

be persuaded to detach, to bring up despatches, (for your accommodation,) a material portion of the force I had relied upon as the escort of that train. The other detachment to which I allude came up some days ago to escort Lieutenant Semmes, of the navy, duly accredited by Commodore Perry, to the Mexican minister of foreign affairs, to negotiate the exchange of Passed Midshipman Rogers, now a prisoner of war. That matter, also, seems to have been considered too important to be entrusted to my agency!

But, to return to the actual government of Mexico. Señor Anaya is, I believe, president, *ad interim*. But you may have learned that the Congress, after hearing of the affair of Cerro Gordo, passed many violent decrees, breathing war, to the uttermost, against the United States; declaring that the executive has no power, and shall have none, to conclude a treaty, or even an armistice, with the United States, and denouncing as a traitor any Mexican functionary who shall entertain either proposition. I have communicated a copy of those decrees to the War Department, and, until further orders thereupon, or until a change of circumstances, I very much doubt whether I can so far commit the honor of my government as to take any direct agency in forwarding the sealed despatch you have sent me from the Secretary of State of the United States.

On this delicate point, however, you will do as you please; and when, if able, I shall have advanced near to the capital, I may, at your instance, lend an escort to your flag of truce; and it may require a large fighting detachment to protect even a flag of truce against the rancheros and banditti who now infest the national road, all the way up to the capital.

I see that the Secretary of War proposes to degrade me, by requiring that I, the commander of this army, shall defer to you, the chief clerk of the Department of State, the question of continuing or discontinuing hostilities.

I beg to say to him and to you, that here, in the heart of a hostile country, from which, after a few weeks, it would be impossible to withdraw this army without a loss, probably, of half its numbers by the *vomito*, which army, from necessity, must soon become a *self-sustaining machine*, cut off from all supplies and reinforcements from home until, perhaps, late in November—not to speak of the bad faith of the government and people of Mexico—I say, in reference to those critical circumstances, this army must take *military* security for its own safety. Hence, the question of an armistice or no armistice is, most peculiarly, a *military* question, appertaining, of necessity, if not of universal right, in the absence of direct instructions, to the commander of the invading forces; consequently, if you are not clothed with military rank over me, as well as with diplomatic functions, I shall demand, under the peculiar circumstances, that, in your negotiations, if the enemy should entertain your overtures, you refer that question to me, and all the securities belonging to it. The safety of this army demands no less, and I am responsible for that safety, until duly superseded or recalled. Indeed, from the nature of the case, if the enemy, on your petition,

should be willing to concede an armistice, he would, no doubt, demand the military guaranty of my signature, for his own safety.

Should you, under the exposition of circumstances I have given, visit the moveable head-quarters of this army, I shall receive you with the respect due to a functionary of my government; but whether you would find me here, at Perote, Puebla, or elsewhere, depends on events changeable at every moment.

The sealed despatch from the Department of State I suppose you to desire me to hold until your arrival, or until I shall hear farther from you.

I remain, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

N. P. TRIST, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

JALAPA, May 20, 1847.

SIR: The enclosed reply to the tirade against our government, which you saw fit to put into the shape of a letter to me, (I regret exceedingly that it did not receive a more appropriate form and direction, by being made up, *at once*, into an "article" to adorn the columns of some reckless partisan press,) was commenced at San Juan del Rio; where, after taking time to recover from the amazement which your letter occasioned, and coolly to reflect upon its extraordinary character—as I have repeatedly done since on the journey—I passed nearly the whole night in writing, so desirous did I feel to dismiss the unpleasant subject from my mind. Having motives also for wishing that my reply should reach you before my arrival here, I purposed finishing it at the first place where it could be resumed. With this view, when we reached El Encero, I got out my writing materials, intending to pass the greater part of the night in this labor, and that of taking a copy. This design having, however, been defeated by the *alerte* which we had there just about sunset, causing Col. Riley to order the advance of the train with which I was to retire from its position in and around the house and out-buildings; the completion of my task has, from this and subsequent causes, been unavoidably delayed until now.

I was, most assuredly, not sent to Mexico for any such purpose as that of engaging in a correspondence with you; above all, in one of the nature of that which I have so unexpectedly found forced upon me; and I doubt whether the government will approve of my having allowed myself to employ any portion of my time in it. Certain I am that this would be censured, but for the fact that your letter found me under circumstances rendering it impossible that I should occupy myself upon the object for which I was sent here. The same excuse will not exist hereafter; and even if it should, numberless other good and sufficient reasons will always exist to compel me to decline the honor of maintaining a correspondence with you.

The communication from the Department of State to the Mexi-

can minister of foreign relations, transmitted to you by me from Vera Cruz, has been returned to me, since my arrival at this place, by your military secretary, Lieut. Lay. So soon as I shall be enabled to ascertain that the condition of the government of this country is such as to admit of its delivery, it will be again placed in the hands of the general-in-chief of our forces, for that purpose.

Upon recurring to your letter, I find both its tone and its matter, with respect to the transmission of this communication, so perfectly in keeping with the rest of it, and especially with the light in which you have seen fit to consider me—that of an emissary of the Secretary of War, through whom and to whom you may “say” whatever your honor suggests—that I deem it necessary to make a special endeavor, in regard to this very important point, to bring down your thoughts from the lofty regions into which they have soared, to the one alone appropriate to such plain matters of business as I am charged with.

You say that some time hence, perhaps, “I (you) may, at your (my) instance, lend an escort to your (my) flag of truce; and it may require a large fighting detachment to protect even a flag of truce against the rancheros and banditti,” &c.

Now, sir, in reply to this, all I have to do is to deliver to you—as I hereby do *in writing*—(and this for the second time, unless my first letter was far more enigmatical than I believe it could seem to any honest men, who, upon their conscience and honor should be called to respond to the questions, whether you had or had not, in this instance, been guilty of a wanton contempt of orders; and whether this offence had or had not been aggravated by the character of the pretences under which the contempt was indulged in, and the contumacy sought to be covered up)—I have, I say, sir, to deliver to you this message from your commander-in-chief, the President of the United States, to wit: “*When the communication, bearing the seal of the Department of State, and addressed ‘to his excellency the minister of foreign relations of the Mexican republic,’ shall be placed in the hands of the general-in-chief of the United States army in Mexico, it is the will, order, and command of the President of the United States, that the said communication shall forthwith be transmitted to its destination under a flag of truce; which flag of truce is to proceed from the head-quarters of the army, and is to be a flag of truce from the general-in-chief. It is to be protected by such escort as the general-in-chief shall deem necessary and proper for its security against all dangers of the road in general, (including those from ‘rancheros and banditti,’ in particular.) Whether the escort necessary and proper for the purpose shall, in the judgment of the general-in-chief, be a corporal’s guard, a company, a regiment, or a brigade; such necessary and proper escort, whatever it may be, is to be furnished. The President, at the same time, commands that the general-in-chief shall not, for the sake of carrying out this order, do aught which may jeopard the existence of the army, or interfere with any movements or operations whatever which he may deem necessary or expedient for the most vigorous possible prosecution of*

*the war. The transmission of the communication above referred to is at all times to be deemed a secondary consideration to any of those just mentioned; but it is also to be deemed at all times paramount to every thing else, and, so far as may be compatible with them, the utmost attention is demanded to it.”*

This, sir, is the order and command of the President of the United States, which—standing as I do to him, for this special purpose, in precisely the same relation that one of your aids-de-camp bears to yourself, when entrusted with a verbal order from you to a subordinate officer—I do hereby convey to the general-in-chief of the army.

You will now, sir, I trust, understand, when the communication referred to shall again be placed in your hands, that greatly deficient in wisdom as the present (and indeed any democratic) administration of the government must necessarily be, it has not, in this particular instance, fallen into so egregious a blunder as to make the transmission and delivery of that communication dependant upon the amiable affability and gracious condescension of General Winfield Scott.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. P. TRIST.

To Major General WINFIELD SCOTT,  
General-in-chief of the U. S. Army in Mexico.

BIVOUAC AT SAN JUAN DEL RIO,  
May 9, 1847.

SIR: Your letter of the 7th instant, directed to me at Vera Cruz, and transmitted by Captain Kearney, has met me at this place, on my way to the head-quarters of the United States army in Mexico, where my instructions require me to be, and for which I set out from Vera Cruz yesterday, in company with Captain Grayson, of your staff, a gentleman to whose kind attentions I am already much indebted.

In the exercise of the discretion left me, as to the precise time for proceeding to head-quarters, I should probably have decided upon remaining at Vera Cruz, until I could obtain some definite information respecting the aspect which things now wear with reference to the object of my mission, had it not been for the information confidentially communicated to me by the governor of Vera Cruz, confirming, (as your letter again does,) the correctness of the impression which I found generally prevalent there, that, after the passage of this well guarded train, all communication between our army and the seaboard would probably be cut off, and remain closed for some time. This consideration, joined with my utter want of all means of judging at what moment a juncture might be likely to occur, when every thing, so far as regards the re-establishment of peace between the two countries, would depend upon my being on the spot, ready to carry out my instructions, without

the loss of a single day, determined me to set out forthwith. My short stay at Vera Cruz had, consequently, to be employed in making the requisite arrangements for leaving with the train, (the departure of which was to take place on the morning after my arrival, though it did not occur till a day later,) instead of being given, as it otherwise would have been, to the examination of files of the Mexican papers for the last five or six weeks; whereby alone my entire ignorance of all political events since the capture of Vera Cruz, and indeed for some time previous, could have been dispelled; for I found all our officers at that city so engrossed by the urgent demands upon their attention which are every instant arising, that the only intelligence elicited by my inquiries was, that every thing was in the utmost confusion, and that a new president had been elected in place of Santa Anna, and in utter disregard of his title to the office, under the election of last year.

No one acquainted with the history of this country could be surprised at such a proceeding, and I took for granted that it had happened exactly so, until I learned from your letter that this new president is merely a "president *ad interim*," not intended to supersede Santa Anna, the latter being still "the nominal president," in other words, the recognised head of the government.

The frantic decrees of the Mexican Congress which you mention, I had never before heard of, although, if your letter had found me still at Vera Cruz, it would most certainly not have had any such effect as that of deterring me from proceeding into the interior, and causing me to abandon all idea that my presence there might possibly be of use. In themselves, such insane proceedings could have had no force whatever upon my mind in forming an estimate of the probabilities of peace, and, in my endeavors to judge of the weight to which they might be entitled from concurrent circumstances, I should not have lost sight of the fact, that it was from the *Mexican Congress* that these brute fulminations had proceeded; the same body, who, calling themselves the representatives of the people, and with "God and liberty" for their motto, had allowed their country to be crushed under a domestic military tyranny, far more grinding than the Janissary oppression inflicted upon the Greeks by their Moslem conquerors.

Upon despatching to you the hurried note written a few hours after my arrival at Vera Cruz, I did not at all anticipate, sir, that a written correspondence was to arise between us, or that any communication whatever would be made on your part until I should have the pleasure of congratulating you in person upon the brilliant success which has attended your movements. Your letter, however, is one which cannot remain unanswered. It imposes upon me the duty at once to reply to it by a written correction of the misconceptions which, to my very deep regret, no less than exceeding surprise, have, from some cause or other, taken possession of your imagination upon the receipt of my letter.

The first of these in importance is the one evinced by the remarks, in the course of which you say: "I see that the Secretary of War proposes to degrade me, by requiring that I, the commander

of this army, shall defer to you, the chief clerk of the Department of State, the question of continuing or discontinuing hostilities."

Upon this point, sir, I have to state that the order conveyed to you in the letter of the Secretary of War, did not originate with that officer, but emanated from him, who, if the constitution of the United States be anything but an empty formula, is "the commander-in-chief" of "this army," and of the whole armed force of the United States, in whatsoever quarter of the globe it may be directed to operate. In the present instance, this fact is positively known to me, and had it not been so, I should still, slight as is my acquaintance with military affairs, have taken it for granted, for I do not recollect ever to have heard of an instance, in which an important order issuing from the War Department, above all, one manifestly founded upon executive determinations respecting our foreign relations, was ascribed to any other source, or in which a disposition to treat such order with contempt sought to shelter itself under any such cover as the pretence that it was regarded as the mere act of the Secretary of War.

Commodore Perry, to whom the same identical order was issued through the Navy Department, and with whom I had a conversation on the subject, did not see in it anything at all extraordinary. This, however, may have been caused by his being less habitually vigilant of, or less gifted with discernment in regard to, the honor of his branch of the public service. Or, perhaps, this want of penetration on his part may be attributable to his not having equal reason for believing his own personal consequence to be so excessive, and the influence of the Secretary of the Navy to be so overwhelming, that for the mere sake of affording indulgence to the personal envy and malevolence of the latter, in the very vilest shape in which these base passions can manifest themselves, a most important measure of the government (belonging obviously to the branch of public duties appertaining to the Department of State, and having no reference to the functions of the War Department) was deliberately planned and decided upon, and a confidential diplomatic agent despatched post haste from Washington, with a communication for the Mexican government.

Thus much in regard to the author of the degradation supposed by you to be involved in this order. With respect to the degradation itself, and the imagined necessity of your deferring to me on "a military question," the following passage in my instructions (instructions which, in making the full explanation referred to in my first letter, it was my intention to submit for your perusal) will suffice. It shows that "the question of continuing or discontinuing hostilities," so far from having been in any manner committed to my discretion, is one which the President, in the discharge of the duty which he owes to our country, has judged proper to reserve entirely to the chief executive authority of our government: "If the contingency shall occur, on the happening of which, as provided by the third article of the proposed treaty, hostilities are required to be suspended, you will, without delay, *communicate this fact* to the commanders of our land and naval

forces, respectively, the Secretaries of War and of the Navy having already issued orders to them for the suspension of hostilities, upon the receipt of such notice from yourself."

It is here seen, that the object of the order, thus provisionally issued to the commanders of our land and naval forces is, simply, that they shall cease to wage war upon Mexico, on the occurrence of a certain contingency. This contingency, as it was intended that you should be fully informed, by the exhibition of the proposed treaty, immediately upon my reaching head-quarters, is, *the ratification, by the Mexican government, of a definitive treaty, establishing peace between the two countries.* No power or discretion whatever—no shadow of any such thing, is vested in me, with respect to the suspension of hostilities. So far as this measure is connected with my mission, or can by any possibility grow out of my mission, it cannot take place except upon the occurrence of a state of things *strictly defined by the President.* A treaty of peace and amity, such as I am empowered to make, must first be concluded, and not only concluded, but *ratified* by Mexico; and then, upon notice of this state of things, given by me to the respective commanders, the order for the suspension of hostilities is to come into force, this order being the President's order, emanating from him, through the appropriate departments, and not *my* order. To represent it as mine, strikes me as being no less obviously erroneous, than it would be to state that the generals of the army under your command had been subjected to the authority of your aids-de-camp, and required to "defer" to them, because you had issued an order requiring the former to execute a particular movement, previously prescribed by yourself, whensoever they should receive from the latter a notice or direction to that effect. And the error would be no less palpable, if, instead of the course pursued by the government, in issuing to yourself and to Commodore Perry the *provisional* order which you have received, the President had judged it to be expedient and necessary that you should never hear of the proposed treaty until it should have been ratified on the part of Mexico, and I had been instructed *then* to notify this fact to you, and to require you, in his name, to suspend hostilities.

So long, then, as the two countries *shall continue to be in a state of war*, the operations of our forces in Mexico cannot, by the remotest possibility, be affected by the fact that I am charged with the duty of making that notification. So far as those operations are concerned, the case now stands, and cannot but continue to stand, precisely as if negotiations for peace had taken place at Washington, and as if no order for the suspension of hostilities had issued until after those negotiations had been brought to a successful close. The only difference which can result from our government's having a diplomatic representative on the spot, is, that the restoration of peace may possibly be thereby hastened. And the only difference made by this agent's being instructed to give notice of its restoration, (instead of waiting till this could travel from Mexico to Washington, and back again from Washing-

ton to the army,) is, that the calamities of war would be arrested a month or two, or more, the sooner; and that this very consideration might, in itself, be the cause of peace, by determining the enemy to conclude a treaty which, otherwise, he would be unwilling to enter into. On your part, sir, above all other men, this certainly could not be objected to; for, unless my memory deceives me, our batteries before Vera Cruz were, in your official despatch, reported as being in "a state of *awful* activity," an epithet which struck me at the moment as being a somewhat unusual one in artillery technicals, although the National Intelligencer very soon afterwards accounted for it to my entire satisfaction, by the assurance which it gave our country, that you are "distinguished for humanity," an assurance which receives the strongest possible corroboration from the little word thus inadvertently dropped from your pen.

In a word, sir, the course determined upon by our government, respecting the suspension of hostilities, is what any man of plain, unsophisticated common sense would take for granted that it must be; and it is not what your exuberant fancy and over cultivated imagination would make it. The question truly presented by it, and it would require very skilful sophistry, indeed, to make our country believe that this could be otherwise than obvious to any man occupying your position, is *not* whether the immediate command and direction of the United States forces in Mexico is to continue to reside in the senior officer of the army present, or is to be transferred to some person not belonging to the army. The question is, whether the government of the United States is to be permitted by General Winfield Scott to discharge its international functions and duties in its own way, and by agents of its own selection, when he may have taken a fancy to relieve it of the trouble of attending to them, by himself settling the preliminaries of peace, in adjusting the terms of that "armistice" with regard to which he has judged proper so vehemently to assert his own exclusive competency.

It may be remarked, that, even if the order thus prospectively given by the President, instead of having reference to a notice of the happening of a certain anticipated possibility, (which it was deemed expedient and necessary not to refer to specifically in the order,) had directed that hostilities should be suspended upon the receipt of a *requirement* from a secret and confidential agent of the government; even in this case, a genuine, as contradistinguished from a merely verbal or formal "respect" for the authority of the constitution, would be likely to suggest to any commander receiving such order and habitually entertaining such genuine sentiment, at least to abstain from all premature determinations to treat it as a nullity. He might, through love of country and forgetfulness of self, make up his mind, should the order take effect under circumstances rendering it destructive of the public weal, then to disobey it. But he would scarcely show haste to make a parade of this determination, or to set to his army an example of insubordination by any unnecessary disclosure of even this contingent intention before those circumstances had become matter of fact and of positive