

From the BOSTON COLUMBIAN CENTINEL.
The Diplomatic Policy of Mr. MADISON Unveiled.
No. X.

Mr. Madison's conduct towards France, and that of France towards us. The Author's vindication and conclusion.

"France has ships, and we have men."

Mr. JEFFERSON.

"France wants money, and must have it."

Mr. MADISON to Mr. RANDOLPH.

FROM the authors of such sentiments, one would not look for any exhibition of impartiality, or for any expressions of indignation towards France, for her accumulated wrongs—but from a man of Mr. Madison's prudence and talents, one would have expected some appearance of decorum, some shew of independence, some token of a sincere desire to preserve a nominal impartiality. In reviewing the President's late message, with its accompaniments, we are astonished to find the mask which even Mr. Jefferson deigned to wear, superciliously thrown away.—Mr. Madison, secure of his office and of his popularity, disdains any labour, even to save appearances, and while his speech breathes nothing but hostility and war towards Great-Britain, it is worse than silent as to the wrongs, the injuries and insults of France.

The proofs of this partiality have been too long and too fatally felt, to require a very minute display of them at this moment. I shall confine myself to a few instances which have recently occurred. The documents which accompanied the President's Message, furnish the first proof. While the correspondence with the British Cabinet and our complaints against Great-Britain, occupy Eighty eight pages, all the evidence of our intercourse with France is comprised in seven. While every document in relation to the British controversy is communicated at large, even down to the notes of the Secretary of Legation, while some parts of Mr. Erskine's letters are extracted and published twice in the same pamphlet in order that in one form or the other they might be sure to meet the public eye, some of the publications and letters of General Armstrong to our government, and of Mr. Champagny to General Armstrong, are mutilated extracts, and the most material parts are suppressed. This is not all—whole letters and the whole history of our late negotiation with France is kept behind the curtain.

This conduct is the more unpardonable inasmuch as the public expressed its just indignation and its merited jealousy on the attempt to suppress the French Documents last winter.—How did we in that case obtain a disclosure of the disgraceful nature of our negotiations with France? By the voluntary exhibition of the Executive? No. The suppressed documents published in Boston, dropped down upon us, we know not how—the light flashed upon us, we know not whence!

And are the American people to be always kept in this state of palpable blindness? Are our negotiations with France, such deeds of darkness that even when all hopes are gone, when abortive, when dead born, they are to be buried without examination?

If such shameful suppressions would have answered in ordinary times, shall we submit to them when we are called upon to take the solemn alternative of war or disgrace? Shall we see the gauntlet thrown to Great-Britain, under the pretext of insults which we cannot perceive—shall we see her envoy dismissed, while clothed with full power, to complete an adjustment, declaring that he is not ordered to insist on pretensions which we have deemed inadmissible, but is ready to receive and discuss our own proposals, and yet not be allowed to examine the conduct of France, with whom both our own and their Minister allege the door of negotiation is forever closed.

The public have been amused the last summer, with repeated Messages to France—several vessels have been dispatched thither—did they not carry remonstrances, demands, or proposals? If so, where are they? Why are they suppressed? While a negotiation is pending reasons of state may require secrecy—but this is not the case. General Armstrong, in the mutilated extract of his letter of 16th September last, declares that Mr. Champagny's note, which I shall presently consider, is "a definitive answer to our proposals."—This note is not only definitive, but it is insulting in the extreme. It is not only a flat refusal, but it is a most cutting and sarcastic taunt. Why should we not know then what these proposals were, which Mr. Armstrong says he has made? If they were reasonable and moderate, our resentment ought to be the more excited against France. Why then attempt to rouse the passions altogether on one side? Shall it be said that as we mean to join one party against the other and not to fight both, we ought to suppress the wrongs of our intended ally in order to make our Union more solid and complete? But the people have not yet decided which party they will join, and they wish to have the whole conduct of both displayed fairly by the Government.

If the Government continue to smother the wrongs and injuries of France, the people will state an account for themselves.—If Great-Britain be charged by Mr. Madison with perfidy because she refused to ratify the act of an unauthorized agent made in violation of his instructions, which were, we admit in substance made known to us.—The people will not forget that with Napoleon Bonaparte we have made a treaty signed with his own sign manual, which guarantees to us the right to carry even British goods on British account—a treaty which declares that no blockade shall be laid by either party unless the same be actual—the people will not forget that it is not even suggested in Mr. Champagny's most impudent letter. Like the treaty before made with France, in which we were told that France "could only find a real disadvantage in adhering to the terms of the treaty, so Mr. Champagny tells us, that the Emperor's decrees are the effect "of the necessity of reprisals which circumstances impose."

It is alleged by Bonaparte's good friends, in this country, that the French decrees are retaliatory merely. Grant them this point solely for the sake of argument. Still

France is perfidious, because in November 1806, when her Berlin decree passed, Great-Britain did not enforce any principles but what she enforced when our treaty with France was made. If, then, with the knowledge of the British rule of 1756, and of the British rules of blockade, she stipulated to permit us to carry British goods, and never to stop us by nominal blockades, she is guilty of base perfidy by her Berlin and Milan decrees.

If we are told that Mr. Jackson, the British envoy, insulted us, by repeating in nearly the same words a concession made by Mr. Smith, our own Minister, what shall we say to Mr. Champagny's haughty note in which he puts an end to all our negotiations, by announcing his Imperial Majesty's "invariable determination?"

To our complaints that our treaty had been violated, our ships captured and seized in French ports, and on the high seas, to the amount of twenty-five millions, our seamen imprisoned as enemies, our vessels burnt without any form of trial, and our property confiscated in neutral countries, Mr. Champagny replies by a discourse on the Emperor's morality. Irony of this sort to a bleeding, suffering, and insulted nation, would have roused the Roman pride or the feelings of our fathers—as well might the abandoned female in a brothel deliver a discourse upon modesty, the pick-pocket address a sermon upon integrity to the man whom he had plundered, or the murderer boast to the expiring victim of his revenge, the gentleness and suavity of his character.

Yet Mr. Madison communicates this most insolent letter to Congress with only the equivocal remark, "that the posture of our affairs with France does not correspond with the measures taken on the part of the United States to effect a favourable change."

But let us be a little more explicit upon the insulting nature of this letter.

In 1806, Bonaparte, in violation of our treaty with him, declared the British Islands in a state of blockade.

He could not do this by way of retaliation justly.—

1st. Because Great-Britain did not then enforce any principles which she had not enforced during the whole war, and at the moment of our treaty with France.

2dly. Because we had not violated the treaty on our part.

3dly. Because there had been no previous complaint to us, nor any demand that we could resist any pretensions of Great-Britain, all which would be requisite to make the retaliation just.

It was, in fact, avowed to be the consequence of a resolution of Bonaparte to destroy Great-Britain by the destruction of her trade.

We remonstrated against these French decrees, and Mr. Armstrong so early as 1807, declared to Mr. Champagny, "that to appeal to our treaty or the law of nations as it respects France would be literally appealing to the dead."

This was the right sort of spirit. What is Mr. Champagny's answer to this remonstrance? As if France had been an angel in purity, and as if she had not been the confessed aggressor, he replies, "The right or pretension of blockading by proclamation, rivers, and coasts, is as monstrous (*revolante*) as absurd."

When we had been persevering in our remonstrances for this very conduct for three years, we are gravely told that such behaviour is very provoking and very unjust, and that France is in principle exceedingly opposed to it. This cost France one hour's labour of Mr. Champagny, and the expense of the paper and postage, which is well repaid by twenty-five millions of our property seized upon this very principle.

Again—In 1807, a French Admiral seized a number of American vessels on the ocean, and burnt them without trial. This was the first time such a practice had ever been attempted.

Mr. Armstrong mildly remonstrated, or rather asked, whether it was understood that France countenanced such an unheard of proceeding?

We had no answer to this demand till this letter of Mr. Champagny, who sarcastically tells us, "that a merchant vessel is a moving colony, to do violence to such a vessel by search, visits, or other arbitrary acts of authority, is to violate the territory of an enemy."

COMMENTARY.

It appears then that though the French will not allow the principle of searching or visiting a merchant vessel, they make no scruple to burn the colony of a neutral state, and to sink the territory of a friend.—They have made a still better reply to Mr. Armstrong by issuing new orders to burn every vessel which would not bear the expense of carrying in—which orders have been actually executed in several instances.

Yet Mr. Madison is silent as to both these *modest replies* of France.

Still further—On the 24th of Nov. 1806 an Order was passed by Bourienne, minister of France at Hamburgh, that all English Merchandize, to whomsoever belonging, should be confiscated. Similar decrees were issued in the free cities of Lubeck and Bremen by France. In August, 1807, the same thing took place at Leghorn, and on the 19th September 1807, in the Papal territory. *Bona fide* American property was seized under these decrees upon land in neutral and friendly states.

Mr. Madison directed Mr. Armstrong to complain of this conduct, and the first and only answer we received after waiting three years is in these words—"In all her conquests France has respected private property.—The warehouses and the shops have remained to the owners."

It would strike any person as fabulous who did not understand the French diplomatic character, to hear that any man could have the audacity to reply to the very person who had so often complained to him of the seizure not of private property merely, but of neutral property—not in an enemy's country solely, but in a friendly state, "that France respects even an enemy's private property in an enemy's country." Mr. Armstrong should have replied that if that was true, it would be better and more safe to be the enemy of France than her friend.

But as applied to her enemies, the falsehood and affront is not the less palpable.—Have we forgotten the Bulletins issued after the perfidious entry into Spain, in which

the Emperor boasts of his having obtained 50,000 bales of Spanish wool? From whom was this seized? From individuals, his allies, the Spaniards, whose only crime was their loyalty to their legitimate sovereign, whom Bonaparte had perfidiously kidnapped and violently dethroned.—Have we forgotten his profaning the altars of the Almighty, and sacrilegiously robbing the sanctuaries of the most high? Will he with his infidel spirit, contend that this was not private property, and therefore was the fair object of plunder? We have not forgotten the robbery of the sacramental plate in Portugal, and the indignation which it produced in the minds of the Portuguese, when the fortune of arms put these robbers into the power of the injured and indigent sufferers.

We should do injustice to France, however, if we omitted to notice one instance of the frankness in this communication of Mr. Champagny.—He assures us that when France shall have regained her maritime power, when she shall be able to render her mandates universally respected, she will respect the liberty of the seas in as great a degree as she does the liberties of the nations whom she conquers on land.—We have then the rule of her justice—she will regard the rights of private property on the ocean as much as she has heretofore done upon the Continent!!!

There is one other idea upon this point which we would present to our readers before we quit this subject, and which may account for the tameness of the language of Mr. Madison.

Before our Embargo was imposed it will be recollected, that Gen. Armstrong stated to the Americans in France, that such a measure would undoubtedly take place in America.—Letters from France and Holland from private Merchants to their Correspondents in this Country, confidently spoke of such a measure before it had been even suggested in our Country.—A dispatch vessel arrived from France, and in three days after the embargo was imposed—Mr. Masters, a democratic member of Congress, declared "that the hand of Napoleon was in this thing." Our venerable watchman, Col. Pickering, suggested to us the same idea—we have now the proof that it was agreeable to France from this letter of Count Champagny.—He declares "that the Emperor applauded this generous determination of renouncing all commerce rather than acknowledge the dominion of the tyrants of the seas."

A like omen, and a similar prophecy has occurred in the present case.—A Senator of France, in a recent publication in France, has declared "that the United States are about to join the general coalition against Great-Britain—that as a pledge of that intention, their New Ambassador had reached Copenhagen, and Mr. Jackson had been dismissed."

It is a singular fact that a vessel from France did arrive in the United States, and her dispatches from our minister in France did reach Washington about two or three days before the dismissal of Mr. Jackson.

That such circumstances should so frequently concur, is to every impartial man extremely suspicious, and we can no longer wonder at the suppression of all the late negotiations with France, and the studied silence of Mr. Madison on that subject.

Having now finished the development of the subject which I had originally proposed, it remains for me to vindicate the motives of this public appeal against our own administration.

It would be affectation to conceal, that so deep rooted are the prejudices of our citizens against any impartial display of the questions between us and Great-Britain, that any writer who may undertake it, however pure may be his motives, and however well founded his arguments, is sure to incur the most violent invective from one class of citizens, a cool disapprobation from another, and but a feeble and timid support from the rest.

This is inevitable from the nature of our government, in which it will be always an unwelcome task to stem the popular prejudices; that our citizens have strong antipathies against Great-Britain, and are indifferent to the insults and injuries of France, the history of the last twenty years most abundantly proves.

The writer of this examination cannot, he does not hope to turn the current of these prejudices. It would require more than mortal power to arrest the progress of such inveterate prepossessions. But there are moments like the present in which the imminence of the danger may rouse the thoughtless, and stimulate the lethargick. Even truth may at such a period hope to find a reluctant admission.

I do not address those base and sordid minds who deny the right of a citizen of a free country, to address the understandings of his fellow countrymen at such critical moments, upon questions between ourselves and foreign nations.—Such men are formed and fitted only to be slaves. In this respect many, if not most of our people are several centuries behind their ancestors, the British nation, in the estimation of the people's rights.

In Great-Britain, that land of slavery and corruption, as our sons of liberty call her, the press has no such restraint—not only in the periods preceding a war, but during a war itself, the opponent of that war can, with impunity, and without censure, question the justice of the cause and denounce the motives of the administration which brought it on.

Who will dare to question the virtue of Col. Barre and Mr. Burke, or of Lord Chatham, in their opposition to the American war, or in their severity towards the ministry during that war?

What democrat in our country ever censured Mr. Fox, whose speeches they published and praised for his hostility to the war against France, both before and after its commencement?

And, in more recent instances, who censured Lord Grenville, Mr. Baring, or Mr. Brougham, for their attack on their own ministry in the questions between us and G. Britain?

Base indeed, and worthy only of being the slaves of a Tyrant, must be those men who would so far degrade our national character, as to contend that we are unable to hear both sides of the question without hazard. If, as those people pretend, our arguments and our remarks are proofs of our devotion to another nation, and of our contempt or disregard for our own country, why not expose us to contempt and execration by republishing our essays? Are the people not as capable of judging as these venal editors?