

case, conspire to present the question as one which must ere long be decided, either by legislation or negotiation, or by that great current of events which overrides human effort, and accomplishes ends in spite of all resistance.

Nor is the question one of mere local importance. The St. Lawrence forms part of the long chain of waters which lies upon our northern boundary, as did once the Mississippi upon our western; and the question of freely navigating the latter was not much less national in its nature than is that of freely navigating the former.

A full examination of the subject requires some notice of the fact that our government has hitherto claimed the right of freely navigating the St. Lawrence as a *natural* right. It was upon this basis that the claim was urged and supported with great power and ability. It was resisted by Great Britain, and the discussion terminated without its settlement. The claim of right is believed to stand now as it did then, save that new events have given it new strength. The subject, therefore, presents itself in a twofold aspect—

1. As a right, to be claimed by the government.
2. As a privilege, to be secured by treaty, or some reciprocal legislation.

We do not propose to discuss at great length the natural right of the United States to a free passage to the ocean through the waters of the St. Lawrence. Whilst but few arguments can be added to those which were urged nearly a generation since in its support, it is yet worthy of notice that the experience of the present day has so clearly proved their justice and validity. The wants and necessities of the extensive region of the lakes, which were then so plainly shadowed forth in the future, have now come to exist, and confirm the justice of our claim. It is therefore deemed well to revive, if not to press, this view of the subject, so that, if the government shall at last conceive itself compelled to purchase as a privilege that which justly belonged to it as a right, its action may appear, what it really will be, a measure of necessity, resulting from the unwillingness of England to acknowledge the justice of our claim. In such an event, it will be but just that the transaction should stand forth in its true character in the history of her intercourse with us; whilst, however, the unconditional acknowledgment of our right by Great Britain would be received by the people of this country with the liveliest satisfaction, and could not fail to have a powerful influence in convincing them of her disposition to treat us with justice and liberality, and in confirming the good understanding which now happily prevails between the two countries.

Although the right of the United States freely to navigate the St. Lawrence to the ocean may have existed from the definitive acknowledgment of our independence by Great Britain in 1783, and even from the treaty of Paris in 1763, which secured to her the Canadas, and of course to her, in common with her adjacent colonies, the use and control of that river throughout its whole extent, yet, as a *question*, it is modern in its origin. So long as there was no occasion for exercising the right, there was none for asserting or disputing it. It is true, under the supposition that the sources of the Mississippi were within the British boundaries as established by the treaty of 1783, that instrument contained a stipulation that "the navigation of the river Mississippi, *from its source to the ocean*, shall forever remain free and open to the subjects of Great Britain and