

men dead and twenty-one wounded. The President suffered but trifling damage, and lost none of her crew—one only being wounded, and that slightly. No censure was passed on either of the Commanders by their respective Governments. Captain Bingham was deservedly applauded, for so bravely fighting a vessel of 18 guns against one of 44; whilst Commodore Rogers, after having been brought to an open court-martial, at the request of the British minister at Washington, was honourably acquitted. During this inquiry, several of his officers and crew were examined, who bore out his statement, that the *Little Belt* fired the first shot. To attempt a decision of the question, “Who fired the first shot?” seems a hopeless undertaking, where the evidence on either side is directly contradictory,—captain against captain, and ship against ship: yet it is but just to make the remark, that both the probability of the case, and other circumstances, distinct from the testimony given in, are greatly against the American. It is not probable that a vessel of eighteen guns should have attacked another of forty-four. No hostile design can be attributed to Captain Bingham; for his orders, which were made public after the encounter, expressly cautioned him against giving any unnecessary offence to the government or the people of the United States; and an attack of his on an American frigate would have been a flagrant violation of those orders, such as—we may conceive—no man in his senses, how daring and impetuous soever, would have attempted. The orders, on the other hand, under which the President sailed, were never published, which is somewhat singular; but the United States government disavowed, to Mr. Foster, the British minister, the issuing of any orders of an unfriendly character. In regard to the American orders, however, it is connected with our subject, though it may not be of much importance to state, that an opinion very generally prevailed in the United States, as Mr. Hildreth, the American historian, informs us, that “Rogers had pursued the *Little Belt*, with the very purpose of avenging on her the still unatoned-for attack on the *Chesapeake*.” In relation to this suspicion of a hostile purpose on the part of the

Americans, we must attach great weight to a remark made by Captain Bingham:—“By the manner in which he (Commodore Rogers) apologized, it appeared evident to me that, had he fallen in with a British frigate, he would certainly have brought her to action. And what farther confirms me in that opinion is, that his guns were not only loaded with round and grape shot, but with every scrap of iron that could be collected.” As the British Government was satisfied with the disavowal of hostile orders on the part of the United States Government, the matter was allowed to drop: and the excitement arising from it at the moment soon died away.

The President's War Message, 4th November, 1811.

The President, at the close of the year, having called Congress together after a shorter recess than usual, communicated to them, on the 4th November, a message, in which, after enumerating the subjects of complaint against Britain (of which we have already said enough), he suggested the appeal to arms in these words,—“Congress will feel the duty of putting the United States into an armour and an attitude demanded by the crisis, and corresponding with the national expectations.”

Nov. 22.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended the raising of 10,000 regulars and 50,000 militia, with other preparations; but, such was the passionate ardour of the Legislature, that the numbers voted were, by a majority of 109 to 22, increased to 25,000 regular troops, and a loan was agreed to of ten millions of dollars.

Was there, to any extent, a secret understanding between the United States and France?

At the very time that the angry majority in Congress were preparing the unhappy collision with Great Britain, the privateers and cruizers of France, as we have said, under the professed revocation of the French decrees, were repeatedly making captures of American vessels, and seizing their cargoes. It was less than one month prior to the declaration of war against Great Britain, that a correspondence was laid before Congress, by the President, be-