

lesley, very naturally, replied that it would be necessary to wait to see whether the French decrees would be actually repealed. Subsequently, when a temporary intermission of French violence, together with the release of some detained American vessels, afforded color for the government of the United States asserting, and probably at the time hoping, that the French decrees had been virtually repealed, though no authentic document beyond the Duke of Cadore's note had appeared to that effect; Mr. Pinckney laboured strenuously and repeatedly to prove to the British Cabinet that those decrees had actually been repealed, and reiterated his demands, that the Orders in Council should be annulled. Lord Wellesley replied that, "admitting the Duke of Cadore's letter to be correctly interpreted by Pinckney, as announcing a repeal of the French decrees to commence absolutely on the first of November, but conditional as to its continuance, or the recall, within a reasonable time, of the British Orders, he should not hesitate to concede such a recall, *had that been the only thing required*. But there was another condition mentioned in that letter wholly inadmissible—the renouncing what were called "the new British principles of blockade."

What France required was the relinquishment by England of "her new principles of blockade;" an expression which unquestionably implied much more than a mere declaration by the British Cabinet that, as a matter of fact, the blockade of 1806 had, as an actual blockade, ceased to exist. We do not see how the British Government could have disputed that point, seeing it was a thing obvious to the eyes of any man, that Lord Keith's ships no longer watched the coast between Brest and the Elbe; Lord Wellesley, we consider, admitted as much, when he told Mr. Pinckney that the blockade of 1806 was included in the more extensive Orders in Council; that is, he admitted, we take it, that the line of coast originally confined by actual blockade was no longer in that predicament; but, in common with the rest of France, affected by the retaliation of Buonaparte's own paper blockades. But this admission, expressed or implied, was not what France wanted. Her view of the case was

this:—"Granting that Britain had 160 vessels* to blockade thirty ports and harbours of ours; she did not invest those ports and harbours by land as well as by sea; and, therefore, in our estimation, it was no actual blockade. It was Great Britain's new principles of blockade. She must, notwithstanding her immense naval force, put that blockade virtually on the same footing with the Berlin and Milan Decrees; she must deny its existence, and—what we are especially aiming at—she must acknowledge its insufficiency. She must do this before our promised repeal of our decrees in favour of the United States is to take effect; and, in doing so, it is to be distinctly understood that in future, unless she can beleaguer our seaport towns by land as well as by sea, there will be no actual blockade." That is, Great Britain was not to shut up the French ports from foreign intercourse, and debar them from foreign supplies—how effectually soever she might be able to do it with her powerful navy—until her Peninsular heroes should have crossed the Pyrenees. Then, if she chose, she might use her fleets to co-operate with her troops on land. The transcendent insolence of such terms is equalled only by their prodigious absurdity; and yet this was what France meant by Great Britain "renouncing her new principles of blockade." These, or a declaration of war by the United States against Great Britain, were the conditions on which the Berlin and Milan Decrees were, by an anticipation, repealed as regarded the United States. The French government, in short, revoked, or more strictly promised to revoke, their decrees in favour of the United States, on the understanding that one of two things was to follow: either that Great Britain should be entrapped into the surrender of her maritime superiority: of which being in itself flagrantly absurd, France, we must believe, entertained no expectation,—or that the United States would go to war with Great Britain: this latter alternative being, as they no doubt imagined, the more probable of the two; and which, within less than two years, was the actual issue of French stratagem and American irascibility.

* This was the force actually watching the French coast in 1806.