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DISPUTE WITH AMERICA.

The following letter of William Cobbett, on American affairs, will be found full of interesting matter of fact, and the closest and most conclusive reasoning, fairly deduced from the facts stated. It will well repay a careful perusal, which, indeed, it merits.—We recommend its re publication to every honest editor in the United States. It is not possible that it can be read without benefit to the individual, and to the country.

[*Dem. Press.*

FROM COBBETT'S POLITICAL REGISTER.

TO THE PRINCE REGENT.

On the dispute with America.

SIR,—Intelligence, received since the date of a former letter, which I did myself the honor to address your royal highness makes it more imperious upon us to examine well the grounds upon which we are proceeding in regard to the American states. The President has called Congress together; and there can be little doubt of his object being to propose to them for their approbation, some measure more of a warlike character than any which he has hitherto adopted; nor can we, it seems to me, be at all surprised at this, if, as is rumored, it be true, that Mr. Foster our new Minister, has made a communication to the American government, making the revocation of our orders in council, depend upon the conduct of Napoleon as to the continental system. The rise and progress of the orders in council, and the French decrees have already been noticed, and sufficiently dwelt upon; it has been shown that the grounds of the present dispute, namely the flagrant violation of neutral rights did not originate with France, but with England, or if not with England, with Prussia—it has been shown, and no one will attempt to deny the fact, that the French decrees were passed after the issuing of our orders in council—that they were passed expressly in the way of retaliation—that they were to be revoked when we revoked ours. It has been shown, that we professed to be animated with a sincere and most earnest desire to revoke our orders, and indeed, that we expressly declared, that we would revoke them whenever the French would revoke their decrees.—It has been shown that the French officially informed the American government, that the decrees were revoked, & that, thereupon the American government called upon us to fulfil our promises in revoking our orders; but, that we did not do this, that we evaded the fulfilment of these promises, & in short that we have not revoked, or softened the rigor of any part of our orders. It has in a word, been shown, that while the French have revoked their decrees, while they, in consequence of the remonstrances of America, have ceased to violate her neutral rights, we persevere in such violation. The pretext for this was, at first, that the Emperor Napoleon, tho' he said he had revoked his decrees, had not done it and meant not to do it.—This, may it please your royal highness was, it appears to me, a very strange kind of language to use towards other powers. It was treating the American government as a sort of political ideot. It was telling it that it did not understand the interests of America, and that it was unworthy to be entrusted with power. And, it was saying to the emperor of France, that he was to be regarded as shut out of the pale of sovereigns—that he was on no account to be believed—that no faith was to be given to the official communications of his ministers, or of any persons treating in his name. Thus then, the door against peace, against exchange of prisoners, against a softening of the rigors of war in any way or in any degree, was for ever barred—and the termination of war was, in fact, made to depend upon the death of Napoleon. But this pretext could not last long—for the decrees were actually revoked—the revocation went into effect and those decrees are now wholly dead as to any violation of the neutral rights of America. It was therefore, necessary to urge some new objection to the revocation of our Orders in Council—and, it is now said, that Mr. Foster has demanded, that as a condition of the revocation of our Orders in Council, the French shall revoke all the commercial regulations which they have adopted since the orders in council were issued—that is to say, that Napoleon shall give up what he calls the continental system, and admit English goods into the continent.

I do not say may it pleases your royal highness, that Mr. Foster has been instructed to make such a demand: I stated the proposition as I find it described in our own public prints: but, that I can have no hesitation in saying, that a proposition so replete with proof of having flowed from impudence and ignorance the most consumate is not to be found in the history of the diplomacy of the universe. The government of America can have no right whatever to interfere with the internal regulations of the French Empire, or of any other country—and the continental system, as it is called, consists merely of internal regulations. These regulations have nothing at all to do with the rights of neutrals—they do not violate in any degree any of those rights—and therefore America cannot, without setting even common sense at defiance, be called upon to demand an abandonment of that system. But, sir, permit me to stop here and to examine a little into what that system really is. It forbids the importation into the empire of Napoleon and the states of his allies any article being the manufacture, or produce of England or her colonies. This in a few words, is the continental system. And, your royal highness certainly need not be reminded, that it is a system which has been copied from the commercial code of England herself.—Your royal highness' ministers, and many members of Parliament have spoken of this system as the effect of vindictiveness on the part of Napoleon—as the effect of a mad despotism, which threatens Europe with a return of the barbarous ages; but, I see nothing in this system that has not long made part of our own system. It is notorious that the goods manufactured in France are prohibited in England—it is notorious that French wine and brandy are forbidden to be brought hither—in short, it is notorious that no article, being the manufacture or produce of France is permitted to be brought into England—and that seizure, confiscation, fine, imprisonment and ruin, attend all those who act in infraction of this our commercial code.—This being the case, it does seem to require an uncommon portion of impudence or of self-conceit for us to demand of the Americans, to cause the continental system to be abandoned as a condition upon which we are willing to cease to violate their rights.—But, it has been said that Napoleon enforces his system with so much rigour and barbarity. This does not at all alter the state of the case between us and America, who has no power, and if she had the power, who has no right to interfere with his internal regulations.—Yet, sir, it is not amiss to inquire a little into the fact of this alleged barbarity of Napoleon. All rulers are content with accomplishing their object—and in this case, it would not be his interest to inflict greater penalties than the accomplishing of his object required.—Our own laws against smuggling are not the mildest in the world: and we have seen them hardened by degrees, till they answered the purpose that the government had in view. We have been told, indeed, that Napoleon punishes offences against his commercial code with enormous fines, with imprisonment, and we have heard of instances where has resorted to the punishment of death. These severities have been made the subject of most grievous complaints against him here—they have brought down upon him reproaches the most bitter—they have been cited as proofs indubitable of the intolerable despotism under which his people groan. But sir, I have confidence enough in your justice & magnanimity to remind you that there is nothing which his commercial code inflicts—that there is nothing in any of the punishments that even rumor has conveyed to our ears—no, nothing, in any of these surpassing in severity; nay, nothing in any of them equalling in severity the punishments provided for in the commercial code of England, having for their object, towards France, precisely that in view which the continental system has in view towards England, namely, her embarrassment, and finally her overthrow.—In support of this assertion, I could cite many of the acts in our statute book—but I allude particularly to that which was passed in the month of May, 1793, at the breaking out of the war against the Republicans of France. That act, which appears to have been drawn up by the present Lord Chancellor, makes it high treason, and punishes with death, and also forfeitures of estates, all those persons, residing or being in Great Britain, who shall have any hand whatever, either directly or indirectly, in selling any goods (mentioned in the said act) to the French government, or to any body residing in French territories.

The act punishes in the same awful manner any one who shall send a Bank note to any one residing in the French territory, or shall have any hand in the most distant manner, in causing such notes to be sent. It punishes in the same manner any person residing or being in Great Britain, who shall have any hand in purchasing any real property in any country under the dominion of France; and it extends its vengeance to all those who, in the most distant manner, shall have any hand in such transaction. This act is the 27th chap. of the 33d year of the reign of George the 3rd; and I have never seen and never heard of any act or edict that dealt out death & destruction with so liberal a hand. It was said at the time by the present lord Chancellor & by the great part of those men who compose your royal highness' ministry that this act, terrible as it was, was demanded by the safety of the nation. This Mr. Fox denied, and he strenuously labored to prevent the passing an act so severe. I shall offer no opinion upon this matter; but it is certain that the code of Napoleon is not, because it cannot, be more terribly severe than this act; and this being the case, common decency ought to restrain those who justified this act from uttering reproaches against the author of the Continental Code. Our Government then said that the act of 1793 was necessary, in order to crush the revolution that had reared its head in France, and that was extending its principles over Europe. They justified the act upon the ground of its necessity. So does Napoleon, his code. He says, that that code is necessary to protect the continent against the maritime despotism and the intrigues of England. His accusations against us may be false, but he is only retorting upon us our accusation against France—& between two such powers, there is no body to judge. In truth, our government passed its act of 1793, because it had the will and the power to pass and to inforce it; and Napoleon has established his continental system, because he also has the will and the power. It is to the judgment of the world that the matter must be left, & I beseech your royal highness to consider, that the word will judge our conduct according to the evidence which it has to judge from, and that judgment will leave wholly out of view our interests and our humours.

To return and apply what has here been said to the case on which I have the honor to address your royal highness, what answer would have been given to America, if she, in the year 1793, had demanded of our government the rescinding of the act of which I have just given a faint description?—In supposing even by the way of argument, America to have taken such a liberty, I do a violence to common sense and commit an outrage upon diplomatic decorum; and it is quite impossible to put into words an expression of that indignation which her conduct would have excited. And yet, Sir, there appears to me, to be no reason whatever for our expecting America to be permitted to interfere with Napoleon's continental system, unless that we admit that she had a right to interfere with our act of 1793. The dispute between us and America relates to the acknowledged *rights of neutral nations*. These rights of America we avow that we violate.—We have hitherto said, that we were ready to cease such violation as soon as the French did the same; but now if we are to believe the intelligence from America and the corresponding statements of our public prints, we have shifted our ground, and demand of America that she shall cause the continental system to be done away, or, at least we tell her that it shall be done away, or we will not cease to violate her rights. The language of those, who appear to be ready to justify a refusal upon the ground above stated, to revoke our orders in council, is this; that it was *natural* to expect that the revocation would be made to depend upon a *real* and *effectual* abolition of the French decrees; that the revocation is merely nominal unless all the regulations of Napoleon, made since 1806 are also repealed; that when these latter are repealed, it will be right for America to call upon us for a repeal of our orders in council, and not before; and, it is added that the American President will not have the support of the people, if he attempts to act upon any other principles than these. So that, as your royal highness will clearly perceive, those persons imagine or at least they would persuade the people of England, that unless the president insists upon the admisson of *English* manufactures and produce into the dominions of *France*, he will not be supported by the people of America in a demand of England to cease to violate the known acknowledged rights of America. The President is not asking for any indulgence at our hands: he is merely asking for what is due to his country; he is merely insisting upon our ceasing to violate the rights of America; and, if what the public prints tell us be true, we say in answer: "We will cease to violate your rights; we will cease to do you wrong; we will cease to confiscate your vessels in the teeth of the law of nations, but not unless Napoleon will suffer the continent of Europe to purchase our manufactures and commerce." If my neighbor complain of me for a grievous injury and outrageous insult committed against him, am I to answer him by saying that I will cease to injure and insult him, when another neighbor with whom I am at variance will purchase his clothing and cutlery from me? The party whom I injure and insult will naturally say, that he has nothing to do with my quarrel with a third party. We should disdain the idea of appealing to America as a mediatress, and, indeed, if she were to attempt to put herself forward in that capacity, indignation and vengeance would ring from one end of the kingdom to the other.—Yet, we are it seems to look to her to cause the French to do away regulations injurious to us, but with which America has nothing at all to do. As to the disposition of the people of America, your royal highness should receive with great distrust whatever is said, come from what quarter it may, respecting the popular feeling being against the President and his measures. The same round of deception will, doubtless, be used here as in all other cases where a country is at war with us. It is now nearly 20 years since we drew the sword against revolutionary France; and, if your Royal Highness look back, you will find that during the *whole* of that period, the people of France have been, by those who have had the power of the Press in their hands in this country, represented as *hostile* to their government, under all its various forms, and as wishing most earnestly for the success of its enemies. The result however has been, that the people have *never*, in any one instance, aided those enemies; but have made all sorts of sacrifices for the purpose of frustrating their designs. On the contrary, the people in all the countries, allied with us in the war, have been invariably represented as attached to their government, and they have been when the hour of trial came, invariably *turned* from that government and received the French with open arms After these twenty years of such terrible experience it is not for me to presume, that your royal highness can suffer yourself to be deceived with regard to the disposition of the American people, who clearly understand all the grounds of the present dispute, and of whom, your royal highness may be assured, MR. MADISON *in his demands of justice at our hands, is but the echo.* The Americans do not wish for war; war is a state which they dread—there is no class amongst them who profit from war—they have none of that description of people, to whom war is a harvest—there are none of those whom to support out of the public wealth the pretext of war is necessary—they dread a standing army—they have witnessed the effects of such establishments in other parts of the world—they have seen how such establishments & loss of freedom go hand in hand. But these considerations will not I am persuaded, deter them from going far enough into hostile measures to do great injury to us, unless we shall, by our acts prove to them, that such measures are unnecessary.

The public are told, and the same may reach the ear of your royal highness (for courts are not the places into which truth first makes its way) that the American president is *unpopular*; that the people are on *our side* in the dispute. Guard your ear, I beseech you, sir, against such reports, which are wholly false, and which have their rise partly in the ignorance and partly in the *venality* of those by whom they are propagated. It is a fact, on which your royal highness may rely, that, at the *last election* (in the autumn of 1810) *the popular party had a majority far greater than at any former period*; and, it is hardly necessary for me to say how that party stands with regard to England; for, from some cause or other, it does so happen, *that in every country where there is a description of persons professing a strong and enthusiastic attachment to public liberty, they are sure to regard England as their enemy.* We are told, that these are all sham patriots, that they are demagogues, jacobins, levellers, and men who delight in confusion and bloodshed. But, sir, the misfortune is that these persons, in all the countries that we meddle with, do invariably succeed in the end. *Their side proves, at last, to be the strongest.* They do, in fact, finally prove to form almost the whole of the people; and, when we discover this, we generally quit their country in disgust, and since they "will not be *true to themselves*," we often leave them to be punished by their revolutions, and reforms. In America, however, it will, I think, be very difficult for any one to persuade your royal highness that those who are opposed to us are sham patriots, and men who wish for confusion. Every man in that country has enough to eat; every man has something to call his own. There are no baits for sham patriots, no fat places to scramble for; no sinecures where a single lazy possessor snorts away in the course of the year the fruit of labor of hundreds of toiling and starving wretches—none of those things, in short, for the sake of gaining which it is worth while to make hypocritical professions of patriotism. As an instance of the sentiment of the people of America with regard to political parties, I beg leave to point out to your royal highness the circumstance of *Mr. Pickering* (who is held forth as the great champion of our *cause* in America) having, at the last election, been put out of the *senate* of the United States, of which he had long been a member, being one of the senators for Massachusetts, his native state. The people of the state first elect the two houses and the governor of the state, and these elect the persons to serve them in the senate of the union. Thus Mr. Pickering was, then, rejected not merely by the people; not merely at a popular election; but by the *deliberate voice of the whole legislature of the state.* And this, too, in that part of the union called New-England; in the state of Massachusetts, too, which state, it is well known, takes the lead in the northern part of the country, *and which state it has always been represented as disposed to divide from the states of the south.* If we had friends any where in America, it was in *this state*; and yet, even in this state, we see the most unequivocal proofs of disaffection to *our cause.* It is useless, sir, for us to reproach the people of America with this disaffection. They must be left to follow their own taste.—In common life, if we find any one that does not likes us, we generally endeavor, if we wish to gain his liking, to win him to it by kindness and by benefits of some sort or other. We go thus to work with animals of every description. In cases where we have the power, we but too often make use of that to subdue the declining party to our will.—But where we have not the power, we are seldom so very foolish as to deal out reproaches against those whose good will we do not take the pains to gain. It is therefore the height of folly in us to *complain* that the Americans do not like our government, & prefer to it that of Napoleon. The friends of England accuse them of giving support to a *despot.* They do not love despots, sir, you may be assured: and if they like Napoleon better than they do our government, it is because *they* think him *less inimical to their freedom & their property.* This is the ground of their judgment. They are not carried away by words; they look at the acts that affect them, &, upon such grounds they might, under some circumstances, justly prefer the Dey of Algiers to the ruler of any other state.——I am, &c. &c.

WM. COBBETT.