

The Florida.
At Liverpool.

she had left the port, such a circumstance would have been well calculated to excite suspicion that the professed voyage to Palermo and Jamaica was but the pretended destination of the vessel.

But nothing of the kind existed. M. Staempfli, who has insisted on such a fact as one of the main grounds of a decision against the British Government, has here fallen into a very serious error. Instead of the guns and their carriages being brought, as he has imagined, from Hartlepool to Liverpool and there shipped, they were, in fact, in order to avoid suspicion, transmitted by railway, unknown to the authorities, from Liverpool to Hartlepool, a port on the opposite coast of England, and there shipped; so that, while the officers at Liverpool knew nothing of the shipment of the guns, the officers at Hartlepool knew nothing of the sailing of the *Oreto*. To this it may be added that, though Mr. Dudley was aware of the sailing of both the ships, and also of the transport of guns and munitions of war from Liverpool to Hartlepool by Fawcett and Co. to form part of the cargo of the *Bahama*, it never occurred to him to imagine that there was any connection between the two vessels. While he believed that the *Oreto* was about to proceed to the Mediterranean, his letters show that he believed that the guns and munitions of war sent to the *Bahama* were intended to run the blockade or be taken to Bermuda or Nassau, to be there transhipped for that purpose.

On the 7th of March he writes to Mr. Seward:—

“Some three weeks ago I was credibly informed that the same parties who had purchased the *Herald* had bought the steamer *Bahama*; that they would load her with munitions of war for the so-called Southern Confederacy, and either run the blockade or else land her cargo at Bermuda and run it into Charleston on smaller vessels. I made inquiries to find her, and wrote to different Consulates without obtaining any information about her, or any vessel of that name. Yesterday, we discovered that Fawcett, Preston, and Co. were shipping, by rail, cases containing shells and shot, also cases supposed to contain cannon and rifles, directed to ‘Pickford and Co., West Hartlepool, for shipment per steamer *Bahama*, for Hamburg.’ This Hartlepool is the same place where the *Bermuda*, on her first trip, received a portion of her cargo. I have written to the Consuls at Leeds and London, and will endeavour to learn something more about this business.”*

On the 12th of March:—

“The Vice-Consul at Newcastle writes me that there is a steamer, called the *Bahama*, loading at West Hartlepool. He no doubt will advise the department and give all the particulars in reference to her. Fawcett, Preston, and Co. are sending large quantities of munitions of war to this vessel; they have already sent from Liverpool 500 cases of shot and shells, upwards of 20 tons of cannon, and about 4 tons of gun-carriages. This vessel will either run the blockade or land her cargo at Bermuda or Nassau, and have it ferried over in smaller vessels.”†

When Mr. Dudley himself had not the shadow of a suspicion that the guns sent over to Hartlepool to be loaded in the *Bahama* were intended for the *Oreto*, it would be unreasonable, even independently of the mistake I have adverted to, to expect that the Liverpool officers should have seen through the contrivance.

Now, indeed, we are enabled to see these things by the light of subsequent events and since-acquired knowledge. We now know that the *Oreto* was ordered by Bullock for the Confederate States, and that Bullock was an agent of those States. But at that time these facts were entirely unknown to Her Majesty’s Government, and the first of them, at least, equally so to Mr. Dudley himself. Subsequent events have shown that the suspicions entertained by Mr. Dudley and others were well founded; but though these suspicions may have had more or less of probability, they were but suspicions, and were, therefore, incapable of being made practically available. It is easy to be wise after the event,—“*Eventus stultorum magister*,” says the adage. The Tribunal must be on its guard against the impression likely to be produced by the adroit way in which, in the United States’ pleadings, the story of these vessels is told without distinguishing what was formerly known, and what is now known about them. But, obviously, nothing can be more irrational or unjust than to say that Her Majesty’s Government were bound to have seen things then as we see them now, or to seek the condemnation of the *Oreto* on such evidence as was then forthcoming, because subsequent events have made manifest what was then incapable of being proved.

The inability of Mr. Dudley to obtain any evidence as to the destination of the vessel becomes the more remarkable from the fact that, owing to an accident, an additional three weeks from the clearing out of the *Oreto* was afforded him for discovery. The vessel in going out, after she had cleared, sustained some injury, and

* United States’ Documents, vol. vi, p. 222.

† Ibid., p. 223.