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Political!

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LETTER I.

TO THE CITIZENS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Constrained by my circumstances, to the constant laborious management of my little farm. I can ill spare the time necessary to the examination of the state of our public affairs, and the conduct of our rulers. But, I consider my farm, my labour, and my life of small account, if our public affairs are to proceed in their present downward course. I therefore suspend my labours in order to lay before you some facts, some truths, and some reflections, which I conceive highly important to your interests, safety and freedom; with which my own are indissolubly united. The attempt, I confess, is attended with discouragements. Newspapers are the usual means of conveying information to you; and a free press has ever been considered as the shield of our rights and liberties; but those means are perverted, and that shield is changed into a mischievous weapon of annoyance. Misrepresentations and falsehoods spread over the country in Newspapers devoted not to the public welfare, but to build up and support a party, who seek their own and not your advantage, have deceived you into a belief, that your national rulers have conducted your affairs wisely and honestly; and that they and those who are their professed admirers & abettors in the several states, are the only friends of the people, the only real patriots.—And how are you to be undeceived? "How are you to come to the knowledge of the truth?" A vast proportion of the people read those Newspapers only, which with fatal industry disseminate the misrepresentations, and falsehoods which have deceived you. They studiously omit and reject all those truths which would correct the errors by which so many are influenced to their own harm and the approaching ruin of their country. If, however, my voice cannot reach you all it may be heard by many, and contribute to their confirmation, in the patriotic course they now pursue.

WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

Yesterday I received from an experienced, discerning, and upright member of Congress, a letter dated the 3d instant, in which he says "The aspect of affairs more strongly indicates WAR approaching than at any other period during the session. I believe, until very lately, some confidence has been placed in the effect of our scare-crow plan of warfare, or that the din of our preparations would produce, on the part of G. Britain, a relaxation in her maritime system. It has entirely failed in its intended effect; and has, on the contrary, produced union [in G. Britain]; so that now our government has no choice left, but either to recede from the ground they have taken, or proceed to the "last resort;" that is, to WAR. "I have all along been fearful that a series of blunders and mismanagement, to give them no harsher epithet, would lead to that result. My fears are I believe like to be realised. The high sense of honor which the advocates of the present measures profess forbids a retreat: there is, therefore, no alternative but to fight. If the people at large have that high sense of national, or rather Congressional honour, which men of this stamp profess, they have nothing to do but to shed their blood and waste their treasure, in the prosecution of this war." My respectable friend then adds, "The crisis is fast approaching. The advocates of the present war have all along been flattering themselves that it would be a popular war. That impression will, I think, prove fallacious. Great attention will be paid to the approaching elections. Every vote given for Gerry, in Massachusetts will be considered here as a vote in favour of the war measures in Congress."

Yes, fellow citizens, abandoning your greatest and best interests, you are to engage in a destructive war for honour.—You are to fight for honour—for "Congressional honour"—(a happy distinction of my friend's)—not for national honour, but for the honour of a set of men, a majority of whom, together with the administration, and Thomas Jefferson, (the masterspring at their head) have been reviled, and figuratively speaking, cuffed and spit upon by Bonaparte.—To his own subjects, while he grinds them to powder by his exactions for his treasury and his armies, he yet shews some respect, but to our rulers in all his words and actions for four years past, nothing but contempt. And finally, he has told them explicitly that they were "despicable of honour!" all which they have borne with the tameness of slaves. And yet these men now talk of honour! and are urging you into a war to defend it! No, fellow citizens! it is a war to rescue them from merited disgrace, and not to save or defend the honour of our country.—The French Emperor has contrived to twist a knot about our necks, as one of the members said, "A knot which," he added, "must be cut by the sword of war!" But war with whom? with him who twisted the knot? No, with G. Britain! But how could Bonaparte twist such a knot about our necks without the aid, the co operation of our own rulers? And if, in concert with them, how but by treachery? But, it is said, they have made a "contract" with him; (and this is the knot twisted about our necks); and every agreement ought to be sacredly performed. True; honest men will always fulfil their engagements: but where promises and "contracts" are mutual, where something is to be performed on one side as well as on the other, if one party fails in the performance the other is discharged. The pre-

tended "compact" was, that if France revoked or modified her decrees so that they should cease to violate our neutral commerce, and G. Britain did not revoke or modify her Orders in Council in like manner, then the United States were to prohibit all importations of the products and merchandize of the British dominions.—But France did not so revoke or modify her decrees; and President Madison's proclamation of November 2, 1810, stating that the French decrees in question had been so revoked or modified was false in fact; for the Emperor's declaration in the letter of his minister Champagny to the American minister in Paris, was conditional, amounting only to a promise to revoke his decrees, on certain future events, which might or might not take place. But it was the fact of their actual revocation not a promise to revoke, which the President was authorised by law to proclaim. It was this unfounded proclamation, for issuing which Mr. Madison ought to have been impeached; combined with the Emperor's conditional promised revocation of his decrees, that twisted knot about our necks, to cut which, the government is now preparing to plunge our country into a war with Great Britain. But, before this knot received the finishing twist, by an act of Congress, a new minister arrived from France. As he had left France long after the first of November 1810, on which day Mr. Madison had proclaimed the French decrees to have been revoked, it was supposed he could settle the point whether they had been revoked or not; for the conduct of the Emperor, in seizing and detaining American vessels subsequent to the first day of November, had excited doubts even among credulous and devoted partisans of France, whether the decrees had been revoked. The then Secretary of State, Mr. Robert Smith, affirms that he very soon expressed his doubts to the President, even within about a month after his proclamation had been issued. He was, therefore, the more ready to seek information of the new French minister, as soon as he had been received by the President. Mr. S. accordingly conversed with the French minister on the subject of the decrees, and the situation of our commerce with France, concluding the interview by observing to the French minister, that he would propose in writing, the several questions which had been stated in the conversation. Mr. Smith committed them to paper, in the form of a letter to the French minister. The first question was "were the Berlin and Milan decrees revoked in whole or in part on the first day of November? Or, have they at any time posterior to that day been so revoked? Or, have you instructions from your government to give to this government an assurance or explanation in relation to the revocation or modification of those decrees?" This letter was dated 20th of February, 1811, and Congress was of necessity to close their session on the 31 of March. The information sought by that question, was of the highest importance to the commerce; and now in its consequences, to the peace of our country. But, Mr. Madison disapproved of it! Mr. Smith "entreated him, but in the most delicate manner, not to withhold from Congress any information that might be useful to them at so momentous a juncture." Such are Mr. Smith's own words, in the public statement of the case.

The letter was not sent. The information was not obtained. And Congress, (groping in the dark, or rather walking only by the light shed up on their path by Mr. Madison, a light that served but to make darkness visible) by an act passed the second of March forbidding all importations from Great Britain, gave the finishing twist to the knot. Our commerce consequently, for a whole year and more, has been struggling for breath under the hands of the hangman, and now by the embargo it is strangled. Nothing remains, but to cut down the body and burn it under the gallows.—This impending war is to accomplish. But why should President Madison oppose Mr. Smith's most important inquiry? It is the President's constitutional duty to "give to Congress information of the state of the union;" and his oath of office enforces the obligation. "The state of the union" means the situation or condition of the United States in regard to foreign nations as well as among themselves.

Was Mr. Madison afraid that the real truth should be known? Did he fear that, by the confession of the French minister himself, his November proclamation should be proved unfounded and false? Or was it a blind devotion to, or treacherous concert with France, which governed his conduct in this matter? I have stated the material facts; you will form your own conclusions. A series of deceptions and double dealing, which I have witnessed in the Executives of the United States for several years past, some of which I have heretofore exhibited to the public, leave me no choice: I can form but one conclusion, and that is, that you are betrayed; that your best interests are sacrificed, and your safety, liberty and independence hazarded to enable the French Emperor to extend his conquests, and finally to destroy the only power yet unsubdued.

I have already remarked, that where promises or compacts are mutual, where something is to be performed on one side as well as on the other, if one party fails in the performance, the other is discharged. Now if the French emperor's Berlin and Milan decrees, which so atrociously violated our rights as a neutral nation, were not revoked, then the United States were not bound to revoke and enforce the non-importation law against Great Britain. But these decrees were not revoked on the 1st November 1810, nor have they been since revoked. On the contrary the emperor has re-

peatedly declared them to be fundamental laws of his empire. Nor has he so modified them as that they cease to violate our neutral rights.

Many of our vessels have been captured and condemned, which were fairly engaged in the commerce which no other laws prohibited; and their condemnation proves those decrees to be still in force. But of what avail is it if those decrees were repealed? The mutual rights and the interests of the United States, require that our commerce should be perfectly free with all nations which are willing to admit our vessels into their ports, whether they be neutrals or the enemies of France. Notwithstanding which the armed vessels of the emperor, take, burn, sink and destroy all our vessels destined to Spain or Portugal, and their dominions, which he has treacherously invaded and endeavored to subdue. But he has not stopped here. In the Baltic sea, French armed vessels make prizes of all the American vessels they can find, although bound to Sweden and Russia, nations at peace with France; their papers sent to Paris, and all are indiscriminately condemned: his imperial majesty himself frequently sitting and passing the iniquitous sentences and condemnation. The President and Congress know all this; for the facts are published in the newspapers, and admit of no doubt; yet are deriving the United States into a war with Great Britain, (for such is the avowed object of all their war preparations) under the pretence of performing its unfounded compact with a faithless tyrant!

I repeat, that even if the Berlin and Milan decrees had been publicly and formally revoked, the pretended "compact" would not be binding on the United States; seeing the French emperor thus causes our vessels and their cargoes to be captured and condemned, or burnt, sunk and destroyed at sea, in violation of our neutral rights; setting at defiance his own treaty with the United States as well as the law of nations. And yet this perfidious monster our government seems anxious to conciliate, to gain his good will! to perform a compact which was without a consideration, and which if it had been founded he has violated, and continues most grossly to violate on his part!

I am lost in astonishment at this state of things! Upon any fair and honorable principle, it is utterly incomprehensible.

Hume, in his History of England, vol. viii. says "An important project was formed, not only to make the King, (Charles II) master of the city, (London) but by that example to gain him the ascendancy in all the corporations of England, and thereby give the greatest wound to the legal constitution, which the most powerful and most arbitrary monarchs had ever yet been able to inflict. All the royalists, though Englishmen, and even, to a certain degree, lovers of liberty, were yet induced from enmity to the opposite faction and from the desire of superiority, to concur in this violent measure."

Will this fact from Hume aid us in attempting to account for the conduct of some honorable gentlemen at Washington?

TIMOTHY PICKERING.

April 15, 1812.

TOWN MEETING.

Some conversation has lately taken place on the expedience of calling a meeting of the inhabitants of this town and its vicinity, to petition to Congress on the present alarming state of the country, a meeting not to originate or be conducted in the spirit of party, but on the broad principle of general good.

Every American of whatever political persuasion, must see, feel, and deplore the present disastrous state of the country; a state too, which, under present circumstances, exhibits a mournful prospect of becoming worse. If this reality of present evils, many and oppressive, and this apprehension of future ones, menacing still heavier calamities, be even partially true, a meeting of our citizens to consult on such important concerns, is worthy of attention. It may lead to good; it can be productive of no ill. Speaking as a mere partisan of a party, we ought, perhaps, to discourage it. The majority in Congress are so peculiarly circumstanced, that they require some application from the people to justify them in taking the probably best, and perhaps only steps that will extricate us from our present embarrassments. But, refrain from this application and they are so pledged that that rapid decline of popularity, which is now taking place will be inevitably celebrated at the Northward. In New-York, New-Jersey and Pennsylvania and all the New-England states, meetings composed of all parties have been called and a degree of union, that should be hailed as the harbinger of future harmony and consequent prosperity, and cherished on every principle of expedience and by every sentiment of patriotism, has been exhibited, and is well worthy of our imitation. The Southern Section of the U. States has been declared on the floor of Congress to be disposed to war. If this sentiment be incorrect it behoves us to undeceive our government, to inform them how seriously and earnestly a war is deprecated by us, if it can be avoided without disgrace, that it can be avoided without disgrace to the people as we verily believe, so we confidently assert.—*Wm. Gazette.*

By the subjoined extract, it will appear that Mr. Madison has not only disavowed the late acts of Commodore Campbell and Gen. Mathews, but has ordered such territory and ports as have been taken from the Spaniards, to be restored to the officers of that government. This is a good symptom; it gives countenance to the opinion that war is not intended; for what folly would it be to give

up acquisitions, however made, to a Power that would in case of a war with England, most probably become our enemy. But shall we credit administration in their declaration that the conduct of the Commodore and the General is not only unauthorised, but is also condemned by them?—*Credat Judæus Apella, non ego!* What shall we say of the letter Col. Monroe wrote to General Mathews, an extract of which Gen. Mathews enclosed in a letter, as authority for procuring a reinforcement from the U. S. troops stationed near Charleston, S. C. This fact is notorious in that city. His request, it is true, was not complied with. Orders from the specifically proper department had not been received, and Gen. Mathews's authority, with Col. Monroe's letter to back him, was very properly deemed insufficient. But this transaction proves conclusively that administration did, sub rosa, encourage the enterprise. They had not spirit to do openly what insidious policy tempted them to effect in secret, and which they now pusillanimously deny.—But neither Com. Campbell nor Gen. Mathews, nor Colonel Smythe will tamely submit to the ignominy which their rulers are heaping upon them: the shaft will recoil on the arm which sped it, and cover with confusion the authors of a transaction, who now shrink from the responsibility of their own crooked policy. Such are the fruits of the tree of democracy, planted by Jefferson, and watered and cherished to the maturity of evil fruit by Madison.—*Ibid.*

INTERESTING LETTER.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Savannah to the Editors of the Courier.

SAVANNAH, 28th April, 1812.

"Dear Sir—I give you the news here of to-day, which you will find pretty correct.—Gov. Mitchell arrived here this morning, and set off in a few hours afterwards for Darien, with all speed, on his way to Amelia Island, to take the command from Mathews, and deliver up the Island to the Spanish Commandant, together with any other parts of Florida which may be in the possession of the U. States, and to assure him of the disapprobation of our government with the proceedings of Mathews and Campbell. The governor's proclamation is now printing, calling upon the American Citizens to refrain from further proceedings against that colony, come home, under penalties, &c. So much for that pretty business. The governor has ordered out one thousand militia to enforce his orders in case of need, and also to keep the local population in awe. So far right. It is understood here that the Governor is ordered to deliver Amelia Island up to the Spanish authorities on or before the 30th instant agreeably to a promise to Mr. Foster."

A WORTHY REPRESENTATIVE.

Humanity endears the possessor of it to the hearts of all good men; a virtuous breast feels sympathy for the distress of others; and esteem for him, who steps forth to administer the balsam of relief. With such esteem our bosom was impressed for that worthy representative from our state, Nathaniel Macon, when we read his humane exertions to relieve from famine the devoted inhabitants of Laguirra, the Carracas, and Teneriffe. It reflects hon or on the House of Representatives, that they adopted without a dissenting voice the motion of Mr. Macon as far as respects the two first mentioned places, and while we regret that a too scrupulous sentiment paused on the assistance that was intended for the unhappy survivors in Teneriffe, it is still satisfactory to observe that a committee is instructed to enquire into and report on the real state of that afflicted Island.—*Id.*

Congress of the United States.

The intolerant spirit manifested in the following debate, requires that the silence observed by the "National Intelligencer" on this congressional proceeding, should be corrected, and that publicity should be given to opinions so alarming to the citizens of the United States, as regards their right of petitioning, and so subversive of the privilege of free debate.

The sketch which we now publish, was received in manuscript from a friend at Washington.

Phil. Register.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Thursday, April 30

Mr. Read, of Massachusetts, presented a petition signed by upwards of 470 merchants of Boston setting forth that they had an immense amount of property in the dominions of G. Britain, the safety of which is jeopardized by the state of the relations between the two countries; and praying permission to draw their said property from G. Britain and her dependencies, under such provisions as shall be reasonable and just.

Mr. Reed having desired the petition to be read, the clerk commenced reading it, and proceeded until he came to that part of it in which the petitioners suggest facts and arguments to shew that the Berlin and Milan decrees are not repealed, when,

Mr. Wright rose, and said he hoped the further reading of the petition would not be suffered; that it was an insult to the house and to the government, for the petitioners to insist that these decrees were not repealed, when the executive of this country had declared they were.

The speaker said that the reading of the petition had been called for, and was ordered, as was always done upon the request of any number who was desirous of hearing a paper read on which he was called to vote.