WASHINGTON CITY.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25.

The MILITARY COURT OF ENQUIRY in the case of General Wilkinson met again on Tuesday, when the depositions of Governor Wright and Mr. James L. Donaldson were taken.

For the new advertisement of the Baltimore Fire Insurance Company, see the last page.

Erratum in the act entitled "An act in addition to the act entitled "An act supplementary to the act entitled "An act laying an embargo on all ships and vessels in the harbors of the United States," as inserted in the National Intelligencer of the 18th inst.— In the 3rd section the words "*or by capture*" ought to be stricken out.

On Tuesday the President laid before both Houses of Congress the following IMPORTANT MESSAGE. The documents are so very voluminous that a considerable portion of them yet remain unread, although three entire days have been devoted to the perusal. A part of them, connected with the others, being confidential, the doors have been kept closed. To morrow, it is supposed, the reading will be brought to a close. In the mean time the Senate have directed 500 copies of the papers relative to the Chesapeake to be printed, and the House have directed 5,000 copies of all the papers to be published, as read. As these communications are of the deepest importance, and ought to be in the hands of every American, we shall push the publication with the utmost spirit.

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

At the opening of the present session, I informed the legislature, that the measures which had been taken with the government of Great Britain, for the settlement of our neutral and national rights, and of the conditions of commercial intercourse with that nation, had resulted in articles of a treaty, which could not be acceded to on our part; that instructions had consequently been sent to our ministers there, to resume the negociations, and to endeavor to obtain certain alterations, and that this was interrupted by the transaction which took place between the frigates Leopard and Chesapeake. The call on that government for reparation of this wrong produced, as Congress has been already informed, the mission of a special Minister to this country, and the occasion is now arrived, when the public interest permits and requires, that the whole of these proceedings should be made known to you.

I therefore now communicate the instructions given to our Minister resident at London, and his communications to that government, on the subject of the Chesapeake, with the correspondence which has taken place here between the Secretary of State and Mr. Rose, the special Minister charged with the adjustment of that difference; the instructions to our Ministers for the formation of a treaty; their correspondence with the British commissioners, and with their own government on that subject; the treaty itself and written declaration of the British Commissioners accompanying it; and the instructions given by us for resuming the negociation, with the proceedings and correspondence subsequent thereto. To these I have added a letter lately addressed to the Secretary of State from one of our late Ministers, which, though not strictly written in an official character, I think it my duty to communicate, in order that his views of the proposed treaty, and of its several articles, may be fairly presented and understood.

Although I have heretofore, and from time to time, made such communications to Congress, as to keep them possessed of a general and just view of the proceedings and dispositions of the government of France towards this country, yet in our present critical situation, when we find that no conduct on our part, however impartial and friendly, has been sufficient to insure, from either belligerent, a just respect for our rights, I am desirous that nothing shall be omitted on my part, which may add to your information on this subject, or contribute to the correctness of the views which should be formed. The papers which for these reasons, I now lay before you, embrace all the communications, official or verbal, from the French government, respecting the general relations between the two countries, which have been transmitted through our Minister there, or through any other accredited channel, since the last session of Congress; to which time all information of the same kind had, from time to time, been given them. Some of these papers have already been submitted to Congress; but it is thought better to offer them again in order that the chain of communications, of which they make a part, may be presented unbroken.

When, on the 25th of February, I communicated to both Houses the letter of Gen. Armstrong to M. Champagny, I desired it might not be published, because of the tendency of that practice to restrain injuriously the freedom of our foreign correspondence. But perceiving that this caution, proceeding purely from a regard to the public good, has furnished occasion for disseminating unfounded suspicions and insinuations, I am induced to believe that the good which will now result from its publication, by confirming the confidence and union of our fellow citizens, will more than countervail the ordinary objection to such publications. It is my wish therefore that it may be now published.

TH: JEFFERSON.

March 22, 1808.

No. I.

From Mr. Madison to Mr. Monroe.

Department of State, *July 6, 1807.*

SIR,

The documents herewith enclosed, from No. I to No. 9, inclusive, explain the hostile attack with the insulting pretext for it, lately committed near the Capes of Virginia by the British ship of war the Leopard, on the American frigate the Chesapeake. No. 10, is a copy of the proclamation issued by the President, interdicting in consequence of that outrage the use of our waters and every other accommodation to all British armed ships.

This enormity is not a subject for discussion. The immunity of a national ship of war from every species and purpose of search on the high seas, has never been contested by any nation. Great Britain would be second to none in resenting such a violation of her rights and such an insult on her flag. She may bring the case to the test of her own feelings by supposing that instead of the customary demand of our mariners serving compulsively even on board her ships of war, opportunities had been seized for rescuing them in like manner whenever the superiority of force or the chance of surprise might be possessed by our ships of war.

But the present case is marked by circumstances which give it a peculiar die. The seamen taken from the Chesapeake had been ascertained to be native citizens of the United States, and this fact was made known to the bearer of the demand, and doubtless communicated by him to his commander previous to the commencement of the attack. It is a fact also, affirmed by two of the men, with every appearance of truth, that they had been impressed from American vessels into the British frigate, from which they escaped, and by the third, that having been impressed from a British merchant ship, he had accepted the recruiting bounty under that duress and with a view to alleviate his situation, till he could escape to his own country: and that the attack was made during a period of negociation, and in the midst of friendly assurances from the British government.

The printed papers herewith sent will enable you to judge of the spirit which has been roused by the occasion. It pervades the whole community; is abolishing the distinctions of party; and regarding only the indignity offered to the sovereignty and flag of the nation, and the blood of citizens so wantonly and wickedly shed, demands in the loudest tone an honorable reparation.

With this demand you are charged by the President. The tenor of his proclamation will be your guide in reminding the British government of the uniform proofs given by the United States of their disposition to maintain faithfully every friendly relation; of the multiplied infractions of their rights by British naval commanders on our coasts and in our harbors; of the inefficacy of reiterated appeals to the justice and friendship of that government; and of the moderation on the part of the United States, which reiterated disappointments had not extinguished; till at length no alternative is left, but a voluntary satisfaction on the part of Great Britain, or a resort to means depending on the United States alone.

The nature and extent of the satisfaction ought to be suggested to the British government, not less by a sense of its own honor than by justice to that of the United States. A formal disavowal of the deed, and restoration of the four seamen to the ship from which they were taken, are things of course, and indispensable. As a security for the future, an entire abolition of impressments from vessels under the flag of the United States, if not already arranged, is also to make an indispensible part of the satisfaction. The abolition must be on terms compatible with the instructions to yourself and Mr. Pinkney on this subject; and if possible without the authorised rejection from the service of the United States of British seamen who have not been two years in it. Should it be impossible to avoid this concession on the part of the United States, it ought, as of itself more than a reasonable price for future security, to extend the reparation due for the past.

But beyond these indispensible conditions, the United States have a right to expect every solemnity of form and every other ingredient of retribution and respect which according to usage and the sentiments of mankind, are proper in the strongest cases of insult to the rights and sovereignty of a nation. And the British government is to be apprized of the importance of a full compliance with this expectation to the thorough healing of the wound which has been made in the feelings of the American nation.

Should it be alledged as a ground for declining or diminishing the satisfaction in this case, that the United States have themselves taken it by the interdict contained in the proclamation, the answer will be obvious. The interdict is a measure, not of reparation, but of precaution, and would besides be amply justified by occurrences prior to the extraordinary outrage in question.

The exclusion of all armed ships whatever from our waters, is in fact so much required by the vexations and dangers to our peace experienced from their visits, that the President makes it a special part of the charge to you, to avoid laying the United States under any species of restraint from adopting that remedy. Being extended to all belligerent nations, none of them could of right complain, and with the less reason, as the policy of most nations has limited the admission of foreign ships of war into their ports, to such numbers as being inferior to the naval force of the country, could be readily made to respect its authority and laws.

As it may be useful, in enforcing the justice of the present demand, to bring into view applicable cases, especially where Great Britain has been the complaining party, I refer you to the ground taken & the language held by her, in those of Falkland's island and Nootka Sound, notwithstanding the assertion by Spain in both cases, that the real right was in her, and the possessory only in Great Britain. These cases will be found in the Annual Registers for 1771, and 1790, and in the parliamentary debates for those years. In the latter you will find also two cases referred to, in one of which the French king sent an ambassador extraordinary to the king of Sardinia, in the most public and solemn manner, with an apology for an infringement of his territorial rights in the pursuit of a smuggler and murderer. In the other case, an ambassador extraordinary was sent by the British government to the court of Portugal, with an apology, for the pursuit and destruction by admiral Boscawen of certain French ships on the coasts of this last kingdom. Many other cases, more or less analagous, may doubtless be found; see, particularly the reparation by France to Great Britain, for the attack on Turks Island in 1764, as related in the Annual Register & in Smollet's continuation of Hume, vol. 10, the proceedings in the case of an English merchantman, which suffered much in her crew and otherwise, from the fire of certain Spanish zebecs cruizing in the Mediterranean; and the execution of the lieutenant of a privateer, for firing a gun into a Venetian merchantman, which killed the captain, as stated in the Annual Register, for 1781, page 94. The case of an affront offered to a Russian ambassador in the reign of Queen Ann, though less analogous, shews in a general view, the solemnity with which reparation is made, for insults having immediate relation to the sovereignty of a nation.

Although the principle which was outraged in the proceedings against the American frigate is independent of the question concerning the allegiance of the seamen taken from her, the fact that they were citizens of the United States, and not British subjects, may have such an influence on the feelings of all, and perhaps on the opinions of some unacquainted with the laws and usages of nations, that it has been thought proper to seek more regular proofs of their national character than were deemed sufficient in the first instance. These proofs will be added by this conveyance if obtained in time, if not by the first that succeeds.

The President has an evident right to expect from the British government not only an ample reparation to the United States, in this case, but that it will be decided without difficulty or delay. Should this expectation fail, and above all, should reparation be refused, it will be incumbent on you to take proper measures for hastening home, according to the degree of urgency, all American vessels remaining in British ports; using for the purpose, the mode least likely to awaken the attention of the British government. Where there may be no ground to distrust the prudence or fidelity of consuls, they will probably be found the fittest vehicles for your intimations. It will be particularly requisite to communicate to our public ships in the Mediterranean, the state of appearances, if it be such as ought to influence their movements.

All negociation, with the British government on other subjects, will of course be suspended until satisfaction on this be so pledged and arranged as to render negociation honorable. Whatever may be the result or the prospect, you will please to forward to us the earliest information.

The scope of the proclamation will signify to you that the President has yielded to the presumption that the hostile act of the British commander did not pursue the intentions of his government. It is not indeed easy to suppose that so rash and so critical a step should have originated with the admiral, but it is still more difficult to believe, that such orders were prescribed by any government, under circumstances such as existed between Great Britain and the United States.

Calculations founded on dates, are also strongly opposed to the supposition that the orders in question could have been transmitted from England. In the same scale, are to be put the apparent and declared persuasion of the British representative, Mr. Erskine, that no orders of a hostile spirit, could have been issued or authorised by his government; and the co-incidence of this assurance with the amicable professions of Mr. Canning, the organ of the new administration, as stated in the dispatch of April 22d, from yourself and Mr. Pinkney.

Proceeding on these considerations, the President has inferred that the justice and honor of the British government will readily make the atonement required; and in that expectation, he has forborne an immediate call of Congress; notwithstanding the strong wish which has been manifested by many, that measures depending on their authority, should without delay be adopted. The motives to this forbearance have, at the same time, been strengthened by the policy of avoiding a course which might stimulate the British cruisers, in this quarter, to arrest our ships and seamen now arriving and shortly expected in great numbers from all quarters. It is probable, however, that the legislature will be convened in time to receive the answer of the British government on the subject of this dispatch, or even sooner, if the conduct of the British squadron here, or other occurrences, should require immediate measures beyond the authority of the Executive.

In order to give the more expedition and security to the present dispatch, a public armed vessel, the Revenge, is specially employed; and doctor Bullus is made the bearer, who was on board the Chesapeake, on his way to a consulate in the Mediterranean, and will be able to detail and explain circumstances which may possibly become interesting in the course of your communications with the British government.

The vessel, after depositing doctor Bullus at a British port, will proceed with dispatches to a French port, but will return to England with a view to bring the result of your transactions with the British government. The trip to France will afford you and Mr. Pinckney a favorable opportunity of communicating with our ministers at Paris, who being instructed to regulate their conduct on the present occasion by the advices they may receive from you, will need every explanation that can throw light on the probable turn and issue of things with Great Britain.

I have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed) JAMES MADISON.

No. II.

Correspondence between Mr. Monroe and Mr. Canning, in relation to the attack on the Chesapeake, with Mr Monroe's letters to the Secretary of State on the same subject.

(Private.)

FOREIGN OFFICE,
Saturday, July 25, 1807.

Mr. Canning presents his compliments to Mr. Monroe, and with sentiments of the deepest regret hastens to inform him that intelligence has just been received of a transaction which has taken place off the coast of America, between a ship of war of his majesty, & frigate belonging to the United States; the result of which has been the loss of some lives on board the American frigate.

The particulars of this transaction and the grounds of the justification of the British officer, and of the admiral, under whose orders he acted, Mr. Canning is not at present enabled to communicate to Mr. Monroe.

If Mr Monroe should have received any accounts of it, Mr. Canning trusts that he will lose no time in communicating them to Mr. Canning.

But whatever the real merits and character of the transaction may turn out to be, Mr. Canning could not forbear expressing without delay the sincere concern and sorrow which he feels at its unfortunate result; and assuring the American minister, both from himself and on the behalf of his majesty's government, that if the British officers should prove to have been culpable, the most prompt and effectual reparation shall be afforded to the government of the United States.

*James Monroe, Esq.
&c. &c. &c.*

TO MR. CANNING.

Mr. Monroe presents his compliments to Mr. Canning, and is much obliged to him for the information communicated in his note of Saturday. Mr. Monroe has heard with extreme regret the account it contains of a rencontre between a British ship of war and an American frigate off the coast of the United States. He has no knowledge of the subject except what Mr. Canning's note has furnished, but will not fail to communicate the earliest intelligence which he may receive of an event so deeply to be lamented. Mr. Monroe derives in the mean time much satisfaction from the friendly assurance of Mr. Canning, that this unfortunate occurrence was not authorised by his majesty's government, and that suitable reparation will be made for the injury, if on enquiry the British officer shall be found the aggressor.

Portland Place, Monday, July 27, 1807.

The Right honorable George
Canning, &c. &c. &c.

TO MR. CANNING.

Portland Place, July 29, 1807.

SIR—Although I have no instruction from my government on the subject, it is my duty to request the attention of his Britannic majesty's government to a late aggression on the sovereignty of the United States, of a very extraordinary nature. The circumstances of the transaction are too distinctly marked to leave any doubt of the extent of the outrage, or of the reparation which is obviously claimed. By accounts which are entitled to full confidence, it appears that on the 23d of June last, his majesty's ship the Leopard attacked an American frigate off the coast of the United States, with a view to assert and enforce the unfounded and most unjustifiable pretension to search for deserters, and after having killed and wounded a number of her men, entered on board and carried away forcibly several of the crew. The conduct of the British officer which in itself forms an act of complete hostility, is rendered more reprehensible from the consideration that just before this aggression he held a station within the jurisdiction of the United States, in the waters of the Chesapeake, where, while he enjoyed the rights of hospitality, he projected this attack against the ship of a neutral power, whose commander relying on the good faith of his majesty's government, and the friendly relations subsisting between G. Britain and the U. States, could not have suspected the design. I might cite other examples of great indignity and outrage, many of which are of recent date, to which the U. States have been exposed off their coast, and even within several of their harbors, from the British squadron; but it is improper to mingle them with the present more serious cause of complaint. I have called your attention to this subject in full confidence that his majesty's government will see in the act complained of, a flagrant abuse of its own authority, and that it will not hesitate to enable me to communicate to my government without delay a frank disavowal of the principle on which it was made, and an assurance that the officer who is responsible for it shall suffer the punishment which so unexampled an aggression on the sovereignty of a neutral nation justly deserves.

I have the honor to be, with great consideration, sir, your very obedient servant,

(Signed) JAMES MONROE,

*The Right honorable George
Canning, &c. &c. &c.*

FROM MR. CANNING.

Foreign Office, Aug. 3d, 1807.

SIR—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your official note of the 29th ult. which I have lost no time in laying before the king.

As the statement of the transaction to which this note refers, is not brought forward either by the authority of the government of the U. States, or with any precise knowledge of the facts on which it is founded, it might have been sufficient for me to express to you, his majesty's readiness to take the whole of the circumstances of the case, when fully disclosed, into his consideration, and to make reparation for any alleged injury to the sovereignty of the U. States, whenever it should be clearly shewn that such injury has been actually sustained, and that such reparation is really due.

Of the existence of such a disposition on the part of the British government, you, sir, cannot be ignorant: I have already assured you of it, though in an unofficial form, by the letter which I addressed to you on the first receipt of the intelligence of this unfortunate transaction: and I may perhaps be permitted to express my surprise, after such an assurance, at the tone of that representation which I have just had the honor to receive from you.

But the earnest desire of his majesty to evince, in the most satisfactory manner, the principles of justice and moderation, by which he is uniformly actuated, has not permitted him to hesitate in commanding me to assure you, that his majesty neither does, nor has at any time, maintained the pretension of a right to search ships of war, in the national service of any state, for deserters.

If therefore the statement in your note should prove to be correct, and to contain all the circumstances of the case, upon which complaint is intended to be made, and if it shall appear that the act of his majesty's officers rested on no other grounds than the simple and unqualified assertion of the pretension above referred to, his majesty has no difficulty in disavowing that act, and will have no difficulty in manifesting his displeasure at the conduct of his officers.

With respect to the other causes of complaint [whatever they may be] which are hinted at in your note, I perfectly agree with you, in the sentiment which you express, as to the propriety of not involving them in a question, which is of itself of sufficient importance to claim a separate and most serious consideration.

I have only to lament, that the same sentiment did not induce you to abstain from alluding to these subjects, on an occasion which you were, yourself, of opinion, was not favorable for pursuing the discussion of them.

I have the honor to be, with great consideration, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed.) GEORGE CANNING.

*James Monroe, Esq.
&c. &c. &c.*

No.

London, August 4th, 1807.

SIR—I avail myself of the opportu-