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Mr. PICKERING'S SPEECH,
IN THE SENATE,

DECEMBER 21, 1808.

*On the Bill making further provision for enforcing
the Embargo.*

MR. PRESIDENT,

THE legal, the constitutional, and the commercial objections to the bill under consideration, have been stated by the gentleman from Connecticut, and my colleague; and enforced by reasons which to me appear irresistible. But if their statements were as incorrect as they are true; if their reasoning were as doubtful as it is irrefragable; and if the rigorous provisions of the bill were carried into execution...not by the marshal aided by the *posse comitatus* or *militia*, according to former safe and wholesome usages, but by the *standing army*, by the *regular troops*, who, as despotism seems now advancing with rapid strides, may soon become the *Pratorian Guards* of the palace...If, I say, the provisions of this bill should be perfectly executed, and the embargo be rendered "complete"...The question, the important question, still recurs...What good will it do our country? How will it promote the public welfare? Shall I be again told, what originated at the palace, and has been a thousand times repeated by its supporters, that it has saved our seamen, our vessels and our merchandise? When every man who will open his eyes must see that the position is unfounded; and that when assigned as the motive for laying the embargo, has been demonstrated to be a delusion?—Yes, Sir, it is still insisted on, that if our vessels were permitted to go out, they would all be swept from the ocean! I am astonished at the confidence with which gentlemen laying high claims to information and discernment, continue to make this assertion.

On a former day, by exhibiting lists of vessels which had been safely sailing on the high seas, and the moderate rates of insurance, I demonstrated that the danger so much talked of was fictitious...that it did not exist. I recollect that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Giles) has since suggested, that the calculations of my mercantile friend (Mr. Thorndike) of the rates of insurance, must be incorrect; that now insurances were low, because "the French have no inducements to send out privateers to depredate upon our commerce, as long as the embargo restrains it within our ports." To say nothing of the multitude of English merchant vessels, sufficient to excite French cupidity and lust for plunder, I will observe, that my mercantile friend possesses as acute native discernment as the gentleman from Virginia, and in mercantile know-