

## PRELIMINARY VIEW.

FROM 1815 TO 1820

THE war with Great Britain commenced in 1812, and ended in 1815. It was a short war, but a necessary and important one, and introduced several changes, and made some new points of departure in American policy, which are necessary to be understood in order to understand the subsequent working of the government, and the VIEW of that working which is proposed to be given.

1. It struggled and labored under the state of the finances and the currency, and terminated without any professed settlement of the cause for which it began. There was no national currency—no money, or its equivalent, which represented the same value in all places. The first Bank of the United States had ceased to exist in 1811. Gold, from being undervalued, had ceased to be a currency—had become an article of merchandise, and of export—and was carried to foreign countries. Silver had been banished by the general use of bank notes, had been reduced to a small quantity, insufficient for a public demand; and, besides, would have been too cumbrous for a national currency. Local banks overspread the land; and upon these the federal government, having lost the currency of the constitution, was thrown for a currency and for loans. They, unequal to the task, and having removed their own foundations by banishing specie with profuse paper issues, sunk under the double load of national and local wants, and stopped specie payments—all except those of New England, which section of the Union was unfavorable to the war. Treasury notes were then the resort of the federal government. They were issued in great quantities; and not being convertible into coin at the will of the

holder, soon began to depreciate. In the second year of the war the depreciation had already become enormous, especially towards the Canada frontier, where the war raged, and where money was most wanted. An officer setting out from Washington with a supply of these notes found them sunk one-third by the time he arrived at the northern frontier—his every three dollars counting but two. After all, the treasury notes could not be used as a currency, neither legally, nor in fact: they could only be used to obtain local bank paper—itsself greatly depreciated. All government securities were under par, even for depreciated bank notes. Loans were obtained with great difficulty—at large discount—almost on the lender's own terms; and still attainable only in depreciated local bank notes. In less than three years the government, paralyzed by the state of the finances, was forced to seek peace, and to make it, without securing, by any treaty stipulation, the object for which war had been declared. Impressment was the object—the main one, with the insults and the outrages connected with it—and without which there would have been no declaration of war. The treaty of peace did not mention or allude to the subject—the first time, perhaps, in modern history, in which a war was terminated by treaty without any stipulation derived from its cause. Mr. Jefferson, in 1807, rejected upon his own responsibility, without even its communication to the Senate, the treaty of that year negotiated by Messrs. Monroe and Pinkney, because it did not contain an express renunciation of the practice of impressment—because it was silent on that point. It was a treaty of great moment, settled many troublesome questions, was very