



"Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace, Unwarped by party rage, to live like Brothers."

From the Richmond Enquirer. COM. PORTER'S SQUADRON. CORRESPONDENCE, &c. To his Excellency the Governor of Porto Rico.

U. S. Ship Peacock, March 4, 1823. Your Excellency: I have the honor to inform you, that in pursuance of orders from my government, I have taken command of all the United States naval forces in these seas, for the protection of the commerce of the United States against all unlawful interruptions, to guard the rights both of property and person of our citizens whenever it shall become necessary, and for the suppression of piracy and the slave trade.

As great complaints have been made of the interruption and injury to our commerce by privateers fitted out from Spanish ports, I must beg your Excellency to furnish me a descriptive list of vessels legally commissioned to cruise from Porto Rico, with a set of the blank forms of their papers, that I may know how and when to respect them, if I should meet with any of them. I must also beg your Excellency to inform me how far they have been instructed to interrupt our trade with Mexico and the Colombian Republic, and whatever instructions or authorities they may have affecting our commerce generally.

As the suppression of piracy, the principal motive for my visit to these seas, is an object that concerns all nations, (all being parties against them) and may be considered as allies) I confidently look to all for their co-operation whenever it may be necessary, or at least their favorable and friendly support; and to none more than those most exposed to their depredations.

I therefore look with confidence to your Excellency for the aid of such means as may be in your power for their suppression; and in the absence of means, I beg to assure your Excellency that whatever course, may be pursued by me to destroy those enemies of the human race, it will have no other aim; and I shall observe the utmost caution not to encroach on the rights, or willingly offend the feelings of others, either in substance or in form, in all the measures which may be adopted to accomplish the end in view.

It will afford me sincere pleasure should I be so fortunate as to fulfil the expectations of my government, and at the same time preserve harmony and a good understanding with those with whom I may be so unfortunately to come in collision or discussion in relation thereto; indeed it will add much to my happiness if it can be avoided altogether.

That such is my sincere wish, and that the objects set forth by me are the only ones which brought me to these seas, I beg leave to assure your Excellency in the most positive and unequivocal terms.

With the highest respect, I have the honor to be your Excellency's very obedient humble servant. (Signed) D. PORTER.

To his Excellency the Governor of Porto Rico.

U. S. SHIP PEACOCK, Aguada, March 8th, 1823.

Your Excellency: On the 2d of this month I despatched from the squadron under my command, the United States schooner Greyhound, commanded by Captain John Porter, of the United States Navy, who was the bearer of a letter from me to your Excellency written in strict conformity with instructions which I had received from my government, propounding certain enquiries to enable your Excellency to put me in possession of such information as would place it in my power to fulfil the benevolent intentions of the government of the United States without infringing on the rights of Spain as a belligerent.

The commander of the Greyhound was directed to remain in St. Johns two days for your Excellency's answer, and then to join me off the port, or at this place, where I proposed watering the squadron under my command.

On the second day after his arrival at St. Johns, I directed the commander of the U. S. schooner Fox, to proceed there with his vessel, to ascertain what time it was probable your reply would be obtained, with orders to return immediately, and apprise the commander of the U. S. schooner Beagle, another of my squadron, of my intention to come to this place.

On the arrival of the Fox within gun shot of the castle I was much surprised to observe that six guns were fired at her; but knowing of no cause to justify such an act of violence, I should have thought that perhaps I might have been mistaken, had not the commanders of all three of those vessels failed to obey my instructions, which could not have happened but for some violent detention by the authorities at St. Johns.

Until I am better satisfied of the fact, however, I shall refrain from the expression of my sentiments on the subject, and shall for the present merely observe, that their character could not have been misunderstood, as the squadron at the time of the departure of the Fox, was lying in full view of the castle, their colors flying, and a British schooner under the command of Sir Thomas Cochrane, which had several times communicated with me and well knew the vessels, there the day previous to the last mentioned vessel, and on the day of my arrival at the port.

Not whether my suspicions are correct I have, in the event of their being confirmed, shall refrain from abandoning the island and leave the island of Porto Rico, as possible, leaving it to my country, which I shall make known the facts, to the outrage as it may think proper, which it will no doubt do promptly and fully.

Your excellency must be aware that it is always in my power to retaliate, and even in this place, but it would be a poor return for the friendship and hospitality I have received from its inhabitants, and I cannot reconcile it to myself that the innocent should be made to suffer for offences not their own. With great respect, I have the honor to be, your Excellency's most obedient humble servant.

(Signed) D. PORTER.

[TRANSLATION.] Office of the Captain General of Porto Rico.

Most Excellent Sir: At noon this day, just as I arrived from the village of Caguas, where I received at 8 o'clock this morning the official letter of the king's lieutenant commander of this place, advising me of the arrival of the squadron under the command of your Excellency with a disposition to enter this port. I have been inauspiciously informed of the misfortune occurring in the death of the commander of a schooner of war belonging to the squadron, who, it seems, persisted in entering the port, notwithstanding his having been warned by the discharge from two cannons, the two first with a blank cartridge, and the other at an elevation with a ball. But the Garrison in seeing his obstinacy, followed with an extraordinary rigour the orders for hindering the entrance of the squadron till my arrival, according to the determination formed by the said lieutenant of the place yesterday.

I wish to persuade the mind of your Excellency into a consciousness of the sorrow which this event, so mournful and unfortunate has caused me; so much the more painful, inasmuch as it has happened in a place in the district under my command, and on an individual under the orders of your Excellency, and a citizen of the United States; of a nation, with whom in all acceptations the Spaniards of both hemispheres are found united.

So unexpected a misfortune, which it seems ought never to be feared in friendly establishments, appears to carry on itself a character of criminality, which more and more aggravates my feelings.

But the juncture of the circumstances which have conspired towards the fatality, according to the information received by me is such, that if your Excellency will be pleased to examine it with impartiality, you will perceive that if the facts are not sufficient to mitigate the regret, they are at least enough to prove that there has been no intention of failing in regard to your Excellency, nor of offending any citizen of the United States, and much less their government.

The lieutenant of the king, and the commander of the place, grounded on various reasons, of which it is not important to trouble your Excellency with a citation, but of which however, I will point out a few, believed that he ought not to permit the entering of the squadron until my arrival. One of his motives arose from his recollecting that during the last year an expedition was armed in the ports of North-America, against this island, and indeed under the command of a man named Duchoudry Holstein; which expedition actually went into the port of St. Bartholomew under the American flag, and among his other reasons were the following: It has been reported here that another similar expedition is this year in preparation. That the schooners alluded to on their entering yesterday, would not receive the pilots on board, unless they practised with particular plans of the harbor, and the leads in their hand, of which the captain of the port made his complaint. That when the officers came on shore, a rumor was spread that they were saying Spain had ceded this island, and that of Cuba, to the English, which relation they confirmed to the lieutenant of the king, as he himself has assured me: That their not having presented to him the writing nor any expression from your Excellency; he suspected he had found something alarming in these rumors; and not sufficient proofs, that these were national vessels merely by the uniforms in which the officers were dressed.

These are some of the reasons which he has informed me he had in view in not consenting to the entrance of the squadron until my arrival, and in consequence of them, he dispatched his orders to the Castle of the Moro, not for the purpose of committing hostilities—but merely preventive orders. He sent an adjutant at half past six o'clock in the morning accompanied by an interpreter on board one of the schooners under the command of your Excellency to entreat her commander to be so good as to call on the government, in order to agree with them on the means and form of making known to your Excellency this their determination. Unfortunately the commander of the American schooner deferred, in the first place, his seeing the lieutenant of the king until one o'clock in the afternoon; and provoked by the adjutant to view it as an unjust case, and to consider duly the cause of his being disturbed, and of which he was fully informed; the commander promised the adjutant that he would go to the government, as soon as he could dress himself.

By an unheard of fatality he did not accomplish their promise until after his hearing the firing of the cannon at the Moro, which might have been avoided had he only presented himself for an interview with the commander of the place. The remissness of this officer, and the pertinacity of him who commanded the schooner in his not suspending his entering in spite of the cannon that was fired without a shot, and without waiting for a pilot; but notwithstanding this, and the

second discharge of a gun at an elevation, to crowd sail in order at all events to gain the port—these acts, most excellent sir, have been the means of depriving the United States of a citizen, your Excellency of an officer, of filling Porto Rico with mourning, and myself with inexpressible sorrow. I feel it to be my duty to assure your Excellency that the orders issued by the lieutenant of the king and commander general of this place, were by no means intended to commit hostilities or offences against the vessels; but as the firing was made at an elevation, either the tumbling of the sea or perhaps some bad pointing, must have been the cause why the fourth discharge should produce such a fatal effect.

Immediately on my return to this place I gave orders that all the vessels under the command of your Excellency of whatever description may enter freely into this harbor, as into a port of friends, where they will meet that reception which the law of nations assigns to those who claim a title in civilization and other privileges, secured by the treaties of friendship existing between the two nations. In this act I anticipate for myself the satisfaction of being able to manifest personally all the consideration which your person merits from me, and my regret for so mournful and disagreeable an event.

May God guard your Excellency many years. Puerto Rico, March 6, 1823. Excmo. Sr. (Signed) MIGUEL DE LA TORRE. The most excellent commander in chief of the Anglo-American squadron in the office of Puerto Rico, D. David Porter.

[TRANSLATION.] Office of the Captain General of Porto Rico.

MOST EXCELLENT SIR: I this moment received the very estimable letter of your Excellency dated the 4th of the present month, in which your Excellency has been pleased to communicate to me the important commission which has been entrusted to you by a government, that claims the respect of all the territories within its influence.

I have the satisfaction of forwarding to your Excellency a nominal report of the privateer vessels which have been armed and despatched for the purpose of cruising by the competent authority in this island, agreeably to the request which your Excellency has made me in the letter of that date, and I am extremely sorry to find myself so situated that I cannot comply with the wishes of your Excellency in regard to my transmitting you a set of blank forms, for the purpose of enabling your Excellency how and when to respect their commissions. The diplomas which they receive, come from our court already signed by his most catholic majesty, and the minister to whom this office pertains, leaving in these cases the naval authority here limited only to the filling of the blank spaces in them with the name of the captain and the vessel. Thus situated, it is impossible for me to accede to your circumspect views in this particular object. But nevertheless, if it should on occasion appear requisite to your Excellency, the said diplomas or commissions can be examined together with a blank signature of the captain of this port, in order that a sufficient ground may be established for comparing this signature with those which may be presented, keeping in view the prospectus of those, with which the said privateers are cruising.

I am likewise asked by your Excellency for information how far your instructions are extended for interrupting the commerce of the U. States with Mexico and the Republic of Columbia; and for your gratification it is my duty to declare that I find myself sufficiently instructed to state that the blockade which was established on all the coasts and ports of the provinces of Venezuela has been raised. Under these circumstances, I consider the commerce of the U. States to be in free capacity for an intercourse with that of the places formerly blockaded; reserving however for lawful capture the vessels of any nation which shall be found conveying implements of war to the insurgents—or people disposed to cooperate with them in their military resistance. I can give your Excellency no certain information concerning Mexico; but it is my opinion that the circumstances and condition are to be found the same as those of Venezuela.

The very important objects to which your mission into these seas is directed, and your good intentions and views, afford me the greatest satisfaction and hasten me to manifest myself to your Excellency, as at the instant I now do, in order to assure you that all within the scope of my authority and faculty in this island is one of the places most interested in the flourishing of commerce, and the revival if possible of good faith, and due respect to the property of the citizens.

Trusting that your Excellency may be able to fulfil the desires of your government in this important charge and that they may be ever more and more happy in their election, I have the honor of being, with the greatest respect, your Excellency's most attentive and sure ser-

vant.—Que sus manos bese. Puerto Rico, March 6, 1823. Excellentissimo Senor. (Signed) MIGUEL DE LA TORRE. Most excellent sir, commander of the squadron of the U. S. of America, in the office of this port, D. D. Porter.

[TRANSLATION.] Office of the Captain General of Porto Rico.

MOST EXCELLENT SIR: One of the first objects of my attention, as soon as I was informed of the mournful accident concerning which I wrote to your Excellency in my letter of yesterday, was to acquaint myself with the actual condition of the wounded individual in order that he should be located, where the duties of friendship might be exercised for his accommodation and comforts, but being certified that he had died during the transaction before related, I could do no otherwise than give my orders that his funeral should be conducted with all the decorum and manifestation of respect due to an honorable officer of his character and station, and causing his corpse to be attended to the grave by a procession composed of the principal chieftains, authorities, and other officers of this garrison. In this act, I could wish that your Excellency might recognise an expression of the lively sorrow which has been excited in me by this misfortune. May God preserve your Excellency many years.

Puerto Rico, March 7, 1823. Excmo. Sr. (Signed) MIGUEL DE LA TORRE. The most excellent commander in chief of the Anglo-American squadron in the office of this port, D. D. PORTER.

[TRANSLATION.] To His Excellency Captain General of Porto Rico.

U. S. Ship Peacock, March 11, 1823.

YOUR EXCELLENCY: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your several favors of the 6th and 7th of this month.

That which is in reply to the letter I had the honor to address you on the 4th is perfectly satisfactory in all its details, and the promptness with which you have been pleased to attend to it, as well as its contents, will no doubt be highly gratifying to the government of the U. States.

I know not how to touch on the melancholy subject of your other letters, without giving vent to some of those feelings which operate at this moment on my mind. I shall endeavor however to treat it coolly and dispassionately, and hope by a few facts to convince your Excellency, that there was not the shadow of an excuse for interdicting the entrance of my squadron into the harbor of St. Johns: That nothing can justify the order issued by your second in command, to fire upon any of the vessels composing it, and that the act of firing was, to say the least of it, an act of the most unpardonable cruelty and barbarity.

It is painful to me to see that your Excellency has laboured to justify the act; and to throw the blame on the commander of one of the United States vessels then in port. A statement in the Echo of the 8th, drawn by the same hand that penned your letter to me, is given to the public with the same object in view.—Your Excellency may have reasoned yourself into a belief of the correctness of the inferences you have in both cases drawn from the information given you, or both may have been considered as necessary and proper to prevent excitement; but I must be excused for saying to your Excellency that the charge is only an aggravation to the outrage which had already been committed. It was not the duty of that officer to move at the beck and call of the king's lieutenant, or to leave the duty unexecuted which I sent him to perform, to communicate to me the hostile intentions of a subaltern, which, had they been fully explained to him, he never could have believed he would have dared to have carried into effect; but they never were explained, and no such conversation took place between the king's lieutenant and the American officer, as is related by your Excellency. Your Excellency has been misinformed on the subject, and had it been the duty of the American officer, to have communicated to me the intention, to prevent my coming into port it would have been impracticable for him to have executed it, as the sea raged with such violence at the time, that no vessel or boat could possibly have left the harbor.

It is not magnanimous in your Excellency to resort to such means to excuse the bad conduct of those under your command.

The officer you would implicate was the bearer of a despatch from me to your Excellency, apprising you of the benevolent intentions of my government in fitting out the squadron I have the honor to command.

Had he been two days in your port and was possessed of a copy of my letter to you, which had been seen by your second in command at the moment of his presenting himself to him, which was on the day of his arrival. And if any doubts existed as to his character, or the character

of the vessel under his command, being in the power of the authorities of Porto Rico, they could easily have satisfied themselves.

But he had been received and treated as an American officer, and it is only to endeavor to palliate, or excuse the conduct of the offending individual, that your Excellency has sought for facts, which would never have been brought into notice, but for the lamentable circumstance which gave rise to these painful remarks.

He informed your second of the character of my squadron; a British squadron was then lying in port, which knew me, and there cannot be a doubt had communicated intelligence of my intentions to visit Porto Rico.

The sloop of war on board which my pendant was flying, with some small vessels of my squadron, were lying in full view of the Castle with their colors hoisted; the schooner which was fired into was standing directly into port in open day; she could not have escaped after the first shot was fired, or have given up her intentions of going into St. Johns, had she been so disposed, or had she understood what was intended by the firing.—But let me ask your Excellency, who for an instant could have supposed that a small schooner of scarcely forty tons burthen, mounting only three guns, with a complement of twenty-five officers and men, would have occasioned any alarm to the city of St. Johns, surrounded as it is by fortresses rendered as impregnable as nature and the art of man can make them? Was it not more natural to believe that the firing was intended to compel her, to approach? and even if the intention was not complied with, ought not her feeble condition to have claimed from those in your fortress some mercy? But no! the vessel after the death of her anchored commander was compelled to anchor between the forts, where a tremendous sea was running which jeopardized the lives of every one on board, to send the small boat on shore, where the young midshipman who commanded her, was insulted by having a heavy gun pointed into the boat, and threatened with destruction if he attempted to move from his position: he was then taken as a criminal and placed under guard.

These are facts, your Excellency, and incontrovertible ones. Let me ask your Excellency what better proofs you have of the character of my squadron now, than was produced on the first day of the arrival of the officer you wish to implicate! What further examination has been made, that the authorities of Porto Rico are better satisfied of our being Americans now, than they were before? None.

I repeat it that the character of my squadron was well known in St. Johns; even in this obscure place I found American newspapers containing all the details respecting it, and at St. Thomas's I saw persons direct from St. Johns, who informed me that its equipment and object was well known there. There has in fact been a degree of publicity given to the expedition, and an interest felt in it, that have been rarely equalled.

The whole of the civilized world was interested in its success.—It is vain then to say, that we were taken for lawless invaders, and it is unjust to endeavor to stain the character of my country by a charge of frequency of hostile expeditions against the Spanish possessions, or offer them as an excuse for the conduct of the offender. But men escape sometimes the vigilance of the most rigid authorities, and no government deserves reproach when it does its utmost to detect and bring them to punishment.

I find your coasts lined with troops since my arrival here. I find reinforcements daily coming in, as I am informed by your order to protect the inhabitants from my resentments. I have found every precaution taken to keep me in profound ignorance of the lamentable occurrence; but these things were all in vain. I saw the insult offered to the flag of my country.—I have satisfied your military commanders that their force is de-picable when compared to that at my disposal, and I have convinced the inhabitants, that although they are at my mercy, they will not be made answerable for the offences of an individual.

It is not then becoming to the character of your Excellency, to resort to subtlety in order to divert the odium of the act from one officer to attach blame to another.

I will further ask, why a rigour should be exercised toward vessels bearing the American flag, that was not extended to the British squadron or to the French frigate which arrived subsequent to the attack on Lieut. Com'dr. Cocker? In the one case there was only a small schooner to fire at, in the other there were vessels of force.

Had he fallen in battle and by the hand of a declared enemy, we should have been reconciled to his fate by the proud satisfaction that he died in the performance of his duty to his country; but to be thus cruelly torn from us, and by the hand of a dastard whose aim was the more sure from a confidence in his own safety, and the defenceless condition of his object, admits of no consolation.

Your Excellency in conversation with the officer you wish to implicate, advert-