

THE IMPARTIAL OBSERVER.

"Let it be impressed on your minds, that the liberty of the press is the palladium of all the civil, political and religious rights of Freemen."—JENKINS.

"LIBERTAS EST POTESTAS FACIENDI ID QUOD JURE LICET."—CICERO.

NO. 14.

COOPERSTOWN, SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 1809.

VOL. I.

From the Freeman's Journal, of Jan. 4.

MR. SLOAN'S SPEECH,

DECEMBER 27.

The House not inclining to resume the discussion of the new embargo bill in committee of the whole, Mr. Elliot had no opportunity to conclude his speech, commenced yesterday, (Dec 26.) A motion being made to discharge the committee of the whole, in order to refer the bill to a select committee, Mr. SLOAN proceeded to speak upon the merits of the bill, when he was called to order. Mr. Sloan said that if he was not in order he would make a motion which would supercede the one now under consideration, and entitle him to proceed. He then made a motion to postpone the subject indefinitely, which, although questioned by several members, was declared by the Speaker to be in order, and Mr. Sloan proceeded as follows:

MR. SPEAKER,

I have observed that since printers have become so numerous in these United States, they are obliged to adopt new modes of publication, in order to procure ready sale for their innumerable productions. They frequently hand out long histories in short numbers—for instance, a history that in one volume would cost five dollars, is much readier sale in twenty numbers at twenty-five cents a piece; and as appears from the progress already made, it is pretty well ascertained that the embargo will occupy the greatest part, if not the whole time of the present session; if a majority of the house is determined to keep the people in their present state of suffering and suspense until spring, the least they can do during the dreary scenes of winter, will be to continue diverting them with eloquent speeches, of all sorts and sizes, from fifteen minutes to four hours long. But knowing that mankind is fond of variety, and believing that my worthy friends in the majority will have the hardest task they ever undertook, to keep the people of these United States in a tolerable good humour, with the embargo on their backs, till next March; although I do not perfectly agree with them, I cannot give them up as lost, but like a faithful friend mean to stand by them to the last gasp, striving if possible to get them out of the horrible pit into which they have fallen, before they perish.

Under these impressions, Mr. Speaker, I shall proceed to offer my second number, which I thought of doing several days ago, but delayed it in consequence of a declaration of my worthy friend from Virginia, (Mr. Newton,) which rejoiced my heart more than all the eloquent speeches I have heard this session: It was that we (the minority) knew that the embargo was never intended as a permanent measure—and that they (the majority) did not intend to keep it on long; or words to that effect. In this declaration from so high authority, I reposed full faith and confidence, and suspended offering my second number, in hopes of seeing the wish nearest my heart of all sublunary objects, accomplished, in the removal of the greatest evil which in my opinion these United States ever experienced since the revolutionary war—I mean the Embargo. But I have hitherto waited in vain; and must now beg the favour of my worthy friend, the next time he obliges the house with hearing the sound of his pleasant voice (which I for one shall hear with great delight) to release my mind from suspense, by giving us the proper definition of the word PERMANENT, and also what he meant by the embargo not remaining long; whether he meant a few days, or a few weeks, months, or years! For, permit me to remind my friend, that if instead of being in his present honourable station, receiving six dollars per day, as he did previous to the embargo, and still does, he was placed in the situation of thousands at this time in these United States, whose sole dependence for support is their daily labour, and who by that measure having been deprived of employment twelve months, now at the commencement of winter look forward with the dreadful apprehension, that ere the return of vernal blooms, their tender children may ask bread, and they have none to give, he would consider one day longer than now he does a month.

Mr. Speaker—I have committed the purport of this second number to writing, for two reasons. First, to lessen the labour of our stenographers; and secondly, because, after having so long followed those learned and eloquent members that have preceded me, in their sublime and almost superhuman flights of imagination, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them instantly to descend to my humble sphere, without, in their rapid descent, falling far below it. Hence I was apprehensive they would dress my bantering in coarser cloaths than it merits—and every member on this floor knows that it is needless. Yet I am not disposed to read it, for I have long believed that both religious and political sermons lose much of their force by reading. But before I proceed further, I will publish my text, which, although very short,

consisting of but one word, conveys a dreadful sound to many thousands of suffering American citizens—“EMBARGO.” I need not repeat it, it is become very familiar, and I fear very pleasing to many who receive six dollars per day for sitting a few hours in this splendid hall, talking about it; but very different is the situation of many of our constituents suffering under it.

Mr. Speaker—Before I left home I expected that one of the first pages of our journal would have contained a declaration, that this word was proved by experience to be uncanonical, and therefore ordered to be expunged from our political bible. But alas! how grievously am I disappointed, in beholding so great a number of our learned Rabbies, introducing Latin quotations, and perhaps Greek and Hebrew, for I understand none of them, and adding testimony brought from every habitable part of the globe, to prove that it is not barely canonical, but that on our strict obedience depends our political salvation, and that all who differ in opinion are dangerous heretics. It will be remembered, that my surprise and disappointment was so great, that I remained silent longer than Job's three friends did in days of yore; we read that in consequence of the grievous suffering of their friend, they sat silent and astonished seven days. I sat silent much longer, until compelled by an imperious sense of duty to plead the cause of the poor and needy, and to exert my feeble powers in behalf of the sinking liberties of my country.

Mr. Speaker—Last session my principal text was, *Removal of the Seat of Government*, and for the same reason that Embargo is at this time; because it was then in my opinion the greatest evil these U. States suffered—the EMBARGO is now. And as every wise and just Legislature will first attend to the greatest grievances of their constituents, I must for the present suspend my exertions to remove the seat of government, and apply them to the embargo. In doing which, I shall not impeach the motives of those who engrafted into our constitution the plan of a district ten miles square for a seat of government; nor of those who carried that plan into execution; nor yet (God forbid, for I was one) of those who passed our first three embargo laws. I will admit that their intentions were good, that their motives were pure. But what has been the consequence? Why experience, that only sure (may I not say infallible) teacher, has incontestibly proved that the principle upon which the ten-mile square is founded, is totally repugnant to republicanism and the liberties of a free and independent nation; that whatever its nominal title may be, however artfully disguised, its essence and effect is monarchial, spreading its baneful influence from Georgia to Maine. So has the Embargo. They are twin sisters, in proportion to their power, and equally destructive to the lasting interest, peace, and prosperity of these United States; with this difference only, that the latter is more rapid in her movements, and consequently her baneful effects at present are more sensibly felt. Well, now let me ask what must be done? Must these pernicious plans be supported and continued perpetually, because they originated in pure motives? Doth not common sense, reason, and justice answer no? The consummate folly of weak and vicious Legislatures hath ever appeared most obvious, in the continuation and rigid enforcement of their own oppressive laws; and, *vice versa*, the wisdom of virtuous Legislatures, in testing their laws by experience, and speedily repealing all that were oppressive to the people.

Mr. Speaker—I shall now ask the indulgence of the house in some observations upon arguments of members, who have preceded me, in favour of the continuation of the embargo laws: In doing which, I shall not pursue them through the deserts of Arabia, or the scorching sands of Lybia; I will not travel with them, either by land or water, from the torrid to the frigid zone; I will not, after exploring the known, make a futile attempt to explore the unknown parts of the universe, in quest of evidence to support our cause—No—that would be a tacit acknowledgement that it was as bad as theirs, insupportable by domestic, plain, and self-evident facts.

The principal object I have in view, is (to use a military phrase) to bring the artillery of divers members that have preceded me, to bear upon themselves; which, if it should bear hard let them remember that they have provoked the attack; and to show, that some of the evidence adduced by them, is conclusive against the continuance of the embargo laws.

The first I shall notice is my friend from Tennessee (Mr. Rhea,) who spoke next after me, soon after the commencement of this discussion. He observed, that no distinction ought to be made between rich and poor. I perfectly agree with him, and only ask him to reduce his excellent christian precepts to practice; that while he sits in this splendid hall, receiving six dollars per day, secure from the piercing blasts of winter, far removed from the hapless habitation of woe, where poverty dwells, or even from the apprehension of the plaintive cries of a bosom friend asking bread for her tender offspring where there is

none to give, he will abstain from making or continuing in force laws not barely oppressing the poor, but totally depriving them of their wonted means of subsistence; yea, cutting off from them their whole staff and stay of bread.

The next observations I shall notice, fell from my young friend from Virginia, (Mr. Ghosson,) who is certainly entitled to the thanks of this house, and of the people of the U. States generally, but more particularly of the merchants, seamen, and fishermen of the middle and eastern states. These classes he has laid under so heavy a debt of gratitude, that I fear they will never be able fully to discharge it. I mean his great condescension, in setting his prolific genius to work to devise some means to relieve them from their present suffering situation. Being a great friend to home manufactures, I gave particular attention to his truly patriotic and benevolent plan—which was, if I understood him correctly, to turn the merchants and their clerks, with their powdered heads, out of their counting-houses, and set them to ploughing—and the seamen and fishermen to spinning cotton—*How worthy of the author!* But, hope my friend will consider it a token of my respect, if I present for his consideration a reversal of his plan; that is, to order the seamen (whose hands have been used to handling the tarry ropes) to the plough; and the other trifling powder-headed gentry, to spinning cotton, as more congenial to their former habits. Ours more so than of my respect, and then I will for the present take leave of my friend from Virginia; that is, that notwithstanding his plan is well adopted to the meridian of a government where slavery and unconditional submission is the order of the day; he will do well to consider before he proceeds to enforce his plan, whether it will suit the meridian of a government whose citizens have not been theoretically, but practically free, and long inured to employment of their own choice.

Mr. Speaker—I shall now proceed to some observations of my friend from Georgia, (Mr. Troup,) but must ask his pardon for not placing him first on the list of the three first mighty men, that have appeared advocates for the embargo—to this station he is, in my opinion, justly entitled, for the clear, positive, and unequivocal manner in which he informed the members of this house, *From whom* they had nothing to fear; and to whom they might safely look up for example. This information I trust, will be duly appreciated, kept in remembrance, and so strictly attended to, as to prevent the necessity of a repetition. The language, if I understand him correctly, was to the following effect; that we had nothing to fear from the anti-embargo men, they were too base and insignificant; that he would not appeal to the anti-embargo New-Englanders, the merest Shylocks, the depraved of the cities, and the ignorant of the country—who would sacrifice the honor and independence of the nation for a little trade in codfish and potash; but to the people of Virginia, too honorable to have been corrupted, and too enlightened to be duped.

Mr. Speaker—As this gentleman has been indulged with liberty to inform the members of this house, and through them the people of the U. States generally, who he would not appeal to for example, and who he would; I ask the same indulgence, with this exception only: I ask not liberty to make individual distinctions between States—I ask not liberty to mention the names of any of them. No! This has never been my practice on this floor, and I trust never will. None more than my self regret being laid under the imperious necessity, in support of justice, liberty, and the inherent rights of man, to say, that I will never appeal, or look up for example, to any state government, under which 346,568 human souls are kept in a state of *perfect bondage*, and used as an article of traffic, in common with a bale of goods, or a beast of the field—I will never hold up as an example any government, where the choicest of all earthly blessings, “liberty,” is extended only to a chosen few, and withheld from the many; where a great majority of those called freemen, who are compelled in case of war, to risk their lives in support of the property of the rich, are denied a voice in making the law that so compels them or any others. I will never look up for a model of political justice, to a state boasting of twenty-two representatives on this floor; who, nevertheless, at a late general contested election, probably took between twenty and twenty-five thousand votes; when on a similar occasion, a state sending but six representatives, took upwards of thirty-two thousand. And finally, until I am convinced that a radical, and complete reformation has taken place (which God in mercy grant may soon be the case,) I will never look for example to a state which the wise and enlightened author of the Notes on Virginia, described as follows: “In this state alone, did there exist so little virtue, that fear was to be fixed in the hearts of the people, and to become the motive of their exertions and the principle of their government.”

No, Mr. Speaker, were I to hold up as an example any state government, it should be one where every man who pays tax for the support of government, and is called upon when necessary to risk his life in defence

thereof, has an equal voice in deciding who shall make the laws that govern him—where the power of the poor man to guard his eye-lamb, is equal to that of the rich over his flock—to a state who having but eighteen representatives on this floor, can nevertheless boast of 111,000 free and independent voters. Not to a state where, if the declaration of independence is read at all, it is regarded only as a pleasant song, as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; but to a state where this heavenly-born language is reduced to practice: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that God hath created all men equal, that he hath endowed them with certain unalienable rights, amongst which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Ever bearing in mind, that not the hearers, but the authors of the laws are to be justified thereby.

I will now, with permission of the house, take some notice of my friend from Maryland, (Mr. Nelson,) who since the commencement of this discussion, has twice favoured us with the sound of his feeble voice—he will pardon my freedom in applying to him the appellation of a friend, after charging me with the capital crime of having turned my coat, (that is to say, I have not always voted with the majority.) But, really Mr. Speaker, if I had turned my coat as often as that gentleman has changed his plan of operations within these three or four years past, it would, by this time, make a very tagged appearance. I am told he is a military officer—God grant that I may never be a soldier under him, for at this time of life he would soon harass me to death, with marching and counter-marching. But he has exultingly reproached the Quakers' principle: This I consider as an act of supererogation; for my own part I am free to acknowledge, that since my acquaintance with his honor, I have never discovered any thing either in his precepts or practice, that would subject him to the charge of even the least tincture of Quakerism, or of any other religious society. I hope in thus candidly exonerating my friend from the horrid sin of Quakerism, I may not be considered as derogating in the least degree from his religion, his piety, or his virtue. He may for any thing that I know, have as large a store as any man, and keep it concealed from the purest motives; that is, a fear that it might be contaminated by exposure to the vulgar throng.

But I will for the present, drop religious topics and observe, that the first time my attention was arrested by my friend's feeble voice, his sentiments at first were perfectly in unison with my own. If I understood him correctly, he informed the house that he had heard so many wrong things he could no longer keep silence, and reproached irritating language, or pointed allusions to particular members—A blessed state of mind indeed!

I will not hurt his feelings by stiling this Quaker doctrine, but give it the name of good Christian doctrine, tending to promote love and harmony. But alas! how short were the pleasing sensations I at first enjoyed—for lo! those mild accents, and that harmonious voice, I was hearing with so great delight, suddenly became rough and sonorous, his visage fierce, and aspect alarming to weak nerves; and in a tone similar (as I suppose) to that in which he gives orders to his soldiers when on duty, proposed adopting Sangrado's plan of blood-letting—thus suddenly transported from the temple of reason to the field of Mars—I was at first much alarmed, not knowing how soon the plan was to be carried into execution upon us poor anti-embargo men; but after coolly reflecting upon the subject a few minutes my fears abated, and a comfortable hope arose, that my friend really meant no more than to cool the political fever, by taking some blood from the left arm, which I feel disposed to acquiesce in, provided he will step forward, strip up his sleeve, and undergo the first operation.

But, Mr. Speaker, the next time he rose, his sympathetic conciliatory plans were all laid aside—the maladies of the body politic were all to be healed by antipathy—the embargo, like tartar emetic, although producing very disagreeable sensations, would eventually have a beneficial effect—his martial heroic spirit rose to such a height, that in case a person only gave him a gentle pat on the cheek, he, without any further ceremony, was to be knocked down.—Wonderful change! thought I: how great the contrast between this plan, and that of running away over the mountains! Hail Columbia, happy land! the valour of whose patriotic sons increases in proportion to the magnitude of impending danger! I congratulate my country on the return of this heroic spirit! believing that if the embargo is continued twelve months longer, it will require at least one hundred thousand such heroes to enforce it. One observation more, which I hope that gentleman will consider as a token of real friendship—Although I am no military man, I have long made human nature my study: the result of which is, that the frozen regions of the north, the residence of many of those renegade anti-embargo men, would not agree with his constitution; but that a mild southern climate is more congenial to his health, and will probably be a means of continuing his valiant acts, and useful labours longer in his native soil.