

# On the Scent

In the chapter titled "On the Scent," dated March 3, John Delane, the editor of the \*Times\* of London, perceives that political tension in America is escalating to a point where violence might erupt. This conflict, particularly between the Southern States and the Union following Lincoln's election, could make for captivating news for his readership, particularly those in England who might take some satisfaction in America's strife.

To grasp the situation firsthand, he decides to send Sir William Howard Russell, a celebrated reporter known for his vivid accounts, particularly from the Crimean War, to observe the tumultuous events in America. Russell had initially hesitated to accept the assignment, being concerned about his wife's health and enjoying a comfortable domestic life. He had spent years covering various conflicts across the globe and was now immersed in the literary circles of London, socializing with notable figures like Thackeray and Dickens. However, upon Thackeray's insistence that he must travel to learn about the unfolding crisis, Russell concedes to the assignment.

He embarks on the steamship \*Arabia\* from Queensland, Ireland, alongside Southern passengers, including a former U.S. Legation member who joined the Confederacy and Colonel Robert S. Garnett, a Virginian officer determined to resign to fight for the South. Through these interactions, Russell gathers insight into the Southern perspective on the conflict. Garnett expresses a belief in a hierarchy supporting slavery, viewing it as a "divine institution," denouncing equality as a doctrine and expressing deep disdain for the Northern states.

During the fourteen-day voyage, Russell learns about the critical issue concerning the ownership of two federal properties: Fort Pickens and Fort Sumter. He notes in his diary that there is widespread speculation about how the U.S. Government will respond to the threats posed by the Southern states, which have vowed to resist any attempts to supply or reinforce federal garrisons. Amidst this tension, the Federal Government appears paralyzed, unable to provide leadership as its soldiers navigate the precarious situation independently.