

of its unregulated exercise, is certain. The question, therefore, presented, directly, for the decision of the thoughtful and virtuous mind, in this country is—whether war for such an abstract right be justifiable, before attempting to guard against its injurious tendency by legislative regulation, in failure of treaty.

A dubious right should be advanced with hesitation. An extreme right should be asserted with discretion. Moral duty requires, that a nation, before it appeals to arms, should have been, not only true to itself, but that it should have failed in no duty to others. If the exercise of a right, in an unregulated manner, be in effect a standing invitation to the subjects of a foreign power to become deserters and traitors, is it no injury to that power?

Certainly, moral obligation demands that the right of flag, like all other human rights, should be so used, as that, while it protects what is our own, it should not injure what is another's. In a practical view, and so long as the right of flag is restrained by no regard to the undeniable interests of others, a war on account of impressments, is only a war for the right of employing British seamen on board American merchant vessels.

The claim of Great Britain pretends to no further extent, than to take British seamen from private merchant vessels. In the exercise of this claim, her officers take American seamen, and foreign seamen, in the American service; and although she disclaims such abuses, and proffers redress, when known, yet undoubtedly grievous injuries have resulted to the seamen of the United States. But the question is, can war be proper for such cause, before all hope of reasonable accommodation has failed? Even after the extinguishment of such hope, can it be proper, until our own practice be so regulated as to remove, in such foreign nation, any reasonable apprehension of injury?

The undersigned are clearly of opinion that the employment of British seamen, in the merchant service of the United States, is as little reconcileable with the permanent, as the present interest of the United States. The encouragement of foreign seamen is the discouragement of the native American.

The duty of government towards this valuable class of men is not only to protect, but to patronize them. And this cannot be done more effectually than by securing to American citizens the privileges of American navigation.

The question of impressment, like every other question relative to commerce, has been treated in such a manner, that what was possessed is lost, without obtaining what was sought. Pretensions, right in theory, and important in interest, urged, without due consideration of our relative power, have eventuated in a practical abandonment, both of what we hoped and what we enjoyed. In attempting to spread our flag over foreigners, its distinctive character has been lost to our own citizens.

The American seaman, whose interest it is to have no competitors in his employment, is sacrificed, that British seamen may have equal privileges with himself.