

SPEECH OF MR. BLAIR,
Of South Carolina,

On the Bill to provide for the collection of the Revenue, delivered in the House of Representatives, Feb. 27, 1833.

I rise, Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of assigning briefly, the reasons why I vote for this bill, and of explaining and reconciling the conduct I adopted at the commencement of the session with that which I deem my imperative duty to pursue now.

Some explanation of this sort is the more necessary, as I understand the gentleman from North Carolina, (Mr. Carson) while I have been out of the House, has expressed some astonishment that I should be in favor of a coercive measure against my own State, or that I should ask the passage of this bill for the protection of the "Union Party," of S. Carolina. If I were disposed to retort upon the gentleman from North Carolina, I might ask him in return how it happens that he is opposed to this measure whilst his constituents are well known to be almost unanimous against "nullification?" I might with at least as much propriety, express my astonishment that he should so far mistake the wishes and well ascertained opinions of nine-tenths of the intelligent people he represents, as to oppose the passage of this bill.

I repeat now, what I have said again and again, that I shall regard the rejection of this bill as a negative sanction of nullification, and an indirect rebuke of the Union Party in South Carolina. I have not asked this or any other measure for the personal safety of the Union Party. I have repeatedly disclaimed it, entirely and unconditionally. We ask not personal protection. We would suffer annihilation before we would invoke aid in that respect. But we think there is something due to our character and feelings.—And I submit to the candid consideration of the House whether it would be generous or politic to make a "scape goat," of the "Union Party," to bear away the sins of nullification to the wilderness, in order to conciliate the disorganizers in South Carolina.—Suppose you should do so on this occasion, what encouragement would an orderly well disposed minority, in a refractory State, have to stand up for the dignity of this government and the execution of its laws in a coming day?—Could you expect such a minority in a rebellious State to hazard their personal liberty, their lives and fortunes, to subject themselves to civil and political disfranchisement, to obloquy and reproach, and to peril their *all* as the Union Party in South Carolina have done, in defence of the Union and institutions of the country? No, sir, you could not expect it. They would remind you of the fate of the Union Party in South

Carolina. I can assure the gentleman from North Carolina, and I assure this House, that the duty now imposed on me, in relation to this bill, is far from being a pleasant one. It will be remembered that at the commencement of the session, I asked and obtained leave to withdraw from the military committee, of which I was a member. I did this under an impression that, possibly it might become the duty of the Committee to recommend some conservative means to counteract the rash measures of the ruling party in the State from which I came. Had I remained a member of that committee, I could not oppose any proposition that might be deemed necessary for putting down nullification and its concomitant measures without indirectly *aiding and abetting* what I consider a *rebellious proceeding*; or at least a proceeding of rebellious tendency—and it was repugnant to my feelings to assist as a member of a committee, in recommending to this House any means of coercion against South Carolina. I was unwilling to subject myself to the appearance, or to the reproaches, even of the nullifiers, of aiding to inflict blows on the State which I in part represent. The public interest and safety did not require that I should make a sacrifice of feeling. My place in the committee could be easily, perhaps advantageously supplied, without detriment to the action of this House or injury to the public service. But now the case is different—I feel myself differently situated—I am called upon, not only as a representative of S. Carolina, but as a representative of the American People, to discharge a solemn and conscientious duty which cannot be performed by a substitute. Here is an unpleasant duty to be performed, which cannot be evaded by referring it to a committee of which I am not a member. The question presents itself *in this House*, and is not to be blinked at by any member here, unless he prove recreant to the trust reposed in him. I have come to the conclusion, some time since that it is my duty to vote for this bill, and I shall not shrink from the responsibility of doing so, be the consequences to myself what they may. Were I to vote against this bill, I should consider myself as giving sanction to nullification, secession and the absurdities which accompany these political heresies. It is impossible, therefore, that I should vote against this bill, and to withhold my vote would be nearly equivalent to my negation of the bill.

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Clayton) has amused, or *attempted* to amuse, the House with a wonderful farrago about witches and hobgoblins, signs and wonders in the Heavens, drumming and fifeing, horsemen and banners, music and battles in the air, at last he descended from the Heavens, and *condescended* to notice the affairs of this lower world. He complained sorely about the extravagance here, and at the "*White House*:" seemed *afflicted* at the profuse expenditure of the public money, and wound up his chapter of lamentations by a commentary on the tyrannical character of General Jackson and something like a "bill of exception," to his conduct during the late wars with Great Britain and the Seminole Indians. He seems *alarmed* at the recollection of the unauthorised conduct, and strong military operations of General Jackson against the Spanish posts in Florida. His management of Calava, and Dominick Hull; and has much to say (by way of reproof, if I understood him) about Gen. Jackson's opinions relative to the "Hartford Convention," and the second section of the Rules and Articles of War.

Now it is a pity the gentleman did not tell us something about his own vote during the last session, appropriating one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the aqueduct of Alexandria; making a canal along the side of a noble navigable river.

I am sorry, too, that he forgot to tell us about his votes in favor of a stereotype edition of the laws.—[Here Mr. Clayton rose and denied that he had given any such vote.] I will, then, refer the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, to the journals of the last session, page 1146, where he will find it recorded, that "Mr. Daniel, in pursuance of instructions from the Committee on the Judiciary, moved that the House do now proceed to the consideration of the Bill from the Senate, (No. 86.) entitled "An act providing for the publication of a stereotype edition of the laws."

"A motion was made by Mr. Foster that the Report of the Committee and the motion to proceed to the consideration of the said bill do lie on the table.

"And the question being put that the House do agree to this motion.

"It was decided in the affirmative:—yeas 74; nays 69."

The name of "Augustus S. Clayton" is recorded in the negative—against laying the bill on the table, which is equivalent to a vote in favor of the bill.

As to his complaints against the conduct of General Jackson, I would ask the gentleman from Georgia if he was not aware of them before he first gave his aid in promoting the General to the Presidential Chair? Did he not, with a full knowledge of all the objections he now urges against Gen. Jackson, assist a *second* time in electing him to the office he now fills? How are we to account for this sudden change of his opinion in relation to the distinguished personage of whom I now speak?—[Here Mr. Clayton said, if he could be permitted, he would state his reasons.] Sir, it is not very material what they are. I shall leave him to answer these questions to *himself* and to his *constituents*.—I presume he has recently seen some new light in the Heavens. He has, probably heard some drumming and fifeing, not in the air, but in the other end of this building. But, Mr. Speaker, it is time to return to a more important subject.

I shall vote for the bill now under consideration, sir, not for the *personal* safety of the "Union Party," to which I belong, but because I think it necessary for the interest and safety of the whole country—were I to consult only the safety of the Union Party of South Carolina, I might wish this bill to be rejected. It may, possibly, increase the anger and hostility of our opponents against us; but I am *proud* to believe that the Union Party are, and ever will be governed by far higher and nobler motives than any grovelling considerations connected with their personal interests, or self aggrandizement.

Now, sir, I shall vote for this measure, because I think the interest, the honor and the safety of the United States demand it. I support it, because I think it necessary to put down and demolish those political heresies, and rebellious proceeding, which strike at the vitals of our Constitution; and which, if tolerated, will destroy the efficiency of our Federal Government for all time to come. I support this bill, sir, because I wish to live and die a *freeman*! I have not the presumption to trouble this enlightened body with a dissertation upon nullification. It is, now, a subject well understood, even by *hackmen* and *scavengers*. It has become "*a by words of reproach*." It has lost all its terrors. It has become a topic as stale and disgusting as it is absurd and ridiculous. Its only fruit has been an impotent, tyrannical attempt, to enslave, to disfranchise and degrade the patriotic few who have resisted it within the limits of South Carolina, and who "*have not bowed the knee*" to its wicked or deluded authors. But I think, sir, the dominant party in South Carolina begin to find that something more than *nullification* is necessary to enable them to make "*Helots*" and serfs of the Union Party.—They therefore, begin to talk of seceding from the Union—of withdrawing our fealty from that Government established by the toils of our fathers, and cemented by their blood; and of bestowing it exclusively on the *nation* of South Carolina. I use this language through no feeling of disrespect or

unkindness toward South Carolina. I have no motive to insult her. "It is my own, my native land." It contains all that is near and dear to me, both living and dead. Within its bosom the bones of my ancestors repose. Upon its soil my family reside. All my property is there: I have not removed one dollar's worth of it from the State.— There it is and there it and myself will remain "for weal and for woe," until the storm passes over and the peril of the day is at an end! Our opponents will find that even *secession* (should they madly resort to it) will not enable them to enslave the Union Party. Sir, they will find that, although Union men may be *annihilated*, they never can be *conquered*. But I must drop this strain, least I be regarded as a *Nullifier* myself. And our time is too limited to amplify on any topic. I will only make a few remarks about the pretended right of a State to secede from the Union. I have been astonished that some of my worthy friends should eschew "Nullification" as they would Satan himself, and yet tolerate and sanction the pernicious doctrine of "*secession*." This is indeed, "*straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel*." Why sir, *secession* goes ahead of Nullification: or rather, it supercedes, and swallows up that heresy, as Aaron's rod and serpent did those of the Egyptian Magicians. A very little reflection must satisfy any unprejudiced mind that *secession* is altogether incompatible with the existence of this confederacy. It is incompatible with that duty which the American people owe to their own interest and safety; and it is utterly incompatible with the welfare and happiness of the *seceding State itself*. Sir, the Government of the United States is not at liberty to permit a State to withdraw from this Union. If it were possible for such madness to seize upon every man, woman, and child, as to desire separation from the rest of the States, you are under a constitutional obligation to prevent it. But when the dominant party of a State has gained its power by fraud and misrepresentation—holding forth Nullification as a "*constitutional, efficient, PEACEABLE Remedy*"—and when a very large and respectable minority of that State protests against *secession*, and reminds you to protect Republican Institutions, you have no sort of discretion on the subject. The Federal Government is under an *imperative constitutional obligation* to guarantee to each and every State of this confederacy a Republican form of Government. Every body knows that small and weak States, in an isolated condition, could not maintain a Republican form of Government. Should the Federal Government permit a State to secede, how could the Federal head answer for the kind of Government the *seceding State* might adopt! We must presume, indeed we *know*, that, from absolute *necessity*, the *seceding State* would be compelled to adopt a more energetic form of government than a Republic. She would be forced to adopt a monarchy, or a despotism of some kind; perhaps a *Dictatorship*, as Poland recently attempted to establish against the formidable power of Russia.

It has been said, elsewhere, and for aught I know it may be said here, that this obligation of the Federal Government, *existed no longer than a State chose to remain in the Union*. Now, sir, if this be true, it was useless to require that guaranty from the Federal Government at all. What was the object of the sages who framed the Constitution, in requiring the Federal Government to guarantee to each State a republican form of Government? Was it for the security of the Federal Government itself, and the great body of the American people? No, sir, it would be absurd to require of them a constitutional pledge or guaranty that they would take care of their own liberty and welfare, and not commit political suicide. But, sir, the object of this guaranty was the security of a *minority* in each State. It was to prevent such tyranny as is now practised by the ruling party in South Carolina. It was to prevent the dominant party in a State (who might obtain their ascendancy by fraud and *delusion*) from changing the Republican Government of that State *into a despotism* and thereby tyrannizing over a minority of their fellow citizens, (as is now done in my unfortunate State) and finally ruling the *whole* with a *rod of iron*. But if this noble object (I mean the preservation of State Republics) can be defeated by allowing the dominant party in a State to secede, and burst the bonds of this happy Union asunder, it was a folly for our fathers to have incorporated that provision in the Constitution. Sir, this right of a State to secede at pleasure, is something like the right of a servant to obey his master until he choose to rebel. The right of the Federal Government, to permit a State to secede, would resemble the obligation of a father to instruct and protect and govern his children until the youngsters chose to throw off his authority and runaway from him. And, sir, as has been said on another occasion, and in another place, by a distinguished gentleman of this House [the Honorable John Q. Adams,] "The right of a State, to secede from this Union, would be the right of an inhabitant of a populous city to burn his own house." Yes, sir, the right of a State to secede, is your right, or any man's right, to burn his own house in the midst of a populous city, and thereby destroy, perhaps a hundred thousand of his neighbors.

Sir, if this construction of the Constitution is to prevail, any State wishing to set up a monarchy, or form a foreign alliance, has only to declare herself out of the Union to effect her object, or a foreign power has only to transport about ten thousand of her scape-gallows ruffians into one of our small States, where they can soon become naturalized, vote the State out of the Union, involve the country in anarchy and desolation, and away goes your Confederacy and American liberty forever.

This would be a much easier and cheaper way for a foreign nation to destroy united North America, than by sending fleets and armies against us.

But if a State has a right to secede in *time of peace*, it may have an additional pretext, perhaps stronger *reasons*, for doing so in *time of war*. And, a State which may be the *key* to the whole country, containing within her bosom some of your most powerful fortifications and richest arsenals, with a vast proportion of your navy in her harbours, may at the most perilous moment, declare herself independent of the Confederacy, secede from the Union, make common cause with the common enemy, turn your own batteries and your own ships of war against you, and commit, in the most aggravated manner, what the Constitution absolutely defines to be *Treason*. This is the inevitable tendency of this *heresy*. Sir, if any man can sanction such a hideous, suicidal doctrine as this, and then *stickle at Nullification*, I envy not his sagacity.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, has been likened to the "*Boston Port Bill*"—it has been called the "*Bloody Bill*"—and the vocabulary of billingsgate has been called and ransacked for abusive epithets to bestow upon it. Are its enemies so foolish as to imagine they can have this bill slain by giving it the name of "*mad dog*?"—Such a stratagem might possibly succeed at a *barbecue meeting in the country*, but the artifice is rather too shallow to succeed here.

It is pretended that this bill will invest the President of the United States with dangerous powers; that it will make him "*a Cromwell*," "*a Military Despot*,"—"*an armed Dictator*," and all that.

Now, sir, to all this, it is a sufficient answer to say, "the crisis demands it," the circumstances of the country require the passage of this bill; and that similar powers, indeed greater powers, have been vested in the predecessors of President Jackson, on more slight emergencies; and that too by the votes of Southern men. Greater powers were vested in General Washington and Mr. Jefferson to suppress the whiskey insurrection in Pennsylvania, and to enforce the Nonintercourse and embargo laws in New England. I say greater powers were vested in the predecessors of President Jackson; because this bill makes the power of the present Chief Magistrate contingent upon the aggressive violence of the ruling party in S. Carolina. It defines and limits those powers of the Chief Magistrate which, without this bill, would be latitudinous and without end. If the *dominant* party in S. Carolina do not use force against the federal officers and federa-

laws, the President will not feel himself authorized under the provisions of this bill, to use force against any portion of the citizens of S. Carolina. I need not turn to the cases or descant upon the laws to which I allude. We have heard them quoted and commented on, over again, by some of the ablest men in the world, in the other House, whose speeches have been published in the newspapers, and are now familiar to almost every man in the United States every body knows that those powers were called for by Mr. Jefferson, and were vested in him by the acts of 1807, and 1809, to enforce the non-intercourse and embargo laws, and prevent their evasion by the *cunning Yankees*. Yes, sir those laws were called for by *Thomas Jefferson*, who is now held forth as the champion of State Rights, and the apostle of NULLIFICATION itself.

Southern men, I presume, could not see, or at least they could not *feel* the danger of exercising such powers against *Yankees*. But when it proposed to empower, the President to *coerce Southern Nullifiers*, if they do not behave themselves, why then, indeed, it is quite another affair: then the Southern Bull gores the Northern Ox.

It is said, sir, if we pass the "Tariff bill," there will be no need for this bill. Well now, should there be no need for the President to exercise the powers granted by this bill, it will be *entirely harmless*, and its passage can do *no injury*, whatever. But what security have you that there will not be need for the exercise of the powers granted by this bill? Any Tariff bill now offered embraces, to the fullest extent, the "protecting principle." And the ruling party in South Carolina have declared, in their "address to the American People" that they will be satisfied with nothing short of an entire abandonment of *that principle*. The Representatives of that party here may hope (for they cannot offer you a better guaranty than a *hope*,) that their friends at home may be moderate, if the "Tariff bill" passes,—But they cannot pledge their party,—nor can they account for what their Nullifying Convention may do, when reassembled on the second Monday in March next. I say, therefore, this "enforcing bill," as its enemies call it, ought to pass whether the Tariff bill becomes a law or not—If you pass "Mr. Clay's bill," or "Verplank's bill," as they are called, what certainty have you that either of those bills would induce the reckless rulers of South Carolina to pause in their mad career? Each of those bills recognize the "protecting policy," and retains the "principle of protection" unimpaired—and when the Convention which passed the Ordinance of Nullification is reassembled, they may remind you of their "address to the American People"—they may tell you that your "Tariff bill" does not come up to their requisition; and that it is not such a modification of the Tariff as they, in the plenitude of their sovereignty had demanded of you. General Hamilton himself, the President of the Convention, if he was here, could give you no positive assurance that the Convention would be satisfied with your modification of the Tariff. Those who raise a political storm cannot long control it, and that Convention may proceed to *practical* nullification, and secession. They may declare the Union men traitors, forfeit their lives and confiscate their estates. But, sir, I say again we do not ask the passage of this bill for the security of our lives and property. If we cannot defend ourselves against the personal violence of our opponents, let us "*go to the wall*." But do not, by your legislation here *censure your friends* and *sanction the rebellious conduct of your enemies*. No, sir, give us *extermination*, if God wills it; but spare us from *reproach and dishonor*.

But to return once more to the bill before us: why not invest President Jackson with full and undisputed powers to meet any emergency that may arise? Is it pretended that he is less patriotic, less devoted to his country, or more disposed to become a monarch than any of his predecessors? I believe not. Is there any thing in the whole history of his public life to warrant the belief that love for *himself* would predominate over love for his country? Not at all; the very reverse is the truth Has he not, again and again staked his life, his character and his fortune on the successful issue of his measures for the safety of his country? Did he not, in the late war with Great Britain, and the more recent war with the Seminole Indians, hazard his life, his fame, his character and property on the success of his military operations for the defence of our frontier inhabitants and the safety of our country? And has he not on two recent and memorable occasions put his political existence in *imminent peril* to save the people from a dangerous Bank monopoly, on the one hand, and the plundering system of Internal Improvements, on the other? Sir, I well know that his best friends *trembled* under an apprehension that he had committed *political suicide*. Perhaps there is not another man *in the world*, who would have dared to do as much. No other man in the United States could have done so much for southern views and southern interests. And yet he has been abandoned and *reviled* by *some* Southern men. Yes, by *some* Southern men, who not long ago, *bellowed forth his praise as loud as the braying of the jack*, and who swore "they went for the old Hero, right or wrong." (Vide Senator Miller's confession to this effect, in his speech for the rejection of Mr. Van Buren, as Minister to the Court of Great Britain.) Well, now, I should like to know what President Jackson has done to merit the desertion of such *devoted*, such *thorough going, whole hog friends!*—What unknown sin has he committed? What sacrilege has he perpetrated against the interests or the political creed of the South? I know of nothing, except his *presumption* in offering for re-election! "This is the head and front of his offending." It was thought by his *real friends* and the *real friends of the country*, that the re-election of President Jackson at the present crisis, was important to the preservation of the Federal Union. It was deemed necessary that he should yield his well known predilections for retired life, to the good of his country; and General Jackson never halted, or dallied to consult his own ease or his own popularity, when the interest and safety of his country was at stake. He only inquires what his duty is—what is required of him and he pursues it, regardless of all consequences to himself. But I do not stand here either as the *apologist* or the *eulogist* of General Jackson. He has his oversights, no doubt, as well as all other men—he is not *infallible*, because he is not a *God*. He is a *man*, and therefore liable to *err*.

His Proclamation has been assailed as the "*besom of destruction*" to State rights. It has been denounced as the most villainous paper on earth, this bill only excepted. Perhaps some of its "doctrinal points" are liable to the cavil and criticism of metaphysical politicians. There is not a more pernicious animal in a simple republic as ours is, (*or should be*,) than a politician who deals in *abstractions*. He can refine and *mystify* upon the Constitution until he makes it to mean *any thing, every thing and nothing*. Such men can reason themselves *out of reason*, and out of *common sense to boot*. Gen. Jackson is not one of those *hair splitters*—he goes for *practical utility*. He is as General Washington was, brave, honest, and devoid of mystery and dissimulation. His Proclamation is of the same character. It may have some minor defects. There are *spots in the sun*—there may be specks on the Proclamation. But in the *aggregate*, it is sound and orthodox. Some of its *reasoning* may be liable to criticism, but its *end and aim* are good. Its objects are the overthrow of Nullification and secession, the execution of the laws and the preservation of the Union. I believe its enemies concede that it is a *well written* document. Yes, sir, it is a whole piece of composition; it is written with the *light of a sun beam*, and the *power of a thunderbolt*. It has carried dismay into the ranks of the disorganizers in all quarters; and has blasted nullification like lightning from Heaven. Sir, I will only add that without an adherence to the fundamental principles of the Proclamation, this Federal Government cannot long exist; and "*State Rights*" themselves will live *only as a name*. Sir, this Proclamation as little

needed my *defence* as General Jackson does my *eulogy*. I love and esteem Jackson, as a brave, honest, and patriotic man. I honor him as the greatest living benefactor of our common country. I am proud of him as a Carolinian and "*a son of the old Waxhaws.*" But I do not *idolize* him, and I have no motive to flatter him. I have never sought, *and I never shall seek*, office from him, either for myself or for any relative I have upon earth. I have no claims upon President Jackson: he is under no obligation to me. My feeble aid has been given him to his elections, because I thought the public good, and my duty to my country required it of me. I have supported such of his measures and recommendations as I thought to be just and right; I have opposed all that I considered wrong. I shall continue to do so to the end of my political life. I shall detain the House no longer. I am not fond of *talking*, nor am I fond of those who do love to talk. It is more the province of *old women* than of men, "*full grown men;*" and now, when it is so important we should *act*, nothing is so injurious to the public interest as long speeches.

In conclusion, sir, allow me to repeat that you should pass this bill, whether the tariff bill passes or not. If the Tariff bill becomes a law and is satisfactory to the nullifiers, this bill at most can *do no harm*. Without it there is no certainty that your revenue laws or officers will be respected. In short, there will be no security in South Carolina, be the fate of the Tariff what it may.