

unavoidably incident to a frontier. It is national responsibility only, which, by exciting the vigilance of Government over unauthorized acts of its citizens, can check and repress this spirit and a resort to force. Such is our position, and such our responsibilities, as already acknowledged by the Government.

It must be recollected, sir, that a resort to arms, on account of illegal acts of *the citizen*, cannot be considered until reparation by *his Government* has been demanded and refused.

It is now represented that *the subjects of Great Britain* have, likewise, in the case of the *Caroline*, violated their neutral obligations to us, under circumstances of great atrocity. Still, so far as appears, it was, as in the case of our citizens, an illegal and unauthorized act of the *subjects of Great Britain*. We have no more just right to presume, in the absence of the fullest proof to the contrary, that this proceeding of British subjects was instigated, or in the remotest manner countenanced, by *the British authorities*, than would their Government to presume, under like circumstances, that the officially acknowledged aggressions against them by *our citizens* was the deliberate act of our Government.

It is reasonable to conclude, from the present state of our information, that neutrality has been violated and wrong done by the *people* of both nations. For the honor of ours, I hope it may ultimately appear that the offence of our people has not been so flagrant as that of the opposite side. Yet the information already communicated by the Executive leaves no room to hope that *the first* aggressions did not proceed from us, and serve as a pretext, though I can hardly suppose a justification, of what succeeded. If we have been *most* wronged, it is certain that Great Britain has been *first* wronged.

Now, in the midst of this popular ferment, before the Governments on either side are implicated, does not every consideration recommend self-possession and wisdom *here*? The right of individuals, and even nations, to sympathize in the cause, real or imagined, of freedom, is not contested; but it must be exercised in subserviency to justice and law, not at their expense. In an exigency like this, the public have a right to look to Congress for a proper tone of opinion. It must be expected that the lead will be taken, to a great extent, by this House, the proceedings of which (our debates forming a part) will necessarily be regarded with peculiar interest by both nations. It is therefore, I conceive, of the highest consequence that our views, as here publicly expressed, should rise to the magnitude as well as the dignity of the occasion; and that the subject should be placed at once beyond the influence, and, if possible, the suspicion of the influence, of passion or precipitation. Not that I imagine there is danger of war with Great Britain; of that, gentlemen may dismiss all apprehension; for, sir, there will be no war over these border collisions. To imagine such an event, is ridiculous and absurd. A course of intemperate discussion here may, nevertheless, greatly embarrass the two Governments, by inflaming still farther the public mind, already too highly excited. But it will merely embarrass; for war, I repeat, will not come.

It would be superfluous to enter at large, in the present state of the controversy, into the numerous reasons which pronounce such a war utterly out of the question. It is enough, almost, to remember that the spirit of the age, and the religious and moral as well as political illumination of the world, stand opposed to war, especially between highly civilized Christian nations. The advance of mankind could by nothing be more strikingly illustrated than the prevailing aversion and abhorrence with which war is now regarded,