

remain in their ports, to bring there their prizes, to repair in them, to equip in them, whilst they have expressly refused this privilege to their enemies. The intention of the United States has been to facilitate to us the means of protecting, efficaciously, our commerce, and of defending our possessions in America, so useful to our mutual prosperity; and as long as the states, assembled in Congress, shall not have determined that this solemn engagement should not be performed, no one has a right to shackle our operations, and to annul their effect, by hindering those of our marines, who may be in the American ports, to take advantage of the commissions which the French government has charged me to give them, authorising them to defend themselves, and fulfil, if they find an opportunity, all the duties of citizens against the enemies of the state. Besides, Sir, at all times, like commissions, during a war, have been delivered to our vessels. The officers of the marine transmit them to them, in France, and the consuls, in foreign countries; and it is in virtue of this usage, which no power has ever thought of regarding as an act of sovereignty, that the executive council has sent here such commissions.

However, Sir, always animated with the desire of maintaining the good harmony which so happily subsists between our two countries, I have instructed the consuls not to grant *letters*, but to the captains, who shall obligate themselves, under oath and security, to respect the territory of the United States, and the political opinions of their President, until the representatives of the sovereign shall have confirmed or rejected them. This is all that the American government can expect from our deference; every thing that passes out of the waters of the United States, not coming within their cognizance.

It results from this note, Sir, that the commissions transmitted in virtue of the orders of the executive council of the Republic of France, to the French vessels in the ports of the United States, are merely an authority to arm themselves, founded upon the natural right and constant usage of France; that these commissions have been expedited at all times, in the like circumstances; that their distribution cannot be considered but as an act of consular administration, and not of sovereignty; and that every obstruction by the government of the United States, to the arming of French vessels, must be an attempt on the rights of man, upon which repose the independence and laws of the United States; a violation of the ties which unite the people of France and of America; and even a manifest contradiction of the system of neutrality of the President: For, in fact, if our merchant vessels, or others, are not allowed to arm themselves, when the French alone are resisting the league of all the tyrants against the liberty of the people, they will be exposed to inevitable ruin in going out of the ports of the United States, which is certainly not the intention of the people of America. Their fraternal voice has resounded from every quarter around me, and their accents are not equivocal—they are pure as the hearts of those by whom they are expressed, and the more they have touched my sensibility, the more they must interest in the happiness of America, the nation I represent;—the more I wish, Sir, that the federal government should observe, as far as in their power, the public engagements contracted by both nations; and that by this generous and prudent conduct, they will give at least to the world, the example of a true neutrality, which does not consist in the cowardly abandonment of their friends in the moment when danger menaces them, but in adhering strictly, if they can do no better, to the obligations they have contracted with them. It is by such proceedings, that they will render themselves respectable to all powers; that they will preserve their friends, and deserve to augment their number.

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