

THE MINERVA.

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FOR THE MINERVA.

On the 29th day of February, 1808, a number of citizens of Stokes county convened together in Salem, for the purpose of deliberating on the propriety of sending an address to our representatives in Congress, respecting the present critical situation of our country and the measures adopted; when George Hauser, Esquire, was unanimously elected chairman, and Charles F. Bagge, secretary.—After which, the following Address was read, and debated paragraph by paragraph, and agreed to.

To the Honorable MESHECK FRANKLIN, and the other Representatives in Congress, for the State of North-Carolina.

GENTLEMEN,

The present alarming crisis in the national affairs of the United States, the anxiety about the fate of our beloved country, and the right we, as freemen have to a knowledge not only of all the proceedings and measures of government, but also of the motives leading to extraordinary measures, and likewise that you obtain a knowledge of the sentiments of your constituents, which is not a privilege, but a right we have to declare to you, is the apology for our present address.

We have been informed of extraordinary, alarming, and perhaps indecisive measures of the Legislature of the U. States; the most prominent whereof are the embargo on the shipping of the United States, and the non-shipment act revived and going into operation. Of the latter we have only the opinion, that the benefit to our country must appear problematical, of prohibiting the importation of articles from one country, at a time when neither our own country furnishes them, nor can they be obtained with safety from any other.

The act laying an embargo has diffused general alarm. The impressions on our minds as being the probable result of its operations, have been the following:

1st. The total destruction of our commerce, that source of life and activity to the agriculture of this country. Is commerce destroyed, then agriculture consequently languishes, and is eventually ruined also. In vain does the husbandman sow his grain, plant his cotton or tobacco, or any article for exportation; in vain rear his cattle or support a dairy, if he can find no market for his surplus productions: These must perish and rot on his hands: It is not worth his while to raise more than the immediate wants for the consumption of his family; he cannot pay his debts, cannot discharge his dues towards the support of government; cannot rear his offspring to industry, and cannot give them an education suitable to his former wealth and standing in society. Hence result idleness and the concomitant evils, poverty, ignorance, fraud and corruption, the *amor patriæ* is lost, and at last follows a servile submission to the yoke of any pretender or despot. Providence has blessed our country with a variety of agricultural productions; the superabundance of which is of no use to us without the aid of commerce; that once destroyed, our farms will return to their primitive state of native wilderness. It is absurd to say, that the mercantile interest suffers alone: the fallacy of such reasoning is plainly to be inferred from what has been said. The agricultural interest is so closely connected therewith, that they in fact make but one interest, and if the one be destroyed, it takes the other inevitably along in its fall; and we should be afraid to offer an insult to common sense, were we to demonstrate that manufactures on a large scale cannot be established to advantage in a country whose population is so scattered.

2d. If we give up our commerce tamely, our great commercial rival will surely take the advantage and grasp the commerce of the world into her own hands; which from her power and activity on every ocean, she is enabled to do; and of her readiness to take advantage, there can be no doubt. And are we ready to say, that we will suffer others exclusively to be our carriers?

3d. Our commercial advantages have certainly been great, and that our country flourished thereby cannot be denied. If we suffer the channels of wealth gained by commerce to be lost to us and other nations to take possession thereof, they may be lost to us forever; and it will at least require time, wisdom and perseverance to bring us back again to that flourishing condition whence we had set out.

4th. The sailors of our numerous merchantmen will be out of employ. They are inured to a seafaring life—the sea is their element, where they have been brought up. They

would not willingly take up with another mode of life; and if they would, the greater part of them are not able to earn a subsistence in any other way. Shall they be supported by charity? For a short time this would do; but charity is at an end, when the fountains which support it are dried up. They must either fall into a dissolute life and become a burthen, or which is much more probable, go over to our rival and strengthen their already dreaded navy.

5th. In the north and in the south we are bounded by colonies of two European powers. The embargo cannot affect them. In the north the citizens of the United States can form connections with the subjects of Great-Britain, and those in the south with the subjects of Spain; and thus the embargo be avoided there, to the manifest advantage of our adjoining neighbours. It is well known that upper Canada and others of the British possessions in North America, are capable of great improvements; and it is equally well known that the British government encourages the settlement of those parts by all means. If then the United States languish and pine away for want of paternal care in our government, or by putting the inhabitants thereof into a state of inactivity, it will not affect the British colonies in the north. The more we languish, the more will they flourish, and privileges be multiplied to entice the citizens of the United States to become their subjects. Can it be believed that people will consent to be bound down to inactivity, and not take up with advantages the energy of another government will hold out to them? Thousands will emigrate from the United States, and can you hinder them? It is in vain to appeal to patriotism. The multitude always take things as they are at the present moment, and as they operate on their feelings. Is it not an historical fact, that multitudes have emigrated from the United States, even in times of their highest prosperity into the British northern colonies, and are now settled there? Will they not do the same when pressed by want, produced by inactivity? Thus the weapon intended to wound our rival, will arm him with new strength and power.

6th. The embargo will destroy the revenue and revenue system of the United States.—Our whole revenue is derived from commerce; when that is ruined, there is no revenue. How then shall government be supported, our debts paid and the nation be defended; and if you speak of war, how is that to be supported? By a revenue from internal taxation? What articles in our country can bear a taxation equal to the wants of the government, when industry is paralyzed by an act which makes our staple commodities of no value? And if we should have war, how is a revenue to be raised, and how are the defenders of the country to be paid their pittance?

These are a few of the impressions on our mind occasioned by the late measures of government. That by the deprivation of commerce we are already, and shall still be more subject to suffer numberless hardships, cannot be denied. These we would bear patiently, did we but know that the present measures of government might ultimately result to the benefit of the union. Ignorant of the causes which lead to such measures, we are surprised that they are kept a secret from the public, and still more are we astonished that the act laying an embargo could have been consented to by our representatives in Congress, when even they had not full information of our situation in relation to some foreign governments. Our feelings were alarmed when we saw a motion made in the secret sessions of Congress, to have papers relating to a communication of a foreign power to the administration, laid before the house for information, rejected by the same. We cannot but then infer, that they have acted by some impulse or other without having had all the bearings of the object in full view. In vain do we then look for information from our representatives, whereto we have a right, when we must suppose ourselves not fully informed, and our whole knowledge is to consist of the rumours of the day, which may be erroneous, and which we often find hard to believe: We will for instance, not believe, that with the administration a preference is given to one of the belligerent powers before the other, for it is congenial to our feelings that this country should be perfectly neutral between them. With both, without preference, good faith ought to be kept, and the injuries of the one ought to be resented as well as those of the other; but we must confess, that our belief in the impartiality towards both the belligerent powers is somewhat shaken, when we see all the acts and papers of

and relating to one of these powers are promul-

gated, whilst those of the other are kept a secret from the nation. We hope not that the time has yet arrived, when we are to be made the dupes or tools of any foreign power on earth. We are not yet ripe for it. We are honest Americans, and as such, our wish is to stand neutral in foreign quarrels and wars, and to lend neither open nor secret assistance to any. The same injuries we receive from both, ought not to be resented in the one and submitted to in the other. Both ought to be treated with the same policy.

It is to be lamented that deserters from a navy of a friendly or neutral power are suffered to get encouragement to serve in the navy of the United States. This cannot but be a source of endless animosities and difficulties. Will not that which would be irritating if done to us, be also the same to others if done to them? And cannot an act of legislature cut asunder this knot of reiterated misunderstandings?

It is with reluctance that we express our regret that we perceive even on the floor of Congress, an encroachment on the liberty of speech; for when a member declaring his honest sentiments and perhaps differing from others of a certain description, is immediately denounced a British partizan, then adieu to the liberty of speech and the liberties of the country. Such denunciations, though properly meant to captivate the public out of doors, have no more effect on us, than that we see a pernicious party spirit blasting the best hopes of the United States, is kept up. Those that speak least about British or French influence, we think our best friends. We have also to state our mortification, that as much as the rumours of war are afloat, we can hear of no efficient navy, no fortifications, and hardly of arms and ammunition for the defence of the country of an adequate amount to be provided for. And if all shall be provided for at the commencement of a war, our country will feel the dire effects of weakness before we can be in a state of preparation; besides which, where is the money necessary for such armaments to come from, when the revenue has ceased to bring its millions into the treasury. It is a pity the wise maxim, "That a state wishing to be at peace, ought always to be prepared for war," has been neglected. The more we reflect on these things, the more are we astonished that the time of Congress is taken up with holding caucusses, forestalling people's opinions, and that such pitiful motions as that of removing the seat of government can be countenanced by Congress. We will not trespass any longer on your time, and it only remains for us to inform you that the wishes of the people are—peace with all the world; impartiality to, and neutrality between belligerent powers; not to submit to the dictates, frowns or smiles of any power on earth. As long as there are ways open to negotiation, recourse to that method of settling differences ought to be had without equivocation and needless punctilios on our side. If injuries received by any one cannot be settled without having recourse to arms, let the war be solely American, and stand on its own merits, and not be called forth by the artifice, intrigue, command, insinuation, threatening or promises of any third power. Americans will defend their liberties, but will disdain to fight the battles of any foreign power, even of the mightiest monarch on earth. We are still in hopes that our fears for our country will be dispelled by a true statement and some consolatory information, which will be gratefully received by your honest constituents.

On motion, it was unanimously ordered, that this Address be sent to Mesheck Franklin, Esq. Member of Congress from Surry district, and that a copy of it be forwarded to a printer in this state, to have it published.

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy from the original.

C. F. BAGGE, Secretary.

FOR THE MINERVA.

At the last session of the Inferior Court held for the County of New Hanover, the following presentment was made by the Grand Jury.

State of North Carolina } Court of Pleas and
New Hanover County } Quarter Sessions,

February Term, 1808.

Convinced as we the Jurors are, of the wisdom, patriotism and integrity of the President, Vice-President, and Congress of the United States, and approving the measures which the present Administration have pursued; we behold with regret, and present as a grievance, the conduct of certain persons who go to and fro in the county aforesaid, endeavouring to alienate the minds of the

good citizens of this county from a confidence in the general Government.

At this awful crisis, when the deadly hatred of two great rival nations has convulsed the whole civilized world, and when the vindictive enemy of those contending powers, has given a rude shock to the commercial interests of the United States, it becomes the duty of every good citizen, to strengthen the arm of the constituted authorities, in order that the rights of an unoffending neutral nation may not be trampled upon.

Sincerely as we do sympathize with those of our fellow sufferers, from the restrictions on trade, yet we are convinced that the Embargo was a measure dictated by wisdom, prudence and safety; and from the superior information of our Delegates in Congress, we repose entire confidence, that they will not sacrifice our interests.—And we confide, that the Embargo will be of no longer duration than comports with the dignity, honor, and solid interests of the United States.

This presentment, was signed by A. F. Macneill the foreman, and by

It will be remembered that in this State Grand Juries must make their presentments upon oath, and that they shall make no presentments for envy, hatred or malice. There are but two ways by which a Grand Jury is permitted to receive information—one is the personal knowledge of 12 of them as to the truth of the fact to be presented—the other is the evidence of witnesses, and these witnesses must be sworn in open Court, and a certificate by the Clerk of their having been thus sworn, sent along with them to the Jury, otherwise they cannot be received; and where it shall happen that less than 12 of the Grand Jury know the fact to be presented: a presentment cannot be made upon their information. The oath they take is not as witnesses, but as Jurors—they must inform the Attorney for the state, and be sworn like other witnesses. It is the same with respect to a petit jury. For if any petit juror knows a fact material to the case, his information cannot be received by his brother jurors upon their retirement; but he must be sworn like any other men, and his brethren must receive his testimony just as they would receive that of any other witness, who was not one of the jury. When the fact to be presented is supported by testimony, it is an invariable practice of this country, for the State's Attorney, to draw up an indictment, and in this case the foreman attests the finding by his single signature. Where it is upon the personal knowledge of 12 of the jurymen, these 12 who know the fact, attest that knowledge by their individual signatures.—This latter course has been the one pursued by the jury in the present case; from whence it must be inferred, that the jurymen were themselves personally acquainted with the fact.

We desire it to be observed that they do not mention the names of any persons who have been concerned in committing the offence which they have described; yet these jurymen have been drawn indiscriminately from all parts of the county. Can any man believe that under these circumstances these 12 jurymen had personal knowledge of the offence, and yet were ignorant of the offenders?—And was it not their duty if they felt themselves under the obligation of an oath to execute faithfully an important public trust, to disclose to the court the names of those who were concerned in the commission of so nefarious an offence?—

It is proper that we should in this place state to the public, that we have for some time past, been active in endeavoring to ascertain the sense of the people, concerning the Embargo act—intending that if they should wish to obtain a repeal of it, to join with them in the exercise of a constitutional right which we have to instruct our representative in congress to endeavor to obtain its speedy repeal. This is all that we have done or attempted to do; and although we are no way bound to assign reasons for the exercise of a constitutional right—nevertheless as we wish to stand justified to our fellow citizens, for all our actions of a public tendency, we will assign our reasons at the close of this paper.

As we neither know nor believe that any persons but ourselves have of late been endeavoring to ascertain the opinion of the people relative to the Embargo law, we must believe that we are the persons meant to be presented; and this is manifest from all that follows after the grievance stated by the jury as the cause of presentment.—It is an unequivocal appeal to the people to support that act, as if we had been seducing them to destroy it, which we certainly never did.