

**MR. FISH AND THE
ALABAMA CLAIMS: A
CHAPTER IN DIPLOMATIC
HISTORY, PP.1-156**

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Mr. Fish and the Alabama Claims: A Chapter in Diplomatic History, pp.1-156 by J. C. Bancroft Davis

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J. C. BANCROFT DAVIS

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1874-1886.

Wm. L. G. L.

Mr. Fish and the Alabama Claims
—
A CHAPTER
IN
DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

the hands BY
J. C. BANCROFT DAVIS



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THIS little sketch was written early in the last summer. Illness and absence in Europe have deferred its publication until now. During the short time which intervened, HAMILTON FISH, the principal actor in the events which it aims to describe, passed away, leaving the history of his public career as a rich legacy to his countrymen. As it will be seen that my knowledge of some of those events was necessarily derived from him, it is proper to say that he did not suggest this publication, nor are his representatives responsible for it.

J. C. BANCROFT DAVIS.

WASHINGTON, *September 30, 1893.*





MR. FISH AND THE ALABAMA CLAIMS

ON the 4th day of January, 1878, a letter from me appeared in the "New York Herald" on the subject of "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Motley, the Alabama Claims and Their Settlement," a copy of which will be found in the Appendix. In that letter, commenting upon Mr. Sumner's speech in the Senate upon the Johnson-Clarendon Treaty for the settlement of those claims, I said:—

"Lest I should be supposed to misrepresent the doctrines of this speech, which was the beginning of the differences between Mr. Sumner and the Administration, I quote from it. Under the heading 'The Case against England' he said: 'At three different stages the British Government is compromised: *first, in the concession of ocean belligerency, on which all depended;*¹ secondly, in the

¹ All the italics in the quotation are mine.

negligence which allowed the evasion of the ship in order to enter upon the hostile expedition for which she was built, manned, armed, and equipped; and, thirdly, in the open complicity which, after the evasion, gave her welcome, hospitality, and supplies in British ports. Thus her depredations and burnings, making the ocean blaze, all proceeded from England, *which by three different acts lighted the torch.* To England must be traced the widespread consequences which ensued.'

"What those widespread consequences were he set forth in detail under the heading 'The Extent of Our Losses.' He estimated 'the loss sustained by the capture and burning of American vessels' at 'about \$15,000,000.' The loss in the carrying trade he put at \$110,000,000 on the authority of 'a statistician.' Then he said that, large as these losses were, there was another chapter where they were larger far, — 'the national losses caused by the prolongation of the war, and traceable directly to England,' and he clinched the state-