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—Truth is omnipotent, and Public Justice certain.—

FOR GOVERNOR
HENRY JOHNSON.

NEW ORLEANS:
SATURDAY MORNING, DEC. 4, 1841.

THE RIGHT OF SEARCH.

We laid before our readers some days ago, the official correspondence between Mr. STEVENSON and Lord PALMERSTON, in relation to the aggressions of British cruisers on the property of America citizens near the coast of Africa. We are glad to see these diplomatic communications published, as hitherto the people of this country had been kept entirely in the dark both as regards the complaints urged by Mr. STEVENSON and the replies furnished by the late Minister for Foreign Affairs. These violations of international law had been not only frequent, but had been conducted with an audacity, cool insolence, and perfect disregard of courtesy or consideration, that added insult to this unjust and oppressive policy. In vain did the press of our country protest against the odious enforcement of the right of search. In vain did even a portion of the English press condemn its indiscriminate and causeless exercise. The Van Buren administration, absorbed in the miserable policy of idols and electioneering, did not deign to regard the National honor as worthy of serious consideration, and the impudent assumptions of the British authorities were tolerated with a tameness that absolutely encouraged the continuance of the evil.

Popular justice has, however, been rendered to the late administration and another has been chosen, pressing at least to hold the dignity and honor of the Union at a somewhat higher rate than as a subject of low chaffering and barter. Among the first evidences of this determination to enquire into the tyrannical conduct of the British cruisers, is the publication of the official correspondence alluded to. This inspires with some hope that the subject will not be permitted to linger amidst endless litigation in the Chancery Court of diplomatic controversy. The remonstrances of Mr. STEVENSON, though urged with less vehemence and resolution than might have been expected, have even so far effected that they have called forth a reply from the navy officers of the British Cabinet—and PALMERSTON, we see, appears to admit that the English cruisers had not received that unlimited authority to insult the American flag, and institute on sight and [illegible] grounds an odious system of espionage, such as have been in the habit of arrogating. Lieut. SKORSM has been called upon to state the grounds justifying him for the seizure and detention of vessels bearing the American flag, and duly furnished with the necessary papers and credentials. A severe scrutiny into the circumstances has been ordered by the proper authorities, and we may hope that it will produce a satisfactory result.

We need scarcely at this late day attempt to explain the justice of our Minister's remonstrance. The English cruisers are despatched to the coast of Africa for the purpose of enforcing the suppression of the slave trade, and they possess, by virtue of a compact entered into by Great Britain, Spain and Portugal, the right to board and examine all vessels belonging to the two first nations, whenever they have reason to suspect such vessels may be engaged in this infamous traffic. But the United States is no party to this contract, and the right of search cannot exist without the mutual consent of the parties interested. The English cruisers cannot plead this privilege in justification of their oppressive and tyrannical inquisition—they do not possess it—it has never been granted. The doctrine that the right of search is absolute and illimitable, is unstable and Lord PALMERSTON himself avoids the utterance of so palpable an absurdity.

Granted as this right must be by National Convention it has been most grossly and wantonly abused, if we may judge by the facts mentioned in Lord PALMERSTON's letter. Since 1835, when the treaty concluded with Spain was ratified and put into execution, the British cruisers have seized and sold ninety-five vessels on board of which no captured blacks were found. Within the same period, they have seized and sold fourteen Brazilian vessels, of which two only contained slaves. We may judge from these facts, how greatly this right of search requires limitation, and how seriously individual interests are impaired and national dignity outraged by its causeless enforcement. The object of Great Britain is clearly to obtain the monopoly of the commerce of the Coast of Africa, and all the manœuvres tend to the attainment of this end. The swift vessels on the slightest and most groundless pretexts, and immediately transport them to Sierra Leone, where they are either sold or detained for a long and only liberated, without indemnity, when the object of their voyage has been completely frustrated by prolonged delay. Such procedures cannot in the end lead to any thing else but the unlimited command of Great Britain over the trade of the African coast.

While we rejoice that the correspondence on this subject has been laid before the people, we would impress upon our readers the necessity of remembering that it occurred more than a year ago. What further has transpired is not yet known, but we indulge the hope that the claim of this country has not been sufficiently languish. It is more than probable that all the documents and facts relative to this feature of British interference with American rights—including the recent outrageous business of the brig *Creole*—will come before Congress at an early day. If any regard be entertained for the preservation of our national dignity and a proper sense of independence, it will never again be allowed to slumber, until conducted to an honorable termination whether that consist in a concession of the grievances of which we complain, or in a resort to an ample system of reprisals.

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