VENEZUELA.

No. 413.

MR. PILE TO MR. FISH.

No. 3.]

UNITED STATES LEGATION,

Caracas, October 5, 1871. (Received October 21.)

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of letter addressed to this legation by Mr. J. W. Hancox, president of the Venezuela Steam Transportation Company, detailing the facts in reference to the seizure of the vessels of that company at Ciudad Bolivar, to which the attention of the Department is respectfully solicited.

I have asked the United States consul at Ciudad Bolivar for an official report of the facts in this case within his knowledge; and, as I am informed that the United States consuls at Martinique and Guadalupe have been applied to by our vice-consul at Trinidad to send a naval steamer to investigate this matter, I have written to the commander of our West India squadron a statement of the facts, and requested him, in case a vessel is sent, that it be ordered to report at La Guayra for conference with me previous to going to the Oronoco River. I shall bring this matter to the attention of this government as soon as I am formally received, and will promptly communicate to the Department any further information I may receive in reference thereto.

I have, &c., &c.,

WM. A. PILE.

Inclosures.

No. 1.—Mr. Hancox to Mr. Pile, September 20, 1871.

No. 2.—Mr. Fitt to Mr. Partridge, September 5, 1871.

Mr. J. W. Hancox to Mr. William A. Pile.

TRINIDAD, September 20, 1871.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that I am president of the Venezuela Steam Transportation Company, a company organized under the laws of the State of New York.

That this company owns the steamer Dudley Buck, plying between La Guayra and Trinidad, the steamer Hero, connecting with the Dudley Buck, and plying between Port of Spain and Ciudad Bolivar. That this company further owns the steamers Nutrias and San Fernando, plying between Ciudad Bolivar and Nutrias on the rivers Oronoco and Apure.

That all these steamers are permitted to carry their national flag by special agreement with the existing government of Venezuela, and only upon this condition the company has consented to navigate their waters. The steamer Hero left Trinidad duly cleared for Ciudad Bolivar, on the 26th of August, and while on her voyage up the Oronoco, opposite a place called Guayana la Vieja, was boarded by about two hundred armed men, calling themselves斌es or revolutionists, the officers were overpowered and the vessel captured. The officers, American citizens, with pistols presented to their heads, were forced to navigate the steamer as directed, and the steamer was forcibly carried to a place called Soledad, opposite to Ciudad Bolivar, and the captain was imprisoned in his state-room. The steamer Nutrias, lying at her moorings at Ciudad Bolivar, was forcibly taken possession of by the legitimate government, converted into an armed vessel, and opened a naval engagement against the steamer Hero, causing the Hero to suffer serious damage.

The undersigned was on board of the steamer San Fernando, a new boat making her first trip up the river Oronoco, and arrived at Ciudad Bolivar at 2 p. m. on Sunday, September 3; found the town in possession of the revolutionary party; also the steamer
Hero with armed soldiers on board. I immediately had the necessary proofs of capture and imprisonment certified by the American consul, John Dalton, esq. I then demanded from the chief who governed the city, the release of the steamer Hero, which was peremptorily refused, and continued to exercise all the influence at my command toward the release of the steamer, until the 5th instant, on which day I was notified that if I would comply with their conditions the Hero would be allowed to return to Port of Spain, viz:

1st. That the Hero should return from Port of Spain on the 10th, and resume her regular trips.

2d. That the Nutrias, which had been carried off by the legitimate government with government officers on board, to Trinidad, should return.

3d. That I should use my influence to stop the steamer Dudley Buck from running from Trinidad to Laguayra.

These were only such conditions which prisoners, as I considered myself and the officers, could accept. The importance of communicating with the United States by the mail-packet ship which was to leave Trinidad on the 8th September, and to preserve my property, gave me no choice but to accept their conditions, which they declared must be in writing, and, through one of their chiefs, my word as a man. I left on the morning of the 8th and arrived in Trinidad in time to connect with the mail of the 8th instant, by which I had the consul's dispatches forwarded. Copy of his telegram to Secretary Fish I herewith inclose.

I returned with the Hero to Ciudad Bolivar, according to agreement, on the 10th September, and the Nutrias left Trinidad on the 13th instant. On my arrival at Ciudad Bolivar I found the steamer San Fernando in possession of the military power, and on the 14th instant, with the American flag struck, she left on a military expedition up the rivers Orinoco and Apure. To save the vessel, I prevailed upon the master and engineer to remain on board as long as permitted. I left with the Hero on the 17th instant.

As the steamer Dudley Buck is, by special contract of the company, bound to and with Captain Treviornas to make regular trips to transmit the government mails, my influence, according to agreement, could not prevent him from making this trip.

Your honor has now before you an unvarnished statement of facts; the proof of nearly all is now in the hands of the United States Government. That our Government will act promptly I cannot doubt, and it will be the only means of saving the vessels in these waters, as an attack, now contemplated by the legitimate government upon Ciudad Bolivar, will, without doubt, destroy our steamers.

I beg and pray of your excellency to make use of every means at your command to protect and save from loss our vessels, for if the stars and stripes, our pride and glory, are no guarantee to Americans in any or every clime, I say for one, let me hoist a piece of calico in its stead.

I have, &c., &c.,

J. W. HANCOX.

Mr. John Dalton to Mr. Fish.

U. S. CONSULATE AT CIUDAD BOLIVAR, STATE OF GUAYANA, VENEZUELA,
September 6, 1871.

SIR: Two American steamers, namely, Hero and Nutrias, have been seized by contending forces in Venezuela. American citizens, officers of said steamers, are prisoners. Property and lives of Americans and other foreign residents are in danger.

Full particulars of these outrages forwarded by mail to you.

National dignity and humanity compel me to apply to you for due protection, to be granted at the earliest convenience.

JOHN DALTON,
United States Consul.

No. 2.

Mr. Edward H. Fitt to Mr. Jas. R. Partridge.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,
Trinidad, September 5, 1871. (Received October 21.)

SIR: I have the honor to inclose declaration on oath of D.L. Sturgies, master of the United States steamer Nutrias, as also of Joseph Edny and John Lovell, first and second engineers of the same vessel.

You will perceive that the Nutrias was taken possession of by President Dalla Costa of the State of Guayana, and converted into a vessel of war for the purpose of destroying the American steamer Hero, which, it is said, was in possession of the other belligerent party.
The Nutrias, which had two guns on board, discharged several cannon-shots at the Hero to prevent her landing the troops which she had on board.

As soon as Ciudad Bolivar was in the possession of the party styling themselves the Blues, the government officers on board of the Nutrias ordered Captain Sturges to sail for this port, where he arrived in the morning of the 3d September. On arrival Captain Sturges went on board Her Majesty’s ship Cherub to claim the protection of that vessel, which was granted to him, or he would have been compelled by the government officers to proceed in search of the Venezuelan steamer of war Oriente, for the purpose of transferring the officers, men, and arms which she had conveyed from Bolivar.

I have applied to the consuls at Martinique and Guadaloupe to send an American steamer of war to Bolivar to investigate these matters without delay, and afford protection to any American citizens who may require it.

In conjunction with other consuls of this port, I applied to the governor of this island to order Her Britannic Majesty’s ship Cherub to proceed to Bolivar, for the purpose of affording an asylum to any foreign citizens who might be in need of protection. This he declined doing unless we could produce evidence that the lives of any of the foreign citizens were in danger. As we could not produce this evidence, there the matter ended.

On receipt of further information from Ciudad Bolivar I will communicate it to you. I may add, the Hero, one of yesterday, has not yet appeared. It is reported that when the Nutrias left Bolivar she appeared to be on fire. I cannot vouch for the correctness of this information. I think it expedient that measures should be promptly taken to investigate these occurrences.

I will communicate with the Department of State by the mail that leaves here on the 8th instant.

Mr. J. W. Hancey, president of the Venezuela Steam Transportation Company, is with the steamer San Fernando up the Orinoco River.

I have, &c., &c.,

EDWARD H. FITT,
United States Vice-Consul.

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No. 414.

By the President of the United States of America.

A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas satisfactory evidence was given to me on the 17th day of this month by the government of Portugal that the discriminating duties heretofore levied in the ports of Portugal on merchandise imported in vessels of the United States into said ports from other countries than those of which said merchandise was the growth, production, or manufacture have been abolished:

Now, therefore, I, Ulysses Grant, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by an act of Congress of January 7, 1824, and by an act in addition thereto of May 24, 1828, do hereby declare and proclaim that the discriminating duties heretofore levied in ports of the United States upon merchandise imported in Portuguese vessels from countries other than those of which such merchandise is the growth, produce, or manufacture, shall be and are hereby suspended and discontinued, this suspension or discontinuance to take effect on and after the said 17th day of this month, and to continue so long as the reciprocal exemption of merchandise belonging to citizens of the United States from such discriminating duties shall be granted in the ports of Portugal.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this twenty-fifth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the ninety-fifth.

[Signature]

U. S. GRANT.

By the President:
HAMilton FISH, Secretary of State.