

When he received the reply he no longer desired peace with Great Britain. Bonaparte, we have seen, had sought a temporary peace with Great Britain in order to reopen the contest when once he felt able to cope with her at sea, but at this moment a movement in the states of northern and eastern Europe suddenly threatened Britain's maritime supremacy. In the previous winter the Tsar Paul had abandoned his alliance with both Austria and Great Britain in disgust and anger: subsequently when Great Britain refused to give up Malta,¹⁵³ which Paul claimed as Grand Master of the Knights of St. John,¹⁵⁴ he determined finally to take action against her. Encouraged by Bonaparte,¹⁵⁵ he created the Armed Neutrality of the North, a league composed of Russia, Prussia and the Scandinavian powers, with the object of compelling Great Britain to relax the rights of blockade and of search, then exercised by her in a very extreme form to the great annoyance of neutrals. As Great Britain was determined to continue her practice in these matters, war with the Armed Neutrality

¹⁵³ i.e., after the French garrison in Malta capitulated to Great Britain in September, 1800.

¹⁵⁴ Paul's election to the office was illegal and the Order itself was in fact defunct, but Great Britain, when still in alliance with Paul, had shown a disposition to recognize his claim. Naturally she ceased to do so, after he had given up his alliance with her and manifested an inclination to become her enemy. Bonaparte on the contrary, when his own hold upon Malta was on the very verge of extinction, by a clever stroke of policy, offered to surrender the fortress to Paul, as Grand Master of the Order. On this offer see the note from Talleyrand to Panin, 26 Aug., 1800, Tratschevski, *Russia and France*, I, 3, (Paper No. 2.)

¹⁵⁵ *Corr. Nap.*, VI, 5208, 7 Dec., 1800, a note to be sent to allied and friendly powers: . . . "le Gouvernement français, ayant principalement à coeur de s'opposer à l'envahissement des mers et de concourir avec les autres puissances neutres à faire respecter leurs pavillons, et appréciant le zèle vraiment patriotique de l'Empereur de Russie pour la cause commune de toutes les puissances continentales, ne traitera de la paix avec l'Angleterre qu'autant que ces principes sacrés seraient reconnus, et que les pavillons russe, danois, suédois, américain, prussien, seraient respectés sur mer, comme les armes de ces puissances le sont sur le continent, et qu'il serait reconnu par l'Angleterre que le mer appartient à toutes les nations."