

earliest day possible what had been decided, so that British and other vessels might govern themselves accordingly.

In view of the statements made by Mr. Bayard in his note of the 3rd February, to which I have referred above, Her Majesty's Government assumed that, pending a conclusion of the discussion between the two Governments on the general question involved, no further similar seizures of British vessels would be made by order of the United States Government. They learn, however, from the contents of Mr.

Enclosure Nos. 1 and 2 of No. 16. Bayard's note of the 13th August, inclosed in your despatch No. 245 of the 15th August, that such was not the meaning which he intended should be attached to his communication of the 3rd February; and they deeply regret to find a proof of their misinterpretation of the intentions of the United States Government from an announcement recently received from the commander-in-chief of Her Majesty's naval forces in the Pacific, that several more British vessels engaged in seal hunting in Behring Sea have been seized when a long distance from land by an American revenue vessel.

Her Majesty's Government have carefully considered the transcript of record of the judicial proceedings in the United States District Court in the several cases of the schooners "Carolina," "Onward" and "Thornton," which were communicated to you in July, and were transmitted to me in your despatch No. 196 of the 12th of that month, and they cannot find in them any justification for the condemnation of those vessels.

The libels of information allege that they were seized for killing fur seal within the limits of Alaska Territory, and in the waters thereof, in violation of section 1,956 of the Revised Statutes of the United States; and the United States Naval Commander Abbey certainly affirmed that the vessels were seized within the waters of Alaska and the Territory of Alaska; but according to his own evidence they were seized 75, 115 and 70 miles respectively, south south-east of St. George's Island.

It is not disputed, therefore, that the seizures in question were effected at a distance from land far in excess of the limit of maritime jurisdiction which any nation can claim by international law, and it is hardly necessary to add that such limit cannot be enlarged by any municipal law.

The claim thus set up appears to be founded on the exceptional title said to have been conveyed to the United States by Russia at the time of the cession of the Alaska Territory. The pretension which the Russian Government at one time put forward to exclusive jurisdiction over the whole of Behring Sea was, however, never admitted either by this country or by the United States of America. On the contrary, it was strenuously resisted, as I shall presently show, and the American Government can hardly claim to have received from Russia rights which they declared to be inadmissible when asserted by the Russian Government. Nor does it appear from the text of the Treaty of 1867 that Russia either intended or purported to make any such grant; for, by article 1 of that instrument, Russia agreed to cede to the United States all the territory and dominion then possessed by Russia "on the continent of America and in the adjacent islands" within certain geographical limits described, and no mention was made of any exclusive right over the waters of Behring Sea.

Moreover, whatever rights as regards their respective subjects and citizens may be reciprocally conferred on the Russian and American Governments by treaty stipulation, the subjects of Her Majesty cannot be thereby affected, except by special arrangement with this country.

With regard to the exclusive claims advanced in times past by Russia, I transmit to you documents communicated to the United States Congress by President Monroe in 1822, which show the view taken by the American Government of these pretensions.

In 1821 the Emperor of Russia had issued an edict establishing "Rules for the limits of navigation and order of communication along the coast of the Eastern Siberia, the north-western coast of America, and the Aleutian, Kurilo and other islands."