

of seacoast will be at the mercy of the conqueror. The Atlantic, deep and wide as it is, will prove just as good a barrier against his ambition, if directed against you, as the Mediterranean to the power of the Cæsars.

Do I mean, when I say so, to crouch to the invader? No, I will meet him at the water's edge, and fight every inch of ground from thence to the mountains, from the mountains to the Mississippi. But after tamely submitting to an outrage on your domicile, will you bully and look big at an insult on your flag three thousand miles off?

But, sir, I have yet a more cogent reason against going to war for the honor of the flag in the narrow seas, or any other maritime punctilio. It springs from my attachment to the principles of the government under which I live. I declare, in the face of day, that this government was not instituted for the purposes of offensive war. No; it was framed, to use its own language, for the common defence and the general welfare, which are inconsistent with offensive war.

I call that offensive war which goes out of our jurisdiction and limits for the attainment or protection of objects not within those limits and that jurisdiction. As in 1798 I was opposed to this species of warfare because I believed it would raze the constitution to the very foundation, so in 1806 am I opposed to it, and on the same grounds. No sooner do you put the constitution to this use — to a test which it is by no means calculated to endure, than its incompetency to such purposes becomes manifest and apparent to all. I fear, if you go into a foreign war for a circuitous unfair carrying trade, you will come out without your constitution. Have you not contractors enough in this House? Or do you want to be overrun and devoured by commissaries and all the vermin of contract?

I fear, sir, that what are called the energy-men will rise up again — men who will burn the parchment. We shall be told that our government is too free; or, as they would say, weak and inefficient. Much virtue, sir, in terms. That we must give the President power to call forth the resources of the nation; that is, to filch the last shilling from our pockets — to drain the last drop of blood from our veins. I am against giving this power to any man, be he who he may. The American people must either withhold this power or resign their liberties.

There is no other alternative. Nothing but the most imperious necessity will justify such a grant. And is there a powerful enemy at our doors? You may begin with a first consul; from that chrysalis state he soon becomes an emperor. You have your choice. It depends upon your election whether you will be a free, happy, and united people at home, or the light of your executive majesty shall beam across the Atlantic in one general blaze of the public liberty.

For my part I never will go to war but in self-defence. I have no desire for conquests — no ambition to possess Nova Scotia — I hold the liberties of this people at a higher rate. Much more am I indisposed to war when among the first means for carrying it on I see gentlemen propose the confiscation of debts due by government to individuals. Does a *bona fide* creditor know who holds his paper? Dare any honest man ask himself the question? 'Tis hard to say whether such principles are more detestably dishonest than they are weak and foolish. What, sir; will you go about with proposals for opening a loan in one hand and a sponge for the national debt in the other?

If, on a late occasion, you could not borrow at a less rate of interest than eight per cent when the government avowed

that they would pay to the last shilling of the public ability, at what price do you expect to raise money with an avowal of these nefarious opinions? God help you! if these are your ways and means for carrying on war — if your finances are in the hands of such a chancellor of the exchequer.

Because a man can take an observation and keep a log-book and a reckoning; can navigate a cock-boat to the West Indies, or the East; shall he aspire to navigate the great vessel of state — to stand at the helm of public councils? "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*"¹ What are you going to war for? For the carrying trade. Already you possess seven eighths of it. What is the object in dispute? The fair, honest trade, that exchanges the produce of our soil for foreign articles for home consumption? Not at all.

You are called upon to sacrifice this necessary branch of your navigation, and the great agricultural interest, whose handmaid it is, to jeopardize your best interests, for a circuitous commerce, for the fraudulent protection of belligerent property under your neutral flag. Will you be goaded by the dreaming calculations of insatiate avarice to stake your all for the protection of this trade? I do not speak of the probable effects of war on the price of our produce; severely as we must feel, we may scuffle through it. I speak of its reaction on the constitution.

You may go to war for this excrescence of the carrying trade, and make peace at the expense of the constitution. Your executive will lord it over you, and you must make the best terms with the conqueror that you can.

But the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. Gregg] tells you that he is for acting in this, as in all things, uninfluenced by the opinion of any foreign minister whatever — foreign,

¹ "Let not the cobbler go beyond his last."

or, I presume, domestic. On this head I am willing to meet the gentleman, am unwilling to be dictated to by any minister at home or abroad. Is he willing to act on the same independent footing? I have before protested, and I again protest, against secret, irresponsible, overruling influence. The first question I asked when I saw the gentleman's resolution was, "Is this a measure of the cabinet?" Not an open declared cabinet, but an invisible, inscrutable, unconstitutional cabinet — without responsibility, unknown to the constitution. I speak of back-stairs influence, of men who bring messages to this House, which, although they do not appear on the journals, govern its decisions. Sir, the first question that I asked on the subject of British relations was, what was the opinion of the cabinet? What measures will they recommend to Congress? — well knowing that whatever measures we might take they must execute them, and therefore that we should have their opinion on the subject — My answer was (and from a cabinet minister too), "There is no longer any cabinet." Subsequent circumstances, sir, have given me a personal knowledge of the fact. It needs no commentary.

But the gentleman has told you that we ought to go to war, if for nothing else, for the fur trade. Now, sir, the people on whose support he seems to calculate, follow, let me tell him, a better business; and let me add that whilst men are happy at home reaping their own fields, the fruits of their labor and industry, there is little danger of their being induced to go sixteen or seventeen hundred miles in pursuit of beavers, raccoons or opossums — much less of going to war for the privilege. They are better employed where they are.

This trade, sir, may be important to Britain, to nations who have exhausted every resource of industry at home — bowed

down by taxation and wretchedness. Let them, in God's name, if they please, follow the fur trade. They may, for me, catch every beaver in North America. Yes, sir, our people have a better occupation — a safe, profitable, honorable employment.

Whilst they should be engaged in distant regions in hunting the beaver, they dread lest those whose natural prey they are should begin to hunt them — should pillage their property and assassinate their constitution. Instead of these wild schemes pay off your public debt, instead of prating about its confiscation. Do, not, I beseech you, expose at once your knavery and your folly. You have more lands than you know what to do with — you have lately paid fifteen millions for yet more. Go and work them — and cease to alarm the people with the cry of wolf until they become deaf to your voice or at least laugh at you.

Mr. Chairman, if I felt less regard for what I deem the best interests of this nation than for my own reputation I should not on this day have offered to address you; but would have waited to come out, bedecked with flowers and bouquets of rhetoric, in a set speech. But, sir, I dread lest a tone might be given to the mind of the committee — they will pardon me, but I did fear, from all that I could see or hear, that they might be prejudiced by its advocates (under pretence of protecting our commerce) in favor of this ridiculous and preposterous project — I rose, sir, for one, to plead guilty — to declare in the face of day that I will not go to war for this carrying trade. I will agree to pass for an idiot if this is not the public sentiment; and you will find it to your cost, begin the war when you will.

Gentlemen talk of 1793. They might as well go back to the Trojan war. What was your situation then? Then

every heart beat high with sympathy for France — for republican France! I am not prepared to say, with my friend from Pennsylvania, that we were all ready to draw our swords in her cause, but I affirm that we were prepared to have gone great lengths.

I am not ashamed to pay this compliment to the hearts of the American people even at the expense of their understandings. It was a noble and generous sentiment, which nations, like individuals, are never the worse for having felt. They were, I repeat it, ready to make great sacrifices for France. And why ready? because she was fighting the battles of the human race against the combined enemies of their liberty; because she was performing the part which Great Britain now in fact sustains — forming the only bulwark against universal dominion. Knock away her navy, and where are you? Under the naval despotism of France, unchecked, unqualified by any antagonizing military power — at best but a change of masters. The tyrant of the ocean and the tyrant of the land is one and the same, — lord of all, and who shall say him nay, or wherefore doest thou this thing? Give to the tiger the properties of the shark, and there is no longer safety for the beasts of the forests or the fishes of the sea.

Where was this high anti-Britannic spirit of the gentleman from Pennsylvania when his vote would have put an end to the British treaty, that pestilent source of evil to this country? and at a time, too, when it was not less the interest than the sentiment of this people to pull down Great Britain and exalt France. Then, when the gentleman might have acted with effect, he could not screw his courage to the sticking place. Then England was combined in what has proved a feeble, inefficient coalition, but which gave just cause of alarm to

every friend of freedom. Now, the liberties of the human race are threatened by a single power, more formidable than the coalesced world, to whose utmost ambition, vast as it is, the naval force of Great Britain forms the only obstacle.

I am perfectly sensible and ashamed of the trespass I am making on the patience of the committee; but as I know not whether it will be in my power to trouble them again on this subject I must beg leave to continue my crude and desultory observations. I am not ashamed to confess that they are so.

At the commencement of this session we received a printed message from the President of the United States, breathing a great deal of national honor and indication of the outrages we had endured, particularly from Spain. She was specially named and pointed at. She had pirated upon your commerce, imprisoned your citizens, violated your actual territory, invaded the very limits solemnly established between the two nations by the treaty of San Lorenzo.

Some of the State legislatures (among others the very State on which the gentleman from Pennsylvania relies for support) sent forward resolutions pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, in support of any measures you might take in vindication of your injured rights. Well, sir, what have you done? You have had resolutions laid upon your table—gone to some expense of printing and stationery—mere pen, ink, and paper, and that's all. Like true political quacks, you deal only in handbills and nostrums. Sir, I blush to see the record of our proceedings; they resemble but the advertisements of patent medicines. Here you have the "Worm-destroying Lozenges," there, "Church's Cough Drops,"—and, to crown the whole, "Sloan's Vegetable Specific," an infallible remedy for all nervous disorders and vertiges of brain-sick politicians; each man earnestly adjuring

you to give his medicine only a fair trial. If, indeed, these wonder-working nostrums could perform but one half of what they promise, there is little danger of our dying a political death, at this time at least. But, sir, in politics as in physic, the doctor is oft-times the most dangerous disease — and this I take to be our case at present.

But, sir, why do you talk of Spain? There are no longer Pyrenees. There exists no such nation — no such being as a Spanish king or minister. It is a mere juggle played off for the benefit of those who put the mechanism into motion. You know, sir, that you have no differences with Spain — that she is the passive tool of a superior power, to whom at this moment you are crouching. Are your differences indeed with Spain? And where are you going to send your political panacea (resolutions and handbills excepted), your sole arcanum of government — your king cure-all? To Madrid? No — you are not such quacks as not to know where the shoe pinches — to Paris. You know at least where the disease lies, and there apply your remedy. When the nation anxiously demands the result of your deliberations, you hang your heads and blush to tell. You are afraid to tell. Your mouth is hermetically sealed. Your honor has received a wound which must not take air. Gentlemen dare not come forward and avow their work, much less defend it in the presence of the nation. Give them all they ask, that Spain exists, and what then? After shrinking from the Spanish jackal, do you presume to bully the British lion?

But here it comes out. Britain is your rival in trade, and governed, as you are, by counting-house politicians: you would sacrifice the paramount interests of your country to wound that rival. For Spain and France you are carriers — and from customers every indignity is to be endured. And what