

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE
RIGHT OF
VISIT OR APPROACH BY
SHIPS OF WAR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649249831

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Cover @ 2017

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INTO

The Right of Visit or Approach,

BY

SHIPS OF WAR.

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NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY JAMES MILLER,
No. 486 BROADWAY.
1858.

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THE recent visitation of several United States vessels, off the coast of Cuba, brought to the knowledge of Mr. Secretary Cass by newspaper reports, which, in several instances, have received contradiction by the masters of the vessels represented as having been outraged by such interference,* has been deemed of sufficient importance for a dispatch, dated 18th May last, to Mr. Dallas, the American minister to England, by which he is instructed to lay down certain principles for the information of the British Foreign Secretary. In that dispatch, to which all possible publicity has been given, General Cass, while basing his complaint upon the highly-colored newspaper reports of the occurrences, yet writes in regard to them, "The statements in the public journals contain the details of these transactions, but no authentic report on the subject has yet reached the department."

Will it be believed, also, that these very occurrences, of

* Besides other cases, see letters in *New York Times* of 26th May last, and other papers, from masters of brig "*S. Thurston*," schooner "*Marcia Tridou*," and ship "*Escount*."

which Mr. Cass complains as outrageous proceedings, have happened as the natural result of his own request and directions?

It will be recollected, by almost every body who reads the newspapers, that on the 24th of December last (1857) Lord Napier, Her Britannic Majesty's minister at Washington, addressed a powerful remonstrance to the American Secretary of State, calling attention to "*the present activity of the African slave trade; to the fact that it is now chiefly prosecuted by the criminal and fraudulent assumption of the United States flag, and to the incommensurate means which are employed*" (by the Secretary's government) "*for its suppression.*"

His Lordship adds: "In illustration of the statements which I have brought under your notice, it may be desirable that I should add a brief catalogue of the vessels captured by Her Majesty's cruisers on the west coast of Africa, previous to the month of October last, with some of the circumstances attending the seizure; but, in framing this list, I must regret that there may be others of which the designation has not yet reached Her Majesty's Legation."

Cases were then cited as follows:

1st. The "Adams Gray," seized 10th April, by Her Majesty's ship "Prometheus;" her name and "New Orleans" being painted on the stern, and her *captain and mate, to all appearance, American citizens.*

2d. The schooner "Jupiter," with 70 slaves on board; fitted out at New Orleans; captured by H. M. ship "Antelope."

3d. The "Abbott Devereux," taken by the "Teazer," with two hundred and seventy slaves on board; sailed from off the coast of the United States, *via* Havana.

4th. The brigantine "Eliza Jane;" fitted out at New York; seized by the "Alecta," on 22d August.

5th. The schooner "Jos. H. Record," from Newport, Rhode Island; seized by "Antelope," with one hundred and

ninety-one slaves on board; five United States citizens among the crew.

6th. The "William Clark," of New Orleans; seized by "Firefly;" exhibited American colors, and forged American papers. The vessel was remarked to be in correspondence with another craft in the offing, under American colors.

7th. The brigantine "Onward," of Boston; owned by Messrs. Lafitte, of New York, and fully fitted for the slave trade.

8th. The bark "Charles," of Baltimore; fitted out at New Orleans.

9th. "General Pinckney," or Pierce.

10th. The bark "Splendid," of Boston.

11th. The "North Hand," of New York.

12th. The "W. D. Miller," under American colors.

13th. The "Panchita," of New York.

14th. The "Nancy," of New Orleans.

15th. The "Minentonga," stated by Admiral Grey, commanding at Cape of Good Hope, to be one of several American vessels fitted out for the slave trade, as follows:

16th. The "Isle of Cuba."

17th. The "Jamestown," of New York.

18th. The "Putnam."

19th. The "Charlotte," of New York.

20th. The "Wizard," of New Orleans.

21st. The "Petrel," of New York.

22d. The "Ellen," of New York.

23d. The "Cole."

24th. The "Globe."

25th. The "Spirit of '76."

26th. The "Reindeer."

27th. The "Vesta."

28th. The "Flying Eagle."

29th. The "James Buchanan."

Or nearly an American slaver for every state in the Union, and one of them bearing the name of its chief magistrate.

But while this letter of Lord Napier's, published in most of the New York journals of about the 21st of May last, may be well remembered, the reply which it called forth from General Cass seems to be almost universally overlooked, notwithstanding its pertinence to the present discussion.

Mr. Cass, replying to Lord Napier, under date of 10th April, 1858, (see *Washington Union* of 24th April subsequent,) remarks:

"Experience has come to test the measures proposed, and they have been found inadequate to the extinction of the evil, so much so, that, in the opinion of your government, its present activity demands increased exertions on the part of the United States, with a view to accomplish the object. Those exertions, it is suggested, should be directed to the coast of Africa, in order to render the blockade more effectual, and especially to examine and deal with vessels bearing the American flag and suspected of being engaged in this trade. This system of a joint blockade has been pursued for some years, and the benefit it has produced bears no reasonable proportion, I regret to say, to the expenditure of life and treasure it has cost. But this failure need not discourage the anxious hopes of Christendom. *There is another way of proceeding, without the dangers, and doubts, and difficulties, and inefficiency which beset a blockade, and which is sure to succeed if adopted and persevered in, and that is, to close the SLAVE MART OF THE WORLD, OR RATHER, OF THE ISLAND OF CUBA, which is now almost the only region where the slave dealer can find a market. If these unfortunate victims could not be sold, they would not be bought. To shut the ports of Cuba to their entrance, is to shut the ports of Africa to their departure, and to effect this, nothing would seem to be wanting but the cordial co-operation of the Spanish government. The conventional arrangements which exist between Great Britain, and France, and Spain for their mutual co-operation in the suppression of the slave*

trade are very imperfectly known to me, but it is understood that Spain has entered into engagements with Great Britain, if not with France also, that she will use her best exertions to prevent the importation of slaves into her dominions. This pledge, if given, has certainly not been redeemed, though it is difficult to believe that the Spanish government would resist or neglect the firm remonstrances of those two great powers, or even of Great Britain alone, if she alone has the right, by treaty stipulations, to demand of Spain the faithful performance of duties which she has voluntarily assumed. *Upon the course of the Spanish government far more depends than upon the most rigorous blockade of the African coast."*

It is in accordance with such views on the part of Mr. Cass, that the British government turned its attention, for the suppression of the slave trade, from Africa to Cuba; deeming that the right of visit, as it had been exercised on the one coast, would be unobjectionable upon the other. It is true that the legitimate trade of the United States on the coast of Africa is of such small amount as to give rise to grave suspicions, when the American flag is frequently displayed: but, on the other hand, the island of Cuba is the great slave mart, and as most of the vessels known to be engaged in the trade are American built, the occasional inconvenience to which legitimate American traders on the coast of Cuba are subjected, ought not to be made a matter of serious complaint.

If the British naval officer generally meets the demand of his country, which "expects him to do his duty," there is none more anxious not to overstep the line of his instructions; and, in this particular case, the following letter from Commodore Rogers, bears an intelligent and honest testimony to the total absence of design on the part of Her Majesty's officers to injure or insult the flag of the United States. When such insinuations as we daily hear uttered in high places as to the malignant designs of England, or its

government, to force a war upon America, are received with general credence, the prospect of continual peace will become gloomy indeed.

But to the whole English nation there could be presented no state so horrible as a war with America—none to which they would make greater sacrifices to avoid. No journal that suggested any benefit to be derived therefrom, could live an hour, through the public execration it would invoke. No minister who valued his position, his fame, nay, even his personal safety or existence, would dare, in England, to lay measures in such train as to produce that fearful calamity; nor do we suppose, when the angry cloud of passionate misrepresentation which has been thrown around the subject of the recent visits to American vessels shall have passed away, that the American people will be less disposed to acknowledge that the truest interests of America, as of England, lie in peace with each other, at any sacrifice but that of duty; or that they will less honor such men as Rogers than those whose misguided or malignant patriotism paint the scenery of war with a brilliant light, only directed to reveal its spoils and prizes, while casting its train of suffering and horrors into intentional shade.

But let the better language of Commodore Rogers speak:

U. S. STEAMER WATER-WITCH, }
KEY WEST, Thursday, June 3, 1858. }

SIR: I arrived here safely to-day for coal. All well on board. I leave to-morrow for Havana, where I shall find H. B. M. steamer "Devastation," which has brought instructions from Admiral Seymour to the cruisers upon the coast of Cuba. H. B. M. steam gunboat "Jasper," commanded by Lieutenant William H. Pym, came into this harbor this morning in search of the "Styx," to deliver dispatches from the Admiral. Lieutenant P. stated to me that his instructions were printed, and were dated, he believed, 1849; that *they were, at all events, the instructions he had acted upon on the coast of Africa nine years ago.* He said he believed,