

than seven hundred deserters from the army of the United States and nearly as many runaway slaves had found a secure refuge within the limits of that province.¹

President Jefferson went so far as to inform General Turreau, the French ambassador at Washington, in the course of a confidential conversation, sometime in July, 1807, that "If the English do not give us the satisfaction we demand (*i.e.*, for the attack on the Chesapeake), we will take Canada, which wants to enter the Union; and when, together with Canada, we shall have the Floridas, we shall no longer have any difficulties with our neighbors; and it is the only way of preventing them."²

Animated by such sentiments it must have seemed to him a mere matter of ordinary prudence to take secret measures to ascertain the strength of the latent feeling in favor of annexation which he believed to exist in Canada, and even to foster it. How far he succeeded in this can scarcely be stated definitely.

Early in the spring of 1812, while the question of declaring war against Great Britain was still being warmly debated in Congress, a large, fine looking man, who gave his name as Nathaniel Cogswell, of Newburyport in Massachusetts, introduced himself to the British Consul at Philadelphia, and offered to disclose a plot for the separation of Canada from the British Empire in promoting which, he stated, that he had been employed as chief agent ever since 1806. While so engaged, he had visited the British provinces on four different occasions, had resided there for twelve months, and had been once arrested on suspicion. He had been instrumental in the employment of about one hundred sub-agents in the promotion of this scheme, and his motive for now revealing it, he stated, was to obtain revenge, because his application for the rank of Brigadier General in the army had been refused. If his expenses were paid to Quebec he would make known the full particulars of the conspiracy to the Governor General, who could easily test the truth of his statements. The consul communicated with Mr. Foster, the British Minister at Washington, who considered his story of such importance that he readily advanced four hundred dollars for travelling expenses, and wrote a letter of introduction in cypher to Sir George Prevost.³

On June 22, 1812, Cogswell addressed a letter to Prevost from Odelltown in which he said:—

"The subversion of the British in the two Canadas has been earnestly desired and waited for by the Govt. of the U.S. ever since Mr. Jefferson came into office. Not that there was any wish or desire

¹ Louisville Gazette, 1807.

² Turreau to Talleyrand, quoted by H. Adams, *Hist. of the United States*.

³ Foster to Prevost, undated, Canadian Archives, Sundries, L.C. 1812.