

Council upon the maritime interests and trade of the United States. He secured the passage of the Embargo act prohibiting all vessels in the ports of the United States from sailing for any foreign Port, except foreign ships in ballast, or with cargoes taken on board before notification of the act, and requiring coast-wise vessels to give heavy bonds to load their cargoes in the United States. The little life that was left in American commerce under the pressure of the Orders in Council of England and the Decrees of France, was utterly crushed out by this act. Its professed objects were to induce France and England to relax their practical hostility to neutral commerce ; and to preserve and develop the resources of the United States ; but it accomplished neither : opposition in the Eastern States to the measure was violent and incessant. Among the political pamphlets of the day, we find one in verse by William Cullen Bryant, then a lad of thirteen years of age :

Curse of our Nation, source of countless woe,  
From whose dark womb, unreckoned misery flows,  
The Embargo rages, like a sweeping wind,  
Fear lowers before and famine stalks behind.

Many dreading the horrors of war with England, which they believed the Embargo Act would bring about, preferred giving freedom to the commerce of the country — letting it provide itself against the risks that threatened it, and run the gauntlet of British cruizers, rather than kill it outright.\*

Such was the feeling of merchants, but patriotic statesmen holding the dignity and independence of the State as of far more consequence than the temporary interests of trade, advocated the most stringent execution of the Embargo Act. The obnoxious act is supposed to have had

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\* Lossing—Field book of the war of 1812.