

This revocation, then, which was so paraded in public documents of Mr. Madison's Administration, and triumphantly quoted both in those documents and in Congress, as creating an irresistible claim on Great Britain for the repeal of her Orders, was nothing more than a revocation contingent on impossible conditions, and was, therefore, no revocation at all. It was simply a piece of French intrigue, seen through without difficulty by the British Cabinet, as a transparent fraud, and failing, therefore, to draw Great Britain into the snare; but ultimately successful in the other quarter; that is, in aggravating the discontent felt by the United States towards Great Britain, and contributing to bring on hostilities between those two countries. Still, it might be asked,—“Did this French stratagem preclude Great Britain from making a relaxation of her Orders in favour of the United States, supposing that good policy dictated such a step?” Pledged to such a concession she certainly was not, for her pledge—as we have seen—was based on nothing short of an absolute and unconditional repeal on the part of France, which was never made. But was she not at liberty to make the concession of her own accord? We think she was. We cannot see that she was in the slightest degree bound by any interpretation which France might put upon; by any extravagant conditions which her furious adversary, in her own distempered imagination and inflated pretensions, might gratuitously attach to such a concession. She was, it appears to us, altogether in a position to take, and to maintain her own view of her own policy, and to say to the United States:—“It will be mutually advantageous that we should discontinue the restraints which French violence at the first compelled us to put on your commerce; and we do so: we strike off the trammels we imposed; you, of course, abrogating your retaliatory enactments. It is true, the violence of France continues; for, as she has relaxed her Decrees with an understanding utterly ridiculous,—on conditions surpassingly inequitable and absurd,—which can never be fulfilled, she has, in point of fact, not relaxed those Decrees at all. But your Non-Intercourse Act, and our Orders in

Council, hurt both you and ourselves, infinitely more than they annoy or injure France, and this we judge to be a sufficient reason for rescinding the Orders. This we are ready to do, without compromising our right, which is sanctioned by all national law and precedent, to close where we can the ports of France with our fleets, which are quite adequate to the maintenance of any actual blockade we have as yet attempted. This relief we are ready to afford you, without for one moment debarring ourselves from turning against our enemy, as God shall give us ability, that maritime superiority, whose crowning honours and strength were bought with the blood of Aboukir and Trafalgar.” This, we conceive, would have been good and safe policy on the part of Great Britain. It would have conciliated the United States, and miserably disappointed France, without involving, so far as we can see, any concession detrimental to our maritime superiority, or discreditable to the nation at large. The persistence of the British Cabinet in their original policy at this period, and subsequently, when the Erskine arrangement was disallowed, may be pronounced, we think, unfortunate, and seems, indeed, unaccountable, when we consider how loudly the increasing commercial distress in the British Isles cried out for relief. During the year 1810, two thousand bankruptcies were announced; whilst the elements of the riots which in 1812 broke out in the manufacturing districts were visibly fermenting. We do not mean to attribute the whole of this commercial distress to the Orders in Council and the retaliatory acts of Congress; but we are aware that a great deal of it arose from that source; whilst it may be acknowledged that the chief cause of such a depression was Buonaparte's Continental system,—the confiscation of British merchandise with which it commenced, and the subsequent exclusion of that merchandise from all the Continental ports under his control. The re-establishment of satisfactory relations with the United States would certainly have been, under these circumstances, a measure of relief; and it was simply as a measure of relief to suffering and complaining multitudes that the Orders in Council were, in the end,