

bled from attempting his revenge where the ruinous catastrophe had befallen him,—on the sea, from which his fleets had been swept by the skill and courage and maritime genius of his island-foe; he put forth the full strength of his passionate nature and his prodigious energies to accomplish on the land, where his arms had been hitherto irresistible, those plans for the destruction of British commerce, which—as Mr. Alison has described them—were owing to “no momentary burst of anger or sudden fit of exultation; but the result of much thought and anxious deliberation.” These plans were embodied in the famous manifesto which is known by the name of “the Berlin Decree,” having been issued on the 21st November, 1806, from the subjugated court of the unfortunate King of Prussia.

The Berlin Decree is an ordinance familiar to all, mainly through the medium of Mr. Alison's widely circulated history; but in order to make our present publication as complete in itself as we can, we will introduce the eleven articles of the Decree,\* as they appear in that admirable work to which, no less than to its own extraordinary pretensions, the Berlin Decree is likely to be indebted for immortality.

Rigorous execution  
of the Decree.

It is undoubtedly correct to consider Buonaparte's anathema against British commerce as being, in one sense, extravagant and frantic, for it introduced a system of warfare unparalleled in the annals of civilized nations, and the menaces it expressed very far exceeded the ability of its author to carry them out. It is, however, quite contrary to fact, to represent it as a mere ebullition of rage, and a proceeding utterly Quixotic and impracticable. It said, in effect, to Great Britain,—“The French Emperor declares that you shall have no trade;” and, although the extinction of British trade was greatly beyond his power, there is no question that he was able to inflict upon it, and did inflict upon it, serious damage. The Berlin Decree was far from being a vapoury threat. It did not, by any means, resolve itself into empty air, but was rigorously executed; and the losses known to have been suffered under its operation were in many instances extremely severe. In the Hans Towns, for example, the proprietors of English

merchandise were glad to be allowed to compound for their valuable goods with the large payment of £800,000. The Berlin Decree obviously, then, was not—as politicians in the United States would have it—a dead letter.

British Order in  
Council: 7th Jan. 1807.

Pressed by this unusual and threatening emergency, the British Ministry were evidently forced to adopt defensive measures. Accordingly, on the 7th January, 1807, the Order in Council, which will be found in the note below,\* was issued,—being the first of those

\* BRITISH ORDER OF COUNCIL.

*At the Court at the Queen's Palace, January 7, 1807.*

PRESENT,

The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

“Whereas the French Government has issued certain orders, which, in violation of the usages of war, purport to prohibit the commerce of all neutral nations with his majesty's dominions; and also to prevent such nations from trading with any other country in any articles the growth, produce, or manufacture of his majesty's dominions; and whereas the said Government has also taken upon itself to declare all his Majesty's dominions to be in a state of blockade, at a time when the fleets of France and her allies are themselves confined within their own ports, by the superior valour and discipline of the British navy; and whereas such attempts on the part of the enemy would give to his majesty an unquestionable right of retaliation, and would warrant his majesty in enforcing the same prohibition of all commerce with France, which that power vainly hopes to effect against the commerce of his majesty's subjects, a prohibition which the superiority of his majesty's naval forces might enable him to support, by actually investing the ports and coasts of the enemy with numerous squadrons and cruisers, so as to make the entrance or approach thereto manifestly dangerous; and whereas his majesty, though unwilling to follow the example of his enemies, by proceeding to an extremity so distressing to all nations not engaged in the war, and carrying on their accustomed trade, yet feels himself bound by a due regard to the just defence of the rights and interests of his people, not to suffer such measures to be taken by the enemy, without taking some steps on his part to restrain this violence, and to return upon them the evils of their own injustice; his majesty is thereupon pleased, by and with the advice of his privy council, to order, and it is hereby ordered, that no vessel shall be permitted to trade from one port to another, both which ports shall belong to, or be in the possession of France or her allies, or shall be so far under their control as that British vessels may not freely trade therat; and the commanders of his majesty's ships of war and privateers shall be, and are hereby instructed to warn every neutral vessel coming from any such port, and destined to another such port, to discontinue her voyage, and not to proceed to

\* See Decree at end of chapter.