NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER,

AND

WASHINGTON ADVERTISER.

Vol. VI. WASHINGTON CITY, PRINTED BY SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH, PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE. No. DCCCLXXXVI

FIVE DOLLARS PER ANNUM. MONDAY, JUNE 16, 1806. *PAID IN ADVANCE.*

LETTER OF MR. T. M. RANDOLPH. (CONCLUDED.)

Another was immediately brought forward, to put a sum of money into the hands of the executive to open a negociation with Spain for the purchase of the Floridas, which contain, besides the slip of country claimed by the United States, lying eastward of the Mississippi, a separate province of considerable extent and value, and of incalculable local importance to the union. That province, East Florida, contains an immense body of unsettled land of good quality, in a wholesome climate, which admits the culture of the most valuable kind of cotton throughout, and on the eastern extremity, it is said even that of coffee to advantage. It has a great extent of sea coast, along which the whole trade of the Mississippi, promising very soon to be much the largest portion of the export trade of the union, must pass. As long as this coast is held by another power, that trade may be annoyed by public or private cruisers of all sizes, from the frigate to the barge, which may ride with safety and convenience in its harbors, or lurk behind its reefs for that purpose. But when possessed by the United States, gun boats alone will be sufficient to place the same trade in perfect safety. The United States have no claim upon any part of this province.

West-Florida, which was originally part of Louisiana, and is claimed as such by the United States, contains no great quantity of valuable land. By its position, however, it separates so completely the territory of Orleans from the Mississippi territory, that the mails of the United States cannot be carried by land to New-Orleans without the indulgence of the Spanish governor. It includes the only outlets to the sea of the north western part of Georgia, of the eastern, the central, and more than half the western part of the Mississippi territory, which are watered by some of our best rivers. One of these affords the only ready and convenient route for the return trade of the country of the Ohio, the Tennessee, the Missouri, and all the upper branches of the Mississippi. The object of those who brought forward this proposition, was to offer a liberal price for the province to which the United States had no pretensions, yet would derive immense benefit from possessing, upon condition that the province in dispute should be given up in the bargain, and that a boundary between the two nations on their south-western frontier should be established upon a just and equal construction of the terms of the treaty as explained by the evidence of history. The claim for spoliations would of course be urged in the new negociation, and could be readily provided for out of the money to be paid for East Florida.

Their opponents declared the plan to be nothing less than buying again what we had already paid for, and at last pronounced it to be a disgraceful scheme to purchase peace. They said that the money would be employed in bribes at the French court, to induce that power to compel Spain to acquiesce in our views. They declared it infamous to form any contract of that nature with Spain, while France had so much control over her councils, that she could not exercise free will. They laid hold of an expression which had been used in un-official conversation by an eminent member of the executive branch of the government, that it appeared to him France discouraged an accommodation of the differences between us and Spain, with the view to produce another purchase of territory for the benefit of their joint coffers. They pronounced that France had dishonorable views of obtaining money at the expence of Spain, and that the proposition to purchase was an ignominious concurrence with those views on our part, produced by the threats of that power. This last assertion is founded solely on a civil and candid answer given by the French minister of foreign affairs to a question of serious interest, put to him by our ambassador at Paris; whether France would take part in the war, in case of hostilities between the United States and Spain; to which the reply was that she would of course give aid to Spain. Merely an avowal that a connection as intimate exists at present between the two nations as that of the ancient family compact, through the force of which and its effects upon other powers, Spain was brought in along with France to our aid in the struggle for our independence. A simple confession, which could not at the time have worn the aspect of menace, because expressions of regret at the serious appearance of the differences between Spain and the United States, the sincerity of which there was no sure reason to doubt, had been previously used. But the soundest judgment, the best understanding, and the most ingenuous moral disposition may not always guard warm and quick tempers in the glow of ardent debate, against precipitancy and inconsistency, against unsound views or unwarranted inferences and constructions. They suggested that we should pay our money upon a risk, for the title made by Spain under the influence of France, might on a favorable occasion be revoked by the former power, when her government fell into the hands of other men. That it was a sacrifice of our future repose as well as our honor to escape a present difficulty.

They did not succeed, however, in communicating their punctilious sentiments to the majority of the House. The members composing it could not understand why, as France was bound to join in the war on the part of Spain, if the affair came to that issue, she might not with propriety use the influence over her councils which naturally arose out of that obligation, to procure measures which would avert war. They could not see how, under such circumstances, the title made to us by Spain would be rendered questionable by the exercise of that influence. They would not admit that we had a right to take into consideration the probable application of the money by Spain, after she had given us her receipt for it. They would not concur in the unjust suspicion that it would be employed for infamous purposes in Paris, and that there was a probability of its being dissipated there, without attaining the end contemplated. They persisted in thinking that if we could get our just rights established, procure a territory of great importance to us, and secure peace at the same time by making a regular purchase of East Florida at a liberal price, although it might be afterwards said something had been allowed to extinguish the claims of Spain upon West Florida, and part of south western Louisiana, yet that the peace not only could not be an ignominious one, but that the termination of the dispute would be entirely honorable and satisfactory. They saw no humiliation to their country in offering to France and Spain combined, the alternative of assured peace and a generous price for Florida, or the manifest risk, from inevitable collisions of war, with its certain consequences, the invasion of Mexico and Cuba. Two millions of dollars were appropriated and put into the hands of the executive, without an express declaration of the object intended, which could have had no other effect than to shew a want of confidence in the wisdom, purity, and disposition of the chief magistrate to promote the views of the legislature, which did not exist except in the breasts of a small minority.

A resolution was extorted from the House, expressive of an opinion, that an exchange of territory was the most eligible mode of settling the dispute about boundaries. But this was a nugatory declaration, for Spain had already rejected a liberal offer of that kind, upon the ground of confidence in the justice of her claim to the whole. The words of the resolution too rendered an arrangement of that kind, in strict compliance with it, difficult in general, and impracticable in one point. Retaining all the country watered by the Mississippi, and yielding all the remainder, the line of demarcation would have been difficult to describe on the earth, and impossible to guard. An ample barrier on the side of New Mexico could not have been given to Spain under that restriction, for the waters of some of the branches of the Mississippi interlock with those on which stands the capital of that province, at no great distance from which some of the sources of the Red river and of the Yellow Stone branch of the Missouri are known to exist. The principle of exchange too was in direct opposition to the spirit of some of the arguments most warmly urged by the opponents of purchase. If, as they said, the national honor was concerned in the support of the claim, what difference could they shew between giving one half of the country in dispute to secure the other, and paying a small part of the value of the whole to obtain a relinquishment of the whole? On the score of interest there is indeed a manifest difference in favor of the latter. But it was never contemplated, by a part at least of the favorers of the proposition to purchase. They considered themselves as holding the following language to Spain—We will not take the purchase of Louisiana from France as the standard whereby to fix the price of East Florida. We will pay for it, all that we can make out of it, or save by its possession. The value of its lands, the convenience of its harbors, the advantage of holding so important a line of coast, the revenue of imposts we shall derive from it, the benefit of having in our own hands the outlet to the sea of the Apalachicola, even the additional command the possession of the province will give us over the Creek nation of Indians, all shall be fairly taken into the estimate, but we must have West Florida in the bargain, and a just arrangement according to the treaty, in the south west. This is our final proposal. We do not think ourselves dishonored by making another attempt at accommodation, although that recently made in your own capital, through one of our citizens whom we honor most, was met by you with such disrespectful indifference. Tranquility is no far interest only, but the prevalent desire of our people. We shall not sacrifice it to punctilio. We entreat you, however, to reflect, that from the nature of our political system, insults given to our government touch every breast in the nation, and that a ferment excited in a large mass is not easily allayed. We shall make our application to you this time through your ally for two reasons. First, because the intimacy of your connexion necessarily involves him in the consequences of a failure to accommodate our differences, and we believe that although he has the least reason of any power on earth to dread war, that he sincerely prefers peace. Next, because we conceive his honor to be implicated in the decision of the question between us, upon principles such as we propose. If the secret explanation between you of the descriptive words of your treaty of 1800, was a promise on his part that you should continue in possession of West Florida, surely it was equivalent to an acknowledgment that West Florida was included by the expressions of his treaty with us, and that it has been fairly conveyed to us, since we were not informed of his secret promise to you. If that explanation was an impartial construction made between you, of the terms of the treaty, he will not hesitate to acknowledge that it is not binding on us, as he made no provision for its adoption in his treaty with us, and that he cannot be a fair arbiter between us, in establishing a construction, since he has given his opinion against us already.—But where can we find an arbiter if he is thus excluded? What would be his feelings if upon agreeing on one, another construction contrary to his should be rendered, and Spain be deprived of what he has assured to her? In either case an accommodation of the kind we propose must be desirable to him.

It was during the debate on this question, that extraordinary imputation was cast on the Executive branch of our government, by an eminent member in his place, which must have reached your ears, and cannot fail to have given serious disturbance to your mind. He stated, that he had received information from undoubted authority, of a design having been conceived by the Executive to draw a sum of money from the treasury, for the purpose of commencing a negociation for the purchase of the Floridas, previous to the appropriation by law; and that the intention had been regularly intimated to the head of the treasury department. An eager and anxious inquiry was of course the immediate effect of such an assertion. The information obtained was, that at a meeting of the heads of departments, convened for consultation, some time before the legislature assembled, the President had given an opinion that the plan of accommodation, since adopted by the legislature, was the most eligible; that the circumstances then existing of the European powers, rendered that juncture the most favorable possible for the commencement of such a negociation, and that the probability was, it would become less so, if not wholly unfavorable, before Congress could decide on the measure. He then suggested as a matter of deliberation, how far it might be advisable to anticipate an appropriation, by instructing the minister of the U. S. to enter into a negociation immediately on the basis of purchase. After some discussion the subject was dismissed, with the determination to wait the decision of Congress. By the official declaration of the Secretary of the Treasury to the House of Representatives, it became certain, that the member was entirely under a mistake, as to the fact of the application to that department. A mistake, which it appeared himself and two others had been led into, by an imperfect communication or comprehension of the occurrences I have stated, in a conversation with that officer.

The question of appropriating money to purchase Florida, was discussed in secret, for the obvious reason that to proclaim the intention of making a bargain, not only renders it more difficult to insure advantageous terms, but exposes the party to the machinations of all who have an interest to defeat his design. In this particular case, it was manifestly the interest of G. Britain to render the design abortive, for she would thereby, not only hinder the coffers of her enemy from being replenished, but might eventually cause to fall into the scale against him, a weight by no means insignificant in the estimation of either. Diplomatic conferences too, which are the materials of debate, and the ground-work of measures in all questions relating to foreign affairs, have always been deemed, from their nature, confidential between governments, and the publication of them to the world, while the characters concerned are in a way to be affected by it, is apt to produce strong resentment in Europe. And while the great powers of the earth continue to be under the absolute command of single men, who are governed by their passions, and swayed by their transient feelings, there will be room for apprehension, that the unguarded language of the indiscreet, or the violence of warm tempers, may mar the best prospects and produce excitements destructive of the tranquility of nations. Besides, to insure that freedom in debate, which is requisite to fair discussion, it is absolutely necessary when a great foreign power is the object of the measures proposed, to debate in private. The fear of exciting unfavorable feelings abroad by expressions uttered from a body which holds the sword and purse of a nation, will otherwise prove a pernicious restraint upon the minds of the discreet. Thus while the observance of secrecy as to the communications from the Executive of foreign correspondence, and as to the measures contemplated, is dictated by prudence, privacy of debate on certain occasions is not only consistent with the spirit of popular government, but is demanded by its most essential principles. At the same time, however, those principles imperiously demand the earliest promulgation which the considerations stated will admit, and it cannot be neglected or delayed without an unpardonable violation of them. In this case, although the invitation from the Executive to privacy met no opposition, and was adopted without hesitation, yet very soon exertions were made to give premature publicity to the measure determined on, the sentiments uttered during debate, the confidential communications of the President, and the foreign correspondence on the subject, which succeeded as to the first, and of course the second, though they failed as to the remainder. Privacy of legislative proceedings in popular governments was pronounced altogether inadmissible, and determinations were proclaimed to oppose all future orders of secrecy on whatsoever ground they might be proposed. It was said that already, from the slack observance by the members themselves of the order of the House, by the vigilant and dexterous cunning of a certain foreign minister, and by the ardor of the editors of gazettes to gratify public curiosity, the whole substance of the secret proceedings had transpired. An assertion by no means altogether unfounded, yet affording no argument at all to defend a formal promulgation of the whole proceedings at such an unseasonable time. For the public had what information on the subject it possessed entirely on the footing of conjecture, too vague to excite the jealousy of G. Britain, or to inflame the malcontents of Louisiana, who had become quiet at length, from the stronger hope, perhaps, which they cherished, of reunion with Spain, and from whose despair events might ensue of a nature to prove serious obstacles to the negociation about to commence. Complaints were uttered of the injustice done the minority in refusing them permission to explain and defend their conduct to their constituents, when it had been rendered necessary by the unpopular vote they had been compelled to give by their knowledge of the course to be pursued with regard to Spain, upon a great question that was discussed and decided in public, that of our differences with G. Britain, a strange and heedless admission, which the well known political standing of those gentlemen contradicted of itself. For how low must that representative be in the confidence of his constituents, who could not at once effectually restrain their impatience to censure his conduct, by assuring them that he was prevented only by a public crisis which demanded secrecy, from giving them that entire satisfaction with regard to it, which he was ready to do, and would not delay a moment longer than necessary for the security of their important interests. Unfortunately a small number of the House of Representatives lost sight of the importance of secrecy in such circumstances, and of the consistency of conduct due from them. Without the smallest change of circumstances, or a single argument which had not equal force at the commencement, the injunction of secrecy, as to the debate, and the measure adopted, was removed. Immediately the intention to make purchase of the Floridas, the sum allotted as earnest money for the purpose, the reliance on the success of that measure, which was displayed in the rejection of the proposition to increase the regular troops, all became officially public. Much of the inflammatory declamation of the private debate, all the offensive sentiments uttered against France and Spain, the charge of venality upon the court of the former, and the imputation of servility against that of the latter, have been since given to the world under legislative sanction, in the gazettes of the union. Papers which, it is said, find their way as certainly to the bureau of foreign affairs in Paris, and to the mantle piece of the imperial Boudoir, as they do to the counting rooms of our merchants, and the breakfast tables of our country squires. The sensation produced some years since in France, by insinuations of the same nature, cannot be forgotten. The fate of the negociation may justly be deemed uncertain. If it should fail, war with France and her allies, Spain, Italy, and Holland, may possibly be the consequence. War with France, after she has trampled Austria in the dust, driven the arctic bear howling with anguish back to his polar prison, and rendered mute the British lion. For myself I do not despair of the favorable issue of such a contest, if it should be forced upon us.

I do not from that apprehension regret the rejection of the late proposition to increase the standing army, although I deem it possible that we may soon require a hundred thousand men instead of four thousand. If war is to take place, I sincerely wish we may receive the first blow, not only that we may give evidence to the world of the sincerity of our pacific professions, but that the spirit of the people may be completely roused, and our trifling dissensions hushed, that the irresistible elasticity of the American character may be completely displayed. I cannot, however, cease to regret the indiscretion in debate, and the much less excusable fluctuation of opinion, which may possibly have opened the way to incalculable calamities.

Your Friend,

TH. M. RANDOLPH.

FOR THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

UNIVERSAL BLOCKADES.

The government of Great Britain does not appear sufficiently to consider the *nature and consequences* of the measure of *universal blockade*, which they are said to have adopted. The measure is in fact improperly stiled *a blockade*. *It is a forcible suspension of all the trade of the continent of Europe.* Switzerland enveloped in Europe, and the United States of America, in a different and remote quarter of the globe, are incidentally subjected to insupportable and illegitimate interruptions of the sales of their agricultural productions and manufactures, and to the most injurious obstruction of their supplies. We can have *no vent* for the tropical productions which we import. Switzerland, *incapable* of participating in the operations of France and Prussia in shutting the European sea ports, and America *having no participation* in them, are treated as France and Prussia. The chapter of *justice* is torn out of the maritime code. The law of nations is mutilated in one part and interpolated in another. America, prevented from supplying the old continent through England, or by direct voyages, can raise no monies from domestic or foreign goods to pay for European merchandize. She cannot therefore import such merchandize. She cannot raise duties or revenue thereon. This is a condition, which the United States are *unable* to endure. It is quite unnecessary to consider, whether we shall be *willing* or *will consent* to endure such a state of things, for it is not in our power to bear it. We must use our *accustomed medium* (domestic and foreign goods) to purchase or to procure supplies. If we cannot sell our domestic and foreign goods *abroad*, we must *work them up and consume them at home*. Beer, cider, and fruit and grain spirits, made at home, *must* soon exclude foreign beer and rum. Europe takes no *sheep's wool* from us, wherefore we must *extend* our prohibitions of woollen goods at the next session of Congress, that Europe and America may be forced to manufacture the raw materials we produce for sale and exportation. *Two millions of females and many children* in the United States, who do little now but needle work or play, must be taught to card, spin by machines, knit, weave, dye, print cloths, engrave, gild, paint, and perform other operations in manufactures. If the manufacturing nations unwisely and unkindly destroy the export trade of our produce, we *must* manufacture it. The current of British supply will be turned aside, because we cannot lose the value of our crops, and buy of them any longer to the amount of 50 millions of dollars per annum. It is the plain *interest* of G. Britain to facilitate the sales of crops and foreign goods, *the proceeds of which enable us to buy their manufactures*. If instead of facilitating, she destroys the nett proceeds of sales by illegitimate blockades, it will force us like the new Robinson Crusoe, to work up our crops for ourselves. As there is not a section in the law of nations to justify this destruction of neutral trade, in goods not contraband, so it is manifest that she converts the trident into the sceptre of naval despotism. *Wise, and learned*, and *upright* judges, cannot condemn the property of the innocent infracters of illegitimate blockades. Conscience, in an enlightened and independent judiciary department, is not to be moulded by "*orders*" of the executive government. "*Resentment*" against Prussia cannot *there* warrant lawless injustice to the U. S. of America. There is no authority in the British navy to make commercial laws for neutral states. Britain has no right to make "*orders of king and council*" to bind our commerce in all cases whatsoever. But lately we heard the plea of necessity to justify the impressment of our seamen and now it is used to justify the prostration of our agriculture and the destruction of our trade in innocent goods—goods not contraband of war. It is easy to perceive the same disposition in the British convention of March 179[illegible] with the late government of Russia,