

Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton

# LORD LYONS

*(Vol. 1&2)*

**Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton**

**Lord Lyons**  
(Vol. 1&2)

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# **PREFACE**

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It was the practice of the late Lord Lyons to preserve carefully the whole of his correspondence, whether official, semi-official, or private, and upon his death this accumulation of papers passed into the possession of his nephew, the present Duke of Norfolk.

I have been able to draw to some extent upon my own diary and recollections of the five years (1881-1886) during which I served as a member of Lord Lyons's staff at the Paris Embassy, but that period represents only a very small portion of his official career, and it is from the above mentioned papers that this work has been almost entirely compiled. All the material was placed unreservedly at my disposal, and I desire to make full acknowledgment of this mark of confidence. I desire also to express my gratitude to the numerous persons who have readily given their consent to the publication of important letters in which they possess a proprietary interest: notably to Emily Lady Ampthill, Lord Clarendon, Lord Derby, Lady Granville, Lady Ermyntrude Malet, Lord Rosebery, the Hon. Rollo Russell, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Sanderson.

I am indebted to Mr. J. F. Marshall and Mr. Alan Parsons for their assistance in sifting the enormous mass of documents found at Norfolk House, and to the Hon. Arnold Keppel for a service rendered at a subsequent period. Finally, I have to thank Mrs. Wilfrid Ward for an interesting contribution

entitled "Lord Lyons in private life," containing personal details only available to a near relative.

NEWTON.

October, 1913.



# CHAPTER I

## EARLY LIFE

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Born in 1817, Richard Bickerton Pemell Lyons, second Baron and first Viscount and Earl Lyons, eldest son of the distinguished Admiral Sir Edmund (subsequently first Baron Lyons), was apparently destined like his younger brother for a naval career, since at the age of ten he was already serving as an honorary midshipman. A sailor's life, however, must have been singularly uncongenial to a person of pronounced sedentary tastes whom nature had obviously designed for a bureaucrat; in after years he never alluded to his naval experiences, and it was probably with no slight satisfaction that the navy was exchanged for Winchester. From Winchester he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1838, being apparently at that period a quiet, well-behaved, hard-working youth, living carefully upon a modest allowance, and greatly attached to his parents and family.

In the following year he entered the diplomatic service as unpaid attaché at Athens, where his father occupied the position of Minister. In 1844 he became a paid attaché at Athens, and passed thirteen uneventful years at that post.

At this stage of his career, prospects looked far from promising; he had started later than usual, being twenty-two at the period of his entry into the service; younger men were senior to him; he had had no opportunity of distinguishing himself at Athens, and as he laments in a



letter to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Malmesbury, written in April, 1852, he felt 'mortified and humiliated that a man six years younger than himself had been passed over him as Secretary to the Legation in which he had served for thirteen years.' Promotion indeed seemed so remote that, having reached the age of thirty-five, he seriously contemplated abandoning diplomacy altogether.

As a matter of fact, there was no cause for uneasiness. In 1852 he was transferred as paid attaché to Dresden, and early in the following year received the gratifying intimation that Lord John Russell, who had been struck with his capacity, had appointed him paid attaché at Rome. 'What I mean for him,' wrote Lord John Russell, 'is to succeed Mr. Petre, and to conduct the Roman Mission, with £500 a year. If there were any post of Secretary of Legation vacant I should gladly offer it to him, as I have a very good opinion of him.' The importance of the post at Rome consisted in the fact that, whereas technically dependent on the Tuscan Mission at Florence, it was virtually semi-independent, and might easily form an excellent stepping-stone to higher and more important appointments if activity and discretion were displayed.

In June, 1853, Lyons started for his new post carrying despatches, and as an illustration of the conditions of travel upon the continent at that period, it is worth noticing that the expenses of his journey to Rome amounted to no less a sum than £102 3s. 3d., inclusive of the purchase and sale of a carriage, although no man was ever less prodigal of public money. Nor is there any record of any official objection to this somewhat alarming outlay.

In 1853 the Pontifical Government, exercising its sway over some 3,000,000 inhabitants of the Roman States, was in possession of no inconsiderable portion of the Italian peninsula, and presented the remarkable spectacle of a country jointly occupied by two foreign armies whose task it was to protect the Pope against his own subjects. With this object, 10,000 Austrians were stationed in the Ancona district, and 10,000 French troops in Rome, the latter paying their own expenses, but the former constituting a heavy charge upon the Holy Father with his embarrassed revenue and increasing deficit. The foreign policy of the Government was in the hands of Cardinal Antonelli, and not long after his arrival Lyons was able to write that in spite of 'his peculiar position' (unaccredited to the Government in Rome), and that in some quarters England is regarded as the natural enemy of the Papacy, I have found that notwithstanding a very strong opinion to the contrary, at Rome, as at most other places, one succeeds best by transacting one's business in the most plain and straightforward manner, and through the most direct channels. By acting on this principle and by being very quiet and unobtrusive, I think I have in part allayed the suspicions which are felt towards us always more or less at Rome, and I am certainly on a better footing with Cardinal Antonelli than I had at all expected to be.

The business between His Majesty's Government and that of Rome was not of an overpowering nature, and was chiefly concerned with the proposed establishment of regular diplomatic relations; with the alleged intention of the Papal Government to create a Hierarchy in Scotland, and with the inconvenient zeal of ardent Protestants in the Papal

dominions. As regards the establishment of diplomatic relations it seems highly doubtful whether the Papal Government really desired to see a new Protestant Mission at Rome: Cardinal Antonelli disclaimed any intention of creating Roman Catholic Bishops in Scotland, but the religious activity of British subjects in the Pope's dominions was a constant source of petty troubles. It must be admitted, however, that it was singularly easy to fall out with the Papal Government. The importation of Bibles was forbidden, the distribution of tracts was punished with imprisonment; one man of English extraction was incarcerated for a lengthy period because, according to his own statements, he had not communicated with sufficient regularity; and there were over 600 political prisoners in gaol at Rome at the same time.

As for the official relations between England and the Papal Government they were friendly enough, and when the Crimean war broke out, feeling at the Vatican was strongly anti-Russian, for it was believed that whereas the Roman Catholic Church had nothing to fear from Protestants and Mussulmans, the Greek schism was a real and threatening danger.

The following letter addressed to his brother, Captain Lyons, gives a not uninteresting description of the life led in Rome by an unmarried diplomatist without much private means, and incidentally shows the deep affection which he entertained for his family.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Rome, January 3rd, 1855.**

You may imagine what a relief to me it was, after reading your letter of the 18th, to see Admiral Dundas' arrival at Constantinople announced in the Malta paper. Your letter of the 3rd is almost, indeed I think quite, the most interesting I ever read. The only drawback to the delight all these letters are to me, is that you were still lying up. That I hope is over, and that you will be very prudent about it. We have now a weekly post from Constantinople and Malta, which is a great comfort. Mention all the details you can in your letters about the siege and operations by sea and land. The Malta papers bring nothing that can be depended upon. Besides the intense interest, it is a great advantage to me diplomatically to have good intelligence to communicate here, and is a great help to getting information, which is useful to me, on Roman matters. Details about Sir E. and yourself are always the most precious things you can write, and they cannot be too numerous or too minute.

My *ménage* consists of two men. I am obliged to have two, in order not to have to open the door myself, if I send one out. I have a good-sized sitting room, much better furnished than most Roman Lodgings, a second sitting room, which serves as Anteroom, and Breakfast Room, good Bedroom and a Dressing Room. I have very little sun, which I think an advantage, though in general it is thought the greatest of disadvantages—I breakfast at home, and dine with some of the other Diplomatsists at a little quiet Table d'Hôte, where there is a very good dinner. In winter I dine out three or four times a week,

and always spend the evening in society. I never do anything at all in the way of hospitality. With the immense number of English here, it would be impossible for me to get on, unless I made this rule. In summer I had some men occasionally to play at Whist, all of course Foreigners. I have taken my present lodging to the end of June. My hope is to go to England for two or three months about that time. I pay between 14 and £15 sterling a month for my apartment. It is in a capital situation—and a second floor. It is an admirable country for long rides, but very bad for short ones. The pavement of the Town is so slippery that it is dangerous to ride over it—most of the gates are at a very great distance, and after you pass them, you have a mile or two of stone wall, before you get out into the open country—which is beautiful and excellent for riding. The result is that I never do ride. Being almost the only Englishman here who has anything to do, beyond sight seeing and amusement, my hours do not suit my Countrymen. My great friend is a Count Gozze, Austrian Secretary of Legation. He is an old Dresden friend of mine. Rome is a very rainy place, which obliges me often to hire a carriage to go out in the evening. The hired carriages are good, but dear, about nine shillings for an evening. Lord Walpole is here—no one else I think that you know. I have scribbled all this because you ask me, and because little details about the writer (if one really cares for him) are generally the most interesting parts of letters, written where there are no great events

going on. You would think me oldwomanish if I mentioned half my anxieties about you and my Father.

A few months later, the brother, Captain Lyons, an exceptionally promising and gallant naval officer, died of wounds received before Sebastopol.

In 1856 promotion came in the shape of the secretaryship of Legation at Florence, but he continued to be employed in Rome, and stood twenty-second on a list of twenty-four secretaries of Legation. His prospects of further advance did not appear reassuring, and in March 1857, he writes to his father (now a peer), 'My chance at present seems to rest almost entirely on Lord Clarendon's disposition to give practical effect to the good opinion he expresses of me. I should trust with more confidence to that, if he had not promoted six secretaries of Legation before me during my residence here, and afterwards offered me as promotion the post of Secretary of Legation at Florence. Had it not been for your visit to England at the critical moment, I should now have been no more than simple Secretary of Legation, doing nothing at Florence.'

In the autumn of 1857, Lord Normanby, Minister at Florence, having gone on leave, Lyons was sent to take his place, and, instead of having nothing to do, found himself at once involved in one of those trivial questions which so deeply exercised the diplomacy of a former generation, but which are now of rare occurrence.

Earlier in the year the Pope had paid a visit to Tuscany, and during his stay at Florence a banquet was held in his honour, to which the members of the diplomatic corps were invited. Much to their indignation they were not

accommodated at the Tavola di Stato or Sovereign Table, where His Holiness was seated, and Lord Normanby, the British Minister, a K.G., Ex-Viceroy, and social magnate, considered that an apology was due from the Tuscan Government. Unfortunately for Lord Normanby, his colleagues, having previously agreed to support him, backed out of their undertaking, and the task of extracting an apology fell upon Lyons, for Lord Normanby had departed uttering dark threats that he would not return unless the apology was forthcoming. The Foreign Office took up the matter seriously, and for no less than three months an animated controversy was carried on, in the course of which 'The Tuscan authorities showed themselves so thoroughly wrongheaded that every time the subject was mentioned they said or did something which made it more difficult for them to go back,' and Lord Clarendon administered to them 'a severe rebuke.' Finally, whether owing to the severe rebuke or not, some sort of expression of regret was obtained; the injured Lord Normanby returned to his post, and Lyons resumed his duties at Rome. Whence he writes on March 6, 1858:—

The question of Reforms in the Papal Administration, which was so much agitated during the Pope's journey and immediately afterwards, appears to be entirely forgotten. The repressive measures which have been adopted in France since the attempt on the Emperor<sup>1</sup> would seem to render it difficult for H.M. to urge other sovereigns to Liberal reforms. The mode in which the intelligence of the attempt was received at Rome was shocking. One can hardly say that any class expressed

horror: the lower people openly declared their regret that the crime had not been successful, and the middle classes took little pains to conceal that they shared this feeling. In fact the policy which is supposed to be adopted by France of coquetting with the Liberal Party, without doing anything serious in their favour, has alienated the sympathies of this part of Italy.

Reforms of a simple character were evidently urgently needed in the Papal Administration, for just about this time a Canadian bishop and other British tourists were openly plundered on the main road between Rome and Civita Vecchia.

The turning point in Lyons's fortunes may be said to have arrived when early in March he received orders from Lord Malmesbury to proceed to Naples to inquire into the case of the *Cagliari*.

The *Cagliari* was a mail steamer plying between Genoa, Sardinia and Tunis, and on June 25, a number of Mazzinians who had taken passage in her seized the master and the crew, altered the course of the vessel, landed at the Island of Ponza in Neapolitan territory, where they liberated three hundred political prisoners, and subsequently proceeded to Sapri, in the neighbourhood of Salerno. Here they again disembarked, expecting the inhabitants to rise in their favour, but encountered a superior force of Neapolitan troops who killed or captured the whole party, whilst the *Cagliari* was seized by Neapolitan warships as she was making her way ostensibly to Naples. Some weeks later it was ascertained that amongst the prisoners in Naples were two English engineers, Watt and Park by name, and it was



stated that these two men were entirely ignorant of the conspiracy, and had been forced by the conspirators to work the engines under threats of being summarily shot if they refused. Under the circumstances, as was only natural, application was made by the British Government that they should at least have a fair trial, and that the acting Vice-Consul at Naples should be permitted to visit them in gaol.

Diplomatic relations between England and the Neapolitan Government having been suspended for some years, Lord Clarendon wrote himself direct to Signor Carafa, the Neapolitan Foreign Minister, in November, urging the necessity of dealing with the case in an equitable spirit, but with incredible perverseness and stupidity the Neapolitan Government continued to refuse upon one pretext or another either to release the men or to bring them to trial, or even to permit the Vice-Consul to visit them. In March, 1858, Watt and Park were still in gaol, and had been subjected to such abominable treatment that the health of both was completely broken down, and Watt had become partially insane. Under these circumstances, a change of government having in the meanwhile occurred in England, Lord Malmesbury directed Lyons to proceed at once to Naples and inquire into the case. Although the whole question had been considerably complicated, partly owing to a note of Sir James Hudson to the Sardinian Government having been unaccountably altered by a member of his staff, and partly owing to a rooted belief on the part of high Neapolitan legal authorities that engineers were responsible for a ship's course, the Lyons Mission soon bore fruit, and the two unfortunate Englishmen were both set free,

nominally on bail, before the end of the month, it having become evident to every one that they were absolutely innocent. But the Neapolitan Government was by no means out of its difficulties. It was pointed out that as two innocent men had been imprisoned for nine months, and treated with great barbarity during the greater part of the time, they were entitled to an indemnity which was fixed at £3000. Worse was to follow, for, egged on by the Sardinian Government, the British Government put forward a demand that the *Cagliari* should be surrendered on the ground that its capture had been illegally effected. Both these demands were refused, and finally, in May, 1858, a special messenger was sent to Naples instructing Lyons to leave unless within ten days the Neapolitan Government consented to accept mediation, and stating that England would make common cause with Sardinia under certain circumstances.

The message could not have been an agreeable one to deliver, and what the Neapolitan Government disliked more than anything else was the appearance of yielding to Sardinia. 'Ah! s'il n'y avait que l'Angleterre!' had always been the expression used by Signor Carafa; but his Government had placed itself hopelessly in the wrong, and Lyons was able to report that the indemnity would be paid, and that the *Cagliari* had been placed 'at his disposal.' It was an additional satisfaction to him to add that: 'Far from threatening, I did not even go so far as my instructions warranted, for I did not say that His Majesty's Government proposed that the mediator should retire at the end of three months, nor did I tell Signor Carafa that I was myself

ordered to go back to Rome if the mediation should be refused at the expiration of ten days.'

In spite of the unpleasant nature of this affair, Lyons contrived to remain on the very best of terms with the Neapolitan Ministers with whom he had to deal, and Lord Malmesbury was so favourably impressed with his tact and skill that he at once appointed him Minister at Florence. His professional future was now assured; but far greater honours were in store for him, for in November, 1858, came the offer of the Washington Legation, an offer which, with characteristic modesty, he accepted with considerable misgivings as to his competence. Nor could it be said that success had arrived with unusual rapidity, for he was already forty-one.

In the same month he succeeded to the peerage on the death of his father. His mother had died some years previously; his brother had perished in the Crimea, and the only remaining near relatives were his two sisters, one of whom was married to the Duke of Norfolk, and the other to a Bavarian gentleman, Baron von Würtzburg.

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# **CHAPTER II WASHINGTON (1859-1860)**

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In February, 1859, Lord Lyons, accompanied by some members of his staff (a novelty to one who hitherto had been obliged to work unaided) was despatched to Washington in H.M.S. *Curaçoa*, and owing to the limited coal capacity of that vessel, the voyage occupied no less than forty-two days, a period which must have been singularly disagreeable to a man who in spite of some years' naval service always suffered from sea sickness. The new Minister was received with marked courtesy by the U.S. authorities, and presented his letter of credence on April 12, Mr. Buchanan being President at the time, and General Cass occupying the position of Secretary of State.

Although the Presidential message of the previous December had contained some rather ominous passages with regard to the relations between England and the United States, the sentiments now expressed were friendly in character and showed a disposition to settle pending difficulties in an amicable spirit.

The first letter of importance addressed by Lord Lyons to Lord Malmesbury deals with the effect produced in the United States by the outbreak of war between France and Austria.

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**Washington, May 24, 1859.**

I had intended to write a despatch respecting the effect produced in the U.S. by the War in Europe, but we are so short of hands in the Chancery, that it is as much as we have been able to do to get through the regular matters of business which must be treated officially. I can however give you in a very few words an account of the state of feeling here, which is probably just what you would have expected it to be.

The sympathies are all with France and against Austria, but they do not seem very strong; one sentiment however does appear to be both strong and universal—the desire to take advantage of the state of things in Europe to carry out American Views on this side of the Atlantic; in short to get hold of Mexico and Cuba. The present wish of the President is, I think, both to be and to appear to be on the best terms with us. He is careful to vindicate us, in the newspaper which is his organ, against all imputation of insincerity in Central American Affairs. The Departments are particularly attentive to all the smaller matters I have to bring before them, and apparently anxious to do what I ask. But here I am afraid the practical effect of their goodwill is likely to end. The Government is so weak that I do not think it would venture, even in a small matter, to do anything for us which would expose it to the least unpopularity. I feel my way cautiously, endeavouring to be very plain and firm upon clear British Questions, and to avoid doubtful topics as much as possible.

The immediate object of the President with regard to Mexico appears to be to avoid the ridicule which would be heaped upon him if the Government of Juarez were to fall immediately after the American Cabinet had at last made up their mind to recognize it. Instructions are, I am told, on the point of being sent to Mr. McLane to negotiate a treaty with Mexico, partly, it is said, with the object of giving Juarez a little moral support, partly perhaps to get so advantageous a Treaty from him, as to engage public opinion here to declare itself more strongly in favour of his being upheld by the U.S. Whether Mr. McLane will be instructed (as Mr. Forsyth was) to propose to purchase part of the Mexican territory, I am unable to say.

I am very much obliged by your sending out Mr. Warre, and am impatiently expecting him. It is absolutely necessary to have a good man here to direct the Chancery; I think too this mission would be a very good school for a young man who really wished to learn his business, and I should welcome any one who was industrious, and wrote a thoroughly good legible hand.

It is particularly desirable that the Staff should be complete, because if the Minister is to have any knowledge of the Country and people, it is indispensable that he should visit, from time to time, the principal cities. This is not like a European State, in which politics and business are centred in the Capital, and can be studied more advantageously there than elsewhere. No political men make Washington their principal residence, in fact they cannot do so, as it sends no members to

Congress, either to the Senate or the House of Representatives. Commerce it has none. It is in fact little more than a large village—and when Congress is not sitting it is a deserted village.

Another letter dated May 30, shows that he was under no illusion as to the feelings entertained by a large section of the American public, while fully conscious of the difficulties with which the United States Government, however well intentioned, was forced to contend.

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**Lord Lyons to Lord Malmesbury.**

**Washington, May 30, 1859.**

You will anticipate from my private letter of the 24th my answer to your inquiry as to what would be the animus of this Government if England became involved in the present war.

The first notion both of Government and People would be to take advantage of the circumstance to take their full swing upon this side of the Atlantic, and especially so far as the people are concerned to get hold of Cuba and Mexico. The wiser heads see very distinctly the imprudence of fresh acquisitions of territory, and the great danger to the Union of introducing large Bodies of Citizens of Spanish and mixed Races. I believe this to be the feeling of the present Administration, but no administration disregards the popular cry.

So far as I can learn, the American acquisitiveness is directed rather South than North, and is disposed to be content for the present, with what is most easy to lay hold of. Except on the part of the most rancorous of the Irish here there does not appear to be much desire of exciting disturbances in Canada or any of our Colonies.

I think that if we were engaged in war the Americans would be (particularly with reference to neutral rights at sea) punctilious, exacting and quarrelsome to a degree. There is hardly any amount of violence to which a captain of an American man of war, if he were clearly in superior force, might not be expected to resort, in order to prevent American merchantmen being interfered with. And however outrageous in itself and opposed to International Law the conduct of the American officers might be, it would meet with enthusiastic applause from the multitude, and consequently the Government would not dare to disavow it. This admiration of bullying and violent proceedings on their own side, which appears to be universal among the populace here, and the want of firmness on the part of the Government in withstanding it, seem to me to constitute some of the greatest difficulties we should have to contend with in keeping at peace with America when we were at war with other Powers.

I do not think the general sympathies of the Americans need be taken much into the account. The violent feelings aroused at particular conjunctures by the events of the war, or by special matters of dispute, are what will sway the mob, and therefore control the



Government. The upper classes here have certainly in general a strong sympathy with England; they are proud of her position in the world, they are anxious for her good opinion, they admire her political institutions, and are extremely discontented with those of their own country. But the upper classes keep aloof from political life, and have little influence in public affairs. The mass of the Irish Emigrants appear to regard England with bitter hatred, their numbers give them weight in elections, but their moral power is small. I should hardly say that the Bulk of the American people are hostile to the old country but I think they would rather enjoy seeing us in difficulties. Those even who are most friendly like to gratify their pride by the idea of our being reduced to straits and of their coming to our rescue.

I conceive that the wish both of Government and people would certainly at first be to remain neutral, and reap all the advantages to their commerce which could not fail to result from that situation, and their interest in remaining at peace with us is so apparent and so immense, that it could not fail to tell for some time. But the People are irritable, excitable, and have a great longing to play the part of a first-rate power.

The Government would no doubt endeavour to maintain neutrality, but it would follow public feeling, and probably become exacting, captious, and (to use a term more expressive than classical) 'bumptious' to a very irritating extent. A great deal would depend upon firmness on our side. If they thought they could attain

their ends by threats and bluster, there would be no limit to their pretensions. Perhaps the best way to deal with them would be to gratify their vanity by treating them in matters of form as great people, being careful to communicate with them respecting our views and intentions in something the same manner as if they were really a considerable military power: to avoid interfering in matters in which we are not sufficiently interested to make it worth while to raise serious questions, and above all in matters directly affecting British interests and British Rights to be clear and distinct in our language, and firm and decided in our conduct, to convince them that when we are in the right and in earnest, we are more unyielding, not less so than formerly—in short to avoid as much as possible raising questions with them, but not to give way upon those we raise.

I need not remind you that these are the crude ideas of a man who has been only seven weeks in the country, and who has necessarily passed them in a small, and at this season, almost deserted town, which is merely the nominal Capital.

I am anxiously looking out for Mr. Warre, whose arrival you announce that I may soon expect. It would add much to the efficiency of the Mission, and be a great comfort to me to have an additional unpaid attaché, provided he were industrious, desirous to improve, and capable of writing a good hand.

The change of Government which took place in England during the summer substituted Lord John Russell for Lord

Malmesbury at the Foreign Office, and following the example of his predecessor, Lord John desired to be supplied with confidential information by private letters.

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**Lord Lyons to Lord John Russell.**

**Washington, July 11, 1859.**

At present the President and his Cabinet appear to desire both to be, and to be thought by the Public to be on the best terms with us. They are however so weak in Congress, that I doubt whether they would venture to do anything for us which would be the least unpopular. It is not therefore to be hoped that they will make any effort to open to us the Coasting Trade, to extend the provisions of the Reciprocity Treaty with Canada, to make a Copyright Convention, or, in short, take any liberal course in commercial matters. Nor indeed is it likely to be in their power to carry any measures tending to put us on equal terms with themselves in these respects. The Democratic spirit in this country appears to be all in favour of Protection and Exclusive Privileges. Happily the interest of the South is against a high Customs Tariff; and this checks the Protectionist Tendencies of the Manufacturing North.

Mr. Dallas will have communicated to you the Statement which has been for months preparing here, of the views of this Government respecting neutral rights. The Cabinet, I understand, hope that they shall obtain great credit with the people for their efforts to establish

American views on this point. They are very anxious to obtain our co-operation, and imagine, I think, that they may induce us to claim now concessions to Neutrals which would result in being a considerable restraint to our assertion for ourselves of Belligerent rights if we should become involved in war.

I think that our Relations with the U.S. require more than ever—at this moment—caution and firmness. Caution—to avoid raising questions with them, without a positive necessity; firmness—to make them feel that they cannot take advantage of the State of affairs in Europe to obtain undue advantages in matters directly affecting British Interests or British Rights. For my own part I endeavour to speak firmly and distinctly upon all matters which fall within the proper province of the British Minister in this country and to avoid all doubtful topics.

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The Americans, both Government and People, are I think very much pleased by attentions and civilities, and very prone to fancy themselves slighted. This quality may be sometimes turned to good account, and should certainly be borne in mind when it is necessary to keep them in good humour.

One of the many questions which had for some time engaged the attention of the two Governments was the disputed ownership of the island of San Juan on the Pacific coast, and this case afforded an instance in which the

Government of the United States was hampered by an agent whom it was not inclined to disavow. The culprit was a certain General Harney who in a high-handed manner occupied the island without authorization, and conducted himself in a generally offensive manner, but although President Buchanan was considerably embarrassed by his action, he was too much afraid of the press and the mob to order the withdrawal of the troops. For some time there appeared to be a chance of an actual collision, and Lord John Russell showed considerable irritation.

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**Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons.**

**Abergeldie, Sept. 21, 1859.**

The affair of San Juan is very annoying. It is of the nature of the U.S. citizens to push themselves where they have no right to go, and it is of the nature of the U.S. Government not to venture to disavow acts they cannot have the face to approve.

The best way perhaps would be that we should seize some other island to which we have as little right as the Americans to San Juan. But until we know the answer of the American Government to your note and the proceedings of Governor Douglas, we can hardly give you instructions.

If you could contrive a convention with the U.S. by which each Power should occupy San Juan for three or six months, each to protect person and property till the

boundary question is settled, it will be the best arrangement that can be made for the present.

As a matter of fact the U.S. Government showed itself more reasonable than had been expected: a superior officer, General Scott, was sent to settle matters, Harney, to use Lord John Russell's expression, was 'left in the mud,' and after a joint occupation and protracted negotiations the question of the ownership of San Juan was referred to the arbitration of the King of Prussia, who gave his award in favour of the United States some years later.

San Juan, however, was but one amongst a multitude of questions requiring solution, and the great difficulty which Lord Lyons had to contend with was—to use his own words, 'The idea that, happen what may, England will never really declare war with this country has become so deeply rooted that I am afraid nothing short of actual hostilities would eradicate it.' One of these questions concerned the Slave Trade.

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**Lord Lyons to Lord John Russell.**

**Dec 6, 1859.**

You will see by my despatches of this date, that there is very little prospect of any satisfactory result from our remonstrance concerning the Slave Trade. Lamentable as it is, I am afraid the President goes beyond public opinion already in the measures he takes against it. In the South the rendering it legal has many avowed