

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES,

RELATIVE TO

THE TREATY LATELY CONCLUDED AT WASHINGTON; INCLUDING
INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE EARL OF ABERDEEN TO
LORD ASHBURTON.

1842—1843.

No. 1.

The Earl of Aberdeen to Lord Ashburton.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, February 8, 1842.

THE last subject to which I propose to advert is that which, under the designation of the "right of search," has already created so much excitement in the United States.

I am persuaded that this excitement has in great measure been the consequence of misapprehension, and that when the real state of the question at issue shall have been fully explained and understood, it must necessarily subside.

Undoubtedly it would be much more agreeable to Her Majesty's Government, and, I must be permitted to think, more honourable to the United States, if the Cabinet of Washington were now to enter into the league which has been formed by the Great Powers of Europe, and by the mutual concession of a duly regulated right of search, to hold out to humanity the cheering prospect of the final extinction of the odious traffic in slaves. Your Lordship will constantly keep this object in view, and will not omit any seasonable opportunity to renew propositions tending to this result. With the example now happily afforded by all Europe I am unwilling to doubt the ultimate success of our endeavours to include the American Continent in these engagements.

But whatever objections may exist in the United States to the right of search, properly so called, these are not applicable to the present case under discussion between the two Governments. Upon this subject I have really nothing to add to the explanations contained in my notes recently addressed to the Representatives of the United States in this country, with copies of which you have already been furnished. You will there have seen that no such right is asserted by Great Britain. Our object is exclusively limited, where reasonable ground of suspicion shall exist, to ascertain the genuineness of the flag which any vessel may display. Her Majesty's Government have given ample proof of their desire to make these inquiries, when necessary, with every possible precaution, and with the least inconvenience to those concerned. They are ready to adopt additional provisions, if such can be pointed out, which may be still further calculated to prevent the possibility of abuse; but the right itself, being manifestly founded on justice and common sense, they are determined to maintain.