

CONDITIONS.

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From the Louisiana Courier.

Recent advices from Washington announce, that the chevalier De Onis has made a formal demand on our government for the surrender of the Floridas, and likewise for the delivery of general Toledo and his associates, in order that they may be brought to condign punishment for having dared to promote the emancipation of Mexico from the thralldom of Spain.

Those demands, whether viewed separately or connected, are to be considered among the political novelties of the nineteenth century.

The age of chivalry is about to commence, Ferdinand VII. and the pope, with the aid of the inquisition, are about to establish their supremacy in the new as well as in the old world. Bulls and expeditions against the heretics of South America and Mexico, are becoming as fashionable as during the reign of Charles V; and if we are to judge from the lofty ground taken by the chevalier Onis, it is presumable that Ferdinand means to take under his holy protection a portion of the citizens of the United States. After we give up the Floridas, I suppose the next question will arise as to the validity of our holding Louisiana, because as it is the order of the day among the potentates of Europe, to undo all that France has done since Louis XVI. was deposed. Spain conceives that she has a right to require the restitution of a territory which she consented to part with during the moments of her imbecility, but which she may now deem essential for the dignity and integrity of the Spanish monarchy. Waving every discussion for the present on these points, let us take a cursory view of the demand for the persons of general Toledo and his associates.

The inhabitants of the Mexican empire have been struggling for some years past to emancipate themselves from the most galling oppression that ever afflicted any portion of the human race; they have so far succeeded as to spread the spirit of resistance against Spain from one extremity of the empire to the other. Hitherto they have had no effective assistance from the United States or any other quarter; they have been literally without arms or munitions of war, without discipline or organization; and yet with all these disadvantages, and notwithstanding the accounts that have been published in the city of Mexico, at Havana and Cadiz, of ten, twenty, and thirty thousand rebels being slain in battle, we find that these rebels have been gradually augmenting; that they have formed a social edifice, elected representatives from the greater portion of the empire; that their congress is now securely holding its session in the heart of the country; that the republican armies have invested or taken possession of many important places in the interior; that the communications between the cities Vera Cruz and Mexico is frequently interrupted by the republicans and that the royal forces in the city of Mexico are obliged to remain in the city for its protection, it being well understood that if the troops were only a few days absent from the place, the viceroy would be deposed, and the banners of independence wave on the turrets of that city. I have given this statement of the situation of things from date I believe to be correct, and with a view of inspiring the hopes of those who unite in the feelings and sentiments of the writer on this interesting subject. Much has been said about hostile combinations, and of the thousands and tens of thousands of American citizens that had joined the Mexican revolutionists, and no doubt the minister consuls, and all those who were hostile to the independence of Mexico, have made ridiculous and exaggerated representations to the government of the U. States on this subject; but the fact is, and much do I regret it, that the Mexicans have not as yet received from the citizens of the Uni-

ted States any thing that merits the appellation succour, either in men, muskets or munitions of war. Some two or three hundred adventurers, many of them desperate in circumstances, and destitute of military knowledge, and perhaps a few hundred inutile muskets, is about the whole assistance they have as yet obtained from our countrymen. Had it been otherwise, that is to say, if two or three regiments of our citizens, conducted by good officers, had co-operated with the Mexican patriots, the destinies of Mexico would have been fixed long before this time. But I do not hope (and shall rejoice at the event) that the conduct of the Spanish cabinet in raising a controversy either about the Floridas or Louisiana, may enable our government to depart from that system of apathy which we have hitherto observed towards the struggles of the Mexican patriots, and that in place of proclamations from our executive; cautioning our citizens against enrolling themselves under the banners of Mexican independence, they will be invited and encouraged by our government to an undertaking congenial to the feelings of every genuine American, and deeply interesting to the future glory and prosperity of our country.

When we reflect that in our struggles against our mother country, we dispatched our Jays and our Franklins to implore the aid of men, money, arms and ships from the nations of Europe, and when we reflect that during that struggle our beloved Washington was denounced as a rebel & a traitor, when James Madison and his compatriots were all included in the British anathemas; when we reflect on those solemn facts, we ought not, nay we cannot without incurring the opprobrium of apostasy, view with indifference the efforts of our Mexican brethren to shake off the chains of Spanish tyranny.

The cause of Mexico is not strictly analogous to our revolutionary struggle, that is to say, our former colonial government and the blessings we then enjoyed made our political situation a paradise when compared to the horrors & outrages under which the Mexican population have been groaning for more than three centuries; and shall it be recorded on the page of American history, that our government, our statesmen and our citizens not only turned a deaf ear to the supplication of the Mexican patriots, but in reality palsied their exertions by a course of measures calculated to make every friend to the cause hesitate as to the opinions he advanced, or the steps he might feel disposed to take in their favor? For my own part I never have hesitated nor ever will, in the open avowal of my feelings and opinions on the subject. The right of expatriation is given me by the constitution of my country; nor is there a single clause therein that authorises an inquisitorial scrutiny as to what country I may feel inclined to remove, or under what banners I may enrol myself in another nation, (notwithstanding the opinion of some learned men to the contrary,) much less would I feel any hesitation when my object was to rally round the standard of freedom, and to assist in the emancipation of six millions of my fellow creatures from tyrannic oppression. Under these circumstances I feel, I hope, as every American ought to do, a sentiment of contempt and indignation at the demand or requisition of the chevalier de Onis for the persons of gen. Toledo and his associates. General Toledo is an officer in the service of the American patriots, and there is likewise in this place a minister from the congress of Mexico, going to lay his credentials before our government.

These individuals are attempting, as is their duty, to render the cause of Mexico popular in our country; they wish the aid of our government and our citizens towards accomplishing their object; they have a right to pursue every legal means to effect that object; and in fact they are attempting to do neither more or less than as before observed, our Franklins and our Jays succeeded in doing for our country during our struggles for independence; they are under the safeguard of our laws, and to them only are they amenable—and as respects their associates, that is, any of my own countrymen who are the advocates for the freedom of Mexico, or who contemplate personally assisting the cause, I trust they will find in the arrogant demand of the chevalier de Onis, a new motive for every legal and honorable exertion in favor of the independence of the Mexican empire.

WM. D. ROBINSON.

New Orleans, 17th Feb. 1846.

The legislature of Pennsylvania has given leave for the executor of the will of Gen. MORRIS, to sell his estate in this country.

CONGRESS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

MONDAY, MARCH 4.

COMPENSATION TO MEMBERS, &c.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ky. said, he considered it his duty to make a proposition to the House, the object of which was the dispatch of public business, a more punctual attendance of the members of Congress to their duty, & shorten the sessions of Congress, by changing the compensation of the members from six dollars per day, to five dollars per day, and by other regulations connected with the subject, having the same tendency; and to deduct the compensation of members in proportion to their absence from the House, during the session. The public business has been so protracted, that at the close of three months, no member could see, with any certainty, the termination of the session. This delay may be ascribed to a variety of causes; such as the accumulation of business, after a war—the variety of sentiment on every subject; but to no cause could we ascribe so much the delay of business, as to the constant and never-ending debate on every subject that came before Congress for decision. On subjects of importance, difficulty and complication, discussion was necessary and proper—and on such occasions it should always be indulged, without restraint, until the subject was thoroughly understood. In speaking of the proceedings of the House, he did not wish to be considered as casting censure upon any member: He spoke of the House as a body—he spoke of evils which were apparent to all, and it was the duty of all to put an end to them. He could speak more freely of the necessity of reform in the proceedings of the House, because he did not pretend to inculpate himself less than others: on minor subjects, on detail, as to phraseology, and all amendments to bills and reports, it was the bounden duty of members to have confidence in each other, and not presume any to be unprepared to act. On the contrary, it should be admitted, as a matter of fact, that each member could judge for himself, and correctly, upon hearing the proposition made; and if any difficulty should exist as to matters of fact, a single enquiry of those whose duty it had been to examine them, would be all that should be required, in the way of conversation, and not in set speeches. In any such cases it would be a poor compliment to the capacity or attention of any member, to suppose tedious examination necessary. Indeed, we are very much mistaken, if we presume that the silent members of this House (and they compose a majority) think less than those who speak most. Those who said but little, were generally master of the subject, understanding the principles and the details of a bill, before it was acted upon. The House had adopted a rule that no member should speak more than twice on the same question, and, indeed, the rule was nominal, for leave was always granted, when asked. The cry for the questions, was a kind of disorder that had no influence, because it was the duty of the Speaker, at all times, to suppress it if a member was on the floor speaking. The inattention of the House to members speaking, had no greater influence, as it was not uncommon to see an interesting speaker occupying the floor, with an able speech, with a half dozen friends around him, listening, more out of courtesy, than a desire to have any doubts removed, in relation to the subject. It is well known to the House, that for several years past, particularly during the war, there was a universal disgust, clamor and censure, throughout the nation, at our much talking and little action. The people had much reason on their side in this disgust, but they were not exactly acquainted with all the difficulties we had to encounter. It is, however, high time that Congress should be redeemed from imputations which have lessened very much the confidence of the people. It is also well known, that daily and hourly we hear the entreaties of claimants, urging us to act upon their petitions until the applicants in many cases have to return home upon the bounty of friends, & continue to attend Congress many years, without a decision of their cases; and in most instances their claims were of the most meritorious character. To these inducements, Mr. JOHNSON said, a rule existed, known by the name of the previous question—a rule which would never be enforced, but in the most extreme necessity; but, if it could be enforced; it would be effectual. But even in war, when we had such strong reason for it, very few

members could be brought ever to call it, and, when demanded, very seldom supported there, certain members to whom the rule was obnoxious, would call the eyes and noses, and put every obstacle in the way of progressing. From the experience of the house on this subject all would agree, that the previous question, however proper to be in the hands of a majority of the house, was a dead letter in time of peace. There must be some remedy for this evil, and what is so effectual as to give a gross sum of money, by which members who are made attentive to business, and not adjourn any day at 4 o'clock, when such a course of conduct would be to deprive them of an adequate compensation, &c.—on the other hand, to take away the imputation on members of remaining in session for the per diem; and it will hold out the inducement of a higher reward in proportion to the industry of the house. Without this remedy Congress would, after a while, have to sit all the year, which would ultimately drive every man from Congress whose time was valuable to himself and family, and who was not wealthy enough to make such a sacrifice of time. In a few years, riches, and not patriotism, would rule the nation—whatever we have, let it be by the session and not by the day. We can do in three months, what we fail to do in ten under the present arrangement. As soon as the spring opens, what do we witness? The farmer wishes to return to his family and farm; the mechanic to his shop; the lawyer to his courts—applications are daily made for leave of absence, until we are left with a bare quorum, and sometimes not that, we have to send for members, and those who stay are injured, and some ruined and ultimately quit Congress from necessity.

The session should be reduced to three, and not extended to six months. In such a case its sacrifice would not be so great. If enquiry should be made in this stage of the business, what compensation should be given as a gross sum of money to each member, the answer would be easy: such a compensation as will not cost the United States one cent more, but by our industry might be more to us; give a member of Congress what you give to your doorkeeper, your sergeant at arms and it will be better than the present system. Nothing extravagant, nothing prodigal; a compensation received by a good clerk in one of the departments would be sufficient: give what we may, the compensation should be in a gross sum, and not a compensation by the day. Mr. JOHNSON said the effect of this change would produce three results—1st. It would lessen the duration of the session; 2d. It would give the members greater compensation if they acted with industry; 3d. It would save money to the nation, by lessening the contingent expenses of the house in fuel, stationary and attendance, which was now very great. But it may be asked, should a gross sum operate upon members of Congress to be more industrious, as it would upon the day laborer and he who worked by the job? Mr. JOHNSON said he had no doubt on the subject, and it was no disgrace to members to say, that they could be operated upon like other men.—In a government like ours we should avoid extravagance—so should we extreme parsimony. In relation to the representatives of a free people, he thought they should be actuated from patriotic, and not sordid motives; and a reasonable compensation was all they should have. But a member of Congress who represents 35,000 freemen, would feel himself degraded, and so would the people, if such was the reward as to drive from Congress all but the rich and the favored few. Mr. JOHNSON then moved the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to enquire into the expediency of changing the present mode of compensation to the members of Congress into a gross sum for each session; and to report such other provisions as may have a tendency to the dispatch of public business, and to compel the punctual attendance of members of Congress during the session.

Mr. RANDOLPH expressed his hope the resolve would be adopted, and carried into complete effect. In moving it, he said, the gentleman from Kentucky had acted with a manliness which became his character; with a frankness and independence which deserves not only the thanks of this body, but the approbation of the nation. The situation in which members of congress were placed growing out of the manner in which they were compensated for their public services, was, he said, disgraceful to them individually, as well as a great public detriment. Was it wonderful, he asked, that they should be considered by

the people at large in the light of day laborers, who worked here for something less than a dollar an hour; for something more perhaps than you have to pay a man for sawing wood. He promised with a solemn assurance of his sincerity in the declaration, that his opinion was now, and always had been, that the members of this and the other branch of the government ought to receive no payment at all.— This, he said, he new to be an unpopular sentiment, but he sincerely entertained it. But, if the members were to receive pay, he would have them paid like gentlemen; because members of Congress ought to be gentlemen—they ought to, and he trusted they were, in principle: not merely in their exterior, but in their high sense of honor, in a character which scorns, which spurns, to do that which is mean and base. In this point of view, Mr. R. said, he was decidedly in favor of the proposition of the gentleman from Kentucky. Mr. R. here took a discursive view of the causes and origin of the committee of accounts, and of an attempt on the part of the Senate some years ago to establish a difference in the rates of payment between members of the Senate and of the other house. A member of Congress, he went on to say, was as much entitled to his pay for the day he does not attend as for the day that he does attend; it was not to be presumed, because he was not in his seat, that he was idle.— His business, he said, was not merely to come here to write and frank so many letters, read so many newspapers, and stitch together so many documents as he daily finds on his table; to adjourn whenever the index of the clock pointed to 4 o'clock, and pass the remainder of the four and twenty hours in a perfect abstraction of mind and body from labor or exertion.—No, Mr. R. said, even Sunday shone no Sabbath day for him—and yet, his account with the Public for his services when a member heretofore, to this day remained unsettled, because he could not undertake to say to the committee of accounts, how many days he had been absent, &c. This was a sort of economy he condemned—would they think of subtracting from the compensation of the head of a Department so much for every day he did not go to his office? A member of Congress, if he deserved to come at all, Mr. R. said, had no compensation for his services in the miserable pittance which the government now allows, &c. He hoped this motion would pass, and that another reform would take place in the mode of doing business in the house that was, allowing days for business in the house, and leaving other days for doing business out of the house, &c.—The present system might do, say he, for mercenary soldiers, for day laborers; but not for men of our time of life & our state. With respect to devising any mode of forcing the attendance of members; he was afraid no better could be devised than that which exists: the compulsory process; stopping wages, &c. treating the members of this house like livery servants, would not do.—Mr. R. concluded his remarks by saying he had sometimes reflected with pain on the gradual depreciation of the value of a seat in this house, since he first had the honor of a seat in it.—Members then made no sacrifices of the dignity of their station, and of their own personal dignity. If they had not possessed native dignity, they acquired it from their station; they felt themselves the Representatives each of thirty thousand souls.— They thought it beneath them in those days, he said, to truckle to the great or to the small vulgar; to curry favor even with great officers of state, either foreign or domestic; much less with printers of journals, newspapers &c.

Mr. STANFORD rose to enter his protest against any increase of the compensation of members of Congress; against offering such emoluments as would induce men of abilities to prefer offices and stations under the general government to those under the state governments. He would diminish rather than increase the compensation of the members of this house. He was willing to change the mode of compensation, but not in any way so as to increase it. The depreciation of money was, he said, a great and just complaint; but any change contemplating an increase of the compensation of the members, he thought, would be a change essentially to the mischief of principle. He was willing to change the mode of compensation; because in such a change there might be both economy and advantage.

Mr. RANDOLPH again rose. He said, that whenever he differed from the gentleman last up, he doubted the correctness of his own judgement, so great reliance had he on that of that honorable gentleman. The resolution before the house did not speak of