

Important Foreign News.

London dates to March 8.

HOUSE OF COMMONS—THURSDAY, FEB. 18.

AMERICAN PAPERS.

Lord CASTLEBROUGH, in rising to call the attention of the House to a most important subject, namely, the negotiations which had preceded the present state of our relations with the United States of America, thought it necessary to remark, that it was not the ordinary practice of the Ministers of the Crown to bring before Parliament, documents for the purpose of showing that they were entitled to the approbation of the Legislature; and if those now laid before the House had that tendency, it would be frequently that the production of them had been frequently requested. His Majesty's Ministers were generally disposed to be satisfied with the pleasing reflections which arose from the consciousness of duties fulfilled and zeal employed to promote the public welfare; it would savour of arrogance to intrude themselves, the details of their services, however meritorious they might be, upon the notice of Parliament, and challenge the approbation of that high tribunal, how fervently they might desire to obtain it.—The correspondence now submitted to the House comprehended a period of two years and a half, and the perusal of them would sufficiently show how little Ministers were disposed to withhold any information that could be in the least satisfactory to the House or to the public, or furnish lights by which their own conduct might be subjected to the most rigid scrutiny. The question which he should ground on the production of those papers, was one in the decision of which the character of the country was at issue; and as it was therefore of the utmost consequence that such decision should be the result of the most patient and cautious deliberation, he would cheerfully supply, by unsolicited answers to any interrogatories that might be put to him, such information as might lead to elucidate the documents on the table, and render the result of inquiry beneficial to the community.

The chief point to which the attention of the House would be directed was, whether it was in the power of Ministers, by any exertion, to have prevented the much-to-be-deprecated war in which we were now engaged; and here he hoped to have credit from the House, when he said, that no one more sincerely lamented the necessity of that war than he did. War, in its most favourable aspect, calamitous to a country, was, in this instance, rendered by peculiar circumstances, doubly calamitous. Most sincerely grieved was he that he could but too well make out for the satisfaction of the house the necessity there was for extending that evil for exchanging, in our relations with the United States, that peaceable intercourse which was so beneficial to both nations for all the ill which a state of hostility involves; and he trusted, that in the sentiment by which he was actuated, his colleagues, the Parliament, and the nation at large, most cordially participated. The justice was obviously on our side, was indeed, a mighty consolation, but certainly not efficient to subdue the sense of the calamity in which the severe pressure of necessity had involved us. But was a feeling of this nature to lay us at the feet of an enemy who had not every act of conciliation on our part with augmented hostility? He trusted that we should be found actuated by a far different spirit, and that, after having explored the infiltration in the government and population of the United States, which had forcibly drawn us into the contest, we should turn our attention to every means by which unjust aggression could be most effectually repelled. It would appear very plainly that Ministers had not wantonly plunged the country in a war which there were so many motives to avoid, if possible, and in having a length recourse to it after by repeated attempts to promote a pacific temper in the enemy, they had endeavoured to avert the evil. They felt confident that they had carried into it with them the feelings of the country with so full a tide, that it would be prosecuted with a vigour and firmness of spirit such as would be most likely to promote the only legitimate end and object of all war—a secure and honourable peace.—Nor, indeed, was it to be despised that a wise and firm line of policy on our part, together with a candid and temperate discussion of the differences which had arisen between the two nations might have a more extended effect than that of confining our own people in a resolution to maintain their rights unimpaird. It was difficult to suppose the people of America so deaf to the voice of reason as to be utterly unconscious that in the intercourse which had taken place between the governments of the two countries, there had not been the party which had held justice cheapest, and sought more eagerly for war; and if their eyes were once opened, it would not be an unreasonable expectation if we looked to their calling on their rulers to desist from hostilities, in which they were likely to reap neither honour nor profit. The question now before the House was simply this, whether the country was or was not engaged in war with the United States, having justice on their side? And the proposition which he meant to ground on their decision in the affirmative was, that an Address should be presented to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, calling on him to direct a vigorous prosecution of the war with the United States; and praying him to repose the fullest confidence in the support of Parliament and the Country. Of the negotiations now before the House, he had to observe that many points had on former occasions occupied much of their attention, and given rise to discussions of an inconsiderable length. The points, therefore, in which he would more particularly draw their attention on the present occasion were those which were to be found of any importance in the latter stages of the correspondence. They would, he was satisfied, easily collect from them the necessity of the stance which the Government was now disposed to make, and would consequently acquiesce cheerfully in the proposition he should make, to call on the Crown to engage with spirit in the contest, confident of finding in the people a determined resolution to repel the attacks which had been so wantonly made on them, and which they could not have prevented but by a sacrifice of rights acknowledged and maintained by every nation whose intercourse with her neighbours is regulated by any reference to a code of international law. They would ascertain that every possible attempt had been made to bring the American government to reason, and that every such attempt had failed, merely because there was to be found in that government, supported by a part of the population entrusted to their rule, an unyielding and insolent spirit of enmity which would not be made productive of any advantage appear like

indecency, and would have committed the honour of the country, the government of which could seem insensible to repeated insult. This was a spirit which had seemed to gain strength from every fresh concession, and had now risen to a height which imperiously called for resistance from this country, if the preservation of her rights and her honour were dear to her children. We had gone perhaps as great lengths as ever any nation had gone, in conceding our territory to be occupied by a hostile people, with whom no doubt we had the strongest incentives to remain on such a footing; it was now high time to substitute the spear for the olive branch, and shew the perverse enemy we had to cope with, that in our humility no principle of fear had mingled, and that we were to be as terrible in the conflict they had provoked, as we had been mild in the negotiation by which we had sought to avoid it. The Address which he should this night propose to the House, he trusted, would lay the foundation of such a peace as would alone be desirable to obtain.

The Noble Lord then proceeded to take a view of the documents which had been laid before the American government, contending that an adequate notion could be collected from them of the unreasonable spirit of hostility by which they were actuated against this country. He referred in particular to the explanation of the President, of the motives which had induced the declaration of war, and to the paper which had been published by the Secretary of Foreign Legation after the commencement of it. He asserted, that these papers contained a full disclosure of all of the points on which it had been disapproved in this country; that concessions had been made, and amply thereby assumed; those very points were, what the American government had chosen to press as affording just grounds for hostility, arguing on them in precisely the opposite direction to what any reasonable man would have supposed them likely to do. They had excluded all the points which had been requested, however minutely it appeared to have been neglected, and not inappropriately even from those in which injury had been adjudged on the side of America, and actual aggression made on ours.

The war which had thus commenced had been followed up by an armistice; but if this armistice had been meant as an indication of a wish for peace, the tone and temper as the American government, to this country would have undergone a revolution, and far different grounds of adjustment would have been assumed from those on which they now stand. The great questions between the countries were, the Orders in Council, which it was customary in America, to call an illegal blockade, and the imprisonment of our seamen. They might, perhaps, think that the former of these was taken out of the question by the armistice—that might be true; he would not pledge the American government further than that they were desirous to remain themselves; but they ought not to have closed every avenue of conciliation, but thus by having recourse to which we should make a surrender of our rights. The ministers have even laid a claim to indemnity for the vessels captured under the Orders in Council.

Not satisfied with the forbearance manifested by this country in the resocation of the Orders in Council and the relinquishment of the blockade of 1806, the American government claimed the abandonment of that of Great Britain, and the future exercise of the rights involved in those Orders in Council. With respect to the Orders in Council, that question had undergone repeated discussions in the British Parliament, and a variety of opinions had certainly been entertained and expressed on the subject; but he would say that those opinions bore on the commercial expediency of the measure rather than on any doubts as to the right and competency of this country to regulate and throw back on the enemy the injuries and wrongs which their conduct themselves were calculated to inflict upon us. This was a discussion, the renewal of which he wished to leave at that moment; but he trusted, that no individual would suppose that his Majesty's Government could be so dead to their duties, and so insensible to the general interests and rights of the country, as not to be anxious at the very moment they modified the measures which had been previously adopted, with the expectation of extending to the general cause against France, so to guide their conduct as to leave the rights and claims of this country on the table clear and unobscured as if no relaxation whatever had taken place. Unquestionably, he was prepared to contend, that his Majesty's Government had undoubted right to issue the Orders in question, and that justice and necessity at the particular moment at which they were issued, when the previous conduct of France was considered, must appear still more evident, as well as their foundation in the true and sound policy of the British empire. For what true inconvenience a portion of the commerce and interest of this country might have sustained from the interruption of the communication with the American market, he had no hesitation in stating it as his decided opinion, that had not the British Government opposed to France measures similar to and retaliatory of this country, the commerce of France would have been a triumph on the Continent, as well as the commerce of Great Britain would have sunk to the lowest state of depression. He begged therefore to be always considered as one of the most steady and faithful admirers of that system in which the Orders in Council originated. When any relaxation of those Orders took place, it had always been on the principle of accommodating neutral Powers as far as was consistent with the preservation of the system of commerce. It was to the abandonment of that system by which she was endeavoring to exclude British commerce from the whole world.

With respect to the blockade of 1806, the fact was, that for a long period after its institution, it was wholly uncomplied with by the government of the United States; it existed for three years, not only without an adverse representation respecting it on the part of America, but actually with a special representation in its favor, made by the American minister at the Court of London. It was a measure, on the legitimate nature of which all political parties in this country agreed. Originating in Mr. Fox's administration, the justice of it had been maintained by every government since the present day. It rested on the ordinary principle of maritime law, viz. that the power by which it was instituted, possessed a force capable of maintaining it. He felt it to be due to the character of Mr. Fox to state, that he did not hesitate to declare that he had written to the Admiralty to know if they could maintain it in an adequate naval force. On this point, therefore, he trusted that the question of this country stood on a ground wholly unimpaired. The question which remained to be considered, and indeed by far the most important question, was, that which related to the right of this country to impress British seamen found on board American merchant ships. He was sure that the question which he had now proposed could be more closely connected to the country, to which it did upon one of the most important points of the support of our naval power. He would consider the general course adopted by the government of the United States on this subject, and would refer to the several overtures made by them upon it, in one point of view. In doing this, he should have to advert to two letters from Mr. Russell, followed by one from the American agent for prisoners, and to the further discussions on the subject which took place in America between Sir J. B. Warren and the American Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and the House would determine, on a view of the whole together, whether or not the course adopted by his Majesty's government was entitled to their approbation. It was a more important question to this country, was never agitated, it might not be expedient to enter into a comparative examination of the claims of the two nations, and of the temper in which those claims were

respectively urged. He would be the last man in the world to under-rate the inconveniences which the Americans sustained in consequence of our assertion of the right of search. All settled nations must suffer more or less from the exercise of such a right on the part of a belligerent. But while he admitted that America unquestionably was entitled to this inconvenience, and while he allowed that the government of the U. States were not entitled to a more extensive privilege, he nevertheless thought it as far as possible from the pressure of that inconvenience, he maintained that that government ought to have recollected, that the exercise of the right itself was not merely a convenience to Great Britain, but belonged to her very constitution as a state; and that the abandonment of it would have proved a total dereliction of her sovereignty. As a nation, therefore, Great Britain was fully justified in insisting upon that, the relinquishment of which would have shaken the foundations of her power. We had a right, therefore, to consider the question with other feelings, and with greater tenacity than America, towards whom it did not threaten the loss of freedom or safety, but merely to the inconvenience of a small portion of her trade, and the just exercise of the right of a belligerent during the continuance of the war. In another point of view also, the American government ought to have been assured that the objection was pursued by Great Britain in her own defence, not with any object of inordinate ambition. He trusted that she should not be considered libellous in declaring, that, in his opinion, the American government had pursued its object in a casual and general sense, and not calculated to produce prodigies in America, incompatible with the future prosperity of the two countries.—Let the subject be fairly examined, and he was sure that an impartial and fair mind would say that it was possible the object was such as to induce the British government to do any thing unjustifiable for its attainment. The government of the United States contended that its object was to take away the impression towards the American seamen, assuming most unjustly, that every individual taken by the British cruisers out of an American ship must necessarily be an American subject. That this was not the fact, would appear upon a *prima facie* view of the case.—The American minister, Sir J. B. Warren had impressed 15 or 20,000 American seamen. He intended to put the British government to the test, who he was about to state, he would not pretend to come exactly to the truth, but he would appeal so near to it as to enable Parliament, and to enable America herself, to judge whether the actual and immediate value of the object in question was such, and whether that object was so imperatively necessary to the maintenance of the maritime power of Great Britain, as to induce the British government to place its feet on the neck of its neighbor, instead of getting rid of that source of contention, which prevented the cordial friendship and co-operation as desirable. It was impossible to believe, that for such a paltry and miserable object as that which he was about to state, the British government could have shown themselves insensible to the great interests of the state. Having premised this, he would proceed to inform the House, that so far from our having 15 or 20,000 American seamen, we had only 15 or 20,000 British seamen, and that the Admiralty ascertained how many of the 15,000 seamen actually employed in the British service professed themselves entitled to be discharged as American citizens. And here he must observe, that it was impossible to put the question at issue on a point of view more favorable to the assertion of the American government, because every individual who had the slightest pretext for doing so would make a claim, the immediate result of which must be to render it likely to lead to liberty and to the means of engaging in a service more lucrative than that of the British Navy.—What were the returns? In January, 1811, the whole number out of the 145,000 who claimed to be American subjects (and let it be remembered that the justice of the claim rested on their own declaration) was 3,500. When a similar application was made at the same time to the Admiralty, the number of British subjects remaining being divided into three parts, the return was as follows:—British subjects, 3,500; American subjects, 3,500; and British subjects, 3,500. When a similar application was made at the same time to the Admiralty, the number of British subjects remaining being divided into three parts, the return was as follows:—British subjects, 3,500; American subjects, 3,500; and British subjects, 3,500.

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