

I trust that the British government will consider the subject in a friendly temper, and it may expect the best disposition on the part of this government. Although this is a confidential note, I shall not object to your reading it to Earl Russell and Lord Palmerston if you deem it expedient.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

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*Earl Russell to Lord Lyons.*

FOREIGN OFFICE, November 30, 1861.

MY LORD: Intelligence of a very grave nature has reached her Majesty's government.

This intelligence was conveyed officially to the knowledge of the admiralty by Commander Williams, agent for mails on board the contract steamer Trent.

It appears from the letter of Commander Williams, dated "Royal Mail Contract Packet Trent, at sea, November 9," that the Trent left Havana on the 7th instant, with her Majesty's mails for England, having on board numerous passengers. Commander Williams states that shortly after noon on the 8th a steamer having the appearance of a man-of-war, but not showing colors, was observed ahead. On nearing her at 1.15 p. m. she fired a round shot from her pivot-gun across the bows of the Trent, and showed American colors. While the Trent was approaching her slowly the American vessel discharged a shell across the bows of the Trent, exploding half a cable's length ahead of her. The Trent then stopped, and an officer with a large armed guard of marines boarded her. The officer demanded a list of the passengers; and, compliance with this demand being refused, the officer said he had orders to arrest Messrs. Mason, Slidell, McFarland, and Eustis, and that he had sure information of their being passengers in the Trent. While some parley was going on upon this matter, Mr. Slidell stepped forward and told the American officer that the four persons he had named were then standing before him. The commander of the Trent and Commander Williams protested against the act of taking by force out of the Trent these four passengers, then under the protection of the British flag. But the San Jacinto was at that time only two hundred yards from the Trent, her ship's company at quarters, her ports open, and tompons out. Resistance was therefore out of the question, and the four gentlemen before named were forcibly taken out of the ship. A further demand was made that the commander 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 insisted upon.

It thus appears that certain individuals have been forcibly taken from on board a British vessel, the ship of a neutral power, while such 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.

Her Majesty's government, bearing in mind the friendly relations which have long subsisted between Great Britain and the United States, are willing to believe that the United States naval officer who committed the aggression was not acting in compliance with any authority from his government, or that if he conceived himself to be so authorized he greatly misunderstood the instructions which he had received. For the government of the United States must be fully aware that the British government could not allow such an affront to the national honor to pass without full reparation, and her Majesty's government are unwilling to believe that it could be the deliberate intention of the government of the