

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

T H U R S D A Y, F E B R U A R Y 11, 1796.

PROCEEDINGS

Of the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED STATES, in the case of ROBERT RANDALL and CHARLES WHITNEY.

[Continued from our last.]

Monday, 4th January, 1796.

R. MURRAY declares, that on Wednesday last, the twenty-third instant, Mr. Smith, member of congress, of South-Carolina, informed him, that a man of the name of Randall, of Maryland, had the evening before attempted to bribe him in western lands, on condition of his supporting an application, which Randall told him he should soon make to congress; the object of which application was, a grant from congress, of from eighteen to twenty millions of acres of land, between Erie, Huron and Michigan. That Mr. Smith was extremely solicitous, that some other gentleman should immediately be informed of the infamous proposal, and that he said he would mention it to Mr. Henry, of the senate, and advise with him, upon proper measures for the detecting of the full extent of the scheme, and crushing it.—That he had no opportunity of talking to Mr. Henry, on that day; but early on the morning of the twenty-fourth instant, communicated the intelligence to Mr. Henry, who recommended that Mr. Smith should immediately inform the president: That on the said day, Mr. Randall of Maryland, was introduced to him, the informant, and requested a confidential interview, at his, the informant's lodgings, which the informant readily promised him, to be at five, for the purpose of developing his scheme. That Randall came at or near five, that day last named, to wit; on Thursday, and communicated to Mr. Henry and himself, in general terms, the outline of a plan, by which he, Randall, and his Canada friends would extinguish the Indian title to all the lands between lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, as marked on a map which Randall then shewed, containing from eighteen to twenty millions of acres. That he, the informant, then asked Randall into his apartment, where they were alone. That Randall expatiated at first upon the public utility of his scheme, which was, that congress should grant to him, and his company, all the land aforesaid mentioned, for five hundred thousand, or at most, one million of dollars; and that he would undertake, in four months; that the harmony of the Indians should be secured to the union; or if congress thought proper, that the Indian tribes, now on said land, should be removed to the British side, or down the Michigan, reserving to some aged chiefs, a few miles square; that his company and himself had determined to divide the lands aforesaid, into forty, (or forty-one) shares. That of these shares, twenty-four were to be reserved for the disposal of himself and his partner, now in town; for such members of congress as assisted them, by their abilities and votes, in obtaining the grant aforesaid.—That of these twenty-four shares, his partner had twelve under his management, for the eastern members of congress, and that he, Randall, had the other twelve shares under his management, for the southern members of congress. That these shares were to be so divided as to accomplish the object by securing a majority of congress. That the informant started an objection to land speculation, as troublesome, and that he, Randall, said, if you (meaning the informant) do not chuse to accept your share of the land, you shall have cash in hand, for your share. That the informant appointed Randall to meet him in the lobby of the house, on Monday, the twenty-eighth instant. That Randall told him, a memorial was to be handed in, upon this subject, on said Monday; but refused to inform the informant, what member was to present it. That Randall told him, that he, Randall, mentioned his plan to some members in the general way only—meaning thereby, as he understood him, a view of the sounder part of the plan, as being conducive to public utility.—That in the early part of the confidential and secret conversation, Randall said, that the members of congress, who would behave handsomely, should come into their shares, on the same terms upon which the company obtained the grant; but soon after made proposals, more openly, seductive and corrupt; closing them with the offer of cash in hand, as aforesaid.—That the informant on that evening when Randall went away, told Mr. Henry of the whole of Randall's offers aforesaid; then called on the secretary of state, and communicated the same to him; and next morning early, informed the president of the transaction.

(Signed) W. V. MURRAY.

December 29, 1795.

William B. Giles, a member of the house of representatives, in the congress of the United States, declares.—That in the evening of Thursday, the seventeenth of December, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, as well as this informant recollects, a person called

upon this informant, at his lodgings, under the name of Robert Randall, with an introductory note from Mr. Gabriel Christie, in the usual form, dated the fifteenth of the same month.

That the said Robert Randall informed this informant, that he had some business of importance to communicate to this informant, which would probably come before congress: That it respected the fur trade, at present carried on by the British traders with the Indians, through the lakes. He observed, that it would be important to change the course of that trade into some channel through the United States.—That he believed he could put congress upon some plan of effecting that object.—That the plan was of a secret nature.—That he was not then prepared to disclose it, and requested a private interview with this informant, for that purpose, at some other time. Upon which request, this informant appointed the next Saturday, at twelve o'clock, (being the nineteenth of December) to receive the communication.

That about the time appointed, the said Robert Randall called on this informant, and after some general conversation, informed this informant, that an association had been formed by himself and others, with some of the most influential traders at Detroit, for the purpose of purchasing all the lands contained in the peninsula formed by the lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, and the waters connecting those lakes, amounting in the whole to twenty or thirty millions of acres, if the consent of congress could be obtained for the extinguishment of the Indian claims thereto. The said Randall then produced a map of the peninsula and lakes.

That this tract of country was to be divided into shares, and that a number of shares was to be left unappropriated, until the necessary law of congress should pass, authorizing the extinguishment of the Indian claims; and might then be filled up by those who might think proper to concur in the plan, and should give their aid for procuring the passage of such law. Upon this intimation, this informant observed, that he hoped the said Randall did not intend to address the information of the unappropriated shares, particularly to this informant.

To which the said Randall replied, that he did not: That he only meant it as general information; but he could see no impropriety in the members of congress being concerned in the scheme, if the public good was to be promoted by it; and that thirty or forty members were already engaged in its support; or words to that effect.

After some further conversation of a general nature, respecting the present state of the fur trade; the value of the lands contained in the peninsula; and the probable effect of the late treaty upon that trade and country, the said Randall inquired of this informant, "whether he deemed his plan advisable, and whether it would meet with the support of this informant, in congress." To which this informant replied, that if the said Randall should bring his proposals before congress, this informant would give them the consideration which his duty required, and should give such vote as he deemed right; or words to the same effect. Very shortly after this observation, Mr. Edward Livingston, a member of congress from New-York, entered the room, and the said Randall left it, without further observation, as well as this informant recollects. This informant immediately communicated the contents of this conversation to Mr. Livingston, and declared that he considered the proffer of the unappropriated shares to the members of congress, a direct attempt at corruption.

This informant, on the same day, communicated the substance of the conversation to the speaker of the house of representatives of the United States, to Messrs. Blount and Macon of North-Carolina, and to Messrs. Madison and Venable of Virginia. It was deemed advisable by all these gentlemen, as well as by this informant, to permit the plan to be brought before congress, in the usual way, by memorial, and to cause a detection, by means of a committee, to whom the said memorial should be referred; and in the mean time, if the said Randall should again call on this informant, he should proceed to make further discovery of the real state and nature of the transaction.

That on the next day, the said Randall did again call on this informant, and informed him, that he, the said Randall, then proposed to disclose his plan more particularly; and after some general remarks upon the public utility, as well as individual benefit of the plan, he said that it was in substance as follows:

The tract of country before described, was to be divided into forty-one shares; five of which were to be reserved to the Indian traders at Detroit; the other thirty-six were to be divided into two departments; eighteen to the eastern, and eighteen to the southern department. That six, out of the eighteen shares, were to be reserved to his eastern partner and associates, and six, out of the remaining eighteen, to himself and his associates. That the remaining twenty-four shares were to be left unappropriated, for the use of such members of congress

as should support the measure. That the names of those members were not to be made known until after the law for the extinguishment of the Indian claims had passed; and then requested this informant to prepare some writing which would compel the ostensible persons to surrender the unappropriated shares to the real supporters of the measure, after it should be effected. That one million of dollars were spoken of, as the price for the lands; but that he deemed that sum by far too much; and as congress would have to fix the price, they might make the terms such as to ensure considerable emoluments to the purchasers. That a majority of the senate had consented to give the plan their support, and within three of a majority of the house of representatives. After much further conversation on the subject, which this informant thinks unnecessary to particularize, the said Randall promised to wait again on this informant, at his lodgings, on Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, and introduce to this informant, his eastern associate.

The said Randall did not call at the appointed hour, and this informant did not see him again until Friday, the twenty-fifth of December, when the said Randall again called on this informant, and after making an apology, for not calling at the appointed hour of the preceding Tuesday, informed him at the door of his apartment, that his memorial to congress would be ready to be presented on the next Monday; but as several gentlemen were in this informant's room, at that time, the said Randall did not enter, and no further conversation was then had; since which time this informant has not seen the said Randall, until he was brought to the bar of the house of representatives, in custody.

This informant further saith, that he communicated the substance of every material conversation with the said Randall, to the speaker of the house of representatives, and to the several gentlemen before mentioned.

(Signed) WILLIAM B. GILES.

January 1, 1796.

I, Daniel Buck, inform and say, that about ten days previous to my setting out on my journey to congress (which was on the thirtieth day of November last,) a stranger, whom I now know to be Charles Whitney, in custody of the serjeant at arms, called at my office in Norwich, in the state of Vermont, introduced himself by the name of Whitney, and informed me, that he had some business of importance which he wished to converse with me upon. I asked if he wished to be in private, he signified that he did, upon which my clerk withdrew; and the said Whitney proceeded to inform me that the business of which he wished to converse, was of great importance to the public, as well as to the individuals immediately concerned.—That it would come before congress, but was so circumstanced as to render it necessary to make a previous statement to some of the members, that they might be able to explain to others; and the whole thereby be better prepared to judge upon the business: he declared he wished for nothing improper, and that he did not want that I should favour the plan, unless I saw it to be consistent; for he said he wanted nothing but what was perfectly just and honourable, and was confident that if the matter could be understood, it would appear to be of great public utility: he then stated, that he and his associates had discovered a large and immensely valuable tract of land, between, or contiguous to, lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, (if I mistake not the names) which he said might be purchased of the Indians, at a low rate: That this purchase would conciliate the affections, and secure the friendship of the hostile tribes.—That he, the said Whitney, together with Ebenezer Allen, doctor Randall, and a number of Canadian merchants at Detroit, had formed an association for the purpose of extinguishing the Indian title, and petitioning congress for the pre-emption right to those lands; that if they succeeded, it was their intention immediately to make settlement on them.—That those merchants had such influence with, and control over the Indians, that there would be no difficulty with them; and that such a settlement would be a barrier against the savages, and effectually secure peace to the United States.—That those merchants were then employed in the business, among the Indians; and that his partner, doctor Randall and his other associates, had such connections, that there was a fair prospect of success.—That it was not their intention, however, to engross all this property to themselves; but that it was to be divided into a number of shares, and that he and the said Randall had the disposal of them.—That he, the said Whitney, was then directed from Philadelphia, and that it was agreed that Randall should dispose of a part amongst his friends, and the influential characters in the southern states; that he, the said Whitney, was to distribute the other part amongst his said Whitney's friends, and the influential characters in the eastern and northern states.—That they had already got a number engaged, but that the subscription unappropriated, for the use of such members of congress, was not full, and that I might become an adventurer,