

injuries from their graves to oppose against what national consistency and the national conscience compel us to regard as a claim intrinsically right.

Putting behind me all suggestions of this kind, I prefer to express my satisfaction that, by the adjustment of the present case upon principles confessedly American, and yet, as I trust, mutually satisfactory to both of the nations concerned, a question is finally and rightly settled between them, which, heretofore exhausting not only all forms of peaceful discussion, but also the arbitrament of war itself, for more than half a century alienated the two countries from each other, and perplexed with fears and apprehensions all other nations.

The four persons in question are now held in military custody at Fort Warren, in the State of Massachusetts. They will be cheerfully liberated. Your lordship will please indicate a time and place for receiving them.

I avail myself of this occasion to offer to your lordship a renewed assurance of my very high consideration.

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

The Right Honorable Lord LYONS, &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Thouvenel to Mr. Mercier.

[Translation.]

ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Political Department, Paris, December 3, 1861.

SIR: The arrest of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, on board the English packet Trent, by an American cruiser, has produced in France, if not the same emotion as in England, at least extreme astonishment and sensation. Public sentiment was at once engrossed with the lawfulness and the consequence of such an act, and the impression which has resulted from this has not been for an instant doubtful.

The fact has appeared so much out of accordance with the ordinary rules of international law that it has chosen to throw the responsibility for it exclusively on the commander of the San Jacinto. It is not yet given to us to know whether this supposition is well founded; and the government of the Emperor has, therefore, also had to examine the question raised by the taking away of the two passengers from the Trent. The desire to contribute to prevent a conflict, perhaps imminent, between two powers for which it is animated by sentiments equally friendly, and the duty to uphold, for the purpose of placing the rights of its own flag under shelter from any attack, certain principles, essential to the security of neutrals, have, after mature reflection, convinced it that it could not, under the circumstances, remain entirely silent.

If, to our deep regret, the cabinet at Washington were disposed to approve the conduct of the commander of the San Jacinto, it would be either by considering Messrs. Mason and Slidell as enemies, or as seeing in them nothing but rebels. In the one, as in the other case, there would be a forgetfulness, extremely annoying, of principles upon which we have always found the United States in agreement with us.

By what title in effect would the American cruiser, in the first case, have arrested Messrs. Mason and Slidell? The United States have admitted with us, in the treaties concluded between the two countries, that the freedom of the flag extends itself over the persons found on board, should they be enemies of one of the two parties, unless the question is of military people actually in the service of the enemy. Messrs. Mason and Slidell were, therefore, by virtue of this principle, which we have never found any difficulty in causing to be inserted in our treaties of friendship and commerce, perfectly at liberty under the neutral