

direct colonial trade. Our intercourse is not interrupted with the colonies and dependencies of France; but the decrees interdict all neutral commerce with the colonies and dependencies of England, as well as with the mother country. Your very ships, which enter an English port, are denationalized, and are liable, after the lapse of any time, though performing a voyage otherwise innocent, to seizure and confiscation.

Another feature of injustice and iniquity distinguishes the decrees from the orders. By the orders, our merchants are apprized of the commerce which is interdicted. Full time for notice of the prohibition is allowed, before the property is exposed, by a transgression of the orders, to be confiscated or seized. No such forbearance can be discovered in the decrees, which are to be indiscriminately executed upon the innocent and the guilty; upon those who never heard, or could have heard of them in the same manner as upon those who knowingly violate them.

I hope, Sir, it will not be understood that I mean to defend the orders in council, or to advise this nation to submit to them; but I could wish to direct some portion of the warmth and indignation, which has been expressed against them, against those decrees which produced them, and which exceed them in iniquity and outrage.

The avowed object of the honorable gentleman from Virginia—is a war with England. On this subject I make but one question—Is it possible to avoid it with honor?

If this possibility exists, the war ought to be avoided. And it is my opinion that it does exist. To this opinion I am, in a great degree, led by a want of confidence in the sincerity of the disposition of our executive to settle our differences with Great Britain. Your measures have not been impartial as to the belligerents, and your negotiations have not been sincere as to England. The gentleman from Virginia has called this charge of insincerity a miserable vision. I believe, Sir, it is a miserable and melancholy fact—and if you will have patience with me, I will furnish proof enough to support the belief of the most incredulous.

I mean to shew, that your government has had it in its power to secure peace with Britain, by the settlement of the differences between the two nations, and that the means have not only been neglected, but means employed to prevent such a settlement from taking place.

It will be necessary for us to consider what those differences were.

They may be referred to three heads:—

- 1st. The rule, as it is called, of the war of 1756.
- 2d. Constructive blockades.
- 3d. Impressment of seamen on board of American merchant vessels.

I do not mean to say, that there were no other causes of complaint, arising from the indiscretions and insolence of British commanders; but they had not the character of national differences,