

knowledge, and whilst they had as yet not ceased to be the coinage of an imagination ready to impute to the chief magistrate elected by our country—aided in his deliberations by the eminent citizens whom he had called around him for the purpose—a course of proceeding so imbecile as to awaken surprise that the bare possibility of its having ever been contemplated by them should suggest itself to any sane mind.

With regard to the choice made by the President of the person to be charged with the measures dictated by him for bringing about the state of things whereof notice is thus to be given, I, sir, do not entertain a doubt but that far better selections might have been made; and that it has fallen upon myself solely in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the juncture. Among these far better selections, the best of all, perhaps, would have been the present commander of our land forces in Mexico. This would have been attended with one advantage, at least, that of precluding all danger of this attempt to restore peace being rendered abortive by collisions in regard to "military rank." But if the President has proved himself not duly sensible of this consideration, added to the many others, which should doubtless have weighed with him in favor of the appointment now referred to; and should he hereafter have cause to repent that he did not make it, no part of the blame can ever attach to me, for he knows that the sin thus committed by him was not in any way participated in by me, except so far as my consent, in reply to his own spontaneously expressed wish, no less undesired than unsought on my part, may have made me one of the guilty.

My instructions (which, as has already been stated, I am authorized to make known to you, and had intended to exhibit to you) show that no ground exists, either for the supposition you have made, that the object for which I have been sent here is, to "*petition the enemy to concede an armistice,*" or for the apprehension which you express, that the communication from the Secretary of State of the *United States of America!* to the Mexican Minister of foreign relations, may be of a nature to "*commit the honor of*" the *government of our country*; although this patriotic solicitude, most assuredly cannot fail to be duly appreciated by that country, and most especially by all sticklers for military subordination within the army, and for the strict enforcement of the respect due from the military to the civil authority. Equally groundless will be found to be the supposition that "the chief clerk of the Department of State" can have been taken from his desk, and sent to the seat of war in the heart of the enemy's country, "clothed with military rank over" the senior officer of the army of the United States! The propriety of its finding a place in the reply of that senior officer to the communication which, in the discharge of the duties confided to me, I found it necessary to address to him, is a point which does not call for remark from me. The merits of this *jeu d'esprit*, as a specimen of delicate and refined irony, so peculiarly appropriate, too, in reply to a letter so offensive as mine, I willingly leave to the good taste and good feeling of our countrymen.

They will not fail to do justice to it also, as a model of the respect due by all public servants to the office and the authority of the President of the United States.

The communication from the Secretary of State to the Mexican minister, in regard to which you express surprise, (or perhaps *indignation* may be the meaning of your note of exclamation,) that it should have been enclosed to you for transmission "sealed," was so sealed because it was deemed proper that it should bear the seal of the Department of State of the United States; and in this there was no departure from the established practice in similar cases. It was intended, however, that you should be made acquainted with its contents, as well as with every thing else relating to the subject, by means of the copy in my possession; and I had supposed that this intention was sufficiently expressed in my former letter, though from the haste in which it was written and despatched, (and which did not allow me to retain a copy,) it was doubtless very imperfect in more than one particular. But, had no such intimation been given, and had no such intention existed, the doctrine which should deny to the government of the United States the right to send to its agents or officers abroad, civil or military, for transmission to foreign governments, any communications which it might be deemed necessary to make, and in such state, sealed or unsealed, as it might be deemed appropriate to the occasion, such a doctrine would, so far as my very limited knowledge extends, be a most extraordinary innovation in the conduct of public affairs. Nothing is more common than to send naval commanders, of any and every rank, to sea with "sealed orders;" which, although addressed to *themselves*, and relating to public interests *entrusted exclusively to them*, they are required not to open for weeks or months thereafter, or not at all, except upon the occurrence of a certain contingency. And if this be considered as not affecting their honor, and as not giving them the right to take their government to task, either by the device of notes of exclamation or by less condensed modes of expression, it strikes my poor judgment as following, *a fortiori*, that no such right can arise from the transmission, through them, of a sealed note to a foreign government, upon matters *totally distinct from their own professional duties*.

The haste in which the communications for the Mexican minister of foreign relations was despatched to you, arose from the utter uncertainty in which I found myself, whether the state of things then existing in the interior might not be such as to present a crisis, rendering it of the highest importance to our country, and to Mexico likewise, that the moment should be seized for the delivery of that communication. It was the President's intention, when I left Washington, that it should be delivered immediately upon my arrival in this country, and that it should forthwith be placed in the hands of the general-in-chief of our forces for this purpose. By transmitting it to you, and making the intention of the President known, my duty in regard to it is fulfilled. At the same time, had I been aware that the circumstances of the moment were decidedly unpropitious for its delivery, I should have deemed it my duty,

perhaps, to retain it, or at any rate to recommend, at the moment of placing it in your hands, that its transmission should be delayed until a favorable change should occur, or at least until further instructions could be received.

Under this view of the subject, I do not regret that its transmission has been delayed until I shall have reached Jalapa; although I cannot, I must confess, assent to the correctness of the ground upon which your determination thus to delay it is placed. It is impossible for me to perceive how it could have been inferred, from the extreme anxiety evinced by me to transmit that communication to you *at the earliest possible moment*, that it was contemplated by the instructions under which I so acted, that you were to retain it until my arrival at "the moveable head-quarters."

[No. 6.]

PUEBLA, June 3, 1847.

SIR: To-day, about 12 o'clock, I accidentally learnt from one of the officers who visited the house where I am staying, (General Persifor Smith's head-quarters,) that a train is to leave this place for Jalapa to-morrow morning. This intelligence found me engaged in the examination of a number of Mexican papers, of straggling dates, from the 1st to the 11th ultimo, the first which I had been enabled to obtain since my arrival here on the 29th, although I had authorized a person who I knew would omit no effort to accomplish the object, (for he has himself a deep personal interest in the matter,) to pay any price within reasonable bounds for a file of papers embracing the last two months. He yesterday found, in a stable, and brought to me, one half of the "Republicano" of the 10th May, which he conjectured had been dropped there by some Mexicans who had just come in from that direction with horses, and from whom he subsequently succeeded, through the agency of the landlord of the inn, in obtaining, at half a dollar a piece, the papers above mentioned, eleven or twelve in number, which he brought to me late last night.

They afford the only means which have come into my possession of forming an idea of what has been, or may now be, going on at the capital. The ignorance on this subject seems to be universal and *entire*. Even ***** , who has acquaintances in all these parts among the most intelligent business men, and whose long residence in the country has qualified him for finding out and understanding what is taking place, is completely in the dark, unable to tell me what is the meaning of this presidential election, which was to take place on the 15th ultimo, and which is now spoken of as not to be decided until the 15th instant.

Such passages in the papers referred to, as seemed to shed a glimmer of light upon the prospect ahead, I have made translations of, which are herein enclosed, on six closely written pages.

I enclose, also, a letter addressed to me by a gentleman, whose name will be communicated hereafter. Being struck with the

clearness and comprehensiveness, as well as the justness, of the views expressed by him in conversation with me, I requested him to commit the substance to writing, which he has obligingly done. I beg leave to call your attention to the part relating to the point *below* the Paso del Norte, to which he attaches *great* importance in a military point of view. If deemed proper, the boundary defined in my instructions might easily be modified in accordance with this suggestion, (as far as regards that post,) by saying, "up the middle of the Rio Bravo to the 32d degree of north latitude; thence due west to a point due south of the southwestern angle of New Mexico; thence due north to the said angle; thence along the western boundary," &c. I will add, that he has not the slightest idea of what my instructions contain on this or any other subject.

I have been occupying part of my time here in making a cipher, which I shall probably have frequent occasion for. A duplicate and key can be made at the department, by sending to my daughter for a copy of the smallest of the books (there are several at my house) which she packed up for me, the work of our old instructor, who was sent to Spain as consul. Let the letters of the prefatory address "To the British nation," (excluding this title,) be *numbered* from *one* onwards, until every letter of the alphabet is reached except *z*, (which I represent by *zero*.) Each of the letters, with a few exceptions, has *three* numbers corresponding to it.

I have the prospect of a confidential interview with a most important personage here, through whom a knowledge (a very limited one, of course) of the object of my mission may be imparted to the most influential power of the State, and to all disposed to cooperate with them. They are evidently beginning to be seriously alarmed, and a plain statement of facts, as to the certain consequences of the continuance of the war, will greatly increase the alarm.

My position personally could not be more agreeable than it is, as a member of General Smith's family. He is a perfect gentleman, of a most frank and amiable disposition, and totally free from pretension, and of a fine, clear, comprehensive mind. As a commander, his officers say he has no superior; perfect master of his profession, and as distinguished for composure and perfect imperturbableness under fire as old Zack himself.

On my arrival here I received a letter from General Scott, to which I shall make no reply, (as I informed the aid, Lieutenant Hamilton, who handed it to me,) and which I will transmit at some other time. No other communication has reached me from him; and, as was stated at the beginning of this letter, it was through accident only that I became informed of the opportunity for writing afforded by the train for Jalapa to-morrow morning. The officer who gave me the information said, "Of course you know there will be an opportunity for sending letters down to-morrow."

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

N. P. TRIST.

HON. JAMES BUCHANAN,

Secretary of State.

JUNE 2, 1847.

DEAR SIR: At your request, I put in writing some remarks made the other day on the subject of the present war.

The object of a war, at any period of its continuation, is not necessarily that for which it was commenced: it is therefore unnecessary to go back to the beginning of this, as Mr. Calhoun has done, to learn how it can be waged or concluded with honor; the more so in this case, where the war was not begun by us. What objects have we to gain *now*, and how can we honorably obtain them? These are the questions to determine.

We have three points—indemnity, boundary, and maintenance of the national honor. All these may be secured by treaty, if the Mexicans consent to negotiate; but they have hitherto refused in such a manner as to preclude any further direct propositions from us. And it is certain that, if the change of government now taking place among them, does not eventuate in an administration willing to treat with us, we cannot look for peace for a long time to come. Suppose the war party to prevail—What should be our course? In other words, how shall we then secure indemnity, boundary, and honor?

The defensive policy advocated by Mr. Calhoun would, in some measure, secure the two first, but at the evident expense of the last. Mexico could say to us—Depending on your superior wealth and strength, you have invaded and occupied a remote part of my territory, almost unpopulated, and separated from all my resources by difficult passes and wide deserts; strong as you are, you have not dared to meet me in battle, except at my great disadvantage; you cannot aspire to be even the robber—you are only a thief: and probably believing what she thus said, our possession of the occupied territory would always be disturbed by her efforts, more or less effective, to recover it. No line that we can occupy, even the Rio Grande or Nueces, and the 42° of north latitude, can secure us any shadow of tranquility, while the question of superiority in arms is undecided, even to the point fixed by Mexican boasting.

If this was true before we undertook any invasion, it is more plainly so now, since an invasion is an acknowledgment of its truth, and is, besides, a threat we are bound to execute. Having executed this threat, and settled this point of honor, we are then at liberty to assume a line of boundary which shall at once secure our claims of indemnity, and fulfil those of conquerors. I may as well pursue this branch now, and revert to the point of honor.

In the first place, it is due to our own character, and to the high principles of justice which we profess, that we should limit our gains to the smallest extent possible, and incur no reproach for grasping and insatiable avarice. In the next place, it is not our interest to acquire a territory containing much population, especially if the latter be, as is the case in northern Mexico, of a mixed colored race. And, finally, our acquisitions should be such as not to excite disunion among ourselves.

I propose the line of the Rio Grande up to a point *thirty miles*

south of the town of Paso del Norte, and then following out that parallel of latitude to the Pacific, or gulf of California, as the case may be; but if it intersects the main stream of the river Gila, then to follow that to the gulf. This would give us all the ports we desire on the Pacific; and at Paso del Norte, which is the first very fertile spot on descending the river, could be established the main post for defending that frontier: the line from that to the gulf of California, being very mountainous, would require but few troops.

Another line suggested is from Tampico, by Megianetzin, San Barbara, Tula, Labradores, Saltillo, Parras, and the upper part of Sinoloa: this is a strong line, by posting troops at Victoria, Linares, Monte Morelos, and Monterey, and occupying the advanced points in the mountain passes in front of them. It includes a vast and rich country, with many inhabitants. It is too much to take. The population is mostly as dark as our mulattoes, and is nominally free, and would be actually so under our government. The north would oppose taking it, lest slavery should be established there; and the south, lest this colored population should be received as citizens, and protect their runaway slaves. I do not think a treaty, including that territory, would be ratified by the Senate; much less would the occupation and government of it, without treaty, be authorized by a law. I will, therefore, assume the Paso del Norte line as that to be finally taken, and now go back and inquire—When can we with “honor” place ourselves on this line?

I assume that if negotiations are not opened on the conclusion of the pending elections in Mexico, there will be no peace. I will also assume that Congress will never authorize the raising of an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men, necessary to occupy and govern all the States of Mexico as a conquered territory. A force of ten thousand men, exclusive of garrisons and sick, can successively march to and occupy all the principal cities, but to no advantage to ourselves; for, occupying the territories either by the large force simultaneously, or successively by the small one, will end by debasing the morals of the soldier, and teaching habits of plunder and rapine.

It remains, therefore, to fix the period at which (there being no hope of peace) we can with “honor” abandon the plan of invasion, having obtained all the advantages it can afford, and take up the new system, less expensive and more convenient to ourselves. I fix that period at a proper interval after the entry of our army into the city of Mexico. When we have accomplished that act, we can say to the Mexican people—You have upbraided us with attacking your remote and thinly populated districts, and have threatened, when we approached your large cities and populous valleys, to meet us and drive us back into the sea: we have accepted your challenge: we have attacked and captured your strongest fortresses: we have met your best appointed armies, and defeated them: we have marched through your largest cities, and at 300 miles from the sea have entered your capital, and now stand with our feet on your very floors; we have done all that the honor of our name demanded; and now, after all these successes, offer you the same lib-

eral terms of peace that were at your disposal before you tried the fortunes of war. Will you now accept them? If you do not, we have no more proposals to make, but shall henceforward pursue a system solely dictated by our rights and our convenience.

If, as would probably be the case, this offer be refused, General Taylor should be directed to send that part of his force intended to be placed on the line, by the way of Parras and Chihuahua, to Paso del Norte and Santa Fé. This army should, at its leisure, fall back so as to occupy Perote, La Hoya, and Jalapa, in September, and, despatching all the sick and extra stores in advance, reach Vera Cruz in time to embark the beginning of November; part of the boundary line, by the way of the Rio Grande, and the rest for the different Mexican ports on the coast; all of which should be garrisoned by our troops, sustained by the navy.

This boundary and these posts on the seacoast can be maintained at a cost very little beyond what the army will require if peace be made, and will be a constant pressure on Mexico, which may finally bring her to reason. But it is absolutely necessary that this change of system should be in the first place preceded by our occupation of the city, lest it be attributed to a failure on our part in the invasion, and should not be delayed so long after that success as to appear to have been chosen only on discovering our inability to select and execute something preferable; it must come in as part of the plan adopted from the beginning, and carried out in the face of all opposition, without variation.

[Referred to in Mr. Trist's No. 6.]

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Puebla, May 29, 1847.

SIR: Your long studied letters of the 9th and 20th instant, making 30 pages, in reply to my short note of the 7th, were handed to me under one cover at Jalapa, the morning of the 21st, when you knew, being on the spot, that I was about to march upon this place. Occupied as I was with business of much higher importance, I did not allow the seal of the package to be broken till the evening of the 22d, which I took care to have done in the presence of many staff officers. One of them, at my instance, read a part and reported to me the general character of the papers. I have not yet read them.

My first impulse was to return the farrago of insolence, conceit and arrogance to the author; but on reflection, I have determined to preserve the letters as a choice specimen of diplomatic literature and manners. The Jacobin convention of France never sent to one of its armies in the field a more amiable and accomplished instrument. If you were armed with an ambulatory guillotine, you would be the personification of Danton, Marat, and St. Just, all in one.

You tell me that you are authorized to negotiate a treaty of peace with the enemy—a declaration which, as it rests upon your

own word, I might well question; and you add, that it was not intended at Washington that I should have anything to do with the negotiation. This I can well believe, and certainly have cause to be thankful to the President for not degrading me by placing me in any joint commission with you.

From the letter of the Secretary of War to me, of the 14th ultimo, I had supposed you to be simply authorized to propose, or to concede to the enemy, the truce or armistice which usually precedes negotiations for a peace, and my letter to you was written on that supposition. If the terms of military conventions are left to me, the commander of the army, I have nothing more to desire or to demand for its safety.

In conclusion—for many persons here believe that the enemy, 20,000 strong, is about to attack this place—I have only time to ask you, in your future communications to me to be brief and purely official; for if you dare to use the style of orders or instructions again, or to indulge yourself in a single discourteous phrase, I shall throw back the communication with the contempt and scorn which you merit at my hands.

I remain, sir, officially, &c.,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

To NICHOLAS P. TRIST, Esq.,

&c., &c., &c.

A true copy:

GEO. W. RAINES,

Lieutenant, and A. A. D. C.

From the "Bulletin of the Democracy,"—Mexico, May 1, 1847.

[This is a new paper, violently opposed to Santa Anna.]

"GENERAL BASADRE.

"We have just learnt that this gentleman has set out to-day for the States of the interior, and we have heard some unfavorable comments on the subject. It is said," &c., [here some remarks upon the general's conduct on previous occasions.]

"And what, it is now asked, may now be the mission of General Basadre? The replies are various, and even contradictory, although most of them are to the effect that he goes charged by the ministry to negotiate in certain States to bring their authorities to consent not to oppose the *foreign mediation* which the government has it in contemplation to admit; to dispel the impressions which the disaster of Cerro Gordo may have caused against General Santa Anna, so that the legislatures may elect him president; and finally, if his election should prove impossible, to negotiate, in order that it may fall upon some person who shall be under the exclusive influence of the peace party, as are Ocampo, Elorriaga, and Anaya. Unhappy country!"