

INTRODUCTION.

9

of London, stating that "the impressment of American seamen was an injury of very serious magnitude, which deeply affected the feelings and honor of the nation; that no right had been asserted, to impress the natives of America; yet, that they were impressed; that they were dragged on board British ships of war, with the evidence of citizenship in their hands, and forced by violence there to serve, until conclusive testimonials of their birth could be obtained; that many must perish unrelieved, and all were detained a considerable time, in lawless and injurious confinement that the continuance of the practice must inevitably produce discord between two nations, which ought to be friends of each other; and that it was more advisable to desist from, and to take effectual measures to prevent an acknowledged wrong, than by persevering in that wrong, to excite against themselves the well founded resentments of America, and force the government into measures which may very possibly terminate in an open rupture."

These extracts furnish ample proof that the subject of impressment became a serious ground of complaint and remonstrance as early as 1792. Nor did British cruisers desist from their practice of impressing American seamen even during the period of our naval war with France.

In the winter of 1800, Mr. Liston, the British minister at Philadelphia, submitted a project of a treaty to the consideration of the American government. It was rejected by Mr. Adams, and the chief officers of the executive department, whom he consulted, on the ground "that it did not sufficiently provide against the impressment of American seamen," and that it was better to have no article, and to meet the consequences, than not