

NICARAGUAN AFFAIRS.

General Cazneau and Mr. John McKeon— Interesting Correspondence.

To the Editor of the New-York Daily Times:

Mr. District-Attorney MCKEON having led the way in publishing our correspondence, I avail myself of this official precedent to offer the press my reply to his letter, and to correct a few of his remarkable—will not say willful—misapprehensions.

There need be no mistake—for there certainly is no mystery—in my position or proceedings with reference to Nicaragua, and any assumption that there arises less from ignorance than from a desire to find an excuse for persecution.

Nicaragua is rich in a vast extent of public domain of incomparable beauty and fertility, which is open to the whole world by a liberal plan of colonization. She proposes to bestow on actual settlers free homesteads with transportation to them at her own expense. Feeling a deep interest in the progress and development of this American State, I proffered my humble services in aid of this munificent system of colonization, which, as may be seen by its provisions, combines many peculiar and inviting features.

First—That not less than fifty families are to be settled in one compact neighborhood.

Second—The sites of these settlements are selected in the most favorable locations for health, productiveness, internal trade and external communication.

Third—That homesteads of eighty (80) acres, are given in fee to actual settlers in these chosen locations, and a free passage thereto supplied at the expense of the State of Nicaragua.

This line of settlements, stretching in continuous communication along the transit route, and guarding the navigable waters of the State, would be the best guarantee for its domestic peace and prosperity, as well as the surest means of advancing American interests on the Isthmus. Each settlement will be strong enough to protect itself in ordinary contingencies, and all are to be placed at carefully-selected and naturally-communicating points; those, therefore, who are best acquainted with the true state of affairs in Nicaragua have no fears for their safety and general success. Several hundred persons had engaged to go out in the *Tennessee*, and take homesteads in these colonies, and my object in addressing the District-Attorney was to learn in what way this class of emigrants could be protected from serious injury to their prospects, by being arrested as fillibusters. I desired, on their account, to know whether some evidence of an attempt at illegal action would be required, or whether they could be arrested and prevented of their passage on any shadowy "suspicion of an intention" to enter WALKER'S army, if, on their arrival in Nicaragua, they should happen to find the Americans there in deadly peril, and be disposed to strike one brave blow for their rescue.

Mr. MCKEON declined answering these points and favored me instead with a chapter on diplomatic considerations which has as little to do with the subject of American rights—probably much less in fact—than the treaty now before the Senate, for that may be aptly styled a *treaty to extinguish the Monroe doctrine for the benefit of England*.

It is universally believed that certain high officials, in their unrelenting hostility to American progress on the Isthmus, expected and desired to see our friends there "crushed out," that is, butchered to the last man by their foreign enemies; and it is not to be doubted that the most stringent orders were sent from Washington not to allow succor to reach them from this quarter. It was thought by many that WALKER must fall,—and with him all the Americans on the Isthmus would be exterminated, without distinction of age or sex,—if he failed to receive aid in men, munitions and provisions, by the end of December.

By using a strict vigilance and a convenient latitude in rendering the neutrality laws, it was easy to make this relief impossible, and measures were taken accordingly. The friends of Nicaragua did not think Gen. WALKER'S position so critical, and bounded their efforts to sending out clothing and provisions for the sick, wounded and helpless, including women and children, and not excluding the wounded and suffering of the enemy.

But, up to this moment, the question remains unanswered whether lawful emigrants would not be subject to arrest and detention at the pleasure of any one who might choose to suspect them of fillibustering "intentions."

Mr. MCKEON talked in general terms of not permitting a violation of the neutrality laws, but could not be brought to define what act or movement constitutes this violation. He assumed that every emigrant to Nicaragua must necessarily and inevitably go with fillibustering intentions. He professed to know better than themselves, that of the thousands of industrious men whom our severe Winters leave homeless and unemployed, none can be found who will accept a fine farm in a mild and fruitful climate, with a free passage to it, from the generous Government of Nicaragua.

Starting on his own assumption, that the poorest homestead, he infers that the colonists who had engaged passage by the *Tennessee*, must all be open to the "suspicion of an intention" to violate the Neutrality laws, and therefore all be liable to arrest and imprisonment.

Acting on this principle, Mr. MCKEON, in the private interview at his office, operated upon the fears of Mr. MORGAN for the safety of his through line to California, and extracted from him, in my presence, a promise that none of the persons under colonist engagements should have a passage in the *Tennessee*, and all of them were cast adrift, to their great disappointment, and in many cases serious loss. Some hundred citizens were thus invaded in their rights, and Mr. MORGAN was compelled to recede from his engagements with the Government of Nicaragua, at

the hazard of his charter, on the bare "suspicion of wrong intentions." If he had persisted in taking these passengers, the steamer might have been stopped, as the *Northern Light* was on the same day last year, under the supposition that her detention might insure the destruction of WALKER and his band.

Costa Rica, Guatemala and San Salvador—all of them red with the innocent blood of our murdered citizens—may be lawfully supplied with men and arms to complete their wholesale plan of massacre, but we are forbidden to go to the rescue of our countrymen.

Well might HENRY CLAY declare that our neutrality laws were framed for the especial service of the foes of freedom, and well may the gallant QUITMAN battle for their repeal. Very respectfully yours,
WM. L. CAZNEAU.

GEN. CAZNEAU TO MR. MCKEON.

NEW-YORK, Friday, Dec. 26, 1856.

SIR: I regret to observe that your note of the 24th inst. in no form answers the inquiries I was constrained to address you in my note of the same date, respecting the execution of the Neutrality laws.

I asked no such superfluous question as whether Don FERMIN FERRER has been officially recognized at Washington, since it is well understood that England has not yet consented that our Government should adopt an American line of policy in Central American affairs, and no one expects Mr. MAREY to act without it. It is about as generally understood that Señor FERRER has not yet asked for recognition, and I was also perfectly aware that it did not fall within the range of your duties to decide that gentleman's position. Neither did I solicit an opinion as to the value or validity of the colonization contract, which I respectfully submitted to your consideration.

I only desired to know, in my capacity of American citizen, and for the benefit of hundreds of other American citizens, to whom it is of vital importance to know the fact, "whether persons going out under that contract would be liable, by the latest construction of the neutrality laws, to arrest and imprisonment here upon 'suspicion of an intention' to violate the neutrality laws in another country and jurisdiction."

Don FERMIN FERRER'S name was simply offered as an evidence of the existence and character of the contract, not supposing the circumstance of his not having sought or received official recognition at Washington, had annihilated his being as a man, or his identity as the selected representative of Nicaragua. I called upon him as an accessible and credible witness of the true nature of the contract, and with no expectation of exposing his name to the skillful discourtesy to which it has been subjected.

I distinctly stated that I had "no power, instruction, or intention to raise men for military service, or to send out any other class of emigrants than those persons disposed to accept farms upon the sole condition of cultivating them, as good and orderly citizens." But as mere *thoughts* have been made crimes, subject to arrest and imprisonment in former enforcements of our elastic neutrality laws, I was anxious to learn whether this construction was still in force. This is not a needless or unimportant question since our citizens have been arrested, steamers detained at heavy loss, and vast commercial interests deranged at foreign suggestion, and on such frivolous pretenses of suspected intentions, that our authorities never found it expedient to bring the arrested to trial. With these antecedents before us, it is necessary to guard such of our citizens as may be disposed to emigrate from a repetition of these inquisitorial persecutions. For their personal safety it is essential to ascertain whether some evidence should not be adduced of an attempt at military organization, before they can be deprived of their liberty and defeated in their prospects by arrest on the "suspicion of an intention" to violate the Neutrality Laws. This is what I desired to know and to this I could obtain no answer from the United States Authorities.

I never entered upon such an extravagant flight of fancy as to dream that this Administration would protect American citizens outside the limits of the United States, as other strong nations protect their subjects on foreign soil. Many times have their lives been sacrificed, their property plundered, and the free passage of American trade and travel assailed on the Isthmus; but no one has heard of any redress of these flagrant injuries to what you term *supposed*, but which the sufferers felt to be *real* American interests in Nicaragua.

I only presumed to hope that, on due application, the proper authorities would condescend to enlighten us as to what degree of freedom on our own soil remains to us under the present Government construction of the neutrality laws. We did not require to be informed of their existence, nor of our obligation to respect them; but considering their immense susceptibility of constructive expansion and contradiction, we were anxious to learn what class of acts would be treated as a violation of those laws, or whether the mere "suspicion of an intention," without any act at all, will be sufficient cause for the arrest and detention of persons departing from the United States in the legitimate pursuit of their interests in Nicaragua, and to this I again say we can obtain no answer.

Very respectfully, your ob't. servant,

WILLIAM L. CAZNEAU.

Hon. JOHN MCKEON, U. S. Dist. Atty., New-York.