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British Consulate for the State of Maryland
Baltimore May 31st 1852

Sir
I regret exceedingly that the first time I have the honor to address you officially I should be obliged to bring before your notice the alleged improper proceedings of a Public Officer of the City of Baltimore.

I herewith enclose copy of a letter I have received from Mr. James Knox, a British subject, doing business in this City who complains, that on Sunday last, while standing quietly on the sidewalk, he was severely beaten by some persons to whom he had said, or done, nothing, and was then taken to the Police Station, where he was locked up on a charge of rioting. At half past six in the evening he was taken before Justice Bliss, who, according to Mr. Knox's statement, proceeded to put to him a number of (if true) exceedingly improper, and totally irrelevant, questions, and then made out an order for his commitment to jail as no sureties were present to give the necessary bail, (Mr. Knox having had no opportunity to send for any of his friends) — On Monday Morning he was released on giving security in \$5000 to keep the peace during 12 months.

I beg to draw your particular attention to the details of this case as narrated by Mr. Knox in his letter.

I feel sure that you will not fail to agree with me that should a Magistrate, instead of impartially examining into the merits and circumstances of the case brought before him, and administering justice accordingly, take upon himself the part of a prosecutor, and attempt to brow beat and roughly question the individual arraigned, on subjects quite foreign to the charge made against him, and then, without hearing any witnesses for or against, proceed to condemn him, that Functionary is quite unfitted to discharge the important duties of his office —

If then Mr. Knox's statements are correct, and I hope you will give him an opportunity of substantiating them, as he says he is able to do, I confidently trust that, should it be within your power and prerogative, you will relieve that Gentleman from the surety he was forced to enter into to keep the peace which he says he never broke, and that you will take such further steps as you may deem most fit and proper to protect both him, and other British subjects, now and at any future time, from a repetition of the same proceedings.

I have the honor to be

Sir,

Your most obedient
humble servant

Frederick Bernal

His Excellency

Augustus Bradford Esq.

Governor of the State of Maryland