

settlers, being chiefly composed of old British soldiers, and of United Empire Loyalists, who had left their homes in the United States and come to make new ones in Canada, under the shelter of their dearly loved Union Jack, reflected the British feeling to an intensified degree. An animosity, more bitter because the neighbourhood was so close, had sprung up between the two countries.

To this train of inflammable material the great disturber of Europe indirectly applied the torch. Not only did his stormy career excite the most opposite sympathies in the two nations, but his arbitrary "Decree," declaring all British ports in a state of blockade, led to the British retaliation of the celebrated "Orders in Council," which became, at least, the ostensible *casus belli*. This declaration, asserting the constructive blockade of all French ports, and declaring all products of countries under French rule liable to be seized under any flag, bore very hard upon neutrals, especially upon the Americans, whose merchant marine had, during the engrossment of Europe in war, almost monopolised the carrying trade of the world. On every sea American merchantmen, bound to or from French or British ports, were encountered and captured by cruisers of the hostile nation, but as the British cruisers were by far the more numerous, they did by far the greater damage. To the exasperation occasioned by these events was added, through the self-willed action of a British commander, the "last straw" which seemed to make war, sooner or later, almost inevitable.

It was an affair very similar to that known about a dozen years ago, as the "Trent Affair," which, had not Britain been more forbearing than America was in similar circumstances, might have provoked another war. The "right of search" for contraband goods or deserters, which England claimed on principle, and America on principle denied, was rudely asserted. By command of Vice-Admiral Berkeley, of the North

American station, Captain Humphries, of the *Leopard*, overhauled the American frigate *Chesapeake*, and made a demand for deserters whom he knew to be on board. The demand, being refused, was enforced by a broadside, which compelled the *Chesapeake* to strike her colours and surrender the deserters, who were afterwards tried and convicted of piracy at Halifax, and one of them executed.

This unauthorized act was officially disavowed by the British Government at once, before a word of remonstrance from America could reach them. Both Admiral and Captain were recalled, and it was further explained that "the right of search, when applied to vessels of war, extended only to a *requisition*, and could not be carried into effect by force."

But the echoes of the *Leopard's* guns had awakened a storm in America not easily appeased, and still further stirred up by the inflammatory appeals of demagogues and journalists. The cry "To arms!" seemed to be the cry of the nation. Even clerical dignitaries wrote to the President, Jefferson, asserting that forbearance would be cowardice. Jefferson afterwards claimed the credit of having averted actual hostilities at a time when no other man in the Republic could have held in leash the "dogs of war." Yet, notwithstanding, he did not exercise the forbearance of waiting for the reparation and disavowal which came so promptly and spontaneously. Without even asking for reparation, he resorted to the proclamation of the celebrated "embargo," excluding British ships from all American ports. In doing this, he declares that he wished to avert war; to introduce into the disputes of nations "another umpire than that of arms;" and it is to be presumed that he was sincere.*

* Yet the permission, without disavowal or reparation, of such acts as the attack and capture, by the garrison of Fort Niagara, of seven merchant vessels quietly passing on the Niagara River, did not look like a desire to avoid hostilities, and led Brock and other