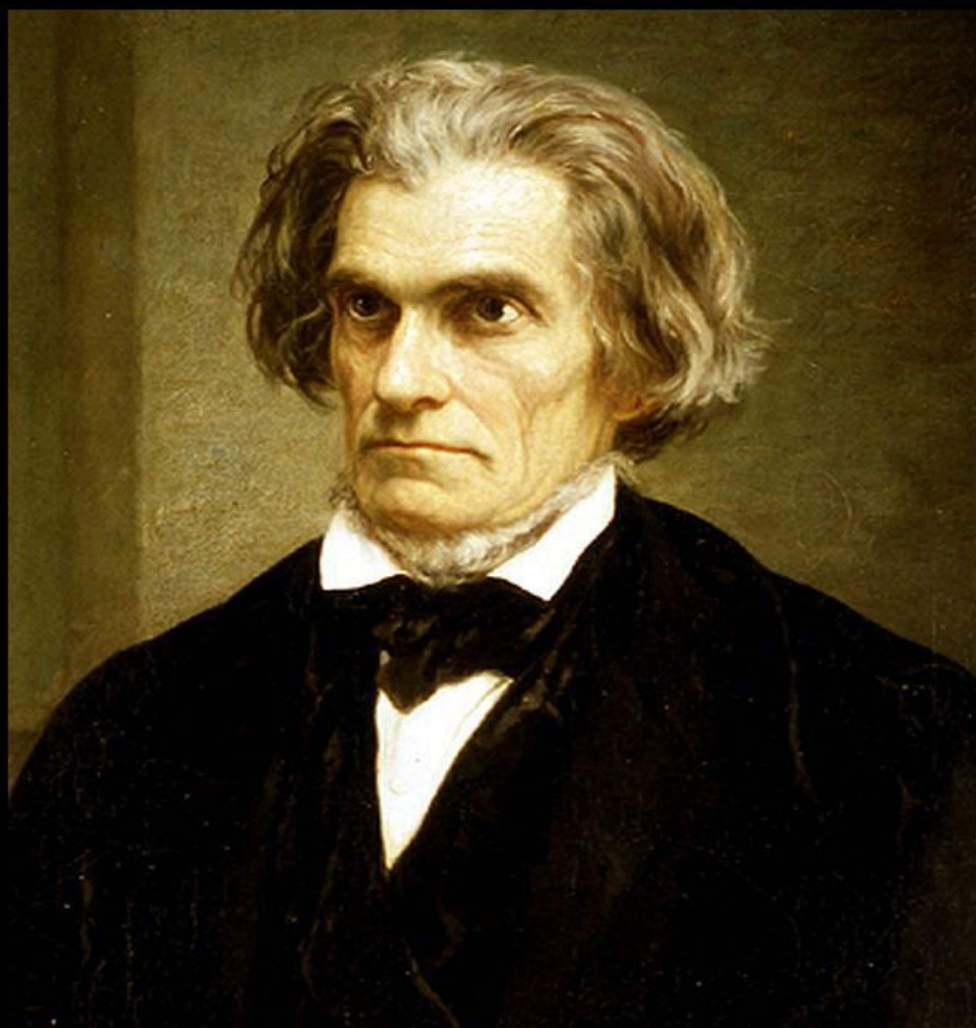




THE WORKS OF
JOHN C.
CALHOUN
VOLUME 2

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Volume 2

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE collection of the Speeches of Mr. Calhoun, here offered to the public, includes, it is believed, all delivered by him in Congress of any general interest—or rather, all, of which any reliable reports have been preserved. Many, no doubt, especially during the war of 1812, through carelessness and the want of competent reporters in the House of Representatives, have been lost—a fact the more to be regretted, as the period was marked by events of much moment to the country. For the comparatively few which have been preserved, the public is chiefly indebted to the Hon. Mr. Simkins, at that time a member of the House from South Carolina, who, for his own gratification, took notes and drew out the sketches (for they are by no means full reports) which appear in this collection. For the use of these, the Editor is indebted to the kindness of the Hon. Francis W. Pickens—to whom he takes this occasion to return his acknowledgments. Others, belonging to the same period, have been copied from manuscripts found among the papers of Mr. Calhoun, though not in his handwriting.

Of the Speeches delivered in the Senate, between the years 1833 and 1850, a much larger number has been preserved. They are, for the most part, better reported; and not a few were published in pamphlet form at the time, under his own inspection. Still, so constant and pressing were his engagements—so incessant the demands on his time, that it is impossible he could have bestowed much attention, except on those connected with the more important subjects of discussion. Many were left to be drawn out by the reporters; and his peculiar position, in regard to the two great contending parties of the country, was anything but favorable to fulness and fidelity. Not a few (and among them some on questions of much interest) were never reported at all, or otherwise so mangled and garbled,— to serve a temporary purpose,— as to render them

unworthy of this collection. A sufficient number, however, it is hoped, has been preserved from the ravages of time, and the still more ruthless spirit of party, to insure, as a tribute to his virtues, the love of the Patriot, the admiration of the Statesman, and the gratitude of the Historian and the Philosopher.

As many of the questions discussed during the war of 1812, both of a foreign and domestic character, have probably, to some extent, faded from the public memory, the Editor has prepared a brief introductory note to the Speeches delivered in the House of Representatives, which he hopes will be acceptable to the general reader. It was deemed unnecessary to adopt the same course in regard to Speeches of a more recent date.

April 8, 1853.

SPEECHES.

SPEECH On the second Resolution reported by the Committee on Foreign Relations, delivered in the House of Representatives, Dec. 12, 1811.

[Note—The Committee on Foreign Relations, on the 29th of November, 1811, submitted a report, which, after an able examination of the causes of war with Great Britain, concluded by recommending to the House the adoption of a series of resolutions, among which was the following: “2. Resolved, That an additional force of ten thousand regular troops ought to be immediately raised to serve for three years; and that a bounty in lands ought to be given to encourage enlistments.” This resolution having been amended in committee of the Whole, by striking out the word “ten,” was reported to the House, where an animated debate ensued. A majority of the committee avowed their object to be a preparation for war; and the discussion took the widest range, embracing almost every topic of foreign and domestic policy. The principal speaker, on the part of the opposition, was Mr. Randolph of Virginia, to whose remarks Mr. Calhoun seems to have confined his reply. The resolution was finally adopted—Yeas, 109; Nays, 22.]

MR. SPEAKER:—I understood the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Relations, differently from what the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) has stated to be his impression. I certainly understood that the committee recommended the measures now before the House, as a

preparation for war; and such, in fact, was its express resolve, agreed to, I believe, by every member, except that gentleman.

I do not attribute any willful misstatement to him, but consider it the effect of inadvertency or mistake. Indeed, the Report could mean nothing but war or empty menace.

I hope no member of this House is in favor of the latter. A bullying, menacing system, has everything to condemn and nothing to recommend it. In expense, it almost rivals war.

It excites contempt abroad, and destroys confidence at home.

Menaces are serious things; and ought to be resorted to with as much caution and seriousness, as war itself; and should, if not successful, be invariably followed by it. It was not the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) who made this a war question. The resolve contemplates an additional regular force; a measure confessedly improper but as a preparation for war, but undoubtedly necessary in that event.

Sir, I am not insensible to the weighty importance of the proposition, for the first time submitted to this House, to compel a redress of our long list of complaints against one of the belligerents. According to my mode of thinking, the more serious the question, the stronger and more unalterable ought to be our convictions before we give it our support.

War, in our country, ought never to be resorted to but when it is clearly justifiable and necessary; so much so, as not to require the aid of logic to convince our understandings, nor the ardor of eloquence to inflame our passions.

There are many reasons why this country should never resort to war but for causes the most urgent and necessary. It is sufficient that, under a government like ours, none but such will justify it in the eyes of the people; and were I not satisfied that such is the present case, I certainly would be no advocate of the proposition now before the House.

Sir, I might prove the war, should it ensue, justifiable, by the express admission of the gentleman from Virginia; and necessary, by facts undoubted, and universally admitted; such as he did not pretend to controvert. The extent, duration, and character of the injuries received; the failure of those peaceful means heretofore resorted to for the redress of our wrongs, are my proofs that it is necessary. Why should I mention the impressment of our seamen; depredations on every branch of our commerce, including the direct export trade, continued for years, and made under laws which professedly undertake to regulate our trade with other nations; negotiation resorted to, again and again, till it is become hopeless; the restrictive system persisted in to avoid war, and in the vain expectation of returning justice? The evil still grows, and, in each succeeding year, swells in extent and pretension beyond the preceding. The question, even in the opinion and by the admission of our opponents is reduced to this single point—Which shall we do, abandon or defend our own commercial and maritime rights, and the personal liberties of our citizens employed in exercising them? These rights are vitally attacked, and war is the only means of redress.

The gentleman from Virginia has suggested none, unless we consider the whole of his speech as recommending patient and resigned submission as the best remedy. Sir, which alternative this House will embrace, it is not for me to say.

I hope the decision is made already, by a higher authority than the voice of any man. It is not for the human tongue to instill the sense of independence and honor. This is the work of nature; a generous nature that disdains tame submission to wrongs.

This part of the subject is so imposing as to enforce silence even on the gentleman from Virginia. He dared not deny his country's wrongs, or vindicate the conduct of her enemy. Only one part of his argument had any, the most remote relation to this point. He would not say, we had not

a good cause for war; but insisted, that it was our duty to define that cause. If he means that this House ought, at this stage of its proceedings, or any other, to specify any particular violation of our rights to the exclusion of all others, he prescribes a course, which neither good sense nor the usage of nations warrants. When we contend, let us contend for all our rights; the doubtful and the certain; the unimportant and essential. It is as easy to struggle, or even more so, for the whole as for a part. At the termination of the contest, secure all that our wisdom and valor and the fortune of the war will permit. This is the dictate of common sense; such also is the usage of nations. The single instance alluded to, the endeavor of Mr. Fox to compel Mr. Pitt to define the object of the war against France, will not support the gentleman from Virginia in his position. That was an extraordinary war for an extraordinary purpose, and was not governed by the usual rules. It was not for conquest, or for redress of injury, but to impose a government on France, which she refused to receive; an object so detestable that an avowal dared not be made.

Sir, I might here rest the question. The affirmative of the proposition is established. I cannot but advert, however, to the complaint of the gentleman from Virginia when he was first up on this question. He said he found himself reduced to the necessity of supporting the negative side of the question, before the affirmative was established. Let me tell the gentleman, that there is no hardship in his case. It is not every affirmative that ought to be proved. Were I to affirm, that the House is now in session, would it be reasonable to ask for proof? He who would deny its truth, on him would be the proof of so extraordinary a negative. How then could the gentleman, after his admissions, with the facts before him and the country, complain? The causes are such as to warrant, or rather make it indispensable, in any nation not absolutely dependent, to defend its rights by force. Let him, then, show the reasons why we ought not so to defend ourselves. On him lies the burden of proof. This

he has attempted; he has endeavored to support his negative. Before I proceed to answer him particularly, let me call the attention of the House to one circumstance; that is,— that almost the whole of his arguments consisted of an enumeration of evils always incident to war, however just and necessary; and which, if they have any force, are calculated to produce unqualified submission to every species of insult and injury. I do not feel myself bound to answer arguments of this description; and if I should touch on them, it will be only incidentally, and not for the purpose of serious refutation.

The first argument of the gentleman which I shall notice, is the unprepared state of the country. Whatever weight this argument might have in a question of immediate war, it surely has little in that of preparation for it. If our country is unprepared, let us remedy the evil as soon as possible.

Let the gentleman submit his plan; and if a reasonable one, I doubt not it will be supported by the House. But, Sir, let us admit the fact and the whole force of the argument. I ask whose is the fault? Who has been a member, for many years past, and seen the defenceless state of his country even near home, under his own eyes, without a single endeavor to remedy so serious an evil? Let him not say, "I have acted in a minority." It is no less the duty of the minority than a majority to endeavor to defend the country. For that purpose we are sent here, and not for that of opposition.

We are next told of the expenses of the war; and that the people will not pay taxes. Why not? Is it from want of means? What, with 1,000,000, tons of shipping; a commerce of \$100,000,000 annually; manufactures yielding a yearly product of \$150,000,000; and agriculture of thrice that amount, shall we be told the country wants capacity to raise and support ten thousand or fifteen thousand additional regulars? No; it has the ability; that is admitted; and will it not have the disposition? Is not the cause a just and necessary one? Shall we then utter this libel on the

people? Where will proof be found of a fact so disgraceful? It is answered;—in the history of the country twelve or fifteen years ago. The case is not parallel. The ability of the country is greatly increased since. The whiskey-tax was unpopular. But on this, as well as my memory serves me,—the objection was not to the tax or its amount, but the mode of collection. The people were startled by the number of officers; their love of liberty shocked with the multiplicity of regulations. We, in the spirit of imitation, copied from the most oppressive part of European laws on the subject of taxes, and imposed on a young and virtuous people all the severe provisions made necessary by corruption and long-practiced evasions. If taxes should become necessary, I do not hesitate to say the people will pay cheerfully. It is for their government and their cause, and it would be their interest and their duty to pay. But it may be, and I believe was said, that the people will not pay taxes, because the rights violated are not worth defending; or that the defense will cost more than the gain. Sir, I here enter my solemn protest against this low and “calculating avarice.” entering this hall of legislation. It is only fit for shops and counting-houses; and ought not to disgrace the seat of power by its squalid aspect. Whenever it touches sovereign power, the nation is ruined. It is too short-sighted to defend itself. It is a compromising spirit, always ready to yield a part to save the residue. It is too timid to have in itself the laws of self-preservation. It is never safe but under the shield of honor. There is, Sir, one principle necessary to make us a great people, -to produce not the form, but real spirit of union;—and that is, to protect every citizen in the lawful pursuit of his business. He will then feel that he is backed by the government;—that its arm is his arm; and will rejoice in its increased strength and prosperity. Protection and patriotism are reciprocal. This is the way which has led nations to greatness. Sir, I am not versed in this calculating policy; and will not, therefore, pretend to estimate in dollars and cents the value of national independence. I

cannot measure in shillings and pence the misery, the stripes, and the slavery of our impressed seamen; nor even the value of our shipping, commercial and agricultural losses, under the orders in council, and the British system of blockade. In thus expressing myself, I do not intend to condemn any prudent estimate of the means of a country, before it enters on a war. This is wisdom,— the other folly. The gentleman from Virginia has not failed to touch on the calamity of war, that fruitful source of declamation by which humanity is made the advocate of submission. If he desires to repress the gallant ardor of our countrymen by such topics, let me inform him, that true courage regards only the cause, that it is just and necessary; and that it contemns the sufferings and dangers of war. If he really wishes to promote the cause of humanity, let his eloquence be addressed to Lord Wellesley or Mr. Percival, and not the American Congress. Tell them if they persist in such daring insult and injury to a neutral nation, that, however inclined to peace, it will be bound in honor and safety to resist; that their patience and endurance, however great, will be exhausted; that the calamity of war will ensue, and that they, in the opinion of the world, will be answerable for all its devastation and misery. Let a regard to the interests of humanity stay the hand of injustice, and my life on it, the gentleman will not find it difficult to dissuade his country from rushing into the bloody scenes of war.

We are next told of the dangers of war. I believe we are all ready to acknowledge its hazards and misfortunes; but I cannot think we have any extraordinary danger to apprehend, at least none to warrant an acquiescence in the injuries we have received. On the contrary, I believe, no war can be less dangerous to the internal peace, or safety of the country. But we are told of the black population of the Southern States. As far as the gentleman from Virginia speaks of his own personal knowledge, I shall not question the correctness of his statement. I only regret that such is

the state of apprehension in his particular part of the country.

Of the Southern section, I, too, have some personal knowledge; and can say, that in South Carolina no such fears in any part are felt. But, Sir, admit the gentleman's statement; will a war with Great Britain increase the danger?

Will the country be less able to suppress insurrection? Had we anything to fear from that quarter (which I do not believe), in my opinion, the period of the greatest safety is during a war; unless, indeed, the enemy should make a lodgment in the country. Then the country is most on its guard; our militia the best prepared; and our standing army the greatest. Even in our revolution no attempts at insurrection were made by that portion of our population; and however, the gentleman may alarm himself with the disorganizing effects of French principles, I cannot think our ignorant blacks have felt much of their baneful influence. I dare say more than one half of them never heard of the French revolution.

But as great as he regards the danger from our slaves, the gentleman's fears end not there—the standing army is not less terrible to him. Sir, I think a regular force raised for a period of actual hostilities cannot properly be called a standing army.

There is a just distinction between such a force, and one raised as a permanent peace establishment. Whatever would be the composition of the latter, I hope the former will consist of some of the best materials of the country. The ardent patriotism of our young men, and the reasonable bounty in land which is proposed to be given, will impel them to join their country's standard and to fight her battles; they will not forget the citizen in the soldier, and in obeying their officers, learn to condemn their government and constitution. In our officers and soldiers, we will find patriotism no less pure and ardent than in the private citizen; but if they should be depraved as

represented, what have we to fear from twenty-five thousand or thirty thousand regulars? Where will be the boasted militia of the gentleman? Can one million of militia be overpowered by thirty thousand regulars? If so, how can we rely on them against a foe invading our country? Sir, I have no such contemptuous idea of our militia—their untaught bravery is sufficient to crush all foreign and internal attempts on their country's liberties.

But we have not yet come to the end of the chapter of dangers. The gentleman's imagination, so fruitful on this subject, conceives that our constitution is not calculated for war, and that it cannot stand its rude shock. This is rather extraordinary. If true, we must then depend upon the commiseration or contempt of other nations for our existence.

The constitution, then, it seems, has failed in an essential object, "to provide for the common defense." No, says the gentleman from Virginia, it is competent for a defensive, but not for an offensive war. It is not necessary for me to expose the error of this opinion. Why make the distinction in this instance?

Will he pretend to say that this is an offensive war; a war of conquest? Yes, the gentleman has dared to make this assertion; and for reasons no less extraordinary than the assertion itself. He says our rights are violated on the ocean, and that these violations affect our shipping, and commercial rights, to which the Canadas have no relation. The doctrine of retaliation has been much abused of late by an unreasonable extension; we have now to witness a new abuse. The gentleman from Virginia has limited it down to a point. By his rule if you receive a blow on the breast, you dare not return it on the head; you are obliged to measure and return it on the precise point on which it was received. If you do not proceed with this mathematical accuracy, it ceases to be just self-defense; it becomes an unprovoked attack.

In speaking of Canada the gentleman from Virginia introduced the name of Montgomery with much feeling and interest. Sir, there is danger in that name to the gentleman's argument. It is sacred to heroism. It is indignant of submission . It calls our memory back to the time of our revolution, to the Congress of '74 and '75. Suppose a member of that day had risen and urged all the arguments which we have heard on this subject; had told that Congress ,— your contest is about the right of laying a tax; and that the attempt on Canada had nothing to do with it; that the war would be expensive; that danger and devastation would overspread our country, and that the power of Great Britain was irresistible. With what sentiment, think you, would such doctrines have been then received? Happy for us, they had no force at that period of our country's glory. Had such been then acted on, this hall would never have witnessed a great people convened to deliberate for the general good; a mighty empire, with prouder prospects than any nation the sun ever shone on, would not have risen in the west. No; we would have been base subjected colonies; governed by that imperious rod which Britain holds over her distant provinces.

The gentleman from Virginia attributes the preparation for war to everything but its true cause. He endeavored to find it in the probable rise in the price of hemp. He represents the people of the Western States as willing to plunge our country into war from such interested and base motives. I will not reason on this point. I see the cause of their ardor, not in such unworthy motives, but in their known patriotism and disinterestedness.

No less mercenary is the reason which he attributes to the Southern States. He says that the Non-Importation Act has reduced cotton to nothing, which has produced a feverish impatience. Sir, I acknowledge the cotton of our plantations is worth but little; but not for the cause assigned by the gentleman from Virginia. The people of that section do not reason as he does; they do not attribute

it to the efforts of their government to maintain the peace and independence of their country. They see, in the low price of their produce, the hand of foreign injustice; they know well without the market to the continent, the deep and steady current of supply will glut that of Great Britain; they are not prepared for the colonial state to which again that power is endeavoring to reduce us, and the manly spirit of that section of our country will not submit to be regulated by any foreign power.

The love of France and the hatred of England have also been assigned as the cause of the present measures.

France has not done us justice, says the gentleman from Virginia, and how can we, without partiality, resist the aggressions of England. I know, Sir, we have still causes of complaint against France; but they are of a different character from those against England. She professes now to respect our rights, and there cannot be a reasonable doubt but that the most objectionable parts of her decrees, as far as they respect us, are repealed. We have already formally acknowledged this to be a fact. But I protest against the principle from which his conclusion is drawn. It is a novel doctrine, and nowhere avowed out of this House, that you cannot select your antagonist without being guilty of partiality.

Sir, when two invade your rights, you may resist both or either at your pleasure. It is regulated by prudence and not by right. The stale imputation of partiality for France is better calculated for the columns of a newspaper, than for the walls of this House.

The gentleman from Virginia is at a loss to account for what he calls our hatred to England. He asks how can we hate the country of Locke, of Newton, Hampden, and Chatham; a country having the same language and customs with ourselves, and descending from a common ancestry. Sir, the laws of human affections are steady and uniform. If we have so much to attach us to that country, potent indeed must be the cause which has overpowered it. Yes, there is a

cause strong enough; not in that occult courtly affection which he has supposed to be entertained for France; but it is to be found in continued and unprovoked insult and injury—a cause so manifest, that the gentleman from Virginia had to exert much ingenuity to overlook it. But, the gentleman, in his eager admiration of that country, has not been sufficiently guarded in his argument. Has he reflected on the cause of that admiration? Has he examined the reasons of our high regard for her Chatham? It is his ardent patriotism, the heroic courage of his mind, that could not brook the least insult or injury offered to his country, but thought that her interest and honor ought to be vindicated at every hazard and expense. I hope, when we are called upon to admire, we shall also be asked to imitate. I hope the gentleman does not wish a monopoly of those great virtues for England.

The balance of power has also been introduced, as an argument for submission. England is said to be a barrier against the military despotism of France. There is, Sir, one great error in our legislation. We are ready, it would seem from this argument, to watch over the interests of foreign nations, while we grossly neglect our own immediate concerns. This argument of the balance of power is well calculated for the British Parliament, but not at all suited to the American Congress. Tell the former that they have to contend with a mighty power, and that if they persist in insult and injury to the American people, they will compel them to throw their whole weight into the scale of their enemy. Paint the danger to them, and if they will desist from injuring us, we, I answer for it, will not disturb the balance of power. But it is absurd for us to talk about the balance of power, while they, by their conduct, smile with contempt at what they regard our simple, good-natured vanity. If, however, in the contest, it should be found that they underrate us—which I hope and believe—and that we can affect the balance of power, it will not be difficult for us to obtain such terms as our rights demand.

I, Sir, will now conclude by adverting to an argument of the gentleman from Virginia, used in debate on a preceding day. He asked, why not declare war immediately? The answer is obvious: because we are not yet prepared. But, says the gentleman, such language as is here held, will provoke Great Britain to commence hostilities. I have no such fears. She knows well that such a course would unite all parties here—a thing which, above all others, she most dreads. Besides, such has been our past conduct, that she will still calculate on our patience and submission, until war is actually commenced.

**On the Petition of the Citizens of Albany to repeal the
Embargo, delivered in the House of Representatives,
May 6th, 1812.**

[Note.—On the 4th of April, 1812, a bill, on the recommendation of the President, was passed by Congress, laying an embargo, for sixty days, on all vessels then in port, or thereafter arriving. Soon after its passage, petitions were presented from various parts of the Union for its repeal or modification. Among these, was one from the citizens of Albany, presented by Mr. Bleecker of New-York, praying a repeal of the act. Motions were made to postpone it indefinitely, and to refer it to the Committee on Foreign Relations. On these motions, a debate of considerable interest ensued, involving the whole course of policy recommended by the Executive, and pursued by the majority during the session. The principal speakers for the postponement were, Messrs. Calhoun, Rhea of Tennessee, Johnson of Kentucky, Grundy of Tennessee, and Wright of Maryland. In opposition, were Messrs. Randolph of Virginia, Bleecker of New-York, and Fisk of Vermont. On the motion to postpone indefinitely, Mr. Calhoun submitted the following remarks.]

MR. SPEAKER:—It is not my intention to discuss the merits of the embargo law, or to follow the gentleman from Virginia in that maze of arguments and assertions through which he has thought proper to wander. The House must be wearied, and can receive no additional light on a subject which, through the zeal of some gentlemen in opposition, has been so frequently dragged into discussion. I cannot suppose that our opponents, in their importunity, are governed by an expectation that a change will be made in the opinions of any individual of the majority. This, they

must see, is hopeless. The measure has been too recently adopted, and after too much deliberation, to leave to the most sanguine any hope of change. To reply, then, to the arguments of gentlemen on the general merits of the embargo, would be an useless consumption of time, and an unwarranted intrusion on the patience of the House. This, as I have already stated, is not my intention; but it is my object to vindicate the motion now under discussion from unmerited censure, and to prove that it cannot be justly considered as treating the petitioners with contempt. I am aware that the right to petition this body is guaranteed by the Constitution, and that it is not less our interest than our duty to receive petitions expressed in proper terms, as this is, with respect.

Two propositions have been made relative to the disposition of the petition now before us: one, to refer it to a committee; the other—that now under consideration—to postpone the further consideration to a day beyond the termination of the embargo. It is contended, not by argument, but assertion, that the former would have been more respectful to the petitioners; but the reasons have been left to conjecture. I ask, then, why would it be more respectful? Would it present stronger hopes of success, or admit as great latitude of discussion on its merits? Gentlemen know that it would not; they well know, when the House wishes to give the go-by to a petition, it has been usual to adopt the very motion which, in this instance, they advocate.

On a motion of reference, debate on the merits is precluded; and, when referred, the committee, where there are no hopes of success, usually allow it to sleep. But, Sir, I ask what is the necessity for referring this petition to a committee?

What are the objects of a reference? I conceive them to be two: one to investigate some matter of fact, and the other when a subject is much tangled with detail, to digest and arrange the parts, so the House may more easily

comprehend the whole. This body is too large for either of those operations, and therefore a reference is had to smaller ones.

In the present case, neither of these furnishes a good reason for the reference asked for. The facts are not denied, and as to detail, there is none; it ends in a point—the repeal of the embargo law—and it has been so argued in opposition.

This House is as fully competent to discuss its merits now, as it would be after the report of any committee, and the motion to postpone admits of the greatest latitude of discussion on its merits. This, the speech of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) has proved. He has argued not only on the merits of the petition, but on the embargo, and almost every subject, however remotely connected. I know that the motion is tantamount to that of rejection, in the present instance. In fact, it has been vindicated by the mover on that ground. He has justly said: as we cannot grant the relief prayed for, we ought to act with promptitude and decision, so that the petitioners may know what to expect. This motion has that character; it leaves no expectation where there can be no relief. I know, Sir, we might have acted very differently: we might have spun out the hopes of the petitioners. Some may think that it would be sound policy; but, in my opinion, it would be unworthy of this House. Candor, in our government, is one of the first of political virtues. Let us always do directly, what we intend shall finally be done.

Since there can be no objection to the motion now before the House, it remains to be considered whether the relief prayed for ought to be granted. I am sensible that the maxim is generally correct, that individual profit is national gain; and that the party interested is the best judge of the hazard and propriety of a speculation. But there are exceptions; there are cases in which the government is the best judge; and such are those where the future conduct of government is the cause of the hazard. It certainly is the

best judge of what it intends; and, in those cases, where it foresees a hazard, it ought, in humanity to the party interested, to restrain speculations. Such is the present case. Many of our merchants labor under a delusion as to the measures of government: nor can this seem strange, since some gentlemen, even in this House, have taken up such mistaken views of things. With such conceptions of the course of events, as the gentleman from New-York (Mr. Bleecker) entertains, I am not surprised that he should advocate the prayer of the petition. He believes that the embargo will be permitted to expire without any hostile measure being taken against Great Britain; and that, in the present state of our preparations, it would be madness to think of war in sixty days, or any short period. When I hear such language on this floor, I no longer wonder that merchants are petitioning you to aid them in making speculations, which in a short time must end in their ruin. I ask the gentleman from New-York, who are the true friends to the petitioners—the majority who, foreseeing the hazard to which they would be exposed, restrain them from falling into the hands of British cruisers,— or the minority, who, by suppressing the evidences of danger, induce them to enter into the most ruinous speculations? By the one, the merchants still retain their property, depreciated, it is true, in a small degree; by the other, it will be lost to themselves and their country, and will go to augment the resources of our enemy. For, Sir, let me assure the gentleman that he makes a very erroneous estimate of our preparations, and of the time at which we will act. Our army and measures are not merely on paper, as he states. And were this the proper time and subject, it could be shown that very considerable advances have been made to put the country into a posture of defense, and to prepare our forces for an attack on our enemy. We will not, I hope, wait the expiration of the embargo to take our stand against England—that stand which the best interests and honor of this country have so loudly demanded. With such a

prospect, I again ask, would it be humanity or cruelty to the petitioners to grant their prayer, and, by relaxing the embargo in their favor, to entice them to certain destruction?

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Randolph) stated,— to induce us to repeal the embargo law, and to make it odious, I suppose, with the community, -that it operated less severely on the merchant than on the farmer and miller. He did not prove very distinctly how this unequal pressure was produced. But I understood him to say, that eastern vessels could be had with so much facility to make shipments to any European port, and that flour had risen so much already in consequence of the embargo, that the rise in price nearly compensated for the additional risk and costs of exportation.

I observe the gentleman shakes his head in disapprobation of the statement. I suppose I misunderstood him. However, I could not mistake the conclusion which he drew,— that the merchants, by eluding the embargo, had prevented the depreciation of the price of wheat and flour on hand.

This, Sir, is sufficient for my purpose. The gentleman from Virginia must know that, from the character of trade, the profit of such trade, if it really exists, cannot be confined to the merchant. It would soon raise the price of breadstuffs in the hands of the other classes of the community, and would prove that his statement of the distressed condition of the millers and farmers cannot be correct.

In his zeal against the embargo, the gentleman from Virginia says, it was engendered between the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Executive. Engendered! The gentleman must be sensible of the impropriety of such language, as applied to the Executive, or a Committee of this House.

No, Sir, it was not engendered, but adopted by both the Executive and committee, from its manifest propriety as a

prelude to war. There is no man in his reason, and 'uninfluenced by party feelings, but must acknowledge that a war, in this country, ought, almost invariably, to be preceded by an embargo. The very persons most loud against that measure, would be the most clamorous had it not preceded the war. There has been, Sir, much false statement in relation to the embargo. I remember, when it was under discussion on a former occasion, that a gentleman then observed, he had certain information that the French minister had been importuning our government to stop the exportation of breadstuffs to the Peninsula. I know not whether he intended to insinuate this as one of the causes of the embargo.

Be it as it may, I assert, from the highest authority, that no such application has ever been made, directly or indirectly, on the part of the French government. The statement was of such a nature as induced me to inquire into its correctness; and the result is such as I have declared. I can scarcely suppose, that the gentleman intended to convey the idea that French influence had anything to do with the measure. He must know that the Executive, as well as a majority of this body, would resist, with the greatest indignation, any attempt to influence the measures of government. But such has been the use made of it by certain prints, either from the manner in which it was connected in debate with the embargo, or the very imperfect and unfair reports of the secret proceedings of Congress.

One would suppose, from the language of the gentleman from Virginia, that he was much in the secrets of government. He says, the plan now is, to disband the army and carry on a predatory war on the ocean. I can assure him, if such is the plan, I am wholly ignorant of it; and that, should it be proposed, it will not meet with my approbation.

I am decidedly of opinion that the best interests of the country will be consulted by calling out the whole force of the community to protect its rights. Should this course fail,

the next best would be to submit to our enemy with as good a grace as possible. Let us not provoke where we cannot resist. The mongrel state—neither war nor peace—is much the worst.

The gentleman from Virginia has told us much of the signs of the times. I had hoped, that the age of superstition was past, and that no attempt would be made to influence the measures of government,—which ought to be founded in wisdom and policy,—by the vague, I may say, superstitious feelings of any man, whatever may be the physical appearances which may have given birth to them. Are we to renounce our reason? Must we turn from the path of justice and experience, because a comet has made its appearance in our system, or the moon has passed between the sun and the earth? If so, the signs of the times are bad indeed. It would mark a fearful retrograde in civilization—it would show a dreadful declension towards barbarism. Sir, if we must examine the auspices; if we must inspect the entrails of the times, I would pronounce the omens good. It is from moral, and not from brutal or physical omens, that we ought to judge; and what more favorable could we desire than that the country is, at last, roused from its lethargy, and that it has determined to vindicate its interest and honor.

On the contrary, a nation so sunk in avarice, and so corrupted by faction, as to be insensible to the greatest injuries, and lost to all sense of its independence, would be a sight more portentous than comets, earthquakes, eclipses, or the whole catalogue of omens, which I have heard the gentleman from Virginia enumerate. I assert, and gentlemen know it, if we submit to the pretensions of England, now openly avowed, the independence of this country is lost—we will be, as to our commerce, re-colonized. This is the second struggle for our liberty; and if we but do justice to ourselves, it will be no less glorious and successful than the first. Let us but exert ourselves, and we must meet with the prospering smile of Heaven. Sir,

I assert it with confidence, a war, just and necessary in its origin, wisely and vigorously carried on, and honorably terminated, would establish the integrity and prosperity of our country for centuries.