

taken in a strong dose of confidence—the result of the meeting of the governors—which has served to brace them against its stunning effect. Mr. Thornton left here on the 17th, and was to complete his journey on the evening of the 21st. Before he had reached there, I was privately advised here of the appointment of the commissioners named in the official note from the minister of relations, under date the 22d, herein enclosed, together with a copy of my reply to the same, which was despatched from Queretaro on the morning of that day. Their extreme anxiety on the subject may be judged of from the fact that I have received, already, the same communication in duplicate and triplicate. The peace men did not cease, for several days, to implore me to remain in the country, at least, until Mr. Parrott shall have arrived with the despatches of which report makes him the bearer. To these entreaties, however, I have turned a deaf ear, stating the absolute impossibility that those despatches should bring anything to change my position in the slightest degree. General Scott at once said, that he would despatch a train at any time I might name. And I should have set out before this, but for two considerations: one, that the garrison here is already so small that its duties are exceedingly oppressive to both officers and men, and the matter would be made still worse by the detachment of another escort; the other, that General Scott has been engaged, during the whole time that was not employed in the discharge of his current duties, in drawing up charges against General Pillow and others, which had first to be done before my testimony (that is highly important) could be taken in the case. For these reasons, I determined to postpone my departure until the return of the train under Lieutenant Colonel Johnson, which is expected on the 4th or 5th of next month. Should it be delayed beyond that time, and should any reinforcements have arrived here, or be near, I will set out immediately after. It will take us twelve days, at least, to reach Vera Cruz.

I recommended to the peace men to send immediately, through General Scott, whatever propositions they may have to make, or to despatch one or more commissioners with me. After full conversations on the subject, however, I became thoroughly satisfied of the impracticability of either plan; it would, to a certainty, have the effect of breaking them down. The only possible way in which a treaty can be made is, to have the work done on the spot—negotiation and ratification to take place at one dash. The complexion of the new congress, which is to meet at Queretaro on the 8th of January, is highly favorable. This will be the last chance for a treaty. I would recommend, therefore, the immediate appointment of a commission on our part.

I am, sir, in great haste, and very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. P. TRIST.

Hon. JAMES BUCHANAN,
Secretary of State.

QUERETARO, November 22, 1847.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith to you, at the request of Señor de la Peña y Peña, Mexican minister of foreign relations, a note addressed to you by his excellency, announcing the nomination, in consequence of the readiness expressed by you to receive them, of commissioners for the purpose of negotiating a treaty of peace with you. I beg leave to express my earnest hope, that the promptness with which this step has been taken by the Mexican government after the election of General Anaya to the presidency, may serve to you as a proof of their sincere and anxious desire for the fulfilment of the great object which the commissioners have in view.

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

EDWARD THORNTON.

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

MEXICO, November 24, 1847.

To his excellency, DON MANUEL DE LA PEÑA Y PEÑA,
Minister of relations of the Mexican government:

The undersigned has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the note, under date the 22d instant, of his excellency Don Manuel de la Peña y Peña, minister of relations of the Mexican government, acquainting him of the appointment of the commissioners therein named, to negotiate for the restoration of peace. The undersigned regrets to say, in reply, that the powers conferred upon him, for that purpose, have been revoked, and that, agreeably to the instructions received by him, he is under the necessity of returning, without delay, to the United States. At the same time, he has been instructed to say, that any communication from the Mexican government, having for its object the opening of negotiations, or the restoration of peace, will be immediately transmitted, by the commanding general of the United States forces in this republic, to Washington, where it will receive the prompt consideration of the President.

The undersigned still cherishes, therefore, the hope that the signature of the treaty, which has been reserved for another hand than his, is destined to take place at an early day. In this hope, he tenders to, &c.

[No. 22.]

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE U. S. ARMY,
Mexico, December 6, 1847.

SIR: * * * * *

In the letter just referred to, besides the complimentary consideration therein mentioned, (my belief that the appointment of a commission on the part of our government cannot now take place in

time,) I place my determination on the ground of my conviction, "*first*, that peace is still the desire of my government; *secondly*, that if the present opportunity be not seized *at once*, all chance for making a treaty *at all* will be lost for an indefinite period—probably forever; *thirdly*, that this (the boundary proposed by me) is the utmost point to which the Mexican government can, by any possibility, venture." I also state, that the determination of my government to withdraw the offer to negotiate, of which I was made the organ, has been "taken with reference to a supposed state of things in this country *entirely the reverse of that which actually exists*." These four points constitute the heads under which the development of the subject naturally arranges itself.

1. "*First*, that peace is still the desire of my government." Upon this point the words of the President, as I took leave of him, are still fresh in my memory: "Mr. Trist, if you succeed in making a treaty, you will render a great service to your country." These were his words, with an addition respecting the "great distinction" which I should thereby acquire; a matter which to me was one of very slight if of any concern then, and the value of which has certainly not risen in my estimation since, after the additional opportunities which my companionship with this army—truly a "glorious army"—has afforded of knowing by what means "great distinction," true or false, may be acquired; and also of seeing that for distinction's sake, for the sake of the thing itself, the false is as good as the true. It was, however, far otherwise with respect to the "great service." It required no words from any one to impress me with the truth that the restoration of peace would be a great benefit to our country; and the conviction on this point, and the wish born of that conviction, which I entertained and cherished then in common with our whole country, to say nothing of differences in modes and degrees, arising from peculiarities of position on the political board, I entertain and cherish still, with this difference only, that both the conviction and the wish have become strengthened a thousand fold by the same opportunities just referred to.

Such having been the state of the President's mind at the time of my departure, and such the *spirit* in which I was sent here, I have carefully examined the despatches last received by me, (those by which I am recalled,) with special reference to the point now under consideration; that is to say, taking those despatches as the latest expression of the wish and intention of our government as to the restoration or non-restoration of peace, I have examined them with a view to discover whether any change has occurred in the President's mind, in other words the recognised mind of our government, on this particular subject. I have found there no intimation or indication of any such change; nothing whatever which would at all warrant the supposition that he has ceased to believe, or believes any the less strongly now than he did then, that the restoration of peace is highly desirable to the country whom he is charged with the grave responsibility of thinking for, and judging for, and determining for, at this fearful turning point of her des-

tinies. On the contrary, the determination of the President to put an end to the mission committed to me, is expressly placed on the ground of his belief "that your (my) continued presence with the army *can be productive of no good, but may do much harm*." How? The conclusion of the sentence gives the answer: "by encouraging the delusive hopes and false impressions of the Mexicans." The delusive hopes and false impressions here referred to are those to which, in the sentences immediately preceding, the pertinacity of the Mexicans in continuing the war is ascribed: "They must attribute our liberality to fear, or they must take courage from our supposed political divisions. Some such cause is necessary to account for their strange infatuation." It is, therefore, *because* of its supposed tendency to *prolong the war*, that the President apprehends that the continuance of this mission "*may do much harm*." Here, then, is a conclusive proof that, upon the point now before us, the President is still of the same mind as when I left Washington; that now, as then, he considers the protraction of the war a great evil; that now, as then, he believes that to restore peace would be to render a great service to our country; in a word, "*that peace is still the desire of my government*."

Thus has the first point become established in my mind. It is true, that since I left home *the tone of the public mind* of our country in regard to this war has undergone a great, and in one respect a most salutary change, as no one acquainted with the patriotic sentiment which lies at the bottom of her heart could doubt that it would undergo, under the influence of the impressions produced by the view she has taken, altogether erroneous as that view is, and can easily be demonstrated to be, of the occurrences here immediately preceding the capture of this city. 'Tis true, also, that the unanimous determination now manifested in all parts of the Union to support the war has altogether reversed, for the moment at least, the party consequences which, down to the time when this change occurred, were universally considered as certain to ensue from the war, unless it were speedily brought to a close. Of all this I am fully aware. But it is altogether irrelevant to the point just considered; that point being, not what may be the present tone of the public mind in regard to the war, nor what party consequences may be likely to result from its continuance, but simply and solely whether, judging from the communications made to me, I have good and sufficient reason to believe, and am bound to believe, "*that peace is still the desire of my government*."

I will, however, say that if, losing sight of the principle which requires that every public servant in the executive branch shall look to the Executive alone as the rightful and the only rightful channel through which any knowledge of the public will can reach him; if, losing sight of this principle, I had added the considerations just adverted to to the list of those by which it was proper that I should be governed; even in this case, I should have been brought to the same conclusion in regard to the desire and the will of my country, that I have been brought to in regard to the desire of my government: and the conclusion would have been still the

same in regard to party consequences, both in the broad and in the narrow view which may be taken of them, for my conviction is immeasurably deeper now than it was eight months ago that the early cessation of this war is of incalculable importance to the preservation of the great principles of the democratic party, whilst, with respect to the narrow view of the subject, embracing only the influence which the continuance of the war may exercise upon the results of the struggles for office now going on, I am satisfied, notwithstanding the very decided character of the present war fever, that the expectations to which it has given rise are destined to prove altogether transient, and that the war spirit is soon to subside to the point up to which alone, particularly with reference to such an adversary as Mexico, the high intelligence and the high civilization of our country can permit it to continue; the point, I mean, of giving to the war a sober and steady support, so long as the government, keeping, as hitherto it has done, on the right side, shall continue to prosecute hostilities with a view solely to securing a peace, *so soon as this can be secured upon fair terms*. However great may be the tumult of feelings occasioned at home by the events here, which crowded themselves into one short month succeeding our arrival near this capital, and whatever be the thoughts which that state of high excitement may have occasioned, the point just indicated is one to which the war spirit cannot but subside.

I consider this certain, because it is manifest that this excitement (except so far as it consists of pure, generous, patriotic joy and exultation at the glorious deeds of our army) consists solely of indignation against this country; and because I know that the appearances by which this indignation has been excited are so entirely deceptive, that it cannot possibly survive a single "sober second thought" upon the truth of the matter, when that truth shall be known. One such thought is all that can be necessary to convert this angry feeling into one of pity and commiseration, and to make our country ashamed that she should have been betrayed into allowing herself to degrade *her* indignation by throwing it away upon such an object; to make her blush at having fallen into the error of fancying that, with reference to a country towards which such sensitiveness is far more misplaced than it would be towards any one of the Indian tribes within our borders, *her* honor could require her to bristle up as she would towards England, or France, or Russia, upon the same affront from them: that is to say, if their governments were to pursue towards her the same line of conduct which, on this stage, has recently marked the exit of the miserable, trembling, vacillating faction, that had possessed itself for the hour of the opportunity to filch from this people, and of the pretext to speak in their name.

What is the character of this country, as compared with ours? The identity between the government and people, which is our most striking peculiarity and our proudest characteristic—which, among us, is perfect, absolute, and uninterrupted for a single day or a single hour—this identity there is not the faintest shadow of here. Whilst *we* constitute, really and truly constitute, *one being* with respect

to the rest of mankind; whilst we have a government fixed as the eternal hills—a government the stability of which is never for an instant disturbed, and the obedience of which to our will is constant and invariable; whilst this is the condition in which Providence has placed us, the unhappy people of this country do not so much as constitute a *nation* at all: they present but an incoherent collection of fragments of the human family, among whom the principle of concerted action is so weak as to be altogether inadequate even for the purpose of mutual protection at their very hearth-stones, against the mid-day robber and assassin. With respect to what is called their government, they present but a helpless multitude; and this government itself, always destitute of all semblance of stability, is seldom anything but a soulless faction, utterly devoid of sympathy with the people, and intent solely upon haste in robbing, ere it be ousted from its stolen lease of a political power entirely ineffectual for the most ordinary purposes of government, as these are regularly fulfilled in all tolerably well organized communities. Whilst among the nations of the earth we are the one above all others to whom with the greatest equity may be applied, in all strictness and rigor, the international principle that every government must be regarded as the organ of the people who consent or submit to its rule, and that the acts of the one must be regarded as the acts of the other; whilst this is our position, Mexico occupies the very lowest point of the same scale—a point beneath even the one proper to the Indian tribes within our borders; for they have a real *national* existence, both internally and externally, whilst she has none, either for internal purposes or for external: they always constitute one body, and are never without a head to this body—a head which truly represents the collective will; whilst the condition of the Mexican people (for, from want of a more appropriate term, the word *people* must be used in speaking of her inhabitants, when considered as one *mass*) is the reverse of this in all respects, and their existence as a nation is limited to the one single fact that their independence is recognised by the rest of mankind; in other words, that there is a general acknowledgment of the absence of right in other nations to interfere in their internal concerns. Whilst the principle referred to is one of absolute necessity as a rule among nations; and while this necessity extends not only to such acts of governments as are attended with injury to the material interests of other nations, but to such also as affect only points of honor and international decorum; while this rule is necessarily of universal application, still, nowhere else upon our globe is there to be found a people whose helplessness in regard to the factions that, in endless succession, are ever preying upon them, presents equally strong appeals to every generous or good sentiment of the human heart, in its enforcement with respect to them. Nowhere else is there to be found a people in regard to whom the indulgence of feelings of exasperation or resentment, for any possible breach of international decorum committed by one of those factions, is equally unworthy of a christian people—equally irreconcilable with self-respect in any civilized community. Nowhere

else does there exist a people in regard to whom the aggravation of their unhappy lot, by injury to their material interests, as a punishment for mere affronts offered by their rulers in departing from the established standard of diplomatic probity or diplomatic courtesy, would be equally abhorrent to the most ordinary justice between man and man.

And does it admit of doubt that, when all this shall once have been adverted to by the American people, the war spirit which now fires the bosom of our country will instantly subside to the point above indicated? Does it admit of doubt that (to say nothing of her civilization, her christianity, and the generosity which becomes her) she will instantly dismiss, as incompatible with her position of pride among nations—as degrading to her dignity and honor—the thought that these could be wounded to the quick, or could be touched at all, by aught proceeding from such a source, in the shape of trembling subterfuge or impudent propositions? And when brought down by self-respect to this point, what will her war spirit amount to? What else can it be, other than a sober determination, free from everything like anger or resentment, steadily to prosecute the war into which she has been reluctantly forced, with a view solely to the end so oft and so solemnly and with such perfect sincerity and truth asseverated by her?—*the end of obtaining peace?* What else can it be, other than a steady determination to secure this peace, so soon as it can be secured on just and equitable terms?—that is to say, so soon as Mexico shall consent to our retaining such portion of the territory which she has placed us under the necessity of occupying in the prosecution of this war, as our country shall deem a just and fair indemnity for the cost of the war, and the sacrifices into which she has thus been compelled.

However unanimous and vehement the determination of our country may have become to support the government in pushing the war actively and vigorously, this determination cannot but continue to be connected with the determination to establish peace so soon as it can be secured upon the terms just stated. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose the character of the war altogether changed, entirely reversed; and that, from being—as it has so often been declared to be, and has so truly been thus far—a purely defensive war on our part, it has become a war of conquest. Mere invasion, however extensive, does not make a war the less truly, and strictly, and purely defensive, so long as the intention of the party accords with the determination just referred to, as having been constantly asseverated by our government, and sincerely entertained both by the government and the country. But the instant this determination is lost sight of, or ceases to control and to govern every feeling to which the events of the war may give rise, from that instant the character of the war becomes entirely reversed, and it becomes purely a war of conquest, a war waged through no other motive than acquisition. Whether our country will permit the character of the war thus to become reversed; whether she will see in the weakness and defencelessness of Mexico, or in the deplorable state of things which the internal condition of this coun-

try exhibits, reasons sufficient to induce her to employ her power in subjugating it, either from motives of ambition or from motives of philanthropy; this is a question which the future alone can settle. But of two things I feel perfectly certain. The one, that this question has never yet been presented to her. The other, that her intelligence will not permit this reversal of the character of the war to take place, without her perceiving that it is taking place; her sagacity will not permit the question just stated to substitute itself unperceived for the question whether the war, *in the character which has thus far belonged to it*, shall receive a cordial support. However vehement and enthusiastic may be the response which she is now giving to the latter, this generous excitement can never so far cloud her reason as to make her confound the two questions, or blind her to the fact that her response to the one has no manner of applicability to the other, cannot rightfully be taken as an answer to the other, and warrants no inference whatever in regard to the answer which she will give to that other.

Such has been the result of my endeavor to seize the true character of the change now exhibited in our country's tone of mind with respect to the war. This is not, as I have said before, among the considerations by which I have deemed it proper that I should be governed in the trying position in which I find myself. But, had it been so, I should have had to enumerate among those considerations my conviction that peace is still the desire of my country, as well as of my government.

I will here take leave of this first head, with the remark that—as will be perfectly apparent from what I have to say under the next, with reference to the state of things in this country—this is such as to create *an absolute incompatibility between a sincere desire for peace on our part, and any omission on our part to seize, at the very instant when it may present itself, any opportunity that may occur to make peace upon terms just to ourselves*: for, according to every human probability, this juncture is rapidly verging to a state of things when a treaty of any kind with this country will be an absolute impossibility.

2. “*Secondly*, that if the present opportunity be not seized *at once*, all chance for making a treaty *at all* will be lost for an indefinite period—probably forever.”

Upon this point, the explanations of the state of parties in this country, contained in my recent despatches, will have afforded you some means of forming a judgment. I will here repeat, that—setting aside mere *personal factions*—but two parties partaking in any sense of a *national* character (as those both do in one sense, and the best sense; that is to say, they are governed by considerations having reference to what they consider the good of their country) now exist here, with respect to the question of peace or war. Both desire peace, and have peace in view: but the one desires peace immediately; whilst the other, bent upon making the war conducive to its views respecting the mode of promoting the public weal, is no less actively, and energetically, and recklessly opposed to immediate peace, than if it were actuated alone by

national animosity, in its very bitterest and maddest conceivable excess. In this form, and in this form alone—putting out of view mere personal factions—does there exist in this country, at the present moment, a war party. There is no such thing as a war party, for the sake of war, nor even for the sake of resistance. All minds are satisfied of the utter inutility and hopelessness of this. The only national influence which presents—or which has presented, since the downfall of Santa Anna, and the success of the efforts of the friends of peace in organizing a government—any serious obstacle to the making of a treaty of peace, consists of the *annexationists*, of those who are inflexibly resolved, cost what it may, to play out their game (commenced long before the war broke out) of *forcing our country into a connexion with this*. It was through dread of succumbing before this same influence—aided as it then was, and would have continued to be, by many others, of which it constituted the nucleus, but whose cohesion with it went not beyond the point of opposition to Santa Anna, actively or passively—it was through this dread solely that Santa Anna, at the crisis of his destiny, shrank from making the treaty which could alone save him, and which would have given him the power to carry out his despotic designs.

Such is the character of the two parties, on whose struggle the issue to the question of peace or war really depends. And this question is not whether peace shall take place now or a year hence: it is a question between *immediate* peace and indefinite war. That the case stands thus, is perfectly manifest from the position of the two parties at the present moment.

The efforts made by the friends of peace—and never were efforts more active or more untiring than these have been, since they aroused from the supineness in which they had been held by the apprehension of giving strength to Santa Anna if they did anything for peace whilst he remained in power—have been crowned with success far exceeding their most sanguine expectations. They first built up the “provisional government” of Peña y Peña, a government pledged to the cause of peace, and *known* to be sincerely devoted to it. This government they defended and upheld against the ceaseless machinations of the puros, acting in concert with the Santanistas and all the other personal factions who could be brought into the alliance. Whilst engaged in this contest, they have succeeded in bringing the “sovereign constituent congress” together, and in obtaining at its hands the election of a president *ad interim* of the same complexion as the provisional president whom he replaced, and who immediately appointed that predecessor his minister of foreign relations, at the same time that he reappointed to the post of minister of war General Mora y Villamil, the avowed “apostle of peace,” known to the whole country as the man who, as one of the four commissioners then treating with me, had, in full cabinet council, taken the lead (which was followed by the others) *in declaring himself in favor of accepting our projet*. During this same struggle, they have carried the elections of president and of the new congress which is to meet in January;

that president being no other than General Herrera, the man of all others, perhaps, most universally respected throughout the republic for the purity of his character, and one of those same four commissioners, who, on the occasion referred to, evinced his concurrence in the opinion of General Mora. And, finally, they have succeeded in bringing together at the seat of government the governors of the respective States; and, after full conference, in obtaining their concurrence (with one single exception—the governor of Potosi) in the peace policy, and the pledge of their support.

Such is the character and the condition, actual and prospective, of the peace party: a party the principal leaders of which are men whose talents and virtues would command confidence in any country; men, some of whom have never before taken an energetic or an active part in public affairs, and the rest have kept aloof from the government for a long period, except during the short space when it was held by Herrera; men who recently have banded together, and have worked indefatigably to possess themselves of the public posts, *solely with a view to bring about the restoration of peace*. They are now in complete possession of the government *ad interim*; and this government is to be succeeded, on the 1st of January next, by a regular and permanent one, of the same complexion as itself in all its branches, and elected according to the forms of the constitution of 1824, as now restored. But this party cannot possibly stand, *unless the object for which alone it has formed itself be speedily accomplished*. Without this its destitution of pecuniary resources must become aggravated every day; and this cannot continue much longer without sealing its fate: a catastrophe which would involve a total dissolution of the federal government and of the Union.

To bring about this is now the object of the war party; and so little disguised is it, that a decree suspending the existence of the federal government *during the war* has actually been proposed in the constituent congress. Foiled in all their schemes, first to prevent the organization of *any* government after the abdication of Santa Anna; then, to prevent the recognition of the provisional government of Peña y Peña by the State governments; and, after it had been recognised by the States, to prevent its recognition by the constituent congress; foiled in its manœuvres in congress to break up the provisional government by means of degrees of disqualification, and articles of impeachment against Peña y Peña and his two ministers, and foiled again in its combinations (which were very near succeeding) to carry the election of president *ad interim*; and after this election had been carried against them, foiled in their endless schemes for compelling the administration of Anaya to commit itself in favor of the prosecution of the war;—foiled in everything they have attempted, their determination has but become the stronger and the more energetic; and they are now at work to accomplish *out of congress* the object of the decree proposed by them for suspending the existence of the federal government. This can now be done only by means of a pronunciamiento; and, in concert with the Santanistas, extensive arrangements have been making