

Cochrane's letter, as some expressions in it were laid hold of as breathing a most sanguinary and ruthless spirit:—

*From vice-admiral Cochrane to Mr. Monroe.*

His Majesty's ship the *Tonnant*, in the Patuxent river, Aug. 18, 1814.

SIR,

Having been called on by the governor-general of the Canadas to aid him in carrying into effect measures of retaliation against the inhabitants of the United States, for the

wanton destruction committed by their army in Upper Canada, it has become imperiously my duty, conformably with the nature of the governor-general's application, to issue to the naval force under my command, an order to destroy and lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast as may be found assailable.

I had hoped that this contest would have terminated, without my being obliged to resort to severities which are contrary to the usages of civilised warfare; and as it has

Without dwelling on the deplorable cruelties committed by the savages in the British ranks, and in British pay, on American prisoners, at the river Raisin, which to this day have never been disavowed, or atoned, I refer, as more immediately connected with the subject of your letter, to the wanton desolation that was committed at Havre-de-Grace, and at George town, early in the spring of 1813. These villages were burnt and ravaged by the naval forces of Great Britain, to the ruin of their unarmed inhabitants, who saw with astonishment they derived no protection to their property from the laws of war. During the same season, scenes of invasion and pillage, carried on under the same authority, were witnessed all along the waters of the Chesapeake, to an extent inflicting the most serious private distress, and under circumstances that justified the suspicion, that revenge and cupidity, rather than the manly motives that should dictate the hostility of a high-minded foe, led to their perpetration. The late destruction of the houses of government in this city, is another act which comes necessarily into view. In the wars of modern Europe, no examples of the kind, even among nations the most hostile to each other, can be traced. In the course of ten years past, the capitals of the principal powers of the Continent of Europe have been conquered, and occupied alternately by the victorious armies of each other, and no instance of such wanton and justifiable destruction has been seen. We must go back to distant and barbarous ages to find a parallel for the acts of which I complain. Although these acts of desolation invited, if they did not impose on the government, the necessity of retaliation, yet in no instance has it been authorized. The burning of the village of Newark, in Upper Canada, posterior to the early outrages above enumerated, was not executed on that principle. The village of Newark adjoined Fort-George, and its destruction was justified by the officer who ordered it, on the ground that it became necessary in the military operations there. The act, however, was disavowed by the government. The burning which took place at Long-point

was unauthorized by the government, and the conduct of the officer subjected to the investigation of a military tribunal. For the burning of St. David's, committed by stragglers, the officer who commanded in that quarter was dismissed without a trial, for not preventing it.

I am commanded by the president distinctly to state, that it as little comports with any orders issued to the military and naval commanders of the United States, as it does with the established and known humanity of the American nation, to pursue a system which it appears you have adopted. The government owes to itself, and to the principle which it has ever held sacred, to disavow, as justly chargeable to it, any such wanton, cruel, and unjustifiable warfare.

Whatever unauthorized irregularity may have been committed by any of its troops, it would have been ready, acting on these principles of sacred and eternal obligation, to disavow, and as far as might be practicable, to repair. But in the plan of desolating warfare which your letter so explicitly makes known, and which is attempted to be excused on a plea so utterly groundless, the president perceives a spirit of deep-rooted hostility, which, without the evidence of such facts, he could not have believed existed, or would have been carried to such an extremity.

For the reparation of injuries, of whatever nature they may be, not sanctioned by the law of nations, which the naval or military forces of either power may have committed against the other, this government will always be ready to enter into reciprocal arrangements. It is presumed that your government will neither expect or propose any which are not reciprocal.

Should your government adhere to a system of desolation so contrary to the views and practice of the United States, so revolting to humanity and repugnant to the sentiments and usages of the civilized world, whilst it will be seen with the deepest regret, it must and will be met with a determination and constancy becoming a free