UNPUBLISHED LETTERS
OF MR. ERSKINE, LATE BRITISH ENVOY.

[Continued.]

No. 10.

Dispatch from the Honorable David Erskine to Mr. Secretary Canning, dated Washington, 16th March, 1809—received 15th April.

SIR,

Since the arrival in the Delaware river on the 10th instant of the American dispatch vessel the Union from England and France, I have had an interview with the President (Mr. Madison) and the Secretary of State (Mr. Robert Smith) who expressed their sentiments to me very freely relative to the intelligence which was brought by that vessel.

The President observed, that the alteration in his majestys Orders in Council by the recent order which had been communicated by you to Mr. Pinkney, suspending "operation of the acts as to any duties on exportation granted by the said acts as far as relates to articles, being the growth, produce, or manufacture of any country in amity with his majesty," &c. did not in fact remove the objections entertained by the U. States against the orders in council in any degree worthy of notice. That they still violated the neutral rights of this country, as they made it necessary for American ships to pass through England, which was not only an infringement of the independence of the U. States, but was completely destructive of their commerce, since the American vessels were prohibited from going to the continent after they had been forced to touch in England.

He remarked also upon the circumstance of Russia and Denmark being comprehended in the operation of the orders in council, which he said was assuming a new principle, as the orders had been hitherto rested upon the ground of a right of retaliation, whereas Russia and Denmark have never issued any decree violating neutral rights. He complained severely of this, and went over the same arguments upon these points which he had made use of while he was Secretary of State, and seemed to be greatly disappointed and vexed that no change in the relations of the United States with the belligerents seemed likely to take place before the meeting of the new Congress in May next, as he foresees the serious difficulties and embarrassments in which the United States will be then involved in determining upon the course of conduct which it will be expedient to pursue, as it is universally thought that the non-intercourse law cannot last longer than the next session of Congress, and it will become necessary at that time either to abandon all idea of resistance, or to determine to adopt measures of hostility against both belligerents, which could not be carried in the last Congress, and therefore are still less likely to be adopted in the new, which will consist of a larger number of members averse to such a desperate and unavailing course.

The Secretary of State (Mr. Robert Smith) repeated the sentiments which he had often expressed to me, when Secretary of the Navy, of regret that his majesty's government seemed not to believe that the U. States would resist the decrees of France. He thinks the correspondence between the American minister at Paris (General Armstrong) and the French government, prove the determination of this government, not to submit to them. He declared to me also that he *knows* that war would have been instantly declared against France, upon Great Britain's relaxing her orders, which he said were issued before the United States had an opportunity of ascertaining the illegal interpretation which France meant to put upon her decrees; he added, that he was convinced that even now measures of actual hostity would be adopted against France, without hesitation, should Great Britain relax in her orders so as to afford the United States an opportunity of doing so with honor; but that it would be impossible that they should single out France as an opponent, while Great Britain, contrary to her own declarations, enforced her orders before any acquiescence on the part of the United States in the French decrees had been proved.

He acknowledged that it might be difficult to bring on a state of actual hostility between this country and Great Britain upon the grounds of any subsisting differences, but that he was desirous that an amicable understanding should prevail between the two countries, which the present state of their relations would entirely prevent.

He added, that he was afraid the irritations which were likely to be produced by capture under his majesty's orders in council might lead to serious, consequences, which he said he should deprecate, as he was unwilling to see the United States thrown into an alliance which he thought already too powerful for the interest of the world. He did not pretend to entertain any partiality towards England, but considered that the interest of the U. S. was the same at the present moment with that of G. Britain.

These sentiments, as expressed to me by Mr. Robert Smith are, I believe, very sincere. I have been much acquainted with him, and cannot I think be mistaken in the opinion which I have formed of his disposition and feelings upon that subject.

Both the President and Secretary of State are, I understand, much offended at the appointment of admiral Berkley to a high command, pending the serious complaint preferred against him by the United States; they have not mentioned the subject to me, as no authentic account of the fact has been yet received; but I expect to hear strong representations upon the subject, should it prove to be well founded.

As I have already had the honor to to convey to you my sentiments upon the subject of the non-intercourse law, in several preceding numbers of my dispatches, as also upon the general aspect of affairs, in this country, I will not trouble you with any further remarks, but beg leave to refer you to the enclosed extract from my No. 12. which was sent in his majesty's packet with the mail of last month, as it contains my opinion upon those topics, which are unchanged.

This dispatch, as also my Nos. 14 and 15, will be carried to England in the American dispatch vessel Pacific, which will sail from hence in a few days with a messenger, Lieut. Read: another vessel is going at the same time to France, with a messenger and dispatches. Mr. Coles, the private secretary of the late President, is to be the bearer of them.——*(To be continued.)*

INDIAN WAR.

Vincennes, June 28.

The editor thinking that he could not present any thing more acceptable to his readers than a particular account of the causes of alarm which have existed here for some days past, waited on governor Harrison for the purpose of procuring information, and was favoured with the following:

Since early in May, the government has been possessed of information communicated by Indian traders and by friendly Indians, that the Shawanese Prophet was again exciting the tribes of the Wabash to war against the U. S. and indeed it was actually agreed upon by all the tribes west of that river; this information was communicated to the government, and was the cause of the detachment of troops being sent there which we mentioned in our last. Early in May also, the interpreter maintained by the government amongst the Delawares arrived here, to inform the governor, that that tribe had heard of hostile movements of the prophet, and that they had determined to send a solemn embassy to the tribes west of the Wabash, to warn them of [illegible] to the advice of the prophet. The governor did every thing in his power to strengthen them in the resolution, and composed a speech for them to deliver to the other tribes. This it appears was faithfully delivered, and it is more than probable, that to the influence of the Delawares, and the impression made by them on the minds of the other Indians, that the war has been averted.

From the 10th to the 18th inst. the governor was informed through various channels, that the Indians were collecting in very great numbers about the prophet, that the Miamies had been so intimidated as to agree to attend his council—that the Wyandots had come into his schemes, and they agreed with him—that every thing that had been done between the white people and Indians, since the treaty of Greenville, was void and good for nothing, and that they were determined to stop the progress of the white settlements.

About the 9th and 10th instant, an Indian came to Mr. Dubois (a French gentleman who lives about a mile above this town) in the dead of night, and told him that his friendship for him, had induced him to come to him for the purpose of advising him by all means to remove over the Mississippi with his family as he might shortly expect trouble if he remained where he was. The old Piankashaw chief, Grobie, came also to the governor, and asked his permission to retire over the Mississippi, observing that he heard nothing from the Indians above, but the cry of war—that he was old and did not wish to have any share in it.—that he wanted to retire to a place of safety. The next day he informed the governor that a particular plan had been laid by the prophet for the surprise of this town, and told him what the plan was.——About this time also, a boat which had been sent up the Wabash with the annuity salt for the Indians returned.

The master informed the governor that the prophet and the Kickapoo tribe had refused to receive the eight barrels of salt destined for them—that the prophet's brother had insulted him in the grossest manner (the prophet being present shaking him violently by the hair as well as some others of his crew, and asked them whether they were Americans (they were all young Frenchmen.)

Mr. Bouillette, a trader, who was suspected of being in the employment of the government was also insulted, made to deny that he was an American, and his house plundered of his provisions and other articles. The prophet sent word to the governor "That his people should not come any nearer him, that they should not settle on Vermillion river—he smelt them too strong already."

The governor being loath to create an alarm until there should appear an absolute necessity for it, from the great injury it might produce by stopping the emigration to the country, and perhaps driving off some of the frontier settlers, had not hitherto made public any part of the information he had received—but as the danger appeared to him to be extremely threatening, on the 18th inst. he assembled 17 or 18 of the leading citizens, viz: The Secretary of the territory, a judge of the Supreme court, the representatives of Knox county, the register of the land office, county officers, merchants, &c. and having laid before them the information he had received, requested their advice upon the subject of taking measures for putting the country in a state of defence; this was unanimously advised, as well as the immediate ordering of two companies of militia into actual service.

Whilst these measures were progressing a principal Potawatimie chief arrived, being sent by the representatives of 16 villages west of the Wabash, to inform the governor that they had abandoned the prophet, and thrown away the tomahawk which he had put into their hands. This revolution in their minds was produced by the forcible representation of the Delaware deputies above mentioned, to a council which was convened the latter end of May, somewhere in the neighborhood of St. Joseph's on Lake Michigan.

The Governor assures the editor that the chief who brought the above information is entirely to be depended upon. His fidelity to the United States, and personal friendship for him, having been manifested in every transaction with the Indians since the treaty of Greenville.

Two young Frenchmen arrived from Fort Wayne last night, as they passed the town of the prophet, they were desired by Mr. Bouillette, to inform the governor that every thing appeared to be quiet above the prophet's town, but that another council was shortly to be held. There are not more than 400 warriors at the town where the prophet resides, and the governor thinks that the whole number which still adheres to him does not exceed twice that number. Notwithstanding the above favourable appearances, we understand the governor will not countermand the order for turning out the militia, until he discovers what measures will be taken by the prophet upon the defection of his followers.

FOR THE STAR.

DEMOCRATIC CITIZENS OF QUEEN-ANN'S COUNTY—

It is with pain that I feel it a duty to address you in the few following sentences. There appears among you a discordance which if allowed to gather strength & establish a foundation, will indubitably prove the ruin of your cause in the issue. I have carefully viewed the different movements throughout the county for years past, i was not long after you gained the ascendancy, that a dictatorial spirit and faction made their appearance—What, let me ask you, can you expect to gain by suffering such a principle to continue to exist? As faithful patriots you should unite at once, and crush this accursed thirst for office and dictation in whatever corner it may appear.—They are your worst enemies who are influenced by such motives. They would sacrifice your all on the altar of *self*—hear them, how they endeavour to cry down every man, who may attempt to frustrate their vile machinations, in an independent manner—they adopt means to confuse you—it becomes you therefore, to attend to the good old motto "united we stand, divided we fall," this spirit which I am condemning has made its deceitful appearance under two spurious forms; one form assumes the title committeemen, the other *anti-committeemen*—at first view you may think it will be difficult for you to avoid the evil; as you have no alternative from one or other of these modes of selecting of candidates: but a little attention will soon unfold the mistery—the anti committeemen tell you that by submitting to committees, your privileges are curtailed, the spirit of arbitrary dictation takes place—and you are deprived of the opportunity of voting the man of your own choice—but this, when attended to, will all appear to be a deceitful refuge of lies—it was the federalists that first adapted the system of committees: when their party began to sink, it was the only mode by which they were enabled to collect their whole force, the democrats soon afterwards adopted the scheme in Pennsylvania, and it was not long until they completely put down the aristocratic principles that had crept in among them, indeed it is the alone mode by which the strength of a party can be collected, the Pennsylvanians have experienced the happy effects of that system in suppressing the factions that appear from time to time among them, they approve of it; and they studiously & carefully attended to the continuation of it—can any thing be more conducive to the true spirit of democracy, under the pressing circumstances of the present times when there are so many hawks for office, each watching every prey on which he can lay hold, than for you to meet by public and general notification, at your several election districts and there select a suitable number of judicious and faithful persons, unto whom you will communicate your sentiments, who will meet in general committee of the county, and there in joint council, nominate proper characters to represent you in the State Legislature, the men who dread this mode of proceedings are men who, as has been justly remarked by another writer, "cannot hope, from their talents or political opinions to be called from their private stations." But, although I would strongly recommend this system of committees, it becomes my duty to guard you against the evils that may arise from neglect, committees may be and many are very greatly abused: and you cannot be insensible to it, in your own county—you have been grossly imposed upon already by men who make the most plausible professions, and that I am induced to believe, is at least one of the causes which prevents you from coming forward heartily at once, to the adoption of the measure—when the committee system was first proposed, and rules laid down for the government of them, these would be dictators, must have the sole sway, and in order to have that they violate their own rules, and because other men of equally judicious and independent minds would not comply with their wishes, and be their humble tools, they must of course be proscribed and traduced as assuming this conduct, soon perfected the distraction which now so grievously rends you There are a few men who think they have all the sense: and they would be well disposed to have the whole management of the county in their hands, their conduct for several years last past fully proves the truth of these observations. Guard against the influence of these men; it is not much they really have—they endeavour to gain a few adherents by extraordinary adulation in different parts of the county. Guard against them and you are in no danger. This is to be done chiefly, by attending early to the appointment of committees; by which means you have time to cure any evil that may appear to arise, as has been well observed by the writer CRITO. "suppose several candidates should offer shortly before the election, and you had not time to make a proper arrangement, agreeable to your wishes what must be the consequence?" How was it with you last year? There was not then a deliberate, but a hasty and dissatisfactory arrangement just before the election; and you had not time to redress the evil, you were necessitated to bear with it, or do worse: Crito himself held back last year, because he knew that the mind of the county was unfavorable to his election, until he saw a change could not take place, he then stepped in securely, he comes forward now in a manner well calculated to deceive you, he shews two heads, first he plausibly recommends to you, unanimity and spirit; adherence to the principle and form, he professes to discard those who oppose it. but second, he charges their whole opposition with being merely a design against "certain citizens," viz. the lawyers; then goes on to shew you how he a lawyer, acted last winter in voting for the fifty dollar act, but he does not tell you that he spoke, at the same time more against that act, than any man in the house, and used his utmost endeavours to render it unpopular: although he acted for it, being compelled so to do by his promise to his constituents. But fellow citizens, dont be deceived by such men or such reasoning, you have had enough of nominal lawyers in your Legislature from your county—let them stay at home, and mind their docket.—Let them apply themselves a little more in their libraries than they do: and try to make money in that way. You have had enough of ——— in the county to be tired of lawyers altogether. I trust you have considered the subject sufficiently to see the necessity of sending men to represent you this year, who will be able advocates for the proposed arbitration system: that system will not require so much of your useless money to be needlessly thrown away to idle nominal lawyers; unless there should be such a door left open as was in the fifty dollar act for the judges to overturn all the decisions & by that means, harrass the community. and render the law unpopular. Attend, I request you speedily to the arrangement of a ticket of pure characters to represent you in the next Legislature, and let no idle lawyer be among them.

NO OFFICE HUNTER.

Queen Anns County, July 25th, 1810

FOR THE STAR.

TO THE DEMOCRATIC CITIZENS OF CAROLINE COUNTY.

Fellow-Citizens,

I observe in the People's Monitor of last Saturday, a scrap by A Washington Trooper of Caroline—what he supposes to be an anodyne for the few thoughts which I threw out, in the Star of the 24th ult. in order to call you to a timely attention to your duty. This *creature* puts me in mind of an expression of lord Chesterfield. That great man justly observed, that there were some who were "*boys at forty.*" I think he might have said at *seventy*, for nothing will make a soft head retain sensible impressions. You might as well attempt to make a tract in the ocean, as to teach an ass wisdom. I would not now spend time, nor trouble you with these remarks, but to convince the most ignorant of these minions that their party have become perfectly impotent—like wasps who have lost their stings, they retain their temper, but they can do nothing.

To prove to you that this *creature*, after all his frothy gasconading through the county—his exclusive talents, and those miserable scraps which he has stupidly published, he does not understand what he is saying. Only behold! To whom is his piece addressed?—"To Democrats, Federalists, and Republicans." Here the three classes in the community are most particularly designated by himself. Can there be a stronger proof of the necessity of my admonitions to you? It is now put beyond all dispute, by his own pen, that there are tories amongst you—by which of the two names he cloaks them, I know not; that rests with himself. The tories are like the Camelion, they assume different names, as they think best suited to deceive.

With *boasting modesty* he tells you that, from "conversing with many of the citizens, it was their wish to bury party animosity, and as a band of brothers, live in union; and that the federal-republicans meant to make no party opposition." Does this most contaminated *imposter*, whose whole life has been a continued scene of iniquity, think that you can be duped by such barefaced, ignorant trash? Does he think that your memories are like his brains, unsusceptible of impressions? Does he think, or is he capable of thinking at all, that because it is the fashion with his *sovereign lord* THE KING, to order his insolent hirelings to rob us of our rights—murder our citizens—abuse our government to their faces, and then amuse us with idle and worse than visionary tales—You the citizens of Caroline are also to pass over and bury in oblivion the vile practices of him and his few confederates? If he does, he must think you grossly ignorant indeed.

It does not suit his sublime and penetrating genius to make any particular remarks on the *sore place* of the piece I wrote. He passes over these with his usual go-bye "nonsense—a pack of stuff." But, I would beg leave to tell him, that that piece is such a "pack of stuff" as ought to keep him in eternal retirement, if he was not completely lost to all feeling.

I appeal to your own candid understanding, fellow citizens, if there is any thing in my piece of an assuming or dictatorial nature, in calling your attention to the four candidates, who have offered for your suffrages? But, does not this *modest would-be Legislator* evidently shew his Dictatorship, in his observations on the candidates? One he "barely knows"—two others have exercised the right of freemen, by giving their opinion respecting an appointment of his friend—and because *he* does not know the one, and the other two gentlemen have acted independently, they must of course be proscribed by him; and they are unworthy of your suffrages—allowing him *most modestly* to dictate.

He calls your attention to the toasts, on which, I have commented a little; and says, he "cannot see any thing exceptionable in them."—I will, with all candor, acknowledge that, if these toasts could be viewed abstractly, there is nothing in them exceptionable to myself. But, that is, what cannot be done, in the present case; for they have no signification; if they are separated from the basis, on which they were predicated, and that we well know—The "manly and eloquent remonstrances of the tories of New York and New England against the embargo law."—Encouraging rebellion against our thrice happy government.—Pickering's torified letter to Sullivan:—And the British King's proclamation.—These are the basis of the 8th toast. And ye faithful friends of your country, is there nothing exceptionable in these?—The attempt at being artful in *condemnation* of the fifty dollar act passed last winter; and the peaceable and economical arbitration system, which was maturely digested and brought forward; and is now offered for the consideration of the community, by the hacknied phrase the "trial by jury," these are the basis of the 11th—I ask, why does not this contemptible, deceitful, ignorant, boasting knave, take notice of, and illustrate these points? Because he dare not—He cannot—You might as well expect him to make a world. No. He tells you that, the "Troop is composed of democrats and federal-republicans;" and that "these toasts were composed, by a committee, unexceptionable to all; and drank with cordiality, and without any appearance of disapprobation." I am acquainted with the most of the members composing the Troop alluded to—— And there are several of the federal gentlemen for whom I have the highest esteem. It is not the real federalists, although we may differ a little in opinion, but the tory, the uncandid, dishonest knaves that assume the federal name as a garb of deception, that I censure.—And against whom I warn you, my fellow citizens. I most earnestly wish a cordial union between the pure federalists and democrats; but that cannot take place until the rotten members are cut off. It will not be long, however, before the bailing of the waters produced by the tyranny of the British will purge out the filthy, stinking, tory scum from amongst them. It is when the waters are still, that the scum settles on the top. By the bailing of the wa-