

OF AMELIA ISLAND.

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OF AMELIA ISLAND.

Mr. M. Inosh to Mr. Crawford.

THE REFUGE, NEAR JEFFERSON,

Camden co. (Georgia) Oct. 30. 1817.

" DEAD SIR—The last letter I had the honor to

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address to you, was on the 9th of August; shortly after which the public papers announced that you had left Washington on a visit to Georgia. A few weeks after, I thought it not imprudent to venture out to my swamp plantation on the Satilla, and since, have been very little at St. Mary's. Since gen. M'Gregor, and the greater part of his officers, (some of whom were men of respectable standing in the United States) have left Amelia Island, there has not been so much ingenuity made use of in misrepresenting the conduct and intentions of the invaders of East Florida; and the accounts which are published of them, are, for the most part, generally correct. The present chief, commodore Aury, got the command very much against the inclinations of sheriff Hubbard and colonel Irwin. When he arrived at Fernandina, with his squadron of privateers and prizes, they were entirely without money. He declared, "that if he gave them any aid, it must be on the condition of being made commander in chief; and that as general M'Gregor never had any commission whatever, the flag of the republic must be struck, and that of the Mexican hoisted, and that Fernandina should be considered as a conquest of the Mexican republic, (under which he was commissioned) without its being necessary that any other part of the province of East Florida should be conquered." Hubbard and Irwin reluctantly agreed to the mortifying condition of resigning the command. They were never friendly with the commodore, and endeavored, but in vain, to gain over by intrigue a part of his men. Their own party considerably increasing shortly after, they were several times on the point of coming to open war with Aury and his followers; and under the pretence that Aury's force were composed chiefly of brigand negroes: A few days before Mr. Hubbard's death, (who was called governor without having any power) Aury marched to his quarters with a body of armed men, and obliged him to make such concessions as drove him to an act of intemperance, which soon after terminated his existence.

"Since the death of this gentleman, there has been little or no disturbance among them. But it would appear as if the suspicions of the Frenchman did not die with Hubbard, as none of his privateers have left Fernandina.

"The parties are designated as the American and French; and, I have been assured by individuals belonging to them both, that each are anxiously looking for reinforcements. Aury has a number of Frenchmen, who were, it is said, officers of Bonaparte. They find it their interest, as well as inclination, to support their countryman.

"His great dependence, however, is on about one hundred and thirty brigand negroes—a set of desperate bloody dogs.

"The American party, which are rather more numerous than the other, consist generally of American, English and Irish sailors; but now have no declared leader. Irwin wants either spirit or popularity to assume that character. For my own part, I believe that in point of morals, patriotism and intentions, they are exactly on a par. Aury's blacks, however, make their neighborhood extremely dangerous to a population like ours; and I fear, that if they be not expelled from that place, some unhappy consequences may fall on our country. It is said that they have declared, that if they are in danger of being overpowered,

they will call to their aid every negro within their reach. Indeed, I am told that the language of the slaves in Florida, is already such as is extremely alarming.

"The patriots at Fernandina, had, about ten days ago, an unexpected and strange reinforcement. Twenty half-pay British officers, by the way of Turk's Island, arrived at St. John's river, and, mistaking it for Amelia, a colonel and a couple of others were made prisoners by the Spaniards. The others got safe to Fernandina; but finding that general sir Gregor M'Gregor had abandoned it, they determined immediately of doing so too."

Extract of a letter from Mr. Clark, Collector of St. Mary's, to Mr. Crawford.

Collector's office, St. Mary's, Georgia,
1st November, 1817.

Honorable Wm. H. Crawford,

SIR—I hasten to communicate the following information by letter, received from a gentleman residing on St. John's river, East Florida, the subject, in its bearings, presents considerations of the first importance, as to our political relations with Spain.

The following is extracted from the same:

"PABLO RIVER, ST. JOHN'S, Oct. 24, 1817.

About sunset a yawl boat arrived at the landing, when seven persons came from her who requested shelter for the night, and some refreshment, stating that they were half-pay British officers of the army and navy, from the island of St. Thomas, on their way to England, via the United States; that they had mistaken this bar for St. Mary's, that they left the schooner in the offing under that impression, and intended to send her a pilot by the return of the boat. After staying all night, they embarked at day light, having procured a negro pilot to conduct them inland to Fernandina.

Col. M'Donald, in thanking me for the hospitality he had received, said he felt bound as a gentleman to be candid, and accordingly informed me, that they had lately arrived from London at St. Thomas, in the ship *Two Friends*, with a great number of officers and munitions of war in abundance; that he had with him thirty officers on board the schooner; that he would command in this quarter; that they would have men sufficient and a profusion of every thing necessary for active operations; that they wanted a war with Spain, and that he had power to draw on England for 100,000 pounds sterling; that they would have a fine train of artillery; and that all these supplies were actually on their way or shipping; that a number of gun brigs and sloops would leave England reported for the East Indies, but were bound directly here, and to South America. That they were much disappointed at St. Thomas, on hearing that M'Gregor had left Amelia island; and that the capture of Amelia was known prior to their leaving England."

These officers have a soldier-like and genteel appearance, and all have their commissions; they said "their object in leaving the schooner was to reconnoitre."

They have all since arrived at Fernandina.

I have the honor to remain, &c.

(Signed) A. CHD. CLARK.

* Capt. Thomas was at St. Mary's with Cockburn, and lieutenant of the ship that fired on gun-boat 163 after the peace.

Extract of a letter from captain John H. Elton, to the hon. R. W. Crowninshield, secretary of the navy, dated

U. S. brig Saranac, Cumberland Sound, }
September 26th, 1817. }

"The patriotism of Amelia Island appears to be confined to privateering and plundering. General Aury has the command," &c.

Extract from a letter from captain John H. Elton, to the hon. R. W. Crowninshield, secretary of the navy, dated

U. S. brig Saranac, Cumberland Sound, }
October 10, 1817. }

"I have detained a Felucha, or small schooner that sailed from Fernandina, under a commission granted by general M'Gregor, to one John Morrison, for two reasons; first, as a pirate for having captured an English schooner with regular papers, bound from Nassau to Barracoa, called the Brothers; the commission was granted to John Morrison, a citizen of the United States, and who, during the cruise resided at St. Mary's, in Georgia, and the commission was made use of by one Edward Fenner, who likewise captured a Spanish schooner; both are detained for investigation. They have been out some time, and have received provisions from some English and American vessels, they say, gratis. The crew consisted of 18, and I suppose they could not carry provisions for ten days. On the 6th inst. I detained the schooner Hornet; she was commissioned by general M'Gregor, 22d July last, John Smith commander. She cleared out from Philadelphia in August as the Traveller; she received her arms and men in the Delaware Bay, near Lewistown. On the 6th or 7th September, she, for the first time, assumed the name of the Hornet, went off Cuba, made two prizes, the crew mutinized, and in that state was coming in."

"Until I get directions how to consider the island of Amelia, and the people bound to that place, it will be impossible to prevent either slaves or goods being smuggled."

"As most of the patriots there are one day an American citizen, and the next at Fernandina; 'tis easy for them and their agents, to evade all the vigilance we are possessed of. One small Spanish vessel, a prize to a privateer, got into the port before we could board, with seventeen slaves. I would have taken her out immediately, but I considered it neutral ground, and that it was the wish of government not to infringe—fearful of that error, our boats are generally sent out to board at sea."

Extract of a letter from captain John H. Elton, to the Secretary of the Navy, dated

United States' brig Saranac, }
Cumberland Sound, Oct. 19, 1817. }

"Day before yesterday I sent out to detain a Spanish slave vessel prize to a Mexican privateer: the captain and owner came in to converse with me, and the officer, neglecting to leave any persons in charge, the people from Fernandina went secretly off and landed all the blacks on the outer part of the island."

Extract of a letter from captain John H. Elton, to the Secretary of the Navy, dated United States'

brig Saranac, Cumberland Island, November 15, 1817.

Sis—On the 9th instant I sent a boat out to board a vessel from sea. The officer had not been informed to take charge of her, until I had thoroughly overhauled her, if she was a slave vessel. He was at Savannah when the instructions were issued. He returned, and reported it was a slave vessel prize to the Brutus privateer. I despatched a boat to bring her in for examination. The officer, acting sailing master M'Cluny, met her coming in, and, as it was dangerous to leave her to, remained on his oars, to drop alongside. They pretended to give him a rope—they did not, but passed him—he caught by a boat astern. The prize master threatened to fire on him, if he attempted to board; and, when musketry was fired under his stern, it was returned. The alarm was given by the boat. I unfortunately was on Cumberland Point, where only one gun was mounted, from which we fired two shot to bring her to. The first lieutenant fired three from the brig. Two of the five struck her, but she succeeded in getting into Fernandina. Although irritated at the insult, I did not conceive it correct to attempt force, to have her driven from neutral waters, but proceeded as I thought most correct; and the enclosed correspondence has passed between general Aury and myself. 'Tis true, shot was fired at her when close to Amelia, but the officer assures me she was on the northern part of the channel when he attempted to board. If half the depth of water is allowed us she was on our side. I have informed you that the channel over the bar was on their side, or to the southward of a direct line drawn between the islands to the sea. I never have been instructed on that head, but I really think they hold the island by too precarious a tenure, to be yet so very cautious of their rights. A verbal answer was returned, at first to my application, that they would protect her. Not knowing how the United States wished to view these people, I did not think proper to attempt to destroy the establishment, but sent out lieutenant commandant E. R. McCall, to bring back the privateer Jupiter, to remain as a pledge until I heard from government. It has excited considerable feeling, and no other privateers attempted to sail. The slave vessel was brought over last night, but every thing but slaves, and a small quantity of rice, was taken from her, and she appeared in a very filthy state. The prize master was not sent, neither any of the prize crew. I have written for the former—whether he will be sent I cannot vouch. Yet as retribution could so soon be had, if force was authorized, and wishing not to interrupt harmony, if it is wished by the United States, I have released the privateer Jupiter; and the High Flyer sailed immediately on a cruise.

A prior correspondence took place, as regarded captain Farinham. It was represented to me that he was a citizen, and only went there to trade. It appears he had been in the service of the patriots for some time. The application was of course dropped.

I shall send the vessel to Savannah for adjudication, and if the prize master is found, shall send him also. He is an old offender, by the name of Austin.

The situation of Amelia is, by no means, a quiet one. Those at present there, act very strangely. There has been a French party and

an English party—they have been in constant alarm of each. The French party is now trying as many of the English party as possible, and strangely are making a Botany Bay of the United States, as you will perceive by the proclamation enclosed. So much discontent prevails, that I should not be surprised to see them engaged in civil war. The slave vessels that have hitherto entered Fernandina, I have no doubt have smuggled all their slaves to the United States. Small boats are permitted to pass and repass; as they are rowed by slaves, they can smuggle one or two at a time without detection. Another mode of smuggling is, that the law makes no provision how to consider Boats of less than five tons. I sent one of that description to the collector. She was filled with provisions and naval stores from Savannah to Amelia—she had no "clearance—the law requires none; but from a passenger, on board, I had no doubt, in my own mind, it was to fit out a former slave vessel as a privateer. She was released by the collector. Am I to stop arms, ammunition, &c. bound from the United States to Fernandina, if not cleared as such? They turn them boxes of merchandize very frequently, and sometimes have more than they clear out.

Extract of a letter from Thomas Wayne, Esquire, purser on board the United States brig Saranac, St. Mary's river, dated, September 27, 1817, to Benjamin Homans.

* On our arrival here, we found general M'Gregor in command of Amelia. A few days afterwards he decamped, and embarked on board the privateer M'Gregor, formerly the St. Joseph. The command of the Island devolved on colonel Irwin an American, who was in a few days, attacked by the Spaniards. After an engagement of forty-eight hours which was all smoke, it terminated without the loss of a single life, and the Spaniards, retreated.

The noted Woodbine, of infamous memory, arrived here from Nassau, with a view, as was said, to join the patriots; but his friend, M'Gregor, having left the cause, he was disappointed, and embarked with M'Gregor, who sailed a few days since for Nassau, to commence some new expedition, which, it is generally supposed, will be to the Bay of Espirito Santo, or Bay of Tampa, in latitude 28° 15' N. and longitude 76° 30' W. This is an extensive Bay, and capable of admitting ships of any size, contiguous to which are the finest lands in East Florida, which Woodbine pretends belong to him, by virtue of a grant from the Indians. He says, he has surveyed the whole of the Gulf of Mexico, and Tampa Bay is the only place into which large ships can enter.

The patriots of Amelia are a most heterogeneous set, consisting of all countries and languages, except Spanish Americans. Amongst them may be found, Americans, French Irish, Scotch, English, Dutch, Germans, Haytians Petions, &c. all come ostensibly to aid the cause of the patriots of South America; but their real motive is, no doubt, to prey upon whom they can. Should they continue in Amelia Island, the place will become a second Barrataria.

At this time the government consists of Mons. Aury who is commander in chief of the naval and military forces: and Ruggles Hubbard, formerly high sheriff of New-York, is the civil governor.

A number of prizes of considerable value,

have been brought into Amelia by Aury's squadron.

It appears to be the anxious wish of the inhabitants, of the opposite side of the river, to be under the American government, as they are not now secure from either party.

Extracts of letters from Robert M. Harrison esquire, Consul of the United States at the Island of St. Thomas, to the Secretary of State.

St. Thomas, 20th April, 1817.

The increasing number of the American seamen, whose ill success in the privateers and pirates that infest those seas, induces them to relinquish those unprofitable pursuits, whenever an opportunity offers, and who almost universally swarm to this Island to claim my protection and support, so that they daily almost surround my door, renders it again my duty to request instructions from the department of state. I have not yet extended to such men any more than a partial assistance, though many of them are in the greatest possible distress, considering that the expenditure of such large sums of money might be considered as advancing beyond the bounds of my duty. It is much to be regretted that the disappointment sustained by so great a number of our seamen should not be sufficient to deter others from embarking in such enterprises.

St. Thomas, 30th May, 1817.

Numbers of American vessels, originally bound to the Spanish main, where their cargoes could have been disposed of to great advantage, have been deterred from a prosecution of their voyage, from a dread of the piratical cruisers that infest those seas, and have been actually obliged to sacrifice their property here, whilst English vessels prosecute the trade in perfect safety, merely from the circumstance of there being a few British vessels of war in the West India seas. The presence of one of our smallest armed vessels would completely awe those marauders, and enable our merchant vessels to prosecute a legal trade in safety. Her presence, (of the Boxer,) in the neighborhood would be attended with the most salutary effects.