

### THE ALABAMA CLAIMS—SECRETARY FISH'S INSTRUCTIONS

The following is an extract from Mr. Fish's second letter of instructions to Mr. Motley:

"Department of State,  
Washington, Sept. 25th, 1869.

"Sir—When you left here upon your mission the moment was (not) thought to be the most hopeful to enter upon renewed discussion on negotiations with the Government of Great Britain on the subject of the claims of this government against that of Her Majesty, and you are instructed to convey to Lord Clarendon the opinion of the President that the suspension of discussion for a short period might allow the subsidence of any excitement or irritation growing out of events then recent, and might enable the two governments to approach more readily to a solution of their differences. You have informed me that Lord Clarendon saw no objection to this course, and agreed with you that it would be well to give time for the emotions which had been excited of late to subside. The President is inclined to believe that sufficient time may have now elapsed to allow the subsidence of those emotions, and that thus it may be opportune and convenient at the present juncture to place in your hands for appropriate use a dispassionate exposition of the just causes of complaint of the United States against that of Great Britain. In order to do this in a satisfactory manner, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the acts and events which have in their progress and consummation so much disturbed the otherwise amicable and friendly relations of the two governments."

The Secretary then enters into a history of the grievances, in the course of which he writes:

"The precipitancy of the declaration of the Queen's government, as Mr. Bright characterized it, the remarkable celerity under and the unfriendly haste with which it was made, appears in its having been determined on the 6th May, four days prior to the arrival in London of any official knowledge of the President's proclamation of April 17th, 1861, by reference to which the Queen's proclamation has since been defended, and that it was actually signed on the 13th of May, the very day of the arrival of Mr. Adams, the new American minister, as if in the particular aim of forestalling and preventing explanations on the part of the States. The prematurity of the measures is further shown by the very tenor of the proclamation, which sets forth its own reason, namely. Whereas hostilities have unhappily commenced between the United States of America and certain States styling themselves the Confederate States of America.

He then argues that there was no just ground for the proclamation of belligerency. He says there was no such fact of necessity, no such fact of continued and flagrant existing hostilities, to justify the action of Great Britain in the present case. Hence the United States felt constrained at times to regard the proclamation as the sign of a purpose of unfriendliness to them and of friendliness to the insurgents, which purpose could not fail to aggravate all the evils of the pending contest, to strengthen the insurgents and to embarrass the legitimate government; and so it proved, for as time went on, as insurrection from political cause at length to be military, as the sectional controversy in the United States proceeded to exhibit itself in formation of great armies and fleets, and in prosecution of hostilities

on a scale of gigantic magnitude then it was that the spirit of the Queen's proclamation showed itself in the event, seeing that in virtue of that proclamation maritime enterprises in the ports of Great Britain which would otherwise have been piratical were rendered lawful and to the end continued to be the arsenal, navy yard, and treasury of the insurgent Confederates. A spectacle was thus presented without precedent or parallel in the history of civilized nations Great Britain, although a professed friend of the United States, yet in time of avowed internal peace permitted armed cruisers to be fitted out and harboured and equipped in her ports to sail against the merchant ships of the United States and to burn and destroy them until our maritime commerce was swept from the ocean. The merchant vessels were destroyed particularly by the captors who had no ports of their own in which to refit or to condemn prizes, and whose only nationality was the quarter decks of their ships, built and despatched to sea, and though seldom in the name still professedly owned in Great Britain. Earl Russell truly said: It so happens that in this conflict the Confederates have no ports except the Mersey and Clyde from which to send out ships to cruise against the Federals'. The number of our ships thus directly destroyed amounts to nearly 200, and the value of the property destroyed to many millions. Indirectly the effect was to increase the rate of insurance in the United States, to diminish exports and imports, and otherwise obstruct domestic industry and production, and to take away from the United States its immense foreign commerce, and to transfer this to the merchant vessels of Great Britain, so that while in the year 1860 the foreign merchant tonnage of the United States amounted to 2,548,237 tons, in 1866 it had sunk to 1,496,923 tons. This depreciation is represented by a corresponding increase in the tonnage of Great Britain during the same period to the amount of 1,120,450 tons, and the amount of commerce abstracted from the United States and transferred to Great Britain during the same period is in still greater proportion. Thus, in effect, the war against the United States was carried on from the ports of Great Britain by British subjects in the name of Confederates. Mr. Cobden, in the House of Commons, characterized by these very words the acts permitted or suffered by the British Government: "You have been carrying on the war from these shores against the United States, and have been inflicting an amount of damage on the country greater than would have been produced by many ordinary wars."

Again he writes:

"It remains only in this relation to refer to one other point, namely, the question of negligence—neglect on the part of the officers of the British Government, whether superior or subordinate, to detain Confederate cruisers, and especially the Alabama, the most successful of the depredators on the commerce of the United States. On this point the President conceives that little needs now be said for various cogent reasons. The matter has been exhaustively discussed already by the department, or by successive American ministers. If the question of negligence be discussed with frankness it must be treated in this instance as a case of extreme negligence, which Sir W. Jones has taught us to regard as equivalent or approximate to evil intention. The question of negligence, therefore, cannot be presented without danger of thought or language disrespectful towards the Queen's ministers, and the President, while proposing, of course as his sense of duty requires,

to sustain the rights of the United States in all their utmost amplitude, yet intends to speak and act in relation to Great Britain in the same spirit of international respect which he expects of her in relation to the United States, and he is sincerely desirous that all discussions between the governments may be so conducted as not only to prevent an aggravation of existing difficulty, but to tend to reasonable and amicable determination as best becomes two great nations of common origin and conscious dignity and strength."

Again the Secretary says:

"It is impossible not to compare and contrast the conduct of the States General as regards Great Britain on the occasion of a revolt of the British Colonies with that of Great Britain as regards the insurrection in the Southern States. No fleets were fitted out by America in the ports of the Netherlands to prey on the commerce of Great Britain. Only in a single instance did American cruisers have a temporary harbor age in Texel. Year after year the exports of munitions of war for the Netherlands were forbidden by the States General; but nevertheless Great Britain treated the declaration of neutrality by the States General and the observance of that declaration as sufficient cause of war against the Netherlands, prior to which the British Government continually complained of the occasional supplies derived by the colonies from the Island of St. Eustapho. How light in this respect would have been the burdens of the late insurrection if British aid had been confined to contraband commerce between the insurgents and the port of Nassau. Not such is the complaint of the States against Great Britain. We complain that the insurrection in the Southern States, if it did exist, was continued, and obtained its enduring vitality by means of the resources it drew from Great Britain. We complain by reason of the imperfect discharge of its neutral duties on the part of the Queen's Government that Great Britain became a military, naval and financial basis of the insurgents against the United States. We complain of the destruction of our merchant marine by British ships, manned by British seamen, armed with British guns, despatched from British dockyards, sheltered and harboured in British ports. We complain that by reason of the policy and acts of the Queen's ministers injury incalculable was inflicted on the United States."

### THE AMERICAN NATURALISATION QUESTION.

England is at last about to abandon, by legislative enactment, her long contested claim to the absolute allegiance of those born under her flag, a question that has been discussed at some length by the American people, and by them urged upon the attention of the British government. This is a matter of considerable interest to the many thousand emigrants from Ireland, especially those who have removed to the United States. In a speech by Mr. Otway, Under Secretary for the Foreign Department, and member for the House of Commons for Chatham, made before his constituents, on the 20th inst., he expressed his hearty satisfaction of the question, and remarked that an act had been drafted, which would be brought before parliament at its next session, enabling British subjects in that country to divest themselves of their nationality whenever they see fit to do so. We present below, a recapitulation of the facts and ar