

FROM THE BOSTON CENTINEL,
THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

No. I.
To the PEOPLE of Massachusetts.

The hopes of New-England, blasted by the President.

Amidst all the distress, privations, and injuries we have sustained during the last year from the gross violation of our dearest rights by that scourge of our country, the Embargo, some consolation had been derived from the expectation that its unfeeling author, who had in the true spirit of a philosopher spread this devastating ruin over his country for the sake of a doubtful experiment, convinced as he must be, and as all the world has been, that it was a measure fruitful only of misery to ourselves, inoperative and ineffectual as to others, would under some pretext or other, recommend its repeal.

But men of sensibility and virtue, of honesty and patriotism, who judge of Mr. JEFFERSON by their own hearts apply a wrong standard.—The obliquity of a philosopher is at least equal to his coldness, and far from being convinced of his error by his failure, he gathers fresh confidence in the wisdom of his projects.

While therefore all mankind perceive in this unexampled restriction of commerce, this sudden arrestation of industry, nothing but ruin and mortification to ourselves, Mr. JEFFERSON fancies that he discovers it in an *Aegis* which guards our rights, protects our property and secures our honor. He felicitates himself on the happy discovery of this panacea which is to remedy all our evils.

In the same speech in which he is compelled to announce the total failure of his project, to disclose the contempt or indifference with which his boasted measure was received by those on whom it was to operate, he nevertheless has the confidence to tell an injured and insulted people, that it has produced the most beneficial effects.

The most interesting parts of this message, those to which men of political wisdom would look for an exhibition of his system of policy, are as usual so confused and obscure, so purposely enveloped in words without meaning, in sentences so artificially arranged, that it is only with the most painful attention, that their real meaning can be discovered.

Possessing none of this philosophical art and despising to use it if I did, I shall very briefly endeavor to strip off this immense covering of words, and exhibit the naked truth to an indignant people.

The first remark I shall make, and to which I request the marked attention of my readers, is, that the President with the meanness and cunning of a political mountebank, endeavours to have it believed that the Embargo was adopted as a mild, retaliatory measure for the French and British decrees. He had hoped that it would by this time have been forgotten, that the decrees of France could not be enforced to any great extent, and at the time of passing the Embargo law, the Orders of England were not known to be in existence.

2dly. I would also notice that from the nature of the negotiation with Great-Britain, he admits, that it was intended as a hostile measure against her and to coerce her to a repeal of her decrees, whereas it will be recollected that it was recommended to Congress on totally different grounds, and had the real motives of it been avowed, it is possible the measure would not have been adopted.

Let us now see what political use Mr. JEFFERSON has made of this favorite measure, and with what temper it was received by the two nations on whom it was to operate.

To France, who he knew was pleased with it, at whose request perhaps, or at least to gratify whom, it was first laid, he has artfully insinuated, that by repealing her decrees which had been discovered to be of no use to France, she would put Great-Britain in the wrong, she would give us an apology for taking sides openly against Great-Britain, and she would strengthen her influence in this country.

To France no offer was made of withdrawing the Embargo, because, as he would have you believe, it would be of no use so long as the British Orders remain in force, inasmuch as all our property would be exposed to British cruizers; but the true reason, why no such offer was made to France was, that he knew that the embargo was a measure extremely grateful to France, a measure perhaps more agreeable than an open declaration of war against Great-Britain, a measure which the Emperor's ministers in the face of all Europe have declared to be an honorable proof of our resistance to our common enemy, Great-Britain.

But France perfectly content with the proofs of submission which the Embargo afforded—satisfied with our readiness to suffer every thing for her sake, does not yield to the Machiavelian policy recommended to her by Mr. JEFFERSON—She has higher objects, and merely for the sake of rivetting our attachment, which she already finds sufficiently strong, she will not degrade herself before the world, by appearing to yield first in a contest which she was the first to begin, and to acknowledge the folly of a system which like our boasted Embargo, she had declared would bring the British Lion at her feet.

She adheres to her system—disdains even to reply to the proposed policy of her submissive friend, Mr. JEFFERSON, and leaves him to work out his own salvation, from the desperate situation in which her orders and wishes had involved him and his wretched country.

The policy adopted towards Great-Britain, if not more weak was at least as wicked, and as was expected and as Mr. JEFFERSON wished, was equally fruitless.

This shall however, be the subject of some special remains in our next paper.

November 13, 1808.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

No. II.

His conduct towards Great-Britain, and his declaration that he means to adhere to his hostile measures against her.

The policy which the President avows that he has pursued towards Great-Britain is if possible more reprehensible than that which has marked his conduct towards France,—

We have to thank him, however, for having for the first time put us in possession of documents which prove what we have so long suspected, and charged upon him, a fixed and irrevocable determination never to restore a good understanding with Great-Britain.

Before we proceed to notice his declaration as to the measures he has pursued towards that nation, it may be useful shortly to state the position in which these two nations stood in relation to each other. In the year 1803 our Commercial Treaty with Great-Britain expired, and from that time until 1805 nominal attempts were constantly made by our Government to form such a treaty as, avoiding those stipulations which the President and his party had rashly censured in the former one, might enable them to escape the charge of inconsistency. To this system of negotiation, they added another barrier, by demanding of Great-Britain the renunciation of one of her most precious maritime rights—a right which they knew she never would renounce—a right she had always exercised under our late administration, and during the most friendly state of her relations with us—and a right which not only all the European nations both claim and exercise, but which some recent events in our own country prove, is equally claimed by us.

Whether this sort of negotiation may be termed insincere, or not, we leave to the public to decide. Be this as it may, the friendly relations between the two nations were continued, and were so declared to continue by Mr. JEFFERSON in his public speeches, until the British Court of Admiralty in 1805 re-assumed their doctrine of colonial trade, and condemned a few of our vessels under this principle.—It deserves however to be remarked, that these captures were altogether owing to the refusal or neglect of our government to renew our most excellent and advantageous treaty; and further, that these condemnations, which excited so much sensibility in our government, and revived the old projects of NON-IMPORTATION and confiscation, were not half so numerous, nor so destitute of justification, as the late seizures in France, which do not call for a single remark from our lamb-like, submissive and impartial Executive.

These captures and condemnations were suspended as soon as our Ministers were seriously disposed to enter into a new negotiation, and perhaps there never was a period since the commencement of the war of 1793, when our commerce experienced less vexation or interruption than since the year 1805.

But the present administration, devoted since the earliest times to the interest of France, and as radically hostile to Great-Britain, pursued on this question of the colonial trade the same unprecedented and hostile course which we have since seen it assume on the unfortunate affair of the Chesapeake. Departing from the established usage of all civilized nations, and from that moderation which it has affected to maintain, it did not wait the course of diplomatic discussion, but chose to take the remedy into its own hands, and at the very moment when it was tendering the olive branch it accompanied its pacific propositions with the hostile and threatening measure of NON-IMPORTATION.

It presumed, and so did all wise men of our country, that Great-Britain would not treat, so long as this threatening attitude was maintained:—but the Cabinet of St. James, waving its right to complain of this ungenerous course of procedure, and preferring our friendship to the gratification of their national pride, appeared to overlook this illiberal conduct, and to the infinite chagrin of Mr. JEFFERSON, she offered such a treaty, as Mr. MONROE, and our special envoy, Mr. PINCKNEY, deemed satisfactory; and Mr. JEFFERSON himself, in February, 1807, announced to Congress the happy termination of all our differences, by a formal convention concluded with our Ministers.

It may then be assumed, that in the spring of 1807 the relations between Great-Britain and the United States, were those of AMITY and FRIENDSHIP.

What has occurred to disturb these relations, and why are we now compelled to see our nation involved in distress unparalleled? Why are we told, that we have no alternative but the wretched one of an hopeless WAR, or a paralyzing EMBARGO?

The Government of Great-Britain has been unusually cautious and delicate in its conduct towards us:—But two circumstances have occurred which must be the sole pretexts of this warlike tone, which our Government, either for the purpose of gratifying its long smothered hatred, or of conciliating the cabinet of St. Cloud, has lately assumed.

The first is the unfortunate affair of the Chesapeake.—I call it unfortunate, because this term may be correctly applied to those cases in which a nation or an individual is implicated by the acts of subordinate agents or officers.—The rashness of an inferior officer cannot, however, by the law of nations, be imputed to those who employ him, unless they refuse to tender adequate reparation as soon as it is demanded.

By the acknowledged law of nations, by that rule which the wisdom of ages has established to preserve the peace of communities, no nation has a right to assume its own reparation, until a demand has been made of the sovereign whose servants have given the offence, and until that sovereign has unreasonably neglected, or refused to give the satisfaction which is due.

In the case of the Chesapeake our administration, in violation of this equitable and peaceable regulation, chose to take its redress in its own way. Insulting the British Cabinet by a presumption unwarranted by the conduct of that Court, and doubting in advance its willingness to render us justice, it adopted a warlike and hostile measure, and while it gave succour and granted all the rights of hospitality to the enemies of England, it refused those rights to the British navy, which the laws of neutrality required us to grant.

Here Great-Britain might have rested.—She might by the acknowledged principles of public law have said.—“You have taken the measure of redress into your own hands; I owe you no acknowledgements so long as you refuse to confide in my justice or honor.”

But, as in the former case, she overlooked the ordinary dictates of pride, and preferred the maintenance of our friendship to the gratification of her passions. She sent us

a special envoy to offer us ample redress, but the same hostile spirit prevailed in our cabinet, and they pertinaciously persisted in a system which they knew Great-Britain could never admit, and thus rendered an accommodation absolutely impracticable.

Can any reasonable man, attached to the peace, the honor and welfare of his country, doubt that the continuation of this dispute is imputable solely to our own administration?

We now proceed to the only remaining pretended source of complaint against Great-Britain, her Orders in Council of November, 1807.

In November, 1806, BONAPARTE, without pretext, without color under the law of nations, issued a decree at Berlin, and afterwards one at Milan, declaring, all the British possessions in a state of blockade, and authorizing the capture of all neutral vessels which should have visited a British port, or have, by force, been visited by a British ship. These decrees, more piratical than any which was ever issued from the barbarous courts of the pirates of Africa, are placed by Mr. JEFFERSON on precisely the same ground with that of Great-Britain, and he talks of the pretexts on which they were respectively founded, as having been the same.

But we ask here, what decrees Great-Britain had before issued, to which we were bound to have made resistance?

When did he or his ministers require our resistance?—Till such demand had been made, no such order could legally have been issued. But it is idle to spend time on such a subject. It is well known, that these decrees were issued by a Military Conqueror, at a moment when he was flushed with victory, with the hope that he might conquer or reduce by commercial restraints, a brave and magnanimous foe, whom his arms had in vain attempted to subdue.

He issued it in the conscious violation of neutral rights—of rights which freebooters and tyrants, like himself, have in all ages treated with contempt.

What was the course which Great-Britain pursued on this occasion? Did she take counsel from her pride or passions? Did she hurl in the face of the tyrant the vengeance which she had the power and capacity to enforce?

No—She waited with moderation and firmness.—She notified to neutral States, and especially to us, in the language of justice and forbearance, her determination to resist this unexampled attack upon her through the medium of the rights of neutrals, and she waited twelve months to see whether there yet remained in the few unsubdued States, sufficient independence to maintain their privileges.—She mistook our condition.—We had been already subdued, though no French army had ravaged our country.—No libidinous officers had debauched our wives and children. No whiskered Prefects had as yet quartered themselves in the houses of our citizens and levied contributions upon our cities.

In this state of things our Congress inflicted that terrible punishment upon our country, a perpetual Embargo. Soon after the Embargo was imposed, the British retaliatory Orders of Council appeared.—This measure limited in the very face of it, both in duration and in principle, to the Orders of the tyrant of France, nevertheless, contained the strongest evidence of a disposition to soothe and conciliate the United States.

In place of following the examples of BONAPARTE and extending them to every port of their enemies, and to every species of traffick, it left free to us the vast colonial trade of France and Spain, and enabled us to enjoy all the luxuries of the tropical regions. Blind to this strong proof of a conciliatory disposition, our administration, devoted to France, have always considered, or affected so to do, the British Orders as original, and as the principal cause of our difficulties.

Thus circumstanced, Congress adjourned, leaving us to our disasters and our fate. What have been the proposals to Great-Britain in this extraordinary state of affairs?

The pretended object of the late negotiation has been to induce her to repeal her Orders. When a proposition is made to a nation, or to a wise man, to rescind any measures adopted in deliberation, one would naturally expect that such propositions would extend to the removal of the causes on which such measures were founded.

The British Orders were founded solely on the Decrees of the French Government. Their bearing on neutrals was merely incidental, and it is evident that bearing was painful to the British Government.

What does Mr. JEFFERSON propose? To mediate between Great-Britain and France, and procure a repeal of the original cause? No.—Does he propose to resist the decrees of France by force? No.—But he would have us believe, that he proposed to resist effectually by keeping on the Embargo.

Was Great-Britain blind and deaf? Did she not know that this Embargo was a hostile measure; adopted solely against her? Did she not know, that a French minister, in a public address, had praised the Embargo, as evidence of a disposition to resist what he calls the unjust claims of Great-Britain? Did she not know the facilities given to French cruizers to elude this act? and the arbitrary and tyrannical, the unconstitutional and shameful manner in which it had been enforced against the Canadian frontier?

What then was the simple proposal to Great-Britain? Annihilate your decrees, aimed at your enemy, and we will annihilate our decrees, aimed at you. Was not this identifying our cause with that of France? Was it not allowing and admitting, that in THIS MEASURE we had been allies? That we had joined in the system of coercing Great-Britain, by commercial warfare?

We pray all sober men to reflect, and say, whether as France is waging solely a commercial war against England, our Embargo, in its design and execution, is not in effect an alliance offensive and defensive in that war?

What then was the modest demand which Mr. JEFFERSON made of the cabinet of St. James? That she should repeal a justifiable retaliatory order on her enemy, because we were willing to repeal our hostile Embargo.—For the proposition was absurd, unless we suppose Mr. JEFFERSON considered the Embargo as bearing hostilely on Great-Britain. So then for the sake of re-acquiring our trade, Great-Britain was to acknowledge two things infinitely to her disadvantage, 1st. That she could not cope with Bo-