

To this cause the people were taught to charge its successive failures, and not to its intrinsic imbecility. In this state of things the undersigned deemed it proper, to take away all apology for adherence to this oppressive system. They were desirous, at a period so critical in public affairs, as far as was consistent with the independence of opinion, to contribute to the restoration of harmony in the public councils, and concord among the people. And if any advantage could be thus obtained in our foreign relations, the undersigned, being engaged in no purpose of personal or party advancement, would rejoice in such an occurrence.

The course of public measures also, at the opening of the session, gave hope that an enlarged and enlightened system of defence, with provision for security of our maritime rights, was about to be commenced, a purpose which, wherever found, they deemed it their duty to foster, by giving, to any system of measures, thus comprehensive, as unobstructed a course as was consistent with their general sense of public duty. After a course of policy, thus liberal and conciliatory, it was cause of regret that a communication should have been purchased by an unprecedented expenditure of secret service money; and used, by the chief magistrate, to disseminate suspicion and jealousy; and to excite resentment among the citizens, by suggesting imputations against a portion of them, as unmerited by their patriotism, as unwarranted by evidence.

It has always been the opinion of the undersigned, that a system of peace was the policy, which most comported with the character, condition, and interest of the United States; that their remoteness from the theatre of contest, in Europe, was their peculiar felicity, and that nothing but a necessity, absolutely imperious, should induce them to enter as parties into wars, in which every consideration of virtue and policy seems to be forgotten, under the overbearing sway of rapacity and ambition. There is a new era in human affairs.—The European world is convulsed. The advantages of our situation are peculiar. “Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humour, or caprice?”

In addition to the many moral and prudential considerations, which should deter thoughtful men from hastening into the perils of such a war, there were some peculiar to the United States, resulting from the texture of the government, and the political relations of the people. A form of government, in no small degree experimental, composed of powerful and independent sovereignties, associated in relations, some of which are critical, as well as novel, should not be hastily precipitated into situations, calculated to put to trial the strength of the moral bond, by which they are united. Of all states, that of war is most likely to call into activity the passions, which are hostile and dangerous to such a form of government. Time is yet important to our country to settle and mature its recent institutions. A—