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A JUST DUE.

THE FRENCH SPOILIATION CLAIMS.

History of These Long-Standing and Dented Debts—Their Origin and Justice—A Chapter of American History—The Government's Criminal Neglect in the Matter—The Claims Nearly All in the Hands of the Heirs of the Original Owners—Remarks of Mr. Cameron in the Senate in Favor of their Adjustment and Satisfaction.

The following speech, delivered in the Senate on the 16th ult. by Senator Cameron, on the bill to provide for the adjustment and satisfaction of claims of American citizens for spoiliations committed by the French prior to the 31st day of July, 1801, will be read with interest by the people of Philadelphia.

The bill being before the Senate, Mr. Cameron said:

MR. PRESIDENT: The bill which I have had the honor to present to the Senate is the same bill that was introduced by the Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. Sumner] on the 9th of March, 1871. Its main feature is, that it provides for the payment to the claimants of the sum of \$5,000,000 in lieu of all demands which may be made upon the Government. The original claims were supposed to be about \$20,000,000, and upon that interest has been accruing for seventy years; but it is proposed now to pay these people in full by giving them \$7,000,000—one-fourth of the original claim, without any interest.

Mr. President, it is equally beyond my hope or my expectation to say anything new on a subject which has been pressed upon the attention of Congress for seventy years. Forty-three Congressional Reports have exhausted the facts, and the masterly speech delivered in the Senate on the 24th and 25th of March, 1846, by Hon. John M. Clayton has exhausted the argument on this just and equitable claim. An elaborate restatement of these facts and arguments is also unnecessary; for that has been done so eloquently and well by the honorable Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. Sumner] in his report on this subject of April 4, 1864, that it would, in my opinion, be a waste of time to go over ground again which has been so often traveled. But the convenience of the Senate may require a brief reminder of the main points in this case, and to that duty I shall confine myself.

After the French people had beheaded their king and declared the Republic, they found themselves called on to defend their country against a vast and powerful league of monarchs determined to punish the regicides and then restore the fallen French dynasty; and to fully and honestly consider the facts from which our commerce suffered, it will be necessary to briefly describe the character of the war waged against France by the coalition. In performing this duty I am confronted with facts so horrible and atrocious that nothing but official documents will justify any one in stating them. The failure of her harvests had brought France to the brink of starvation. The ports of Europe were closed against her famishing people, and so her only hope for food was from abroad, and mainly from us. This last resource her

enemies determined to cut off, and the shocking policy was announced that France was to be starved into submission. England, while peace continued between her and France, detained all vessels in her ports loaded with provisions and destined for French ports. A reliable historian, writing of this outrage, says:

"These violations of the law of nations of treaties, and of neutral rights were committed when England was in a declared state of neutrality and peace with France, and while a French minister was in London begging the Ministry to remain at peace and to permit the exportation of provisions to keep his countrymen from starving. So atrocious, indeed, were these acts that the British Ministry were compelled to take refuge under an act of indemnity to escape impeachment and punishment."

A Russian fleet was sent to the Atlantic under Admiral Goff, who bore these orders for his guidance:

"We are bound, according to our stipulations with his Majesty the King of Great Britain, to endeavor to prevent these French, who persist in their rebellion, from receiving any supplies of which they may be in need. The hostile measures employed against them are not strictly conformable to the natural laws of war when it unfortunately takes place between nations under lawful government; but as these measures are taken against these arrant villains who have overturned all duties observed toward God, the laws, and the government—who have even gone so far as to take the life of their own sovereign—the means of punishing these villains ought, in justice, to be employed in such a manner as to accelerate and insure success in so salutary an affair. We have made a representation to the courts of Sweden and Denmark, but our just demands have not been satisfactorily answered. We have, therefore, declared to them that we cannot see with indifference provisions of stores sent to France to nourish rebels. By this you will clearly see our intentions, and we order you to seize all French vessels you may meet with, and send back to their own ports all neutral vessels bound to France."

Prussia adopted the same cruel policy, as shown by the third article of her treaty with England, signed July 14, 1793, as follows:

"ART. 3. The high contracting parties having taken the resolution to shut all their ports against French ships, and not to permit the exportation in any cases from the said ports for France of any military or naval stores of corn, grain, salt, meat, or other provisions, they reciprocally engage to continue these measures, and promise to employ all other means which shall be in their power for injuring the commerce of France and bringing her, by such means, to just conditions of peace."

These official contracts will show, in some degree, the situation when the spoiliations on our commerce occurred. The allied sovereigns had determined to starve the French people because they had chosen to become a republic. The starving French must procure bread or succumb. And so the attention of both parties was directed to our shores. Our old friends and allies were anxious to procure the sorely-needed food we had to spare. The seas between were swept by cruisers bent on preventing our breadstuffs reaching France. And the French, driven to desperation, ordered:

"The capture of all neutral vessels which should be found laden, in whole or in part, either with articles of food belonging to the neutral powers, and intended for an enemy's port, or with merchandise belonging to an enemy."

The consequence of these measures of retaliation was that our commerce was driven from the ocean, many of our merchants were ruined, and our finances were seriously crippled. Representations were made to the French government concerning these outrages on our people and our commerce, and assurances were given that reparation should be made; but these assurances failed to restore to our merchants their commercial liberties and rights, which continued to be crushed between the contending forces. At last our Government interfered and attempted to restore our maritime interests, and so relieve the finances now suffering from the destruction of our foreign trade. To this end the following circular was addressed by the Secretary of State, Mr. Jefferson, under date August 27, 1793, to our merchants:

"GENTLEMEN: Complaint having been made to the Government of the United States of some instances of unjustifiable vexation and spoliation on our merchant vessels by the privateers of the powers at war, and it being possible that other in-

stances may have happened of which no information has been given to the Government, I have it in charge from the President to assure the merchants of the United States engaged in foreign commerce or navigation that due attention will be paid to any injuries that may suffer on the high seas or in foreign countries, contrary to the law of nations, or to existing treaties, and that on their forwarding hither well-authenticated evidence of the same, proper proceedings will be adopted for their relief."

This assurance, in conformity with the absolute duty of every government to protect its citizens in the enjoyment of all their legitimate rights, restored our commerce to some extent. But, so far as the claims now under consideration are concerned, it proved to be a snare to the unwary rather than a shield of protection. It only allured our merchants and ship-owners to again risk their property to the perils of the war-swept ocean, and when they had been engulfed in ruin no redress was given, although the losses they had suffered had been incurred under a solemn assurance of protection by which they had again been entrapped into spoliation and ruin!

I do not assert or imply that our Government did not endeavor to procure payment for these losses of our citizens. On the contrary, it was constant, persistent, importunate in its efforts to procure indemnification, and at last did secure from France full satisfaction for these claims—a hundred times told—and has for more than seventy years retained the consideration, the receipt of which is acknowledged in the convention of 1800 between France and the United States. The controversy settled by that convention is simply this: we claimed from France more than twenty millions for indemnity for spoiliations committed upon the property of our citizens. France claimed from us the fulfilling of treaty obligations in the future, and inestimable damages for past neglect of these duties—damages so vast that our claim became only contemptible in comparison.

A brief outline of the French claims set up as an offset to ours may not at this point be inappropriate, and I shall devote a few minutes to that part of the subject, saying nothing beyond a reference to the main points of the case.

In 1778 our whole country was thrilled with the joyful intelligence that Benjamin Franklin, our minister at Paris, had secured the alliance of France for our struggling patriots. The success came at a critical juncture. The campaign of 1777 had closed with the defeat at Brandywine in September, and the disaster at Germantown in October. Washington had led his beaten, dispirited, half-naked, starved army into winter quarters at Valley Forge. Even his serene courage gave way at that terrible time. We can estimate the general gloom when we read the sorrowful and desponding words of the great chieftain. He says:

"Four days of bad weather will destroy this army."

And with it, we may well conclude, the hopes of ultimate liberty which up to that dreadful moment had nerved the courage of our ancestors. It was then that the camp at Valley Forge, the whole land, rang with shouts of triumph at the prospect of the powerful aid of France.

Of this aid, and of the treaty which pledged it, Mr. Clayton says:

"I am certain this treaty secured the independence of the United States. I have no desire to weaken that statement; nor do I weaken it when I qualify it by saying that this treaty and the benignant favor of God in a just cause secured to us the victory over our powerful foe. But the price we were to pay for the aid of France was incalculable. Men struggling for the right to enjoy life and to promote liberty, and desperately pressed in the noble struggle, do not stop to estimate the cost of that which brings them relief from immediate peril and salvation from ultimate destruction. To make apparent this cost I need only quote two articles of the treaty of 1778, and recount the French possessions on our hemisphere. I now quote articles eleven and twelve of the treaty of February 6, 1778, between France and the United States:

"ART. 11. The two parties guarantee, mutually, from the present time, and forever, against all other powers, to wit: The United States to his most Christian Majesty, the present possessions of the Crown of France in America, as well as those it may acquire by the future treaty of peace. And his most Christian Majesty guarantees, on his part, the United States, their liberty, sovereignty, and independence, absolute and unlimited."

"ART. 12. In order to fix more precisely the sense and application of the preceding article, the contracting parties de-

clare that, in case of a rupture between France and England, the reciprocal guarantees declared in the said article shall have full force and effect the moment such war shall break out."

Here we have our guarantee to France to protect her territory in America in case of war between her and England; and the possessions thus guaranteed comprise the islands in the West Indies, &c. (San Domingo, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Tobago, Desada, St. Pierre, Marie, Galante, Miquelon, and Grenada,) and Cayenne and the territory of Orleans on the main land. Owing to the subsequent participation of England in the great struggle to reduce France and the naval war which followed, many of these valuable possessions were torn from France, while every condition which bound us to defend them was in full force. The weakness of our nation then may furnish a good excuse for supinely permitting many of these fine islands to be wrested from our faithful ally; but, if that be a sufficient excuse, the case is one which would justify a nation much weaker than ours then was in wishing for power to tear the plunderers of a brave nation from their prey, and to enable us to fulfill the reciprocal duties which honor, public faith, and gratitude alike demanded, and every feeling of generosity urged us to perform. If weakness alone was the cause of our neglect of duty, I submit that the fact bears peculiar weight on our obligation, now that we are strong, to come to the aid of those who suffered from our inability then to fulfill our part in the great bargain, and have for three quarters of a century suffered the consequences of that weakness from generation to generation.

But a candid examination of this matter will show what I wish it did not show, that our dereliction did not proceed entirely from inability to perform our duty. A change had come over our policy. The Federal party, governed by their sympathy for England, were intent on rebuking the heroes of the French revolutionary war. The engagements of European alliance alarmed many wise men of that day; and while public sentiment was drifting away from our ally the French did much to accelerate the change in American sentiment. Unwise diplomatic agents of the Republic urged us to the performance of our treaty obligations with more zeal than judgment—always had policy. The language held by these representatives was more that of a master than a friend; and at last their pertinacity and insolence weakened the ties which bound the two nations together, for the load of obligation we owed to France was lightened by the too frequent reminders we received that it was inexorable. This state of feeling and the constant irritation of the public mind of our people caused the authorities to cast about for relief from a friendship the continuance of which was more intolerable than open enmity. Our minister at London began negotiations for a treaty of neutrality between the United States and Great Britain, and in time a treaty was signed and ratified between the two nations.

This treaty, known as the Jay treaty, annulled the exclusive rights of France in our ports (so far as one party to a contract can annul it) secured to her by the treaty of amity and commerce signed on the same day as the treaty of alliance, by giving the British equal privileges of shelter, equal rights for bringing into our ports and selling her prizes, and indeed in everything which had heretofore been enjoyed by France exclusively. I do not trust myself to criticize the justice of our policy in this affair. But passing it by as a chapter in our history best studied in silence, I merely remark that the Jay treaty caused an outburst of anger in France which came very near involving us in war with the nation to which we owe in an eminent degree our national existence.

Retaliation was at once declared. Smarting under a sense of wrong, and goaded to desperation by our bad faith and the atrocious attempt to starve her whole people, orders were issued by the French government to seize our merchant vessels and carry them and their food into French ports, and these spoiliations began.

When we submitted claims for these spoiliations France set up an offset, and I think a just one, against our claims. For seven years or more neither would agree to the only settlement then possible in the impoverished condition of the two nations. But at last, in 1800, both France and the United States agreed to set off their claims against each other; and in consideration of our abandonment of our claims against her we were released from all responsibility for past due obligations

and from all future guarantees of French territory on this hemisphere. All alliance, the end of which none could see, and a responsibility which none could estimate, was ended. For the first time in our national existence we were relieved from that "entangling alliance" which would have inevitably drawn us into the tempestuous dangers and endless troubles of European complications and wars, in which we had all to lose and nothing to gain. And now the time had come when the whole force of the mind of our people could be directed to home developments; and the mighty progress which has since blessed us is but one of the many benefits we have enjoyed by the emancipation from these guarantees, which emancipation was secured through the confiscation of the property of those whose heirs now ask us to pay them a tithe of what their ancestors lost.

This very imperfect outline of the case before us shows, I think, that to secure national release from an immense claim, and national exemption from perpetual onerous duties, from complications and dangers reaching into futurity, from international obligations which must have brought on us the danger and the curse of European politics, the Government of the United States bartered claims of its citizens placed in its possession for collection, at the invitation of Thomas Jefferson, by direction of George Washington. These claims were for losses incurred in the pursuit of legitimate trade; they were caused by a condition of affairs at once novel to the sufferers and disgraceful to us; they were suffered because no adequate protection was afforded by the Government to its citizens in the pursuit of their lawful calling; they were increased on the plain promise of the authorities to assist the plundered merchants and ship-owners in obtaining redress and indemnity; they were confiscated for a lasting public benefit, and these benefits have been constantly enriching our people, while those whose property was bartered have died in poverty and disappointment.

How much longer can we bear the disaster which our neglect in this matter brings on our good name, our honesty, our generosity? How long shall the heirs of the sufferers come, cap in hand, to the descendants of the beneficiaries and piteously beg us to give a part of what our fathers took from theirs? How long shall our criminal neglect of these poor people fill the land with stalking shadows who witness against us so eloquently? And for how many more weary years shall they furnish living witnesses of that most shocking thing, that all property is in perpetual peril in a nation which, in violation of its fundamental law, takes private property for the public use without just compensation?

I hope the end of these things has come. I cannot believe that a Congress now called on to appoint commissioners to distribute indemnity for losses so like the French spoliation claims will busy themselves with the Alabama award, and neglect to order that our own Treasury shall now disgorge the money so long and so unwisely withheld from the poor people for whom I plead. What conjunction could be more felicitous? What occasion so singularly just? I sincerely trust that the Senate will promptly pass this bill, and so earn the plaudits of all just and merciful men.

I have only to say in conclusion that I am surprised to find that nearly all these claims are in the hands of the descendants of the first owners. Such confidence had the first owners of these claims upon the Government that almost every one of them gave a dying injunction to his children never to barter them away, because they felt that the Government, when it became able to pay, would pay so just a debt.

The Pittsburgh Mail says: The Florida United States Senatorship is exciting as much interest as the late election for Senator in South Carolina did. The election takes place on the 15th of January, and the candidates are the present Senator, Mr. Osborn, Governor Reed and John Tyler, Jr., with the chances evenly divided between the two first named. The fact that the Democrats in the Legislature have no hope of electing the Senator, has induced those gentlemen to tender their votes to any Republican who will undertake to defeat Osborn.

During the recess a special House committee, consisting of Messrs. Merriman, of New York; Colton, of Iowa; and Cox, of Alabama; will visit New York to take evidence as to the cause of the loss of \$185,000 of Government stamps by Johnson's well-remembered defalcation in the Assistant Treasurer's office. The object is to provide remedial legislation for defects in existing rules and law.

PROCEEDINGS OF BEAVER COUNTY TEACHERS' INSTITUTE.

FIRST DAY.
The thirteenth annual session of the Beaver County Teachers' Institute was held in the Court House of Beaver, commencing Monday, the 16th of December, and closing on Friday noon of same week. The attendance of teachers was large. Directors and friends of education generally were present, and manifested great interest in the proceedings.

The Institute was called to order by Prof. M. L. Knight, County Superintendent, and the opening prayer was made by Rev. D. P. Lowary. Mr. Knight made some remarks, addressed to the teachers present, stating that the Institute for the time being would be conducted as a Normal school, and insisted on each teacher being punctual and regular in attendance during the session. The Institute was organized by electing J. P. Todd, of Bridgewater, Recording Secretary, and L. Wise, of Industry, and Mrs. S. D. Marquis, of Beaver, Enrolling Secretaries.

Prof. F. A. Allen, of Tioga county, was introduced as instructor for the week. He made some very well timed remarks on the great importance of teaching; the power that the teacher can exert over the children, owing to the relation sustained to them; knowledge and training were necessary. He alluded to his own experience, having entered upon it without any correct conception of its responsibilities; referred to the fact that so many teachers are experimenting—forty per cent teach only one year; urged the necessity of professional teachers; alluded to the Teachers' Institute, so necessary for the teacher; gave some practical suggestions with reference to the plan of managing the Institute. Prof. Allen took up the subject of School Economy; referred to the bargain made between directors and teachers, usually one sided on the part of the former. In order that the teacher be successful he must have a plan, and should know what each pupil ought to study. He referred to the architect, his plans in rearing a building; compared the teacher as a builder, working upon a plan, building a structure which, as teachers we should have just as clear an idea of what we are building, as definite a plan, as the architect. In speaking of school organization he stated that all school life divided itself into two periods: 1st. How or fact period; in other words we want only to know facts, or how things are; in the other we seek for reasons, which may be termed the Philosophical period. When the child enters school he should have but three lessons, namely: language, mathematics and science, and should continue with but three, no more no less, until he graduates. The lecturer spoke of the multiplicity of classes and studies in our schools. In one instance, when he had gone into an Academy of forty-five pupils, there were forty-four classes. In teaching Languages, teach the pupil how to talk, embracing everything relating to the subject. In teaching Mathematics, make the instruction practical, using mathematical forms and solids, objects that will give the pupil clear illustrations of the subject. In teaching the Sciences, first a little Geography, then Physiology, and at a proper time of the year, when flowers are blooming, Botany.

Prof. Allen then entered upon the subject of Geography. He stated that teachers know too little about the subject, and make the mistake by studying the book and not the subject; pointed out prevalent errors in commencing the study; we should proceed from the things we know to things we do not know, from the known to the unknown. First teach the child to understand the points of the compass. At this point the Prof. requested the teachers to rise, gave the command to face the South. The result was that many of the class were facing all the cardinal points of the compass. This circumstance caused much merriment. He would teach distance by actual measurement; children should be taught this in such a manner that they may be able to estimate distance accurately in after life; gave some very good illustrations of how to teach distance practically.

The subject of Spelling was next considered, and teachers were called upon to give their methods of teaching the branch. Mrs. Marquis, of the Beaver public schools, taught by using both the oral and written methods, combining the two. Miss Bunn, Principal of the above schools, taught it by dictation exercises, having the pupils write sentences upon the board. For the time being Professor Allen sustained the relation of pupil, Miss Bunn as teacher, and an exercise

CONTINUED ON EIGHTH PAGE.