

ports of his own allies, as at Leghorn, Hamburg, and other places, where our property has suffered so much by his orders.

But liberty of the seas is only a question *during war*, and will vary in every war. In Russia it varies with every new sovereign, and with every new fancy of each sovereign. It is there that armed neutralities have sprung up, in defence of the commerce of the seas; though the Russians, comparatively, have no merchant vessels. Of course, it has been with Russia a mere political pretext, adopted and rejected as suited her particular views, at the moment—the Russians laughing at the nations which were made dupes by it. They resemble the Virginians, who slight *our* navigation in theory, and hate it in reality, yet are the hottest for quarreling about it.

After it had been maintained by us, with great zeal, that free vessels made free goods, Mr. Jefferson, while secretary of state, was obliged to abandon the doctrine, on the part of the United States.

France, like Russia and America, under different circumstances, will also equally vary the doctrine. Let France be at war with a weaker maritime power, and France will directly plead against the liberty of the seas; just as she has plead for civil liberty, during the first moments of her revolution, then acted against it, and now openly reprobates it, even in words. It costs France nothing to pretend, to abandon, to assert and to deny. Lastly, we ourselves, who now plead for the liberty of the seas, because it would benefit us, as carriers and adventurers, when we become concerned in war, *may* then be as warm against it, as we are now for it. Should the English, on the other hand, now be forced to give up the point, because of their weakness, they would necessarily return to it again, when they were strong, and again in a state of war, as every powerful maritime state will always do. If therefore, we go to war for this principle, it would be in connection with allies, who might change sides during the course of it, or who might make peace between themselves, as soon as we had become a partner in the war; or else the United States might, for the moment, obtain the acknowledgment of the principle, and by