

to agree, without any knowledge of the adequacy of the system which could be substituted, to negotiate upon the basis of accepting the legislative Regulations of a foreign State, as the sole equivalent for the exercise of a right, which she has felt to be essential to the support of her maritime power.

If America, by demanding this preliminary cession, intends to deny the validity of that Right, in that denial Great Britain cannot acquiesce; nor will she give countenance to such a pretension, by acceding to its suspension, much less to its abandonment, as a basis on which to treat. If the American Government has devised, or conceives it can devise, Regulations, which may safely be accepted by Great Britain, as a substitute for the exercise of the right in question, it is for them to bring forward such a plan for consideration. The British Government has never attempted to exclude this question from amongst those, on which the two States might have to negotiate: It has, on the contrary, uniformly professed its readiness to receive and discuss any proposition on this subject, coming from the American Government: It has never asserted any exclusive right, as to the impressment of British seamen from American vessels, which it was not prepared to acknowledge, as appertaining equally to the Government of the United States, with respect to American seamen when found on board British merchant ships:—But it cannot, by acceding to such a basis in the first instance, either assume, or admit that to be practicable, which, when attempted on former occasions, has always been found, to be attended with great difficulties; such difficulties, as the British Commissioners in 1806, expressly declared, after an attentive consideration of the suggestions brought forward by the Commissioners on the part of America, they were unable to surmount.

Whilst this proposition, transmitted through the British Admiral, was pending in America, another communication on the subject of an armistice was unofficially made to the British Government in this country. The Agent, from whom this proposition was received, acknowledged that he did not consider, that he had any authority himself, to sign an agreement on the part of his Government. It was obvious that any stipulations entered into, in consequence of this overture, would have been binding on the British Government, whilst the Government of the United States would have been free to refuse or accept them, according to

the circumstances of the moment: This proposition was therefore necessarily declined.

After this exposition of the circumstances which preceded, and which have followed the declaration of war by the United States, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, acting in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, feels himself called upon to declare the leading principles, by which the conduct of Great Britain has been regulated in the transactions connected with these discussions.

His Royal Highness can never acknowledge any blockade whatsoever to be illegal, which has been duly notified, and is supported by an adequate force, merely upon the ground of its extent, or because the ports, or coasts blockaded are not at the same time invested by land.

His Royal Highness can never admit, that neutral trade with Great Britain can be constituted a public crime, the commission of which can expose the ships of any power whatever to be denationalized.

His Royal Highness can never admit that Great Britain can be debarred of its right of just and necessary retaliation, through the fear of eventually affecting the interest of a neutral.

His Royal Highness can never admit, that in the exercise of the undoubted and hitherto undisputed right of searching neutral merchant vessels in time of war, the impressment of British seamen, when found therein, can be deemed any violation of a neutral flag. Neither can he admit, that the taking such seamen from on board such vessels, can be considered by any Neutral State as a hostile measure, or a justifiable cause of war.

There is no right more clearly established, than the right which a Sovereign has to the allegiance of his subjects, more especially in time of war. Their allegiance is no optional duty, which they can decline, and resume at pleasure. It is a call which they are bound to obey: it began with their birth, and can only terminate with their existence.

If a similarity of language and manners may make the exercise of this Right more liable to partial mistakes, and occasional abuse, when practiced towards vessels of the United States, the same circumstances make it also a right, with the exercise of which, in regard to such vessels, it is more difficult to dispense.

But if, to the practice of the United States, to harbour British seamen, be added their assumed right, to transfer the allegiance of British subjects, and thus to cancel the jurisdiction of their legiti-