

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MONDAY, March 2.

SPEECH OF SIR ROBERT PEEL ON MOVING THE VOTE OF THANKS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO THE INDIAN ARMY, FOR THE VICTORIES ON THE SUTLEJ.

(Concluded from page 2395.)

I do then hope, that I may say that this house will, by its unanimous vote, mark the sense in which we hold the services that have been performed, and in token of the regard in which we hold the memory of Sir R. Sale, that this house will represent to Her Majesty that should Her Majesty deem fit to mark her sense of the services of Sir Robert Sale, by ordering that a monument shall be erected to his honor, this house will make good the expense of such a testimonial [hear, hear]. We have, too, amongst the superior officers, to regret the loss of Major General M'Caskill, to whose memory there is inscribed a brief and touching record by Sir Hugh Gough, in those few sentences in which he announces the loss of that valiant officer [hear, hear]. We have also to deplore the loss of one of the most eminent men, both in a civil and military capacity, Major Broadfoot—a man in whom the highest confidence was placed by every one who came in contact with him, and who had gained, because he merited, the applause of every one of the civil and military authorities; an individual who, as a civilian, was distinguished by his firmness, his wisdom, and his prudence, and whose eminent qualities as a civilian were only equalled by his courage, his gallantry, and his ardent zeal as a military man [cheers]. It is said that out of three brothers, the last who died in the service of his country was Major Broadfoot. He was present with Sir Robert Sale at Jellalabad, and it is mournful to think that, in the same conflict, we have to deplore the loss of men so eminent in the public service as Sir Robert Sale and Major Broadfoot [hear]. I will not now refer to individuals of a lower rank, who have fallen in these engagements, because it might be invidious to make distinctions where all have been alike brave; but, whatever be their rank, I think I can assure their surviving relatives that this house and the country will do justice to their valour and their devotion to their country; that both lament their loss, and prize with affectionate respect their memory [cheers]. I hope, sir, that the thanks of this house will be conveyed to every regiment, and to every man who took part in these conflicts, without exception [cheers]. If there were an occasion on which the valor of some regiments might appear, in some respects, not great, I say that, considering their former services, and their known reputation, and considering their severe losses which evinced their courage in these very conflicts—considering all these things—I venture to say that the deficiency of a single moment ought to be altogether obliterated in the recollection of former eminent services, and even in the recollection of the services performed upon this occasion [cheers]. I am quite certain that Her Majesty's 62d regiment, and the two regiments of the native sepoys, will not from all that is known of these three regiments, suffer in the estimation of their countrymen, and that we may, without exception, tender to every man in that army the willing thanks of this house for the good service performed by him [cheers]. I do hope, sir, that there will be a unanimous acquiescence in these resolutions [hear]. I trust I have said nothing which can by possibility interfere with that unanimity, which I desire to see evinced upon this occasion. I am sure that there is nothing in the resolutions themselves to which any man can entertain an objection. As to the policy out of which these transactions emanated I forbear to touch upon it. There is nothing in the resolutions that alludes to it. Let us keep, I say, our political differences, and our opinions, upon the questions of policy, altogether in the back ground on this occasion. Let us, without any division of political parties, all unanimously concur in bearing our testimony of gratitude to those who have performed a great and glorious achievement, of our esteem for those who have acted so worthy of the name of Englishmen, and who have added a new honor to that branch of the public service in which they were engaged. My own opinion is, that there never was a greater, nor a more remarkable instance of extreme forbearance than all these transactions evince—of great justice—of the refusal to resist all temptations to indulge in views of ambition or aggrandisement. Never, I believe, was there a greater combination of these high qualities—the determination to yield to no temptations of ambition, and the most brilliant valor and exalted courage in defence of British rights and of British honor [cheers]. Of those who have unfortunately fallen, it can be truly said that their lives have not been sacrificed in vain. They constitute one of the great defences of the empire, for they show what can be done by the British bayonet, wielded by British valor and by British discipline, as such qualities were displayed on the 18th, 21st and 22d December. When we look to what they have done, we feel increased confidence that in a just cause our country must be not merely invincible, but victorious; and the memory of those men who have fallen in their devotion to their country will long survive to animate the British Army by their example, and to make us proud of that name which we bear in common with such brave men—to animate us, should we be ever called upon to similar exertions, to equal their devotion, and to exhibit an equal courage in the cause of this great country, [loud cheers]. He moved the following resolutions:—

“That the thanks of this house be given to the Right Hon.

Lieutenant General Sir Henry Hardinge, Governor General of India, Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, for the energy and ability with which he directed the military means at his disposal, to the repelling of the unprovoked invasion, by the Sikh army, of the dominions of the British government, and of the protected states upon the left bank of the Sutlej; and also for the firmness and gallantry with which he directed the operations of that portion of the army under his immediate command on the afternoon and night of Dec. 21, 1845, and on the morning of the 22d, upon which occasion the enemy's defences were carried by storm, the greater part of their artillery captured, and their subsequent attempts to regain what they had lost, repeatedly defeated.

“That the thanks of this house be given to Sir Hugh Gough, Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, Commander in Chief of the forces in the East Indies, for the distinguished valour with which he led the several attacks upon the enemy in the battles of the 18th, 21st, and 22d of December, 1845, displaying, in conjunction with the Governor General, a brilliant example to the troops of perseverance and courage in critical circumstances, and of irresistible ardour in the several attacks made upon the enemy.

“That this house desires to tender its thanks to Major General Sir Harry Smith, Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath; to Major General Walter Raleigh Gilbert, and to Major Gen. Sir John Littler, Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, and to the several officers under their command, for the eminent services rendered by them in the recent arduous and successful operations.

“That the thanks of this house be given to the non-commissioned officers and private soldiers, European and native, for the perseverance and fortitude maintained by them at Moodkee on the 18th Dec. 1845, and for the daring valour with which they forced the enemy's entrenchments at Ferozesbah on the 21st and 22d of December, captured most of his guns, and finally compelled the Sikh army, of greatly superior numbers, to retire within their own frontier.

“That this resolution be signified to them by the commanders of the several corps.”

UNITED STATES.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

WASHINGTON, March 24, 1846.

To the Senate of the United States:

In answer to the enquiry of the Senate, contained in their Resolution of the 16th instant, whether, in my “judgment, any circumstances connected with, or growing out of the foreign relations of this country, require at this time an increase of our naval or military force,” and if so “what those circumstances are,” I have to express the opinion, that a wise precaution demands such increase.

In my annual Message of the 2d of December last, I recommended to the favourable consideration of Congress an increase of our naval force, especially of our steam navy, and the raising of an adequate military force to guard and protect such of our citizens as might think proper to emigrate to Oregon. Since that period, I have seen no cause to recall or modify these recommendations. On the contrary, reasons exist which, in my judgment, render it proper not only that they should be promptly carried into effect, but that additional provision should be made for the public defence.

The consideration of such additional provision was brought before appropriate Committees of the two Houses of Congress, in answer to calls made by them, in reports prepared, with my sanction, by the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, on the 29th of December and the 8th of January last; a mode of communication with Congress not unusual, and, under existing circumstances, believed to be most eligible. Subsequent events have confirmed me in the opinion that these recommendations were proper and precautionary measures.

It was a wise maxim of the Father of his country, that “to be prepared for war, is one of the most efficient means of preserving peace;” and that “avoiding occasion of expense by cultivating peace,” we should “remember, also, that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it.” The general obligation to perform this duty is greatly strengthened by facts known to the whole world. A controversy respecting the Oregon territory now exists between the United States and Great Britain; and while, as far as we know, the relations of the latter with all European nations are of the most pacific character, she is making unusual and extraordinary armaments and warlike preparations, naval and military, both at home and in her North American possessions.

It cannot be disguised that, however sincere may be the desire of peace, in the event of a rupture those instruments and preparations would be used against our country. Whatever may have been the original purpose of these preparations, the fact is undoubted that they are now proceeding, in part at least, with a view to the contingent possibility of a war with the United States. The general policy of making additional warlike preparations was distinctly announced in the speech from the throne, as late as January last, and has since been reiterated by the Ministers of the Crown in both Houses of Parliament. Under this aspect of