

BOSTON, JUNE 7.

ANSWER

OF THE SENATE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

TO THE

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

May it please your Excellency,

The Senate of Massachusetts have met your Excellency at the opening of the present political year, with the most lively emotions of respect and affection, and with devout thankfulness to the Author of all good, for your re-election to the office of Chief Magistrate. In this event, so propitious to the best interests of our country, we discern a satisfactory evidence of the virtue and intelligence of our fellow citizens—and we can assure your Excellency that the enlightened people of this Commonwealth have witnessed your administration, during the past year, not only with entire approbation, but with the warmest sentiments of veneration and gratitude. The cheerfulness, with which your Excellency has again accepted this high and responsible office, doubly arduous at this perilous crisis of our affairs, is a renewed proof of the pure and exalted patriotism for which your Excellency has ever been distinguished.

The Senate consider the view which your Excellency, in your communication to the Legislature, has taken of the causes which have produced the present calamitous situation of the country, to be so clear and comprehensive, that it would be difficult to make any observations in their answer, which your Excellency has not anticipated.

A frequent recurrence to the principles of our Constitutions is necessary to a proper understanding and support of our rights and privileges.

That the freedom of speech and of the press is essential to the preservation of our free governments:—that all political power is derived from the people:—that they may resume the trust which delegated for their welfare, whenever it shall be exercised to their ruin; and that allegiance and protection are reciprocal—are positions in which all agree.

These rights are indeed liable to abuse. The freedom of speech may degenerate into licentiousness; and the inherent right of the people to alter and amend their systems of Government, may be perverted to the purposes of ambition. But notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers which must be encountered for the attainment and support of Civil Liberty, yet its blessings are a full reward for all the care and exertion necessary to its preservation.

The Constitution of the United States was the result of mutual forbearance and liberal compromise. There were however certain great interests, which were understood to claim its peculiar regard.

Among the most prominent of these were the encouragement and protection of commerce.—This was justly considered by the New-England and navigating States, as an indispensable condition of the compact. It was commerce which gave value to their enterprise and agriculture, and so careful were they to guard this sinew of their strength, that a provision was introduced into the Constitution itself, exempting all exports from duty. This regard to commerce was not novel; for in the Declaration of Independence it forms a conspicuous allegation against Great-Britain, that she had cut off our trade with all parts of the world.

It is not to be supposed that the navigating states would have adopted the constitution if they had foreseen that the effect of it would be the destruction of their commerce.

Soon after the constitution went into operation the war in Europe broke out, and the citizens of the United States were necessarily affected by its consequences.

It was then that the patriotism and firmness of Washington were again tried. Moved by considerations of justice as well as of policy, notwithstanding the embarrassments of a powerful opposition, and with means and resources inconsiderable, compared with those which were in the power of the present administration—he took and maintained the ground of an impartial neutrality.

The state of prosperity which followed this magnanimous course, was unexampled in the history of the world.

It was emphatically the golden age. Our commerce was extended through the world, richly rewarding the labor and enterprise of the farmer and the merchant, and furnishing abundant revenues for the support of Government. With such an example before them, was it to have been expected that any administration under circumstances nearly similar, would pursue an opposite policy? Could it have been believed that the original ground and bond of the union would be abandoned? that measures would be adopted and pursued with undeviating perseverance destructive of our

commercial advantages? that a naval defence should not only be neglected but represented as an extravagant and useless expenditure!

It was naturally to be supposed that both Great-Britain and France would be desirous of the aid of the United States in their sanguinary contest; but it was obviously the duty and for the interest of this country to remain perfectly neutral. Why has our country been involved in war, especially with that power whose means of annoyance so greatly exceeded those possessed by the other? Was Great-Britain selected for our enemy because she has paid less regard to her treaties than France? In utter contempt of her engagement that free ships should make free goods, France has plundered and confiscated American property wherever it could be found. While one of the rival powers has, according to her agreement, compensated in damages with interest for injuries of which we complained, the other has avoided her compacts by the shameless avowal that she finds a real inconvenience in their performance. While one of them has convoyed the other has burnt our ships in every sea.

The principal alleged cause of the war, was the Orders in Council;—and although they have ceased, it is still necessary to consider the circumstances under which they were issued, rightly to understand the grounds and origin of that disastrous measure.

Our Ministers in London had concluded a treaty upon all the points in dispute between the two countries, just at the time when the Berlin Decrees was published, prohibiting to neutrals all intercourse with Great-Britain. Aware of the injuries which she must sustain from the flagrant violation of the law of nations, she frankly informed our Government, that if (contrary to all expectation) the United States submitted to that outrage, she should be obliged to retaliate upon France by prohibiting to neutrals all trade with her. The Berlin Decree was immediately enforced upon all American property within the reach of French rapacity, as well in neutral territories as on the high seas. This was known to our Government:—for it appears that as early as May 1807, they informed our minister in France, that “there were proofs that the West India privateers had under colour of that edict, committed depredations, which would constitute just claims for redress.”

The treaty was rejected by the President as unworthy of the consideration of the Senate: notwithstanding the duty to preserve an exact impartiality, no efficient measures were taken against France, for her violation of her treaty as well as of the law of nations; and after waiting nearly a year, G. Britain issued her Orders in Council, of 11th Nov. 1807, retaliating the aggressions of France pursuant to the notice before given.

These, as your Excellency observes, were declared to be “retaliatory measures, adopted in consequence of the aggressions of her enemy, and to be revoked when these aggressions ceased.”

Our Government contend that France has been the first to do justice to the U. States: That she repealed her decrees, and ceased to violate our neutral rights in Nov. 1810:—and therefore, that Great-Britain ought to have revoked her Orders: That, in consequence of her refusal the Act of Congress of March, 1811, was rightfully passed, prohibiting all intercourse with G. Britain—a measure which the Emperor has graciously condescended to consider as “an act of resistance to the British Orders.”

The question is thus brought to a single point. Did France repeal her Decrees, and cease to violate our neutral rights in Nov. 1810?

If she did, Great-Britain was bound upon her own principles to repeal her Orders.—If she did not, it necessarily follows that France has added insult to her original aggressions.

The pretended repeal of the Decrees was upon condition in effect, that Great-Britain should abandon the ancient rights and usages of war, sanctioned by the public law touching blockades: “a condition, which, (as your Excellency observes,) many persons supposed would never happen.”

Nevertheless our government conducted itself in relation to Great-Britain, as if the repeal had been absolute.

The ground taken by the American cabinet was that France had ceased to violate the neutral rights of the United States, and they insisted that Great-Britain ought to believe it.

But the continued burning of American vessels by order of the commanders of the Emperor's ships—the indiscriminate plunder and confiscation of American property on shore—on the seas—in France—in Denmark—Naples, and other subjugated States:

These outrages, connected with the repeated declaration of the Emperor, that the decrees were the fundamental law of his Empire, still operated upon the incredulity of Great-Britain.

At length when it suited the purpose of the Emperor, but not till April 1811—he made his repealing decree, and as we are informed communicated it to our cabinet, although it was not made public for more than a year after its date: and this puts the question now under consideration forever at rest. The Emperor declares that he repealed his decrees in consequence of our act of resistance to the British orders:—but our government declares that this act was in consequence of his repeal of the decrees.

“To suppose therefore (as your Excellency remarks) that the French decrees were repealed on the 2d Nov. 1810, involves the absurdity, that the effect took place long before the cause.”

During all this period the negotiations was pending with Great-Britain. She making overtures to revoke her orders upon receiving evidence of the repeal of the decrees:—the actual repeal was carefully concealed—and the American cabinet employed itself in labored essays to persuade Great-Britain, that the pretended repeal was real and absolute—until they terminated the discussions by a declaration of war.

It is now sufficiently apparent that if the decrees had been effectually resisted, the Orders in Council would not have been issued—for as soon as the real repeal was produced, Great-Britain annulled her orders according to her uniform engagement. Unfortunately, however, the country was plunged into the war, before the revocation could be known here.

The declaration of the French minister that the Decrees of April, 1811, was communicated to our cabinet, was true, or it was not. If it was true, why have not the administration indignantly denied the fact, and taken such a position in relation to that perfidious power as the occasion required? If it was true, and the war has been produced by the concealment, will not all the blood that has been or may be shed in carrying it on, be required at the hands of its authors?

If upon the discovery of the perfidy of the French government, the President had revoked his Proclamation, we agree with your Excellency, “that the numerous evils that have followed from that unfortunate measure might have been prevented.”

And considering the restrictions which the European powers, in time of peace, usually impose on trade with their colonies—we perfectly agree with your Excellency, “that it is probable that if our government had maintained a system of impartial neutrality and had imposed no restrictions on trade, that notwithstanding those decrees and orders we might, by reason of our neutral character, have enjoyed a commerce more lucrative for the last seven years than would have fallen to our share had the whole world been at peace.”

The Orders in Council having been thus removed, the only remaining alleged cause of war was the right which Great-Britain claimed to take her own seamen from our merchant ships.

That cause alone was not considered as a sufficient objection to the arrangement which was made with Mr. Erskine, and little doubt can be entertained, that another arrangement equally advantageous to the U. States might have been made and the war instantly brought to a close. As impressions had been continually diminishing, it is not easy to perceive why the necessity of war for that cause should have increased.

Besides, the people had expressed great satisfaction with that arrangement, and would undoubtedly have rejoiced had a similar course been pursued.

By this we do not mean that the manner should have been exactly followed, for we should exceedingly regret that any offensive terms should have been again introduced, having a direct tendency to defeat the negotiation.

The people fortunately understand the subject of impressment much better than formerly, and it will be difficult to persuade them that they are to be benefited by the employment and protection of foreign seamen.

The result of the late investigation upon this subject in this Commonwealth, abundantly proves that the risque of impressment of native American seamen is so small that it scarcely excites their attention or regard. Indeed it must be considered as a singular circumstance that our western brethren should express and seem to feel so much more sympathy for the wrongs suffered by the seamen, than the seamen do for themselves.

It ought to be recollected that the evidence on that examination, was taken un-

der oath; from merchants of this state who had employed the greatest number of seamen, in voyages to all parts of the world; and it is much to be desired, that such further investigation will be had in other commercial states as will present the whole truth upon this very interesting subject.

We concur with your Excellency in the belief, “that British seamen have been patronised at the expence of our own, and that if G. B. should consent to relinquish the right of taking her own subjects it would be of no advantage to our native seamen, it would tend only to reduce their wages by increasing the number of that class of men.

We believe there never was a subject more grossly misrepresented, both as to the cause and effect, than this of impressment.

Give our gallant seamen ships and employment, and they will not call upon the landmen for protection or for bread.

Your Excellency very justly observes that “the national constitution was formed and adopted for our own defence, and that there is not “a clause in it in which an extension of our territorial limits was contemplated.” Attached as we are to the union of the states upon the principles of the constitution, we are alarmed that Congress should ever have pursued a policy in the admission of new states, so entirely contrary to these principles, and so fatal to the safety of the union.

The duty imposed by the Constitution upon the General Government to provide for the common defence, was undoubtedly a principal reason for its adoption. But in what manner has this duty been performed?

Although Massachusetts and other great navigating States have contributed immense sums for the support of the General Government, yet when they are plunged into the war by States whose contributions have often fallen short of the expence of the collection, they are left to take care of themselves.

What measures have been adopted for the protection of our immense property on the ocean; where are the troops, raised and paid by the United States? They have been most improvidently drawn from the seaboard, the most exposed part of our Country, for the purpose of invading the territory, and attacking the inhabitants of a neighbouring and unoffending province, which was sincerely desirous of continuing upon the most friendly terms with us; a province too, the conquest of which, if made, can be of no advantage, but may produce incalculable evils to our Country.

The refusal of the President to furnish this State with its proportion of arms, for which the State has already paid, we hope is not a correct indication of the temper and disposition entertained by the General Government in relation to the aid which they propose to afford, in this war which has been so wantonly waged. Considering that the distribution was peremptorily required by law, to be made according to the effective Militia of each State, we know not from whence the President derives his power to dispense with its obligations.

The accumulated evils which have fallen upon the people in consequence of the departure from the principles and policy of Washington, have in a great measure silenced the rage and lessened the asperity of party animosity.

Involved in one common distress, they look upon each other with astonishment and sympathy, and are anxious only for the public safety.

Depending upon the blessings of Heaven our fathers braved and resisted oppression, and founded this free State upon the principles of civil and religious liberty.

We trust that their Sons have not degenerated—and that they will duly appreciate and defend their precious heritage.

We cordially unite with your Excellency in the “hope that with a fixed attention to the duties imposed by our National and State Constitutions, and with a humble reliance on the Divine protection, the members of this government will at this perplexing period, preserve consistency of conduct, and adhere with undeviating constancy to the principles of Justice and Truth.”

BOSTON, JUNE 5.

LATEST FROM NEW-LONDON

A gentleman who arrived in the Providence Stage last evening, left New-London, at 9 o'clock on Thursday morning: at that time there were two British ships of war at anchor off Gardner's Island about 12 miles from New-London—our frigates had not shifted their position. Considerable apprehension of an attack so soon as the British should be reinforced, prevailed. The town was filled with soldiery—and the inhabitants were removing their furniture.

Extract of a letter, dated Hartford, June 2.

“An express arrived this morning to the Governor, stating, that Commodore