

THE TRUE REPUBLICAN, OR AMERICAN WHIG.

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

[Vol. I.]

WILMINGTON, (N. C.) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1809.

[No. 8.]

MR. PINKNEY'S LETTER TO MR. CANNING.

(Concluded.)

I might also have been led to intimate that my proposal could apparently lose nothing by admitting that "by some unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, without any hostile intention, the American embargo did come in aid of the before mentioned blockade of the European continent, precisely at the very moment when, if that blockade could have succeeded at all, this interposition of the American government would most effectually have contributed to its success." Yet, I should probably have thought myself bound to remind you that, whatever may be the truth of this speculation, the same embargo withheld our tonnage and our exports from that communication with the colonies of your enemies, and with the European continent, which you had asserted your right to prevent; which as a direct communication (with the continent) you had in fact prohibited; which, even through British ports or in other qualified forms, you had professed to tolerate, not as that which could be claimed, but as an indulgence that could at any time be withdrawn; which, as a traffic for the United States to engage in, you had at last discouraged, not only by checks and difficulties in the way of its prosecution, but by manifesting your intentions to mould it into all the shapes which the belligerent, fiscal, or other peculiar policy of Great Britain might require, and to subject it to the exclusive jurisdiction of her municipal code, armed with all the prerogatives of that universal law to which nations are bound to conform for the rights of neutral commerce.

In giving an account of our second conference you say, "that, though not stating myself to be authorized by my government formally to offer the suspension of the embargo as an immediate consequence of the repeal of the orders in council, yet I did profess my readiness to take upon myself to make that offer, provided that you would give me beforehand an unofficial assurance that, coupled with that offer, so made, the demand of the repeal of the orders would be favourably received; that you of course declined to give any such previous assurance, but as I appeared to attach great importance to this suggestion, and you were led to think that a compliance with it might relieve me from a difficulty in executing the instructions of my government, you consented to take a few days to consider of it, and reserve your definitive answer until you should see me again."—You then observe that you "never doubted in your own mind as to the inexpediency and impropriety of encouraging me to take an unauthorized step by an unofficial promise that it should be well received." I am sure you did not, Sir; but I must take the liberty to say, that I am equally sure that I never thought of asking you to give me encouragement to take an unauthorized step of any kind. I am, indeed, truly mortified that my conduct has appeared to you in that light and I should not be readily consoled if I did not reflect that, in condescending to listen, even for a moment to what must have struck you as an irregularity, as vain and nugatory in its purpose as reprehensible in its principle, you must at least have given me credit for good intentions, and for a strong desire, sincerely felt, although erroneously obeyed, that our countries should find themselves in that relative position, which suits the interests and tends to the happiness of both.

When I professed a readiness to make my proposal in writing, it was, as you state, provisionally; but I did not intimate that I was acting without authority, nor did I comprehend that such was, as I now know it to have been, your impression.

The provisional nature of my offer arose out of circumstances, and was afterwards pressed upon conviction that, if it was meant to adopt the views of the president, nothing more could be necessary. I understood you to be desirous of ascertaining, whether I was empowered and disposed, with a view to a final arrangement, to present what I had suggested, in a written form, as an overture originating with my government. I said, of course, that, every thing being first matured, a note should be presented; but that I would, with your permission, take a little time to consider of the manner and terms. I did not at that time suppose that we were conversing about a written proposal which was to be made only to be rejected; or even for the purpose of deliberation; and, consequently, in professing my willingness to make it as soon as we were prepared for it, I presumed that I had done all that you desired. And I was confirmed in this opinion, not only by your saying nothing, as I supposed, to the contrary, but by your requesting me, as I was about to leave the room, to employ myself, before the next interview, upon such a note as we had been talking of, and then retracting that request, by observing that I would doubtless first desire to know what were your ideas and intentions upon the subject of it; with which I was given to understand I should be made acquainted at another conference.

At the third interview, after speaking of a transaction upon the lakes, of which your traders complained, and of another occurrence in the bay of Passamaquoddy, you observed, that you had thought long & anxiously upon what I had suggested to you: that the subject had at first struck you as being much more simple than upon careful examination it had been found to be; that, in the actual state of the world, it behoved both you and me to move in this affair with every possible degree of circumspection; that, without some explicit proposal on my part, writing upon which the British government could deliberate and act, nothing could be done; and, finally, that you must leave me to consult my own discretion whether I would make such a proposal.

It appeared to me that if this determination should be persisted in, my overture was not likely to be successful; and I urged accordingly, the propriety of going on in a course which would lead us to a better issue. That course was, that we should understand one another as to our respective views; and that a concise note, which I had in fact prepared since the last meeting should then be presented and acted upon. You informed me, that my wish in this particular could not be acceded to; that, if I presented a note, you must be left at present liberty to decide upon what it proposed; that you could not give me even an intimation of the probable consequences of it; and, in a word, that you would neither invite nor discourage such a proceeding. You added, that there were some points belonging to the subject, which it would be proper to discuss in writing one of which was the connection between our embargo and your orders of November, supposed to be implied by my proposal. I remarked that, with an actual result in view, and with a wish to arrive at that result without delay, it could not be advisable to entangle ourselves in a written correspondence, undefined as to its scope and duration, upon topics on which we were not likely to agree; and that if I were to frame my note with a knowledge that it was to provoke argument, instead of leading, at this crisis, to a salutary change in the state of the world, you must be conscious that I too must argue. And where would this end? To what wholesome consequence would it conduct us? At the close of the interview, I observed, that as the footing, upon which the subject was now placed, made delay of no importance, I should take time to

prepare such a proceeding as the occasion required.

On the 26th of August I had the honor to see you again, and, after entering more at large than I had before believed to be proper, into a consideration of the effect of my proposal on the equity of adhering to your orders in council, and after reading to you parts of my instructions, I delivered an official note, in which the proposal was made in the form required.

Something was said, at this interview, of the affair of the Chesapeake and the president's proclamation, which it is not I presume necessary to repeat. It will be sufficient to state, that you asked me what was to be done with these subjects?—And that my reply was, that they had no connection with the present; but that I could say with confidence, that my government had every disposition to attend to them, with a view to such an adjustment as would be honorable to both parties. I did not suppose that it was expected (for you did not intimate such an expectation) that renewed negotiation upon these points should, as well as the repeal, upon terms, of your orders in council, be invited by a formal overture from the government of America.

I will not trouble you with many observations more.

You state in your letter that "there was one point upon which you were particularly anxious to receive precise information, and upon which, from my candor and frankness, you were fortunate enough to obtain it." This was, "whether in fact the orders in council of November had been known to the government of the United States, previously to the message of the President proposing the embargo, so as to be a moving consideration to that message." I quote this passage, principally, that I may recall to your recollection, that my suggestions, upon the subject of it, were not made officially, or as being authorized or furnished by any communication from my government, or in answer to enquiries on your part. They were very briefly made, near the close, as I think, of our third interview, in consequence of your intimation (intended, perhaps, to amount to an enquiry) that my proposal implied that the embargo had been produced by the orders of November; to which you added that this could not be admitted, and (as I comprehend what you said) that it even required to be made the subject of some notice or discussion in writing, as intimately connected with my proposal, if it should be brought forward in that shape. And I understood you to assign this as one of the reasons why a written overture was indispensable. In replying to that intimation, and the remarks which followed it, I professed to speak, as I did in fact speak, from general information only, and disclaimed, as it was my duty to do, all authority to say more upon the nature and origin of the embargo, than I had some time before communicated to you, in obedience to the orders of the President. The purpose of my observations was, chiefly, to show that there was no inducement for embarking in formal discussions upon this point; and I assured you that it was not in my power, either as respected instructions from my government or knowledge of facts, to do so. My opinion was, and I spoke accordingly, that it was one of those questions which might be left completely at rest without the least injury to the wisdom or the justice of our conclusions upon the great object of our conferences. There could be no objection, however, to my giving you, on this head, such conjectural information as I was able. On the contrary, by fully disclosing to you my own materials for forming an opinion upon it you would be enabled more distinctly to see, that I could take no part in any discussion, which you might propose to apply to it. And I could not but be assured that any anxiety you might feel, to

obtain a knowledge of the facts in questions sprung from considerations which had every claim to my respect; for I know that your mind was far above the reach of prejudices, which would ascribe the American embargo to participation in the councils or views of your adversary, or of any foreign power whatsoever.

My suggestions were to the following effect: that I believed that no copy of your orders of November had arrived in the United States at the date of the President's message; that a recent change in the conduct of France to our prejudice did appear to be known; that intelligence had been received, and a belief entertained, of your intention to adopt some further measure, as a measure of retaliation against France, by which our commerce and our rights would be affected; that there was reason to conclude that you had actually adopted such a measure; that (as collected from American newspapers) this had appeared from private letters, and the newspapers of this country, received in the United States some days before the message of the president, and probably known to the government, that, in a word, various information concurred to show that our trade was likely to be afflicted by the combined efforts of both the belligerent parties; and that the embargo was a measure of wise and peaceful precaution, adopted under this view of reasonably anticipated peril.

You observe, in another part of your letter, "that you have always rather wished to refer the argumentative discussion of the subject of the orders in council to the official correspondence, which you have more than once been taught to expect me to open upon it." If I should object to any part of this statement, it would be to the words "more than once." Your wish has always appeared to be such as you now represent it, and you had reason to expect that I would commence a written discussion of the orders of November, soon after their publication. I had told you that I should do so, and you had said that there could be no objection to it. But you were afterwards apprised that, upon reflection, I had determined to leave the subject where it was, until I should know the pleasure of my government.

The orders had been officially communicated not to me, but to Mr. Madison, through the British minister at Washington. It seemed, therefore, to be proper (unless my instructions should make it otherwise) that the view, which the government of the United States took of them, should find its way to you through the same channel; and, accordingly, the letters of Mr. Madison, to which I have referred in my note of the 23d of August, did open at great length a discussion which I could have no inducement to shun, although I did not continue to think myself authorized to commence it.

It only remains to add that you share in our several conversations was, what you represent it to have been, not considerable, and that your manner, although reserved, was, as it always is, perfectly friendly.

I need not say that if in this letter, written under the influence of sincere concern, that the proposal I had the honor to lay before you has been unsuccessful, any thing is to be found which you could wish to be otherwise than it is, I shall be the first to regret that I have not been able to do justice to my own feelings and intentions.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest consideration,

Sir,
Your most obed't humble servant,

WILLIAM PINKNEY.

BLANK BOOKS.

Merchants and others can be supplied at this office with BLANK BOOKS of every description.

January 10.