

SPEECH OF MR. VAN WYCK

Mr. VAN WYCK (N. Y.) after a general allusion to the frauds which had been perpetrated on the Treasury, spoke as follows:

About the time the New York Seventh, the pride of the Empire state, composed of the best of her citizens; of men of wealth, high family position, education, enjoying the confidence of the community in all the relations of life—with the Massachusetts Sixth—a regiment representing the intelligence and business occupations of that wonderful state—side by side were fording streams, building bridges, laying railroad tracks, sleeping on the untested field, and, when hunger was pressing upon them, the Seventh dividing their last store of bacon and hard biscuit with the gallant men of the Sixth, a contract was made in this city by the department with Dwyer, Laughman, Sibley & Tyler, for cattle, from two to ten thousand, at eight dollars per hundred, live weight, delivered here, and five and three-quarters in Pennsylvania. What facilities had Dwyer & Co. for transportation which the government did not possess? Government could lap its strong arms upon railroads and use them; could plant its gathering armies to guard the bridge and track.—At that very time an agent was sent by the department into Maryland, who, without difficulty, purchased cattle to be delivered in Washington at six and a half per hundred, live weight. Besides, direct navigation with New York was not obstructed by the Potomac. Still more, if the danger of transportation through Maryland was an excuse for this contract big with profits, why a provision that a portion should be delivered in Pennsylvania if the Department desired, and why were nearly 1,500 received in Harrisburg, while scarcely 800 were delivered in Washington? Notwithstanding the lions in the way Dwyer & Co. immediately sub-let the contract to New York men, so that without any hazard or peril they realized over \$32,000 on about 2,000 head. They had no difficulty during the panic of those times in making this contract. Why should the government have found any? There is no pretense that either of these men had any special occasion in overcoming danger or remarkable skill in purchasing cattle.—Two were railroad contractors, one particularly near to the Secretary, one a lawyer, and one the winter before had been in consultation and negotiation with rebels for the sale of arms. Thus treason and corruption were continued at the capital.

AGENCY OF ALEXANDER CUMMINGS, ESQ.—PURCHASE OF ARMY SUPPLIES.

Nearly simultaneous with this occurred another transaction. On the 21st day of April, the Secretary of War, although he well knew the great ability and experience of Colonel Tompkins, quartermaster, and Major Eaton, commissary in New York city, wrote two letters to Alexander Cummings, Esq. In one he "wants him to aid the commissary in pushing them forward." The other letter states that:

"The department needs at this moment an intelligent, experienced and energetic man, in whom it can rely, to assist in pushing forward troops, munitions and supplies."

No man knew better than the secretary that these qualifications were already possessed by the army officers in New York on whom it was safe to rely. The secretary thus gracefully compliments Mr. Cummings:

"You are acquainted with the internal arrangements and connections of the railroads in Pennsylvania, over which for the present, they will have to pass."

Can there be so much intimacy about the railroad connections in Pennsylvania that the United States Quartermaster in New York or Philadelphia was not conversant with them? The secretary then adds the touching appeal to his patriotism:

"I am aware that your private affairs may demand your time. I am sure your patriotism will induce you to aid me, even at some loss to yourself."

On the 23d of April the secretary again writes:

"In consideration of the extraordinary emergencies which demand immediate and decisive measures, I hereby authorize Edwin D. Morgan and Alexander Cummings to make all necessary arrangements for the transportation of troops, in aid and assistance of the officers of the army of the United States."

Either was authorized to act in the absence of the other. On the fourth day of May Governor Morgan delegated his portion of the power to George D. Morgan.—On the 24th the secretary wrote:

"I sent you yesterday an official paper to act in connection with Governor Morgan by land through Maryland and Pennsylvania; it is important you should act promptly in sending supplies."

"Mr. Cummings,"

Mr. Cummings thus armed, seemed supreme in his orbit; instead of rendering aid and assistance, he effectually superseded the army officers. Major Eaton distinctly informed him that his services were not needed in the purchase of supplies. Still, Mr. C. commenced buying over \$21,000 worth of straw hats and linen pantaloons, which were worthless to the army, and not required by the regulations. He employed a clerk of whom he knew nothing—had never seen before.—In his evidence at first he did not know who recommended him; then he thought who was recommended by Mr. Thurlow Weed—finally said: "I remember now that Mr. Weed told me he knew all about him, and upon his recommendation I took him." This clerk Mr. C. suffered to do all the business and make all the purchases except what were made by George D. Morgan. It is but justice to an influential and widely circulated paper in the city of New York to say that since the World was united with the Courier and Enquirer Mr. Cummings has had no connection with it as editor or publisher.

CHARTER OF THE CATALINE.

The doctor next appoints Captain Comstock to charter or purchase vessels. The captain, with a friend, goes to Brooklyn, inspects the Cataline, and learns that her price is from \$18,000 to \$20,000. Instead of purchasing or chartering, or recommending the doctor to do so, from the

owner, his friend suggests to Mr. Develin that there "is a nice opportunity to make something by good management." This was the 23d day of April, the very day the propeller Daylight left New York with supplies for the Seventh Regiment and two hundred recruits of the brave and generous young men of that city. The Daylight left without convoy, passed up the Potomac without convoy, and reached Washington safely. I never can forget that 23d day of April and the trip of the Daylight, or of that gallant band who were leaving all the endearments of home and associations of friends to encounter the perils of disease and battle. I never can forget the universal quietude in the great city of the continent. No mails, no telegraph, a dreadful, solemn suspense—brave men good men, fearing, doubting, yet hoping—actuated by one impulse, ready to give all, to even life, for the defense of the capital Washington founded, and the flag the patriots of the revolution baptized in blood. No one could have believed that at such a moment men could find leisure or inclination to ascertain how something could be made out of the griefs of the people by good management. Yet that very day, when sympathy for a bleeding country and the obligations of duty to his employers should have received from Capt. Comstock all his skill and energy, his mission was used to benefit friends.—He knew Dr. Cummings was agent for the War Department; still he counsels freely with Mr. Develin about the value of the Cataline, and gives an opinion what will be paid for her charter. Had she been cheap at \$15,000 his government was entitled to the purchase. After yielding to Mr. Develin all the time he required for the negotiation, on the 25th the boat was chartered by Col. Tompkins, he relying upon Capt. Comstock, the authorized agent of Mr. Cummings, the agent of the War Department, paying for her use \$10,000 per month for three months, and if lost by war risks the government to pay \$50,000. Col. Tompkins would not sign until Capt. Comstock assured him that she was worth \$50,000, and that it was all right. The captain knew the value of the boat and what she cost. Mr. Freeman having an interest in her profits, swore they did not pretend she was worth \$50,000. Captain Comstock, however, dies that he alleged she was worth that amount. The testimony of Captain Comstock shows the vast number and almost unlimited power of persons at that time assuming to act as agents for the government. He says:

"I was sent for by Mr. Weed to come to the Astor House about the time of the commencement of these troubles. He stated that he was an agent of the government, and had troops and munitions of war to send to Washington by way of the Chesapeake, and that he wished to charter vessels for that purpose."

Afterwards Cummings called on me and showed me the same authority that Weed had shown. It had been transferred to him to perform the same service. I should think that Weed chartered from six to ten vessels."

The testimony was given on the 25th day of December, and up to that time the committee had no evidence or intimation that Mr. Weed had been an agent for the government or acting as such. The department was liberal in bestowing confidence and grants of power; but that confidence seems to have been abused by the transfer of authority one to the other.—Mr. Weed's absence from home prevents an examination at present into the nature and extent of his agency. The committee have not been able to show for whom the steamer was loaded. It has been intimated she was loaded by private parties, to be run, however, at the risk and expense of the government. And when she could not obtain a clearance her cargo was in whole or part sold to the government. If this be so, it will account for Mr. Cummings purchase of straw hats, linen pantaloons, London porter, Scotch ale, Dutch herring, "butter cheese and all." Collector Barney swears that on the 27th of April Mr. Stetson, in whose name the title had been taken, called on him, demanding a clearance to Annapolis. When asked how she was loaded, and to whom the cargo belonged, he replied she was loaded with flour and provisions, and was bound to several of his friends. Mr. Barney refused to clear her. Stetson then said the provisions were for the army.—Barney replied that as the property was not government property, but property of individuals, he could not clear her except by a request from some government officer. It is but just to say here that Mr. Develin was evidently induced to purchase the vessels at the suggestion of those who were acting for government, and that Mr. Stetson in everything he did, was frank, candid, and made no concealment. When Mr. Stetson again called on the Collector "he brought a note from Mr. Weed, stating that the cargo consisted of supplies for troops, and requesting a clearance."—Mr. Barney declined, but saw Mr. Weed and explained why a clearance could not be granted. Mr. Weed said "it was all right, and would be arranged in some other way." He concluded not to give a clearance unless requested to do so by General Wool. He saw the general and requested him to be careful before he gave orders for a clearance. A pass, however, was obtained from the general, which he regretted; for on Monday morning he sent an order to the collector revoking it; but the fugitive had escaped, with the condemnation of the collector and General Wool upon her. Her voyage was an unfortunate one; after two months' service she was destroyed by fire. The question recurs, who were the friends referred to by Mr. Stetson as the owners of the cargo? It is necessary to go back and see who had any interest or connection with the transaction. Mr. Freeman, who had a one-tenth interest in the profits, swears after first declining to do so, that he received, as part security for the purchase money of the Cataline, four notes, of \$4,500 each as follows:—One note by John E. Develin, endorsed G. C. Davidson; one note by Thurlow Weed, endorsed John F. Develin; one note by C. O. Davidson, endorsed by O. B. Matteson; one note by O. B. Matteson, endorsed by Thurlow Weed. These parties must have all been in New York city at this time. The only other person besides the captain and crew was James Larkin, who went on the boat, he says, as purser although he finally concluded his duty was to act as check upon the captain. This man was appointed by

Mr. Develin upon the recommendation of Mr. Davidson. No one seemed to take any interest in loading the vessel except Mr. Develin. Col. Tompkins knew nothing of her cargo. The Union Defense Committee knew nothing of her cargo; and when Dr. Cummings was asked if he knew anything of her cargo, he said, "Not a particle." He relied entirely upon and trusted to the clerk, Mr. Humphreys, appointed upon the recommendation of Mr. Weed.—It must be left to surrounding facts to show who were referred to by Mr. Stetson and whether the boat was first loaded for private speculation; and when no clearance could be obtained, Mr. Cummings, through his clerk, purchased the cargo for government, so that a pass could be procured. General Wool's hesitancy in giving a pass to the Cataline probably induced a representation to General Scott that the condition of his (Wool's) health required repose from arduous duties. Mr. Cummings was certainly a remarkable agent. The Secretary wants an energetic, intelligent, and experienced man, of course—more so than the Union Defense Committee, or the army officers in New York; one on whom he can rely; yet the agent apparently takes no interest but to draw and pay the money. When he was called on especially to aid in purchases, he trusts it all to Mr. Humphreys his clerk. When vessels are to be chartered, he doesn't deem it worth while to examine them. He good naturedly says he took it for granted that what the owners said was true. He was certainly a confidence man. The Secretary says notwithstanding the pressure on his private business he is sure he will aid him. Yet Mr. C. repays this generous and unbounded confidence by knowing nothing, absolutely nothing of the purchasing of articles or loading of vessels. Two million dollars, by the Secretary of the Treasury, were placed in the hands of a committee of high toned, honorable men, to be paid out on the order or requisition of Mr. Cummings, without his producing to them any vouchers. Strange as it may appear, while this money was there to respond to his requisition, he draws \$160,000, and deposits it in his name, with his private account, in one of the city banks. Stranger still, four months after his agency had ceased, he leaves no vouchers with the War Department. The War Department, in its generous confidence, had no means of knowing the whereabouts of the money. Such were the prominent transactions occurring at the time of the war, and the Secretary has endeavored everything to his country. This was the case, no larger than a man's hand, which increased the amount of money which they were required to draw, and money which the streets wandering where this thing will end. 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