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government.  
reading it to

SEWARD.

30, 1861.  
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United States unnecessarily to force into discussion between the two govern-  
ments a question of so grave a character, and with regard to which the whole  
British nation would be sure to entertain such unanimity of feeling.

Her Majesty's government, therefore, trust that when this matter shall have  
been brought under the consideration of the government of the United States  
that government will, of its own accord, offer to the British government such  
redress as alone could satisfy the British nation, namely, the liberation of the  
four gentlemen and their delivery to your lordship, in order that they may again  
be placed under British protection, and a suitable apology for the aggression  
which has been committed.

Should these terms not be offered by Mr. Seward you will propose them to  
him.

You are at liberty to read this despatch to the Secretary of State, and, if he  
shall desire it, you will give him a copy of it.

I am, &c.,

RUSSELL.

The Lord LYONS, K. C. B., &c., &c., &c.

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*Mr. Seward to Lord Lyons.*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
*Washington, December 26, 1861.*

MY LORD: Earl Russell's despatch of November the 30th, a copy of which  
you have left with me at my request, is of the following effect, namely:

That a letter of Commander Williams, dated Royal Mail Contract Packet-  
boat Trent, at sea, November 9th, states that that vessel left Havana on the 7th  
of November, with her Majesty's mails for England, having on board numerous  
passengers. Shortly after noon, on the 8th of November, the United States  
war steamer San Jacinto, Captain Wilkes, not showing colors, was observed ahead.  
That steamer, on being neared by the Trent, at one o'clock fifteen minutes in the  
afternoon, fired a round shot from a pivot-gun across her bows, and showed  
American colors. While the Trent was approaching slowly towards the San  
Jacinto she discharged a shell across the Trent's bows, which exploded at half  
a cable's length before her. The Trent then stopped, and an officer with a  
large armed guard of marines boarded her. The officer said he had orders to  
arrest Messrs. Mason, Slidell, McFarland, and Eustis, and had sure information  
that they were passengers in the Trent. While some parley was going on upon  
this matter, Mr. Slidell stepped forward and said to the American officer that  
the four persons he had named were standing before him. The commander of  
the Trent and Commander Williams protested against the act of taking those  
four passengers out of the Trent, they then being under the protection of the  
British flag. But the San Jacinto was at this time only two hundred yards  
distant, her ship's company at quarters, her ports open and tompons out, and  
so resistance was out of the question. The four persons before named were  
then forcibly taken out of the ship. A further demand was made that the com-  
mander of the Trent should proceed on board the San Jacinto, but he said he  
would not go unless forcibly compelled likewise, and this demand was not in-  
sisted upon.

Upon this statement Earl Russell remarks that it thus appears that certain  
individuals have been forcibly taken from on board a British vessel, the ship of  
a neutral power, while that vessel was pursuing a lawful and innocent voyage—  
an act of violence which was an affront to the British flag and a violation of  
international law.

Earl Russell next says that her Majesty's government, bearing in mind the