

SECRET HISTORY OF THE SLAVE TRADE TO
CUBA WRITTEN BY AN AMERICAN NAVAL
OFFICER, ROBERT WILSON SCHUFELDT,
1861

edited by

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On April 7th, 1862, the United States Secretary of State, William H. Seward, and the British Minister in London, Lord Lyons, signed a treaty granting mutual search rights to warships of either nation in an effort to prohibit the slave trade which continued into Cuba. Among the innovations that this treaty introduced were three mixed courts designed to hear evidence from captors and owners of suspected slavers. These courts were established at New York, Capetown and Sierra Leone.¹ The New York court was the only mixed court ever introduced in America for the suppression of the African slave trade. It was established by Judge Truman Smith in one room premises in Union Building, New York City, and no case came before it between 1862 and 1870, when the mixed courts were finally abandoned.²

Truman Smith, ex-Whig Senator from Connecticut, was firmly in the Republican party camp by 1862. A graduate of Yale in 1815, Smith had studied law at the Litchfield Law School and was admitted to the bar in 1818. During the 1830's he moved into political life, firstly in the Connecticut State Legislature from 1831-1832 and 1834, and then as a Whig in the Federal House of Representatives from 1839 to 1843. After declining renomination for the 1843-1844 session, he served another two terms from 1845 to 1849. His interests in this period were concerned with the management of

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the Whig party. After serving as an elector on the presidential Whig ticket of Clay and Frelinghuysen in 1844, Smith was among the first to promote General Zachary Taylor for the presidential candidacy at the Whig National Convention in Philadelphia in 1848. He then acted as chairman of the Whig National Committee which successfully directed Taylor's campaign.³ Once Taylor was elected, Smith was conspicuous in his attempts to secure as many Whig delegates to Congress as possible, helping to organize Whig committees in the electoral districts of the various States.⁴ He was offered the post of Secretary of the Interior for his part in Taylor's successful bid for the presidency but he declined, preferring to serve in the Senate, to which he was elected in 1849.

During his term in the Senate, Smith helped to obtain a land grant to assist in the construction of the Sault Sainte Marie canal and also urged the construction of a Pacific railroad. As the sectional issue arose in Congress, the Connecticut Whig refused to be pulled into the orbits of either the Cotton Whigs or the active free soilers. He believed the question of slavery could be settled on the basis of climate and the regional topography of the areas into which it was proposed slavery should extend. During this period, his political skills were displayed in "informal colloquies" rather than on the Senate floor.⁵

In 1854 Smith resigned from the Senate for financial reasons and resumed his law practice in New York City, residing in Stamford, Connecticut. Between 1855 and 1857 he began to move over into the Republican camp. He associated with a group of New York politicians, bankers, railroad manufacturers and landowners, including William H. Seward, who were interested in incorporating the North American Emigrant Aid and Homestead Company.⁶ By the time of the 1860 election, Smith was a keen Lincoln supporter.⁷

In July, 1862, Lincoln appointed Smith to act as the American judge of the mixed court. While this was no doubt a reward for political loyalty, the new judge made a conscientious effort to understand the details of the slave trade treaty and the slave trade.⁸ He drew

up a condensed exposé of the treaty to take with him to his New York office at 61, Wall Street, Room 5.⁹ But the most obvious indication of Smith's interest lay in his search for information about the slave trade. At the end of 1860, he asked a neighbor in Stamford, Robert Wilson Shufeldt, to inform him of the "secret history of the Slave Trade" into the island of Cuba.

Shufeldt was well qualified to perform this task for Smith. A United States' naval officer from 1839 to 1854, when he resigned from the Navy, Shufeldt had served in the United States' African Squadron from April, 1846, to August, 1848. After 1854, Shufeldt was employed as a merchant ship captain by a number of shipping firms operating between New Orleans, Havana and New York. From 1857 to 1859 he worked for the Louisiana-Tehuantepec rompany on the New Orleans-Coatzacoalcos route, then switched to the New York-Havana run in 1860. A fluent Spanish speaker, Shufeldt was soon to be appointed as United States' Consul General at Havana for the first two years of the Civil War. In 1858 he had bought a small cottage in Stamford, Connecticut, close to Truman Smith's house, and the two men became close friends. Smith worked closely with Shufeldt on a number of projects, including an attempt to interest Seward in the work of Peter A. Hargous, the leading investor in the Louisiana-Tehuantepec company, who was determined to push a railroad over the Mexican isthmus of Tehuantepec. Later Smith helped Shufeldt to re-enter the Navy in 1863 and the two remained close political allies until Smith died in 1884.¹⁰ Early in 1861, Shufeldt replied to Smith's request and sent the ex-Senator his views on the slave trade into Cuba.

S.S. Quaker City
At Sea, Jany. 6, 1861.

Truman Smith Esq.
My dear Sir,

As the last time I saw you, you expressed some desire to become acquainted with the secret history of the "Slave trade" as it is carried on between the coast of Africa & the island of Cuba, in American Ships, I will endeavor, according to promise, as briefly as possible, to satisfy your curiosity—

An organized Company exists in the City of Havana with a capital of \$1,000,000, whose sole business it is, to import negroes, into the island of Cuba—Nine tenths of the slaves imported are brought in vessels owned by this Company at the head of which is a Spaniard well known in that City—a large merchant who conducts all of its affairs.¹¹ His manner of proceeding is this—He writes to his correspondent in New York to purchase a vessel & find a Master. This correspondent is probably Mr. Machado¹² of Beaver St. Mr. Blanco¹³ of Pearl St. or some other naturalized citizen of the U. S. who places the business in the hands of Messrs. Wenburg & Weeks¹⁴ who are “facile” ship brokers. These gentlemen obtain the vessel—not too large, or too expensive (in order to divide the risk of capture among several, with the same amount of capital)—and with as little difficulty they get a Captain—for he knows where to look for them, & they know where to find him. So well established is this business & so well understood, that even the U. S. Marshall might see—if it was not unfortunate, that there are those, so “blind that they will not see—” (Note—Most of the captains that I have known to be connected with this traffic are New England men).

The ship bought for cash—the ownership is sworn to in order to get a register—by this Captain & some American citizen who lends his name, for a consideration. The next thing is to load and clear her from the Custom House. Not many months ago—this was comparatively an easy matter—The Am. Bark *Wildfire*¹⁵ since captured with 500 negroes on board—was loaded in broad daylight with a regular slave cargo—at a pier on the East river—and to the astonishment of all the ‘longshoremen in that vicinity went to sea in tow of a steam tug—direct for Africa—Everybody knew it, except the U. S. Marshall!—A gentleman told me who I know is well used to these matters, that for these little “sins of omission”—some convenient friend of the above mentioned officer, was in the habit of securing a check payable to Bearer for say \$1000!—In this way some seventy vessels are said to have sailed from the Port of New York¹⁶ after cargoes of slaves since the 1 Jany. last—but latterly owing to a pressure of public opinion

—& it is to be hoped also somewhat to the stings of a guilty conscience—these U. S. officials have been rather more rigid in their scrutiny of suspected vessels—and consequently the manner of proceeding has been changed. The vessel now takes a legal cargo to Havana—and here opportunity for the prosperity of this traffic, a recent decision of Mr. Att[orne]y Gen[era]l Black,¹⁷ at the suggestion I believe of the Am[erican] Consul at Havana¹⁸—relieves this latter gentleman of all responsibility—(after the arrival of the Vessel in that foreign port) in reference to the legality of her future. The Atty. General has decided—that the clearance of any Am. vessel from the Custom House at Havana—is prima facie evidence of the legality of the voyage—and consequently the Consul need take no further steps—than the ordinary one of exacting from the Master, an oath that he is bound on a proper voyage & with a cargo in accordance with his clearance from the Custom House—those acquainted with the Government Officials in Havana—their sympathy with slavery and their natural affinity to bribery & corruption, need not be told how easily such a clearance can be obtained—(*Note a Captain recently informed me, that his cost him Six ounces (\$102)!—But this decision of Mr. Black & this action of our Consul—while it may be consistent with their own sympathies—& may also relieve them of direct responsibility—has not at least as yet, had the effect of diminishing the traffic under the national flag. On the contrary it has increased and is increasing every day. Mr. [Charles J.] Helm our Consul told me himself—that within the last twenty days he had passed thro' his office, the registers of eight Am. vessels—which he knew where going after Negroes.

The ship having been purchased in N. Y.—arrived in Havana—& discharged her cargo—now proceeds to fulfil the real object of her owners. In the first place she takes in a new cargo, which consists of articles used in the purchase of slaves, & their subsistence on the homeward voyage—viz Ba[rre]ls of bread, puncheons of rum—tierces of rice & beans—jerked beef—tobacco—pickles & vinegar, powder & old muskets—& together with lumber, for the slave deck—(specie is seldom sent

out,)—Next the crew is shipped consisting usually of men of every nation—these men agree to go the voyage upon terms that are well understood. So much “advance”—say \$50, & one and a half dollars per man for every negro landed in Cuba. In addition to the Capt. Mate & 2nd Mate, there comes on board—a sallow faced, gloomy Spaniard, who is generally Don José or Don Somebody else—whose frequent voyages to “the Coast” are written in every line of his face. He is the “Sobre-cargo”—the great factotum & transactor of all the business of the ship, & in case of need when boarded by American Men of War, he hoists the Spanish flag—& is the Spanish Captain! After this important character comes another man—called the “Contra maestro” or boatswain—he is the “nigger” driver, the brute who manages & beats into submission the human cargo on its homeward trip—none but a Spaniard could look or be so cruel as he is! The ships cargo & crew are now complete, & having “cleared” from the Custom House & the American Consulate—direct for the “Rio Congo”—She sails out of port some bright morning with the American flag, that beautiful emblem of liberty to the oppressed—flaunting to the breeze—& speeds on a mission—the horrors & cruelties of which my pen can not describe.

The outward voyage will occupy about forty five days, how this is employed by the Captain & his incongruous crew—I am unprepared to say—perhaps in mutual speculation as to their probable gains, & guesses as to how many of the “damn niggers” will die—before they can land them; each one, being worth to the meanest & vilest of this crew—at least, one dollar & a half! But arrived in the “Rio Congo” you perhaps imagine, the dark night, the thick jungle & the stealthy tread of the man stealer, as the necessary adjuncts of this traffic; quite the reverse Sir—the ship glides unmolested some thirty miles up the river, & with all the bustle of a new arrival hauls into a regularly constructed pier—opposite the so called “factory” & warehouse of this regularly established company which I have before mentioned. The resident Agent comes on board & warmly welcomes his old friend the “Sobre Cargo”—& after

being introduced to & taking a drink with the Captain, they adjourn on shore to a comfortable dinner—where over their wine they discuss the price of rum & the price of niggers!

In the meanwhile on this wharf there assembles the most promiscuous crowd of men, that perhaps you ever saw, the result of captures by men of war on “the coast” & landed at convenient points, in order that they may man other vessels—& be again taken with full cargoes of negroes—& thus over & over again, put prize money in the pockets of H. B. Majesty’s Naval Officer! These men are the outcasts of all civilization, desperadoes—murderers—pirates, Chinese, Portuguese, Native Africans, English, Dutch—Devils! And as our ship left Havana (to save appearances) with a small crew—a fit addition is made to it, from these “experts” in the abominable traffic—. The next day perhaps a Man of War steams up the “Rio Congo”—for she has a coal depot opposite this very “warehouse”—and our Captain receives a visit from her—cheerfully shows his regular manifest & clearance certificate by the Am. Consul at Havana—& hoists his Am. flag—& sends back to the Steamer a box of very good Havana Segars & one case of very good Brandy—& then the Steamer sails away perhaps to watch him at sea—for there is no prize money unless the negroes are on board—He waits therefore until they are. In fact he rather encourages him—by hurrying away—but our Yankee Skipper is “up to *him*.”

Now however he has work before him, & he loses no time—(it is this indomitable energy of purpose & restless activity of the Am. shipmaster which renders him so much more valuable than other men in this business). He begins at once to discharge his outward cargo into the warehouse—& to receive from there, empty casks, which were previously puncheons of rum brought by the preceding vessels of this same company—These he places in his Hold to be filled with water—& over all he lays on cross pieces, his “slave deck,” the lumber for which was also a part of his cargo. He now fills his water casks—by boring a hole in the bottom of his ship & leading a pipe therefrom to the casks—for the waters of the Congo are as sweet to the native African—as the boasted draught from the “father of waters”

to the dwellers in the valley of the Mississippi.¹⁹

His water full—his provisions all stowed & his extra cooking stove put on board from the warehouse—he reports himself ready for sea—& the sobrecargo informs him—that he has had a chance to select a fine lot of seven hundred & fifty out perhaps of a thousand waiting in the “factory” for shipment—at a cost (in bad rum) of fifty dollars a head! Oh! this boasted christian, civilised, nineteenth century which permits such a double edged iniquity, the exchange of bad rum to ignorant barbarians for the blood and sweat of their own kith and kin!

The Agent now sends out his spies to report the mouth of the river clear from Men of War, & with the first fair wind & ever favoring current, the negroes are driven on board, naked as the day they were born, in one promiscuous huddle of men, women & children, the lines are cast off—and without a word of farewell these sons & daughters of Africa, are carried away from their native soil—never—never to see it again—Never to reunite the ties that day so rudely severed—then after a sea passage—during which at least *one third* of them must die, doomed to a bondage in a foreign land—compared to which death would be a blessing—and all this done under the American dag—which in the touching pathos of our national poetry only “waves over the free”!

We will now imagine our ship clear of the coast & with a fair wind; The description of the life on board for one day will answer for the voyage, usually about thirty five days in length—This vessel is one hundred feet long & thirty feet wide, and on her deck and under her deck—and on her cabin & in her cabin are stowed seven hundred & fifty human beings—so cramped & crowded, that they can scarcely sit down when standing—or stand up when sitting; The women however have been separated from the men by a broad partition—In the early morning the crew lead a hose from the pump—& without regard to sex or condition give each one a thorough bath; & afterwards wash the deck—sending into the pure sea, the accumulated filth & excrement of the preceding day & night. Each negro then is compelled to wash out his mouth with vinegar—and

occasionally to eat a pickle—this is done to prevent scurvy—afterward a meal is served out to them consisting of a pint of water & a quantity of rice and beans, mixed & boiled in one huge “copper”—After this the “Doctor” examines them—pitches overboard the dead & the dying—and gives medicine to such as are not beyond the hope of recovery; the principal diseases, with which they have to contend are dysentery and ophthalmia, both generally fatal & both owing to the confined space & foul atmosphere; During the day the “contra maestro” of whom I have spoken & the very sight of whom makes my blood boil with rage—goes about among them with his whip & crows down the boldest—and silences the noisiest with his merciless lash—and sometimes he takes a few of the weakest to a less crowded space & makes them dance & jump—to the tune of his cowhide—as an exercise & to restore circulation!

The second & last meal for the day consists of the same dish—with the occasional addition of scraps of jerked Beef—this comprises the entire diet—sometimes however when very *despondent*, they are given some rum. At night they are compelled to lie down “spoon fashion”—(as a housekeeper places his spoons in a basket—)—a canvass covering is hauled over them—and it is *impossible* for them to change their position until daylight the following morning—But we will pass over all of the sickening details of a lengthened voyage, the excitement of a chase—the frequent scantiness of water & provisions & the consequent frightful mortality—among the negroes & often among the crew—and the thousand and one barbarous incidents which must make the soul of every honest American sicken at the bare idea that such abominations are practiced every day under the guarantee of his Nationality. We will pass them over I say & suppose our Ship safely arrived at the “Key St. Philip”—this little island is only one of many of the secluded rendezvous abounding on the coasts of Cuba. The Capt. drops his anchor—hoists his private signal—and the launches which have been waiting since a certain fixed day—immediately come off & with them a custom house officer—sent probably by the Governor of the district! The negroes are landed, & sent off at once to some place—where they are washed, & exercised &

fattened for the market. The Comp's agent pays off the crew giving to each man his pro rata. The Ship's anchor is raised—Sail is made & the plug from that same hole in her bottom which was used for fresh water in the Congo—is pulled out and the old craft, foul with crime—& full of all uncleanness, is started forth upon the sea—to sink inevitably & thus obliterate from the records, all evidence of the cruise in which she has been an innocent participator.

The Captain goes to Havana—with his Ship's register & a false bill of sale in his pocket—which he forwarded to the N. Y. Custom House according to law—& In the meanwhile he presents himself to his Principal with the following balance Sheet: ²⁰

Mr.....

To first cost of Ship	\$ 7,000	500 Negroes \$800	\$400,000
Advance Wages	\$ 1,500	deduct bribes	\$100,000
Cost of Negroes @ \$50	\$37,500		<hr/>
Capt. Wages	\$ 5,000		\$300,000
Super Cargo &			<hr/>
Boatswain	\$ 5,000	deduct first cost	\$ 63,500
Crew 10 men \$750	\$ 7,500	Nett. Profits [sic]	\$237,500
	<hr/>		
	\$63,500	And so ends the voyage!	

The foregoing is a plain but I fear somewhat tedious narrative of a slave voyage— I hope it will contribute however to the full understanding of a subject in which you have manifested so much interest—If you will permit me to continue my letter I will do so by drawing Your attention to the following facts & suggestions in regard to the importation of negroes into the island of Cuba.

First, The enormous profits which accrue to the trader, are such as to insure a constant supply—unless some other than the present means are used to stop the trade; so far the additional risk of capture by the increase of men of war around the island of Cuba has only had the effect of increasing the *number* of vessels

engaged—and it is a notorious fact that more negroes have been landed since Jany. 1860 than the aggregate of the previous five years. A moderate estimate places the number at 50,000²¹ since the above date.

Again—The recaptured Negro—by the cruiser of any nation—in a humane point of view—is infinitely worse off than if permitted to pursue his original destination. This fact is patent to those who are acquainted with the subject—If taken by an American Cruiser—he is sent at a large expense to the Government to Liberia—& his destiny is inevitable starvation—or perpetual slavery to a strange & barbarous tribe. He might better be landed in Arabia—If taken by a Spanish Cruiser—he is turned over to the tender mercies of a soldier overseer—to work upon the public works—without pay—with scant food & no clothing—but with the philanthropic title of “emancipado”—(emancipated) he labors unceasingly under the lash—for the public good—as one utterly without hope—

Secondly; Spain *alone* is responsible to the world for the continuance of the Slave trade; Cuba is at the present time its only market, and it is undoubtedly true that not a negro is landed upon that island, without the knowledge of some of the Spanish Officials—if not even the Captain General himself—a large amount of the profits is expended in purchasing their connivance. It would be simply *impossible* to land one cargo in ten, without the fact coming to the knowledge of some of the subordinates of the government; But in spite of her treaty obligations—& against every dictate, not only of humanity but of the future welfare of her queenly island—She continues it—for her own present selfish advantage.

The Sugar crop of the island is estimated at 600,000 tons—or in money—\$60,000,000—Every negro imported is an additional ton of sugar; and at the late prices for that staple, the Planter could buy negroes at a thousand dollars and make sixty per cent nett profit upon his gross outlay of capital; It is the policy of the Spanish Government to exact as much direct revenue from her colonies as possible—& nothing but these large profits would enable the Planters to meet these demands of

Spain. The income to the government from this island amounts to 20,000,000 pr. an. or one third of the total value of the annual products—It is therefore evident that before Spain can stop the Slave Trade, she must first reduce her *taxes*. It is not probable that she will take a step in this direction unless actuated by some pressing emergency—not at present foreseen.

Thirdly However humiliating may be the confession, the fact nevertheless is beyond question that nine tenths of the vessels engaged in the Slave trade are American. There are two reasons for this; the first is the vicinity of a good market for the purchase of cheap vessels—the facility with which they can be cleared for the coast, & the equal facility with which they can escape conviction if caught, owing probably to an ill concealed sympathy for the institution of Slavery which seems to extend from the head of our present government to every subordinate officer! But the main reason why American vessels are employed is the immunity which our National flag gives to the combined rascality of christendom; The diplomatic dogma that the flag “covers the vessel” is inconsistent with the spirit of the present day, it is no longer required as a protection for American seamen against foreign press gangs—it nullifies the intention of naval forces in time of peace—as an international police of the ocean—& if it is the joint duty of the U. States with the rest of the civilized world to put an effectual stop to the slave trade, it *must be abandoned!* ²²

Fourthly. The presence of large Naval Forces on the Coast of Africa have been comparatively of but little use in the suppression of the Slave trade! The extended line of Coast (over 2000 miles)—and the demoralizing tendency of giving prize money for that which ought to be simply an act of duty & humanity—have hitherto rather had the effect of increasing the audacity of the trader—for he knows pretty well when & where to expect the cruiser—whose visits can at best be but periodical—& he knows equally well that if empty, he is not likely to be touched—it is the full cargo the cruiser wants; So he seizes his opportunity, *after a visit*—& in a few hours has on board his slaves & is far away from the point of danger. The captures on the Coast of Africa

are the exception, the general rule is to go & come unmolested.

One half of this Force forming a cordon around the island of Cuba would so effectually blockade it, as to render a landing *impossible*. For this purpose, the U. States ought to so modify her foreign policy as to consent to a joint action with other naval powers—and permit these powers to “visit & search” all vessels without regard to nationality found in these waters under suspicious circumstances.

The natural sensitiveness of the American, who claims for his flag unquestioned exclusiveness from foreign interference, ought surely to be somewhat modified when he remembers that such interference is infinitely less disgraceful than the fact that this flag consecrated in all his associations to “human freedom”—is & will be unless this plan is adopted, made to cover the foulest & vilest crime which in these times any man can commit!

Fifthly—The appointment of U. S. Consuls & their subordinates to the island of Cuba ought to be of men whose proclivities are rather against than for slavery—Hitherto this has not been the case²³—and altho’ I willingly give these gentlemen credit for the *intention* of doing their duty, yet frequently I have no doubt that their secret sympathy with the crime has caused them to be lenient with the criminal. I know of a recent case, where a vice consul sent a crew captured from an American slaver to the U. S. in a man of war as “distressed seamen”—in order that they might escape a punishment, most righteously due them, in the “chain gang” of Havana.

Am. vessels bound from Havana or any of the ports of Cuba to the Coast of Africa, are justly liable to grave suspicion & should be dealt with accordingly by these Officers—As the isld. of Cuba has no trade with Africa—unless directly or indirectly connected with the slave trade & yet these vessels have been permitted to clear from Havana for that coast without let or hindrance.

Sixthly. The disposition of the recaptured negroes ought at once to engage the gravest consideration of our Statesmen & Philanthropists. My own personal observation leads me to assert that the present disposition of

these unfortunates though different & characteristic of each government which has them at disposal, is still liable to the serious objection that the condition of the negro is not improved—on the contrary it would perhaps be better so far as he is concerned if he had been permitted to pursue his original destination!

Other nations have adopted a policy which in some shape or other is intended to make the recaptured negroes of use to the public as well as to himself. Our own government however with more humanity but perhaps less wisdom liberally provides for landing him again upon what it considers his *native soil*. To those acquainted with Africa the utter difference in the language, customs & religion of the various tribes—increased frequently by hereditary hostility, it need not be told how far is the prospect of the poor negro ever seeing his home again when landed upon the Soil of Liberia, as foreign & as strange to him, as the coast of Arabia; it is true he is supported thro' the Colonization Society by the Government for six months or a year but at the expiration of that time he has no alternative than either to die of starvation or become an abject slave to some adjacent tribe!

In view of this fact I am not sure that some system of apprenticeship to our Southern Planters, for a term of years—under a strict accountability—both for a humane exercise of his authority over the negro & the payt. of his wages—would not be a better plan—more humane—& certainly more economical²⁴—At any rate nothing is more certain than that the Negro once taken from Africa *never* can get back again to the point from whence he came!

Finally. I have thus far endeavored to show you Sir—how the slave trade is conducted and in what vessels—how Spain is responsible for it & why she permits it—how it could be effectually checked & why it is not—and incidentally that the present disposition of the recaptured negro is imperfect in its results & unjust to him—Now before your patience is entirely worn out Sir—I wish to draw your attention to one more point only—& that is the

Future destiny of Cuba

The institution of Slavery on this island has none of the ameliorating conditions of our own Southern Country²⁵—The Slave there is not a domestic—he is merely an animal with a master naturally cruel—from whom is expected the greatest amount of labor in the shortest time and with the least food. During the crop season on a plantation he is worked eighteen hours out of the twenty-four—& with this system labor, it has been ascertained that the average life of a slave in Cuba is about seven years! He is not permitted nor has the time or opportunity to cultivate any of the feeling or affections natural to man—he is in fact brutalized & rendered doubly savage by the almost entire absence of women from the estates. Without therefore any attachment to the soil or to his Master, on the contrary with a strong sense of accumulated wrongs only subdued by the lash—How long will it be before that island must become Africanized? Particularly when we remember that there is an annual addition to this horde of savages—of 50,000 if possible still more savage? The eternal Law of Compensation must be eventually fulfilled—& the Master & the tyrant of today will surely become the slave or the victim of tomorrow.

But Spain has no interest in the future of Cuba. She knows that some day it will pass from beneath her sceptre—She legislates therefore for that Colony only, for the present-revenue from it is what she wants—& she exacts that & would draw blood if it could be turned into gold!

The real future of Cuba is bound up with the destiny of our own Country but more especially with the Northern portion of the country. Between it & the South there is an antagonism arising from the similarity of institutions & similarity of products. But the North wants her crops—& she wants Northern manufactures & northern products—& She looks in that direction & clings to that support more & more every day.

It is therefore the right & the duty of our government to say whether this Africanization of the island of Cuba²⁶ shall go on until it ends in the blood & carnage

—rapine & devastation—& finally in the barbarism of another San Domingo—or whether by checking the future importation of negroes—she may yet shine forth from the warm bosom of her tropical sea as another bright Star in our Country's diadem—with all the radiance of a Queen of the Antilles!

I am, Sir, truly Your
friend . . .

R. W. SHUFELDT.

¹ For the treaty of April 7th, see *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1862* (Washington, 1862), 64-65, 158-59, 164-65, 181, 185, 289, 473; A. T. Milne, "The Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862," *American Historical Review*, XXXVIII (1932-33), 511, 525; Sadie Daniel St. Clair, "Slavery as a Diplomatic Factor in Anglo-American Relations During the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History*, XXX (1945), 267, note 15; Willis D. Boyd, "The American Colonization Society and the Slave Recaptives of 1860-1861: An Early Example of United States-African Relations," *Ibid.*, XLVII (1962), 123-24, note 49; R. W. Van Alstyne, "The British Right of Search and the African Slave Trade," *Journal of Modern History*, II (1930), 37-47, especially 46-47; Harral E. Landry, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Atlantic Diplomacy, 1850-1861," *Journal of Southern History*, XXVII (1961), 184-207; and Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law* (Berkeley, 1963), 61-62.

² *Ibid.*, 63. Howard called Smith's post a "perfect sinecure"; Willis D. Boyd, "The American Colonization Society and the Slave Recaptives of 1860-1861: An Early Example of United States-African Relations," 124, note 52, quoted Truman Smith to Hamilton Fish, October 11th, 1879, *Letters Received Relating to Judges and Arbitration of Mixed Courts at New York, Capetown and Sierra Leone (1861-1870)*, Slave Trade and Colon, and maintained that Smith "had no occasion to institute proceedings of any kind in his court."

³ This outline of Smith's early life is based on Edward Conrad Smith, "Truman Smith," in Dumas Malone (ed.), *Dictionary of American Biography*, IX (New York, 1935), 350; and *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1961* (United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 1624.

⁴ For example see Truman Smith to (a Fairfield County Whig co-worker), Washington City, January 27th, 1849, and Truman Smith to (a potential Whig voter in Fairfield County), Washington City, February 22nd, 1849, both in the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, 974.6 Sm 51 and 920 Sm 65 respectively. Most of the Smith papers that have survived are in the Connecticut Historical Society MSS Division, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁵ Edward C. Smith, "Truman Smith," *DAB*, IX, 350.

⁶ Apart from Seward, the group included Rollin Sanford, dealer in dyewoods and stockholder in the Stamford Manufacturing Company; John A. C. Cary, dry goods retailer and a director of the Bank of New York; William A. Hall, shoe business dealer and a member of the Board of Directors of the Broadway Bank; D. Randolph Martin, President of the Ocean

Bank; Erastus Corning, President of the Albany City Bank, iron manufacturer, railroad capitalist and the political boss of the Albany Regency Democratic organization Richard M. Blatchford, lawyer for mercantile interests Henry H. Elliott, trader in iron; Edward W. Fiske; Thurlow Weed and Charles A. Stetson, proprietor of Astro House. See George Winston Smith, "Ante-Bellum Attempts of Northern Business Interests to 'Redeem' the Upper South," *Journal of Southern History*, XI (1945), 195.

⁷ See Abraham Lincoln to Truman Smith, Springfield, Illinois, November 10th, 1860, in Roy P. Basler (ed.), *The Collected Work of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, 1953), IV, 138. On November 7th Smith had urged Lincoln to issue a public statement "to disarm mischief makers, to allay causeless anxiety, to compose the public mind and to induce all good citizens to . . . 'judge the tree by its fruit'."

⁸ On July 21st, 1862, Smith recommended the appointment of Cephas Brainerd as arbitrator at New York in case of need, an appointment which Lincoln approved and the Senate confirmed on January 19th, 1863. Abraham Lincoln to William H. Seward, Washington, July 23rd, 1862, *Ibid.*, V, 339.

⁹ Truman Smith to W. H. Merriam, Saratoga Springs, August 24th, 1862, Connecticut Historical Society, MSS Division, Hartford, Connecticut.

¹⁰ For Shufeldt's pre-Civil War career, see Frederick C. Drake, "The Empire of the Seas": A biography of Robert Wilson Shufeldt, USN," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, January, 1970, chapters 1-2. Shufeldt became one of the foremost expansionists of the 1865-1885 period, leading commercial expeditions to Africa and opening Korea to American trade in May, 1882. The "Secret History of the Slave Trade" is in Robert Wilson Shufeldt, General Correspondence, Box 7, Folio 9 (January-October, 1861), Library of Congress, MSS Division.

¹¹ This company was the "great new slave-trading company in Havana" about which rumours began to circulate in 1857. In 1859 the British Consul-General, Joseph T. Crawford, reported to Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, that the company was capitalized at \$600,000 with plans to increase it to \$1,250,000. See Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 53-55, who declared that although Crawford's estimates of 40,000 Negroes brought in to Cuba were "palpably false," it was fairly certain that the slave-trading venture was launched in 1857.

¹² John Albert Machado, 165 Pearl Street, a native of the Azores, who came to the United States in the 1840's, was naturalized in 1853 and began "an extensive legitimate and illegitimate trade with west Africa." *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹³ Possibly a reference to José da Costa Lima Viana, also of 158 Pearl Street.

¹⁴ This was the firm of Benjamin Wenburg and John P. Weeks, a subsidiary firm of the key traders, José da Costa Lima Viana, C. H. S. de la Figaniere, the Portuguese Consul-General in New York and son of the Portuguese Minister to the United States, William de la Figaniere, a naturalized American and partner to his brother, and Manoel Basilio da Cunha Reis. See Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 50.

¹⁵ Captured by USS *Mohawk*. April 26th, 1860.

¹⁶ This almost accords with the eighty-five slavers fitting out in New York harbour during the eighteen months of 1859 and 1860, mentioned by Leo H. Hirsch, Jr., "The Negro and New York, 1783 to 1865," *Journal of Negro History*. XVI (October, 1931), 413, citing the New York *Evening Post* and W. E. B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to America, 1638-1870* (Cambridge, 1896), 179.

¹⁷ President James Buchanan's Attorney General, Jeremiah S. Black.

¹⁸ Charles J. Helm, later a Confederate agent in Cuba and St. Thomas during the Civil War. Helm attempted to persuade Secretary of State Lewis Cass to inform the Spanish Government that the Consulate would never interfere with an American vessel that had cleared customs. This would place the onus of responsibility on the Spanish authorities for allowing the outfitting of slavers within Spanish territory. Cass was informed by Attorney General Black that the Consuls had no authority to detain vessels, so Helm was granted his request. The Consul renounced any rights to interfere with American slavers. See Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, 123 and 295, note, 31.

¹⁹ This would account for the early introduction of disease on board.

²⁰ The British Consul-General in Havana, Joseph T. Crawford, estimated the profitability of the slave trade in the late 1850's to be as follows: Cost \$150,150; Proceeds (450 slaves at \$1,200 each); Profit \$389,850. See *Ibid.*, Appendix C, 236-37. Howard believed Crawford's estimate of \$1,200 was more than twice the price actually obtainable. He estimated the trade to cost \$159,500; Proceeds \$250,000 (500 slaves at \$500 each); Profit \$90,500, and concluded "it is plain that a trade in which an investor could make 56% on his outlay, allowing for all hazards, could easily attract abundant risk capital," 237. Shufeldt's estimate of cost is much lower than either Crawford's or Howard's, because it omits provisions, food, etc., but his Proceeds and Profits are halfway between the other two estimates.

²¹ This is very likely an overestimate based on rumour. Warren S. Howard estimated the number from 1857-1860 at 6,000 each year and in 1859-1860, 11,000 a year, *Ibid.*, Appendix K, 256. Hubert H. S. Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba 1511 to 1868* (New York, 1907), Appendix II, 269, estimated 9,000 for 1856-1859 (2,500 per year) and 3,000 for 1860, 2,000 for 1861 and 600 for 1862.

²² At this point, and in the following three paragraphs, Shufeldt placed his finger on one of the evils of American naval and diplomatic dogma. Such pressure led to the treaty of April 7th, 1862.

²³ Thomas Savage, Vice-Consul in Havana, was a rarity in battling against the slave trade from 1858 to 1860.

²⁴ They would lead towards graduated emancipation for Southern slaves. The effect of recaptured Negroes serving an apprenticeship for a given term of years, and receiving payment, would have led Southern planters into complications with their own slaves that they would not have been able to solve.

²⁵ In contrast to the conditions portrayed in Herbert S. Klein, *Slavery in the Americas: A comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago, 1967).

²⁶ C. Stanley Urban, "The Africanization of Cuba Scare, 1853-1855," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXVII (1957), 29-45.