

Certainly the embargo exercised a most injurious effect on the trade and commerce of America, depreciating property and paralyzing industry, especially in New England, where a war with England and a French connection were equally deprecated, and where the feeling, stirred up by the embargo, excited one of the earliest poetic efforts of Lowell, then a boy of thirteen. But there was, undoubtedly, among a large section of the American people, a strong hatred of England and desire to humiliate, especially, her maritime power; and succeeding events indicated, clearly enough, that with many the real object was—in the words of Alison—"to wrest from Britain the Canadas, and, in conjunction with Napoleon, extinguish its maritime and colonial empire." In the meantime the situation was sad enough; on the one side, the artisan population of Great Britain starving for lack of the corn of which their American brethren had such a superabundance, while, on the other side, American planters were half ruined, and American industry crippled, by the refusal to admit British manufactures and merchandise, or permit the exportation of the cotton which was glutting the home market.

In 1809, Jefferson was succeeded by Madison, who repealed the embargo, substituting a non-intercourse Act with England and France. An attempt at negotiating the existing difficulties failed, owing to diplomatic complications; and President Madison, far from inaugurating a more pacific policy, proceeded to keep up and exasperate the warlike sentiments of the people; and, by his treating with Bonaparte, and other actions, showed an evident desire to distinguish his presidency by the conquest of Canada.

In May, 1811, existing ill-feeling was aggravated by another maritime encounter, in

which Britain was certainly *not* the aggressor. The American 44-gun frigate *President*, in defiance of the avowed principle that vessels of war were not liable to right of search, provoked an encounter with the *Little Belt*, a small sloop of 18 guns, and shot the latter to pieces. The American captain was tried by court-martial and acquitted amid national exultation; but Great Britain at once forbearingly accepted the official disavowal of hostile instructions.

Notwithstanding this forbearance, however, President Madison, in November, 1811, appealed to the nation for the "sinews of war," and they responded by large votes of money and men, warlike armaments being prepared during the winter. The people were full of sanguine hopes of an easy conquest of Canada. It was presumed that political troubles and transient dissatisfaction, caused by grievances connected with the Executive, had so far weakened Canadian loyalty that the colonists would interpose but a slight resistance, if they did not even welcome the idea of American connection. And England, her hands full, and her attention engrossed by the affairs of Europe, where Wellington was engaged in the struggle with Spain, and Napoleon was pressing on to Moscow at the head of his gigantic army, would, it was believed, have neither leisure nor power effectually to defend her distant colony. Succeeding events showed how far these calculations were correct.

As a preparation for war the American Government imposed a close blockade of all their ports, allowing no vessels whatever to enter or leave. Their aim was to cut off all communication with England, and attack at an advantage the homeward-bound West India fleet, which was accordingly done by Commodore Rogers, the hero of the *Little Belt* encounter. The frigate *Belvidere*, however, single-handed, defended the merchantmen against a pursuing squadron of three frigates and two sloops, and brought her charge safely home.

Canadians to conclude that the U. S. Government, while avoiding the declaration of war, were desirous of bringing it on by provocation.