



ELOQUENT APPEAL!

Speech of the Hon. Mr. Holmes, in the Senate of Massachusetts, during the debate on the late "Report," and the proposed Convention at Hartford.

Mr. President—From the indecent tenor of these resolutions and their preamble, I did expect that some one who was friendly to them, would have been good enough to point out their object. This I had a right to expect from their candor and liberality; but in this I have been disappointed; and, as well as I am, I feel little inclination or encouragement to detain the senate long in this debate. It was hoped that at this extraordinary session, summoned, as it is said, on account of extraordinary dangers, there would have transpired to excite the spirit of party. For myself, sir, I was disposed to dispense with party feelings. I unite my exertions with those of the majority in resisting and expelling the common enemy. In time of danger we might well suspend our domestic quarrels, to be resumed, if we chose, in times of tranquillity. But though in this expectation I have been disappointed, I am not surprised. During the short period I have had the honor of a seat in the legislature of Massachusetts, I have feared to be supposed as nothing, however extraordinary; and I confess I look upon this report of your committee with great composure, and do not believe that the dangers which it seems to threaten us will ever be realized. Yet, sir, lest I should be too confident, it is my duty to resist it. I deem it, to be sure, fraught with pernicious principles and intolerable heresies. That the constitution of the United States has totally failed to secure to the people those rights and benefits which were the objects of its promotion, is a strong assertion. That a radical reform, or a new constitution is necessary, is singular and extraordinary. That at this time any innovations should have been projected, is a subject of extreme regret.

The spirit of party had subsided. All were becoming indignant against the enemy, and were determined to resist him. But certain leaders of party no doubt became alarmed at these symptoms, and the summoning the legislature, at this time, became necessary. Gentlemen were probably alarmed lest a union in support of the war would operate as a destruction of their party; and surely, sir, the course taken in the preamble, is well calculated to guard against the danger.

You begin with the old story of the justice of the war:—This position of yours has been a hundred times refuted, and yet you persist. I have neither time nor strength, nor inclination to travel again over this ground. If our cause is unjust now, it was much more so at the commencement of the revolution. We, then, concluded that we ought not to be taxed without our consent. That the tax created was trifling, and that we ought to pay something, we admitted; but we claimed to be heard in assessing it. The right of Great Britain to her own men, we admit; but we claim the same right in deciding who are her men and who are ours. In the former case Britain undertook to take our property, without consulting us, in the latter, our citizens.

The outrages which Great Britain has committed on our commerce, are such as gentlemen, now opposed to her, have thought intolerable. I could quote the opinions of those gentlemen at different times, were I not afraid of tiring your patience. One instance must at present suffice. I hold in my hand a memorial of a committee of the merchants of Boston to congress, presented in the winter of 1805, signed by Mr. Lloyd, now one of our council, Mr. Perkins, now a member of this senate, and several other very respectable merchants of Boston, in which the most outrageous pretences, principles and practices, against the American commerce, are ably and

faithfully exposed. [Here Mr. Holmes read several parts of the memorial.] Are these complaints just? Is this interference with neutral rights consistent with neutral rights? And from that period to the declaration of war, have not these outrages increased? But, sir, I hold that however trifling the cause of the war in its commencement, additional causes may arise in its progress, and such as would justify its prosecution, even after the original cause had failed.

Turn your attention to the intolerable and unprecedented barbarities of the British, and say, are not these fresh causes of war? The shocking barbarities at Havre de Grace and Hampton, the wanton destruction of monuments of science and taste at Washington, the robbery at Alexandria and the brutalities at Penobscot, and the extortion and pillage at Cape Cod, are not these acts which demand our vengeance? But, sir, I consider these as trifles, compared to the employment of the savages. The moment you engage them, you authorize and become a party to a war of indiscriminate massacre. It is like the use of poisoned weapons or poisonous medicines. It converts the soldier into a savage. Such were once the equipments of the great Chatham. "But, my lords," said he, "who is the man, that in addition to the disgrace and mischief of war, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage? To call into civilized alliance the wild and inhuman inhabitants of the woods? To delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrors of his barbarous warfare against our brethren? These enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment. Unless thoroughly done away they will be a stain on the national character. It is not the least of national misfortunes that the strength and character of our army are thus impaired. Familiarized to the horrid scenes of savage cruelty, it can no longer boast of the noble and generous principles which dignify a soldier. No longer you sympathize with the dignity of the royal banner; nor feel the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious warfare, which makes ambition virtue. What makes ambition virtue? The sense of honor. But is the sense of honor consistent with the spirit of plunder, or the practice of murder? Can it flow from mercenary motives, or prompt to cruel deeds?" But though this extraordinary man could not be answered, he could be voted down.—The practice of plunder and murder prevailed, and it has continued to prevail until a British soldier is transformed to an inhuman and unfeeling ruffian, and the nation has retrograded to a nation of barbarians. Is it true that their barbarities cannot be restrained? Then why are they employed? But the manner the war has been conducted by our Indians, which self defence has brought into our employ, proves that Britain encourages, instead of restraining these cruelties.

But a distinction is attempted, in this report, between an offensive war and a defensive war. If, as you say, the war is unjust, and you have a right to refuse your aid in its prosecution, how happens it that you have a right to defend the soil? If the enemy is the injured party, it is his right to chastise us and avenge the injury. And what authorizes you to screen yourself from his righteous indignation, by fleeing to your own territory? Sir, the law of nature affords no man a refuge from justice. If the municipal law authorizes a man to defend his castle, it is for the furtherance of peace, but not of justice. Upon your hypothesis, therefore, you have no right to defend your neighbor's property. The erroneous ground you have taken will lead you into a thousand such absurdities. Your government has declared war. That alone is responsible for its justice.—

The people are justified, & it is their duty to prosecute it in such a way and manner as the constitutional managers of the war shall dictate. It is often prudent and proper, & the best means of defence, to carry the war into the enemy's country. Will any one undertake to say that the invasion of Canada by Gen. Brown was not the most effectual plan of defensive operation which could have been adopted? How could this band of heroes, who have acquired such never-fading renown, have better defended our territory? And, sir, had we an army of 60,000 men in Canada at this time, it would effectually draw the enemy from our Atlantic frontier and we should be no more exposed to their depredations.

You complain that Massachusetts is left defenceless. At the commencement of the war, 41 companies of militia, a force at that time adequate to the defence of the state, was required by the President and refused by the Governor; and upon the unprecedented and alarming ground, that the Governors of the states have the exclusive right to decide when and to what extent the militia be placed in the service of the general government. A more direct infraction of the constitution had never been made since the adoption.—In a part, too, which goes to the destruction of the strength and energy of the system.—You took the defence of the state out of the hands of the general government. You would not permit them to decide on the danger. You refused them the means to repel it, and now forsooth you complain that you are left defenceless. But, the regular troops enlisted within your state you claim for its defence. What, sir, those enlistments which you have labored incessantly to prevent? Those soldiers whom, you have scandalized, insulted and abused? Those officers whom you have degraded, caricatured, neglected and despised! Surely you would have none of these to defend you. Would you have troops of other states? These, you would say, were sent to drag you into submission, to trample upon your liberties. And you would say, as one of your pulpit incendiaries has said, "rather lay your bones by the side of your fathers than to suffer southern troops to enter the borders of New England."

The truth is you expect that submission would tempt the enemy to forbearance and discrimination. Disappointed in this you face about.—The Governor lays aside his constitutional scruples, and in contempt of the solemn opinion of his learned Judges, placed the militia under an officer of the United States. Now Boston must be defended. Now other seaports like Boston must be defended: The "party" will be patriotic, very patriotic when the danger threatens their property or their sacred person. The wanton barbarity at Hampton and other places, which gentlemen made the theme of much pleasantry, wore a much more serious aspect when likely to be brought near home.

Under these apprehensions, the committee state in their report that Great Britain threatens us with desolation. Gentlemen, too, who have hitherto placed great reliance on the magnanimity of Britain. And will they now doubt her magnanimity? What after she has gloriously emancipated Europe. After she has given freedom to France by impressing on her a master at the point of the bayonet. After she has established the freedom of the sea, by placing all maritime rights under her exclusive control.—What, after having given liberty to Spain, by re-establishing the Inquisition? And above all, after having taken Sheriff's Cooper and Adams under her kind protection and made them her friends, is it possible that she can be so barbarous as to threaten the "friends of peace" with desolation. There is, however one part of the British conduct which I confess I

liked. If there is any honorable feeling still remaining in an Englishman, it is love of country.—And he respects that virtue even in an enemy. Instead of its being a source of complaint, therefore that the British have not discriminated in favor of but against their professed friends, it is very honorable to our enemy and calculated to unite the people. The British have probably learnt, that as in the revolution their professed friends are their real enemies.—That they have been deceived and brought into this war by the professions and declaration of these friends.

But, sir, I do not believe that the glorious emancipation of Europe has either increased or diminished the animosity of G. Britain. She has cherished a uniform settled jealousy and hatred against us ever since our independence was acknowledged.—To be sure the power to gratify this spirit of animosity is increased. The peace of Europe, which was the subject of so much exultation, has put it into her power to harass and distress us. That she has the disposition to do this, let the whole history of her depredations & abuses testify. The enormities of the revolution are renewed with two fold animosity and vengeance. Unwholesome provisions, loathsome prisons, and poisonous medicines are renewed. Wanton cruelties and savage murders are revived—but no cause of war! Indiscriminate conflagration, but no cause of war! Pillage of private property, violations of flags, refusal of quarters, but no cause of war! The exchange of prisoners after they were dead, and other little, base and contemptible frauds which disgrace the savage—and yet gentlemen have the assurance to reiterate—no cause of war!

In this state of danger and alarm, the Governor has summoned the Legislature, as was supposed, to defend ourselves and expel the enemy. You recommend an army—and at the same time take care to propose a measure effectually to prevent it. Why is this done at this time? The reason is plain. The atrocities of the enemy had effected a union. You were alarmed for the fate of your party, and it was found necessary to withdraw the people's resentment from the enemy and direct it against our own administration. A little union was necessary to entice the republicans to defend Boston. But while this secures the town, it destroys your party.

Instead of encouraging and inflaming the zeal of the soldier, we are informing him that the nation is ruined—and this Massachusetts foretold a venture to affirm that no evil can happen to the country which Massachusetts has not predicted. She is always predicting evil, and in addition, she has done all she could that her predictions should be verified. She now pretends to be raising an army, and takes care to be throwing every stumbling block in the way of the measure. She will rejoice at no national success. She will reward no hero who has fought for his country; nor will she reverence the memory of him who has died in defence of its rights.

We magnify the enemy's power and resources, speak of our commercial hostility to her, take care not to charge her with any wrong, boast of her justice, magnanimity and forbearance, and pretend to be enlisting soldiers to fight her. Fine encouragement! Well calculated to expedite the raising of an army.

We are told of the disasters of this war. The increase of our adversary's strength was not to have been expected. No one, I believe, even in Massachusetts, ever predicted the last astonishing events in Europe.—"The glorious emancipation of Europe" has given us a proof of British magnanimity. Her "conquerors of the conquerors of Europe" were sent to "lather the Yankees into submission." Some disasters have taken

place not much to the honor of the American arms. The capture of Washington, and of the towns at the eastward of this Commonwealth, are mortifying.—But they have produced the happiest effects, and have been succeeded by successes more unexpected and astonishing than even the events of Europe! The American arms have triumphed both by land and water. The defeats of their armies, the capture of their ships on the ocean and their fleet on the Lake, are events which should make every American proud. [Here Mr. H. particularized the brilliant achievements of the army and navy, and complimented the officers and men, and proceeded.] These, sir, are achievements which have excited the reputation of Americans and humbled and disgraced that of Great Britain.—Well may we give glory to Almighty God for these victories, and rely on him for our future protection and triumph. I trust and believe that America is destined to be the grave of British glory. Her invincibles have been vanquished, and her navy, her pride and boast, has been humbled and intimidated. But no applause! No thanks! No cause of exultation!

The Committee, in their report, complain that they and their friends are said to be tainted with predilection for Great Britain and disaffection to the Union.—Something more than tainted, I suspect. After advocating all the British claims, magnifying her magnanimity, and excusing her barbarities, do you complain that we charge you with being tainted? If we say nothing more, you may well allow us to be very charitable. I do not know that any of the charges of disaffection to the Union are true; much has been said and something proved. Gentlemen would do well to take care that their present proceedings do not confirm suspicions or establish facts. There was a prediction that this course would be pursued.—I hold in my hand the Message of the President, relative to the developments of John Henry. I will, with your permission, sir, read a part of a letter, dated 7th March, 1809. After stating that he had ascertained the course intended to be pursued by the federal party in Massachusetts, in case of war with Great Britain, he observes, "I have already given a decided opinion, that a declaration of war is not to be expected, but contrary to all reasonable calculation, should the Congress possess spirit & independence enough to place their popularity in jeopardy by so strong a measure, the Legislature of Massachusetts will give the tone to the neighboring States; will declare itself permanent until a new election of members; invite a Congress to be composed of Delegates from the federal States, and create a separate government for their common interest."

Now compare what Henry said would be done, with what is now doing, and I believe that you will agree with me at least in this, that there is a wonderful coincidence between the prophecy and its fulfillment. In case of war with England Massachusetts was to take the lead and give the tone. She was to summon a convention of New England States, & the object was to be the independence of these States. I do not undertake to say that the gentlemen who are supporting this measure, had any thing to do with Henry's prediction; but it does appear that this letter has a very close resemblance to your resolution providing for the convention, both in language and spirit. And I apprehend that the people of this Commonwealth will have too much reason to suspect, that the part we are now acting will eventuate in consummation of the fulfilment of John Henry's prediction. Tainted with a disaffection to the Union! Good God! you resolved that "the laws must and will be resisted." You make the State laws