

IMPERIAL DECREE.

REJOINDER TO HIS BRITANNICK MAJESTY'S ORDER IN COUNCIL OF NOV. 11, 1807.

At our Royal Palace, at Milan, Dec. 17, 1807.

NAPOLÉON, emperor of the French, king of Italy, and protector of the Rhenish confederacy.

Observing the measures adopted by the British government, on the 11th of November last, by which vessels belonging to neutral, friendly, or even powers the allies of England, are made liable, not only to be searched by English cruisers, but to be compulsorily detained in England, and to have a tax laid on them of so much per cent. on the cargo, to be regulated by the British legislature.

Observing that by these acts the British government denationalizes ships of every nation in Europe, that it is not competent for any government to detract from its own independence and rights, all the sovereigns of Europe having in trust the sovereignties and independence of the flag; that if by an unpardonable weakness, and which, in the eyes of posterity, would be an indelible stain, such a tyranny was allowed to be established into principles and consecrated by usage, the English would avail themselves of the tolerance of governments to establish the infamous principles, that the flag of a nation does not cover goods, and to give to their right of blockade an arbitrary extension, and which infringes on the sovereignty of every state; we have decreed, and do decree as follows:

ARTICLE I. Every ship, to whatever nation it may belong, that shall have submitted to be searched by an English ship, or to a voyage to England, or that shall have paid any tax whatsoever to the English government, is thereby, and for that alone, declared to be denationalized, to have forfeited the protection of its king, and to have become English property.

ARTICLE II. Whether the ships thus denationalized by the arbitrary measures of the English government, enter into our ports or those of our allies, or whether they fall into the hands of our ships of war, or of our privateers, they are declared to be good and lawful prizes.

ARTICLE III. The British islands are declared to be in a state of blockade, both by sea and land. Every ship, of whatever nation, or whatsoever the nature of its cargo may be, that sails from the ports of England, or those of the English colonies, and of the countries occupied by English troops, and proceeding to England, or to English colonies, or to countries occupied by English troops, is good and lawful prize, as contrary to the present decree; and may be captured by our ships of war or our privateers, and adjudged to the captor.

ARTICLE IV. These measures, which are resorted to only in just retaliation of the barbarous system adopted by England, which assimilates its legislation to that of Algiers, shall cease to have any effect with respect to all nations who shall have the firmness to compel the English government to respect their flag. They shall continue to be rigorously in force as long as that government does not return to the principle of the law of nations, which regulates the relations of civilized states in a state of war. The provisions of the present decree shall be abrogated and null, in fact, as soon as the English abide again by the principles of the law of nations, which are also the principles of justice and of honour.

All our ministers are charged with the execution of the present decree, which shall be inserted in the bulletin of the laws.

NAPOLÉON.

By order of the Emperor.