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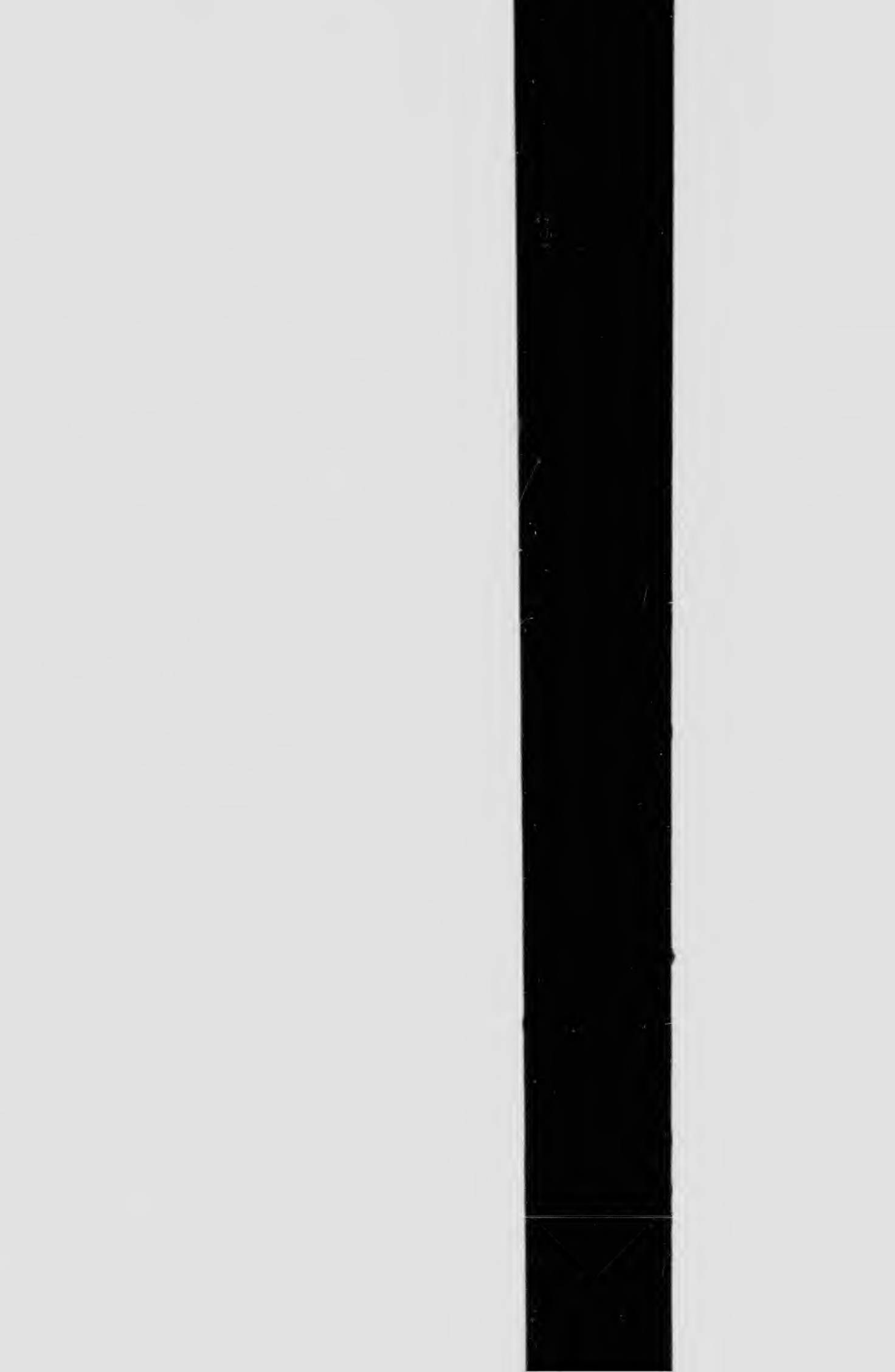
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# IMPORTANT AND ALA

## A LETTER

FROM THE

Hon. TIMOTHY PICKERING,  
A Senator of the United States, from the  
State of Massachusetts, exhibiting to his  
Constituents, a view of the imminent  
danger of an UNNECESSARY and  
RUINOUS WAR, addressed to his Ex-  
cellency JAMES SULLIVAN, Governor of  
said State.

City of Washington, Feb. 16, 1804.

SIR,

IN the even current of ordinary times, an address from a Senator in Congress to his constituents might be dispensed with. In such times, the proceedings of the Executive and Legislature of the United States, exhibited in their *public acts*, might be sufficient. But the present singular condition of our country, when its most interesting concerns, wrapt up in mystery, excite universal alarm, requires me to be no longer silent. Perhaps I am liable to censure, at such a crisis, for not sooner presenting, to you and them, such a view of our national affairs as my official situation has placed in my power. I now address it to you, Sir, as the proper organ of communication to the Legislature.

The attainment of TRUTH is ever desirable: and I cannot permit myself to doubt that the statement I now make must be acceptable to all who have an agency in directing the affairs, and who are guardians of the interest of our Commonwealth, which to materially depend on the measures of the government of the nation. At the same time, I am aware, with the jealousy with which, in these unhappy days of party dissensions, my communications may, by some of my constituents, be received. Of this I will not complain: while I earnestly wish the same jealousy to be extended towards all public men. Yet I may claim some share of attention and credit—that share which is due to the man who defies the world to point, in the whole course of a long and public life, at one instance of deception, at a single departure from TRUTH.

The EMBARGO demands the first notice.—For perhaps no act of the national government has ever produced so much solicitude, or spread such universal alarm.—Because all naturally conclude, that a measure pregnant with incalculable mischief to all classes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been proposed by the President, and adopted by Congress, but for causes deeply affecting the interests and safety of the nation. It must have been under the influence of this opinion that the legislative bodies of these States have expressed their approbation, of the embargo, either directly, or by implication.

...of necessity, or expediency, of the embargo, was of little moment. Or if the danger to our vessels, crews and merchandize, had been so extreme as not to admit of one day's delay, ought not that extreme danger to have been exhibited to Congress? The Constitution, which requires the President "to give to Congress information of the state of the union," certainly meant, not *partial*, but *complete* information on the subject of a communication, so far as he possessed it. And when it enjoins him "to recommend to their consideration such measures as he should judge necessary and expedient," it was certainly intended that those recommendations should be bottomed on *information communicated*, not on *facts withheld*, and locked up in the Executive cabinet. Had the public safety been at stake, or any great public good been presented to our view, but which would be lost by a moment's delay; there would have been some apology for *dispatch*, though none for acting *without due information*. Alas! such the measure appeared to me then, and to others, and as it appears to the public, without a legitimate motive, without a legitimate cause. How, in the general enquiry—"How is it that the embargo laid?" And I challenge any man to disclose the secrets of the Executive Council. I know not, that the President said the papers above mentioned, show the great and increasing danger to our vessels, our crews, and our commerce, but I do know that they say, "no real dangers." If that were the case, our seamen had not been well apprized. The British proclamation had many days before been published in the city's papers; the copy laid before us by the President had been cut out of a newspaper; and to had the substance it not the words of Regnier's letter. Yet they had excited little concern among merchants and seamen, the preservation of whose persons and property was the *principal* object of the President's recommendation of an embargo. The merchants and seamen could accurately estimate the dangers of continuing their commercial operation; of which dangers, indeed, the actual premiums of insurance were a satisfactory gauge. Those premiums had very little increased by the British proclamation; and by the French decree for little or not to stop commercial enterprizes. The great numbers of vessels loading or loaded and prepared for sea; the exertions everywhere made, on the first rumour of the embargo, to dispatch them; demonstrate the President's dangers to be *imaginary*—to have been *assumed*. Or if great and real dangers unknown to commercial men, were impending, or sure to fall, how desirable was it to have had them *officially* declared and published.

# ARMING INFORMATION.

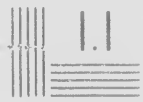
...s, and under all circumstances, the first uniformly refused to relinquish. The result of the subsequent negotiation at London has shown how utterly unfounded was the President's expectation, how perfectly useless all this bluster of war. While no well informed man doubted that the British government would make suitable reparation for the attack on the *Cheapeake*; the President himself, in his proclamation, had placed the affair on that footing. A rupture between the two nations, said he, "is equally opposed to the interests of both, as it is to assurances of the most friendly dispositions on the part of the British government, in the midst of which this outrage was committed. In this light the subject cannot but present itself to that government, and strengthen the motives to an honourable reparation for the wrong which has been done." And it is now well known that such reparation might have been promptly obtained in London, had the President's instructions to Mr. MONROE been compatible with such an adjustment. He was required not to negotiate on this single transfer of right (which when once adjusted was forever settled) but in connexion with another claim of long standing, and, to say the least, of doubtful right; to wit, the exemption from impressment of British seamen found on board American merchant vessels. To remedy the evil arising from its exercise, by which our own citizens were sometimes impressed, the attention of our government, under every administration, had been earnestly engaged: but no practicable plan has yet been contrived: while no man who regards the truth, will question the disposition of the British government to adopt any arrangement that will recur to Great-Britain the services of *her own subjects*. And now, when the unexampled situation of that country (left alone to maintain the conflict with France and her numerous dependent States—left alone to withstand the power which menaces the liberties of the world) rendered the aid of all her subjects more than ever needful; there was no reasonable ground to expect that she would yield the right to take them when found on board the merchant vessels of any nation. Thus to insist on her yielding this point, and inseparably to connect it with the affair of the *Cheapeake*, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.

I write, Sir, with freedom; for the times are too perilous to allow those who are placed in high and responsible situations to be silent or reserved. The peace and safety of our country are suspended on a thread. The course we have been pursued leads on to war—to a war with Great-Britain—a war absolutely without necessity—a war which, whether dissensions or mercenary, must bring

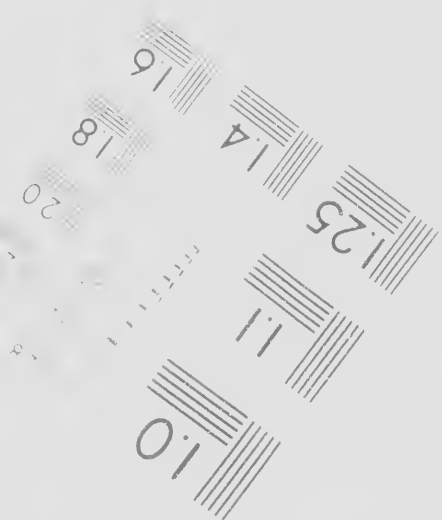
without one instance of a man being taken by force. Three Swedes were taken out by a French frigate. I have made enquiry of all the masters that have arrived in this vicinity, and cannot find any complaints against the British cruizers."

Can gentlemen of known humanity to foreign commerce in *our own vessels*—who are ever willing to *annihilate*—and such there may be—can these gentlemen plead the cause of our *seamen* because they really wish to *protect* them? Can they desire to *protect* our seamen, who, by laying an unnecessary embargo, expole them by thousands to *starve or beggary*? One gentleman has said (and I believe he does not stand alone) that sooner than admit the principle that Great-Britain had a right to take *her own subjects from our merchant vessels*, he would abandon commerce altogether! To what will every man in New-England, and of the other navigating States, ascribe such a sentiment? A sentiment which, to prevent the temporary loss of five men, by impressment, would reduce fifty thousand to beggary? But for the embargo, thousands depending on the ordinary operations of commerce, would now be employed. Even under the restraints of the orders of the British Government, retaliating the French imperial decree, very large portions of the world remain open to the commerce of the United States. We may yet pursue our trade with the British dominions, in every part of the globe; with Africa, with China, and with the colonies of France, Spain, and Holland. And let me ask, whether in the midst of a profound peace, when the powers of Europe possessing colonies, would, as formerly, confine the trade with them to their own bottoms, or admit us, as foreigners, only under great limitations, we could enjoy a commerce much more extensive than is practicable at this moment, if the embargo were not in the way? Why then should it be continued? Why rather was it ever laid? Can those be legitimate reasons for the embargo which are concealed from Congress, at the moment when they are required to impose it? Are the reasons to be found in the dispatches from Paris? These have been moved for; and the motion was quashed by the advocates for the embargo. Why are these dispatches withheld by the Executive? Why, when all classes of citizens anxiously enquire "for what is the embargo laid?" is a satisfactory answer denied? Why is not Congress made acquainted with the actual situation of the United States in relation to France? Why, in this dangerous crisis, are Mr. ARMSTRONG'S letters to the Secretary of State absolutely withheld, so that a line of them cannot be seen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the





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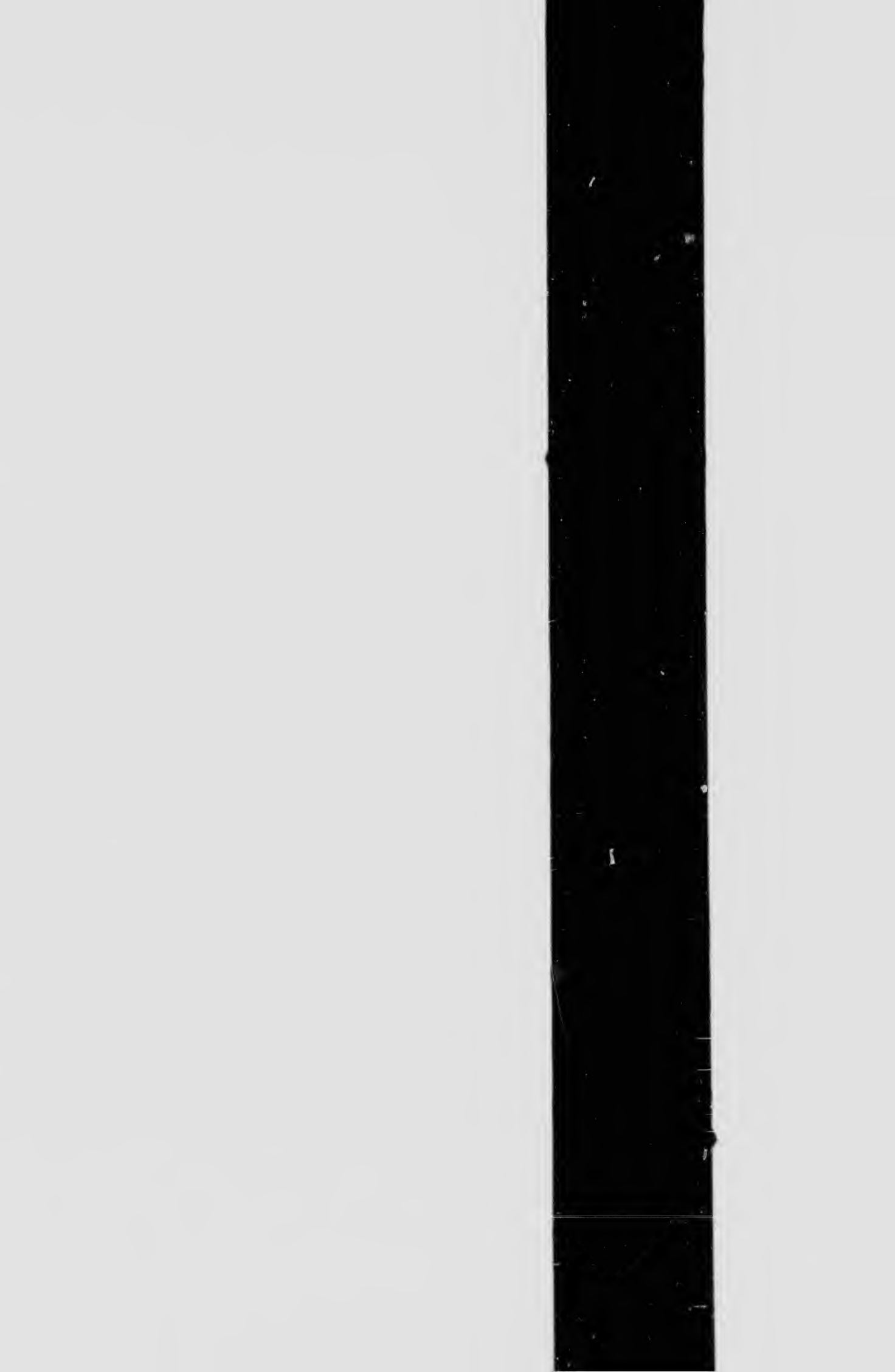
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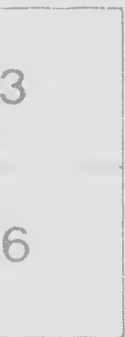
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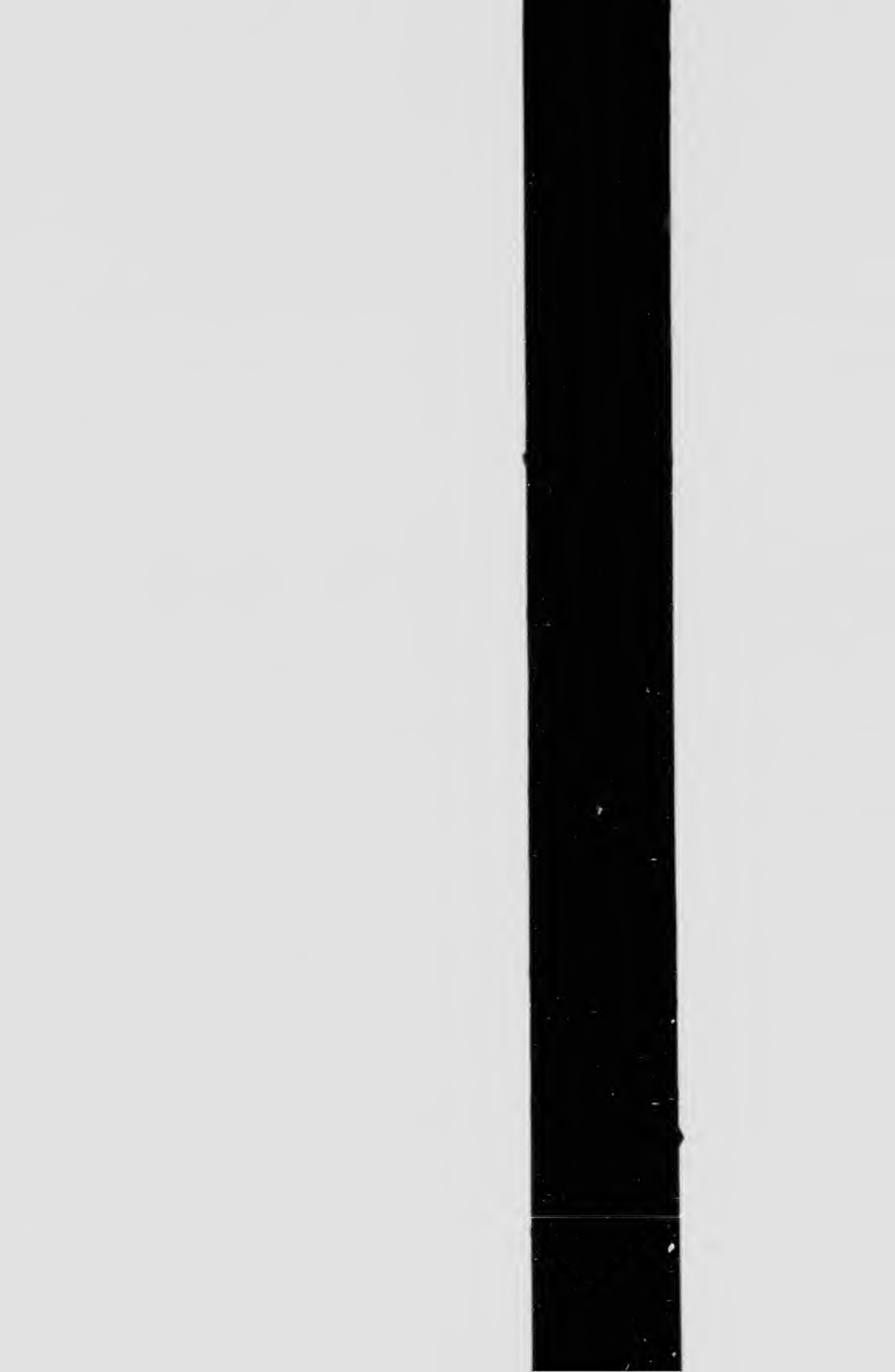
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The embargo demands the first notice.—For perhaps no act of the national government has ever produced so much solicitude, or spread such universal alarm.—Because it naturally concludes, that a measure pregnant with incalculable mischief to all classes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been proposed by the President, and adopted by Congress, but for causes deeply affecting the interests and safety of the nation. It must have been under the influence of this opinion that the legislative bodies of these States have expressed their approbation of the embargo, either expressly, or by implication.

The following were all the papers held by the President before Congress, as the grounds of the embargo.

1. The proclamation of the King of Great-Britain requiring the return of his subjects, the seamen especially, from foreign countries, to aid, in this hour of present danger, in the defence of their own. But it being an acknowledged principle, that every nation has a right to the service of its subjects in time of war, that proclamation could not furnish the slightest ground for an embargo.

2. The extract of a letter from the Grand Judge Roccus to the French Attorney-General for the Circuit of Pises. This contained a partial interpretation of the Imperial Decree of November 21, 1806. This decree, indeed, and its interpretation, present flagrant violations of our neutral rights, and of the existing treaty between the United States and France—but still, the exception of that decree could not—from the small number of French cruisers—entirely interrupt our trade. These two papers were public.

3. The letter from our Minister, Mr. AUSTIN, to Mr. CHATELAIN, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and

4. Mr. CHATELAIN'S answer. Both these ought, in fairness, but it did, as it to have been made public. The latter would have furnished to our nation some idea of the views and expectations of France. But both were withdrawn by the President, to be deposited only in the Executive secret; while neither presented any new ground to justify an embargo.

In the Senate, these papers were referred to a committee. The committee quickly reported a bill for laying an embargo, agreeably to the President's proposal. This was read a first, a second, and a third time, and passed, and all in the short compass of about four hours! A little time was repeatedly asked, to obtain farther information, and to consider a measure of such moment, of such universal concern; but these requests were denied.—We were hurried into the passage of the bill, as if there was danger of its being rejected, if we were allowed time to obtain farther information, and deliberately consider the subject. For to that time our vessels were freely sailing on foreign voyages; and in a national point of view, the departure of half a dozen or a dozen more, while we were enduring in-

actual premiums of insurance were a satisfaction. Those premiums had very little increased by the British proclamation not a cent; and by the French decree so little as not to stop commercial enterprises. The great numbers of vessels loading or laden and prepared for sea, the exertion every where made, on the first rumour of the embargo, to dispatch them; demonstrate the President's dangers to be imaginary—to have been a *jeu d'esprit*. On it great and real dangers unknown to commercial men, we impending, or sure to fall, how desirable was it to have had them *officially* declared and published! This would have produced a voluntary embargo, and prevented every complaint. Besides, the dangers clearly defined and understood, the public mind would not have been disquieted with imaginary fears, the more tormenting, because uncertain.

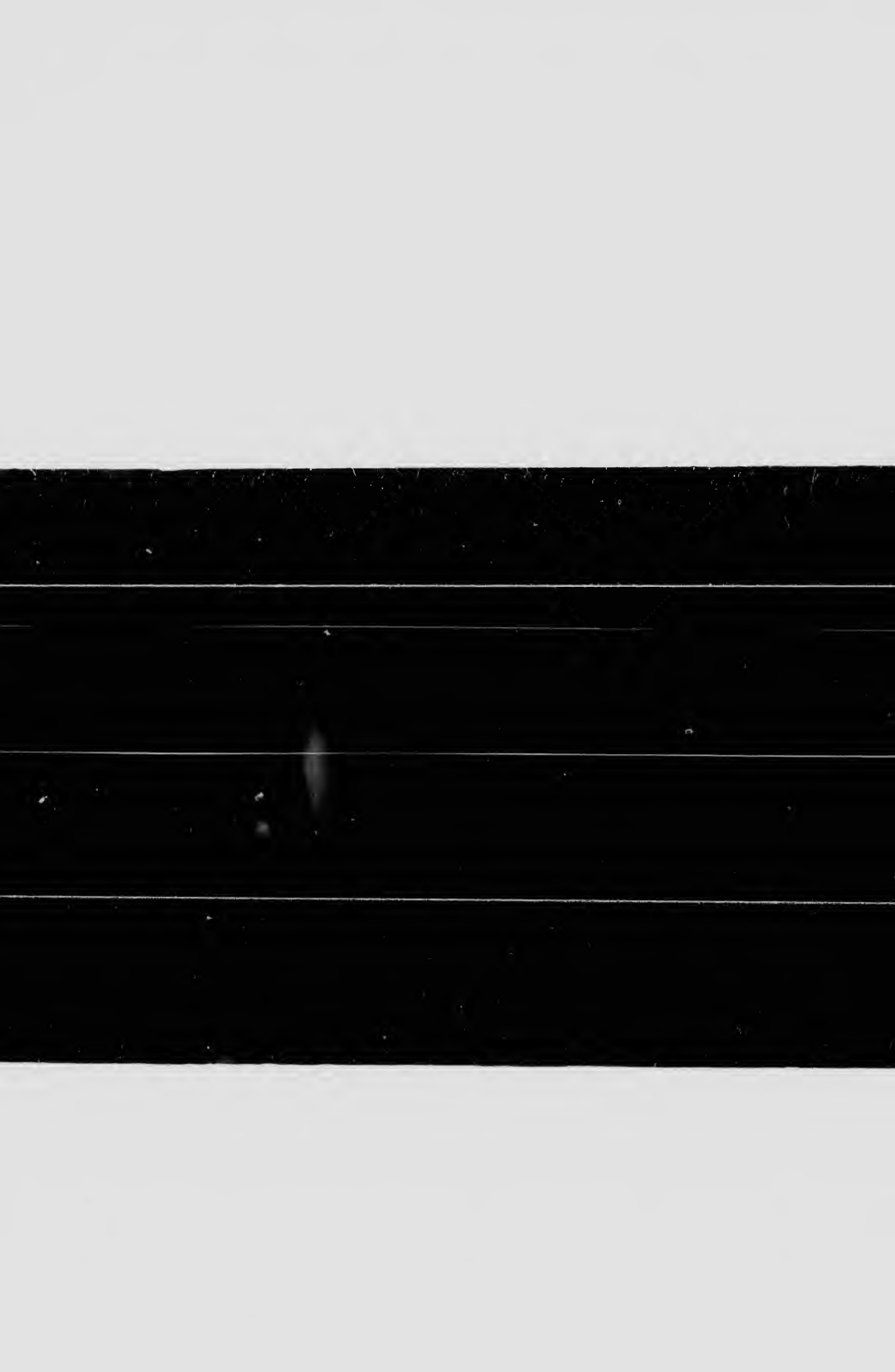
It is true that considerable numbers of vessels were collected in our ports, and many held in suspense; not, however, from any new dangers which appeared; but from the mysterious conduct of our affairs, after the attack on the *Chesapeake*; and from the general apprehension that the course the President was pursuing would terminate in war. The *National Intelligence* (usually considered the Executive news paper) gave the alarm and it was echoed through the United States.—War, probable or inevitable war, was the constant theme of the news-papers, and the conversations, as was reported, of persons supposed to be best informed of Executive designs. Yet amid this din of war, adequate preparations were seen making in vain. The order to detach a hundred thousand militia to fight the British navy (for there was no appearance of an enemy, or any other force) was so completely absurd, as to excite, with men of common sense, other emotion than ridicule. Not the fraud of a man that could operate on the mind of a man of common understanding can be offered in its justification. The refusal of a British officer to receive the frigate *Chesapeake* as a prize, when tendered by his command, is a demonstration that the attack upon it was exclusively for the purpose of taking their detesters; and not intended as the commencement of a war between the two nations. The President knew that the British had no invading army to land on our shores, and the detached militia would be useless except against land-forces. Why then this order for the militia given?—The nature of the case, and the actual state of things, authorize the inference, that its immediate not its only object, was to increase the public alarm, to aggravate the public resentment against Great-Britain, to excite a war passion, and in the height of this artificial fever of the public mind, which was to be known in Great-Britain, to renew the demands on her government; in the negotiation of extorting, in that state of things, concessions of points which she had never considered as her rights, and which at

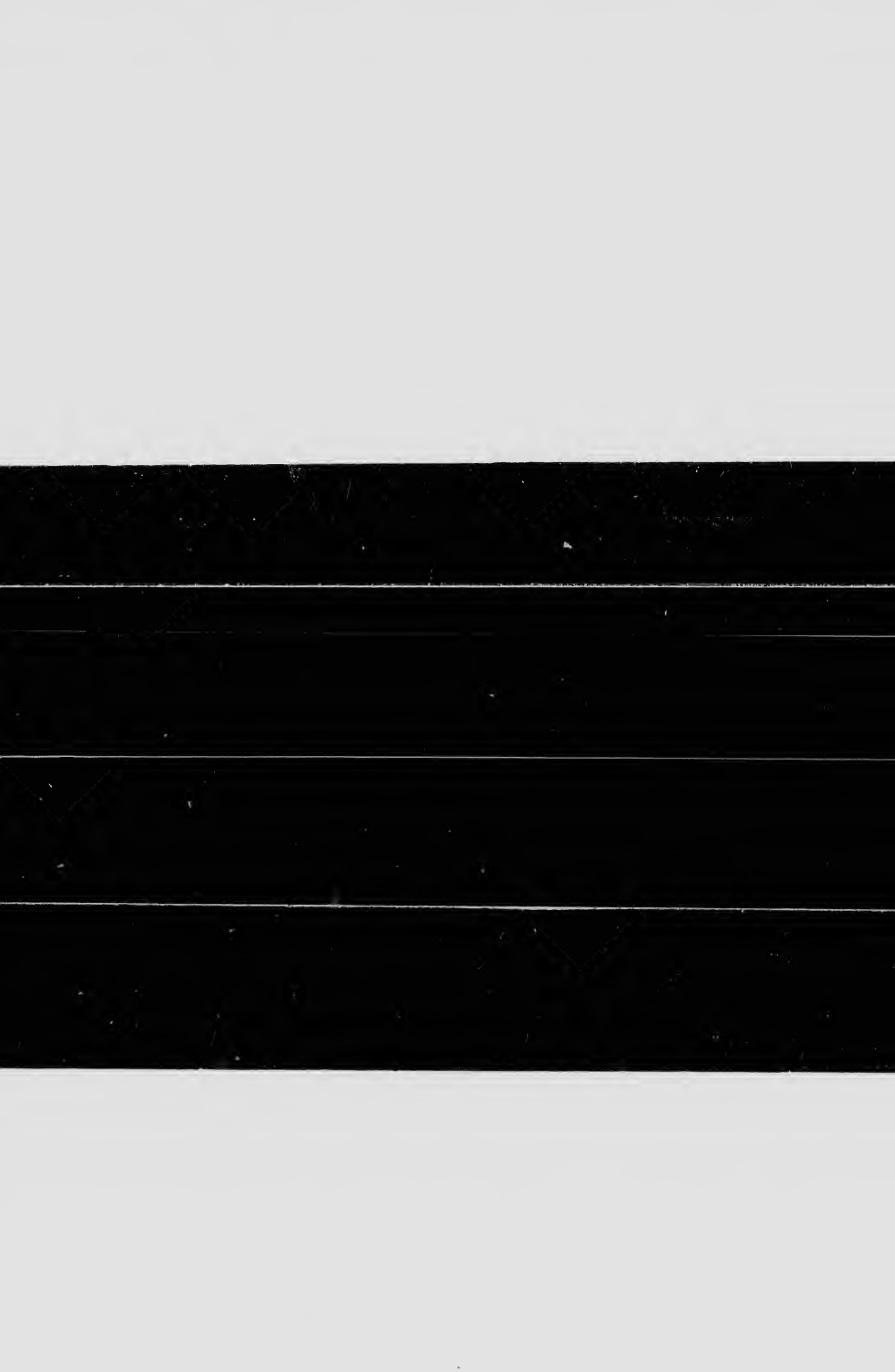
would yield the merchant vessels of any nation. Thus to inhibit on her yielding this point, and inseparably to connect it with the affair of the *Cheapeake*, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.

I write, Sir, with freedom; for the times are too perilous to allow those who are placed in high and responsible situations to be silent or relieved. The peace and safety of our country are suspended on a thread. The course we have been pursued leads on to war—to a war with Great Britain—a war absolutely without necessity—a war which, whether disastrous or successful, must bring misery and ruin to the United States: *And*, by the destruction of our navigation and commerce (perhaps also our inland port towns and cities) the loss of markets for our produce, the want of foreign goods and manufactures, and the other evils incident to a state of war. And, *then*, by the loss of our liberty and independence. For it will be the aid of our arms, Great Britain were freed from that moment (though flattered perhaps with the name of  *allies*) we should become the *Provincer of France*. This is a retail to obvious, that I must crave your pardon for noticing it. Some advocates of Executive measures admit it. They acknowledge that the navy of Britain is our shield against the over-reaching power of France.—Why then do they persist in a course of conduct tending to a rupture with Great Britain?—Will it be believed that it is principally, or solely, to procure inviolability to the *merchant fleets* of the United States? In other words, to protect our feamen, British *subjects*, as well as our own citizens, on board our merchant vessels? It is a fact that this has been many times the case to an immense settlement, with our own ships. Yet I repeat it to be free from all doubt that the *decrees* to detain our *merchant vessels* and the American *ships* captured by mistake, are delivered up as goods, an indubitable proof. The evil which is an effect of the impossibility of distinguishing the persons of these nations who a few years since were our enemies, who exhibit the same manners, speak the same language, and possess similar features. Realizing that we should hear complaints in the great navigating States, how happened there to be such extreme sympathy for American feamen at Washington? especially in gentlemen from the interior States, which have no feamen, or from those Atlantic States where native feamen bear a very small proportion to those of New England? In fact, the number of complaints are much fewer than are reported. They rarely occur in the States where feamen are chiefly natives. The first complaint in the United States, in answer to the late enquiry about British import duties, says, "Since the *Cheapeake* affair we have had no cause of complaint. I cannot find one single instance where they have taken one man out of a merchant vessel. I have had more than twenty vessels arrived in that time,

These have been moved for; and the motion was qualified by the advocates for the embargo. Why are these dispatches withheld by the Executive? Why, when all classes of citizens anxiously enquire "for what is the embargo laid?" is a satisfactory answer denied? Why is not Congress more acquainted with the actual situation of the United States in relation to France? Why, in this dangerous crisis, are Mr. ARMYSTRONG'S letters to the Secretary of State absolutely withheld, so that a line of them cannot be seen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the *Reven* sail from England to France, and there wait three or four weeks for dispatches of no importance? If so, why, regardless of the public solicitude, are their contents so carefully concealed? If really unimportant, what harm can arise from telling Congress and the Nation, *officially*, that they contain nothing of moment to the safety, the liberty, the honour, or the interests of the United States? On the contrary, are they so closely locked up because they will not bear the light? Would then disclosure make the spirit of the people, still slumbering in blind confidence in the Executive? Has the French Emperor declared that he will have no neutrals? Has he required that our ports, like those of his vassal states in Europe, be shut against British commerce? Is the embargo a *beneficial*, a *mutual* form of compliance with the earth demands, which is exhibited in a neutral and military war? Or, the American flag might be raised? Are we well to be kept in the agonies of the decrees, and the independent states of the French Emperor, although it may be at our liberty and independence, and in the meantime, are we, by other means, by observing justice, and our own rights, and our own interests, to be drawn into a war with Great Britain? No!—The extreme anxiety of Congress, and the feelings of the people, excited by the President's proclamation respecting his French dispatches.—In this concealment there is a danger. In this concealment must be wrapped the real cause of the embargo. On any other supposition it is inexplicable.

I am assured, Sir, at this perilous state of things, I cannot repress my suspicions, or forbear thus to exhibit to you the grounds on which they rest. The people are advised to repose implicit confidence in the National Government, in that unbounded confidence, they are in danger. Armed with that confidence, the Executive may procure the adoption of measures which may overwhelm us with ruin, as surely as if he had an army at his beck. By false policy, or by inordinate wars, our country may be betrayed and subjugated to France, as surely as by corruption. I trust, Sir, that no one who knows me will charge me with vanity, when I say, that I have some knowledge of public affairs, and of public affairs, and of the knowledge, and will be

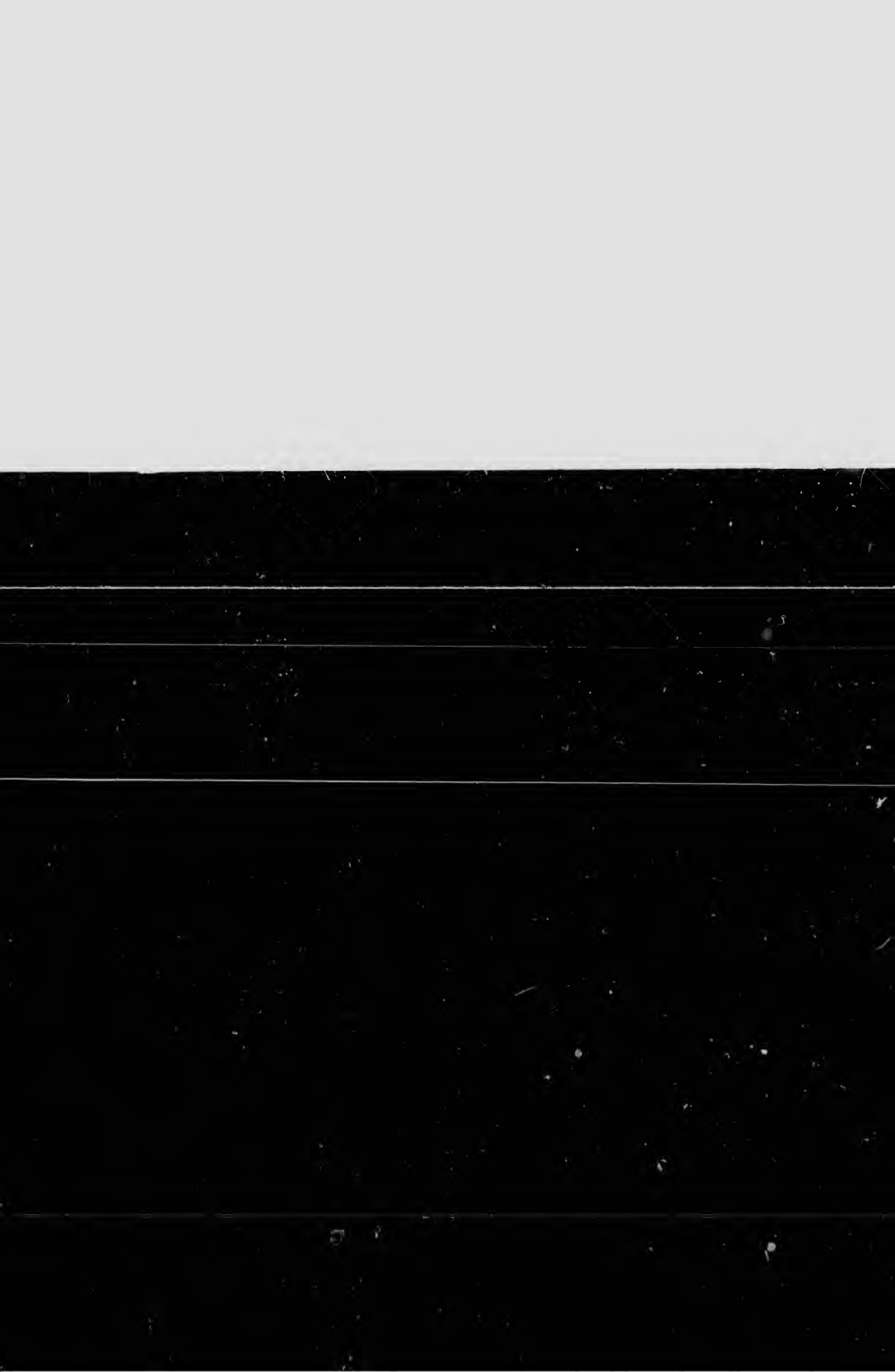






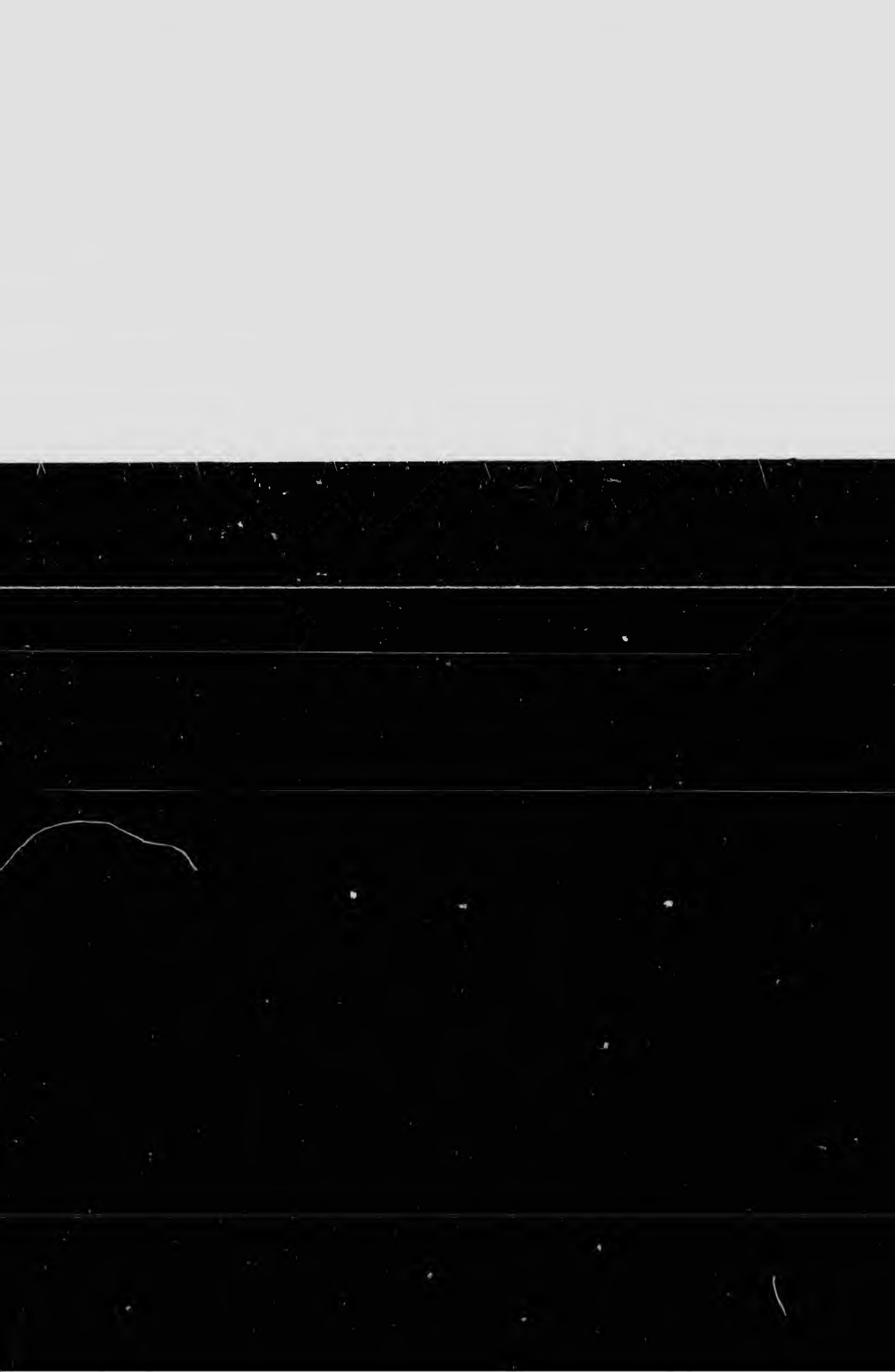






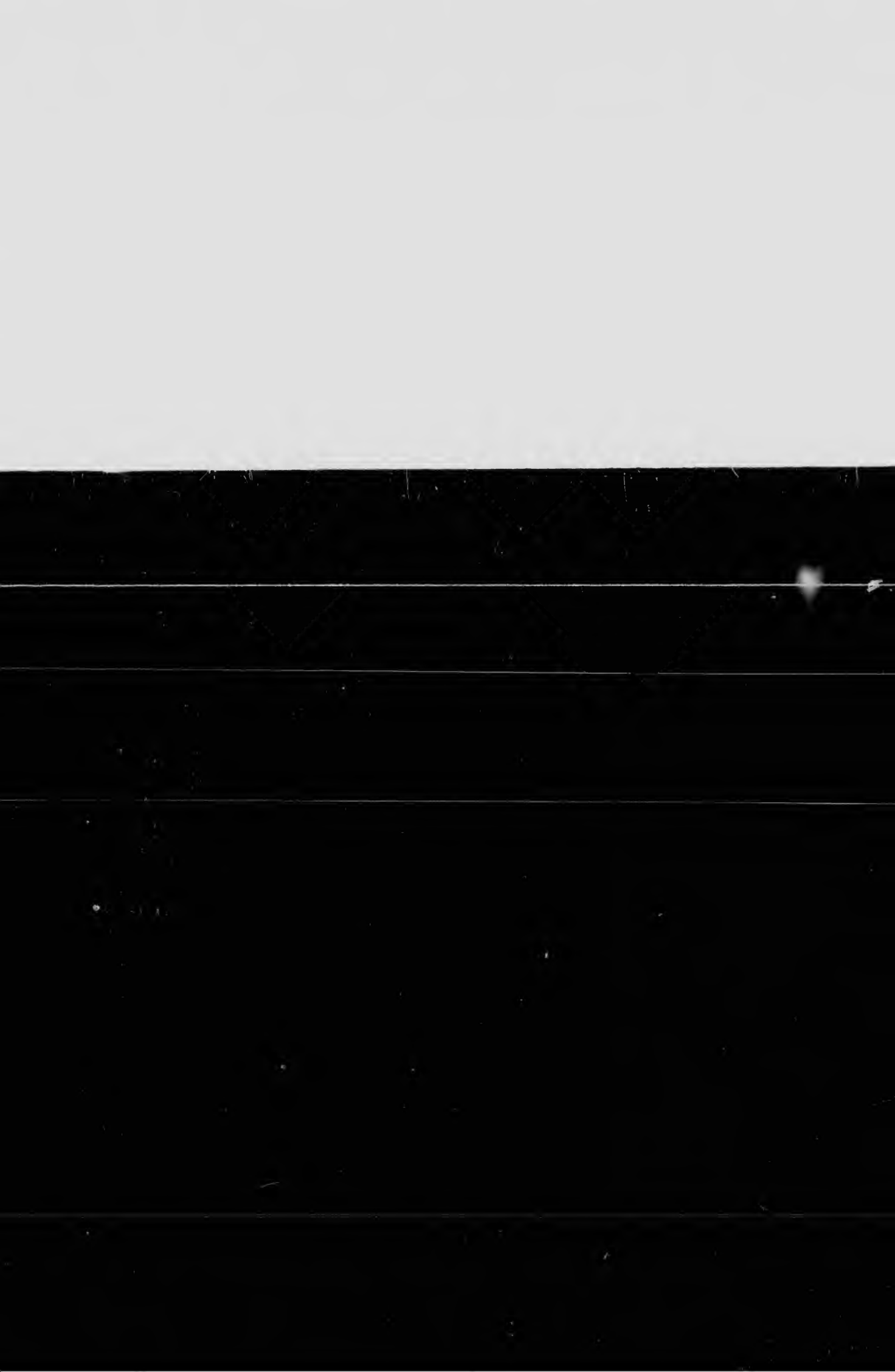












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...out of a merchant vessel...  
...more than twenty vessels arrived at that time, (last) and (C) ... .. and w...





... I have no doubt as to the wisdom or correctness of our present measures; that our country is in imminent danger; that it is essential to the public safety that the blind confidence in our rulers should cease; that the State Legislatures should know the facts and reasons on which our important general laws are founded; and especially that *those States whose farms are cultivated, and whose harvests are gathered in, should immediately and seriously consider how to preserve them.* In all the branches of government, commercial information is wanting; and in "this desert," called a city, that want cannot be supplied. Nothing but the sense of the commercial States, clearly and emphatically expressed, will save them from ruin.

Are our thousands of ships and vessels to rot in our harbours? Are our sixty thousand seamen and fishermen to be deprived of employment, and, with their families, reduced to want and beggary? Are our hundreds of thousands of farmers to be compelled to suffer their millions in surplus produce to perish on their lands: that the President may make an experiment on our patience and fortitude, and on the towering pride, the boundless ambition, and unyielding perseverance of the conqueror of Europe? Sir, I have reason to believe, that the President contemplates the continuance of the embargo until the French Emperor repeals his decrees violating as well his treaty with the United States as every neutral right; and until Britain thereupon recalls her retaliating orders!—By that time we may have neither ships nor seamen: and that is precisely the point to which some men wish to reduce us.—To see the *improvidence* of this project (to call it by no harsher name, and without adverting to ulterior views) let us look back to former years.

Notwithstanding the well-founded complaints of some individuals, and the murmurs of others; notwithstanding the frequent Executive declarations of maritime aggressions committed by Great-Britain; notwithstanding the outrageous decrees of France and Spain, and the wanton spoliations practised and executed by their cruisers and tribunals, of which we sometimes hear a faint whisper;—the commerce of the United States has hitherto prospered beyond all example. Our citizens have accumulated wealth; and the public revenue, annually increasing, has been the President's annual boast.

These facts demonstrate, that although G. Britain, with her thousand ships of war, could have destroyed our commerce, she has really done it no essential injury; and that the other belligerents, heretofore restrained by some regard to National Law, and limited by the small number of their cruisers, have

not inflicted upon it any dereliction. In this full tide of success, commerce is suddenly arrested: an alarm is given; the festive apprehensions are exchanged, in particular, through the confusion and consternation, are advised by the British to keep their vessels in port: what is the cause of this mysterious alarm? We know it not. *It was the unauthorized naval officer on the American frigate, to search for and to capture, known to have been received, and as often demanded, and as often delivered up. As was expected by the British (and before observed) the British on the first information of the event (and without waiting for a declaration) disavowed the act, and disclaimed the principle of the embargo on armed vessels—and declare that they will make suitable reparation, and that the case should be fully known.*

Under such circumstances, is this alarm of war? An alarm which has disquieted the public mind, and interrupted the commerce of the United States to our merchants and seamen?

I will close this long letter with the existing pretences—for

1. The British ships of war, claiming a right claimed and exercised by the whole of the administration, of ADAMS, and of JEFFERSON, to take some of the British ships on board our merchant vessels, from a small number of ours, from a pretence of always distinguishing the citizens of the United States, our government well known to be perfectly willing to furnish a vessel that can be devised, to her service *the seamen will be taken as subjects*; and at the same time the British ships are to be impressed.

2. The merchant vessels of Great-Britain and Holland, being driven from their ports, and destroyed, the commerce of those nations could no longer be carried on. Here the vessels of neutral nations are to be taken to their aid, and carried on to the ports of those nations, and the commerce of those nations, men thus liberated from the hands of those nations, in the pretence of the war, were enabled to man the vessels, and the neutral vessels and their places, became *in fact* auxiliaries in war. Those nations, without one



























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with one another, and which could no longer be carried on. Here the vessels of neutral nations, in their aid, and carried on the commerce of those nations, men thus liberated from the those nations, in the present wars, were enabled to man their vessels, and the neutral vessels and their places, became in fact, *auxiliaries in war*. These nations, without one

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