

CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

No. I.

DISPATCH from the Honourable David Erskine to Mr. Secretary Canning, dated Washington, 3d December 1808.

Sir,

THE government and congress have been quite at a loss how to act in the present extraordinary and embarrassing situation of their public affairs, and they have not yet determined upon the measures which they mean to pursue: but I think that I may venture to assure you that the course of conduct recommended by the committee of the house of representatives, to which was referred the documents mentioned in the president's message to congress, will in substance, at least, be adopted for the present, with certain amendments, so as to give some time previous to its going into operation.

It is not, however, denied by those even who have introduced this measure: that it is only of a temporary nature, and that the United States may be driven to adopt a more decided course of conduct against the belligerents before the present congress closes, or at any rate soon after the meeting of the new legislature, in consequence of the feelings and sentiments of the eastern division of the United States, which