

The Weekly Messenger.

No. 36. of Vol. 1.]

BOSTON—FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 1812.

ANNUAL PRICE 2 DOLLARS, 50 CTS. PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

Political Miscellany.

DEBATE, IN THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS, ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MEMORIAL TO CONGRESS. (CONCLUDED.)

Col. THATCHER, of Warren, said that in addition to the deep interest felt by the whole Commonwealth in the subjects embraced by this memorial, the people of the District of Maine had certain local and peculiar interests which would, he trusted, receive the attention of the house. As no gentleman from that part of the country had risen in favor of the memorial, he would, in addition to a few general remarks, call their attention to the situation of the District of Maine.

This, said Col. T. is one of the most important questions that was ever presented to the people of this state. It is to ascertain the voice of the great people of Massachusetts upon the subject of war with the power that commands the ocean—whether in the present defenceless state of our seaboard, when the government has refused to make the least preparation to defend our coasts, we shall invite the utter destruction of the little remnant of our present commerce, and expose our seaport towns to be battered down and laid under contribution. In this subject the people of Maine are most deeply interested—they have 300 miles of coast completely at the mercy of any naval force that may choose to invade them, and are, a vast majority of them, opposed to a war.

This is not a party question. The interests of all are alike concerned, and all ought to have the same feelings on the subject.—We should put off our sandals at the door of the temple, and consider ourselves on holy ground. It is surprising to find the reverend clergy, instead of preaching "peace on earth and good will to men," engaged in advocating an immediate and destructive war. It proves that we have arrived at a pitch of infatuation which is not the least alarming circumstance of our present condition. I do not arraign their motives—this is not a time for censure; but I must be allowed to forewarn them that their conduct on this occasion may be deplored by themselves and their constituents, when the zeal of the moment shall have yielded to dispassionate reflection.

I feel incompetent on so important a question, and at this late hour, to do justice to the subject. It is difficult to compress within a narrow compass the variety of arguments by which this memorial might be supported. The right itself of presenting it has been disputed. But, sir, this right of petitioning and remonstrating to our government, is a right upon which every state in the union has practised. This privilege carried us through the revolution—it was the first step which our fathers took towards independence; and when the legislature of Massachusetts are not allowed to express their wishes and feelings on subjects of national concern, they will not be permitted to express those opinions in their private capacity. It is a right which we derive from our ancestors, and which has been exercised in Great Britain during the fiercest wars, and in times of highest regal prerogative. When we renounce this right, our liberties are gone.

It is said there is no necessity for us to raise our voice on this subject. Not, sir, Congress, it would seem, have determined to declare war. The proposition was made in the House of Representatives on Tuesday last, and it is of the utmost consequence that Massachusetts immediately express her opinion. The voice of this great people will not be without its ultimate effect. I do not say that we have no cause of war with England. There may be causes of war both with her and France; but this is not now the question before us—we do not express an opinion upon that subject. It is not necessary to allude to the impressment of our sailors by Britain, nor the burning of our ships by France. We might by calling up these and other subjects of complaint, excite a war fever against both these nations.

The memorial does not express an opinion that a war with G. Britain would in itself be unjust, but at this time it would be impolitic and ruinous. As Congress do not threaten war with France, we need not say anything on that subject. Whether it would be expedient or just to declare war against her, are questions with which we have in this discussion no concern. Our relations with that country, however, at this moment, furnish an argument engaging in war with England. The *Hornet* has brought us a mere mockery of negotiation, as far as we are permitted by our government to see the documents, and Bonaparte seems determined to make us his allies, or rather his instruments, in his contest with Britain.—(Here Col. T. gave a succinct view of the operation of the French decrees upon the commerce of the U. States.)

In the present oppressed and impoverished state of our country, a vast majority of the people are opposed to war. The inhabitants of Maine are under serious alarm. The late calling town meetings in the county of Hancock to remonstrate against the proceedings of the government, and pre-

paring addresses to the people of New England, in which they call upon them by the most solemn manner, and urge them by all the motives which can rouse and actuate them as freemen and patriots, to come forth and interpose their efforts to prevent the mad career of our national administration.

The District of Maine is more exposed on the seaboard than all New England besides—and I might almost say, has more harbors than all the rest of the U. States. She is in the vicinity of the Leviathan of the deep—without the least protection—open to every invasion from the sea, and liable to be deprived effectually of every remnant of her remaining trade, without which it is impossible for her inhabitants to live. If war is proclaimed, you throw upon these people a horde of desperadoes, who have fled from Maine to the British provinces, while our foreign enemy will, at her pleasure, burn and demolish the towns on the seaboard. These exposed and defenceless people ask you in the name of all that is dear to man, to attempt to prevent these evils.

[Here Col. T. took an able and luminous view of the policy of our government in relation to a navy, which he showed to be indispensably necessary to protect our commerce, defend our coasts and harbours, and prevent those attacks and insults, which our own voluntary weakness naturally invites; and urged the propriety of deferring an offensive war, at least till we could provide some means to prosecute it.]

Gentlemen seem to debate this question as if our spirit and courage were to be tested by the vote which we shall now pass. But, sir, nothing can be more unfounded than this idea. It is not a question in which our spirit is at all involved. It is the expediency of war which we are now considering. We are not descended from a race of cowards. The heights of Charlestown and the plains of Lexington are at hand to witness to our national spirit and valor; and if we were again invaded by Britain, or any other nation, the descendants of the heroes of 1775 would prove that they are not a degenerate race. But they feel no very ardent desire to march to the attack of Canada; they will not with spirit proceed "in solid columns," "like a Grecian phalanx," as the gentleman from Sedgwick anticipates. This would be the most Quixotic crusade that ever was projected since the expeditions to the Holy Land. Does that gentleman know the strength and situation of Quebec? Does he remember the fate of the army under Arnold, and the fall of Montgomery? And does he think that in the present state of the public mind in New England, with no army and no navy, we can batter down that fortress, which is the Gibraltar of America, or starve the inhabitants, by cutting off their supplies from the sea? Sir, this idea of starving other nations is not only ridiculous in itself, but ruinous in its consequences. That attempt has been sufficiently made by our administration, and the people of this country have suffered enough in proving its folly. Great Britain cannot conquer us, nor can we conquer her. These attempts to bring her to terms by our non-intercourse and embargoes, have only taught her a secret which is fatal to our commercial prosperity—the secret of her own resources, and her entire independence of us for provisions or for a market for her manufactures. The exertion of our restrictive energies, has prostrated our own strength, but has braced and nerved those whom it was intended to weaken and reduce. It is in adhering to this restrictive system, that we discover our want of spirit and ignorance of our interests. It is here that we show submission, and abandon our rights. We submit to the continental system of Bonaparte, by which he would destroy the commerce of the world (as the gentleman from Williamsstown acknowledges) and overcome Great Britain. We have already, by the submission and co-operation of our government, become parties to the continental system of Bonaparte, as such as the Hamburgers or Prussians, with this exception—that we are not yet obliged to buy British goods.—Here, sir, is that *knot which*, Mr. Grundy declared in congress, *France had twisted about us, and which must be cut by the sword—by war with England!* This continental system must be combated, or we are a ruined people. The more we give up, the greater are Bonaparte's demands on us, and the more flagrant his abuse and depredations. What says the Duke of Bassano to Mr. Barlow? "To our claims for compensation for confiscations under the French decrees, he scarcely attempts to amuse him even by distant and empty promises of future arrangement. And as to Mr. Barlow's note, wherein he states our grievances, and makes an exposition of our rights, Bassano says, the emperor acknowledged the reasoning was just and the conclusions undeniable, but it could not be reconciled with his continental system! Shall we then plunge into a war with England, and with our arms as well as our restrictive energies, co-operate in fastening upon Europe and ourselves this continental system? Remember that war with England will be alliance with France.

Little has been said in this debate about our commercial restrictions. But they are

the ruin of the country, and must be removed. We have suffered immensely under them for four or five years. We now remonstrate against the system which the government is pursuing, and which experience has proved to be utterly inefficient as it regards our enemies and is little short of suicide. Now is an opportunity for the democrats of Massachusetts to do themselves immortal honor. Their brethren in New York and other states have set them an example—they have renounced their faith in the restrictive system, and have determined not to support a Virginia president, but to give their suffrages for the friends of commerce and of peace. Would the "republicans" of this state do the same, the weight of Massachusetts might be felt, and the country might be rescued from destruction.

Mr. HOLMES, of Alfred.—From the professions of moderation, and of a design to pursue a conciliatory course, which gentlemen in the majority have been pleased to make during this session, I had expected that this debate would have been held without much exculpation of the general government, allusion to the continental system, or ridicule of the terrapin policy. In this expectation I have been disappointed. I have not been able to discover any more moderation in the language of the majority, than they have exhibited on former occasions, nor have they treated, with more than their usual deference, the constituted authorities of the nation. But it is not of any very great importance to me individually, how others are pleased to consider this question, or to manage this debate. I shall state a few of my reasons against adopting this reported memorial, and let others judge, how much regard is due to them.

A crisis has arrived in the affairs of our country, when our government seem to have determined to assert their rights, and I wish not to embarrass their councils by our interference. I have no fear that government will declare war unnecessarily; their former forbearance is a sufficient pledge on this head. The country is suddenly alarmed about an immediate war; but if gentlemen have rightly described our administration, as destitute of spirit and lost to a sense of national honor, there surely can be little to fear from any warlike measures which they may propose or adopt.

One objection to forwarding this memorial is, that it will convince our enemies that we are a divided people. The British government have been told that there is a party in this country, who will always support her cause and oppose any defensive measures of our own government. This intelligence will be confirmed by this memorial.

Those who administer our government certainly know much better than we, what is the proper course to be pursued. They have been in session six months, and have deliberated on this subject; and if no reasons exist now for declaring war, which did not exist six months ago, (as gentlemen have asserted) then war will not be declared, and we might have spared ourselves the trouble, and our constituents the expense which this memorial has occasioned. But it is said Mr. Giles is opposed to war, and that he is the leader of the majority in Congress. Still less then is the probability that war will be declared. It is said too, that members of Congress have lately been home and have found their constituents averse to war.—This is a still stronger reason why war need not be expected, and why this discussion should not have been provoked.

But the memorial itself is objectionable. In the third paragraph of it, the anticipated war is denominated "offensive war." Sir, is not G. Britain the offender? Has she not captured our ships; murdered our seamen, prohibited our going to her enemies ports? And as a reparation of these injuries, if we take Canada, will it be offensive war on our part? The British have long impressed our sailors. This is an offence which admits of no excuse. Gentlemen talk about protections. It is an insult to mention them. What right has Britain to say, that we shall furnish paper protections to our sailors, in order to prevent their being impressed? Sir, their country should be their protection. Suppose we should demand of the British that their sailors should all have protections, or that we would impress them wherever we could find them. Would that nation submit to it? This is a subject of just war. Our fathers fought to resist a little paltry tax, which did not oppress them, but which they considered unjust; and shall we sit down under the injuries of impressments, and leave our fellow citizens in bondage, without one manly attempt to vindicate their rights?

The fourth paragraph of the memorial states, that "it would be foreign to our present purpose to enlarge upon the duplicity and prevarication exhibited by France in all her negotiations—which aggravate her numerous outrages—so to discuss the motives alluded to by G. Britain in defence of a system of retaliation which bears with a severe pressure on neutral rights." Why this studied difference in the phraseology, when the injuries of these two nations are brought into view? When France is mentioned, she is accused of duplicity and prevarication, and charged with the commission of aggravated outrages. But when Great Britain is mentioned, it is with a

scandalous reluctance, and her outrages merely stated as producing a severe pressure on our neutral rights.

The memorial more than intimates, that if we go to war with England, our object cannot be obtained. But, sir, are we not as well prepared now, as we were thirty years ago? A war will create a navy, by which we can defend our maritime rights; and if a few provincial troops, in the time of the revolution could march up the river Kennebec, through the wilderness, and could so near scale the walls of Quebec, I should think, that now we have acquired strength and resources, we could effect the reduction of that city—and the rest of the provinces would fall of course. Gentlemen talk about our joining to enforce the continental system, and assisting Bonaparte to subvert England. What says Mr. Lloyd on the danger to which England is exposed by this system? He once thought she was fighting for her existence, but he says, "that dream has passed away."

I had not supposed this a proper place or a proper occasion to question for the next president, nor do I believe it right to reflect upon our sister states. This comparing of different sections of the country is invidious, and I fear will be the means eventually of bringing on a dissolution of the union.

I cannot see the necessity of concluding the memorial with so solemn a disclaimer of all party motives. Those who attest their innocence before they are accused, generally excite suspicion, and I apprehend that congress would have been quite as likely to believe the fact, if the assertion had not been made.

Mr. HOOPER, of Newbury, was surprised at the desultory nature of the debate, and that topics so little connected with the question before the house, should be drawn into discussion. It was perhaps not to be wondered at, when the reverend clergy, whose peculiar business it is to preach peace on earth, undertake to advocate war, that they should depart from the question immediately under consideration, and direct their remarks to collateral and extraneous subjects. Sir, the question is not about our wrongs; but whether the people are ready for war. What is there to change our relations since the meeting of congress? We have for years been in much the same situation, as regards England, and still have not declared war; and now, when the late arrivals from France have changed our relations with that country, and exhibit in still stronger light than ever, the hostility and perfidy of that nation—shall we precipitately declare war against England? Sir, we are wholly unprepared—where are our means? We are without money—without a navy, or an army; and are we madly to plunge into war?

Some gentlemen have denied our right to address congress on this subject. But if there is any right more dear to a freeman than another, it is the right of expressing his opinions of public measures, and of raising his voice against their destructive course. Even in Britain, which some gentlemen have been in the habit of representing as the land of slaves, the voice of the people is heard, and has often effected a change in the ministry, against the will of the monarch. And shall we not, in a republican government, have those rights which the people under a monarchy are acknowledged to possess? But, say gentlemen, the present is an important crisis, and we ought not to embarrass the government. Sir, this is the very time for us to raise our voice—when our destinies are trembling on the dial's point of the crisis, it may be our salvation. It is said that congress have determined on this subject, and that our interference will have no effect. But politicians sometimes change their opinions. The gentleman from Alfred, (Mr. Holmes) from his knowledge of human nature, must be perfectly sensible of this fact: and congress may yet change their determination on this subject. We do not wish to embarrass them, but to throw light upon their path. We would give them the voice of the people of New-England, the bone and muscle of the country, who must fight the battles which the government wage; and if they declare war, the blood of the nation will be on their heads.

Mr. WENB, of Weymouth, said that the majority of the house seemed prepared to adopt some memorial of this sort, at this time, and it was perhaps useless for him to enter into this debate, for he should oppose the adoption of any memorial or any proceeding upon the subject. But his feelings would not permit him to give a silent vote upon the question of accepting the reported remonstrance to Congress, for, in his opinion, it was a renunciation of our rights.—The honor of the U. States, said Mr. W. has been deeply stained, and ought to be washed out in the blood of the nation that has injured us. Why should not we regard our honor as highly as the English regard theirs? Gentlemen would not say, if we had treated Britain as she has us, that she had no cause of complaint, and no occasion to call us to account: and will they be more partial to that country than to their own?

This is not a question of war or peace, but a question of war or submission. Britain and France have both so long abused

and insulted us, that it is time for us to show them, that though young, yet we can and will defend our rights. The priority of wrongs is not to be considered in discussing this question. Whether Britain or France was the first aggressor upon our neutral rights, is, at this time, of no sort of consequence. If one of my neighbors trespass on my field, it is no excuse for another neighbor to do the same. Both the first and the second do me an injury, and deserve that I should punish them. This law of retaliation is not justifiable—no one pretends it in the common affairs of life—and nations must be governed by the same rules as individuals. If, however, it were pertinent to enter into the question, whether Britain or France first violated our neutral rights, I should have no hesitation in saying that Britain was first. She in 1806 declared the coast of France to be in a state of blockade. As she had no means of enforcing her declaration, this blockade received the name of the paper blockade. Afterwards Bonaparte, elated with his success in conquering the king of Prussia, declared the British islands in a state of blockade. Certainly Britain was the first to violate our neutral rights by the blocking system.

I do not pretend, because Britain was first to injure us, that we have no cause of complaint against France. She has trifled with us in negotiation—has imprisoned our seamen, burned our ships, and shamefully insulted our ministers at her court. But let us look across the channel and see what Britain has done. She has murdered our citizens, impressed our seamen, and captured and confiscated millions of our property.—The memorial states that France has practised "duplicity and prevarication" in her negotiations with us. This is true—I admit it. But it is as true of England as of France. England has practised "duplicity and prevarication" in her negotiations with our government. She perhaps may not have insulted our ministers at her own court, but her ministers have insulted our government at home. Sir, we have supplicated for what we should demand, long enough. We have never been able to make any arrangement with her about impressments. This single subject is ample cause of war. I have documents to show that for seventeen months past, 1558 of our seamen have been impressed—of that number only 401 have been discharged by the British government. Of these 1558 men, G. Britain claims only 203 as her own citizens—she claims 57 as having enlisted into her service—and only 28 are subjects of foreign governments. On calculation we shall find that 869 of our own citizens that have been taken within 17 months, are still held in bondage. Is this no cause of war?—There is another list of impressed seamen not included in the number just mentioned, which contains 223, of which number 200 are substantiated to be our citizens. If gentlemen dispute this statement, I can produce the hudget. Sir, this list is more potent than the honor and independence of this country than the roll of Ezekiel. The people will vindicate the government in maintaining their rights. They have done it in times past, and they will do it again. Our ancestors resisted us to blood a tax upon tea, and shall we succumb to insults and injuries so outrageous as those I have described? Sir, these insults and injuries ought to be repeated and repeated, till it blister the ears of gentlemen to hear them.

I do not think that we have any constitutional right to interpose in this manner upon a subject exclusively vested in the federal government. I believe it unconstitutional, because I find no mention made in the constitution of such a right. The reason of the thing also is against it. If this right belongs to the legislature of one state, it belongs to all. One state may petition one way, and another state will send a directly contrary petition. If this practice is continued, it will tend to bring on civil war.

For these reasons, I shall vote against this memorial. Col. CROSBY, of Brookfield, said that his constituents were almost unanimously opposed to war, and that nine tenths of the people in the county of Worcester had the same opinion and wishes on the subject, and that as their feelings coincided with his own, he should vote for accepting the memorial and forwarding it immediately to Congress. [Doctor PUFFIN, of Dudley, replied to Mr. Webb, and closed the debate, and we regret that we were unable to hear his remarks.]

Important State Papers,

Laid before Congress.—Continued from our last.

CORRESPONDENCE ON THE ORDERS IN COUNCIL.

MR. FOSTER TO MR. MONROE.
Washington, June 4, 1812.
SIR—Since I had the honor of seeing you at your office yesterday, I have perceived in articles in the public press, stated to be extracted from an English newspaper, and purporting to be an official declaration of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, that the orders in council will be and are absolutely revoked from the period when the Berlin and Milan decrees shall, by some authentic act of the French government, publicly be repealed, expressly and unconditionally repeated. A considerable time has elapsed since by order of my government I had the honor of urging in your the expediency of providing such an authentic act