

seamen of any country to engage, in time of peace, on board a foreign vessel ; no law authorises such seamen to break his contract, nor the armed vessels of his nation to interpose force for his rescue."*

* Such were the sentiments of the father of his country, GEORGE WASHINGTON, when he was president of the United States, concerning one of the subjects now in dispute between America and Great Britain. It seems that he even denied the right of England, to impress *British subjects*, and demanded that the men who had done it, should be punished.

Mr. Pickering, secretary of state, under the direction of president Washington, to Mr. King, dated

"Department of State, Sept. 10, 1796.

"I enclose a letter from Francis S. Taylor, deputy collector, of Norfolk, relative to four impressed seamen. It appears, to be written with candour, and merits attention. If, as the captain of the *Prevoyante* (Wemyss) says, the dignity of the British government will not permit an enquiry on board their ships for American seamen, their doom is fixed for the war : and thus the rights of an independent neutral nation are to be sacrificed to *British dignity* ! Justice requires that such inquiries and examinations should be made, because the liberation of our seamen will otherwise be impossible. For the British government then, to make professions of respect to the rights of our citizens, and willingness to release them, and yet deny the only means of ascertaining those rights, is an insulting tantalism. If such orders have been given to the British commanders (and Mr. Litson's communication, in the conversation of which I sent you a copy in my letter of the 31st ult. countenances the idea) the agency of colonel Talbot and Mr. Trumbull will be fruitless, and *the sooner we know it the better*.* But I would fain hope other things ; and if the British government have any regard to our rights, any respect for our nation, and place any value on

* By this and other parts of the correspondence, it would seem, that Mr. Pickering, and also president Washington, under whose special direction this letter was written, were both of the opinion, that a war ought to, and probably would take place between the two countries, upon the subject of impressment.