

of the present war, with the extraordinary opportunities which it offers to some neutral countries of becoming, on a scale hitherto unprecedented, a base of supplies for the armed forces of the enemy, make the adoption of strict rules with regard to the destination of conditional contraband absolutely imperative.

VISIT AND SEARCH

A neutral Government being, as we have seen, under no obligation to prevent its subjects from trading in contraband of war, it is essential to the maintenance of neutrality and the interception of the prohibited goods that a belligerent shall have the right to stop and search any neutral merchantman she may meet on the high seas or within her own or her enemy's territorial waters. The exercise of this right, owing to the size of modern vessels and the complexity of their cargoes, is one of the chief causes of friction between belligerents and neutrals; but, unless the search is thorough, it is impossible for a belligerent to satisfy himself that cargoes and manifests correspond, that goods nominally consigned to neutral countries are not really destined for the enemy, and that contraband commodities are not being smuggled in by concealment or disguise. Under modern conditions searches at sea are practically futile. Whenever real ground for suspicion exists it is absolutely necessary to bring the suspected ship into port for examination. Otherwise, as stated in the British Interim Reply to the American Notes, the right of search itself 'would have to be completely abandoned'. In order to protect innocent traders as much as possible, it has always been the practice of British Prize Courts to award compensation to the neutral merchant by condemning the captor