

LONDON, APRIL 22.
IMPORTANT STATE PAPER.
DECLARATION.

"The Government of France, having by an Official Report, communicated by its Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Conservative Senate on the 10th day of March last, removed all doubts as to the perseverance of that Government in the assertion of principles, and in the maintenance of a system, not more hostile to the maritime rights and commercial interests of the British Empire, than inconsistent with the rights and independence of Neutral Nations; and having thereby plainly developed the inordinate pretensions, which that system, as promulgated in the Decrees of Berlin and Milan, was from the first designed to enforce; His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, acting in the name, and on the behalf of His Majesty, deems it proper, upon this formal and authentic republication of the principles of those Decrees, thus publicly to declare His Royal Highness's determination still firmly to resist the introduction and establishment of this arbitrary Code, which the Government of France openly avows its purpose to impose by force upon the world, as the Law of Nations.

"From the time that the progressive injustice and violence of the French Government, made it impossible for His Majesty any longer to restrain the exercise of the rights of war within their ordinary limits, without submitting to consequences not less ruinous to the commerce of his dominions, than derogatory to the rights of the Crown, His Majesty has endeavoured by a restricted and moderate use of those rights of retaliation, which the Berlin and Milan Decrees, necessarily called into action, to reconcile Neutral States to those measures, which the conduct of the enemy had rendered unavoidable: and which, His Majesty has at all times professed his readiness to revoke, so soon as the Decrees of the enemy, which gave occasion to them, should be formally and unconditionally repealed, and the Commerce of Neutral Nations be restored to its accustomed course.

"At a subsequent period of the war, His Majesty, availing himself of the then situation of Europe, without abandoning the principle and object of the Orders in Council of November, 1807, was induced so to limit their operation, as materially to alleviate the restrictions thereby imposed upon neutral commerce. The Order in Council of April, 1809, was substituted in the room of those of November, 1807, and the retaliatory system of Great-Britain acted no longer on every country in which the aggressive measures of the enemy were in force, but was confined in its operation to France, and to the countries upon which the French yoke was most strictly imposed; and which had become virtually a part of the dominions of France.

"The United States of America remained nevertheless dissatisfied; and their dissatisfaction has been greatly increased by an artifice too successfully employed on the part of the enemy, who has pretended, that the Decrees of Berlin and Milan were repealed, although the Decree effecting such repeal has never been promulgated; although the notification of such pretended repeal distinctly described it to be dependent on conditions, in which the enemy knew Great-Britain could never acquiesce; and although abundant evidence has since appeared of their subsequent execution.

"But the enemy has at length laid aside all dissimulation; he now publicly and solemnly declares, not only that those Decrees still continue in force, but that they shall be rigidly executed until Great-Britain shall comply with additional conditions, equally extravagant; and he further announces the penalties of those Decrees to be in full force against all Nations which shall suffer their flag to be, as it is termed in this new Code, 'denationalized.'

"In addition to the disavowal of the blockade of May, 1806, and of the principles on which that blockade was established, and in addition to the repeal of the British Orders in Council—he demands an admission of the principles, that the goods of an enemy, carried under a neutral flag, shall be treated as neutral; that neutral property under the flag of an enemy shall be treated as hostile;—that arms and warlike stores alone (to the exclusion of ship timber and other articles of naval equipment) shall be regarded as contraband of war: and that no ports shall be considered as lawfully blockaded, except such as are invested and besieged, in the presumption of their being taken [en prevention d'être pris] and into which a merchant ship cannot enter without danger.

"By these and other demands, the enemy in fact requires, that Great-Britain and all civilized nations, shall renounce, at his arbitrary pleasure, the ordinary and indisputable right of the maritime war; that Great-Britain, in particular, shall forego the advantages of her naval superiority, and allow the commercial property, as well as the produce and manufacture of France, and her confederates, to pass the ocean in security, whilst the subjects of Great-Britain are to be in effect, proscribed from all commercial intercourse with other nations; and the produce and manufactures of these realms are to be excluded from every country in the world, to which the arms or the influence of the enemy can extend.

"Such are the demands to which the British Government is summoned to submit;—to the abandonment of its most ancient, essential, and undoubted maritime rights. Such is the Code by which France hopes, under the cover of a neutral flag, to render her commerce unassailable by sea; whilst she proceeds to invade or to incorporate with her own dominions all States that hesitate to sacrifice their national interests at her command, and, in abdication of their just rights, to adopt a Code, by which they are required to exclude, under the mask of municipal regulation, whatever is British, from their dominions.

"The pretext for these extravagant demands is, that some of these principles were adopted by voluntary compact in the Treaty of Utrecht; as if a Treaty once existing between two particular countries, founded on special and reciprocal considerations, binding only on the contracting parties, and which in the last treaty of peace between the same powers, had not been revived, were to be regarded as declaratory of the public law of nations.

"It is needless for his Royal Highness to demonstrate the injustice of such pretensions. He might otherwise appeal to the practice of France herself, in this and in former wars; and to her own established codes of maritime law: it is sufficient that these new demands of the enemy form a wide departure from those conditions on which the alleged repeal of the French Decrees was accepted by America; and upon which alone, erroneously assuming that repeal to be complete, America has claimed a revocation of the British Orders in Council.

"His Royal Highness, upon a review of all these circumstances, feels persuaded, that so soon as this formal declaration, by the Government of France, of its unabated adherence to the principles and provisions of the Berlin and Milan Decrees, shall be made known in America, the Government of the United States, actuated not less by a sense of justice to Great-Britain, than by what is due to its own dignity, will be disposed to recall those measures of hostile exclusion, which, under a misconception of the real views and conduct of the French Government, America has exclusively applied to the commerce and ships of war of Great-Britain.

"To accelerate a result so advantageous to the true interests of both countries, and so conducive to the re-establishment of perfect friendship between them; and to give a decisive proof of his Royal Highness's disposition to perform the engagements of His Majesty's Government, by revoking the Orders in Council, whenever the French Decrees shall be actually and unconditionally repealed; his Royal Highness the Prince Regent has been this day pleased, in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, and by and with the advice of His Majesty's Privy Council, to order and declare:

"That if at any time hereafter the Berlin and Milan Decrees shall, by some authentic act of the French Government, publicly promulgated, be expressly and unconditionally repealed; then and from thenceforth the Order in Council of the 7th day of January 1807, and the Order in Council of the 26th day of April 1809, shall, without any further order be, and the same hereby are declared from thenceforth to be wholly and absolutely revoked; and further, that the full benefit of this Order shall be extended to any ship or vessel captured subsequent to such authentic act of repeal of the French Decrees, although antecedent to such repeal such ship or vessel shall have commenced, and shall be in the prosecution of a voyage, which, under the said Orders in Council, or one of them, would have subjected her to capture and condemnation; and the Claimant of any ship or cargo which shall be captured at any time subsequent to such authentic act of repeal by the French Government, shall, without any further order or declaration on the part of His Majesty's Government on this subject, be at liberty to give in evidence in the High Court of Admiralty or any Court of Vice Admiralty, before which such ship or vessel, or its cargo, shall be brought for adjudication, that such repeal by the French Government had been by such authentic act promulgated prior to such capture: and upon proof thereof, the voyage shall be deemed and taken to have been as lawful, as if the said Orders in Council had never been made; saving nevertheless to the captors, such protection and indemnity as they may be equitably entitled to, in the judgment of the said Court, by reason of their ignorance or uncertainty as to the repeal of the French Decrees, or of the recognition of such repeal by His Majesty's Government at the time of such capture.

"His Royal Highness however deems it proper to declare, that, should the repeal of the French Decrees, thus anticipated and provided for, afterwards prove to have been illusory on the part of the enemy; and should the restrictions thereof be still practically enforced or revived by the enemy, Great-Britain will be obliged, however, reluctantly, after reasonable notice to Neutral Powers, to have recourse to such measures of retaliation as may then appear to be just and necessary.

"Westminster, April 21, 1812."

KINGSTON, (JAMAICA,) APRIL 17.

Extract of a letter dated Caracas, 11th April, 1812.

"The unfortunate news of Venezuela proves but too true; the loss is incalculable; in all Lagaira no solid building remains; the neighboring villages have fallen likewise to ruin; the city of Caracas is but a heap of rubbish, not a church remains; thousands of lives have been lost—most of the English inhabitants have been saved; the misery is such that it is not in the power of man to describe it; death, starvation, despair, and madness, are painted on the countenance of every body; money is replaced by paper, and trade become null. Thousands of people are still covered under the ruins; they are thrown into the sea, or put up in piles and burnt to avoid pestilential disease. Commerce has thus received a fresh blow, especially in this quarter, and whether independency will hold out is uncertain. Our arrivals from Santa Cruz, St. Thomas, and Porto Rico, prove that the earthquake was not felt there, neither at Rio de la Hache, but the bar of Maricaoibo filled up, so that there remains but six feet water on the bar; Coro has received no damage, but the small town of Corroa on the Caracas road did, and about 2500 men, who arrived from Caracas at 10 o'clock, A. M. and at four o'clock sunk in the town on the 26th. Five hundred from Coro retreated, and by that means

were saved. Puerto Cavello seems to be the principal point of trade, and Valencia the interior capital."

ST. JOHN'S, (ANTIGUA,) MAY 9.

We are indebted to the civility of a gentleman of respectability, in this Island, for the following extract of a letter from his friend in Martinique, dated St. Pierre, 2d May, 1812:

"You will, no doubt, ere this have heard of the earthquake at Caracas, and the dreadful destruction of lives and property in consequence. Something of a similar nature has happened at St. Vincent—late in the evening of the 30th ult. tremendous explosions were heard in succession, until 8 o'clock in the morning of the first instant, which led to a supposition that an enemy's squadron was either engaged with the batteries at Fort Royal, or some of our men of war in the St. Lucia Channel, which occasioned some alarm, when the Militia turned out. Toward mid-day the sky began to have a red smoky appearance to the southward, which led people to suppose that an old volcano in St. Lucia had been operating, and towards night a strong sulphurous smell was perceptible, and ashes falling on the ground, when a schooner with Mules from the Main arrived, and dispelled our doubts by the fact being disclosed, that a terrible volcano had broke out in St. Vincent, with the explosions, as have been mentioned, so tremendous as to shake every timber in the vessel, although nine miles to leeward of the Island she was covered over on the deck with ashes and small stones. A schooner has also arrived from St. Vincent this morning that left there on Thursday evening before the fire began, and reports, that it began on Tuesday to throw up ashes, and had then covered three Sugar Plantations in its neighborhood entirely over, destroying all the Cattle on them, and in the evening, while off the land about four miles, the volcano began to throw out fire and lava with such a shaking and noise, as almost to shake the vessel in pieces—she was covered with ashes and stones, the same as the other; but they cannot tell the extent of the damage. It is also reported, that St. Lucia is in a similar predicament."

ROSEAU, MAY 2.

"A little after midnight, in the morning of yesterday, not only the inhabitants of the town, but of the Island in general, were alarmed by repeated sounds from the Southward, so resembling continued discharges of artillery, that notwithstanding the intervening mountains and distance, was universally believed to be a smart engagement between some vessels in the Martinique Channel, and from the loudness of the reports were supposed to be of considerable force, and consequently occasioned much anxiety as to the result.

The discharges were heard in town from 12 o'clock, until three A. M. when they gradually diminished, and finally ceased; about that time an alarm was fired under the impression that an enemy's squadron had been engaged on the coast;—from four to six o'clock, and about seven explosions were heard at intervals, resembling the distant discharge of heavy cannon, seeming from the South-west, from which the general opinion was confirmed, that the action was now continued in a running fight.

"As there were no vessels seen in the Channel next morning, it was conjectured that it might be an attack on Martinique, and the sloop Lune was despatched to reconnoitre; she returned this morning, with no other information, than, that Martinique was in the same state of alarm, from the same cause.

"The alarm was discharged this morning about 8 o'clock, when the militia returned from their military duties to their former avocation in civil life—Although the satisfaction experienced from the idea of immediate expected danger, was expelled from every heart, by the melancholy intelligence received by the schooner Flying Fish, this morning, the Captain of which states, that in passing St. Vincent's, from the Spanish port of Curapano, he observed a Volcanic explosion, which seemed to cover that Island with flames and smoke, accompanied with a most tremendous noise; he says that although at the distance of ten miles his vessel received a considerable quantity of cinders on deck, and he imagines a great part of the Island must be destroyed; and conceives this to be the cause of the noise heard here;—If this account be correct, it is too horrid for comment.—We leave it to the imagination of our readers.

"It was the intention of some Gentlemen of this Island, to have gone over to ascertain the real situation of that afflicted colony, but from some causes, which we are not able (and probably not authorized to develop,) their intentions were defeated."

Extract of a letter from a Gentleman of respectability in Bassaterre, to one of our Subscribers in this town, dated the 3d inst.

"The sloop of war Lightning of 20 guns, arrived at Bassaterre, the 3 inst. from Martinique, the Captain of which informs us that a schooner despatched from Roseau to St. Vincent, returned thither without having dared to approach that Island, perceiving it all on fire. It now appears that what we took to be the report of cannon on the night of Thursday last, was no other than a volcanic eruption which from the Captain's report took place in three different parts of the Island a considerable distance from each other. The ships of war at Fort Royal, Martinique, felt a considerable agitation.

"The Captain of the Lightning heard at Martinique, that smoke and fire was seen to issue from the Diamond Rock: we hope in a day or two to learn all the particulars of this melancholy catastrophe.

"There being nothing in this event contrary to the laws of nature, these volcanic eruptions do not justify the extraordinary degree of alarm which many people have experienced."