we to be absolved from so sacred a duty? The impressed, the enslaved seamen have invoked the protection of their country. Shall it be extended to them, or shall it be withheld? This is the question now proposed for our consideration, and which naturally introduces the various arguments of the minority on this important subject. They combat against inferences the most clear and powerful; proportionally perspicuous and strong must be the reasons to justify their conduct. I will commence with that which I believe to be most relied on; because most frequently and zealously urged in justification of our enemy. It is said that they take American seamen by mistake, and not by principle; their object is to take their own seamen, but from the impossibility of distinguishing, the American seaman is impressed. The answer is plain and decisive. The argument is founded in a misconception. The duty which the country owes to the impressed sailors originates in a single fact, that they are unjustly deprived by a foreign nation of their liberty. The principle on which they are deprived of their liberty, or the manner, constitutes no part of it. Whether done by principle or mistake, it is true, may have a bearing on the continuance of the practice and its future extent.—For what is done by mistake or accident generally leaves this consolation, that it will not probably occur again; but what is done by principle may be expected to continue. We have not even this hope! The evil is inveterate. The mistake, if one it is, must forever happen so long as the present practice is continued of impressing from American vessels. It, therefore, operates, as it regards us, as if it were the result of principle. I, however, deny the fact on which this justification rests. The object of England is not to take her seamen only. By recurring to official documents on this subject, it will be found, that she impresses persons on board of our vessels, who could not be mistaken

for British sailors. She takes indiscriminately Dane, Dutch, Spaniard and seamen of any nation. To speak another language and to wear a different complexion are, it seems, no evidence with the British Government that he is not an English sailor. What then is the principle of that government on this subject? If we are to judge by facts, and not by pretexts, which will never be wanting, if we are simple enough to believe them, it is this; they claim, at least as far as we are concerned, that every seafaring person found on the ocean is presumptively an Englishman, and bound to serve the crown of Great Britain. They admit, it is true, this presumption to be rebutted in a single case, and only in that; by the seaman proving that he belongs to the country to which the flag does under which he sails. If, for instance, the vessel is American, that he was born in the U. States. The impress officer the very person interested against him, is, however, the judge and jury who presides in this mock trial of nativity.—It is thus the American flag is insulted—it is thus the American citizen is stripped of his liberty under its protection! At home, he holds his liberty under the protection of the most sacred laws; abroad—no, I will not admit the distinction, for while under our flag he is still at home—he holds life and liberty at the mercy of every insignificant drunken midshipman! But let us attend for a moment longer to the object of this principle of the British government, as illustrated by practice. A war in Europe in which England is engaged; sooner or later extends to all the other powers in that part of the globe. In consequence of her superiority at sea, the navigation and commerce of other states are destroyed, or suspended in a state of war; and their seamen, who cannot readily change their habits, are compelled to seek employment in foreign service. Till lately, America remaining neutral, and offering high wages, they naturally preferred ours. To this state of facts, her principle of impressing all foreign seamen was applied; and by its operation forced those who were by their own consent employed in our vessels, to serve by compulsion in her navy.—Thus by a single process, under the pretext of taking her own seamen, the commerce and navigation of the world are converted into a nursery to support the British navy; and the practice of impressment from neutrals, on investigation, is discovered to be, like all of her other encroachments, a system of universal monopoly. Unless resisted by the steady and persevering efforts of other nations, she must eventually draw the commerce of the world into the vortex of her system.

It is next urged that this is an ancient custom on the part of England, and Europe generally; that it is a part of the law of nations to impress on board of neutral vessels on the high seas. Those who urge this argument ought to substantiate it by a reference to the facts and to elementary writers on public law. Till this is done, it cannot be considered in a stronger light than a mere assertion. I, for my part, do not believe that it ever constituted the custom of Europe, or that of England, since the period of the American war. If it were a general custom, why not recognized by some of the many writers on the laws of nations? They minutely state the cases in which a belligerent may enter a neutral vessel for the purpose of search. Why not this also? None of the rights of search would be more important and would better deserve their attention than this, if it really were one. Their silence, then, is decisive against the custom. I know that some English writers have set up an old claim formed on the orders of their government; but there is no proof of acquiescence on the part of other powers; and, if they had, it could not be obligatory on us. The law of nations is composed principally of usages originating in mutual convenience. Among the

nations of modern Europe who are distinguishable by their language and countenance, it is possible that impressment on board of neutral vessels there may not be liable to the mistakes and abuses of which we complain, and even that it might be a mutual convenience. Such a custom, then, would not be extraordinary. But were those nations related, as are America and England, and if the practice must from necessity be attended with incessant abuse, it never could exist. If our opponents, then, had proved, not merely asserted, such a custom, as between us and England, our country would have formed an exception. It is not applicable to our condition; it is unequal, not reciprocal, and attended with incessant abuse. As applied to us, then, the general usage, if there were one, ought to be removed by treaty, so as to suit the mutual convenience of both parties; an object which this country has ever been anxious to effect, but which has been studiously avoided by our enemies. If, however, our opponents still insist that it is a right under the law of nations, and must, notwithstanding the argument which I have advanced, be considered as applicable to us, we may meet usage with usage; or rather doubtful uncertain usage, and opposed to reason, by that which is undoubted and founded in the very essence of civil society. If to impress in neutral vessels is an usage of England and the rest of Europe, how much more so is it to afford protection to the subjects against foreign violence! This is the usage which is certain and universal—not confined to any particular nation—not originating in accidental circumstances; all states, the most weak and contemptible, claim it; and it is so mixed into the very essence of society, that it cannot be relinquished without certain destruction. On this custom, which combines both right and duty, we may oppose any pretext or claim of our enemy.

But, say some of our opponents, we are willing to defend native born American seamen, but not the naturalized. I know not how those who make this distinction can answer a simple question founded in fact. American seamen, yes, sixteen hundred, at least, native born American seamen by the acknowledgement of the British government, are impressed and held in bondage. If, then, you are willing to defend such, why not support the war now carried on solely for the defence of these unfortunate citizens? What avail is the declaration, that you are willing to defend them, when you will not move a finger in their cause? But the distinction between native and naturalized is without truth or reason. It constitutes no part of the controversy between the two countries. We contend for the defence of American seamen generally; the enemy has not distinguished between the one or the other class. He insists on continuing a custom which makes both equally liable to his oppression. We will not we cannot hear of a distinction, till some security is afforded against the abuse of which we complain. Till then I can consider it only as an equivocation, which acknowledges the duty of the government to protect, but evades the discharge of it. We are told that our seamen ask no protection, and that it is strange that those who are most remote and least interested should discover the greatest anxiety for them. As to the first part of this argument, I deny its truth. The sailors have claimed our protection. They have imported and invoked their country for it. We have had their application for protection laid before this House in the form of a document. It forms a large volume. Considering the cold indifference with which we have heard their prayer, I wonder that they have not long since ceased to consider us as their guardians. But we stand forth to discharge this sacred duty, are charged with being a blockhead, men who never saw a