

1730. what their Father wished to tell them ; and on the return of their deputies, they resolved to follow exactly the line of policy which they had long before adopted. Several years before they had wished to destroy the Natchez, and the French had prevented them ; they had pretended to enter the general conspiracy only to involve us with our enemies, to whom we had granted peace in spite of them, and thus force us to apply to them to rid ourselves of them, and thus at the same time profit by the spoils of the Natchez and our liberality.

Perrier had not yet well unravelled all the meshes of this self-interested policy, and all that then seemed to him certain, was, that but for the Western Choctaws, the general conspiracy would have taken effect. He accordingly did not hesitate to employ them to obtain redress of the Natchez, cost what it might. Fortunately two of the Company's vessels arrived at New Orleans in the midst of all this, and he did not wish to defer any longer his march against the enemy, convinced that he could not too soon involve the Choctaws, recall the smaller tribes to our interest, or at least overawe them and reassure the settlers. Yet he felt that he ran some risk by beginning the war with such slender forces. "Do not estimate my forces," he said in one of his letters, (March 18, 1720,) "by the step I have taken in attacking the enemy ; necessity compelled me. I saw consternation everywhere, and fear increased day by day. In this position I concealed the number of our foes, and treated the idea of a general conspiracy as chimerical, an invention of the Natchez to prevent our acting against them. If I had been at liberty to adopt the most prudent course, I should have held myself on the defensive, and waited for reinforcements from France, lest I should be reproached with having sacrificed two hundred Frenchmen of the five or six hundred whom I may have, for the defence of the lower part of the river. The event has shown that we must not always adopt what is seemingly the most prudent course. We were in a position where violent remedies were required, and it was