

two memorable Orders which, unhappily, contributed to aggravate the prejudices previously entertained against Great Britain by a large majority of the inhabitants of the United States, and supplied the ostensible, but—as circumstances, to be hereafter noticed, entitle us to argue—not the real ground for the War of 1812. It is well to bear in mind that this Order was not the production of a Tory Ministry; but of a Whig Cabinet, headed by Mr. Fox,—a man who will hardly be charged with any bias towards the arbitrary exercise of the influence and power of the British Crown. It is still more important to remark that, when Mr. Monroe, the United States Minister in London, communicated the Order to his government, he did so with comments expressive of concurrence and satisfaction. "The spirit of this Order," observes Mr. Alison, "was to deprive the French, and all the nations subject to their control, which had embraced the Continental system, of the advantages of the coasting trade in neutral bottoms: and, considering the much more violent and extensive character of the Berlin Decree, there can be no doubt that it was a very mild and lenient measure of retaliation."

The Order in Council though strictly just, not perhaps the best course open to the British Government.

The issuing of the Order in Council, though just and defensible, was, perhaps, an infelicitous proceeding. The British Government might have tried instead one or other of two expedients, either of which, as matters turned out, would probably have answered better than that which was adopted. If they would not have been justified in treating the Emperor's fulmination with contempt; they might—on the one hand—have paused, at least, to ascertain whether neutral powers would acquiesce in his furious enactment.

any such port; and any vessel, after being so warned, or any vessel coming from any such port, after a reasonable time shall have been afforded for receiving information of this his majesty's orders which shall be found proceeding to another such port, shall be captured and brought in, and, together with her cargo, shall be condemned as lawful prize. And his majesty's principal secretaries of state, the lords commissioners of the admiralty, and the judges of the high court of admiralty, and courts of vice admiralty, are to take the necessary measures herein as to them shall respectively appertain.

W. FAWKENER.

This would have put the United States to the test. Had they acquiesced, their French sympathies would have stood confessed, and the pretext of a grievance—not discovered until an interval of some months had elapsed*—in the Order in Council, would have been completely shut out; had they remonstrated; that would have been taking part with justice, and Buonaparte might have given way. Or—on the other hand—the boldest course of all might have been pursued, and the whole strength of our irresistible navy sent to lay waste the French coast from Ostend to Bayonne, which would soon have brought Buonaparte to reason, and made him consider deliverance from such a scourge—the severity of which he had good cause to know and dread—cheaply purchased by the abrogation of his Decree. The British Government, however, resolved on a middle course; and published the "Order in Council," which, whilst it was insufficient to repel the violence of the enemy, assisted afterwards to bring on collision with a neutral power. Still—as we have said, and will repeat—the Order in Council, if it were comparatively feeble and inefficient, stands nevertheless, as to justice, on a position perfectly unassailable.

The United States raise no voice against Buonaparte's Decree.

The alternative of obsequious inactivity might have been tried at the outset; but certainly could not have been long maintained; and must have given place soon to energetic resistance. Whilst the Berlin Decree was being unsparingly executed, the neutral nations of Denmark, Portugal, and the United States—by abstaining from remonstrance—received it, as we are warranted in considering, with at least silent acquiescence. The silence of the United States is the more to be deplored, because that country—remote from the theatre of war, and completely secure from any attempt of Buonaparte to shut up its ports—might have spoken out in frank and honest terms with safety. It is to be regretted, however, that the current of public feeling had already begun to set the other way. When tidings of the first aggression on the part of the French Emperor reached them, no voice

* The first notice of it is to be found in the President's angry message of October 27, 1807.

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