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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

JANUARY 17.

Debate on Message of the President, communicating Mr. Canning's letter, with the answer of Mr. Pinkney.—Concluded.

Mr. KEY said that he would give his hearty vote for printing the greatest number of copies proposed; for he did conceive that the American people ought to have full information, and that the antidote should accompany the poison. I consider the late publication (said he) as the most direct and insidious attempt of a foreign government to take advantage of and influence the parties in this country, and that too by the most dishonorable means. The paper alluded to could only have been in possession of our own administration or of the British government. It came not from us; it must have proceeded from the other—and from what view? Had fair information been the object, the letter of Mr. Pinkney in reply would also have been made public, that one might have been confronted with the other. It it proceeded from that quarter, the separation of the reply from the letter, is evincive of the attempt to impose on the people. I consider it an attempt to set the people at variance with their government, and an insolent attempt of a foreign nation to interfere in our affairs, in three points of view. 1st. Mr. Pinkney is expressly exonerated from the charge of misrepresentation; but no man can understand it otherwise than as having allusion to the Executive of the country—an insinuation which there is no proof to support, and in support of which none can be adduced. Whatever difference of political opinion may exist between us on some points, I respect the administration on the whole, and every honest man of every political opinion must side with me. 2dly. There is an insinuation that the President of the U. S. had only permitted our minister at London *individually*, not *formally*, to make a proposition on the subject of the embargo. This is unfounded in fact, because the documents before the House prove to the contrary. 3dly. A question is raised whether actual knowledge of the orders in council of November was in the possession of our government at the time of the laying the embargo, which Mr. Pinkney has fully explained, that the American papers shewed that it was well known before the passage of the embargo, that such would probably be the measures adopted by the British government. It is upon these three great questions that this letter is insidiously calculated to delude the American people. I think therefore as ample publicity should be given to the truth as may be. However we may differ as to internal regulations, I hope we shall feel as husband & wife, who, however they jar, will not suffer the interference of a third person. In case of such interference, I trust we shall always be ready to rally around the constituted authorities, as protecting the true interests of the country.

Mr. COOK said that these documents shewed, that, instead of being more favorable to France than Great Britain (as had been said for party purposes) our administration had been far less favorable to France than G. Britain and less favorable than they ought to have been. I shall never feel cordial (said he) in going to war with France, until we make to her the same liberal offer which we have made to G. Britain, and it shall be refused. The publication of this memorable letter of Mr. Canning's is but another attempt to mislead the people, and rob the Executive of their just confidence. The letter itself is of little consequence. It appears that the conduct of the President has been perfectly correct. It would have caused a false impression had Mr. C's letter been published before Mr. Pinkney's answer was received. Mr. Canning, however, acting with less candor than the President of the U. S. has thought fit to publish one without the other; and therefore I wish the reply to be circulated fully.

Mr. LYON considered the documents of very little importance, conveying no new information; but made some observations on the mode of printing them.

Mr. STORY said he was sorry to rise, because the patience of the House must be exhausted; but it was a duty incumbent on him to take the floor. This is not a new occasion (said he). More than once in twenty years the same attempt has been made by foreign intrigue; and when the attempt has been made, there was scarcely a man in America but considered it insidious and disgraceful. Like the gentleman from New-York, it was before my time; but I gathered the feelings of the moment and held sacred the same feelings as were avowed by the father of his country. Whatever may be our political differences, sir, it is incumbent on all of us to frown indignantly on any foreign government that should attempt to influence the people. The publication of garbled and mutilated documents, purporting to be real correspondence between one country and another, has been a mean used to lead the public mind into a state of distempered jealousy, and array the citizen against his country. It has been too long the case in Europe. Whenever the sword has been drawn, corruption has preceded it; and when I find the same means used to detach the people of this country from their government by similar attempts, I cannot repress my contempt at them. It is not any importance which I attach to Mr. Canning's letter that excites my indignation, because the very letter, compared with his formal answer to Mr. Pinkney's note, is a complete answer to itself; for in the documents long ago published, we find an offer in the most formal manner by Mr. Pinkney to repeal the embargo as related to G. Britain on the suspension of the orders in Council; and Mr. Canning in his formal reply has not even intimated the least suspicion that the offer was not the open act of the American government. Mr. P. with his usual candor, exhibited his own instructions to satisfy Mr. Canning not only that this offer was made by the authority of the government, but that it was made in the spirit of conciliation and sincerity. And by this letter a new feature is exhibited, for the purpose, almost avowed, of dissolving the union. I regret to see that our miserable little differences have induced foreign nations to tamper with us; that they have dared to believe that we are not intelligent enough to know our own rights. I regret that our divisions have been such as to induce a foreign nation thus to present a picture to the world of what she believed our real state. It is proved too truly that our own conduct has lessened us in the opinion of foreign nations, has induced them to believe that we are a divided people; it is proved too truly that they have thought the American nation either corrupted with luxury or overawed by the iron hand of despotism, and that they have not strength for a moment to sustain their political structure. The letter of Mr. Canning but for this would not have been published in the Eastern part of this country to foment those divisions produced by existing circumstances. Sir, I cannot but notice the honorable conduct of the gentleman from Md. (Mr. Key) who, though opposed in political opinion to the present administration, has shewn himself to be a real friend to his country. If the same spirit which he has manifested, was exhibited throughout our country, instead of dissentions on this floor, that moment an attempt was made by a foreign nation to injure our rights, our differences on minor points would dissolve into air. It is not necessary for me to state, because the gentleman from Maryland has clearly shewn, the reason of the publication of that letter. As one, sir, I do know that it was not only understood that the orders in council were about to issue, but that, before I heard of the embargo, I had seen letters and newspapers which informed that these orders were signed in the cabinet though not published to the world. In respect to Mr. Canning's saying that the offer to repeal the embargo was not authorised, the dispatches laid on our table, at the commencement of the session shew to the contrary; and his own formal letter is a denial of the insinuation in the letter to-day communicated. Why then was this letter published in this extraordinary manner? To add to the divisions and lessen the confidence of the people in their government, to enable G. Britain to take advantage of these divisions and resume her dominion over the Northern states. With this view of the subject I cannot but conceive that this letter is but a part of a system which has for its object the degradation of our country. I trust we shall on this occasion unite; that we shall not allow any foreign minister to believe that he can publish *ex parte* statements of garbled extracts of official correspondence; that divided as we may be on other subjects, we are united in a determination to support our rights.

Mr. GARDENIER said, by this time the editor of the Columbian Centinel must be pretty well mauled. The fact is (said he) as regards myself, that I have never read with attention the document said to be official; and therefore unfortunately am not in a situation to determine whether in this respect our administration is to blame or not. I am one of those men who cannot comprehend all the details of such a negociation at first glance. I do not believe that knowledge is to be attained by so rapid a progress.—Therefore, I shall not at present follow other gentlemen in their verdict of acquittal. I hope to be able to do it. A gentleman from Vermont, (Mr. Fisk) appeared to be offended at my mischeivous curiosity to the people of N. England. If the gentleman supposes that I mean any harm to the people of New England, he is mistaken. It is not necessary for me to take up any time of the House in expatiating on the respect which I have for the people of N. England. New England was the cradle of American liberty. Sir; it was there the revolution commenced. From that same quarter I apprehend that the same spirit will again arise. A light appears first in the east which I hope soon to see break forth into the most perfect day. The gentleman from Vermont, after this declaration I hope will not impute to me, any disrespect to the people of N. England. They will not submit either to the insolence or injustice of foreign nations, or to any other. Nature intended them for a great and happy people. The gentleman from Vermont has misunderstood me in one thing. I did not say that Mr. C's letter contained any view of the subject not heretofore given; and therefore have no occasion to answer his question.

The question on printing the documents was then taken, and 5000 copies ordered to be printed.

SKETCH OF THE DEBATE IN THE *HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES* ON THE NAVAL ESTABLISHMENT. CONTINUED.

Wednesday, Jan. 11.

Mr. D. R. WILLIAMS moved to commit the bill with the amendments to a committee of the whole. His object was to obtain a reconsideration of all the amendments. He felt a conviction on his mind that the House, having had time to consider the tendency of the vote of yesterday, would agree to rescind it. He wished no national measure to be adopted at this session with a poor, paltry majority of *five*. The nation, he said, was not to be got along in this way. He said when he had risen yesterday, he had felt an agony of soul which he could not repress or express. He, with his friend from N. Carolina (Mr. Macon) was willing to have adhered to the embargo till the last of September, or till its effect was clearly ascertained. And when the vote of yesterday was taken, he had thought he saw war with all its ruinous consequences, stalking over this once happy land. Under this embarrassment he said he had addressed the Speaker, and appeared to have been misunderstood by the gentleman from Georgia. He wished the bill to be recommitted, because he understood that a part of the seamen were considered as immediately necessary for the public service; he wished not to delay their employment by a discussion of the merits of a naval establishment—for no man opposed to the bill would, he presumed, permit it to pass till he had exerted himself to his utmost to prevent it.

Mr. W. ALSTON was in favor of the motion for commitment. The sum appropriated by this House for the smaller object had been stricken out by the Senate, and a sum inserted for the larger, which would scarcely be sufficient to open a rendezvous for enlisting men; if it were not enlarged, the bill would be a nullity.

Mr. DANA said it was his opinion, if a question had been unexpectedly taken, that it did not establish the point in question. He was therefore in favor of a commitment, in order to accommodate gentlemen. Mr. Dana replied in an humorous manner to Mr. Sawyer's observations on the subject of the music on board the navy; saying that indeed it was true that they had drums and bells on board of a frigate, and even silver whistles for the boatswain's mates. The seamen were such strange creatures too, that they would despise an officer who would not make himself be obeyed within the fair limits of his authority. And this subordination, he said, was necessary. The seaman was subordinate to the midshipman who was subordinate to the lieutenant, the lieutenant to the captain, who was subordinate to the commodore, who was under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy, who acted under the Executive; and thus the Executive held the whole, and wielded it at his pleasure for the execution of the law and the general maintenance of public right. He was willing to have the bill committed, but not for the sake of altering the appropriation; for the bill only settled the principle, and the appropriation was for commencing the work.

Mr. BACON said if the nation was really hungry after debate, or thirsting for long speeches, he should have no objection to go into committee of the whole; but, believing this not to be the case, he should object to it, because it could answer no purpose but delay.

Mr. FISK was in favor of the House taking the responsibility of this matter upon itself, and not for throwing it on the President's shoulders. He wished this force to repel infractions of our laws and rights. Armed ships, in violation of our laws, were now carrying on trade within our waters; and information was received that armed vessels were coming on our coast to force a trade. Was this to be permitted? Of what efficacy were our embargo laws, if armed vessels were to come and go when they pleased. What, he asked, could we get by persevering in a system which was thus rendered of no effect but to injure the honest part of the community? He said he wished to treat such violators of the laws as pirates. Unless such a measure was adopted, our embargo laws would be of no effect. It would answer no good purpose to go into committee of the whole on the bill; for the object of the motion was to defeat the bill. The bill rested on this basis—would they or would they not take measures at this time to meet the crisis, or would they rely *wholly* on the embargo. This was in fact the true question. The passage of this bill would give of this species of force no more than its due proportion. Mr. Fisk said he was no friend to standing armies or navies, but, in legislating, judgment must be guided by circumstances. It had been said that the sending out our frigates to sea would produce war; that the spirit of our officers was such that they would engage. He hoped they would not, at the same time that he believed they would resist all encroachments on our rights. Decatur had been at sea for many months with a frigate, and no such consequence had been produced. Mr. F. replied to the observations of Mr. Sawyer, in relation to the conduct of captains; and concluded with some general arguments in favor of naval force.

Mr. ALEXANDER was in favor of going into a committee, and was opposed to the amendments of the Senate. He said, if we were to have war, the ocean was not the theatre on which we should attack G. Britain. It was in another quarter. The course which had been adopted by the administration, and wisely adhered to, he wished first to have a fair experiment. Though he was a friend to the embargo, he did not think that it should be continued for a long time. As long as a hope of adjustment remained, he did not wish to make preparations for war.

Mr. BURWELL hoped that, after a majority appeared to be in favor of the principle, no gentleman would delay the adoption of the other amendments of the Senate. He said he had no idea that any gentleman had been taken by surprise in the vote he had given. The observations of Mr. Williams about a bare majority of *five*, Mr. B. said, was not correct. A majority must always prevail. He was opposed to going into a committee of the whole.

Mr. KEY said, he was not surprized that gentlemen who were wholly opposed to the bill, should wish to have it recommitted. The amendments of the Senate presented but one question to his mind; whether it would be proper, in the present situation of our country, to arm those vessels which we have. He was a little surprised that gentlemen should hesitate, after what had been so often said on this floor. He recollected that those who a few weeks ago had spoken in favor of a middle course, were treated almost as enemies to their country; it was even said that every man was an enemy to his country, who was not in favor of a continuance of the embargo, or war. Gentlemen had said that the line should be drawn, that the distinction should be made between friend and foe. And now, when a defensive measure was brought into consideration, how stood it? It was no quixotic idea of a navy to meet the mistress of the ocean on her own ground. That (said he) is not the question. Let us not be deceived by the idea. The solitary question is, whether, when our ships are lying in our waters, we shall man and equip them—for what? For the protection and defence of our *homes*. We have information that the proclamation of the President of the U. S. has been violated, and even at this moment may be violated. The Lion is bearded in his den—the Eagle strangled on its perch. It was for the purpose of compelling foreign nations to respect our rights within our jurisdictional limits, Mr. Key said, that he would give this additional quota of naval force. He was among the number of those who thought that if our frigates, instead of lying in our docks, had been heretofore sent out, no instance of such hostility would ever have taken place. In one case alone had these violations appeared to have been premeditated, when there was a fleet in the mouth of the river watching the motions of the Leopard, and ready to ensure success to her. All other instances had been insulated. Gentlemen had said that they would not provoke war. Mr. Key said neither would he. But was honorable defence of our rights war? Far from it. To be prepared for war was one of the best preventatives of war. Weakness invited, strength repelled insult and injury. He was therefore for arming those vessels which we have, and sending them out, but not for building others. This was very different from an attempt to protect foreign commerce in this way, which he hoped never would be made. The marine league on the coast, he said, was as inviolable as the soil. From head land to head land of the coast, and all the water within this line, had always been considered as part of the territory; and he contended, politically speaking, that an insult on our sovereignty there was as great as if the forces of a foreign power were to land on our shores, come up to our houses, and murder and plunder the inhabitants. If we had a force upon the water, did any man believe that a single ship of 20 guns, commanded by a lieutenant, would have come within the limits of the harbor of Savannah, and fired a gun? No. Within these limits, Mr. Key said, he would not permit insults on our sovereignty, and therefore wished these vessels to be sent out. His idea was, that this force, as an auxiliary to gun boats, whether further to enforce the embargo or to protect our territorial limits, ought to be given to the President of the U. S. One gentleman had said, let us try the present system till September. What then? Mr. K. asked. When all chance of negociation had ceased, in what situation should we be placed? Unarmed, the vessels rotting, and not ready for any service. We should be better employed (said he) in placing ourselves in such a situation, that if war be inevitable, we may better and more firmly resist it. We are a peaceable nation, and I hope we may have peace yet; but a preparation for war will guarantee peace. A man has two neighbors hostile to him; he would not go to attack them, but the moment they put their foot over his threshold would repel them with force, and chastise them, if in his power. This is the case of this nation, and I would employ the means which God has given us to repel invaders of our territory, whether maritime or territorial. Mr. K. said he could not agree to refer the subject to a committee of the whole, for the proposition was so simple that it would be almost a waste of time longer to detain the House on the subject. He said he had voted for the gun boat system, not that he was in favor of it, but because it was a defensive measure, in what he thought a difficult crisis. He tho't war now still more probable; and if it were, he said, sound policy and a regard for the destinies of the country dictated that we should be prepared, and not let the enemy come upon us without resistance.

Mr. EPPES said he should vote for commitment in conformity with the vote which he had yesterday given