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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CONVENTION

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK ;

HELD

At the Capitol in the City of Albany,

On the seventeenth and eighteenth days of September,

1812.

ALBANY :

PRINTED BY WEBSTERS AND SKINNERS.

CONVENTION

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK.



At a Convention of Delegates from the several Counties of the State of New-York, hereinafter designated, held at the Capitol in the City of Albany, on the 17th and 18th days of September, 1812 :

The following gentlemen appeared and took their seats—

From the County of SUFFOLK—John Jermain.

RICHMOND—Cornelius Bedell.

City and County of NEW-YORK—Samuel Jones, jun. Peter Hawes, John W. Mulligan, Jotham Post, jun. William Henderson.

DUTCHESS—William Bard, William A. Duer, Richard Whiley.

ORANGE—John Duer, Thomas Waters, Allanson Austin, Charles Lindsay.

ULSTER—Jonathan Hasbrouck, James Oliver, Conrad E. Elmendorff, Stephen Nottingham.

SULLIVAN—Charles Baker, Livingston Billings.

COLUMBIA—John Livingston, Jason Warner, Jacob R. Van Rensselaer, Thomas P. Grosvenor.

GREENE—John Adams, James Powers, William Frazer, Martin G. Van Bergen, Abraham Van Dyck.

RENSSELAER—Hosea Moffet, Elijah Janes, Samuel Starr, William M. Bliss, Daniel Gray, Barent Van Vleck, Gardiner Tracy, Herman Knickerbacker.

DELAWARE—Ebenezer Foote.

WASHINGTON—Ebenezer Clark, David Hopkins, Zebulon R. Shipherd, Melancton Wheeler, Zina Hitchcock, Edward Savage.

City and County of ALBANY—Abraham Van Vechten, Harmanus Bleecker, Jacob Ten Eyck, Gideon Tabor, Wil-

liam M'Kown, Jesse Smith, Michael Freligh, Jonathan Jenkins, John L. Winne.

SARATOGA--Guert Van Schoonhoven, Henry Metcalf, Elisha Powell, Levi H. Palmer, John M'Crea, John H. Steel, Abner Carpenter.

MONTGOMERY--Daniel Paris, James Cochran, James Ford, Joshua Webster, Solomon Hamilton.

City and County of SCHENECTADY--John Sanders.

SCHOHARIE--Origen Brigham, Benjamin Miles, Daniel Douw.

OTSEGO--Jacob Morris, Robert Campbell, Joseph White.

HERKIMER--David V. W. Golden, Peter M. Myers.

ONEIDA--Morris S. Miller, Jesse Curtis, James Dean, Adam G. Mappa, James Lynch.

MADISON--John Lincklaen, Peter Smith, Wm. S. Smith.

CHENANGO--John S. Flagler, Joel Hatch, Matthew Caulkings.

ONONDAGA--Joshua Forman.

CAYUGA--Seth Phelps, John Richardson, John Stoylls.

SENECA--Reuben Smith, 2d.

CORTLAND--Mead Merrill.

STEUBEN and ALLEGANY--Samuel S. Haight, Benjamin Wells.

TIOGA--Vincent Matthews.

BROOME--Edward Edwards, Daniel Le Roy.

GENESEE--Robert M'Kay, Daniel B. Brown.

NIAGARA--Elias Ransom.

ONTARIO--Valentine Brother, Myron Holly, Morris F. Sheppard, Daniel W. Lewis, Nathaniel Gorham.

LEWIS--Isaac W. Bostwick.

JEFFERSON--John Paddock, Amos Benedict.

General JACOB MORRIS, was unanimously elected President, and WILLIAM HENDERSON, Secretary.

The following resolution was then moved and unanimously agreed to—

RESOLVED, That Samuel Jones, Jun. John Duer, Zebulon R. Shipherd, Morris S. Miller, Jacob R. Van Rens-

selaer, Daniel Paris, Nathaniel Gorham, Robert Campbell, William Bard, Vincent Mathews, Harmanus Bleecker, Thomas P. Grosvenor and Abraham Van Vechten be a committee to prepare and draft resolutions expressive of the sense of this Convention relative to the state of our public affairs, and also to prepare and report an address to the people of the state on that subject.

Mr. Jones, in behalf of the foregoing committee, reported the following resolutions and address, which were severally read, discussed, and unanimously adopted.

WHEREAS the great and paramount advantages of a republican government arise from the controlling influence of public opinion on the measures of the administration: And whereas, that this influence may be felt, it is not merely the right, but the duty of the people, from time to time, to assemble and express their sentiments in relation to the conduct of their rulers, with a clearness which they cannot misunderstand, and a firmness which they *must* respect: Therefore,

Resolved, That the doctrine, of late so frequently and *viciously* inculcated, that when war is once declared, all enquiry into its justice and expediency ought to cease, and all opposition to the men in power immediately to be abandoned, is essentially hostile to the vital principles of our republican institutions; and if adopted, would change our present government into one of the worst species of tyranny which the ingenuity of the foes of freedom has yet contrived; a government republican in its forms, in spirit and practice, arbitrary and despotic; that it must be obvious to the most ordinary capacity, that were such a doctrine to prevail, an administration which, by its corruption or imbecility, had justly forfeited the confidence of the people, would be tempted to plunge the nation into an unjust or unnecessary war, for the sole purpose of perpetuating their power, and thus building their own greatness on the ruins of their country.

Resolved, That, without insisting on the injustice of the present war, taking solely into consideration the time of declaring

it and the state of the public mind, we are constrained to consider, and feel it our duty to pronounce it a most rash, unwise and inexpedient measure, the adoption of which ought for ever to deprive its authors of the esteem and confidence of an enlightened people ; because as the injuries we have received from France are at least equal in amount to those we have sustained from England, and have been attended with circumstances of still greater insult and aggravation— If war was necessary to vindicate the honor of the country, consistency and impartiality required that both nations should have been included in the declaration. Because, if it were deemed expedient to exercise our right of selecting our adversary, prudence and common sense dictated the choice of an enemy, from whose hostility we had nothing to dread. A war with France would equally have satisfied our insulted honor, and at the same time, instead of annihilating, would have revived and extended our commerce ; and even the evils of such a contest would have been mitigated by the sublime consolation, that by our efforts, we were contributing to arrest the progress of despotism in Europe, and essentially serving the great interests of freedom and humanity throughout the world. Because, a republican government, depending solely for its support on the wishes and affections of the people, ought never to declare a war, into which the great body of a nation are not prepared to enter with zeal and alacrity ; as where the justice and necessity of the measure are not so apparent as to unite all parties in its support, its inevitable tendency is to augment the dissensions that have before existed, and by exasperating party violence to its utmost height, prepare the way for the horrors of a civil war.—Because, before war was declared, it was perfectly well ascertained, that a vast majority of the people in the middle and northern states, by whom the burthen of the contest must be borne almost exclusively, were strongly opposed to the measure.—Because, we see no rational prospect of attaining, by force of arms, the objects for which our rulers say we are contending ; and because the evils

and distresses, which the war must of necessity occasion, far overbalance any advantages we can expect to derive from it.—Because the great power of England on the ocean, and the amazing resources she derives from commerce and navigation, render it evident, that we cannot compel her to respect our rights and satisfy our demands, otherwise than by a successful maritime warfare, the means of conducting which we not only do not possess, but our rulers have obstinately refused to provide. Because the exhausted state of the treasury, occasioned by the destruction of the revenue derived from commerce, should the war continue, will render necessary a resort to loans and taxes to a large amount---measures by which the people will be greatly burthened and oppressed, and the influence and patronage of the executive alarmingly increased. And finally, because of a war begun with such means as our rulers had prepared, and conducted in the mode they seem resolved to pursue, we see no grounds to hope the honorable and successful termination.

Resolved, That while we condemn the war, in the most distinct and unqualified terms, we are deeply sensible of the new duties and obligations which the change of our national relations has imposed upon us; and are fully determined, in our several capacities of magistrates, soldiers and citizens, to obey with promptness and alacrity all constitutional requisitions of the proper authorities; seeking no other redress for the evils of which we complain, than that which we confidently trust will be obtained from a change of sentiment in the people, leading to a change of men and measures.

Resolved, That we view the creation of new states out of territories not within the ancient limits of the United States as inconsistent with the spirit of the federal compact, and calculated to destroy the weight which the old, great and populous states ought to have in the union, and utterly to disappoint and frustrate the great purposes for which they entered into the confederation.

Resolved, That we consider the employment of the militia, for the purpose of offensive war, as a palpable violation of the constitution, as extremely offensive to the people, as the most expensive and least efficient mode of conducting the war; and as a serious and alarming encroachment on the rights of the several states, which it behoves the true friends of our excellent institutions, by all lawful means, firmly to resist.

WHEREAS the late revocation of the British orders in council, have removed the great and ostensible cause of the present war, and prepared the way for an immediate accommodation of all existing differences, inasmuch as, by the confession of the present secretary of state, a satisfactory and honorable arrangement might easily be made, by which the abuses resulting from the impressment of our seamen, might, in future, be effectually prevented; Therefore,

Resolved, That we shall be constrained to consider the determination on the part of our rulers, to continue the present war, after official notice of the revocation of the British orders in council, as affording conclusive evidence, that the war has been undertaken from motives entirely distinct from those which have been hitherto avowed, and for the promotion of objects wholly unconnected with the interest and honor of the American nation.

Resolved, That we contemplate with abhorrence, even the possibility of an alliance with the present emperor of France, every action of whose life has demonstrated, that the attainment, by any means, of universal empire, and the consequent extinction of every vestige of freedom, are the sole objects of his incessant, unbounded and remorseless ambition. His arms, with the spirit of freemen, we might openly and fearlessly encounter; but, of his secret arts, his corrupting influence, we entertain a dread we can neither conquer nor conceal. It is, therefore, with the utmost distrust and alarm, that we regard his late professions of attachment and love to the American people, fully recollecting, that his invariable course has been, by perfidious offers of protection, by deceitful professions of friendship, to

lull his intended victims into the fatal sleep of confidence and security, during which the chains of despotism are silently wound round and rivetted on them.

Resolved, That we are firmly attached to the union of the states, most conscientiously believing, that on its preservation the future peace, security and independence, as well as power and grandeur of the American nation must mainly depend, and we are therefore strengthened in our reprobation of the measures of our present rulers, from a consideration of their evident tendency to produce a dissolution of that union which we so warmly cherish.

Resolved, That to effect a purpose not only so desirable, but so necessary, as a change of our present rulers, the barriers of party, which separate men differing, not in principle but in name merely, ought to be thrown down, and every obstacle removed, which can prevent and impede the full and cordial co-operation of those who are actuated by the same feelings, and entertain the same sentiments.

Resolved, That it be recommended to the friends of peace, liberty and commerce, who are opposed to the present war, without distinction of parties, to assemble in their respective counties (wherein such meetings have not been already held) and appoint committees of correspondence and conference, who if deemed necessary hereafter, may meet in a convention, for the purpose of explaining and comparing their sentiments, and concerting a common plan of operation, having for its object the restoration of peace to our degraded and afflicted country.

JACOB MORRIS, *President.*

WM. HENDERSON, *Secretary.*

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

WE should insult your understandings by an elaborate vindication of your right to canvass with the utmost freedom, the measures of the men whom you have elected to administer your affairs. It is the possession of this right that constitutes you free men. It is to the weak or the corrupt alone that its most unrestrained exercise can ever be formidable. It is in vain that the rulers of a free people attempt to shrowd their proceedings in a portentous secrecy; in vain that they resort to expedients, novel or unconstitutional, to abridge, if not extinguish, the freedom of debate. It is in vain that they represent their own interests or the interests of a party, as identified with the interests of the nation, and affect to consider all attacks on their characters or measures, as evidence of hostility to the government, or disaffection to the country. The determination of the people to examine their conduct with impartial freedom, must be strengthened by the anxiety which they manifest to suppress or elude the enquiry; an anxiety, announcing at once the secret conviction of guilt or error, and the dread of public exposure.—With these impressions on our minds, feeling it our duty, fellow citizens, to address you on some of the topics that have employed our deliberations, we do not merely solicit, we demand your attention. Contrary to the expectations of many, the infatuation and violence of the supporters of the war seem to increase as the events of every day furnish additional evidence of its impolicy, and demonstrate the utter incapacity of our rulers to conduct it to a prosperous or honorable issue. The people it seems are to be allowed no leisure for reflection. All the arts of exaggeration, of falsehood, of calumny, are employed to stimulate their passions, to rouse their deadliest hatred against those who still have the courage to utter those unwelcome truths which the condition of the country

requires to be spoken—Whatever may be thought of the honesty of those, who are thus industrious to envenom suspicion and exasperate rage, which if not removed, or allayed, may burst forth at no distant period in the conflagration of civil war, the policy of their conduct, assuming the temporary triumph of party to be its object, is sufficiently evident. They well know that numbers are destitute of that firmness of mind to which the consciousness of integrity is alone a sufficient support, and cannot endure to be considered as the enemies of their country, even by those whose understandings they contemn, or whose delusion they pity: They well know that numbers are deterred from following the dictates of their conscience, and are still retained the degraded and reluctant slaves of party, from the sole dread of reproaches, at once plainly unjust, and ludicrously absurd. Yet, in truth, the iniquity of these calumniators is not greater than their folly will ultimately prove. The delusion under which so large a portion of the people still appear to labor, cannot always continue; If not dispelled by the force of arguments against the force of facts much longer it cannot stand. If the prospects of future evils do not rouse the people, the sense of actual suffering most assuredly will; when the resentment which they are now taught to feel against their real friends, will change its object, and burst, perhaps, with fatal violence, upon the heads of those by whom they shall discover themselves to have been deceived and betrayed.

His humanity or patriotism, however, is not to be envied, who can look forward with satisfaction to a change of which public distress and national disgrace shall alone have been the causes. Most nations indeed, have been condemned to learn the lessons of wisdom, from their own severe experience; yet we cannot but indulge the hope, that we may still resolve to profit in time by the experience of others. It is with this hope, fellow citizens, that we earnestly invite your attention to the facts and reasoning contained in the present address. We do not intend, on this occasion, to examine how far the causes that have been assigned to justify

the declaration of war against England had a real existence; or how far, admitting their existence, they could with propriety be said to render necessary a resort to arms.

These topics, fellow citizens, and the considerations which they suggest have already been brought before your view in various publications, and have been discussed with the highest ability. Since the adjournment of congress, the revocation of the British orders in council, has effected a most important change in the state of our national relations, so, that even those who approved of the war when declared, with the most perfect consistency, may now condemn the continuance of hostilities.

What is the object of continuing the war? If we refuse to avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded, by the revocation of the orders in council, and the disposition manifested by the British government to make peace now, when and upon what terms is peace ever to be made? These are the questions, fellow citizens, the consideration of which, we would press upon your understandings and upon your consciences. We would urge the necessity of pursuing that course which the proper answers to these questions shall plainly dictate.

However opposite the opinions that prevail, as to the justice of the present war, few will be disposed to deny, that its existence, must be regarded as a great national calamity. The evils indeed resulting from the measure are such as it requires no peculiar sagacity to discover, no extraordinary eloquence to display. The stagnation of all national improvement, the annihilation of commerce, the ruin of thousands, depending on commerce for their support, the loss of the revenue which it yielded, the imposition of new, and burthensome taxes, an immense accumulation of debt, the blockade of our seaport towns, the incursions of the savages, the abandonment of our frontier settlements, the waste of human lives, the misery of widows and orphans. All these consequences of the war are most obvious and wholly unavoidable.

It is plain, therefore, that the authors of a measure so fruitful of calamity, so deeply affecting the interests of their country, have assumed a most awful responsibility. To vindicate themselves from the charge of having betrayed the confidence of the people, whether from profound ignorance, blind and headlong rashness, or actual corruption; they are bound to prove, not merely that we had grounds of complaint against England, but that they were of sufficient magnitude to justify war. Not merely that the objects of the war are just, but that they are attainable; not merely that they are attainable in themselves, but that the necessary means to secure their attainment had been fully provided. For what can exceed the desperate folly, or the enormous guilt of involving a nation in the certain and necessary evils of war, for objects of doubtful right, of doubtful advantage, or doubtful attainment? The advocates of the war are not entitled to call for the reasons of those who question the wisdom of the measure: The support of the affirmative rests upon them; since every offensive war must be deemed unjust and unwise, of which the justice and expediency cannot be clearly demonstrated.

To a free people, no arguments are requisite to be urged to vindicate a war strictly defensive. Were our territory invaded by a foreign power with the avowed purpose of subverting our government, and reducing us to the condition of slaves, he would be base indeed who would not submit with alacrity to every privation and sacrifice which a state of war would demand. He who would then hesitate to fight until he had balanced the evils of submission against the dangers of resistance, by his very hesitation would confess himself to be a coward and a traitor.

But the present war is not a war of defence, but of coercion; not a war that has been forced upon us, but that we have ourselves commenced. To call it a defensive war, may indeed suit the purposes of those upon whom rests the tremendous weight, which the responsibility of the measure has imposed, but such an abuse of language we must be-

lieve is too palpable, even to impose on the understandings of those who are most willing to be deceived.

We complain of having received certain injuries from England, the redress of which, by negotiation, we had failed to obtain. We resort to arms to compel that redress, and seek by our hostilities to inflict such deep and severe wounds on the prosperity of England (so far as not only to humble her pride, but reduce her power) that a regard to her own safety shall at length extort from her those concessions, which from her sense of injustice, (it is said,) it were vain to expect.

Do we then possess the means of thus humbling the pride and reducing the power of England? Does there exist the most remote probability that the result of our hostilities, will be to extort from her those concessions, which our rulers seem determined to require?—For unless these questions can be answered in the affirmative, it must be admitted, that we are exhausting the strength, wasting the resources, and pouring out the best blood of the nation, in a contest hopeless and interminable.

To enable us to decide in what manner these questions ought to be answered, it is necessary that the object which our rulers have in view, in the continuance of hostilities, and the means on which they rely to insure its attainment, should be distinctly stated.

We shall show, fellow citizens, that the only assignable object of continuing the war, is to compel Great Britain to renounce the right of impressment, in the most absolute and unqualified manner, and that the only means, relied on for the attainment of this object, are privateering and the conquest of the Canadas.

The substantive causes of the war, as detailed in the message of the president to congress and the report of the committee of foreign relations, are the refusal of Great Britain to repeal her orders in council after the alleged revocation of the French decrees, and the inveterate abuse of impressing our seamen. Other charges against England, such as

the hovering of her vessels on our coast, the alleged mission of Henry, the pretended incitement of the savages, &c. are indeed brought forward, but plainly not as causes of the war, but as topics of irritation. They are all of them either so slight, or unimportant in themselves, admitting so easily of remedy, or so obviously resting on mere surmise and conjecture, unsupported even by the semblance of proof, that it is difficult to believe that they can have been introduced for any other purpose than that of inflaming the passions of the people, by swelling, apparently, the catalogue of our wrongs.

The orders in council have now ceased to exist; the ports of the continent are again open to our vessels; again may we resume that commerce, which poured wealth into our land, through a thousand channels; supplied a revenue more than equal to the demands of government, and so materially contributed to that unexampled prosperity which we once enjoyed: Yet, the war is still continued, and the refusal of the president to ratify the armistice, renders it evident that from our present rulers we have no reason to expect its speedy termination.

The monstrous pretension of a right to impress our native citizens Great Britain has never advanced. The right which she claims, and which from time immemorial, every nation of Europe has claimed and exercised, is that of taking her own subjects when found on board of neutral vessels. That in the exercise of this right, abuses have taken place to a great extent, and that some of our native citizens are now detained in the fleets of England, has never been denied. But are we waging war to effect their liberation, or to compel Great Britain to enter into an arrangement that may prevent the recurrence of similar abuses? It is not to effect their liberation—for but a few days previous to the declaration of war, a list of all Americans so detained, was demanded by Mr. Foster, from our administration, and the faith of his government solemnly pledged to restore them to their country. It is not to compel an arrangement, by which abuses may in future be prevented, for into such an

arrangement Great Britain has at all times professed her willingness to enter, and on one occasion an arrangement to us both honorable and advantageous, (we use the very terms of Mr. Munroe,) was actually agreed upon between the ministers plenipotentiary* of the two countries, but was rejected by our administration. It is the absolute, the unqualified surrender of the right therefore, we are justified in saying that our rulers demand, and that now constitutes the sole object of the war.

We need not enlarge on the importance, which Great Britain attaches to the exercise of this right. It is unnecessary to remark, that were neutral vessels permitted to become a refuge for her seamen, the lapse of a few years would be sufficient to unman her fleets. She justly considers the right in question, as essential, not merely to her power, but circumstanced as she now is, essential to her very existence.---It must therefore be obvious to all, that no artifice of negociation, no compromise could ever induce her to surrender so important a right : As well might we ask her to place her navy in our hands---as well might we ask her to throw away both her sword and her shield ; to prostrate herself at the feet of Bonaparte, and submit to the most degrading terms, not of peace, but of servitude, which the vengeance of the tyrant might impel him to dictate.

But we will wrest her colonies from her, we will conquer Canada ! That we can conquer Canada, no man who is competent to appreciate the resources of the nation can affect to doubt, though it is already apparent, that the conquest will demand a greater expense both of blood and treasure, than our sanguine politicians have been wont to calculate. We will not stop to compute the cost, or enquire into the value of the acquisition, but hasten at once to the questions which we are anxious to urge. Imagine the Canadas already conquered, shall we make peace then and upon what

* NOTE—Mr. *Monroe*, the present Secretary of State, and Mr. *Pinckney*, the present Attorney General, were the ministers plenipotentiary on the part of the United States, on that occasion.

terms? No rational man can believe, that to regain the possession of Canada, Great Britain would consent to surrender the right of impressment, compared with the importance of which the value of this distant colony dwindles into utter insignificance. But having obtained Canada, it is said, we will no longer insist on the abandonment of impressment, we will then enter into an arrangement, that may reconcile the conflicting pretensions of the two nations. What! enter into an arrangement then, that we might conclude now? Abandon the alleged object of the war? Confess that it is not as its authors have dared to call it, a great and necessary war—but a war of aggression and of conquest—and that our complaints of violated right are merely the pretext by which we have sought to cover our unjust ambition? But the consent of Great Britain, it must be recollected, will be necessary to the conclusion of a treaty of peace, that shall allow us to retain the possession of Canada—and who is it that believes, that while her present power and resources remain unimpaired, to a peace upon such terms she will ever consent? Who is it that does not see, that to compel the restoration of her colonies she would put forth all the energy of her strength, and give “all the reins, to all her wealth.” The conquest of Canada, in truth, would be the commencement of real hostilities: The war would then change its character, and become a war of defence on our part, of coercion on that of England. Invasion of our territory indeed she would not attempt, but a sudden and tempestuous blast would sweep our vessels from the ocean. Our gallant navy would be annihilated, in the desperate conflict, with superior overwhelming force. Our coasts would be harrassed by perpetual incursions. Our seaport towns rigorously blockaded; if not bombarded and destroyed---and what compensation should we find for these evils? What injuries should we be able to inflict in return? How absurd is the comparison of the present contest, with our glorious and successful struggle for independence---because England could not conquer us then, does it follow that we can conquer her now? Yet conquered she must be, before she sub-

mits to the terms, which Mr. Madison seems resolved to exact.

But the downfall of England (such is the language we constantly hear) is rapidly approaching: She is borne to the ground by the enormous weight of her taxes; she is exhausted by her supernatural efforts; the united attacks of internal discontent and foreign hostility she cannot much longer resist; this war will accomplish her destruction—Good God! It were in vain that we should attempt to repress or conceal the feelings which this language excites. We have indeed no charity for those who believe that England is menaced with approaching ruin yet applaud and support the present war. If England fall, into whose hands must her power pass? Who will then possess the dominion of the ocean?—And is it upon the justice and moderation of Bonaparte that we rely for the protection of our commerce, the support of our maritime rights? The heart of the tyrant is to be suddenly changed. A moral miracle is to be wrought in our favor. His pretended love is to be converted into real affection. Who does not see that the fall of England is the triumph of France? They are the battles of France then that we are fighting. A free people are pouring forth their blood and treasures with a mad profusion, to accelerate the success, promote the aggrandizement, extend and confirm the despotism of a tyrant, the most able, systematic, persevering and relentless, that the world has ever seen! A single barrier arrests his march to universal empire: A single bulwark protects us from the grasp of his ambition, and with blind and stupid exultation we assist in its destruction.

Yet the hearts of those who exult in the hope, that the predictions of the downfall of England will soon be accomplished, are not more corrupt, than we believe the predictions themselves to be irrational and absurd.—For the last thirty years these prophets of evil, have been constantly pouring forth their denunciations against England, and every successive year has condemned them to endure the torments of disappointed malignity.—During the whole of this period her commerce, her wealth, her population and power

have been constantly increasing with a proportional rapidity wholly unparalleled in any previous stage of her existence.

That discontents now prevail in England to a considerable extent is highly probable, and it is at least possible that they may continue to spread and burst forth at last with the destructive fury of a popular revolution. But will the change of government, change the spirit and character of the nation? Will a national bankruptcy, should it ensue, absorb in the ruin all the real and permanent wealth of the country? What though all the public men in England should be swept away by the torrent of a revolution; do they alone possess the knowledge, talents and genius, that qualify men for command, and enable them to draw forth the resources and wield the powers of an empire? It cannot be that we are still ignorant of the nature and consequences of revolutions. It cannot be that the revolution in France, the most absolute and destructive that the world has witnessed, has passed before our eyes without notice and without instruction.—Have we forgotten its effects in the developement of talents; in the elevation of mind, of predominant, paramount ability? What is it that has placed France where she now stands, what but the tremendous energy, which her revolution excited.

It is therefore utterly improbable that a revolution of the government in England would at all diminish the resources or impair the strength of the nation. That it would not induce them to abandon their essential rights, and submit without further struggle to the power of him who has sworn their destruction, is morally certain.

With what hope, therefore, we again ask, are we urged to prosecute the war? What probability is there that a period will occur when we shall be enabled to negotiate a peace with Great Britain upon terms more advantageous and more honorable than we have it now in our power to obtain?

The right of impressing her seamen, to compel her to surrender which, we have already shewn, is now the sole object of the war, we may be morally certain she never will,

as, without consenting to her own destruction, she never can, renounce.

We put it to the conscience of every individual to answer whether, if information of the repeal of the orders in council had been received before war was declared, he can believe that measure could ever have been adopted? Would not the majority in Congress, intemperate and violent as they were, have been suddenly arrested in their course? Would the people have borne a war commenced for a cause, which is now assigned as the only reason to justify the continuance of hostilities?

But, fellow citizens, could it even be demonstrated that the observations, we have offered are founded in a mistaken view of the interests and policy of the nation; could it even be demonstrated that by persevering in their course our rulers will extort from England the concessions which they demand; still, in no equivocal language, in no hesitating tone, should we condemn the continuance of the war; still should we feel ourselves bound to exert our efforts for the immediate restoration of peace. We cannot forget that in our collective and national capacity, we are bound by the same rules of morality and justice of which we acknowledge the obligation as individuals—we cannot forget that this pretension of the immunity of our flag, of our right to spread it for the protection of foreigners, is novel and unprecedented—has never been advanced by any former administration. We cannot forget that the right which Great Britain claims of taking her own subjects, when found on board the private vessels of neutral nations, by universal consent and practice, has become a part of that system of public law, which is the general compact of civilized nations; to which they all are parties, and by the provisions of which they all are bound. Were it even possible, therefore, that we could feel tempted to approve of the war as expedient, our consciences would compel us to reprobate it as unjust—We could not consent to share the awful responsibility of those who are the authors of the measure by giving it our approbation and support—We could not become partakers of the

“guilt of blood” and assist in drawing down upon the nation the vengeance of insulted Deity.

Even were the justice of our cause as clear as the advocates of the war wish us to believe, the injuries we have received from France, for which no reparation has been received or offered, it cannot be denied are at least equal to those we have sustained from England—and how any rational and moral man, looking at the state of the world, at the views and relative strength of the belligerent powers, would justify the selection of England as our adversary, we confess ourselves wholly unable to conceive. Are the people of this country prepared to face the horrors of a French alliance, to which a war with England naturally, almost necessarily, leads? Can they banish from their minds the conviction, that by waging war against England we in effect cooperate with France—become active agents in her system to “enslave and brutalize the human race”—extinguish the lights of religion, of science, of freedom, and replunge the world in barbarism thicker and darker than that from which civilized Europe so slowly emerged. The events of the last twenty years, events which have changed and desolated the face of Europe, must be wholly forgotten before our fears of French alliance can be derided as visionary. It must be forgotten, that the victories of France have uniformly been prepared by her arts and her corruption, and that all the victims of her ambition have first been bound in the spell of her friendship. Were the armies of France now to be landed on our shores, our confidence in the ability of a free people, of unbroken spirit and untainted honor, to repel the invaders, would be full and undoubting. Yet the liberty which the arms of France might in vain attempt to destroy, may expire without a struggle, in the poisonous and emasculating folds of French alliance.

Fellow citizens—All who unite in the sentiment of disapprobation of the war, whether from conviction of its impolicy, or its injustice, are bound to unite in their efforts, for the restoration of peace. To enable us to act together, it is sufficient that we are agreed on this great practical

question, and a difference of opinion on other subjects connected with national policy, should be regarded as speculative merely. The ordinary distinctions of party at a period like the present, should be abolished, and those hostile feelings which their prevalence has engendered, should be absorbed and swallowed up in one common and generous passion, for the safety, the welfare and happiness of our country.

That to effect the restoration of peace the change of our present rulers is indispensably necessary, few arguments can be requisite to convince your understandings. A negotiation to be successful must be conducted in the spirit of amity, with the real desire of reconciliation. The avowed prejudices of our present rulers, that glaring partiality to France which their conduct has exhibited, and that distrust of their views and characters, which it is impossible that our enemies should not entertain; create obstacles to the success of any negotiation to be commenced by them which we sincerely believe to be wholly insuperable.

Even should Mr. Madison and his cabinet be driven to conclude a peace, from a dread of the immediate loss of popularity and power, or an overwhelming sense of their own inability to cope with the difficulties, that press and accumulate upon them; whilst the opinions and prejudices of the men in power remain unchanged, who could regard the peace as secure and permanent? Such a peace would in truth be little more than a cessation of hostilities—a hollow and precarious truce. All the existing sources of irritation, would be carefully cherished and preserved—fresh topics of complaint would be found or exaggerated—arts that have already proved successful, would again be employed to mislead and inflame the people, and in the course of a few years their incurable and desperate infatuation again would plunge the nation wholly unprepared into an unjust or unnecessary war. It is abundantly evident, however, that Mr. Madison has no wish for peace, but is determined at every hazard to prosecute the war.

How strong, how powerful were the motives that urged him to ratify the armistice, and avail himself of the opportunity of negotiation that was then afforded him. By the adoption of this measure he would have silenced all opposition to his re-election as president, and in all probability would have insured the general triumph of his party. How strong, how powerful, therefore, must have been the motives that withheld him from pursuing this course !

Is it that Mr. Madison well knows that the immediate and necessary consequence of peace with England upon any terms, is war with France ? Has he any peculiar personal reasons to dread a rupture with that power ? Is he bound in ties that he cannot, or dare not, break ?

Fellow citizens—The right of choosing our rulers not only implies the right of judging of their conduct, but imposes it as a duty on every elector, to seek those means of information and exert those powers of reflection, that can alone enable him to appreciate their merits or ascertain their defects. The time has arrived when the neglect of this duty, a neglect seldom to be excused, is no longer safe. The state of our public affairs now calls emphatically on every elector to remember that the right of suffrage is not a mere arbitrary privilege, in the exercise of which his caprice, his prejudices, his passions, may safely be indulged ; but a most serious and important trust *committed to the individual for the general good*, a trust, in the firm, the enlightened and conscientious discharge of which the destinies of his country, the happiness or misery of “ millions yet unborn,” may possibly depend.

JACOB MORRIS, *President.*

WILLIAM HENDERSON, *Secretary.*



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