In principle, a law established by the common consent, or recognized by the common acquiescence of all nations, can be abrogated or altered only by the common consent of all. Particular nations, indeed, as particular individuals, may bind themselves towards each other, by special contracts, or exceptions, from the general law. But, by these, none can be bound who are not parties to them. The maritime rights of Great Britain, can never be affected by the reciprocal stipulations of powers hostile to her interests, or seeking only to profit at her expense.

But were the principle correct, the fact is falsely assumed. If modern practice be the standard of right, the most modern practice is decidedly in favour of the British system of maritime law.

The doctrines of the armed neutrality of 1780, were indeed adopted in the stipulations of some treaties made in Europe, soon after the conclusion of the American war. But in 1793, and in the succeeding years, almost all the powers of Europe have entered into engagements with this country, and with each other, directly contrary to those principles. Whatever force the new system had acquired by new treaties, it has consequently lost by others, which are still more recent. Nor is this argument to be drawn only from the conduct of the powers engaged in this