

THE TRUE REPUBLICAN, OR AMERICAN WHIG.

"THE TRUTH OUR GUIDE—THE PUBLIC GOOD OUR END."

Vol. I.

WILMINGTON, (N. C.) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1809.

No 7.

Documents

Accompanying the following Message from the President.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

I communicate to Congress certain letters which passed between the British secretary of state, Mr. Canning, and Mr. Pinkney, our minister plenipotentiary at London. When documents concerning the relations between the United States and Great Britain were laid before Congress, at the commencement of the session the answer of Mr. Pinkney, to the letter of Mr. Canning, had not been received, and a communication of the letter alone would have accorded, neither with propriety, nor with the wishes of Mr. Pinkney. When that answer afterwards arrived, it was considered that as what had passed in conversation had been superseded by the written and formal correspondence on the subject, the variance in the statements of what had verbally passed was not of sufficient importance to be made the matter of a distinct and special communication. The letter of Mr. Canning, however, having lately appeared in print, unaccompanied by that of Mr. Pinkney in reply, and having a tendency to make impressions not warranted by the statements of Mr. Pinkney, it has become proper that the whole should be brought into public view.

TH: JEFFERSON.

January 17, 1809.

Mr. Pinkney to Mr. Madison.

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 24, 1808.

SIR, I am now enabled to transmit to you Mr. Canning's answer, received only last night to my note of the 23d of August.

This answer was accompanied by a letter, of which also a copy is inclosed, recapitulating what Mr. Canning supposed to be "the substance of what has passed between us at our several interviews previous to the presentation of my official letter."

To the accompanying paper I think it indispensable that I should reply without delay, supporting with politeness, but with firmness the statements, which I have already had the honor to make to you, of the conversations in question, and correcting some errors upon points which Mr. Canning has thought fit to introduce into his letter, but which I had not supposed it necessary to mention in detail in my dispatches.

I shall not detain Mr. Atwater with a view to this reply; but will take care to forward a copy of it by an early conveyance. My official note and the answer to it being perfectly explicit, Mr. Canning's misapprehensions (for such they are) of previous verbal communications, can scarcely be very important in a public view; but it is, nevertheless, of some consequence that, whatever may be the object of his statement, I should not make myself a party to its inaccuracies, by even a tacit admission of them.

I do not perceive that a formal reply to the more official paper can now be of any advantage; but I shall probably take occasion to combine with my reply to the one paper some observations upon the other.

I regret extremely that the views which I have been instructed to lay before this government have not been met by it as I had at first been led to expect. The overture cannot fail, however, to place in a strong light the just and liberal sentiments by which our government is animated, and in other respects to be useful and honorable to our country.

I have the honor to be,

With the highest consideration,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

W. PINKNEY.

(Here follows Mr. Canning's letter which was published in our last.)

Mr. Pinkney to Mr. Canning.

GREAT CUMBERLAND PLACE,

September 24, 1808.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your answer to my official note of the 23d of last month, relative to the British orders in council of January and November, 1807; together with a statement of "the substance of what has passed between us at our several interviews previous to the presentation of that note."

I shall lose no time in transmitting to my government copies of both these papers, upon the last of which I will take the liberty, in the course of a few days, to trouble you with some observations.

I have the honor to be,

With the highest consideration,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) WILLIAM PINKNEY.

The right honorable

George Canning, &c. &c. &c.

Mr. Pinkney, to Mr. Madison.

LONDON, OCTOBER 11, 1808.

SIR,

I have the honor to transmit enclosed, a copy of my reply to Mr. Canning's letter to me of the 23d of last month, accompanying his official answer of the same date to my note of the 23d of August.

I have the honor to be,

With the highest consideration,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) WILLIAM PINKNEY.

The honorable James Madison, &c. &c. &c.

GREAT CUMBERLAND PLACE,

October 10, 1808.

SIR,

If my reply to the letter, which you did me the honor to address to me on the 23d of last month, should be of greater length than the occasion may be thought to require you will I am sure impute it to its real cause, an earnest desire on my part arising from a feeling of sincere respect for you, that the statement, which I am to give of facts deemed by you to be important, shall be full as well as accurate.

I will not fatigue you, sir, with assurances that no person could be less disposed than I am to find fault with the object of your letter which appears to be to guard against all misrepresentation of "what has passed in our late interviews beyond what you find recorded in my note." You have told me that I have, personally, no concern in that object, and I did not require to be told that my government has as little. I understand, indeed, that the circumstance, which has suggested a peculiar motive for this proceeding, was one of those newspaper misrepresentations, which every day produces where the press is free, which find no credit and beget no consequence, and for which it is greatly to be feared your expedient will provide no remedy. Of my conduct, when that circumstance occurred, in giving you unsolicited proofs that I had transmitted to Mr. Secretary Madison, a faithful report of our conferences, mistaken by public rumour or private conjecture, it is not necessary for me to speak; for you have yourself done justice to it.

The motive, to which I am indebted for the honour of your letter, appears to have been instrumental in producing another effect equally unexceptionable. But you will allow me to say that, until the receipt of that letter, I had not been apprized, by the slightest intimation, that it was in any degree owing to such a cause that you declined, on the part of his majesty's government, after two conferences in which I had been suffered, if not encour-

aged, to unfold myself, individually as well as official, at great length and with perfect frankness, to give an answer to my verbal overture.

At our first interview (on the 29th of June) verbal communication was not discountenanced, but commended. For, after I had made myself understood as to the purpose for which the interview had been requested, you asked me if I thought of taking a more formal course, but immediately added that you presumed I did not, for that the course I had adopted was well suited to the occasion. My reply was in substance, that the freedom of conversation was better adapted to our subject, and more likely to conduct us to an advantageous conclusion, than the constraint and formality of written intercourse; and that I had not intended to present a note. At the second interview (on the 22d of July) it did not occur to me that I had any reason to conclude, and certainly I did not conclude, that verbal communication had not continued to be acceptable as a preparatory course; and it was not until the third interview (on the 29th of July) that it was rejected as inadmissible. But, even then, I was not told, and had not the smallest suspicion, that this rejection was to be ascribed either wholly or partially, to the motive which your letter has since announced to me. That this motive had, nevertheless, all the influence now imputed to it I am entirely confident; and I take notice of it only because, as I have not mentioned it to my government in my official account of our conferences, I can no otherwise justify the omission, either to it or to you, than by shewing that I had, in truth, no knowledge of the fact when that account was transmitted.

I may take occasion to set forth in the present letter the import of all that can be ascertained of our several conversations, according to my recollection of them; but there are some points to which I ought to pay a more particular attention, because you have thought them entitled to it; although I should myself, perhaps, have been inclined to think that they had lost much of their importance by the presentation of my note and the receipt of your written answer, both of which are perfectly intelligible, upon these points at least, without the aid of the conferences that preceded them.

You observe, that "the principal points, in which the suggestions, brought forward by me in personal conference, appear to you to have differed in some degree from the proposal stated by me in writing, are two: the first, that in conversation the proposal itself was not distinctly stated as an overture authorized by my government: the second, that the beneficial consequences, likely to result to this country from the acceptance of that proposal, were pursued through more ample illustrations."

With regard to the first of these supposed differences, I feel persuaded, sir, that, upon farther recollection, it will occur to you that at our first conference, I told you explicitly that the substance of what I then suggested that is to say, that your orders being repealed as to us, we would suspend the embargo as to Great Britain, was from my government; but that the manner of conducting and illustrating the subject upon which I had no precise orders, was my own. I even repeated to you the words of my instructions, as they were upon my memory; and I did not understand, either then or afterwards, that there was any doubt as to their existence or their sufficiency, or any desire to have a more exact and formal communication of them while the result of our discussions was distant and uncertain. I said undoubtedly that I had been directed to require the revocation of the British orders in council; but I said also that, although the government of the United States might

posed itself to be authorized to expect their repeal upon the ground of right as it existed from the first (a subject, however, which I am informed you did not wish at that time to agitate) I was, notwithstanding, empowered to give you the above mentioned assurances, which would, as I presumed, hold out inducements to Great Britain, as well as on the score of policy as on that of justice, to fulfil that expectation. I should scarcely have undertaken to offer such assurances as from myself, or upon my own "conviction" that the president would act in conformity with them. And I should still less (if that were possible) have ventured to ask of you that you would make them, in that form, the subject of repeated conferences, and even of reference to others, as placing the question of a recall or continuance of the orders in council upon new grounds of prudence and equity.

If it is merely intended (as I doubt not it is) to say that I did not make or declare my intention to make, my overture in writing, before I had endeavoured to prepare for it, by personal explanations, such a reception as I felt it deserved, and before I could ascertain what shape it would be most proper to give to it or how it would be met by this government, nothing can be more correct.

It was my sincere wish that my proposal, which I believed to be advantageous to Great Britain, as well as honorable to the United States, should be accepted; and, accordingly, I preferred a mode of proceeding, which, while it was calculated to avoid unprofitable discussion, upon topics of some delicacy and great difficulty, would furnish opportunities for frank & friendly communication upon all the bearings of my proposal, and lead to the result at which I aimed, if that result should be practicable, in such way as, upon mature reflection, & after a liberal interchange of sentiments, should be found to be most for the honor of our respective governments. These views were laid before you without reserve, & seemed to be approved, and I confess to you, sir, that when I was afterwards informed that, if I would obtain an answer to my overture, I must make it in writing, and that I must not look for any previous intimation of the nature of that answer, I did not allow myself any longer to anticipate with much confidence such an issue as I desired.

The second difference, which your letter supposes to exist between my note and verbal suggestions, cannot, I think, in any view, be very material. I will say something upon it, however.

My note declares that, if I forbear to pursue certain ideas through all the illustrations of which they are susceptible, it is because our personal conferences, as well as the obvious nature of the ideas themselves, render it unnecessary. This implies, undoubtedly, that more had been said in our conferences, explanatory of those ideas, than is to be found in the note itself; and that implication can scarcely be otherwise than true, if I expatiated largely, as you very justly say I did, "upon the consequences of a suspension of the embargo as to Great Britain, while it still continued to be enforced against France."

The general idea, to which the note refers is, that justice and interest conspired to recommend that you should take advantage of my proposal. The particular positions are, that if your orders and our embargo should be rescinded in the manner suggested, our commercial intercourse would be immediately revived; that if France followed your example, and rescinded her decrees, the avowed purpose of your orders would be accomplished; that if France refused to terrify, the American embargo, continuing as to her, would occupy the place of your orders and perform their office even better than they could perform at their own, without