

amounted to an engagement on our part that we would in all things shew an exact impartiality between the contending parties; and policy as well as justice demanded of us an equal attention to both. But have we maintained this exact impartiality towards the belligerents? Have not the restrictions upon our own commerce been so calculated as deeply to wound the interests of Great-Britain, without impairing the resources or disturbing the continental system of her enemy? We have expressed a just sympathy for our seamen who are detained in British ships; but have we shown a like sensibility for those who are confined in French prisons until discharged by enlisting on board their cruisers? When the war commenced, had we not received as many grievous insults from the French government as from the British, and in what manner have we resented them? Although in proportion to her maritime means of annoyance we had suffered much greater losses from France than from England, has not our language to the former been mild and conciliating, and have we not to the latter indulged in offensive reproaches and undeserved asperity? Men who sincerely desire peace, will not employ themselves to multiply the causes of dispute and excite jealousy and irritation between the people of the two countries; they will rather allay the passions than inflame them, and will think it no diminution of our dignity if doubtful cases we recede from a supposed right, rather than support it by artifice and violence.

It has been often asserted that our national honor compelled us to engage in a war with Great-Britain.—The honor of the nation consists in the display of its wisdom, justice, moderation, and magnanimity: it requires the government to regulate its conduct for the greatest advantage of the state; and to pursue that series of measures which most effectually promotes the welfare of the people. But that species of honor which would prompt us to wage war for every supposed instance of abuse or disrespect, is not the honor of a wise and moral people. A proud or passionate individual will sometimes claim a right to sport with his own life, by putting it in hazard against the life of another. But, few men will avow that government has a right to expose the safety of the state, and the lives and fortunes of the citizens, merely to indulge its passions, or gratify its ambition.

So far as conquest may be considered as the object of the present war, its policy, to say nothing of the justice of it, must be extremely doubtful. A few individuals may gain by an offensive war, but the great body of the people have nothing to gain, or hope for. In Republicks, the increase of power and wealth has often occasioned severe calamities by increasing their pride and arrogance, and inspiring rash counsels and extravagant measures. But when they have been successful in foreign war and acquired the title of conquerors, I think they have invariably and speedily lost their form of government. A man who has a large army at his controul, must have the virtue of a Washington not to make use of it for his own aggrandisement. The national constitution was formed for our own defence; there is not a clause in it, in which the extension of our territorial limits was contemplated. The Congress indeed were authorised to admit new States into the Union; but every man knew that under the Confederation it had been proposed to form a number of States in the western territory,

and Vermont was even then a candidate for admission. I presume that no one thought of giving Congress the power to obtain by purchase, or conquest, the territories of other nations, and annex them to the United States and form them, or subdivisions of them, into constituent parts of the Union.

A suspicion has been intimated that the hostility of the Indian tribes was excited by British influence.—As no proof has been offered to us on this subject, it might be sufficient to say, that regard to vague and uncertain suspicions exposes a nation to become an unjust aggressor. But has not our conduct towards those tribes been often oppressive and unjust, and have we not indulged an eager desire to obtain possession of their lands, when we had already millions of acres which we could neither cultivate, nor dispose of? Perhaps the late unfriendly disposition of the Indians may be accounted for, by the march of an hostile army into their country, and the battle which ensued, many months before war was declared against England.

In the present moral state of the world, it would seem that our political friendships should be formed with some regard to that state. But are we encouraged by the moral qualities of the French government to take part in its wars? Or will any one say that the cause of France is more just than that of Spain, Portugal or Russia; or that her success would be more conducive to the happiness of mankind? Or should we cultivate the friendship of France, because she can do us more injury than England; or because her manners, religion or policy are more congenial to ours? In our embarrassed and alarming situation, it is indeed a very favorable circumstance that the people have so generally expressed their utter aversion to a French alliance;—such an alliance would be the greatest calamity, and must produce the most fatal effects.

It is my wish, gentlemen, in making these observations, that they may lead to a dispassionate review of our conduct towards England and France, and of theirs in relation to us. While we attend to what is due to ourselves, we are not to forget what we owe to others; and in cases liable to the least doubt, the claims even of an enemy should be impartially examined. If upon such examination we are convinced that the war is necessary, we shall be justified in affording our voluntary aid to support it. But if we discover that our opinions or measures have been erroneous, we have the strongest motives both from interest and duty to relinquish them. We may indeed deceive ourselves, and even resolve to cherish the deception; but the Supreme Arbiter to whose retributive justice the most solemn appeal has been made, cannot be deceived, and will not with impunity be mocked.

In times of party zeal, and public commotion, it may be difficult on some occasions to discern what is right. But I hope that with a fixed attention to the duties imposed on us by our national and State constitutions: and with a humble reliance on the divine direction, the members of this government will, in this perplexing period, preserve consistency of conduct and adhere with undeviating constancy to the principles of justice and truth.

CALEB STRONG.

Council Chamber, May 28, 1813.

Blanks of various kinds may be had at this Office.

WASHINGTON.
NATIONAL LEGISLATURE.
IN CONVENTION.

TUESDAY, May 25, 1813.

At 12 o'clock this day, the President of the United States, transmitted to both Houses of Congress, the following

MESSAGE:

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives,

At an early day after the close of the last session of Congress, an offer was formally communicated from His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Russia, of his mediation, as the common friend of the United States and Great-Britain, for the purpose of facilitating a peace between them. The high character of the Emperor Alexander being a satisfactory pledge for the sincerity and impartiality of his offer, it was immediately accepted; and as a further proof of the disposition on the part of the United States to meet their adversary on honorable experiments for terminating the war, it was determined to avoid intermediate delay, incident to the distance of the parties, by a definitive provision for the contemplated negotiation. Three of our eminent citizens were accordingly commissioned with the requisite powers to conclude a treaty of peace, with persons clothed with like powers on the part of Great-Britain. They are authorised also to enter into such conventional regulations of the commerce between the two countries, as may be mutually advantageous. The two envoys who were in the United States at the time of their appointment, have proceeded to join their colleague already at St. Petersburg.

The envoys have received another commission authorising them to conclude with Russia a treaty of commerce, with a view to strengthen the amicable relations, and improve the beneficial intercourse between the two countries.

The issue of the friendly interposition of the Russian Emperor, and this pacific manifestation on the part of the United States time only can decide. That the sentiments of Great-Britain towards that Sovereign will have produced an acceptance of his offered mediation, must be presumed. That no adequate motives exist to prefer a continuance of war with the United States, to the terms on which they are willing to close it is certain. The British cabinet also must be sensible that with respect to the important question of impressment, on which the war so essentially turns, a search for, or seizure of British persons or property on board neutral vessels on the high seas, is not a belligerent right derived from the law of nations; and it is obvious, that no visit or search, or use of force for any purpose, on board the vessels of one independent power on the high seas, can in war or peace be sanctioned by the laws or authority of another power. It is equally obvious that for the purpose of preserving to each State its seafaring members, by excluding them from the vessels of the other, the mode heretofore proposed by the United States, and now enacted by them as an article of municipal policy, cannot for a moment be compared with the mode practised by Great-Britain, without a conviction of its title to preference; inasmuch as the latter leaves the discrimination between the mariners of the two nations, to officers exposed by unavoidable bias, as well as by a defect of evidence, to a wrong decision under circumstances precluding, for the most part, the enforcement of controlling penalties, and where a wrong