

of public indignation was raised; no authoritative document emanated from the government indicating, even indirectly and in the mildest terms, their sense of the outrage which had been committed by the oppressor and trampler of Europe. Not a word even of expostulation was breathed by the great North American republic—independent as it was of Napoleon's iron-handed despotism, and deeply interested in British commerce; until the arm of French violence fell heavily on the ships of its own citizens; and, even then,—although confiscation followed on confiscation, and millions of francs accruing from the sequestration of American property enriched the French treasury,—the tone adopted by the President of the United States towards the French government, though petulant enough, was gentle and plaintive and supplicatory, compared with the strong and angry language frequently addressed from Washington to ministers and plenipotentiaries of Great Britain.

The affair of the Chesapeake, 22d June, 1807.

Whilst dissatisfaction was thus too evidently increasing on the part of the Government and inhabitants of the United States, an inauspicious enforcement of the right of search, by H. M. ship *Leopard*, against the American frigate, *Chesapeake*, contributed still further to agitate the public mind.

As it was known that several British seamen had deserted from different ships and vessels of H. M. navy, whilst lying at anchor in Hampton Roads, Va., and that, after the whole body of the deserters had openly paraded the streets of Norfolk, under the American flag, and protected by the Magistrates of the town, four of them, at least, had been received on board the U. S. frigate *Chesapeake*, Admiral Berkeley, then in command of the North American station, issued instructions for their requisition and removal,—the deserters having been previously demanded, but without effect, by the British Consul at Norfolk, as well as by the Captains of the ships from which they had deserted. About one month after the issuing of these instructions,—afterwards disavowed by the British Government, as an improper extension of the right of search to armed vessels,—Captain Humphries, of H. M. ship *Leopard*, 74 guns, on the 22nd June, followed the *Chesapeake*

to sea, off Cape Henry, and in a few hours came up with her. On being hailed by the *Leopard*, and receiving an intimation that the Captain of that ship desired to send a message on board the *Chesapeake*, the commander of the latter vessel, Commodore Barron, hove to; whereupon a letter was sent by Captain Humphries, covering an order from Admiral Berkeley, in which the men known to have been received into the American frigate, and alleged to be deserters from the *Melampus*, were designated by name and claimed. Compliance with the order was refused by Commodore Barron, who replied by letter to Captain Humphries, denying that he had the men, intimating his unwillingness to permit the search, and adding that his crew could not be mustered for examination by any other officers than his own. Captain Humphries, on receiving this reply, fired a broadside into the *Chesapeake*, to which the latter vessel returned a few shots, in a confused manner; the *Leopard* then repeating her fire, the American frigate struck her colors. A boat was then put off from the *Leopard*; and the men were discovered and removed. In this affair the *Chesapeake* had three men killed and eighteen wounded, amongst the latter of whom was Commodore Barron; besides which the damage done to her hull and masts was considerable. The captured deserters were taken to Halifax and tried; and one of them, being found guilty of piracy and mutiny, was hanged. It is a circumstance worthy of notice,—as evincing on the part of the U. S. navy at the time a spirit gallant and resolute enough, though too irascible,—that Commodore Barron was censured and suspended soon afterwards by a naval court, for not preparing his vessel more fully for action, when there was sufficient time to do so, and thus incapacitating himself from making more than the slight and very ineffective resistance which he offered. This collision between the two vessels was specially unfortunate at such a juncture; but the hasty proceeding of the President of the United States served to make matters vastly worse. On the 2nd July following, he set forth precipitately an angry proclamation, in which, after reciting the transaction, in language calculated to inflame the public mind in a very high degree, he peremptorily "required all armed vessels bearing commissions under