

THE QUESTION AT ISSUE.

That Great Britain has no right to impress her subjects from neutral merchant vessels, is too clear to be seriously denied. She cannot do it, under the authority of the law of nations. She cannot do it under her own authority. As a belligerent power, the law of nations may authorise her to take in neutral vessels what may belong to her enemy, or what may belong to the neutral in certain cases, specified by the law of nations, in which the neutral falls under the operation of the law of nations, in relation to war. But the right of a belligerent to take, not what belongs to his enemy, or to a neutral, but what belongs to, or is claimed by himself, has no pretext from that law.

As to the belligerent's own laws or authority, no one will pretend that they can be put in force any where but within the territorial limits of the belligerent, and on board his own ships on the high seas. To extend the operation of his laws to the ships of other nations on the high seas, would make the belligerent nation a sovereign over, instead of an equal with, other independent nations.

Is there then no remedy for a belligerent in case a neutral nation should wrongfully seize or seduce his seamen, contrary to their allegiance, and to his safety? Yes, the same remedy as in other cases of wrong done him. He must require redress from the neutral power; and, that failing, he may, if he chooses, resort to self redress by force, that is to war. This self redress by force, on board a neutral vessel, is a case unauthorised by the law of nations, is as much an act of hostility as self redress by force would be on board a public ship of war, which is in no case subjected by the law of nations to such a procedure.

It is not denied by Great Britain that wrongs have been committed against the United States by her impressments from their vessels. As many as 1600 of their seamen, it is confessed by a British minister, were on board British ships of war, where coercion alone could have placed them. If the United States, instead of seeking redress by negotiation and friendly arrangement, had pursued it by forcible steps to rescue the impressed seamen from the British ships, it would have been war. Great Britain would doubtless have so considered it,

From this plain view of the subject, it necessarily follows that if Great Britain considered the employment of her seamen on board our vessels as a wrong done her, she was bound in the first instance to resort to the government of the United States for redress; that in resorting to self redress by force, in taking her seamen from our vessels, she in fact resorted to hostility, and that her perseverance in the practice, notwithstanding repeated offers of friendly arrangement on the part of the United States, made up a clear and strong cause of war.

Had the orders in council, on which the United States and Great Britain happened to be more immediately at issue, been repealed before the declaration of war, it is probable that the case of impressment would have been resumed once more, as a subject of negotiation and pacific arrangement. It certainly could never be abandoned by an independent nation. But Great Britain having given a *positive* and *final* assurance, that the orders would *not be repealed*, war became inevitable; and as she continued in the practice of impressment, whilst she confessed the enormous abuse of it; and as she still turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances and *the overtures* of the injured party, it was impossible not to include the practice of impressment as a cause of the war, and impossible consequently to close it without some satisfactory stipulations on the subject. To do otherwise, would admit that impressments are no cause of war, and would encourage a continuance and extension of the most horrible and degrading practice by fixing the belief that it never would be resented and redressed by war. It may be hoped that reason and justice and sound policy will gain the ascendance in the British cabinet. Should she on the other hand determine to go on with the war, rather than accept peace on the fair terms on which it is offered her, every citizen must be roused to redoubled exertions in the cause of his country.

The time must come when the subjection of our flag and our citizens, to the degradation and violence practised by British press-gangs or officers, must cease, unless the United States shall cease to be an independent nation. And it may be confidently predicted that whenever the practice of impressment shall have ended, a universal astonishment will be felt, that it should have been ever for a moment tolerated; and the every honest American, who has been misled into a justification of the outrage, will look back with horror at his own debasement and infatuation.

Nat. Intel.