

of neutrals. These were a makeweight, they helped to turn a period and to point an invective; but they were largely illusory and without solid foundation.

The War Hawk element insisted that impressment was after all the real issue to be determined, the real cause of the war; and no Administration could be strong enough to fail to insist upon the demand which the United States made for an express renunciation by Britain of the asserted right and the practice of boarding American merchant vessels on the high seas and taking therefrom such sailors as her capturer should decide were British subjects. This claim was undoubtedly exercised sometimes in much the same way as a slaveholder would exercise a right to go amongst the blacks and select for his service such negroes as he should consider were not free; and the lot of the impressed man was worse than that of the slave in that he was exposed to the dangers of battle, if better in that it was not necessarily for life and was not transmitted to his children. Terrible as were the outrages perpetrated upon American citizens, Madison would never have declared war for that cause alone. Nor was he under any delusion as to the nature of the war. His biographer calls it a "wretched war . . . foolishly called the second war of independence." He was not the man for a war president, and he knew it—and he certainly did not wish war for its own sake. But without abandoning what he could not abandon, he did all possible to bring about the return of peace.

When immediately after the declaration of war, Admiral Warren came across the Atlantic asking for peace, he was most courteously received, and every disposition shown favourable to his mission. The one thing, however, that the Administration could not give up was an undertaking by Britain to abandon impressment. That granted, an armistice would have followed immediately; and it is almost certain that satisfactory terms of peace would have been arranged. But that was the one thing Warren could not accede to and Britain could not accede to. Rightly or wrongly, the

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