55TH CONGRESS, 2d Session. SENATE. REPORT No. 816.

NAVAL STATION IN THE WEST INDIES.

MARCH 31, 1898.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. LODGE, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 4303.]

The three islands of the Antilles now in the possession of Denmark are St. Thomas, St. John, and Santa Cruz. St. Thomas lies in 18° 20′ 40″ north latitude and 64° 55′ 38″ west longitude, and St. John about 3 miles to the southeast of it. They both form part of the group known as the Virgin Islands, which lies about 38 miles from the Spanish island of Puerto Rico at the nearest point. This group of about fifty islands, small and large, scattered over an area 24 leagues east and west by 16 north and south, was discovered and named on November 30 by Christopher Columbus during his second voyage to the West Indies, in 1493. At the time of discovery these islands were, when inhabited at all, in the possession of the Caribs, a tribe of warlike cannibals, and it was not until 1550 that they were definitely driven from the archipelago by the Emperor Charles V.

It is not entirely certain when and by whom St. Thomas, the largest of the Virgin group, was first settled. On recent and reliable authority, however, Erik Smidt, who was, it appears, at the head of a trading company which had been formed at Copenhagen at about that time, took possession of the island in behalf of the Danish Crown on the 30th of May, 1666. The Danes, however, seem not to have been the first settlers, but there is no certainty who the first settlers actually were. At all events, in 1671, on the forming of the West India and Guinea Company at Copenhagen, the island of St. Thomas passed definitely under the Danish Crown, and, with the exception of a short period in 1801 and from 1807 to 1815, when on both occasions it was occupied as a war measure, the island has remained under the Danish flag for two hundred and twenty years.

In a letter written by the directors of the Danish West India Company on December 20, 1716, permission was given to 16 of the inhabitants of St. Thomas to cultivate the island of St. John. The Danes had taken formal possession in 1684, and after the settlement the fate

of this little island was bound with that of its larger sister. The events in the history of these two islands are not numerous.

In 1724 St. Thomas was formally declared a port of entrance for all nations, though this had in fact long been the case. In 1733 occurred the great slave insurrection on the island of St. John, which resulted in the death of several whites and which was finally put down by the assistance of some French troops from Santo Domingo.

The history of the island of Santa Cruz, which lies somewhat to the south of the Virgin group, is far more dramatic. Discovered by Columbus in the same month in which he came upon the Virgin group, we first find it inhabited in the year 1643 by two distinct parties of English and Dutch. Two years later, as a result of mutual jealousies and civil war between the two parties, the Dutch were compelled to leave the island. The English, however, were not long allowed to enjoy the fruits of their victory, for in 1650 they were attacked by a force of 1,200 Spaniards and driven from the island. A small company of Spaniards was left to hold the place. After an unsuccessful attempt to regain possession of the island by the Dutch, the 65 Spaniards who had been left to defend it were attacked by a force of 160 Frenchmen from St. Kitts and surrendered to the newcomers without resistance. Thus in the space of seven years English, Dutch, Spanish, and French had in turn sought to gain possession of the island of Santa Cruz.

During the next century its history was also eventful. In 1651 the Knights of Malta bought St. Christopher, St. Martin, St. Bartholomew, Tortuga, and Santa Cruz for 120,000 livres, which were paid down by Commandant de Poincey. He was thus virtual owner of the islands until 1653, when he ceded them to the Knights of Malta, whose dominion was confirmed by a royal concession, made in March, 1683, and signed by Louis XIV. The affairs of the islands were not prosperous, owing to sickness, restriction of their commerce, and consequent hindrance to agriculture. After futile attempts to restore prosperity to the islands, things became so bad that in 1720 the French settlers demolished their forts, abandoned the island, and removed to Santo Domingo. "After this," says Knox, "it was visited by the ships of all nations until 1727, when the French captured seven English merchant vessels, which were lying there, and again took possession of the island. From this time until the year 1753 it continued to be the property of France, from whom it was at length purchased by King Christian VI for 750,000 French livres."

In 1736 the Danish West India Company allied themselves with a body of merchants in Copenhagen, and, by excluding the Dutch from all commerce with the islands, established a monopoly of trade. The result of this restriction was most unfortunate to the islanders, and things went from bad to worse until in 1758 the King took over the colonies, paying the company 2,200,000 pieces of eight ($1,418,000) for them. They have remained ever since in the possession of the Danish Crown.

Santa Cruz, the capital of the Danish Islands, has an area of about 81 English square miles. Its shape is elongated, being about 19 English miles east and west and from 5 to 1 English miles north and south. The northern part of the island is intersected from east to west by a range of hills or low mountains. The southwestern part of the island is level or slightly undulating. The shores are surrounded by coral reefs, except in the northwest, where depths of 1,000 fathoms are found near the shore. There are several small creeks or water courses in the island. The climate is tropical, the temperature high and subject to

little variation; the yearly average is 27.2° C., with a little more than three degrees difference between the mean temperature during the warmest month, August, and the coldest month, February.

A trade wind blows during the whole year with the exception of the hurricane months—August, September, and October—when it becomes irregular and sometimes ceases altogether. According to the last census the population of St. Croix numbered 19,683 souls, of which 9,552 are males and 10,251 females. The town of Christiansted contains 5,499 persons and Frederiksted 3,685. The remainder live in the rural districts. Sugar is the staple production. Of the 51,980 acres which the island contains 16,478 acres are in sugar, and of the remainder 29,776 acres are chiefly pasture, while 4,926 acres are unused. There are some 100 sugar estates on the island in cultivation, and in 1896 the export of sugar amounted to about 15,000 tons. There is semiweekly regular communication with St. Thomas, and the Quebec and the Pickford and Black lines of steamers proceed as a rule from St. Thomas to West End or Frederiksted on their outward voyages, the former touching at both ports on the return.

The island of St. Thomas is about 13 miles long by 4 in width, with a population of something like 12,000 souls, of which about 200 enjoy electoral privileges. Owing to its geographical position and fine harbor, which is so easy of access, it long maintained an important position as the entrepôt of the West Indies, headquarters for many lines of steamers, a coaling station, and a port of refuge. In late years business has somewhat fallen away. St. Thomas is the West India headquarters and coaling station of the Hamburg-American Packet Company, and the German, French, and English mail companies also have coaling stations there. The French, mail stops once a month from Havre, Bordeaux, and the Spanish port of Santander, with an intercolonial boat from Martinique and Guadeloupe. The German mail from Hamburg direct about every ten days, and the English mail every fourteen days, make connection with the English and French Windward Islands. The New York service is done by the Quebec Line about every three weeks, and by the "Red D" Line once a month. The Pickford and Black steamers call regularly every four weeks from St. Johns, New Brunswick, and Halifax via Bermuda. In addition there is a monthly service by the West India and Pacific Company from Liverpool, proceeding to Colon, Jamaica, etc.

St. John is an island with an area of 42 square miles and a population of 915 souls. The product of the island is sugar.

The first negotiations of the United States for the purchase of the Danish Islands were begun by Mr. Seward, then Secretary of State, in January, 1865, at least so it is supposed. There is mention in contemporary pamphlets of a dinner party at the French embassy, where Mr. Seward first expressed to General Raaslof, the Danish chargé d'affaires, the desire of the United States to buy the Danish Islands in the Antilles. Afterwards other conferences followed of an unofficial character, Mr. Seward urging the Danish minister, who replied that Denmark had no desire to sell the islands. Great secrecy was insisted upon and preserved. This was under the Presidency of Lincoln. General Raaslof, who was himself opposed to the sale, reported these interviews to his Government, who replied that it would be advisable to drop the negotiations, as the Danish Government had no desire to part with these colonies. Mr. Seward's carriage accident, consequent illness, and temporary incapacity for public affairs confirmed this attitude on the part of Denmark.

In April came the assassination of the President, the wounding of Mr. Seward, and the accession of Mr. Johnson to the Chief Executive. Mr. Seward's recovery was slow, and it was not until December, 1865, on the eve of his departure for the South, a journey taken to restore his health, that the Secretary of State again mentioned the matter to General Raaslof. The complexion of affairs was now somewhat altered. A new ministry had come into power at Copenhagen, and it was less opposed to the sale than the former one had been. Hence, a note to Mr. Seward, declaring that although the Government had no desire to sell, still it was not unwilling to entertain the Secretary's propositions. A request was made that the United States declare how much it was willing to give.

Mr. Seward departed, and during his absence visited St. Thomas and convinced himself of the necessity of the purchase. On his return he pressed General Raaslof to name a price, and the Danish minister in turn demanded that, as the United States wished to buy, and not Denmark to sell, an offer should be made by the American Government. Finally, on July 17, 1866, as General Raaslof was leaving for Copenhagen, Mr. Seward delivered to him a note offering, on behalf of the United States, $5,000,000 for the three Danish islands, St. Thomas, St. John, and Santa Cruz. Mr. Seward personally informed General Raaslof that the representative of the United States in Denmark would, for a time, have charge of the affair; also that the United States was not pressed for an answer. A few days after General Raaslof left America, and soon after his arrival at Copenhagen he was appointed minister of war, and, in the work of reorganizing the Danish army, lost sight of affairs in America.

Count Frijs, the Danish minister for foreign affairs, who consequently now had charge of the negotiations, was in favor of the sale, but still the affair dragged until January 19, 1867, when Mr. Yeaman, United States minister at Copenhagen, received the following telegram from Mr. Seward: "Tell Raaslof haste important." However, nothing was done for two months. Denmark felt a good deal of hesitation, owing to the uncertainty of the treaty being ratified by the Senate, but she became more assured by the absence of opposition in the United States to the purchase scheme and by the speedy ratification of the Alaska purchase treaty. Nevertheless, at the end of two months Mr. Seward telegraphed again to Mr. Yeaman, "Want yea or nay now." Mr. Yeaman at once communicated with General Raaslof, but it was not until the 17th of May, 1867, that Count Frijs made a counter proposition to Mr. Seward's note. Through the medium of Mr. Yeaman, he declined on behalf of Denmark the offer of $5,000,000 and offered the islands for $15,000,000, or St. Thomas and St. John for $10,000,000, with the option of taking Santa Cruz for $5,000,000 more.

Count Frijs explained that the ratification of the treaty of cession by the Rigsdag would be necessary, and that the Danish Government would require that the consent of the people of the islands should be freely and formally given. In ten days Mr. Yeaman was in receipt of Mr. Seward's answer to this proposition, which was in substance this: "The United States will pay for the three islands $7,500,000 in gold." Mr. Seward objected, however, to the condition that the consent of the inhabitants of the islands was necessary, and thought it sufficient that they should have the free choice of leaving the islands within two years or remaining and becoming American citizens. Mr. Yeaman immediately communicated these instructions to the Danish minister for foreign

affairs, who promised an early answer. This answer was given in a month, in an interview between Count Frijs and Mr. Yeaman. Mr. Seward's second offer was refused and a counter proposition made. This was that Denmark would cede the islands for $11,250,000, or 20,000,000 Danish rix dollars, or St. Thomas and St. John for $7,500,000, and Santa Cruz at option for $3,750,000. Count Frijs further declared that taking a vote of the people of the islands before the cession was absolutely indispensable.

Mr. Seward's second offer being thus formally rejected by the Danish Government, Mr. Yeaman now informed Count Frijs that his instructions obliged him to announce that the offer of the United States was withdrawn and the negotiations ended. Nevertheless, on July 6, 1867, Mr. Seward telegraphed to Mr. Adams in London: "Tell Yeaman close with Denmark's offer. St. John, St. Thomas, seven and one-half millions. Report brief by cable. Send treaty ratified immediately." Still the negotiations lagged. Mr. Seward was strongly opposed to the vote by the islanders, but the Danish Government was firm on this point, and he finally cabled to Mr. Yeaman: "Concede question of vote." On the 24th of October, 1867, the treaty was finally signed by the Danish minister, and by Mr. Yeaman on behalf of the United States.

There remained the vote of the islanders. Mr. Carstensen was sent as Danish commissioner to take the vote, and Mr. Seward dispatched Dr. Hawley to the islands to attend to American interests. He arrived at St. Thomas on the 12th of November, 1867; on the 18th of November, before the vote was taken, there occurred a terrible earthquake, which did much damage to the island, and affairs came temporarily to a standstill. They were resumed on November 26, and on January 9, 1868, the vote was taken in St. Thomas, and on the following day in St. John. In the larger island there were cast 1,039 votes for the cession and only 22 against it, and in the smaller 205 votes for and none against. There were fears in Denmark that the United States would not ratify even after Denmark was fully committed, but Mr. Seward calmed these fears with renewed assurances of success, and after some hesitation the treaty was ratified by the Rigsdag and signed by the King on January 31, 1868. This ratification occurred in the midst of the fierce political war between President Johnson and Congress. The limit of time named in the treaty for ratification was February 24, 1868, and this went by without action by Congress. The time was then extended to October 14, 1868. All, however, was useless. Denmark made repeated endeavors, in the person of her minister and through the medium of other powers, to conclude the negotiations, but in vain. The treaty fell a victim to the storm of political hatred then raging in this country, and in the session of 1868, after an adverse report, the United States Senate dropped it.

In Schuyler's American Diplomacy, page 23, we find the following comment:

> Denmark had no particular desire to sell to the United States, but was persuaded to do so. The inhabitants of the islands had already voted to accept the United States as their sovereign. The late Mr. Charles Sumner, then chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, who was engaged in a personal quarrel with the Administration, simply refused to report back the treaty to the Senate, and he was supported by a sufficient number of his committee and of Senators to enable the matter to be left in this position. It required new negotiations to prolong the term of ratification, and it was with great difficulty that in a subsequent session the treaty was finally brought before the Senate and rejected. As may be imagined, our friendly relations with Denmark were considerably impaired by this method of doing business.

After a lapse of twenty-four years since the rejection of this treaty, the negotiations were reopened in 1892, while Hon. John W. Foster was Secretary of State. The accompanying papers (Appendix A), which, in response to a request for information, were sent to the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations by the Assistant Secretary of State on May 12, 1897, contain a full account of the most recent negotiations, including, in addition to those of Mr. Foster, the correspondence of Mr. Olney on this subject, in 1896, for the purchase of the Danish islands and of the condition and value of the harbor of St. Thomas.

The arguments in favor of the possession of these islands can be briefly stated, and appear to the undersigned to be unanswerable. So long as these islands are in the market there is always the danger that some European power may purchase, or try to purchase, them. This would be an infraction of the Monroe doctrine, and would at once involve the United States in a very serious difficulty with the European power which sought possession of the islands. In the interest of peace, it is of great importance that these islands should pass into the hands of the United States and cease to be a possible source of foreign complications, which might easily lead to war.

From a military point of view the value of these islands to the United States can hardly be overestimated. We have always been anxious to have a good naval and coaling station in the West Indies. Important in time of peace, such a station would be essential to our safety in time of war. Successive Administrations have labored to secure a West Indian naval station. During the war of the rebellion the United States leased the harbor of St. Nicholas from Hayti for this purpose. General Grant endeavored during his Presidency to secure Samana Bay. The effort to obtain the Danish Islands, as has been shown, was begun by Mr. Seward during the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln. The fine harbor of St. Thomas fulfills all the required naval and military conditions.

As has been pointed out by Captain Mahan, it is one of the great strategic points in the West Indies. The population of the three islands is only 33,000, of whom nearly 30,000 are negroes, the others being chiefly of English or Danish extraction. There is no possibility of any material increase in the population, and annexation would never involve at any time the troublesome question of Statehood. The Danish islands could easily be governed as a Territory—could be readily defended from attack, occupy a commanding strategic position, and are of incalculable value to the United States, not only as a part of the national defense, but as removing by their possession a very probable cause of foreign complications.

APPENDIX A.

[Confidential.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, November 28, 1892.

SIR: I am unofficially authorized to inform you that a proposal from the Government of the United States to revive the convention of 1867, by which it was proposed to cede the islands of St. Thomas and St. John to the United States, would now receive favorable consideration from the Danish Government, the meaning of which is that the Danish Government will now, if desired, cede those islands to the United States upon the terms of the convention of 1867. The incidents through which I feel myself authorized to so inform you are as follows:

On Thursday, the 15th instant, I called upon Mr. Estrup, the minister of finance and premier of Denmark, to speak with him in regard to the loan of the Icelandic

books, giving an account of the discovery of America by Lief Anderson, so much desired by you for the State Department exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition. In the course of the conversation we recalled some of the interesting questions which have been considered by the United States and Denmark, and special reference was made to the treaty in question in which Mr. Estrup was specially interested, he having been at the time of its consideration a member of the Danish cabinet, occupying the post of minister of the interior. Reference was also made to his (Mr. Estrup's) conversations with Colonel Arendrup, governor of the Danish West Indies, an account of which I gave in my No. 47 of July 17, 1891.

In the course of the conversation Mr. Estrup said that he would now be willing to cede those islands to the United States, and indicated that he would be willing to do so upon the terms then agreed upon, etc., and it was suggested that the treaty could be revived, etc. I replied that while I had no authority from my Government to make any declaration whatsoever in regard to the matter, I should feel it to be my duty, if informed that the Danish Government were willing to give the matter favorable consideration, to so report to my Government. I then explained the condition of affairs at Washington incident to the coming change of Administration, and said that it was scarcely probable, however the matter might be regarded, that there could be any action at present, etc., but added that there seemed to be a growing feeling in the United States that we require a naval, coaling, and supply station in the West Indies, etc.

The conversation was quite extended, the minister giving me his views at length, the substance of which was that while these islands would be of inestimable value to the United States, it would be better for Denmark to cede them on the terms of the convention of 1867, etc. I left him, substantially agreeing with him in this view of the matter, but declaring that I had no authority to make any proposals, nor even suggestions, and that I should not feel it to be my duty to give the matter attention unless it should appear that the Danish Government was disposed to give the matter favorable consideration, in which case I should feel it to be my duty to inform my Government of such disposition, etc.

On Tuesday, the 22d instant, a week after this conversation, Mr. Estrup called at my house to say that he had been considering the matter since our interview, and had spoken at length concerning it with Baron Reedtz-Thott, the minister of foreign affairs, who was of the same opinion as himself, and that he, Baron Reedtz-Thott, would speak with me about it, etc.

On the same afternoon, upon my calling at the foreign office, the matter was brought up and Baron Reedtz-Thott expressed himself as equally ready to receive with favorable consideration a proposal from our Government to revive the treaty, etc. I repeated to him what I had said to the premier as regarded the present Administration, and that I had no authority to make any proposal nor suggestion, etc., he declaring that he knew this perfectly well, that Mr. Estrup and he had talked this all over, but that they could see no harm in me and my Government being apprised confidentially of their views, etc. I then said that I should feel it to be my duty to communicate these views confidentially to you, etc.

About an hour after I left the minister of foreign affairs, he called upon me at my house and said that he had been reflecting upon the matter and had concluded that it was his duty, before authorizing me to make any statement to my Government, to lay it before His Majesty the King, which he could do in a day or two, to which, I, of course, replied that I would await further information from him.

On Friday afternoon, three days later, the minister of foreign affairs again called upon me at my house and simply said: "You may write to your Government that the matter will receive favorable consideration."

The question will naturally arise as to the motives which prompted the Danish authorities to so express themselves in regard to this matter, and it may possibly be inferred that the Government is in financial embarrassment and that money is needed to tide over some pressing financial difficulties. This is by no means the condition of affairs. There is scarcely a Government of Europe whose financial condition or credit is more sound. The Danes are a prudent, economical, thrifty people, with whom the idea of pay as you go is carried out in public as well as in private affairs. There is no emergency which requires them to so act, and while the authorities express themselves confidentially, as has been stated, in consequence of the failure of the treaty of 1867 in the Senate of the United States, they will never formally propose that it be revived. Whatever may be the views of our people upon the action of the Senate at that time, after the people of those islands, at the suggestion and request of the King of Denmark, had, with almost perfect unanimity, voted for separation, and the Danish Rigsdag had confirmed the treaty, the failure of the Senate of the United States to confirm it was most humiliating to the Danes.

There are, however, certain public improvements which the Danes would like to make, to only one of which I will refer.

In the otherwise beautiful city of Copenhagen, the most conspicuous and unsightly object is the ruined palace of Christiansborg, whose grim and blackened walls have

stood since 1884 when the great edifice was burned. It had been the abode of royalty, contained the assembly chambers of their legislative bodies, great galleries of art, and all that went to make up and embellish this magnificent building, which was really the capitol of Denmark. The entrances to the great palace were sentineled by colossal statues, masterpieces of Thorwaldsen, wonders of art, which fortunately were uninjured and are still standing in all their splendor, in striking contrast with the grim and somber ruin they were created to adorn. From every quarter of the city one may see Christiansborg, which, though in ruins, in grandeur and sublimity still surpasses every other object. Everywhere in Copenhagen, and even in the country, one is reminded of the ruins of the great palace. In several of the galleries of art one sees exquisite pictures, creations of the great masters, which were torn from their frames while the palace was burning. Surrounding the ruined palace, adjoining the courtyard, are the Thorwaldsen Museum, the Old North Museum, the great library containing 600,000 volumes, and the departments of state, all of which were saved from destruction.

It was in one of these buildings, an annex to the ruined palace, the department of finance, where I first spoke with Mr. Estrup on this question, and from this point of view it did not seem strange to me that a finance minister of this Kingdom should be willing and should regard it as the part of wisdom to obtain the means of restoring his capital and to make other public improvements through the cession of territory thousands of miles distant, whose people have voted with almost perfect unanimity and still wish to cast their lot with the people of the hemisphere to which they belong and with whom they are allied in language and in trade relations.

I need not recall the argument upon the treaty of a quarter of a century ago, but it is proper that something be said about the harbor of St. Thomas and the conditions that now present themselves. It is almost circular in form, the entrance to which is by a neck guarded by two heavy forts, and capable of accommodating 500 vessels. The island, 13 miles long by an average of 3 miles wide, has been justly designated as a small Gibraltar. It is asserted by the highest authority that it can at small expense be made impregnable.

Unlike the mole of St. Nicholas, where a large amount would have to be expended to erect suitable wharves and other necessary improvements and to defend them against dangers from a capricious Government, St. Thomas has already, through private enterprise, her great wharves, upon which thousands of tons of coal are deposited, an enormous floating dock capable of receiving vessels of 3,000 tons, marine slips for repairing small vessels, immense cisterns for the storage of water for the supply of vessels, a factory where every kind of ironwork for the repair of vessels can be turned out, including boilers, shafts, etc. The representatives of every industry and trade relating to the building and supply and navigation of ships—ship brokers, ship carpenters and calkers, iron founders, coal dealers, and others—can supply every demand of commerce. There are wharves alongside of which ships drawing 27 feet of water can be moored and coaled, day or night, at the rate of from 60 to 100 tons an hour.

It is asserted and believed that the necessary defenses and the furnishing and equipping any other naval station in the West Indies, which nature and enterprise have already supplied to St. Thomas, if this were possible, would cost much more than the sum fixed upon in 1867 as a consideration for the cession of the islands of St. Thomas and St. John to the United States.

These Danish Islands, with the splendid harbor of St. Thomas, presenting all we can possibly desire for a naval and supply station—location, security, amplitude, development—everything is within our reach upon terms which were regarded as reasonable when far less important or valuable to us. The vast increase of steam navigation necessitating supply stations for coal and machinery, the expansion of our commerce, the building up of our splendid new Navy, the prospect of a ship canal across the isthmus, which will make St. Thomas one of the most important stations upon voyages around and to most of the countries of the world, all these considerations and many more combine to make the possession of this harbor of far more importance to us than when the question of its acquisition was under consideration a quarter of a century ago.

I therefore feel it to be my imperative duty to apprise you of the views of the Danish authorities in regard to this important matter, and at the same time to venture to declare as my deliberate opinion that we should avail ourselves of the opportunity which now presents itself to acquire this haven and stronghold for our commerce and ships of war, and to express the hope that this Administration, if it can do no more, will take measures to open the way to so desirable a consummation.

I have, etc.,

CLARK E. CARR.

Hon. JOHN W. FOSTER,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, November 29, 1892.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I send you to-day a confidential dispatch, No. 129, on the Danish West Indies, by which you will see that, without committing myself or the Government in the least, I have learned that we can have St. Thomas and St. John on the terms agreed upon in 1867.

I believe that we must have a station in that region, and that it will be found that this is the best one available, and that it will be sought for on our part soon, and that this Administration should take the initiative. This can now be done if desired, but should the President not be inclined to do so, we are not, as you will see, committed in the least.

It seems to me that it would be wise for the President to take up the matter of securing such a station in his message to Congress, but of course I would not presume to advise him. There are certainly many reasons why we had better have such a splendid harbor and own the whole islands inhabited by a people who really desire to cast their lot with us, and who will become loyal, patriotic Americans, than to have a station situated among a people of a different nationality.

Whatever may be thought of the matter, I hope that you will so instruct me that I may be able to show Mr. Estrup and Baron Reedtz-Thott that you are not indifferent to their feelings in the matter, and that you appreciate the suggestions they have confidentially made in our private unofficial interviews. They will not be disappointed if you simply say that the matter can not be taken up so late in the Administration, as I have informed them that this will probably be the case, but you know far better than I what is best. You are only, of course, supposed to be confidentially informed that it will receive favorable consideration. * * *

Gen. JOHN W. FOSTER. CLARK E. CARR.

[Confidential.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 20, 1892.

SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your confidential dispatch No. 129, of November 28, 1892, with reference to the willingness evinced by the Danish Government to cede to the United States the islands of St. Thomas and St. John on the basis of the convention of 1867.

I take pleasure in commending the skill and tact with which you have received the approach of the Danish Government on the subject, and while ascertaining the disposition of the Danish Government have in no way committed the Government of the United States.

The question of the acquisition of the islands is one of far reaching and national importance, the extent of which is appreciated by no one more than the President. As his Administration is, however, drawing to its close, he considers it inadvisable to express any views or indicate any policy the consummation of which he could not effect.

He directs me to express his cordial appreciation of the friendly attitude of the Danish Government and of the confidence and frankness displayed by Mr. Estrup and Baron Reedtz-Thott in their conversations with you.

You are therefore instructed to convey verbally to these gentlemen the sentiments of the President, and to explain the reasons, if they are not clearly apprehended, why the present consideration of the cession of the islands of St. Thomas and St. John is impracticable.

I am, etc., JOHN W. FOSTER.

CLARK E. CARR, Esq., *Copenhagen.*

[Telegram.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 31, 1892.

CARR, Minister, *Copenhagen.*

Take no action on instruction No. 128 for present.

FOSTER.

[Telegram.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, February 4, 1893.

CARR, Minister, *Copenhagen.*

You can execute instruction No. 128 at convenient opportunity.

FOSTER.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, January 2, 1893.

SIR: On Saturday night, the 31st ultimo, I received from you a telegram as follows:
"Carr, minister: Take no action on instruction No. 128 for present. Foster."
On this morning came in the mail your confidential dispatch No. 128.
As I understand the telegram, it is my duty to say nothing more concerning the matter until I receive further advices from the Department. Should it still be under consideration, it is no doubt better to wait, but I hope in the near future to be authorized to make some recognition on the part of our Government of the suggestions of the Danish authorities.

I have, etc.,

CLARK E. CARR.

Hon. JOHN W. FOSTER.
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

[Confidential.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, February 22, 1893.

SIR: Referring to my confidential dispatch No. 129, to your confidential dispatch No. 128, and to your two dispatches 129 and 131, and to my 132, regarding the confidential information that the United States can now, if desired, acquire the islands of St. Thomas and St. John upon the terms designated in the convention of 1867 between the United States and Denmark, I have to say that as soon as opportunity offered after receiving your second telegram I spoke with Mr. Estrup and Baron Reedtz-Thott, giving them the views of the President as you instructed me to do.

They were not surprised at this, as I had previously given them to understand that it was improbable that the President would take the matter up when his Administration was so near its close. Each, however, spoke of the pending negotiations regarding Hawaii, and suggested that perhaps they may have had some influence in the matter, and reference was made to a statement that has appeared in the newspapers that we are looking to the acquisition of Samana Bay, etc., and that this may perhaps influence our Government unfavorably in regard to St. Thomas, etc. Of course I could express no opinion in regard to this, but it seemed to them, as it appears to me, that with a canal across the isthmus the acquisition of Hawaii makes it even more important that we should have a station in the West Indies.

Of course any action will depend upon the views of the incoming Administration. Should it be regarded as worthy of further consideration, while it would be a great satisfaction to me to be permitted to pursue a matter to which I have given some considerable thought, it will be a pleasure to me as well as my duty to aid my successor in office in every way in my power to attain the end that may seem desirable.

It seems to be the opinion of all those who are informed as to the needs of our new Navy and of our growing commerce, that the time has arrived when we require a naval station in the West Indies. For such a station, in location, accessibility, amplitude, and natural strength, the harbor of St. Thomas presents far greater advantages than any other that is available.

With its natural advantages it can be made impregnable, and it is my deliberate opinion that with these advantages, and its wharves and docks and buildings and machinery already established by private enterprise, the acquisition of this splendid harbor upon the terms suggested, and its equipment, would in the end be far less expensive than that of any other in that region.

I have, etc.,

CLARK E. CARR.

Hon. JOHN W. FOSTER,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, January 14, 1896.

SIR: Several New York newspapers, of dates about the 1st instant, arrived here yesterday and created considerable interest by certain contents to the effect that Denmark was offering through Mr. Henrick Cavling, a newspaper editor of this city, but now in Washington, to sell to the United States the West India Islands, St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John; and intimating that if the United States did not buy them, Germany would probably do so. Some newspaper reporters called at this legation and asked to be informed whether any such negotiations were pending. Of course I declined to say anything whatever on the subject.

During the day I had an entirely informal conversation with Mr. Vedel, the director-general of the ministry of foreign affairs, in which he exhibited to me copies of the articles in question, which he said had been sent to him by one of the city newspapers with a request for information, but he said he would say nothing about it to the press; to me he said, however, that Mr. Cavling was a self-appointed agent, and had no authority nor instigation from the foreign office; nor was there any negotiation whatever pending between Denmark and Germany for the sale or transfer of the islands.

Thinking that in the changed condition of affairs it might be, or might become desirable for the United States to reopen the negotiation for the purchase of the islands, I said that while I had no instructions whatever on the subject from my Government, I would personally be glad to be informed whether Denmark was inclined to reopen the matter. He replied that certainly Denmark, having met with a disastrous failure in the effort of 1868, could not propose to reopen it; but if the United States should choose to do so, he was of opinion that his Government would be inclined to sell them, though he was personally opposed to it.

I am aware of the action taken by the Department and my predecessor in the early months of 1893, but the subject was dropped then because of the approaching close of the Administration of President Harrison.

It is wholly unnecessary for me to discuss the value of these islands to the United States. It is quite apparent that in certain contingencies they might be very useful, but whether on the whole it would be wise to purchase them I do not presume to express an opinion. All I desire to say is that if our Government shall wish to take up the matter I believe it can be brought to a more speedy conclusion and with more secrecy and safety by carrying on the negotiation here rather than in Washington.

I have, etc.,

JOHN E. RISLEY.

Hon. RICHARD OLNEY,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, January 18, 1896.

SIR: I have the honor to report that early this afternoon Baron Zytphen-Adler, from the Danish foreign office, called at this legation and said the minister would be much obliged if I would call at the ministry at 3.30 o'clock. On complying with the request, the minister told me he had received two cablegrams from Mr. Brun, Danish minister at Washington, in regard to the sale of the Danish West India Islands.

The first, received yesterday, was to the effect that Mr. Brun had a conversation with yourself, which his excellency said he did not clearly understand and had awaited further advices; the second came to-day and was to the effect that a resolution on the subject had been offered in the Senate. There was no explanation of the character of the resolution, nor was the name given of the Senator who offered it.

The minister said he wished me to clearly understand that no one had been authorized to offer the islands for sale to any power whatever, nor would they be offered for sale. The minister continued, however, to say that if the United States should make an offer for them he could assure me that it would be fairly considered; that the great publicity given to the subject would no doubt increase the difficulties here and make it more difficult to carry the matter through to success; and there might possibly be an objection from France as to the island of St. Croix, from whom it was acquired some two hundred years ago. He thought not, but deemed it right to mention the possibility, as it was better to have everything as clearly understood as possible before proceeding further.

The foregoing is the substance of what his excellency said. I replied that I understood the position of the Danish Government to be that they would make no offer, but that if an offer should be made by the Government of the United States it would be considered in a friendly spirit, and I informed him I had already written to you to that effect, substantially, on the strength of an informal conversation had with Mr. Vedel, the director-general.

The impression made on my mind is that the minister will gladly welcome an offer from the United States. Though not a word was said on the subject in this connection, I think the condition of political parties here would make it rather desirable to the ministry to carry to a speedy success such a negotiation.

Awaiting any instructions you may have to give,

I have, etc.,

JOHN E. RISLEY.

Hon. RICHARD OLNEY,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.