

CONGRESS.

House of Representatives.

January 30.

In committee of the whole on Mr. Madison's resolutions.

Speech of Mr. Madison.

[CONTINUED.]

ably. The proposed resolutions would favor an advantageous competition and distribution of our trade, among the manufacturing nations of Europe. At present, it may be said to be monopolized by one; so great is the disproportion of its manufactures which come to our market. That this is an evil, has been admitted, and cannot be doubted. It exposes us to the greatest and most sudden embarrassments from the caprice, the passions, the mistaken calculations of interest, the bankruptcies, and the wars of a single foreign country. Many of these embarrassments are felt at the present moment. If it were possible to liquidate them into a pecuniary statement, it would be found that, in a permanent view of our interest, there would be economy in making very considerable temporary sacrifices, for the purpose of dividing our custom among a number of competitors. It was not true, that Great Britain alone can supply the manufactures we want. France, the United Netherlands, and several other nations, are capable of supplying us with a variety of articles, as well as the nation from which they now come; and, if invited to our markets by prudent encouragements in the first instance, will soon learn to fashion their manufactures to the wants and tastes of this country. The policy of favoring particular branches of trade, even at some expense, in order to guard against the evil of depending on a single one, was exemplified by the conduct of Great Britain herself. Although she viewed her discriminations generally, respecting us, in the light he had explained; yet, he thought it possible, that in the instance of naval stores and ship-timbers, it might be her intention to foster a rivalry in a more distant quarter, in order to provide against a casual privation of the supplies of a nearer quarter. These articles are essential to the marine of Great Britain; as her marine is essential to her greatness. Were she to have no resource but in the Baltic, a war with the Baltic powers might be fatal to her. It may be wise in her, therefore, to keep open the American resource, even at the price of a tax on herself. In this case she must quarrel with both the Baltic powers and the United States at the same time, before the supplies will be cut off.

A member from Massachusetts, (Mr. Dexter) had not, Mr. M. said, been very consistent in his reasoning on this subject. He had contended against all attempts to excite a beneficial competition, on the idea that no competition could be beneficial which would not spring up of itself; and yet he had warned us against the danger, that Great Britain, by exciting a competition against the United States, in those parts of Europe, which most resemble the infant situation of our country, might establish new sources from which supplies would afterwards spontaneously flow to her, without being ever again wanted from the United States. The same remark was applicable to the reasoning of the other gentlemen who had represented the danger of exciting a permanent rivalry for the West-India market, in favour of Canada and Nova Scotia.

Fifthly. The plan of the resolutions tended to conciliate nations in treaty, or disposed to be in treaty with us, into arrangements still more favourable to our commerce. This argument had peculiar weight in relation to France. It had been said that Great Britain was our best customer. The fact, he said, was that we were her best customer: but that France was our best customer. We consume more of British manufactures than any other nation in the world consumes. France consumes more of our productions, than any other nation consumes. He referred to the statements he had before offered for proof of this. Her consumption was also of the most valuable kind; and under favourable regulations would be a very growing one. It consisted of wheat and flour, salt provisions, and fish; articles which were not admitted by Great Britain; and which without the market of France, would glut every other.

Of our fish she consumed five eighths of the whole exportation. Her use of our

live animals was another important consideration. It amounted, in the list of our exports, to 352,795 dollars, for the year 1791. In the same year, the British demand amounted to no more than 62,415 dollars. The superior proportion of navigation we enjoyed in the French channels of intercourse had already been shewn. In examining the policy of cultivating and securing the French markets, he said it ought not to be forgotten, that the profits and the revenue arising from the rum distilleries, depended on an article obtained almost, if not altogether, from the French dominions alone; and which was the only raw material of any consequence imported into the United States. It was paid for also, as had been much urged on other occasions by members on the opposite side, in the worst fish, which could find a vent in no other part of the world. The Molasses imported into the United States in one year, amounted to upwards of seven millions of gallons, more than one half of which went into the state of Massachusetts. He took notice also of the article of sugar, as rendered of great importance by our habits and our finances; and of which more than one half was supplied by the French West-Indies. Out of 17,142,723 dollars imported, 9,321,829 dollars were received from that source. The residue came from the Danish, Dutch, and British dominions, in the following proportions, to wit. Danish, 2,833,010 dollars, Dutch 2,707,231 dollars, British 2,280,647 dollars. This statement was taken from the imports of 1790, the only year he had been able to examine on this point.

It had been said, why grant privileges before a mutual grant should be secured by positive stipulation? Why throw away by a legal regulation, what ought to be the price of treaty? He answered, that the legal regulation threw nothing away, as it was always recoverable: That in the present instance, it was only meeting the legal regulations of which France had set the example: that instead of being a bar to treaty, such a course of proceeding, more than any other, would smooth the way to it, by explaining the objects, and establishing a confidence, on both sides—that it would be happy, if in all cases, where treaties are in view, this open and conciliatory process, could take the place of that reserve and mysterious negotiation, with which the parties approach each other. Were Great Britain desirous of forming amicable arrangements by treaty, he asked what reader or more prudent step could she have taken for the purpose, than to have followed the example set her, by holding out in her laws, the spirit in which she was willing to meet us in negotiation?

Having gone through these explanations, Mr. M. entered into a view of the principal objections to the resolutions proposed.

1. It was said they would diminish the revenue, and endanger the funds.

With respect to the public debt, his general ideas had been expressed by several who had spoken before him. He acknowledged that he had disliked and opposed the modification given to it; but after it had received the sanction of law, he had entertained no other wish on the subject, than that the debt might be honorably discharged, as fast as the circumstances of the country would permit. This he was well satisfied was the prevailing sentiment of the great body of the people. He did not believe, that there was a single state in the Union, or any considerable part of a single state, that did not acquiesce (where they did not approve) in the provisions which had been made in behalf of the public creditors. At the same time he was equally sure, that it never was either meant by Congress, or understood by the public, that in mortgaging the impost for their security, it was to be an hostage to foreign countries for our unqualified acquiescence in their unequal laws, and to be worn, as long as the debt should continue, as a badge of national humiliation. The nature of the obligation could certainly import no more in favor of the creditors, than that the fund appropriated should be applied, as far as requisite, to their use; unless equivalent funds should be substituted; nor more against the public, than that all deficiencies in the fund should be made up, whether arising without, or in consequence of, a change in the laws. If it should happen, then, that in consequence of any measure, dictated by the general good, the impost should become inadequate to its object, all that could be exacted by the

public creditors, would be some other provision that would supply the defalcation; and it ought not to be doubted, that the people at large, whose good was pursued, would readily support whatever other provision might become indispensable. He had made these remarks, however, with reference to an event, which he did not by any means admit to be probable. The more he had revolved the subject, the more clearly it appeared to him, that a very operative addition might be made to the duties on the enumerated articles, without endangering the aggregate product of the importations. And he entirely concurred in opinion with those, who had observed, that the greatest injury which could be done to the class of citizens holding the public paper, was to represent their interests as more to be regarded, than any national considerations whatever; and to oppose to the latter, even the most imaginary contingencies to the former.

(Speech to be continued.)

March 11.

Sundry petitions were presented and referred.

The House went into committee of the whole on the bill to provide for the defence of certain ports, &c. and, after some time spent in the business, the bill was reported with amendments and passed to a third reading.

A bill came down from the Senate providing for building a light-house on Cape Hatteras, and one near Occacock Island; twice read in the House.

A bill was reported, providing for building a light-House on Seguin in the District of Maine—twice read.

These two bills were incorporated to form one.

The amendments of the committee of the whole to the bill providing for the expense attending foreign intercourse were agreed to, and the bill passed to a third reading.

Adjourned.

Wednesday, March 12.

The bill providing for the defence of certain ports and harbors was read the third time and passed.

The bill making appropriations for the support of the military establishment of the United States for the year 1794 was brought in engrossed—in filling up the blanks, the estimate of expenses which will attend the fortifying certain ports and harbors was incorporated—the bill was then passed.

The foreign intercourse bill was also passed this day.

Mr. SEDGWICK, after some prefatory remarks, read agreeable to notice on Monday last the following resolutions:

Resolved, That there be raised, armed and equipped, fifteen regiments of auxiliary troops, to consist of 1000 men rank and file each, with the proper officers.

Resolved, That the commissioned officers thereof be appointed as other officers of the United States, and that the non-commissioned officers and privates be enlisted for the term of two years; and with this condition, that if war should break out within that time, between the United States and any foreign European power, they shall be bound to serve for the term of three years, after the commencement of the war, if the same shall so long continue.

Resolved, That in the case of such war, the officers of the said regiments shall be entitled to the like pay and subsistence, and to equal rank and command with the officers of the present military establishment of the United States; but except in such case shall be entitled to pay, only for the time they shall actually attend on the days of training and exercise hereafter mentioned.

Resolved, That each non-commissioned officer and private shall, by virtue of his enlistment, be entitled to a bounty, consisting of a suit of clothes per annum, of the value of twelve dollars, and shall also be entitled to a compensation of half a dollar per day, for each day he shall assemble for the purpose of training or exercising; which except in case of war, with some foreign European power, shall not exceed twenty-four days in one year; & in that case each non-commissioned officer & private shall be entitled to the same pay and rations, and shall be subject to the same rules and regulations, as the other troops of the United States.

Resolved, That the said regiments shall be furnished with arms and accoutrements

at the expense of the United States to be returned at the expiration of their term of services.

Resolved, That revenues by taxes or duties, competent to the purpose of defraying the expense of raising and paying the said troops, be provided.

Resolved, That within two years and six months after the time, which shall be prescribed by law, for beginning to enlist the said troops, if no war shall in the mean time break out with any foreign European power, the regiments aforesaid shall be abolished and cease.

Resolved, That the President of the United States be authorized, if in his judgment the safety or welfare of the United States shall require it, to lay an embargo generally or particularly, upon ships in the ports or harbors of the United States, for a term, not exceeding at any one time, forty days, and also to prohibit for a like term, generally or particularly, the exportation of commodities from the United States, and such embargo or prohibition to continue from time to time, until the expiration of fourteen days after the commencement of the session of Congress next ensuing the present.

These resolutions were read twice and committed, and ordered to be printed for the use of the members.

A sketch of the remarks which accompanied the above resolutions shall be given to-morrow.

A message was received from the President of the United States, communicating sundry representations from the officers of the Spanish Legation—these were read with closed galleries.

Foreign Intelligence.

LEGHORN, Nov. 27.

Yesterday we witnessed one of the most dreadful catastrophes. Le Scipion, a French ship of 74 guns, carrying 600 men which was lying at anchor in this port with the British Squadron under the command of Admiral Cosby, became a prey to the flames. At three o'clock in the afternoon, large columns of black smoke, rising from all parts of the ship, were the forerunners of the flames, which began to break forth a few moments after. The crew, who were almost all on board of her, & had not the smallest suspicion of any accident, finding they could not withstand the rage of the fire, mostly flung themselves thro' the flames into the sea, every one striving to escape with his life. Mean while a great number of the jolly-boats belonging to the British, Swedish, and Neapolitan men of war, picked up many of the unfortunate sufferers, and a great number of dead bodies were afterwards taken up, suffocated or drowned.

The rest, being invalids, or wishing to extinguish the flames, which began to spread in every part, fell victims.

About 4 o'clock, all the rigging and masts were seen on fire; the port-holes of the cannon resembled so many furnaces issuing a fiery lava. The guns, loaded either with grape shot or balls, went off, and threatened to set fire to the rest of the shipping.

Rear-Admiral Cosby, finding the Squadron of his Britannic Majesty too near the French ship, and exposed to the most imminent danger immediately sailed from the harbour. Shortly after, the French ship bore away from her anchors all on fire; fortunately a strong gale from the land, had preserved the shipping in the harbor from destruction, while Le Scipion passed along, and that prevented great misfortunes.

About eight o'clock in the evening, Le Scipion was four Italian miles from the port, when the great explosion took place in the store-room, containing 300 barrels of gun-powder. The column of fire, rose to the height of near 300 fathoms; a large smoke ensued, which appeared intersected with flames, and during several minutes the whole horizon seemed to be on fire.

The explosion was so great, that it resembled the effect of the most dreadful shock of an earthquake, and an immense number of window panes in this city burst. After the explosion of the store-room, the water rushed into the body of the hulk, which began to sink.

About two o'clock in the morning no further signs of fire appeared on the surface of the sea.

In the morning, a piece of the ship was still seen out of the water, full of coals, and covered with bodies.