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BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MARCH 6.

AMERICAN AFFAIRS.

[*Debate on Mr. Whitbread's motion for an address to his majesty, praying that he would adopt without delay such measures as may best tend to the immediate re establishment of commercial intercourse with the United States.*]

(Concluded.)

Mr CANNING would not trespass on the patience of the House at so late an hour, but he must beg leave to observe, that most of what had been observed upon the subject before the house, led to no practical conclusion, led to no recommendation of measures which it would be thought safe and politic to adopt. Almost all he had heard was lost in vagueness of conjecture, or splendor of declamation. The question really was between England and France; not between England and America; and if the question involved matters of a delicate nature, which were not inconsiderately or prematurely to be exposed the fault was with those who called for the papers, and provoked the discussion; not with those, who while they deemed it their duty to shrink from no inquiry into their conduct, still felt the impropriety of being forced into explanations, which it were more prudent to postpone. He most certainly should have opposed the production of those papers had they not already appeared in print in another country, because he was sensible, that the discussion of them was premature, and that they were not in a shape for fit and seasonable discussion. The blame, as he had already observed, must rest with those who recommend it, and would enforce a parliamentary consideration of an incomplete and undecided question. The right hon. gentleman then proceeded to argue the question of the justice and the right, as well as of the policy and expediency of maintaining the principles upon which the British government had acted with regard to America, under the circumstances of the French decrees. These principles were the grounds of the order in council of the 7th January 1807. A ground not only of retaliation, but of self-defence; a ground therefore, which the gentlemen opposite him would not be disposed to contend against. Upon that ground his majesty's present ministers had found the question—upon that ground they felt it incumbent on them to support it. And here he begged leave to appeal to the principles and the language laid down by his noble and able predecessor (Lord Grey,) whose authority, he did not imagine the gentleman opposite him, would dispute. Much was said about observance of the law of nations. He would not say that the orders in council were an exact application of it: he would allow they were rather an extension of that law; but an extension called for and justified by the new order of things that had arisen in the world. The Berlin Decrees were evidently acts of hostility against England: as such England must have met them. Under the pretence of a municipal regulation, these were intended to exclude British commerce from every port; but that they had none of the features of ordinary municipal regulations, which obtain in peace as well as in war. France was all along the original aggressor, in this respect, though she affected to pay us the compliment of a priority of wrong. The right hon. Secretary next argued, to shew, that the orders in council were not the real cause of the American embargo. This appeared to be the case, from the acknowledgment of Mr Pinkney, who confessed the embargo to be only a measure of precaution, and as such, not the consequence of any measure which we had adopted, but a guard against what we were likely to adopt. As to the offer of repealing the embargo if England revoked her orders in council, nothing could be more hollow than the ground upon which that offer had been made. Should we repeal our orders, America would revoke her embargo, and go to war with France, if France refused to repeal her decrees! But when? that was the question America certainly held out that expectation, but it was not an indefinite time. It was to ascertain this particular point, that he had been anxious, and had required that every thing connected with that question should be recorded in written documents—loose conversation he did not think himself justified in depending upon, the grounds of negociation he had to submit not being to his own judgment but to that of his colleagues, and therefore it was indispensible for him to have them reduced to a fixed form. Besides he was admonished by what had already taken place in America, where these conversations had been mis-stated in the American newspapers, which in that country were made and considered as the vehicles of Government authority. Those who accused ministers of a disinclination to adopt pacific measures respecting America, must surely have lost sight of the line, temper and manner in which his majesty's government had acted towards America since differences had unfortunately arisen between the two governments. Had they not sent a special mission to explain and apologise for the affair of the Chesapeake; and was not the mere sending of a special mission to such an effect ever deemed a sufficient atonement even by the proudest nations? Yet, even there, was not the vessel that carried out the minister compelled to submit to the degrading ceremonial imposed by the embargo? In short, we had rather gone too far, than done too little. We twice offered to negociate; yet the non-importation act was not revoked. Would the late administration have done more? The present discussion, however, was imprudent at a time negociation was pending for the adjustment of differences.

Mr. G. ROSE, Jun. entered into some explanation upon the business of his diplomatic mission to America, and said, that notwithstanding the sole object of his embassy was to make satisfaction in the affair of the Chesapeake, he found it impracticable to conclude the business without leading to protracted discussions, the nature of which were incompatible with the honor of this country. And even the very vessel on board of which he went was not suffered to remain in an American port, but under the direction of the commissioner of customs, and in such station as he should point out.

Mr. WHITBREAD expressed his determination not to avail himself of that privilege, to which, as the original mover, he was entitled. However, he could more freely dispense with the exercise of the right, inasmuch as every argument that was used by his opponents was ably met by the hon. friends who supported him; and where there was such a manifest deficiency in meeting his observations, he could not, at that hour, trespass on the house, even for the purpose of exposing the absurdity of such attempts.

Amidst loud cries for the question, the House divided on the motion—For the address, 83—Noes, 145—Majority, 62.

The House adjourned at 7 o'clock.

COMMUNICATIONS

From JOHN ADAMS, late President of the United States to the Editor of the Boston Patriot—Continued.

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From Mr. Murray, the American Minister at the Hague, who had been appointed by President Washington, I received assurances from the French government similar to those in Mr. Barlow's letter and so many others. They were conveyed from the French Directory to Mr. Pichon, Secretary of Legation and Charge des Affairs of the French Republic near the Batavian Republic in the absence of the French Ambassador, by him officially communicated to Mr. Murray, and by him to the Executive of the U. S. The communication was in these words.

[TRANSLATION.]

EXTERIOR RELATIONS,

3d division.

N. B. The good order of the correspondence requires, the answer should relate the number of the division above indicated.

LIBERTY. EQUALIT.

(French Seal of)

(the Department)

(of Exterior Re)

(lations.)

Paris, the 7th Vendemaire, of the 7th year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

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The Minister of Exterior Relations to Citizen PICHON, Secretary of Legation of the French Republic, near the Batavian Republic.

I have received successively, citizen, your letters of the 22d & 23d Fructidore They afford me more and more reason to be pleased with the measure you have adopted to detail to me your conversations with Mr. Murray. These conversations, at first merely friendly, have acquired consistency by the sanction I have given to them, by my letter of the eleventh Fructidore. I do not regret that you have trusted to Mr. Murray's honor a copy of my letter. It was intended for you only, and contains nothing but what is conformable to the intentions of the government. *I am thoroughly convinced that should explanations take place, with confidence, between the two Cabinets, irritation would cease; a croud of misunderstandings would disappear: and the ties of friendship would be more strongly united, as each party would discover the hand which sought to disunite them.* But I will not conceal from you that your letters of the 2d and 3d Vendemaire, just received, surprise me much.—What Mr. Murray is still dubious of, has been explicitly declared even before the President's message to Congress of the 3d Messidore, (21 of June) last was known in France. I had written it to Mr. Gerry, namely, on the twenty-fourth Messidore and the fourth Messidore. I did repeat it to him before he set out. A whole paragraph of my letter to you of the 11th Fructidore, of which Mr. Murray has a copy, is devoted to develope still more the fixed determination of the French Republic. According to these bases you were right to assert that *whatever Plenipotentiary the government of the United States might send to France, to put an end to the existing differences between the two countries, would be undoubtedly received with the respect due to the representative of a free, independent, and powerful nation.* I cannot persuade myself, citizen, that the American government need any further declarations from us to induce them, in order to renew the negociations, to adopt such measures as would be suggested to them, by their desire to bring the differences to a peaceable end. If misunderstandings on both sides have prevented former explanations from reaching that end, it is presumable that these misunderstandings being done away, nothing, henceforth, will bring obstacles to the reciprocal dispositions. The President's instructions to his envoys at Paris, which I have only known by the copy given you by Mr. Murray and received by me the 21st Messidore, (9th July) announce, if they contain the whole of the American government's intentions, and dispositions, which could only have added to those which the Directory has always entertained; and notwithstanding the posterior acts of that government, notwithstanding the irritating and almost hostile measures they have adopted, *the Directory* has manifested its preseverance in the sentiments which are deposited both in my correspondence with Mr. Gerry, and in my letter to you of the 11th Fructidore, and which I have herein before repeated in the most explicit manner. Carry, therefore, citizen, to Mr. Murray, those positive expressions, in order to convince him of our sincerity, and prevail upon him to transmit them to his government.

I presume, citizen, that this letter will find you at the Hague; if not, I ask it may be sent back to you at Paris.

Salute and fraternity,

(Signed)

CH. MAU. TALLEYRAND.

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This letter was transmitted by Mr. Murray to the American government, and I own I am not acquainted with any words either in the French or English language, which could have expressed in a more solemn, a more explicit or a more decided manner assurances of all that I had demanded as conditions of negociation. How could I get rid of it, with honor, or even without infamy. If ever there was a regular diplomatic communication, this was one. The diplomatic organs were all perfect and complete. Mr. Pichon was well known at Philadelphia, where he had resided some years in a public employment in the family of the French ambassador, as a respectable man & a man of letters. He was now Secretary of Legation, held a commission from his sovereign as much as a minister Plenipotentary; and every Secretary of Legation in the absence of his principal minister is, of course, Charge des affairs, & the acts of Charges des affairs are as official, as legal and authentic, as those of an ambassador extraordinary.

In what other manner could Mr. Talleyrand have transmitted the assurances demanded? He had communicated them to Mr. Gerry, but was desirous of sending them by another way, that he might increase the chances of their arrival. At war with England he could not send them to Mr. King. If he had sent them to Madrid to Col. Humphreys, there was no probability of their arriving in America so soon as through Holland. If he had sent them to Berlin to Mr. Adams, the course would have been still more circuitous and the probability much greater of long delay and uncertain arrival. If he had sent them to Mr. Smith, at Lisbon, there would have been the same difficulties. Of all the diplomatic organs, therefore, in Europe, he chose the shortest, the safest and most certain.

Mr. Gerry's letters to the Secretary of State, dated Nantasket Road, October, the 1st, 1798, confirmed these assurances beyond all doubt, in my mind, and his conversations with me, at my own house, in Quincy, if any thing further had been wanting, would have corroborated the whole. As I have not a copy of that gentleman's letter, if he should chance to read this paper, I ask the favor of him to publish copies of his letters and of Mr. Talleyrand's letters to him, and, if he pleases, to repeat the assurances he gave me in conversation. This gentleman's merit in this transaction was very great. They have been treated like all his other sacrifices, services and sufferings in the cause of his country.

If with all this information, I had refused to institute a negociation or had not persevered in it, after it was instituted, I should have been degraded in my own estimation as a man of honor; I should have disgraced the nation I represented, in their own opinion and in the judgment of all Europe.

JOHN ADAMS.

Quincy, April, 1809.

THE

INADMISSIBLE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

KING OF ENGLAND'S PROCLAMATION *of Oct. 22, 1807—Considered* BY THE LATE PRESIDENT ADAMS.

(Continued.)

THURLOW, when he was Chancellor, hazarded a saying to a committee of the city of London, that the practice of impressment of seamen was legal; but the committee answered him respectfully, but firmly, tho' in the presence of the king in council—"We acknowledge the high authority of your Lordship's opinion, but we must declare that we are of a very different opinion;" & their answer appeared to be applauded by the nation. Press-gangs are continually opposed and resisted at sea, by the sailors, whenever they have the means or the least hope of escaping. Navy officers and men are sometimes killed, and there is no inquisition for their blood. As little noise as possible is made about it. It is known to be justifible homicide to take the life of an assailant in the necessary defence of a man's liberty. There is not a jury in England who would find a verdict of murder or manslaughter against any sailor, on land or at sea, who should kill any one of a press-gang in the necessary defence of his liberty from impressment. Press-gangs on shore are often resisted by the people, fired on, some of them wounded, sometimes killed. Yet no inquisition is made for this. The practice is held in abhorrence by the men of war's men themselves. The boatswain of the *Rose frigate*, after the acquittal of the four Irish sailors who were prosecuted in a special court of Admiralty at Boston, for killing a gallant and amiable officer, Lieutenant Panton, said, "This is a kind of work in which I have been almost constantly engaged for twenty-years, i. e. in fighting with honest sailors for their liberty; I have always suspected that I ought to be hanged for it, but now I know it." Since I have alluded to this case, it may not be amiss to recollect some other circumstances of it.

A press gang from the Rose, commanded by lieutenant Panton, with a midshipman and a number of ordinary seamen, visited and searched a merchant ship from Marblehead, belonging to Mr. Hooper, at sea. The lieutenant enquired if any English, Irish or Scotchmen were on board? Not satisfied with the answer he received, he prepared to search the ship from stem to stern. At last he found four Irishmen retired and concealed in the forepeak.—With swords and pistols he immediately laid siege to the enclosure and summoned the men to surrender. Corbett, who had the cool intrepidity of a Nelson, reasoned, remonstrated, and laid down the law with the precision of a Mansfield. "I know who you are. You are the lieutenant of a man of war, come with a press-gang to deprive me of my liberty. You have no right to impress me. I have retreated from you as far as I can; I can go no farther. I and my companions are determined to stand upon our defence—Stand off." The sailors within and without employed their usual language to each other, and a midshipman, in the confusion, fired a pistol into the forepeak, and broke an arm of one of the four. Corbett, who stood at the entrance, was engaged in a contest of menaces and defiances with the lieutenant. He repeated what he had before said, and marking a line with a harpoon in the salt, with which the ship was loaded, said—"You are determined to deprive me of my liberty, and I am determined to defend it. If you step over that line, I shall consider it as a proof that you are determined to impress me, *and by the eternal God of Heaven*, you are a dead man." "Aye, my lad," said the lieutenant, "I have seen many a brave fellow before now." Taking his snuff box out of his pocket, and taking a pinch of snuff, he very deliberately stepped over the line and attempted to seize Corbett. The latter, drawing back his arm, and driving his harpoon with all his force, cut off the carotid artery and jugular vein, and laid the lieutenant dead at his feet. The Rose sent a reinforcement to the press-gang; broke down the bulkhead, and seized the four Irishmen, and brought them to trial for piracy and murder. The Court consisted of Governor Bernard, Governor Wentworth, Chief Justice Hutchinson, Judge Achmuty, Commodore Hood himself, who then commanded all the ships of war on the station, now a Peer of the British Empire, and twelve or fifteen others, counsellors of Massachusetts, New-Hampshire and Rhode-Island. After the trial, the President, Governor Bernard, pronounced the judgment of the court, that the action of the prisoners was justifiable homicide, and in this opinion the whole court was unanimous. The sailor who was wounded in the arm, brought an action against the midshipman, and commodore Hood himself interposed and made compensation to the sailor, to his satisfaction, after which the action was withdrawn.—Such was the impressment of seamen, as it stood, by law, before our revolution.—The author of my text, then, carries his courtly complaisance to the English government, farther than the Governors Bernard and Hutchinson, and even than Lord Hood carried it, when we were a part of the British empire. He thinks, that, as every nation has a right to the service of its subjects, in time of war, the proclamation of the king of Great Britain, commanding his naval officers to practice such impressments on board, not the vessels of his own subjects, but of the United States, a foreign nation, could not furnish the slightest ground for an embargo! It is not necessary for me to say, that any thing could furnish a sufficient ground for an embargo, for any long time; this, I leave to the responsibility of our President, Senators and Representatives in Congress. But, I say, with confidence, that it furnished a sufficient ground for a declaration of war. Not the murder of Peirce, nor all the mur-