

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED AT

WILLISTON,

JULY 4TH, 1812,

TO A GENERAL AND VERY NUMEROUS MEETING OF
THE REPUBLICANS OF CHITTENDEN COUNTY.

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1812.

AN ORATION.

ANOTHER anniversary of American Independence has come. Another year of American Liberty has rolled away. Again we have convened to commemorate the day which gave birth to our nation. A day, which called forth the attention, and excited the anxiety, of an astonished and admiring world. A day, one of the first in the annals of liberty, and one of the last that will be remembered beyond the wreck of time, and the ruins of ages.

On such an occasion, it may perhaps be imagined by some, that the most suitable employment of a speaker is, to take a retrospect of the causes which brought on, and the events which followed the transactions of that interesting and memorable day. But can it be necessary to relate again and again, what has been so long written, and what must be more or less familiar to

most, if not to all present ? Can it be necessary to give an account of the wrongs which compelled our virtuous and heroick forefathers to leave their native country, and abandon their once peaceful homes, and seek a shelter from the tempest of persecution amidst the howling woods of America, where they were met in every direction by the unwelcome noise of the Savage yell ? Is it worth while to shew, that the same system of injustice which had driven them to the western wilds, pursued them with unabating rigour, until they rose in the majesty of their strength, and proved to their oppressors and to the world, that “ for a people to be free it is sufficient that they will it ?” Can it be necessary to tell over the battles which were fought, the victories which were won, the heroes who immortalized themselves, or the patriots who were slain ? Will it be new to any in this meeting to hear, that the immortal Washington, with an army of naked and hungry soldiers endured toil and fatigue, and encountered hardship and danger, & that at last he came off “ conqueror and more than conqueror,” over all the enemies of his country’s independence ? And above all, can it be necessary to the recollection of any one who has ever heard of those times, to recount the

horrid barbarities which were committed by our enemies ; to speak of the merciless Savages, who, being licenced to torture and to murder, waded to their knees in innocent blood as they went along through our country ?

It is certainly true, that the contemplation of these things can not fail to be extremely interesting at all times to the humane and patriotick mind ; but it is also true, that other things, intimately connected with our national independence, are of higher concern and more immediate interest at this particular moment. The political situation of the United States at the present day, crowds itself first into notice, and claims in the strongest possible manner our chief attention.

When the brave sons of the revolution had cut asunder the knot which bound them to the footstool of a tyrant's throne, they erected a government, having for its foundation the principles of equal justice, and relying for its fortification on the virtue of an enlightened people. It was an experiment ; but it was one of the highest magnitude. The eyes of the world were fixed upon the lofty monument thus raised to freedom. By the friends of liberty it was hailed with the liveliest transports of joy as an omen from heaven,

peculiarly auspicious to the rights of mankind. By tyrants it was watched with never winking eyes, and marked for sure destruction. The government progressed, and under its benign operations blessings have been enjoyed never before possessed by the children of men. Peace with all the world, on honourable terms, has been desired and cultivated, and the hand of friendship and protection has been extended to the unfortunate and oppressed from every nation, who chose to seek an asylum on this hallowed spot. When the European world has been deluged in human blood, shed for the purposes of ambition and destruction, and when its miserable people have been from day to day and year to year, hushed to sleep at night and awakened again in the morning by the clarion of war, the inhabitants of these States have had peace in their borders and plenty in their dwellings. What a happy condition. What an enviable state. Truly has it been said, that the United States was "the garden of the Lord, protected by his own almighty hand." How deeply it is to be regretted that the possessors of these blessings have so much abused them. That instead of being contented in their enjoyment, and united for their preservation, they have quarrelled

about their distribution, until their very existence is endangered. Disunion in the American family, has invited aggressions from foreign powers. These have been continued with increased aggravation, until we have been compelled to engage in a foreign war. In this critical hour, our government calls upon the people to lay aside the weapons of party warfare, and unite against the common enemy in defence of our plainest and dearest rights. The call, though for the most part attended to, is in some instances answered by volleys of abuse. The men who have been placed at the head of our affairs, are charged with being traitors to their country, and devoted to the views and under the controul of the French Emperor. It is boldly asserted, that so far from going to war in defence of any just rights, our government has embarked in the cause of the monster of human nature, against a nation, which alone is contending for the liberties of the human race. Is it possible that these charges are true? If they are, how awfully deplorable, and how eminently perilous is our situation. If they are not true, how highly deceived, or how abominably wicked must be their authors. If our publick officers are thus corrupt, let them be hurled from their

exalted seats, and buried beneath the indignation of an injured people. If on the other hand, they are found faithful to their trust, let their accusers hide their faces in shame and confusion. To investigate this subject must be of the greatest consequence. To probe it to the bottom will shew where the evil lies.

THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR COUNTRY, therefore, will be the subject of this address. And in the first place I shall examine the origin and progress of the disunion which exists among the American people, and next, take a short view of our concerns with foreign nations.

At the termination of the revolutionary war and the acknowledgment of our independence by Great Britain, the United States were placed in a situation, as novel as it was critical and perilous. While the whole country had acted as an army, the want of a more complete system of civil government than what existed in the articles of confederation entered into during the war, had not been felt. But when this new empire was about to take her stand by the side of the greatest nations on the globe, it became necessary to form a constitution, better adapted to our altered situation, and more competent to the purposes of National Government. It was

however soon discovered that the accomplishment of this design would be attended with no inconsiderable hazard. While the war lasted there had been no occasion to draw forth the particular political sentiments of men, as to the different forms of government. It was now found, that all those who had stepped forth to resist the oppressions of the mother country, were not friends, to a republican form of government. And it can readily be perceived, that men might fight against the encroachments and cruelties of the King of England, and at the same time, be in favour of establishing a government of a monarchical kind over these States. Experience fully proves, that many have assisted to overthrow despots, to become despots themselves.

A convention of delegates chosen by the several States, met to do this great work of forming a government. Among them, as was feared, was a party in favour of monarchy.* Finding however, that this scheme would not go

* After the convention had completed their business, Luther Martin, whose evidence I think will not be questioned by federalists, in giving information on the subject to the Legislature of Maryland, said, "there was one party whose wish and object it was to abolish and annihilate all the State Governments, and to bring forward one general Government over this extensive continent, of a monarchical nature, under certain restrictions and limitations. Those who openly avowed this sentiment were, it is true but few, yet it is equally true, that there was a considerable number, who did not openly avow it, who were by myself and many others of the convention, considered as being in reality, favourers of that sentiment, and acting upon these principles, covertly endeavouring to carry into effect, what they knew openly and avowedly could not be accomplished."

down, at least without some qualifications, the labours of this party resulted in a plan submitted by its leader, in the nature of an elective monarchy.* The total, and determined rejection of this proposition, convinced its authors, that the people of the United States, after having burst the chains of one despot, were resolved, not to receive the shackles of another. Being thus defeated, this party abandoned its favourite object as altogether hopeless, and joined in the formation and support of that instrument, which was after much debate adopted. The final ratification however of the new constitution, as it was reported to congress by the general convention, was opposed with considerable warmth, by many of the ablest men, and the truest republicans in the United States. They wished for some alterations and additions, with a view, to render it still more republican than it was. The justness of this opposition was soon fully confessed, by making the principal amendments, which had been advocated in the first place. They are mostly

* Alexander Hamilton, proposed a constitution, in which, with other features equally detestable, it was provided; that there should be a President and Senate for life, the President to have an absolute negative on all acts of the Legislature, the Governors of the several States to be appointed by the general Government, and those Governors also to have a negative on the Legislatures of their respective States. Such a constitution would have been a complete subversion of the principles of republicanism. What freedom could have been enjoyed with a President and Senate for life? And what independence, with such a government, would have been left to the States?

contained in the **Bill of Rights**, which has been attached to the constitution, and which so explicitly defines, and so admirably protects the rights of the people.

When the new government was settled, General Washington, who had been the first in war, was chosen by the unanimous voice of his country, to be the first in peace. A Vice President being looked for from another quarter of the union, the choice fell upon John Adams, a man of eminent talents, and a distinguished revolutionist. The first object of the Chief Magistrate was, to prevent the increase of that party spirit, which had already shewn itself, between the friends of republicanism, and the advocates for monarchy. He appointed Mr. Jefferson, one of the most distinguished of the republicans, to the highest and most important office in the gift of the government, and Mr. Hamilton, the leader of the other party, to the next office. But instead of reconciliation, the breach was every day widened. The party in favour of royalty, and the tories of the revolution, soon entered into a close union. The new tories, and the old tories, fondly embraced each other, and on the altar of British corruption, mutually swore eternal friendship. From this union originated a party which has existed to this hour, and which by its com-

plete devotion, at all times, to the cause of Great Britain, has been a continual curse to the United States. To this party, we must look for the cause, of whatever misfortunes, have fallen on our country. This is the source, whence all the divisions and dissensions, among ourselves have arisen.

This party, it must be understood, is entirely distinct from the federal party. A true federalist is as far from being a tory, or a royalist, as a republican is. It is by means of this faction, that brethren of the same principles, have been arrayed in political opposition to each other. It is by means of this faction, that their dissensions have been fomented and increased, to a pitch of inveterate hostility. It is owing to this faction, that republicans and federalists, have been in the constant habit, of stigmatizing each other's motives and principles. It is through this faction, that the monster, party spirit, has crowded itself into our domestick circles, and damped, if not in a measure destroyed, the pleasures of social intercourse. And it is through this faction, that on this day, and in this very hour, men who in our glorious revolution, were "Solomons in council, and Sampsons in combat," and who still love their country with the same zeal, are separated into different parties;

regarding one another with feelings of jealousy, if not of hatred.

It was in the outset perceived by the men composing this party, that it was impossible ever to make any head way in their designs, except upon the maxim, "divide and conquer." All possible exertions therefore were early made to separate the great mass of the people, who were almost all friendly to their country, and attached to the principles of republicanism, into two parties. And the great object was to do this in such a manner, as to secure to their interest the support of one of those parties. For this end, the poisonous tongue of slander was set in motion. The fairest characters, and the best republicans, were every where calumniated, in the vilest manner. These men, artfully keeping out of view, the attempt which had been made to impose upon us a monarchy, and that the defeat of that project, alone induced its authors to join in the support of the new constitution, used every effort to render odious those who had opposed the ratification of that constitution, as it was presented by the convention to congress. Their opposition was exaggerated and misrepresented, while the motives for their objections, and the fact that those objections were admitted and removed, by the amendments, the want of

which alone had caused them, were as much as possible, laid out of the case. The distinctions of federal and anti-federal, were attempted to be kept up, when not a trace of the original foundation of those distinctions, was left. These sham patriots ranked themselves among those whom they called federalists, and declaimed loudly in favour of the constitution, though they heartily detested it. To all who opposed them and endeavoured to expose their designs, they applied the appellation of anti-federalists, and represented them as enemies to the constitution, and dangerous to the liberties of the country. Knowing the personal weight and influence of President Washington, and the strong attachment of the people to him, they crouched round him, claimed to be his exclusive friends, and boasted of his confidence, while they denounced all as *his* enemies, who would not bow the knee to *them*. By such means they drew after them a considerable portion of the people, who were thus imposed upon by their professions, and deceived in their objects. They soon poisoned with prejudice the minds of those to such a degree, that they began to treat their old friends, from whom they had been alienated, in the most illiberal and contemptuous manner. On the other hand, the republicans, or those who stood

firm on their old whig ground, and who had long seen with deep mortification, that so many of their fellow citizens, whom they respected and esteemed, and who they believed loved their country equally with themselves, were unwarily joining a dangerous faction, could not altogether stifle their feelings at such treatment. Recrimination was the natural consequence. In this way, disunion was gradually created and fomented; and about the time, or shortly after, Mr. Adams's election to the Presidency, the present republican and federal parties were completely formed and organized.

At that period the British party assumed a bolder tone, calculating on an advantage which they had not before possessed. The watchful eye, the honest mind, and the discriminating judgment of Washington, were no longer in their way. They calculated much on the pliancy of disposition of President Adams; and it was supposed, that his administration, might without much difficulty, be rendered entirely subservient to the interest of Great Britain. These expectations were to a considerable degree realized. To join England in her war against France, was a measure openly urged, and in a fair way of being adopted. Preparations were rapidly making, and just as the last

step was to be taken, the President paused. He reflected, and saw the manner in which he had been led to a precipice of awful height. The native honesty of his heart, which had yielded to smooth flattery, and been betrayed by deep deception, resumed its dominion. He burst the ligaments which bound him to an unprincipled faction, & contrary to the wishes and advice of his principal counsellors, instituted a new mission to the French republick, in the true spirit of conciliation. His offers of peace and friendship were readily accepted, and a treaty between the two nations was the result. But this alteration of conduct in Mr. Adams, however honourable to himself, and beneficial to his country, was not considered a sufficient atonement, for the injury which his administration had done to the United States, and the persecution which the opposers of his measures had suffered. He was therefore, at the expiration of his first term of office, dismissed from his place, and Mr. Jefferson, the favourite of the republicans, was chosen in his room.

The elevation of this illustrious man, who had penned the declaration of independence, and who had in every instance, and in the midst of every difficulty, remained true to his principles, discouraged, but did not destroy, the hopes of

the British party. The mode of action however, was of necessity changed. Opposition to Government was now to be the order of the day. Accordingly, every measure of the new administration, of the least consequence, was misrepresented and reviled. The state of political affairs in Europe, afforded at this time, a powerful engine, to scatter contention among the American people. The overthrow of despotism, and the establishment of independence by the United States, had awakened into reflection, the long enslaved and debased inhabitants of the European world. The glad tidings of liberty had reached the ears of the slumbering children of wretchedness across the Atlantick.

France and Great Britain were at peace, when the American revolution burst forth, though those two nations had long before, cherished the most inveterate spirit of rivalry. France beheld with a watchful eye, every step of opposition, of the American colonies, to the mother country. In due time she acknowledged the independence of the United States, supplied them with resources on liberal terms, entered into an alliance with them, and joined in the war against England. Those of the French, who had been with us through our struggle, returned home, with far different feelings and views than when they

came over. They came to be sure, to fight for the Americans against the British, but they had known nothing of liberty. They had now witnessed the process of emancipation, as it had been carried through in the United States. They had seen its successful issue, and its blessed effects, in the institution of a free Government. The sparks from the altar of American independence, which were thus carried across the Atlantick, were soon seen to light into a flame in France, which threatened to consume the gilded trappings of royalty, throughout Europe. A revolution having for its object in the first place, a reformation of some of the royal abuses, was commenced by the French. It was soon understood, that on the event of this revolution, depended the fate of monarchs. For a while, the efforts of the friends of freedom were successful. The throne of every despot in Europe, trembled to its foundation. A combination of crowned heads was formed, for the purpose of stopping, or rendering odious, and destroying the object of the French revolution. This royal banditti made the cause of the King of France their own, and declared a determination to re-establish him, in the full enjoyment of that arbitrary power, of which his people were stripping him. This interference cost the unfortunate Louis his life,

and with his breath, passed away the hopes of arresting the progress of the revolution. The sluices of intrigue and corruption, were next opened in France. Insurrections were excited and fomented. Faction rose upon the ruins of faction, and the most mighty convulsions agitated, and distracted the nation. Thus was republicanism disgraced by the management of its deadly foes. The enemies of liberty, turned to their advantage, the mischief they had accomplished. They painted in the most glowing colours, the crimes which they had instigated, and presented them to view as the natural offspring of revolution. They pointed to the very blood, which cried aloud from the ground for vengeance against their guilty souls, as a solemn warning to man, against any more attempts to regain his long lost liberty. The French people, at last wearied with the tumult of internal commotion, and tired with the sight of bleeding heads, yielded themselves an easy prey to the worst of despotisms.

When Mr. Jefferson took the helm of our Government, was about the time, republicanism in France, was seeking a shelter from the fury of the tempest which had overwhelmed it, and fast going to rest in the calm of despotism. The occasion was laid hold of by the partizans of Eng.

land, in the United States. In the first dawning of the French revolution, they were silent. To have come forward then, would too clearly have exhibited to view their principles. Independent of the British party, the American people of all descriptions, were friendly to that revolution: It would not therefore answer, to come out against it in the first place. The moment however the progress of the revolutionists, was marked by irregularities, the reserve was laid aside. It was declared, that nothing but the blindest enthusiasm, could for a moment, have fostered the idea, that a revolution could be effected in Europe, to any advantage. As to France in particular, it was said, liberty could not dwell there, and that Frenchmen were fit only for slaves. Those who did not subscribe to such opinions, and who ascribed the unfortunate result of the transactions in France to its true cause, were denounced as jackobins, and disorganizers.

The peace between France and England, settled by the treaty of Amiens, had been of short duration. The war had been commenced anew, by a formal declaration on the part of England. Notwithstanding this, her supporters in the United States as well as elsewhere, insisted, that she was fighting in defence of the liberties of

the human race, and that France was striving for universal dominion. Such has been the continual cry to this hour. Believing the awful scenes, which had been excited and acted in France, had gone far towards rendering that nation odious to the world, it was calculated that no expedient would be so likely to make Mr. Jefferson's administration unpopular, as to charge him with being devoted to her interest, and so inculcate the belief, that our councils were under French influence. This was the rallying point during the whole of Mr. Jefferson's administration, and it has been the chief weapon of opposition thus far, through that of Mr. Madison.

The republicans have taken but little interest, in the contest between the two rival nations of Europe, since the commencement of their present war, except so far, as the interest of the United States was plainly concerned. It has uniformly been the case, that the more prosperous England has been in her wars, the more arrogant and insulting, and the more rigid in her claims, has she been towards us. Not so with France and the other nations at war with England. With them, it has been the reverse. Whenever therefore, the republicans have wished success to the arms of France, it has been

with a view to the good of the United States. Republicans, can have no choice, simply between two such detestable governments as those of France and England.

The assertions, that England is fighting for the liberties of the world, and that she alone stands between France and universal power, which have been so often, and so unblushingly made, and repeated, are both false, and ridiculous. England battling for the liberties of the world! Monstrous absurdity! Impudent mockery! Does she care about liberty? Look at her enslaved and starving subjects at home, who are driven to such desperation, as to commit assassination in open day. To what spot of the earth has she ever given freedom? Look at Ireland, and view in imagination, the greedy gallows overloaded, and the hungry grave glutted with human victims, who had never had even the *form* of a trial. Where has her power ever been exercised for the good of mankind? look in India, where even the waters of the holy Ganges, have been purpled and polluted with human blood. What has become of those nations, which have been in alliance with her, and which relied on her friendship, and her power for protection. Look at Bonaparte's list of humble tributaries. Is it for liberty's sake, that thou-

sands of men are torn from their homes, their friends, and every thing dear to them, and forced to linger out a miserable existence, in worse than barbarian slavery? What glorious liberty, that depends on slavery for its protection. What exalted liberty, that owes its existence to British power and influence.

As to universal dominion, there is no more reason to believe that France is aiming at it, than England. Show me an acre of ground on the face of the globe, where it has been possible for the British to set their feet, which they have not colonized, plundered, or rendered tributary. Show me a country in the world, which they have been unable to conquer by open war, which they have not attempted to disturb, or to destroy, by means of secret spies and pensioned emissaries. The honest truth is, the ancient enmity between France and England, has grown to such a height, that each is determined on the other's destruction. For this purpose, it is of the utmost importance to each, to have the assistance, and the controul, of the other nations of Europe; and from this, those other nations, are alternately enslaved by the two great belligerents just as their power varies. But it is said, Bonaparte would conquer the United States, if it were not for England. Indeed. Has he ever

threatened any thing of the kind? Is there any danger of it? On the other hand, how stands the case with England? *She* would in all probability *have conquered us*; *she* would have done the very thing, had it not been for France, which her supporters now say France wishes to do. And I do not hesitate to pronounce, that no man, who is not miserably deceived or wickedly dishonest, will say, that England has not at all times evinced by her conduct, that had she supposed herself to possess the power, she would long since have attempted to subjugate and recolonize the United States. To say the very least then, France stands as much between us and England, as England does between us and France. Still we have no favours to expect from either of them. We ask none; we only wish to preserve our just rights; and those, I hope we can defend without the aid of any foreign power. The cause of the United States is not connected with that of France or of England. It is entirely distinct from either; and nothing is wanting but union, to resist the aggressions of both.

But the conduct of this British party, has been more particularly criminal, in the immediate relations, between the United States and Great Britain. This is the main theatre upon

which they were designed to act, and here, they have faithfully played their part. Here they have eagerly watched, and industriously improved every occasion, to strengthen the cause of Great Britain, to add to the number of her followers, and to stir up the burning spirit of party, in the United States. Every item in the catalogue of British wrongs, has in its turn been defended and justified, and every opposer of British politics has been slandered and abused.

The barbarous practice of impressing seamen from our vessels, has, in the very midst of the lamentations of the father, the cries of the mother, and the distresses of brothers and sisters, been defended and justified, agreeable to the pretensions of the British Government.

The murderous attack on the Chesapeake, after the first and overwhelming burst of resentment had a little subsided, was palliated, if not fully justified, and the refusal of Rose to tender satisfaction for that outrage, or even to tell us what he intended to offer, before the President's proclamation, interdicting British armed vessels was revoked, was declared to be right and proper.

The disavowal of Erskine's settlement, was boldly approved, and the ground taken by the British Government, supported in every partic-

ular. When that settlement was made, the to-ry faction arrogated the whole credit of it to themselves. They proclaimed, that by their determined opposition, our government had at last been driven to an honorable compromise with Great Britain. And they had even the hardihood to assert, that precisely the same terms had been offered us eighteen months before, and that the British, had all the while been willing, and anxious to make the very same settlement. When the disavowal took place, which was but three months afterwards, the same men, with the most brazen effrontery declared, that Erskine had never had any power to make such a settlement, and that Great Britain never could have thought, of authorising, or sanctioning, an agreement so unequal on her part.

When the noted Jackson next came, and with matchless impudence, called in question the veracity of the President, with respect to his knowledge of the extent of Erskine's authority, his infamous conduct was entirely approved, and the incendiary was rewarded with the most distinguished marks of attention, by men who dare profane the honourable title of Americans.

In the affair of the American frigate President, & the British ship, Little Belt, the statement of the British commander was supported against

that of Commodore Rodgers, and the conduct of the British vessel defended, on principles as contemptible, as they are unfounded. The Little Belt had *all* right, the President had *none*. The Little Belt had a right to *chase*, the President had not. The Little Belt had a right to *hail*, the President had not. The Little Belt had a right to *hold her tongue when hailed*, the President had not. In short the President from this, could have had no right, unless it was to *run away*, and this question has not been discussed. It must have been forgotten, or the poor American would have been stripped of even this *lean privilege*, though he had no need to exercise it.

And the orders in council, those monstrous weapons of licenced plunder, have been justified on the plea of retaliation for the French decrees; a plea equally false in fact and unfounded in principle.

Such are the principles of the faction I have described, and such is the course it has invariably pursued. Such has been the manner, in which it has supported the British cause, and such the means, by which it has divided the American people. In this way, has the fire of party been kindled, while fuel has constantly been added to the flame. First the people were

artfully formed into two parties. next we have found this faction endeavoring to incorporate itself with the federalists, so as to secure their support . and lastly, we have seen it but too successful, in drawing their sympathies, and ensharing their affections, thereby exciting them to opposition and contention with those, between whom and them, the greatest cordiality, and the most sincere friendship, ought ever to exist.

Leaving this part of the subject, I approach to that of our foreign relations.

From the treaty of peace with Great Britain to the present time, the United States have enjoyed almost uninterrupted tranquility. This is to continue no longer. The nation is about to put on the armour of war, to defend her violated rights, and her mangled privileges. This is a great change in our affairs, and to spend a short time in examining the causes which have produced it, can not be unprofitable.

From the beginning of the present war between France and Great Britain, for about two years, no essential injury was done to the neutral commerce of the United States, by either of the belligerents. In the year 1805, the country for the first time, was roused by a sweeping and ruinous attack on an important branch of our lawful trade, by Great Britain. The whole mercantile

interest of the United States was fired at this unexpected and undeserved stroke of plunder, which was not even sanctioned by the *form* of a proclamation blockade, or an order in council. Meetings were called in the principal places in the Union ; these were attended and concurred in without regard to party. Party names were lost in the clamours of the sufferers, and party feelings were buried in the ruins which caused these clamours. Petitions and memorials were forwarded to congress, praying the aid and protection of the government. The subject was taken under consideration, and on the 13th day of February, 1806, the Senate of the United States unanimously resolved, “ that the capture & condemnation under the orders of the British government, and adjudications of their courts of admiralty of American vessels and their cargoes, on the pretext of their being employed in a trade with the enemies of Great Britain, prohibited in time of peace, is an unprovoked aggression upon the property of the citizens of the United States, a violation of their neutral rights, and an *encroachment upon their national independence.*”

At this time there was no pretence, that France had done any thing, which was injurious to our commerce, or which could afford a cloak to cover this iniquity of Great Britain.

And it is worthy of remark, that the name of Timothy Pickering, the notorious defender of British injustice, stands recorded in favour of this resolution. Even this shameless man, dared not, until sometime afterwards, advocate these high handed robberies of his "fast anchored Isle."

Special negotiation was urged and recommended by our merchants, and accordingly resorted to by our government. Mr. Pinckney was dispatched to England, though we had then a minister residing there. But no satisfaction could ever be obtained, for this "unprovoked aggression upon the property of the citizens of the United States," this "violation of their neutral rights," this "*encroachment upon their national independence.*"

Next comes the British blockade of May 1806. Here at one dash of the pen, a coast of one thousand miles extent, was *proclaimed* to be in a state of blockade, when it is manifest from the order itself, that but a small part of this coast if any, was actually besieged by a naval force. There was at first some reason to expect that this act was not intended to be executed to the injury of American commerce, but in that, we were soon disappointed.

These proceedings on the part of Great Brit,

ain, roused the ruler of France ; and in November following, we find him at the head of his conquering army in Berlin, *proclaiming* also, (for it could be nothing more) the British Isles in a state of blockade ; giving for his reasons in his decree, the previous illegal acts of Great Britain. This was indeed a rapid and wonderful improvement on the British system. On the publication however of this decree, it was officially declared by the French government to the American minister, that the measure should have no operation against the trade of the United States. This determination was immediately made known to the British government, and was not questioned by them. The decree did not so operate until ten months afterwards. The date of this decree, therefore, as it respects the United States, must be considered to be in September 1807 ; it was then for the first time enforced against them.

In January and November 1807, were enacted the British orders in council ; and in December after, Bonaparte again answers by his Milan decree.

For the more clear and explicit understanding, as to the order of time, in which these several encroachments, on the neutral rights, and national sovereignty of the United States have

been commenced, the following recapitulation may serve.

First, the lawless depredations by Great Britain in the year 1805, which drew forth the resolution of the Senate to which I have referred, and caused the sending a special minister to England. Secondly, the British blockade of May 1806. Thirdly, the British orders in council of January 1807. Fourthly, Bonaparte's Berlin decree, taking effect against the United States in September 1807. Fifthly, the British orders in council of November 1807. And sixthly, the French Milan decree of December 1807.

The question which of the two belligerents began this unprecedented warfare on the rights of unoffending nations, has been contested by some ; but it is certainly very easily decided, by a reference to the dates, and nature of their proceedings. No person whose mind is not the seat of prejudice, can seriously entertain the idea, that France, with a naval power, so contemptibly inferior to that of her enemy, would introduce an example, which at once makes superior force, the test of law and right on the ocean. Great Britain has herself always admitted, and declared, that Bonaparte's decrees were but empty threats, without the possibility of his

enforcing them, while her ability to execute her orders to a very great degree, has never been called in question. Yet she will make a mockery of common sense, by pretending that her sweeping orders, carried into effect, almost to the fullest extent, are mere acts of retaliation, on what.....on *empty threats*. Strange retaliation this. It would be more than folly to believe, that Bonaparte, would by an *empty threat*, against his enemy, lay a foundation for a course of proceeding on the part of that enemy, so effectually and vitally injurious to his interest. It is too plain not to be seen, that Great Britain is determined to make use of her great naval superiority to the best advantage for her interest, without regard to usage or principle ; and from this, have those lawless proceedings arisen, which have swept from our citizens so many millions of property, and been the cause of so much agitation.

But this is a question, after all that has been said about it, entirely unimportant as it regards the United States. The last aggressor of their rights, is no more justifiable, nor even excuseable, than the first. France and Great Britain, as it respects the *laying on* their orders and decrees, stand with the United States, precisely on the same footing.

Both of them have attempted to justify themselves, under an *assumed* right of retaliating, on the acts of one another ; at the same time, the first act of this kind, has never been defended ; they are those which follow after, that are claimed to be lawful ; and both deny being the first offender. It is contended, that these acts are *not direct* and *hostile*, against neutral nations, but only so against the enemy, and in their operation *incidentally* injurious to neutrals. This is not true. It is not *enemies* commerce, which is intercepted. A state of war of itself, subjects *that* to prey. *Neutrals* are stopped from going to belligerents, and trading with them. *They* are prevented from carrying on their usual and lawful business, and *their* property is taken away. The injury is *direct* against *them*, and in truth, only *indirect* against the *enemy*, in as much as he is deprived, of the benefit of bartering for the property of the neutrals, which is thus stopped from coming to him, or seized for the benefit of his adversary. Suppose two merchants trading near each other, should be enemies, and one should forbid all trade with the other, and should undertake to stop all persons going to the store of the other, and take away their money to prevent his adversary from having the benefit of it ; would not this be a *direct* attack upon those

persons who were doing nothing, which they had not a perfect right to do? And as to the right of retaliation; if the other merchant should follow the example, would a person who had been plundered by both, think any better of the last robber, than the first? Would it be sufficient for the last one to say, your trade was of great service to me, and for this reason, my enemy, without the most distant regard to law or right, forbid you to trade with me any longer, and in consequence took from you, whatever money or property you attempted to send to me, now because he committed this flagrant breach of justice against you, to injure me, I have done the same for the purpose of retaliating on him?

But it is said if the first offence is not resisted by neutrals, this mode of retaliation, will, on that ground become lawful. This plea has been brought forward, and urged against the United States, both by France, and Great Britain. The slightest examination, will prove it rotten in principle, and destitute of truth.

An involuntary submission of a neutral, to the superior force of a belligerent, cannot certainly afford ground for attack, from the enemy of that belligerent. It may frequently be the case, that the neutral at the time of the injury, is not in a situation to oppose force to force, or

it might not be thought expedient to resort to arms, on the first occasion. This certainly would not legalize wrongs from other quarters. It must be evident to any one the least acquainted with the subject, that nothing short of a *connivance* by a neutral, at the act of a belligerent, *with an intention to aid that belligerent in the war*, can afford the smallest pretence, for the opposing belligerent to make his attack. Something must be done, or suffered to be done by a neutral, *with a view to assist a nation at war, against her enemy*, before that enemy has a right to complain of the neutral.

As to the *fact*, laying aside the *principle*, it is not true, that the United States, have in any single instance, connived, or acquiesced, or even silently submitted, to the abuses of France or Great Britain. Their complaints and remonstrances, have been loud and constant, against these ruffian wrongs. Measures of precaution and resistance, in the form of commercial restrictions have been resorted to again and again, in the hope of a possibility, that war, that great calamity, might be avoided.

Admitting however, that Bonaparte's Berlin decree, was enforced against the United States, on its first promulgation, and that it was in reality, the first encroachment on their neutral rights.

Great Britain cannot even then, cover her iniquity with this flimsy veil. It cannot be questioned, that it was at least her duty to have waited, until it had been ascertained, whether the United States, would acquiesce in the pretensions of that decree. Instead of doing this, the retaliatory order in council of January 1807, was adopted and enforced 46 days after the date of the Berlin decree, and about the time, and perhaps even before, the decree was heard of in the United States. It is clear then, that on no possible ground, can the British orders in council, rely for justification or excuse, on any previous acquiescence of our government in the measures of France. And it is equally clear, that, as Great Britain undertook to proceed without thus waiting, whatever right she might, under any circumstances, and on any principles, have had in the first instance, to call on us for resistance to France, was by her own act completely waved.

But the last correspondence between the Secretary of State and the British minister proves the plea of retaliation on the French decrees, to have been urged merely as a cloak, and puts at rest, all dispute about the object of the orders in council. The minister states positively & unequivocally, that any repeal of the French decrees as against the United States *alone*, will not produce

a repeal of the orders as against them.* He says, the decrees must be repealed as to all nations before the orders can be touched.

The United States have nothing to do with other nations ; it is enough for them to take care of themselves, and other powers must do the same. All we have a right to ask from France is, that she cease to violate our rights, and we ask only the same from Great Britain. But she, through her minister, declares in the face of our government, that if France *does* cease to violate our rights, she will not do the same. France must cease doing injury not only to the United States, but also to other nations, before Great Britain will let us alone. The plain object of this cannot be mistaken ; it is to compel the United States to become the champion of other nations, with whom they have no connexion, and thus to draw them into the war on the side of Great Britain against France. Even those, who have really and honestly considered, that the French decrees ought to be revoked, before we had a right to

* Mr. Foster to Mr. Munroe, June 10th, 1812. " I have no hesitation Sir, in saying, that Great Britain, as the case has hitherto stood, never did nor ever could engage, without the grossest injustice to herself, and her allies, as well as to other neutral nations, to repeal her orders as affecting America alone, leaving them in force against other States, upon condition that France would except, singly and specially, America from the operation of her decrees."

claim a repeal of the orders in council, must now be satisfied on that head, after the plain and positive declaration of the British minister, that the orders will not be rescinded as to the United States, notwithstanding the decrees should absolutely, and without any dispute, be revoked as against them. This places the question between the United States and Great Britain, on the very same ground, as if the revocation of the French decrees, so far as they affect the United States, was admitted by the British Government, to be in every particular complete and absolute, yet they obstinately persisting to enforce their orders in council against us. In a state of things like this, no man in the United States, has been known to contend, that it would not be just and righteous to go to war with Great Britain.

Under these circumstances, congress have declared that war exists between Great Britain and the United States. Our government has resorted to every expedient short of this, and it has all been in vain. It was rendered absolutely certain, that no course was left with that nation, except humble submission or forcible resistance. Yet there is dissatisfaction in the United States, and it proceeds from the same faction, of which I have given an account. Some pretend to disapprove the step taken by our gov-

ernment, because they greatly deprecate the calamities of war, and in the same breath they will almost mourn, because war was not declared against two powerful nations, instead of one. Many say, although it cannot be denied, that we have good ground for war with Great Britain, yet France has also given us cause for war, therefore, our government has discovered a partiality. For my own part, I cannot perceive the force of this reasoning. If we have cause for war with Great Britain, our not going to war with France, can not take away that cause. On the other hand, if we have no cause for war with Great Britain, going to war with France will not create that cause. The idea of partiality in this case, supposes the same obligations to enemies as to friends. Suppose a man should be attacked by a number of highwaymen, would he be chargeable with partiality, if he did not deal the same number of blows to each? If a nation is on terms of peace and friendship, with two other nations who are at war, the neutral has certain obligations to the belligerents, but the moment those belligerents, have both given her cause for war, all obligations are at an end, and it then becomes a question of policy, and expediency alone, whether to fight both at once, or which to fight first, as also the time and manner of the

attack ; and these questions have not the least connexion, with any obligations, existing previous to the change of situation. The truth is, these charges are themselves the mere creatures of partiality. No man who will admit, that Great Britain has given us just ground for war, and who is not devoted soul and body to that nation, will condemn our government, for the bare reason, that France is not coupled in the war.

And what honest man will say, after a "view of the whole ground," that our government has decided improperly, in selecting Great Britain as the enemy, at this time. Admitting the decrees of France, and the orders of England, to be in full force at this moment, against the United States, and that in this respect, there is no difference between the two nations, still, independent of this, we have more than ample cause for war against Great Britain. Leaving out of the question a host of offences, among which are, abuses of our hospitality, and infringements of our neutrality, in our own ports and harbours, the murder of Fierce, the refusal for so long a time to make reparation for the attack on the Chesapeake, officially inviting our citizens to violate the laws of their country, the treacherous disavowal of Erskine's settlement, the infamous attempt to destroy our union and government ; ex-

citing the Savages on our frontiers to the massacre of men, women and children ; leaving all these outrages out of the question, that of exercising mastership over our vessels at sea, and depriving them of their men, and those men of their birth right, alone is over sufficient to justify a war of vengeance, against this nation, so crimsoned with crimes.

Great Britain says, she has by her laws, a right to the service of her seamen in time of war. What of that. Must she violate the sovereign rights of the United States to obtain her seamen ? It is admitted that the British have no right to enter on to our territory to take them. A law of this kind, merely between the British government and its subjects, if there is any law about it, can not be enforced in the United States, for the reason that the subject for it to operate upon, is not within the legal jurisdiction of Great Britain, but within that of the United States. How is the case altered, as to our vessels at sea. The ocean, it is agreed, is the common highway of nations, The vessels of the United States, have a perfect right to travel it, unmolested by those of nations, with whom they are at peace, except in the single case of carrying on a *trade* prohibited by *the laws of nations*, which of course operate on the seas. A vessel

owned in the United States. and sailing the ocean under their flag, is no more under the jurisdiction of the laws of Great Britain, than our territory is. The only possible difference is, in the one case we are more exposed to her *power* than in the other ; but that power when exercised, is equally unjustifiable in the one instance, as in the other. The admission which is made on all hands, that this practice is liable to abuse, on account of the extreme difficulty, of distinguishing Englishmen from Americans, clearly proves, that the practice itself, ought not to exist. If it is impossible for the British naval commanders at all times to know an Englishman from an American, it is equally so for the commanders of our merchant vessels ; of course, Englishmen may be taken on board of them without a knowledge that they are such. Why then should our vessels, when they have done nothing wrong, be liable to be stript of their crews, and left, perhaps exposed, to go to the bottom of the sea ? Again it may be asked, why should G. Britain in all cases, have the sole power to decide, who are her subjects, and who are our citizens. First her officers forcibly take sailors from our vessels, without any evidence at all of their being British subjects. Next, when we claim our citizens who are taken away, we have to produce proof to support

our claims, and then again, Great Britain alone, decides on this proof. Why should not the British, as well as we on our part, formally demand their seamen, and produce evidence to support their claims? Perhaps I shall be met here, by an argument, if so it may be called, which has been repeatedly brought forward, that Great Britain has long been a *belligerent* while the United States have been at peace, that therefore the want of her sailors has been so pressing, that it was even necessary for *her very existence*, to take them by force, whenever she could find them on board of our vessels, let the consequences to us be what they might. This is the common plea of the highwayman; he always robs *from necessity*. If it is a fact, that Great Britain can not exist, but by the unnatural crime of manstealing, let her perish; the sooner she is blotted from the records of nations, the better.

In briefly examining this question, I have said nothing about the injury done to the individuals, who are torn from their country and their friends, and perhaps their wives and children, and made prisoners for life. Nor have I taken into consideration, the claim which they have on their government for protection and relief. A recital of their miseries at this time, would but serve to harrow up the feelings; and

a consideration of the claim which they have on their country, would only tend to cast a shade over the merits of our national government, for not long since, effectually attending to the cries of the unhappy sufferers.

Should we then disregard all these injuries inflicted on us by Great Britain ; should we let our old enemy go, and first fight a nation, which certainly was once a valuable friend to the United States, and whose aggressions can in no wise be regarded as more than on a par, with but an inconsiderable part of the wrongs done us by Great Britain ? Every honest and candid man would spurn at such a procedure, as the height of impolicy and injustice. And as to the constant clamour against France, on account of the conduct of Bonaparte, independent of his treatment to us, it is sufficient to remark, that the United States have nothing to do with the concerns of any foreign nation, only as they affect *their* rights. At the same time, I defy any man, to point to a single villanous act of the government of France, which has not been fourfolded by that of Great Britain.

I have thus far, to make the case most favourable for Great Britain, gone on the ground that France has not receded from her hostility towards us. Yet it is a fact, that the French decrees have been rescinded, as against the U.

nited States, for more than eighteen months. This to be sure, has been disputed by Great Britain and her supporters, notwithstanding, every publick agent we have had in France during that time, has declared it to be the case, and not a single fact has occurred to contradict them. Nevertheless, if our minister now at Paris, does not before long effect a fair, and honourable adjustment of our remaining claims, on the failure of his negociation, we can not doubt, such steps will be taken, as the interest, and the honour of this nation may require.

Another objection which has been strongly urged against the war with Great Britain is, that it will be an *offensive* war, and that we ought never to carry on any but *defensive* wars. I do not understand that the United States have commenced an *offensive* war. Have they attacked the rights, or committed any depredations, on the property of Great Britain? Do they contend for any new rights, or bring forward any new claims? Have not the British attacked, and for years basely trampled on their rights? Has it not become necessary to resort to arms for the defence and preservation of those precious privileges, which were so dearly bought by our fathers, and which have been handed by them to us, to be transmitted to our posterity?

Let the question be explicitly answered, which has first invaded the other's rights? This will at once determine the character of the war.

But the United States have *declared* war against Great Britain; this is conclusive; it must be a war of *offence*, and can not be a war of *defence*. If the party who declares war, is at all events the *offending* party, what kind of a war has Great Britain been engaged in for several years; that war was commenced by a publick and formal declaration on her part against France? *Great Britain*; that indeed alters the case. *She* is contending for the liberties of the whole world; *she* is fighting the battles of the human race against universal tyranny; *she* alone stands between the monster Bonaparte and universal dominion. No matter who declared war in that case, Great Britain is acting only on the *defensive*.

Yet it must certainly be a war of *conquest*, because we are going to take Canada; we are going to send an army to Quebec. The United States sent an army to Quebec in the year '75; were they then engaged in a war of *conquest*? If our enemies have long taken, and do still most wantonly take our property in one place, and we in order to remunerate ourselves, after every attempt by way of negociation has failed, take their property in another place, does this make a war of *conquest* on our part?

To expose all the absurdities, as well as the wickedness of the opposition to this righteous war, would occupy more time, than the occasion will allow. As the subject however is easy of investigation, and when at all examined, must be rightly understood, it can not be questioned but that the people of the United States, will for the future not only cast off, but regard with the highest detestation those men, who shew themselves to be devoted to the interest of a foreign government, in opposition to that of their own.

The time has come, when republicans and federalists should on the altar erected by their fathers, throw away their party animosities, and unite their strength in this great contest. Those who were honestly opposed to the propriety of *commencing* the war, will on a moments reflection perceive, that since this step *has* been taken, their opposition ought not to be so exercised as to aid the enemy. Our government has made a solemn appeal to the American people, and entreated them to come forward in defence of every thing dear to them, as men, and as freemen. The duty of every citizen is plain. True republicans, and true federalists, *will do their duty*. The enquiry then will no longer be, who is a republican, and who is a federalist, but who is WHIG, and who is a TORY.