

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16.

Debate on Mr. Randolph's Resolution—continued.

Mr. J. Randolph. It appears to me that the resolution is treated, I will not say intentionally, with unfairness. It is a resolution calling for information, and yet gentlemen opposed to it call upon us for information to prove its propriety. They ask, do you know this or that? We answer no—but we wish to know it; and that we may know it, we ask; and yet the requisition is opposed, because we cannot give them the information it calls for. If we had the information, I should suppose that circumstance would be a stronger reason for disagreeing to it. If we possessed the information, we should not want it. But it is said the danger has proceeded to such a length, the crisis advanced, that nothing which we can do will have any effect. Are we then merely to call in the political undertaker, to take charge of the body politic which is defunct, to commit it to the dust. Gentleman say it is too late to do any thing. Either the affair has proceeded to such a length that it has by this time succeeded to the utmost, or is altogether defeated. But are gentlemen prepared to say that the partial success of the conspiracy shall be conclusive in its effects; that the nation will sit down contented, if Baton Rouge or New Orleans is reduced?

While on this subject, permit me to say that when I referred to newspaper information, I did not refer to the vague reports generally circulated through those organs of information, but to evidence legally taken in the case of Judge Sebastian, which, though found in the columns of a newspaper, I consider satisfactory evidence. If it is not, I hope some gentleman from Kentucky will get up in his place, and tell us so. I alluded to this information as exhibiting the intriguing disposition of the Spanish government from the peace of 1783 to the year 1797.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania has told us of some kind of an armistice entered into between the commander of our army and the commander of the Spanish forces. But I should be glad to know from what quarter he derives this information. I believe there is no such information. There may be some tacit informal understanding; but I believe there is no armistice. If there is I have not heard of it; and will this House confide in the tacit understanding between two commanders, when they have seen the government of Spain endeavoring to dismember the union after entering into a solemn treaty with us. In former days we have heard much of Castilian honor and virtue. But at the present day the thing is not—it doesn't exist. We have evidence that while that government was treating with one hand, she was preparing to stab us in the dark with the other.

I again invite the House to draw a proper inference from the indecent, insulting, outrageous, demeanor of the minister of Spain. I did understand that he was to have been deported—ship ped off.—On the contrary I find him still here; & is not the inference of my friend from Pennsylvania irresistible, that, considering the crowd of memorials presented by him to the government in the case of Miranda, and that no remonstrance has been made against this pretended expedition against Mexico, that he is acquiesced with—it that he knows that it is ostensibly for Mexico, but really for Orleans—for the severance of the union.

Some gentlemen make extremely light of this conspiracy. I cannot, however, conceive, how a man in a state of ignorance-respecting its nature or extent can make light of it. The very circumstance of not knowing the extent of danger has a tendency to magnify it beyond its natural size. But there is one fact, which has come so direct, that it cannot be doubted. I believe it will altogether depend on the circumstance of the conspirators getting to Baton Rouge before the troops of the U. S. arrived there, whether New Orleans shall fall; and the waters of the Red river are so low, that we cannot decide when our troops will arrive—they will get possession of the ordinance, and nothing can prevent the reduction of Orleans but a pitched battle.

But who can see, according to the information of some gentlemen, in the resolution under discussion, a proposition either for a war or peace establishment. It is no such proposition. It seems, however, that an expression of mine bore hard on the worthy gentleman from Pennsylvania, for which I am very sorry. But I can only say, "let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung." But I beg leave to repeat in the most decided man-

ner the charge that we are triumphing at the consequences of the measures of the last year. If I could triumph at the calamitous situation of my country, there is ample cause indeed for triumph. But let me change situations with the other gentleman. Let him be the finger of scorn pointed at him—Let him be denounced, let the cry of mad dog, of political defection be raised against him—and let him see all the measures for which this denunciation was made adopted and asserted by his adversaries—would he not feel some chuckling—or would he be so base, so mean, so object, as to lay down and say that tho' he knew them to be right, he dare not declare them so. You may begin with these measures, and go on from alpha to omega. The first of them is the famous non importation law. It is gone—abandoned, given up. Another great point of difference was the bill relative to the public debt, which we have had under consideration this day. It is passed. Then comes the salt tax—passed on a recommendation from the executive. We have next the measures for the increase of the public force—we have a bill from the Senate to that effect. And are we to be amused by a quibbling distinction between a war and a peace establishment? The force is the same, in either case, ready to be used against foreign enemies or domestic conspirators; there is no difference, except this, that our proposition was less obnoxious than theirs; in as much as the peace establishment is for all time, the war establishment merely temporary. And is it not wonderful that gentlemen who avow themselves hostile to a standing army are against a temporary, but in favor of a permanent establishment. No, sir, I cannot take a retrospective of the past without feeling a degree of conscious pride that my aid was not given, that I had no hand in the acts of commission or omission that have brought us to this deplorable state of things. I am asked, did I foresee the conspiracy of this, as he has been called, modern Cataline, and if I did not, I am desired to take no credit to myself for the measures proposed. What? Will I go of this kind go down with the house of the nation? Because we did not prevent individual danger, but foretold it in the general, are we to be denied the credit of warning the country against any danger? But I well recollect there was an argument urged, if not in these words to this effect—it you do not protect the western people, and extend to them the benefits of a free, equal, and strong government—I say stronger, for none but an equal and free government can be strong—they will look out for friends and protectors elsewhere; and is not the credit verified; it is, sir—I say not this in relation to the western people, usually—the same would be the case in any other part of the Union. Suppose the State of Vermont threatened—should troops should pass it in the winter, and that the British minister should in the same way with the Spanish minister? What would the duty be? What it ought to have been last year, what it ought to be now.

But the gentleman from Pennsylvania says, by passing this resolution we shall betray a want of confidence in the executive, and more especially in the President—that he will give us such information as he thinks proper, and if we want more, we act like naughty boys, who call for more than comes to their share. Indeed! Did that gentleman, in the better part of his political life, utter such sentiments. I'd warrant him he did not, and when he felt how contradictory they are to all the good old maxims of the republican party, I am confident he will abjure them. As to my confidence, I am not so fortunately situated as the gentleman from Pennsylvania; because my belief in men, politics and religion is a matter of reason as well as of faith. There never did or can exist a President of the U. S. who will command my confidence to the extent of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, and I believe the cultivation of a degree of scepticism in politics would not be unuseful to that gentleman as well as others. My confidence in the executive will depend on their conduct. If their conduct shall be such as it ought to be, they shall have my confidence. But I cannot go so far as to mortgage it to them, by their conduct, what it may, without reserving even an equity of redemption. This may be an infirmity of my nature; but I cannot. I could never act otherwise. I think the gentleman said, that if on account of the acquisition of Louisiana it were thought necessary to increase our peace establishment, he should be willing to go as far as the bill from the Senate goes. When was that territory acquired? Since the last session? If so, his observation is to the purpose; but to make an acquisition, obtained three or four years ago, the cause of augmenting the peace establishment of the present day, is rather unfortunate, and it appears to me that if the increase of the army be intended for pacific purposes, the greater the increase the worse our situation. As to standing armies, I have no great idea of them—fruges consumere nati—and with regard to our army they are so cut up that little reliance can be placed upon them. We find one company between the two States of Rhode Island and Connecticut, one company in Boston harbor

and at the arsenal at Springfield, one company appointed to defend the important port of New York, and so on. How are these men to be made troops in garrison? I believe whenever they shall be called into action, they will prove they are not troops. I have no hesitation in saying, that if gentlemen depend on this broken staff they will be disappointed; and if necessity calls for it, the best way to get an efficient army will be first to get rid of the present inefficient one. Is this arraignment the conduct of this or that department. No, sir—but that narrow policy which is pursued by the House—a policy, which it is high time for us to lay down, whether we regard the saving of expences or the public safety. When I say that it is high time to lay down this narrow policy, let me be explicit. I have as much confidence as other gentlemen in the militia when at home; but if the U. S. were to conquer the Cape of Good Hope, I would not think of protecting the place by the militia. I believe the militia as adequate to the protection of New Orleans as the Cape of Good Hope; and after paying fifteen millions for the Mississippi and its delta, shall we be so penurious as to defend this important point—this key to our strong box?

I hope the motion to postpone this resolution will not prevail, because I fear it has been already delayed too long. I have withheld it from the consideration I have already mentioned—from a belief that such a course of circumstances at the public good—from the hope that the best practical measures should be taken for the public safety—and from the belief that the House of Representatives would be called in due season to take such further measures as the exigency of the state might require. It does not follow that if the U. S. are in such a situation and the Executive has not considered it necessary to take measures (concerning this argument) that Congress shall take none? What does this amount to? As far as the Executive goes we are authorized to follow—not to keep pace with much less shoot ahead of him. If there is a deliberate opinion on your part that you are in the wrong—you are in the wrong, I am in the right, I am one of those who are not disposed to stand on this ground—I have a respect for the opinions of the members of this House, for the opinions of well informed men out of doors, for those of the President, and the heads of departments; but I do not entertain these sentiments to such an extent as to abandon my own opinions, to grope like a mole in the dark, and to be contented with what is shot at me. We do not call ourselves statesmen or legislators if we are ready to act without information. We may make a kind of courtesy to the Senate; but higher we can never rise, if we adopt a course of this kind.

Mr. Smith. The gentleman from Virginia has been ever consistent to call on the President for information. I have, Sir, I never have called upon him for information during a pending negotiation. With respect to what I said of the executive, I say it again, and I believe that a gentleman will not doubt that I have as much confidence as the gentleman from Virginia.

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[Mr. J. Randolph explained. He did not say, that he questioned the independence of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. He only questioned the correctness of the principles which he advocated—principles on which he hoped he would never act—principles which would lead to a practical dependence which he hoped the gentleman would abjure.]

Mr. Epes. I shall vote against the postponement, as involving the principle contained in the resolution. I shall vote for the resolution, because I believe the information it calls for important to the house and the country; and because I think its terms such as ought to preclude every possible objection to it. If the gentleman from Virginia had confined his observations to the resolution, I should not have opened my mouth. But when the vote I gave last year is questioned here or elsewhere, I consider myself bound to justify it in the face of God and the nation.

more than then? Then the armies of the U. S. and of Spain were arrayed against each other on the Sabine, and there was an enterprise against the Spanish possessions. What is now the situation of the U. S. as to its force on the Sabine? It is sufficient. There has been no time when we had not more men with the Spaniards. An agreement is made and our troops are withdrawn. But we are told that Orleans is to be attacked, that the safety of the country is endangered, that the very union is at stake. Where is the danger? No gentleman expects, as in days of old, an army to be raised from the ground? Is not Blenarhast with his miserable party of 150 men, checked in every quarter? For my part I do not know the existence of danger; and although I shall vote for the resolution, I believe that the present force of the U. S. is sufficient to suppress the conspiracy and to meet the Spanish forces. The only reason that the confederacy is not already suppressed, is that the laws do not provide for cases less than treason. But we have just passed a law for this purpose. At present, I ask gentlemen to point out any authority by which a single boat can be seized, unless under the state laws.

As to the situation of the western country I feel no alarm. I do not believe the fair fame of a state ought to be impaired by the misconduct of a few unprincipled men. We may sweep the whole bench without endangering the fame. The conduct of the state of Ohio has been censured by the gentleman himself. And what is the conduct of the territory? In Clevelands they are prepared to meet the conspirators. The merchants have patriotically come forward with a tender of their services. For my own part, I do not see in this case any indications of danger, but I am now withholding in favor of adopting the resolution, as the means of giving us information, which, I believe, will be valuable to the House and the country.

The question was then taken on postponing the motion for the adoption of the resolution till Monday, and it was—Ayes 38.

Mr. J. Padgett. Before the question is taken, I will observe, though it may seem strange, that this is not a proposition to raise a standing army, or to declare war. Nor do I feel by the terms of the proposition, that I have any objection to making any law, now or ever, to have no disposition to make regular forces for the defence of New York, or Baltimore, or of my native Ohio—there is sufficient population for their defence in all those quarters. But in the country I have spoken of, there is no law.

Again, on the subject of the Executive of the State of Kentucky, I have called in audience on Monday. I am happy to find Kentucky contented with her lot, but I am not contented to keep in check to that she are deluded. But I can say no more favorable an increase of the public faith in any country, when I see a man of the moral leading character, and the men of the parties too, for the express purpose of forming the union.

I am in opinion the true way of avoiding danger is not to defer it. Supply even that gentleman are right, and that I am wrong. If I am wrong no danger can come from my error; but if they are wrong, the great public calamity may result from theirs. In our own principles gentlemen ought to agree to the resolution.

I do conceive, and it gives me extreme concern, that the very men, who are in favor of the resolution, are not in favor of the information which it calls for. It makes me familiar with the possibility of the thing, a more abundant information, they will not be contented with that which is in their power to be held by the State. If I were not of the thing, I believe, I should not think of a law such as this is proposed to be.

Mr. Thomas asked for a division of the question, at the words "United States." He said he had no objection to the first member of the resolution, the agreeing to which would enable them to obtain all the information that was requisite to form a judgment of the magnitude of this national calamity. He was decidedly against the other part of the resolution. It would go to expose the military operations pursued under the President for the purpose of intercepting and defeating the conspirators. It was evident to every man acquainted with tactics, that military operations to be effectual must frequently be conducted with the greatest secrecy.

Mr. Early enquired whether the Yeas and Nays would be taken upon each member of the resolution. The Speaker, answering in the affirmative, Mr. Early moved to adjourn. This motion was disagreed to—Ayes 47—Noes 68.

Mr. Stanton declared himself against the resolution.

Mr. Elmer said he was opposed to both members of the resolution. He was not prepared at this time to vote for it, because when such a call was made, the House ought to have some specific proposition before them on which they meant to act. No such proposition at present was before them. He added that he had full confidence, that when the President was possessed of such information as he thought ought to be communicated, he would promptly impart it.

It is upon the merits, I would not say yield up confidence in the practical ability of a republican government. But it appears to me at this question, from the extreme circumstances mingled with it, has assumed an importance to which it is not entitled. It is merely a resolution to obtain information, part of which I think will be important, and will I am every gentleman does not all agree in questioning. It has no concern whatever with a standing army; but the mover of it, having dragged an army into the parade, rendered it necessary for those who differ from him to repeat his observations.

(To be continued.)

SIXTEENTH BULLETIN OF THE GRAND ARMY.

The duke of Brunswick has sent his marshal of the palace to the emperor; this officer was charged with a letter, in which he recommended his flutes to his majesty. The emperor said to him, "If I should cause the city of Brunswick to be demolished, and if I was not to leave one stone upon another, what could your prince say? Does not the law of retaliation permit me to do at Brunswick what he wished to do in my capital? To announce the project of demolishing cities may be a folly, but to wish to destroy the honor of a brave army, and to propose to it to leave Germany by fixed stages, (journées d'étapes) on the single summons of the Prussian Army, is what posterity will scarcely believe." The duke of Brunswick ought never to have suffered himself to commit such an outrage; grown grey under arms, he ought to have respected military honor; besides, in the plain of Champagne, this general was not able to acquire the right of treating the French standards with such contempt; such a summons can only dishonor the soldier who was capable of making it; it is not on the king of Prussia that this defiance will rest, it is on the chief of his military council; it is on the general who, in these different circumstances, gave the care of his affairs; it is, in short, the duke of Brunswick that France and Prussia will accuse as the cause of the war. The frenzy of which this ill general gave you an example, has inflamed a turbulent set of young men, and caused the king to act contrary to his own opinion and his intimate conviction.

"Alas, sir, say to the inhabitants of the country of Brunswick, they will find in the French generous enemies; that I wish, as regards them, to see the rigors of war, and that the evils occasioned by the passage of troops is contrary to my will; say to the duke of Brunswick, that he will be treated with all the respect due to a Prussian officer, but that I cannot acknowledge a foreigner in a Prussian general."

"If it should happen that the house of Brunswick loses the sovereignty of its ancestors, the cause must be looked for in the author of the war; in one of which he wished to tap even to its foundation, the great canal; and by the other wished to diminish above three hundred leagues which must be conquered, but which will never be found out of the road of honor and glory. Much blood has been shed within a few days, great disasters weigh heavily on the Prussian march; how worthy of blame is this man, who in a world could have prevented them, if like Nelson, raising his voice in the midst of the council, he had said—

"Inconsiderate youth be silent; women, return to your work-bags, and to the interior of your families; believe the continuation of the most illustrious of your predecessors, since the emperor Napoleon does not wish for war, do not place him between war and dishonor; do not engage in a dangerous struggle with an army that has honored itself with fifteen years of glorious honors, and which victory has accustomed every thing to submit to."

"In place of holding this language which agreed to well with the prudence of his age and the experience of his long career, he was the first to cry—to arms! He commenced even the tier of blood, by arming a garrison against his father; he threatened to plant his standards on the palace of Stuttgart, and accompanied these steps with imprecations against France; he has declared himself the author of the foolish manifesto which he had disavowed for fourteen years, though he did not dare to deny that he had sanctioned it with his signature."

It was remarked that, during this conversation, the emperor, with that warmth with which he is sometimes animated, repeated often—"to overthrow and destroy the habitations of peaceable citizens, is a crime which can be repaired with time and money; but to dishonor an army by degrading it to fly out of Germany before the Prussian eagle, is a base deed, that he only who could count it, could commit."

Mr. De Luchezini is always at head-quarters; the emperor has refused to see him; but it is observed, that he has frequent conferences with the grand marshal of the palace, Baron.

The emperor has ordered, that a present shall be made out of the great quantity of English cloth found at Leipzig, of a complete suit for each officer, and a coat and cap for each soldier.

SEVENTEETH BULLETIN.

Prussia, 25th October, 1806. On his road, the emperor being on horseback to repair from Wittingberg to Postdam, he was surprised by a gulf and alighted at the house of the grand huntman of Saxony, his majesty was much astonished to hear himself called by his name by a handsome woman; she was an Egyptian woman, the widow of a French officer of the army of Egypt, who had been in Saxony for three months; she refided with the grand huntman who had received and treated her honorably; the emperor settled on her a pension of 1200 francs and has taken charge of her son. "It is the first time," said the emperor, "that I ever alighted on account of a gulf, I had a presentiment that a good action attended me there."