

and would probably have soon ceased and been forgotten, if the points of controversy between the governments had been amicably arranged. To settle the differences, which I have stated, a negotiation was opened in London in 1803, and carried on till December, 1806. It is remarkable, that while this negotiation was depending and progressing, our government had recourse to a step in its nature calculated to repel, instead of to invite, the British government to a friendly settlement. In April, 1806, they pass a law prohibiting the importation of certain British goods. The acknowledged object of this law was to coerce Britain to agree to our own terms: Did this law evidence a disposition to be friendly upon our part, or was it calculated to inspire a friendly temper on the part of England?

It was fuel to the flame of discord. The British government is not less high spirited and proud than our own, and the attempt to force them to terms was the likeliest course which could have been pursued, by provoking retaliation to widen the breach between the two countries.

This measure enforced, when negociation was going on, and promised a favorable result, is no small proof in my mind that the executive was satisfied with the forms of negociation, but wanted no treaty with England.

I proceed to inquire whether our differences with Britain were not of a nature to be compromised; and if our government had been sincerely disposed, whether they might not have retained the relations of amity with that power.

First, as to the rule of 1756. This rule was founded on the principle, that a neutral nation could not acquire a right to trade by the cession of one belligerent in time of war which did not exist, but was withheld in time of peace. The rule was supported on the principle that a neutral could not come in aid of a belligerent and cover its property on the ocean, when it was incapable of protecting it itself.

I am not going to defend this rule, nor to inquire into its origin. Thus much I will say, that if it was the British rule of 1756, it was the express rule of the French maritime code in the years 1704 and 1744. I will not trouble you with reading the decrees of the French monarchs which I have on the table, made in the years mentioned, and which prohibit to neutrals any but a direct trade to the colony of an enemy. Though the rule of 1756 may not be an ancient rule, yet we must admit that it was not a new rule introduced in the present war and contrived to ruin or injure the American commerce.

France was unable to trade with her colonies; the United States became her carriers, and under our flag the manufactures of the mother country were safely carried to the colonies and the produce of the colonies transported to Europe. This trade was certainly as beneficial to France as profitable to the United States. Britain only was the sufferer, and the rule of 1756 was revived in order to take from French commerce the protection of a neutral

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