

NORFOLK, January 15.

From the Public Ledger.

FRENCH CORRESPONDENCE.

The article under this head, occupies a very considerable portion of our paper of this day, consisting of five letters from *admiral Willaumez*, viz. one to the minister of marine in France, three to general Turreau, the French minister at Washington, one to commodore Barney. It cannot be supposed that we should offer such documents to the public, without observation. With respect to the authenticity of these letters we have no doubt; and our readers may be assured that we have not consented to their publication, but under a firm conviction that they are genuine; the translations in some instances are too literal to be elegant, and the proper names in the originals are very difficult to make out; truth has been more aimed at than elegance. These letters derive their interest from the circumstances of their being written without being intended for public inspection, and of course the sentiments of the writer are freely expressed. It may probably be remarked that a part of these letters do not interest the public, and might therefore have been omitted; but for reasons which we think are conclusive, such a course could not have been pursued without hazarding a charge of suppression. In one instance only has any part of the letters been omitted, and the cause of omission is fully, and to the satisfaction of all explained. The remarks which we have to offer, will come better after the reader has perused the correspondence; we shall therefore insert it here.

FRENCH CORRESPONDENCE.  
(Communicated for the Public Ledger.)  
TRANSLATION.

No. I.

Dated the Havana, 20th Sept. 1806.  
To his Excellency the minister of Marine at Paris.

MY LORD,

I informed you of my intended departure from Martinique on the 29th June, but I was obliged to devote two days for the further accommodation of the vessels not ready for sea: meanwhile I hurried on the repair of the Valerense frigate, and she along with the other six ships of the squadron was ready to put to sea the 1st July.

The enemy well informed of the arrival of our squadron off the Windward islands, rapidly appeared off Dominique, where they were well situated by their neighbourhood to St. Christopher's.

I was well aware that English convoys of West-India trade would not be ready to assemble before the 1st of August at Tortola, and after the departure of the French squadron. In the night of July the 3d I captured in my passage three merchant vessels—a fleet of merchantmen at anchor off St. Christopher's cut their cables, and joined convoy under admiral Cochrane—they were in number 38 ships. I sailed along the coast of this island within half cannon shot, but found I could effect no important service for I presumed the fleet from St. Christopher's had been thence escorted to form a junction with the merchantmen at Tortola. I formed the design of going in there, but my Martinique pilot was not capable of carrying in the squadron; I therefore resolved to go to St. Martin's and I proceeded with my prizes towards that island.

On the 4th in the morning, being at the entrance of Tortola, I had already taken the Fly, a small vessel belonging to the English admiral, which I sent to reconnoitre, and by her was informed there were no vessels in the road. During the day the enemy having passed out, I resolved the next morning to pursue the convoy through the Straits of St. Thomas de St. Croix. In the course of the last 24 hours the squadron repaired the damage it had suffered in the night. In the morning I saw right to windward 12 sail about 4 leagues off, consisting of 4 sail of the line, 5 frigates, & corvettes and brig's, not doubting it was admiral Cochrane's squadron, which were coming to collect the convoy. I lay by for him till 8 o'clock in the morning, not being able to give chase to the English, who were then to windward, without losing time. But I formed my squadron in two columns, under to sails, only keeping the frigate ahead, and in this order I passed the Straights. Admiral Cochrane followed me at a considerable distance, carefully preserving the weather gage. About three quarters past one, I was before the Danish island of St. Thomas. I now hoisted my colors and my flag, and the enemy by two o'clock not more than 3 leagues off, lay to at the mouth of the passage. I likewise here to, sent the *Pratique* to Martinique in the *Mouche* (the Fly) and waited for the enemy, but he stood to the southwards, and I proceeded to seek the convoy. Indeed, my lord, I expected to have seen mention of my name in the details of this affair, of which the English newspapers rendered a very incorrect account.

On the 5th I boarded a brig of the convoy, which had been separated from the rest at leaving the land. I made diligent search, but without success, during several days, for the body of the fleet of merchantmen, until I found myself in the latitude of 28, 30, without seeing a sail—I therefore concluded this little convoy had proceeded to unite itself with the grand Jamaica convoy, towards which I repaired, in the hope of cruising in the Bahama Straits, I should eventually fall in with the Jamaica fleet on or about the 1st of August, as the said fleet generally sails for England at two periods. By thus standing to the westward, I suffered the consequence of this proceeding, for heavy gales of wind came on, and my ships

were several times struck with lightning, and my sails being all split or blown away, I did not soon enough get into the longitude of 78 degrees. On July 10th, I found we were in 75 longitude, and informed about a week afterwards, that nearly at this time the first convoy had passed me to eastward, at the distance of 40 leagues, and that the second convoy could not have been far from sailing likewise: but just at this time I heard that admiral sir John B. Warren had arrived in the West-Indies, and only eight days after my first sailing. I conjectured that admiral Warren would proceed to Newfoundland, where I meant to let him go quietly. July 28th, at sunset, we saw a large ship to windward and two brig's; supposing, however, these might be sir John, and I made the signal to close the squadron and keep to windward, intending next day to engage this admiral to advantage. A schooner, however, which belonged to these vessels to windward, and which I boarded at midnight, afterwards informed me that it was part of a convoy of Americans, consisting of 8 sail, under the escort of two small frigates, bound to New-York, laden with coffee, &c. &c. by the revolted negroes at St. Domingo. This news not being disclosed to me by the master of the schooner, till some days after the convoy had time to escape to the northward—indignant at the conduct of the Americans, I immediately put the master of the schooner in irons, and all his people, and made sail in search of said convoy, determined to hang at the yard arm the captains and supercargoes in the face of their countermen, at New-York—but being nearly off Cape Hatteras, the weather changed, and the gathering storm left me no hope of arriving at New-York in time to intercept these pirates; and on arriving off the cape a gale of wind obliged me to haul to windward, and wait until it was passed, which, when it was over, enabled me to speak a vessel which I was informed that the said convoy had put into the Chesapeake and Delaware. By this time I had arrived within 10 leagues of Long-Island. I then made sail for my rendezvous in lat. 27, and 67, long, which might prove the route of admiral Cochrane proceeding from the Windward Islands with his convoy for Europe, in the course perhaps of the first fifteen days of August. On the 16th of August, being nearly in the proposed rendezvous, I invited on board my ship all the captains to celebrate Napoleon the first, and now learning the condition of their ships, I consented from the disabled state of all the vessels to proceed on the 20th to St. Jean, Porto-Rico, from whence I proposed sailing the first October.

My design was now to proceed direct to Newfoundland to destroy the English Fishery, &c. making my rendezvous afterwards off the Sale Bank, distant 100 leagues E. and in lat. 52, N. to steer for some port in France, where I hoped to arrive by the end of October, but this plan was disconcerted by an horrible tempest which overtook us on the 19th and 20th August. The Veteran, which was missing, I hope met better fortune than the rest of my squadron. Many vessels of the enemy perished, others were greatly damaged, and their convoy dispersed. I got down my top-gallant-masts, and all my ships in sight by 5 o'clock, were lying under their fore-sails and mizens only, but in less than one hour afterwards every sail was blown away and by seven o'clock the violence of the gale increasing we scudded before the sea, such of my ships whose rudders were damaged broached to, and were the first dismasted; such were the fate of the Foudroyant and Impeteux, which by nine o'clock were entirely dismasted, viz. without a single stump left—after blowing thus for 36 hours a hurricane (which I have never known any thing more dreadful) the wind abated, but the sea which was tremendous, frequently fell on board our vessels. Under these circumstances, it was impossible for me to save any part of the wreck, so as to enable me to rig jury-masts—consequently it was not before the 28th that I was at all able to direct the course of the Foudroyant towards the S. S. W. About two leagues from the entrance of the Havana. When arrived thus far, an English small division of men of war, accompanied by a large frigate, shewed a disposition to attack my ship, but in the course of half an hour, after firing at them fifty shot, they retreated to repair their damage. Could I have tackled, or been in a situation to make sail, the English captain would, by a prompt surrender, have paid the forfeit of his imprudent hardihood; this was on the 28th September, and on the same day I got into Havana. The unprovided condition of my ships, and particularly the wretched quality of my sails determined me to hasten my return to France, and not wait till October, but the numerous squadrons of the enemy cruising in the Gulf, and before our principal ports, induced me to continue out during all the long days of summer. A ten months cruise would have proved sufficient to ruin sails and rigging, had they been even new when I first sailed—but I needed not this hard trial to convince me of the miserable equipment of the squadron I was to command, for scarcely had his Imperial majesty's squadron put to sea before they proved leaky and unfit for sea—most painful is it to me to represent to you, at this late day, these miserable equipments, no doubt very contrary to your intentions and the wish of his Imperial majesty, bestowed upon my vessels, relative to which I should have made strong representations, could I have known it before my departure from France; but it was not permitted me to demand anything, neither to inquire into what was requisite for the second squadron, before the first completely unarmed was ordered to sea, nor was it till after sailing I discovered the very bad condition of my ships. Notwithstanding which distressing circumstances I reckoned upon returning fortunate to France, and of convincing you, my lord, by the reports you would have received, on my arriving in port of the lamentable state of my ships. Since my ar-

rival at the Havana I have, by the most secret and careful means, forwarded orders to such of his Imperial majesty's ships as were said to be arrived in different ports in America and Porto Rico, requiring from their commanders an immediate report of the state and condition of their ships, with orders to them to join me at the earliest moment in their power. The Foudroyant must be hove down, which will detain me at this place 3 months. I have read in the Baltimore Gazette of the 2d of this month, of the arrival of the Patriot at Annapolis, of Valerense at New-Castle, and of the Cybelle, belonging to M. Le Hermit's division at Norfolk. All these three ships were considerably damaged. Whenever all the ships of my scattered squadron of men of war shall have rejoined me here, I shall, I hope, be able to perform such services as his majesty has entrusted me with. Meanwhile, some few Spanish men of war, if ordered to proceed to sea with me might effect some good. I find the Spaniards well disposed to forward every thing for the good of his majesty's service, particularly, that general Villavaxario, who superintends the department of the navy. It has been proposed to me to go to Vera Cruz for treasure; the value of commerce there being estimated at 60 millions, and the riches of the place, it is well known are without bounds. I have obtained assurances, that without delay, all the needful repairs on board my ship shall be expeditiously put in hand, and I must say all the people in power have united in demonstrations of zeal for his imperial majesty's service, & kindness for every man bearing the name of a Frenchman. Be pleased, my lord, to represent to the king my sincere affliction for the disabled condition to which I have been reduced by tempest, and assure his majesty of my utmost continued efforts to surmount all difficulties which can possibly happen to interrupt me in the execution of his will and pleasure, and pray assure him of my unbounded devotion towards his august person.

Accept, my lord, likewise, the assurance of my most respectful attachment.

(Signed)

LE C. A. P. WILLAUMEZ.

No. II.

To General Turreau, French ambassador at Washington.

MY LORD,

You have learnt by the arrival of some of my scattered ships in America, the unfortunate event by which they were separated from me. [Here admiral Willaumez gives the detail of the tempest in nearly the same words as in his letter to the minister of marine at Paris, to which he adds] that at this date the Foudroyant was then nearly new masted, and proceeds to enforce to general Turreau, how necessary it was that the ships which had put into the American ports by distress, should hasten to join him at the Havana, where his squadron, if collected and united to the Spanish force at that place, would in effect oppose a strong squadron, and double to that of the English, who at Jamaica, he states, have only two line of battle ships. Admiral Willaumez further says, that he purposed going to Vera Cruz, agreeably to the project of the government of the Spanish colony of Havana, to bring some millions of dollars, which he states will be the more apropos, as the French emperor had a right to the payment of one million of dollars, of which the scarcity was very great at the island of Cuba. Admiral Willaumez then continues, I have just apprehended four seamen, deserters from the Valerense frigate, which I found on board an American brig, where they had been engaged at seventeen dollars per month. Now, sir, if you can succeed in making the American government pay down a compensation for this misconduct, in satisfying thus our seamen, you will punish it by making it smart in that point in which it feels most, viz. its avarice in money, and with so much the more justice, since those people (meaning the American merchants) have for three years past been continually injuring our marine by reducing our best seamen from us.

(Signed)

LE C. A. P. WILLAUMEZ,  
On board the Foudroyant,  
Havana, 25th October, 1806.  
(To be continued.)

BY THIS DAY'S MAILS.

WASHINGTON, January 23.

MESSAGE of the President of the United States,  
Containing a DEVELOPMENT of the CONSPIRACY.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

Agreeably to the request of the house of representatives, communicated in their resolution of the 16th inst. I proceeded to state under the reserve therein expressed, information received touching an illegal combination of private individuals against the peace and safety of the union, and a military expedition planned by them against the territories of a power in amity with the U. States, with the measure I have pursued for suppressing the same.

I had for some time, been in the constant expectation of receiving such further information as would have enabled me to lay before the legislature the termination, as well as the beginning and progress of this scene of depravity, so far as it has been acted on the Ohio and its waters. From this state of safety of the lower country might have been estimated on probable grounds, and the delay was indulged the rather, because no circumstance had yet made it necessary to call in the aid of the legislative functions. Information now recently communicated, has brought us nearly to the period contemplated. The mass of what I have received in the course of these transactions is voluminous; but little has been given under the sanction of an oath, so as to constitute formal and legal

evidence. It is chiefly in the form of letters, often containing such a mixture of rumors, conjectures and suspicions, as render it difficult to sift out the real facts, and unadvisable to hazard more than general outlines, strengthened by concurrent information, or the particular credibility of the relater. In this state of the evidence, delivered some times too under the restriction of private confidence, neither safety nor justice will permit the exposing names, except that of the principal actor, whose guilt is placed beyond question.

Some time in the latter part of September, I received intimations that designs were in agitation in the Western country, unlawful and unfriendly to the peace of the union; and that the prime mover in these was Aaron Burr, heretofore distinguished by the favor of his country. The grounds of these intimations being inconclusive, the objects uncertain, and the fidelity of that country known to be firm, the only measure taken was to urge the informants to use their best endeavors to get further insight into the designs and proceedings of the suspected persons, and to communicate them to me.

It was not till the latter part of October that the objects of the conspiracy began to be perceived, but still so blended and involved in mystery that nothing distinct could be singled out for pursuit. In this state of uncertainty, as to the crime contemplated, the acts done, and the legal course to be pursued, I thought it best to send to the scene, where these things were principally in transaction, a person in whose integrity, understanding and discretion, entire confidence could be reposed, with instructions to investigate the plots going on, to enter into conference (for which he had sufficient credentials) with the governors, and all other officers, civil and military and with their aid, to do on the spot whatever should be necessary to discover the designs of the conspirators, arrest their means, bring their persons to punishment, and to call out the force of the country to suppress any unlawful enterprise, in which it should be found they were engaged. By this time it was known that many boats were under preparation, stores of provisions, collecting, and an unusual number of suspicious characters in motion on the Ohio, and its waters. Besides dispatching the confidential agent to that quarter, orders were at the same time sent to the governors of the Orleans and Mississippi territories, and to the commanders of the land and naval forces there, to be on their guard against surprise, and in constant readiness to resist any enterprise which might be attempted on the vessels, posts or other objects under their care: and on the 8th of November, instructions were forwarded to general Wilkinson to hasten an accommodation with the Spanish commandant on the Sabine, and as soon as that was effected, to fall back with his principal force to the higher bank of the Mississippi, for the defence of the interesting points on that river. By a letter received from that officer of the 25th of November, but dated 21st, we learnt that a confidential agent of Aaron Burr had been deputed to him with communications, partly written in cypher, and partly oral, explaining his designs, exaggerating his resources, and making such offers of emolument and command to engage him and the army in his unlawful enterprise, as he had flattered himself would be successful. The general, with the honor of a soldier, and fidelity of a good citizen, immediately dispatched a trusty officer to me with information of what had passed, proceeded to establish such an understanding with the Spanish commandant on the Sabine as permitted him to withdraw his force across the Mississippi, and to enter on measures for opposing the projected enterprise.

The general's letter which came to hand on the 25th of November, as has been mentioned, and some other information, received a few days earlier, when brought together, developed Burr's general designs, different parts of which only had been revealed to different informants. It appeared that the contemplated two distinct objects, which might be carried on either jointly or separately, and either the one or the other first as circumstances should direct. One of these was the severance of the union of these states by the Alleghany mountains, the other an attack on Mexico. A third object was provided, merely ostensible, to wit, the settlement of the pretended purchase of a tract of country on the Washita, claimed by a baron Bastrop. This was to serve as the pretext for all his preparations, an allurement for such followers as really wished to acquire settlements in that country and a cover under which to retreat in the event of a final discomfiture of both branches of his real design.

He found at once that the attachment of the western country to the present union was not to be shaken; that its dissolution could not be effected with the consent of its inhabitants; and that his resources were inadequate, as yet, to effect it by force. He took his course then at once, determined to seize on New Orleans, plunder the bank there, possess himself of the military and naval stores, and proceed on his expedition to Mexico, and to this object all his means and preparations were now directed. He collected from all the quarters where himself, or his agents possessed influence, all the ardent, restless, desperate and disaffected persons who were ready for any enterprise analogous to their characters. He seduced good and well meaning citizens, some by assurances that he possessed the confidence of the government, and was acting

under its secret patronage; a pretence which procured some credit in the state of our differences with Spain; and others by offers of land in Bastrop's claim on the Washita.

This was the state of my information of his proceedings about the last of November; at which time therefore it was first possible to take specific measures to meet them. The proclamation of November 27, two days after the receipt of general Wilkinson's information, was now issued. Orders were dispatched to every interesting point on the Ohio and Mississippi, from Pittsburg to New Orleans, for the employment of such force, either of the regulars or of the militia, and of such proceedings also of the civil authorities, as might enable them to seize on all boats and stores provided for the enterprise, to arrest the persons concerned, and to suppress effectually the further progress of the enterprise. A little before the receipt of these orders in the state of Ohio, our confidential agent, who had been diligently employed in investigating the conspiracy, had acquired sufficient information to open himself to the governor of that state, and to apply for the immediate exertion of the authority and power of the state to crush the combination. Governor Tiffin and the legislature, with a promptitude, an energy and patriotic zeal which entitle them to a distinguished place in the affection of their sister states, effected the seizure of all the boats, provisions and other preparations within their reach, and thus gave a first blow, materially disabling the enterprise in its outset.

In Kentucky a premature attempt to bring Burr to justice, without sufficient evidence for his conviction, had produced a popular impression in his favor, and a general disbelief of his guilt. This gave him an unfortunate opportunity of hastening his equipments. The arrival of the proclamation and orders, and the application and information of our confidential agent, at length awakened the authorities of that state to the truth, and then produced the same promptitude and energy of which the neighboring state had set the example. Under an act of their legislature of December 23, the militia was instantly ordered to different important points, and measures taken for doing whatever could yet be done. Some boats (accounts vary from five to double or triple that number) and persons (differently estimated from 1 to 3 hundred) had in the mean time passed the falls of Ohio to rendezvous at the mouth of Cumberland, with others expected down that river. Not apprised till very late that any boats were building on Cumberland, the effect of the proclamation had been trusted to for some time in the state of Tennessee. But on the 19th of December similar communications and instructions, with those to the neighboring states, were dispatched by express to the governor, and a general officer of the western division of the state, and on the 23d of December our confidential agent left Frankfort for Nashville to put into activity the means of that state also. But by information received yesterday, I learn that on the 22d of December Mr. Burr descended the Cumberland with two boats, merely of accommodation, carrying with him from that state no quota towards his unlawful enterprise. Whether after the arrival of the proclamation, of the orders, or of our agent, any exertion which could be made by that state, or the orders of the governor of Kentucky for calling out the militia at the mouth of Cumberland, would be in time to arrest these boats, and those from the falls of Ohio, is still doubtful.

On the whole the fugitives from the Ohio, with their associates from Cumberland, or any other place in that quarter, cannot threaten serious danger to the city of New Orleans.

By the same express of December 19, orders were sent to the governors of Orleans and Mississippi, supplementary to those which had been given on the 25th of November, to hold the militia of their territories in readiness to co-operate for their defence with the regular troops and armed vessels then under command of general Wilkinson. Great alarm indeed was excited at New Orleans by the exaggerated accounts of Mr. Burr disseminated through his emissaries of the armies and navies he was to assemble there. General Wilkinson had arrived there himself on the 24th of November, and had immediately put into activity, the resources of the place, for the purpose of its defence, and on the 10th of December, he was joined by his troops from the Sabine. Great zeal was shown by the inhabitants generally: the merchants of the place readily agreeing to the most laudable exertions and sacrifices for manning the armed vessels with their seamen; and the other citizens manifesting unequivocal fidelity to the union, & a spirit of determined resistance to their expected assailants.

Surmises have been hazarded that this enterprise is to receive aid from certain foreign powers. But these surmises are without proof or probability. The wisdom of the measures sanctioned by congress at its last session, has placed us in the paths of peace & justice with the only powers with whom we had any differences; and nothing has happened since, which makes it either their interest or ours to pursue another course. No change of measures has taken place on our part, none ought to take place at this time. With the one, friendly arrangement was proposed, and the law, deemed necessary on the failure of that, was suspended to give time for a fair trial of the issue. With the same power, friendly arrangement is now proceeding, under good expectations, and the same law, deemed necessary on failure of that, is still suspended to give time for a fair trial of the issue. With the other, negotiation was in like manner preferred, and provisional measures only taken to meet the event of a rupture. With