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THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

DURING HIS PRESIDENCY, 1845 TO 1849

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IN THE COLLECTIONS OF
THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

1845—1849

VOL. II.



JAMES KNOX POLK

From the portrait by Thomas Sully, painted in 1847 for the Dialectic Society of the University of North Carolina.

Of this portrait, Mr. Kemp Plummer Battle, the historian of the University of North Carolina, says in a letter of February 27, 1909, "It is an exact likeness of President Polk when he visited us in 1847."

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THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

1845—1849

DIARY OF
JAMES K. POLK

II

WEDNESDAY, *1st July, 1846.*— Had a crowd of visitors until 12 O'Clock to-day. The importunity for office it would seem will never cease. There were many visitors this morning upon the patriotic errand of seeking office for themselves. My mind was occupied about more important matters and I gave them no countenance.

About 1 O'Clock Mr. Buchanan called, and I had a full conversation with him on the subject of his transfer from the State Department to the Supreme Court Bench. I told him I had received his note of the 28th ult. expressing his preference for the Bench. I told him that I was satisfied to retain him in the Cabinet, and that I would leave it entirely to himself to decide whether he remained in the Cabinet or took the Judgeship. He indicated at once his preference for the Bench. I then said to him that I would part with him with reluctance, but that I knew that he had long desired a seat on the Supreme Bench, & that if he did not get it now no other opportunity might occur, and that I would not

stand in the way of his wishes. He then expressed a wish to be nominated immediately. I told him I did not see how I could dispense with his services in the State Department until near the close of the present Session of Congress, and expressed a desire that he should remain until that time. To this he assented, but with seeming reluctance because of his extreme anxiety to go on the Bench. In answer to an enquiry from him as to his successor in the State Department, I told him my mind was directed to Lewis McLane, at present U. S. Minister at London. He approved of the selection. After much conversation, he remarked that he supposed the matter was now settled and understood between us that he would go on the Bench at the close of the present Session of Congress. I told him he might consider it so settled. In the course of the conversation I told him that there had been some differences of opinion, and some unpleasant occur[r]ences between us in relation to offices, but they were at best small matters and I was content to overlook them and let them pass.

The Secretary of War came in on business shortly after Mr. Buchanan retired, and I informed him of what had transpired between Mr. Buchanan and myself. He remarked that he had expected that Mr. Buchanan would go on the Bench, from conversations with Mr. Buchanan, and from what he had heard from other sources. I then asked his opinion about Mr. McLane as Mr. Buchanan's successor in the State Department. He thought he was to be preferred to any man in the country.

At 5 O'Clock P. M. Between 40 & 50 chiefs and braves of the Comanche and other bands and tribes of wild Indians from the prairies in the North of Texas, were presented to me by M. G. Lewis, Esq'r, who had been sent[1] with Gov. Butler last fall to visit these tribes. I received them in the Ladies Parlour above stairs, in the presence of a few ladies and other persons. I held a friendly talk with them through an interpreter, assuring them that they might rely upon the friendship and protection of the U. S. as long as they would remain peaceable and friendly. Their orator made a speech in which he said they had made [a] Treaty of peace and friendship and they would keep it. The interview was a very interesting one. Santa Anna, their principal chief, is a fine looking man of good size and middle age, and is evidently a man of talents. A delegation of the Miamis of Indiana were also present. They had visited Washington on the business of their tribe. I held a talk with them also through their interpreter. Among the Comanches and other wild Indians of the pra[i]ries were several women or squaws, and among others the wife of Santa Anna, the Comanche chief, was present. After the reception and talk were over Miss Pleasanton performed for them on the Piano. They were afterwards conducted to the East Room and through all the parlours below stairs. The large mirrors in the parlours attracted their attention more than anything else. When they saw themselves at full length, they seemed to be greatly delighted. They came to Washington nearly in a

[1] See Diary entry for September 11, 1845.

naked state, with little more than a breech clout on them. They were dressed in American costume to visit me and, as I learned, it was with difficulty some of them could be restrained from tearing their clothes off themselves, & especially the squaws. I was informed that the Chief, Santa Anna, had said that he thought before he came to the U. S. that his nation could whip any nation in the world, but that since he came here he found the white men more numerous than the stars, and that he could not count them. Their visit to the U. S. will no doubt have a fine effect in impressing them with our numbers and power, and may be the means of preserving peace with them. After going through the parlours below stairs, they passed into the grounds South of the President's House, where the Marine band were playing (this being the evening for music on the grounds) in the presence of many hundred ladies & gentlemen. The Indians attracted much more attention than the music. Many of the Indians, as I learned, who had on shoes to visit me took them off and walked barefooted as soon as they got into the grounds.

THURSDAY, *2nd July, 1846.*— Saw company as usual until 12 O'Clock to-day. Closed my doors at that hour and gave my attention to the business on my table. About 1 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Buchanan called, and said it was rumoured all over the City that he was to go on the Bench of the Supreme Court of the U. S., & again expressed his desire to be nominated at once, say-

ing if he was not that there would probably be opposition in the Senate to his confirmation. I told him there could not, I thought, be any such danger, and reiterated to him the reasons I had assigned on yesterday why I thought it important that he should remain in the Cabinet until near the close of the present session of Congress. He said if he was not now nominated he feared England or France might offer a mediation, or otherwise interfere in the Mexican war, and put it out of his power to go on the Bench with propriety, and that he might lose his chance to go there altogether. I told him I thought there was no such danger. He acquiesced in my views, but with great reluctance, and retired manifestly disappointed that I had not yielded to his desire to be nominated at once.

Col. Benton called this morning, and held a long conversation with me in relation to the manner of conducting the Mexican war. I had promised him a few days ago to furnish him with a copy of a Proclamation in the English & Spanish language addressed to the Mexican people by Gen'l Taylor, but had failed to do so. I had the printed copy in both languages on my table, and gave it to Col. Benton. Col. B. said he would submit to me soon his views in writing as to the manner of conducting the Mexican war, as I had requested him to do at our last interview. Col. B. informed me that some complaints had been made in Executive Session in the Senate, that I had so long delayed to nominate a Judge of the Supreme Court of the U. S. in Judge Baldwin's place. I explained to him the reasons of the delay,

which seemed to be satisfactory. He spoke of a conversation he had held with Mr. Buchanan, from which I drew the inference that he may have called at Mr. Buchanan's instance, to prevail upon me to make the nomination at once. I informed Col. B. confidentially that I expected to nominate Mr. Buchanan, but that I could not spare him from the Cabinet until towards the close of the Session. He seemed to be satisfied.

Senators Crittenden & Morehead of Ky. called and requested me to appoint Col. Clarkson of Ky., who is a Whig, a Paymaster in the army. I happened to have a vacancy to fill in the temporary service with the Volunteers, & I told them I would at once appoint Clarkson. They seemed to be much gratified and pleased. I was gratified myself that I had it in my power promptly to meet the wishes of these gentlemen, and thus to prove to them that I was not proscriptive in my appointments.

Mr. Buchanan informed me to-day that he had been called on by Mrs. Maury,[1] an English lady residing at Liverpool, who informed him that she had held a conversation with Mr. Calhoun and that she was very anxious that Mr. C. should succeed Mr. McLane as Minister at London, that she had held a conversation with Mr. C. and thought he would accept the mission if I would tender it to him.

[1] Sarah Mytton Hughes Maury, wife of William Maury, son of James Maury, U. S. consul at Liverpool 1789–1837. She travelled in the United States in 1846 and afterward published *The Englishwoman in America* and *The Statesmen of America.*

FRIDAY, *3rd July, 1846.*— Had the usual round of company until 12 O'Clock this morning. Fewer office seekers applied for places than usual, though several of them appeared and made known their wishes. Mr. Buchanan called and advised me, if I had made up my mind to appoint Mr. McLane as his successor in the Department of State, not to intimate such intention until near the close of the Session, when he would be nominated for the Judgeship according to our understanding. He advised me not to give an intimation of my intention to appoint Mr. McLane, because in the present condition of the party it might have an important influence on the tariff question and some other leading measures of my administration now pending before Congress. I told him that his advice accorded entirely with my own judgment; and I added that I thought the public should know nothing of my intention to appoint him to the Judgeship, or who his successor would be, until I was ready to act by sending the nominations to the Senate. The understanding between us was that nothing was to be said about my intentions in relation to either appointment, until near the close of the Session when I was ready to act.

Mr. Buchanan informed me that Mrs. Maury, an English lady residing at Liverpool, had again called on him, and urged the appointment of Mr. Calhoun as Mr. McLane's successor as minister to England. He said he had informed her that he knew nothing on the subject, but at her request informed her that she must call on me. He said she would call to-day,

if I would see her. This Mrs. Maury is an English woman of talent and education, and one who has seen much of the world. She is the daughter of the former U. S. consul at Liverpool of her name. I told Mr. Buchanan that I thought she was intermeddling in matters which did not concern her, but that I could not refuse to see her if she called. About 1 O'Clock P. M. she called. I received her civilly and as a lady of her character and intelligence entitled her to be received. She had not been in my office many minutes until she introduced the subject of Mr. Calhoun's appointment as Minister to England; she expressed her desire that I would appoint him. I heard her patiently, and reflected in my own mind whilst she was speaking, what could induce her to take an interest in such a matter. She said she had seen and conversed with Mr. Calhoun, and had urged him to accept the English mission. She said Mr. Calhoun told her that if any great public interest pending between the two countries required it, his sense of public duty would induce him to accept the mission, if I called on him to do so. She went on to speak of the high character Mr. Calhoun sustained abroad & of the great consideration he would receive in England. She said that Mr. Calhoun, in her interviews with him, had finally agreed that she might upon her own responsibility communicate to me that he would accept the English mission, if I thought the public interest required his services and should invite him to do so. It struck me as being very strange that Mr. Calhoun's willingness to accept the Mission should be communicated to me

through such a channel. I was very guarded in my reply to Mrs. Maury. I said to her that when the English mission became vacant and it became my duty to select a successor to Mr. McLane I would bear in mind what she had said to me. I told her Mr. McLane was yet in England, and that if the state of our relations with that country should be such as to require it he would remain as long as it was important for him to do so. I told her that Mr. McLane desired to return during the next autumn, and that if he did so I must of course select a successor. I told her that my personal relations with Mr. Calhoun had at all times since I knew him been of a friendly character, and that I admired his talents, but I was very careful to deal in general terms in speaking of him and to say nothing from which Mrs. Maury could infer whether I would appoint him to the mission to England or not. At length she asked me what she should say to Mr. Calhoun. This interrogatory I evaded by a general observation that of course until Mr. McLane returned I could not be casting about me for his successor. She then said she would repeat to Mr. Calhoun what I had said, that I would bear in mind her request when the mission became vacant. It was rather an embarrassing interview. Here was an English woman of undoubted talents and great intelligence intermeddling in a matter with which she had no concern, and yet I felt constrained to give some answer to what she said, and that answer I had every reason to believe would be communicated to Mr. Calhoun. My only course therefore was to answer her in general terms, and to

say nothing which if published could in any way embarrass me. I was careful, too, to say nothing which could either encourage or discourage Mr. Calhoun, if he had a desire to go to England, or that could give him any ground to take exceptions to what I said. I was glad when Mrs. Maury retired. I knew she would report to Mr. Calhoun all that transpired.

About 1½ O'Clock P. M. Senator Dickinson of N. Y. called, and whilst I was in conversation with him the Secretary of War came in. I expressed to Mr. Dickinson my great desire that the Bill to modify the tariff, upon which the vote was to be taken in the Ho. of Repts. to-day, should pass, and expressed to him the opinion that its fate would probably depend on the course of the Democratic portion of the N. Y. delegation. The Secretary of War joined in the expression of the desire that the Bill should pass, and said he had so expressed himself to several of the N. Y. democratic members within the last two days, and he hoped they would vote for it. Mr. Dickinson said he would go to the Capitol and use what influence he could to induce them to do so, and left for that purpose.

Senator Chalmers of Mississippi called about 2¼ O'Clock P. M. on business, and left after a few minutes conversation to go to the Capitol to see Col. Tibbatts of Ky., whose vote was considered doubtful on the tariff bill, saying that he thought he could induce him to vote for it. About 4 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Chalmers returned, and in less than a minute after he entered my office Senator Dickinson of N. Y. came in. They reported to me that they were di-

rectly from the Capitol, and that the Bill to modify and reduce the tariff had just passed the House by a majority of nineteen votes. I was much gratified to hear the result, as this was one of the leading and vital measures of my administration. It was in truth vastly the most important domestic measure of my administration, and the vote of the popular branch of Congress, which had fully endorsed my opinions and recommendations on the subject of the tariff, could not be otherwise than highly gratifying.

This was reception evening. There was a light fall of rain during almost the whole day, & it continued at night. Some fifty or sixty persons, ladies and gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *4th July, 1846.*— This being the seventieth anniversary of American Independence neither House of Congress sat to-day. The firing of Cannon at daylight announced that the anniversary was at hand. According to custom the President's Mansion was open for the reception of company at 12 O'Clock to-day. A large number of persons called, though the crowd was not so great as on many former occasions. The day was damp and unfavourable, it having rained the greater part of the morning. The company retired about 2½ O'Clock P. M.

Whilst I was at dinner, about 4 O'Clock P. M., and without any previous notice of their intention to call, the porter announced to me that a large number of sabbath school children in procession, conducted by their instructors, awaited at the door. I directed

that they [be] shown in and immediately repaired to the Circular parlour and received them. An address was made to me by one of their instructors, to which I responded in a brief address. There were near 200 children of both sexes under 12 years of age. They sang a hymn and retired in good order.

About 5 O'Clock P. M. another procession of Sabbath School children called. This school numbered about 250, male and female. They were conducted by their instructors. I received them in the circular parlour, but the number of persons in attendance was so large that I caused them to be conducted to the East Room, where I delivered to them a brief address, to which one of their instructors responded. Both these Sabbath Schools were under the care of two Methodist churches in this City; the one was attached to the Foundry church, and the other to a church in the northern limits [?] of the City. Both schools presented most interesting exhibitions. In both schools the youth of both sexes are brought up under lessons of moral instructions, which is well calculated to make them good citizens. I spent the balance of the evening in disposing of the business on my table.

SUNDAY, *5th July, 1846.*— Attended Divine worship to-day in the Hall of the House of Representatives, accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. The Rev'd Mr. Baker, whom I had heard several times in Tennessee, preached. His text was the 6th verse of the 28th chapter of the Gospel by Matthew.

MONDAY, *6th July, 1846.*— Saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day; and was much vexed and harassed by persons who called about unimportant matters, and others who were seeking office. There seems to be no end to the applications for office.

I devoted the day to the business on my table.

At 8½ O'Clock P. M. Mr. Senator Johnson of Maryland called. My Private Secretary had at my instance requested him to do so. I informed Mr. Johnson that a Resolution had been passed by the Senate on the 29th ult. and I had understood that he was the mover of it, calling on the Secretary of War to report to the Senate "whether any individual has been authorized by the Department to the Executive of any State, to be authorized to raise volunteers to serve in the war with Mexico, or whether the Governor of any State has been authorized by the Department to receive into service volunteers raised by any individual named by the Department; and if so that he Report the facts to the Senate, together with copies of any instructions or correspondence relating to the same, and state under what power such authority has been given, or such recommendation has been made." I stated to Mr. Johnson that the Secretary of War had [made] copies of all correspondence in the Department on the subject and had submitted them to me. I read them to Mr. Johnson, and, as they showed on their face, they disclosed the plans of the Government of a projected campaign by land and sea into Upper California, and I submitted to Mr. Johnson that if made public it

would probably defeat our objects & be most prejudicial to the public interests. This publication would excite the jealousy of England and France, who might interfere to prevent the accomplishment of our objects. Mr. Johnson at once said that their publication would be improper and highly injurious to the public interests. I remarked to him that the Secretary of War thought that he had no discretion in the matter, and felt it to be his duty to respond to the call of the Senate, but was at the same time of opinion that it would be highly improper to give publicity to these papers at this time, and therefore he had brought them and submitted them to me. I told him that concurring with the Secretary in opinion I had requested this interview with him (Mr. Johnson) understanding that he was the author of the Resolution. Mr. Johnson said he regretted that he had not known more on the subject before he moved the Resolution, but that seeing the impropriety of answering the call, as he now did, he would advise that it should not be answered, and went on to say that if anything was said about it in the Senate he would take pleasure in stating that he had seen the papers and deemed it improper that the call should be answered. I then told him that I would direct the Secretary of War to withhold his answer, at least for the present. There is nothing in the correspondence which could injure the administration or show any violation of law. The objections to the publication were that it would be proclaiming to Mexico and the world our plans of conducting the war, and particularly in regard to California. I

will place the Report of the Secretary and the correspondence on my files for future reference should it become necessary.

TUESDAY, *7th July, 1846.*— The Cabinet held a regular meeting to-day; all the members present except the Attorney General, who was detained at his residence by continued indisposition. Various questions connected with the manner of conducting the war with Mexico were considered. Among other questions which arose, was one in relation to the municipal & commercial regulations to be established in any Mexican port or town which should be taken by our Navy. After this question was considered, or rather during its consideration, Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that our naval forces should be instructed to take and hold Monterey on the Pacific, and the Bay of San Francisco. Farther South than these ports he insisted we should not take or hold, because as he said we intended to hold California permanently & he was opposed to taking or holding permanently the country South of these places. This was the substance of the reason assigned by him for not being in favour of taking and holding the country South of Monterey on the Pacific. He was opposed, too, to giving to the inhabitants of Tamaulipas or of any of the Provinces South of New Mexico any encouragement to annex themselves to the U. S. or that we would receive [them]. It was clear from the general tenor of his remarks on this, as well as on former occasions, that he was unwilling by Treaty with Mexico, or in any other

manner to acquire any part of the Mexican Territory South of New Mexico & Upper California. Mr. Walker discussed the matter with him, differing from him in opinion and insisting upon having a more Southernly line of boundary, if it could be obtained. Finally I remarked that if when we came to make a Treaty I found that I could obtain a boundary from the Mouth of the Rio Grande West to the Pacific by paying a few millions more for it than for the boundary mentioned by Mr. Buchanan, I should certainly make such a Treaty, but that if I could do no better I would take the boundary mentioned by him. It was very manifest that Mr. Buchanan desired to avoid acquiring any Southern territory below the boundary indicated by him. I differed with him in my views, and was sorry to find him entertaining opinions so contracted & sectional.

This being reception evening, near 100 ladies and gentlemen called and were received in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *8th July, 1846.*— Saw company as usual until 12 O'Clock to-day. Nothing of special interest occur[r]ed. I had a long interview with the Secretary of War. I submitted to him the draft of instructions to Gen'l Taylor in relation to the manner of conducting the Mexican war. A part of this draft was prepared by Col. Benton at my request, and the latter part of it, and that which I regard as most important, was prepared by me. It was in the form of a letter to be addressed by the Secretary of War to Gen'l Taylor. The Secretary of War approved it, & [I] told him I would have it

copied in a fair handwriting for him. I will preserve the original draft for future reference, should it become proper. I do this because it is a document of more than ordinary importance.

My old college friend, Hardy L. Holmes of N. C., took a family dinner with me to-day. I had not seen him since he left the University of N. C. in 1817. The Hon. George C. Dromgoole of Va., another college friend, Hon. Cave Johnson, P. M. Gen'l, and David Currin, Esqr., of Tennessee also dined with me.

The Marine band played on the grounds south of the President's House this evening. Several hundred persons, male and female, were present. Near sunset I took Mr. Holmes and Mr. Dromgoole in my carriage & visited Judge Mason, the Attorney General, who is confined to his house by an attack of gout in the feet; and who was at College with Mr. Holmes, Mr. Dromgoole, and myself.

THURSDAY, *9th July, 1846.*— I closed my doors to-day about 11 O'Clock, being an hour earlier than usual, to enable me to prepare a message in answer to a call of the Senate for information in relation to the mineral lands on Lake Superior, and an Executive message making nominations, &c. I spent some time to-day on official business with the Secretary of War, in relation to the Mexican War. The Secretary of State and of the Treasury were also with me on public business.

At about 3 O'Clock the Rev. Mr. Donelan of the Catholic church called at the head of about 500 chil-

dren of St. Matthew's and St. Patrick's Sunday Schools. I received them in the East room. Many of the children I was informed were orphans, poor and destitute, who were under the care of the Catholic church. One of the boys delivered a patriotic speech of his own composition, another presented me with a bouquet of flowers. I made a short address to them.

During my walk around the grounds of the President's square I was joined by the Hon. C. J. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania. I had some three or four months ago intimated, indeed said to Mr. Ingersoll, that it was my intention near the close of the present Session of Congress to nominate him to the Senate as Minister to Russia. Mr. Ingersoll this evening requested me to appoint him Minister to France instead of Russia. This I declined to do, for reasons which I assigned to him. My pledge to appoint Mr. Ingersoll to Russia was made to him some time before his late controversy with Mr. Webster, a controversy which in the estimation of some has resulted to the prejudice of Mr. Ingersoll. It has, I learn, arrayed against him bitter opponents in and out of the Senate, and it is possible he may be rejected by the Senate. I am bound however by my pledge to him to nominate him.

FRIDAY, *10th July, 1846.*— Saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day. After that hour I was closely confined to my table, and despatched a mass of business which had been accumulating on my hands. After transacting business with the Secretary of War, I

consulted him as to the Mission to England, shortly to be vacated by the return of Mr. McLane. I told him that I inclined to tender the mission to Senator Dix of N. York, and asked his opinion on the subject. He concurred with me in opinion that Mr. Dix was well qualified, and advised his appointment. I had previously consulted Mr. Buchanan on the subject.

I requested my Private Secretary to invite Mr. Dix to call on [me]. Mr. Dix called about 6 O'Clock P. M., when I tendered the mission to England to him. It evidently took him by surprise. He expressed his gratitude for the honour done him by the offer of the mission. He said he would give me an answer in the course of a week or ten days.

This was reception evening. More than 100 persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. Among others my neighbour and friend, Maj'r Boling Gordon of Tennessee, and his family were present.

SATURDAY, *11th July, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. No meeting however took place. The Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, and Navy, severally called at different times during the morning, but as I had nothing important to bring before the Cabinet each retired. The P. M. Gen'l and Atto. Gen'l did not attend. The graduation land Bill was pending before the House to-day, and the Ware House bill before the Senate, the fate of both of which bills was considered doubtful. The members of the Cabinet who called, after remaining a few minutes with

me left with the intention of conversing with members of Congress in relation to these two Bills, and effecting if possible such a compromise of opinion among the Democratic members as would effect their passage. Great doubt at this moment exists of the passage of these two Bills, and also of the tariff Bill, or rather the Bill to reduce the tariff. Upon the latter Bill Senator Semple of Illinois, I learn, expresses opinions which render it doubtful how he will vote. Mr. Semple, I learn, has been for some time dissatisfied with the administration. I know of no cause, unless it be that I did not appoint him a Brigadier or Maj'r Gen'l of Volunteers, which he sought to obtain from me. I learned, too, to-day that Senator Dickinson of N. Y. is in a bad humour with the administration, and that his complaint is that his friends in N. Y. have in his opinion been overlooked in appointments to office. Several other members have similar griefs. They have either been disappointed themselves or have not obtained offices for their favourites and friends, and at this moment the great Domestic measures of the Session are endangered from these causes. I sincerely wish that I had no offices to bestow. I cannot gratify all who apply, and it is certain from my experience that the dispensation of the public patronage is a weaken-[ing] operation. There is more selfishness among members of Congress which is made to bear upon great public measures, than the people have any knowledge of. The danger now is that the great measures of the Session will be defeated from this cause more than any other. If their constituents un-

derstood the true cause of the course of some of their Representatives & Senators, they would not fail to rebuke them for it.

SUNDAY, *12th July, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

I sent for Mr. Buchanan this evening. He called about 8 O'Clock P.M. I told him that having made up my mind to appoint Mr. McLane, now at London, his successor in the Department of State, in the event he elected, as he had informed me he would, to go on the bench of the Supreme Court of the U. States, I had sent for him for the purpose of saying that if on reflection he had changed his mind the matter was still in his own hands. I told him I would be satisfied to retain him in my cabinet, but that if he desired, as he did when I last conversed with me [him], to go on the bench, that I desired to know the fact at this time, that I might take proper steps for the selection of his successor in the Department of State. I informed him that if he left the Department of State I had made up my mind to appoint Mr. Louis McLane, now U. S. Minister to England, in his place, and that I desired to know his definitive decision now, that I might write to Mr. McLane by the Steamer which would leave Boston on the 16th Instant. Mr. Buchanan expressed a strong desire to be nominated to the Senate for the appointment of Judge of the Supreme Court of the U. States immediately. To this I objected, and assigned as my reasons that if he was nominated at

this time (a month probably before the adjournment of Congress) it would in my opinion put in jeopardy the reduction of the tariff and all the leading measures of my administration now pending before Congress. I told him he saw the want of harmony and [the] factious spirit which prevailed among the Democratic members of Congress. I told him that the moment it became known that his place as Secretary of State was vacant, that all the factions and sections of the Democratic party in Congress would immediately set to work to press upon me their respective favourites as his successor; that they would probably be getting up petitions signed by members of Congress for this purpose. I told him that I knew that it was impossible to select any man who breathed who would be satisfactory to all the factions of the Democratic party, and that if by any means, by public rumour or otherwise, it became known whom I was likely to appoint, I would be annoyed by protests against him be him [he] whom he might, and that my position would be one of perfect torment & vexation until the close of the Session. I told him further that at the present critical moment, when all my leading domestic measures were pending before Congress, it was not difficult to foresee that to change the head of the Cabinet would probably have the effect to defeat them all. Mr. Buchanan said if I believed that such would be the effect I ought not to make the change at this time. He expressed some apprehension that violent opposition would be made to the confirmation of his nomination for the Judgeship, if it was postponed until

the end of the Session. I told him I apprehended no such danger. I added also that I needed his services in the Department of State during the Session of Congress, and repeated my unwillingness to nominate him to the Bench until towards the close of the Session of Congress. He then said that [if] I was determined not to nominate him to the Bench until the close of the Session, he saw no necessity of writing to Mr. McLane at this time, as it was possible that something might occur between this and that time to change his mind on the subject, and induce him to retire from public life altogether. I told him I did not desire him to retire from the Department of State unless it was to gratify his own wishes to go on the Bench of the Supreme Court. He then remarked that he was friendly with Mr. McLane and entertained a high opinion of his talents, but that in his opinion his appointment would be an unpopular one. I told him that if I selected him I was sure of one thing, and that was that I would have in my Cabinet a gentleman of high character and unblemished honour, a man of talents, and a man that the whole country would pronounce to be qualified and fit for the place. This he admitted, but still thought that he would be unpopular, and added that he lived, too, in a Southern State, which would give the preponderance in the Cabinet to that section of the Union. I asked him if he knew anyone else who was qualified that I could select, and he said he did not. I then told Mr. Buchanan that I would write to Mr. McLane that it was probable he would retire from the Cabinet at the close of the Ses-

sion, and that in that event I would desire him to succeed him in the Department of State. To this he thought there would be no objection. It was manifest from the whole tenor of the conversation that Mr. Buchanan's anxiety to be nominated to the bench immediately arose from his apprehension that it being now publicly rumoured that he would go on the bench, an opposition might be arrayed against him before the end of the Session, that might reject him. I think, although he did not say so, that he feared the publication of his Oregon correspondence with Mr. McLane, which had been called for by a Resolution of the Senate, would array against him the 54° 40′ men, and that the discussion of the tariff might array against him a portion of the free-trade men. I did not inform Mr. Buchanan of the letter which I had written to Mr. McLane on the 22nd ultimo, because I did not deem it to be necessary to do so. (For that letter see my letter Book.)

MONDAY, *13th July, 1846.*— Saw company as usual until 12 O'Clock to-day. Wrote a letter to Mr. McLane to-day, of the purport which I informed Mr. Buchanan on yesterday I would write. (See my letter Book.)

I sent for Senator Semple of Illinois by my Private Secretary. He called between 1 & 2 O'Clock P. M. I had a friendly conversation and explained to him why I had not appointed him a Brigadier General of Volunteers. The Illinois Delegation in Congress had recommended him for the command of the Illinois Brigade. Many members of Con-

gress had applied for commands and I appointed none of them. After a full conversation Mr. Semple appeared to be in a pleasant humour and to be satisfied. I sent for him to make a frank explanation to him, to the effect that my failure to appoint him was not because of any unkind feeling towards himself personally, but for other reasons. Since his disappointment I had learned that he had given indications by his votes and declarations that he was dissatisfied with the administration, & great fears were entertained that in consequence of his personal disappointment he would vote with the Whigs against the reduction of the tariff, and some other important measures now pending before Congress. I felt it to be my duty to conciliate him, if I could do so honorably, by a frank statement of the truth, and thus possibly prevent him from uniting with the Whigs and defeating the great democratic measures of the Session.

Senator Jarnegan of Tennessee called this morning on business, and after it was transacted I introduced the subject of the tariff Bill which had passed the House and was now before the Senate. He at once informed me that he would vote for the Bill. He said he had informed many of his friends at home that he considered the tariff question settled by my election, and that moreover he was instructed to give the vote by the Tennessee Legislature.

TUESDAY, *14th July, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretary of the Treasury failed to attend. The Atto.

Gen'l was also absent in consequence of indisposition. The other members of the Cabinet remained about an hour, during which time some matters of minor importance were attended to. I devoted the balance of the day to the business on my table.

This was reception evening. The circular parlour was filled with visitors, ladies & gentlemen.

WEDNESDAY, *15th July, 1846.*—The usual number of visitors called to-day. At 12 O'Clock I closed my doors, and devoted the balance of the day to the business on my table. At 2 O'Clock P. M. Senator Heywood of N. C. called. After conversing with him about an appointment in N. C. the subject of the tariff Bill now before the Senate was [mentioned]. I found him indisposed to support it without amendment. I told him that I thought it was a choice between the Bill of the House now before the Senate & the tariff of 1842, and that my opinion was that if the House bill was amended the result would be that it would be defeated. I had a long conversation with him on the subject & he left, leaving me in doubt how he will vote.

At 5 O'Clock P. M. my Private Secretary returned from the Capitol, and reported to me that Senator Semple of Illinois had been absent from the Senate chamber to-day, and that it was understood that he was packing his trunk to leave for Illinois this evening or to-morrow morning. I immediately sent Col. Walker to see Judge Douglass and Mr. Smith [1] of

[1] Robert Smith, 1802–1867, Representative from Illinois 1843–1849.

the Illinois delegation and get them if possible to detain Mr. Semple to vote on the tariff bill. My information is that the fate of that Bill in the Senate will depend on a single Democratic vote, and that if Mr. Semple is absent it will probably be lost. After Col. Walker left, the P. M. Gen'l called and I requested him to go and see Mr. Semple, if he had not left the City, and prevail on him if possible to remain. About sunset I learned that Mr. Semple had been at the Rail Road depot at the hour of departure of the cars this evening, with his baggage on his way to Illinois, but had been prevailed upon by Mr. Ficklin [1] of Ill. to remain until to-morrow morning. About the same time the P. M. Gen'l returned and reported that he had seen Mr. Semple, and requested him to call on me tonight. About 8 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Semple called. He showed me a letter which he said he had received from Ill. stating that judgements had been recovered against him in the Courts of that state for between five and six thousand dollars, and that his property would be levied on to satisfy them. I made an earnest appeal to his patriotism and for the sake of the country to remain & vote on the tariff bill. After a conversation of near an hour he agreed to remain and to vote for the Bill. I can but remark that Mr. Semple has been disappointed in not getting an office in the army, and has been dissatisfied for some time past. (See the notice of him taken in this diary.) The most tremendous efforts I understand are being made by the Capitalists who are engaged in manufactures

[1] Orlando B. Ficklin, Representative from Illinois 1843–1849.

to defeat the Bill of the House now before the Senate to reduce and modify the duties imposed by the tariff act of 1842. Scores of them I understand are flocking to Washington for that purpose. The absence of a single democratic Senator will probably enable them to effect their object. I considered the passage of the bill before the Senate the most important domestic measure of my administration, and therefore I take so great an interest in it.

THURSDAY, *16th July, 1846.*— Had the usual number of visitors this morning; was greatly annoyed by importunities for office and by beggars for money. I am applied to almost daily & sometimes half a dozen times a day for money, by persons who do not ask it for charitable purposes, but by well dressed persons, men and women. They call on me to contribute to build Academies, to aid colleges, and for churches in every part of the Union. Except in the District of Columbia I am compelled to decline contributing except for charitable purposes; otherwise I should be utterly bankrupt. The idea seems to prevail with many persons that the President is from his position compelled to contribute to every loafer who applies, provided he represents that the sum he wants is to build a church, an academy, or a college. The persons who apply to me in the great majority of cases are wholly unknown to me, and though their applications are very annoying to me, I am compelled to decline a compliance with their wishes. They may censure and slander me, but better this than to be rendered bankrupt without contributing to the pub-

lic good, or receiving any thanks from the scamps who in a majority of cases apply to me for money.

After night saw Senator Lewis and had a long conversation with him on the subject of the tariff and the prospect of the passage of the bill now before the Senate.

FRIDAY, *17th July, 1846.*— Saw a few persons who visited me this morning up to 10½ O'Clock A. M. At that hour about forty Comanche and other wild tribes from the prairies on the border of Texas called and had a talk with me. They had become dissatisfied with their detention in Washington and desired to return home. I gave them a kind talk and they retired satisfied, as their interpreters reported to me. M. G. Lewis, their former agent, was dismissed from the service of the Government on yesterday. Senator McDuffie of S. C. was present and remained until the Indians retired, when I had a full conversation with him on the subject of the tariff bill now before the Senate.

I devoted the day to the disposal of the business on my table until about 3 O'Clock P. M., when Senator Bagby called and informed me that notwithstanding all the efforts of his friends he found Senator Haywood would separate from his party on the subject of the tariff bill now before the Senate, and propose and vote for amendments which would defeat it. Senator Bagby informed me that every effort had been made by himself and a few others to prevent Mr. Haywood from taking this course, but he feared without effect.

This was reception evening. The parlour was crowded with ladies & gentlemen. Among others the Atto. Gen'l, Mr. Mason, was present. He informed me that he had just called on Mr. Haywood, and that he feared that his course on the tariff bill could not be changed. In his conversation with Mr. Mason he had avowed his intention to move amendments to the Bill now before the Senate, & if they did not prevail Mr. Mason feared he would vote against the Bill.

SATURDAY, *18th July, 1846.*— Saw Senator Niles of Connecticut this morning & had a long conversation with him on the subject of the Bill to reduce the existing tariff now before the Senate & urged him to give it his support, but I fear without effect.

At 11 O'Clock A. M. Lieut. Col. Payne[1] of the U. S. Army called in company with Gen'l Scott and all the principal officers of the army stationed at Washington to exhibit to me several Mexican flags as the trophies of the victory of the 8th & 9th May, on the Rio Grande. These flags were captured from the enemy in the battles on those days, & two of them had been perforated by balls in these battles. They had been sent by Gen'l Taylor to Washington as trophies of the victories of the American arms. Col. Payne himself was in these battles and had been severely wounded. He walks now on his crutches. The officers of the army who were present to-day

[1] Nathan Mountjoy Payne, Lieutenant Colonel of the 4th Artillery.

were in full uniform. A number of ladies and citizens were present on the occasion.

This was the regular day of meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet did not meet until about 12 O'Clock. The Secretary of the Treasury and the Atto. Gen'l did not attend. The Cabinet after attending to some matters of importance connected with the war with Mexico adjourned about 1½ O'Clock P. M. In consequence of a letter received at the War Department from the Governor of Missouri, giving information that a larger Mexican force than had been anticipated were assembled in New Mexico to resist the approach of the U. S. forces under Gen'l Kearney, I directed the Secretary of War (he and the Cabinet concurring with me in its propriety) to despatch an officer of the army with orders to Gen'l Shields of Illinois to proceed with one of the Regiments of Illinois volunteers after Gen'l Kearney to Santa Fe. It was apprehended that Gen'l Shields may have left for the lower Rio Grande before this order could reach him, and in that event a requisition for an additional Regiment of 1000 infantry was directed to be forwarded to the Gov. of Missouri. If Gen'l Shields had moved to the South before the messenger reached Illinois, then the requisition was to be made on the Governor of Missouri, but not otherwise.

SUNDAY, *19th July, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk.

MONDAY, *20th July, 1846.*— The usual round of company called this morning, among whom were several office seekers, a circumstance which is by no means unusual. Among others Col. Benton, to whom I had addressed a note this morning requesting it, called. I informed him of a letter which the Secretary of War had received from the Governor of Missouri suggesting the necessity of calling out an additional 1000 volunteers to march to Santa Fe, in consequence of information which he had received that a large Mexican force would defend that place and the Province of New Mexico. I consulted Col. Benton on the subject. He had no idea that so large a force as 3000 or 5000 men could be brought to the field by Mexico, that being the number mentioned by the Governor of Missouri as the probable Mexican force under the command of the Mexican Gen'l Urrea. He approved the order which I informed him had been given, to march one of the Illinois Regiments, if they had not left for the Rio Grande, in the direction to [of] Santa Fe to join Gen'l Kearney.

I had a conversation with Col. Benton in relation to the probability of the passage of the Bill of the Ho. Repts. through the Senate to reduce and modify the tariff act of 1842. He thought it would pass the Senate by a very close vote, and agreed with me that it would probably depend upon the vote of Senator Haywood of N. C. I knew Col. B's intimacy with Mr. Haywood and requested him to induce him if practicable to vote for the Bill. He said he would do so. In the course of the afternoon I received a

note from Col. Benton expressing the opinion in substance that Mr. Haywood would not seperate from his political friends but would vote for the Bill. I also spo[ke] this morning to Senator Bagby on the subject of Senator Haywood's course on the Bill to reduce the tariff. Upon Mr. Haywood's vote, I am satisfied, depends the fate of the tariff-bill or rather the Bill to reduce the tariff, and therefore the great solicitude I feel on the subject. Senator Bagby said he had a day or two ago conversed with Mr. H. on the subject and had great doubt how he would vote. He promised me to see him again on the subject.

At 12 O'Clock a delegation of 8 or 10 persons from Berks County, Pennsylvania, called upon me. Among them were the Hon. E. B. Hubley (former member of Congress) Dr. Muhlenberg (son of the late Henry A Muhlenberg) & Mr. Saladay. The names of the others I do not remember. They stated that they had come to Washington to see if some compromise on the Bill now before Congress in relation to a reduction of the tariff could not be effected. They expressed great alarm, if it passed the Senate in the form it had passed the House, that it would prostrate the iron and coal interest in Pennsylvania and reduce the Democracy of that State to a minority, and they appealed to me to know if such a compromise in relation to iron & coal could not be effected. I told them that my views on the subject of the tariff were before Congress & that these views I had not changed. They asked me if I would give my assent to a compromise in relation to these leading interests in Pennsylvania and thus save the Dem-

ocratic party in that State from overthrow. I told them I must leave the matter in the hands of my Democratic friends in Congress, but if they could agree upon a compromise within the principles embraced in my message to Congress on the 2nd of December last I would be rejoiced at it. They said all they wished was adequate protection on iron & coal. I asked them what protection they would consider adequate on these articles. They said a reduction of 20 per cent on the present rates of duty, and that 33 1-3 per cent had been mentioned by some of the manufacturers. I told them that this was a matter wholly for the consideration of Congress. They still urged a compromise & said they had been advised to call on me on the subject by some democratic Senators. I then told them that I was not authorized to speak for any democratic member of Congress on the subject, but that I would express an opinion on one point. It was this, *viz.*, " that [if] a proposition such as they had suggested was made, it must come from the Pennsylvania Senators, and that if made by them, before it would probably be entertained by the other Democratic members of Congress they must pledge themselves that if the amendment of Compromise was adopted they would vote for the Bill as amended & that the Pennsylvania Democratic members in the Ho. Repts. would vote for it also. I told them that if such a compromise could be agreed upon I should be rejoiced at it, but repeated that this I must leave to Congress, and could not myself take the initiative in the matter. They retired apparently in a good humor. I sent

immediately for the Secretary of the Treasury and informed him of what had occurred. He left to go to the Senate Chamber to confer with some of the Southern Senators on the subject and to advise them of what had occur[r]ed. About 8 O'Clock P. M. the Secretary of the Treasury called again, and informed me that he had conferred with Senator McDuffie of S. C. and informed him of the interview between the gentlemen from Penn. and myself. Whilst Mr. Walker and myself were in conversation on the subject, Senators Lewis and Yulee called, and I informed them of all that [had] occur[r]ed. They both agreed that if it was ascertained with certainty that Senator Haywood would vote against the Bill as it now stood, that it would be better to accept the Penn. compromise, if it was made, than to lose the bill. They agreed also that it would be better to agree to the amendment suggested by Mr. Haywood to postpone the commencement of the operation of the Bill to the 5th of March next than to loose the Bill. They said they would ascertain with certainty from Mr. Haywood what his course would be and be governed in their action accordingly.

TUESDAY, *21st July, 1846.*—This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. Before the hour of assembling of the Cabinet arrived Andrew Johnson, one of the Representatives from Tennessee, called. He had not been in my office or at the President's Mansion for many weeks, indeed months, except once for a few minutes about 2 months ago in company with the Hon. John Blair and some other

East Tennesseeans who called and remained for a few minutes. After stating a trivial matter of business which I suppose was his apology or pretext for calling, he said there was a matter that he wished to talk about with me. He said he had held a conversation with Mr. Cave Johnson (the P. M. Gen'l) a few days ago, and was surprised to learn from him that his course in opposition to the administration, as he said Mr. C. Johnson informed him, was understood and marked by the administration. He was very much agitated in his manner. He said he did not wish to be understood as making an apology, and then went on to say that he was a democrat & had spent a great deal of time and money in my support in Tennessee, and particularly in 1844, and complained that his politics should now be suspected. He said he thought it best to come and hold a frank conversation with me at once. I told him I was glad he had done so, and that I would be equally frank with him. I told him that having belonged to the same party and having acted with him politically in Tennessee, I had no other thought at the opening of the present Session of Congress than that he would be a friend & supporter of my administration, that I was pleased at his election and expected to be on terms of free intercourse with him, but that I had heard from members of Congress, that he and Geo. W. Jones of Tennessee were, from some cause unknown to me, dissatisfied, and were often finding fault with my administration. I told him that members of the House had come to me and enquired what they meant by their course; and had stated to me

that upon some occasions when they had expostulated with them against their course, and had urged them to support particular measures because they were administration measures, that they had replied that they were independent men and were not under the dictation of anybody. I told him that he knew I had not attempted to dictate to them, or in any way to control their course, and that I thought this strange language to come from Representatives from my own State who had been elected as democrats. I told him that I did not know that it was necessary to specify instances of his opposition, but that I would mention one, and more if necessary. It was this, that when some weeks ago a bill was before the House concerning the appointment of Clerks in the public offices at Washington, Mr. Douglass of Illinois remarked that the President would be poorly employed in the pitiful and little business of appointing clerks & messengers, or to this purport, he (Mr. Johnson) in a sarcastic and bitter tone as I was informed, rose and asked Mr. Douglass if the President was not at the very moment engaged in that employment. Much surprise had been expressed to me by members of Congress at such an attack from a Tennessee democrat. I told him I had seen the report of what he had said in the Newspapers of the City and that I had never seen it corrected. I told him that he knew he had done me injustice, and that he himself had importuned me early in the Session about appointing clerks, and especially about promoting Mr. Russell of East Tennessee, and I supposed had been dissatisfied because it was not done.

I told him that I regarded this occur[r]ence as evidence of his hostility, and this added to the many instances in which he had been found acting with my political opponents, coupled with the facts that I had heard he had often made complaints publicly of my Tennessee appointments, and that he had kept himself away from me for three or four months, had confirmed me in the opinion that he was acting in hostility to my administration. He had mentioned the fact in the course of his conversation that George W. Jones and himself had been marked by the administration & their course condemned. I told him that Mr. Jones's course had been highly exceptionable; that among other things Mr. Jones had in the early part of the Session, in a speech in the House, made a violent and unwarranted attack on the Post Master Gen'l and the Attorney Gen'l, and had upon other occasions given conclusive evidence of his opposition to the administration. I told him that Mr. Cave Johnson had informed me that a few weeks ago in his office Mr. Jones had broken out in a violent strain in the presence of strangers who were present, and said that the only way to get an office from this administration was to become doubtful in politics, and then be bought up. I told Mr. Johnson that I had not given either him or Mr. Jones any cause for their extraordinary course. I told him that in consequence of it, when I came to make the late military appointments in Tennessee, I had sent for and consulted the other democratic members from the State, but had not sent for them. He said if he was to be a victim he wished to know it. I told him the ad-

ministration had not attempted to make a victim of him, but that his course was a matter to be settled between him and his constituents. I told him that though I had reason to be dissatisfied with his course, I had never mentioned it to any of his constituents, although John Blair and several others of them had been here. He said that Jones was a good democrat and that he was one. I told him I had always regarded them as such, but that certainly their course at the present Session was a very singular one. I told him that I had been the friend of Jones and of himself and that I had expected to receive from them that support which all preceding administrations had received from the members of Congress of their own party from their own State, but that instead of that not a word had been said in my vindication by either of them at times when I had been violently assailed by the Whigs in the Ho. Repts. He said he thought Mr. Martin and Mr. Stanton had my confidence. I told him that at the beginning of the Session I had confidence in all the democratic representatives from Tennessee, and that I had now in these two gentlemen and in Mr. Cullum and Mr. Chase, and that it was only because of the unaccountable course of Mr. Jones & himself that I had been most reluctantly compelled to regard them as being unfriendly to me and to my administration. It was a conversation of more than an hour's length, and it was manifest from the tenor of it that he wished to play the demagogue at home, and to assume that the administration intended to attack him and make a victim of him. This I repelled at once, and told

him I should pursue my public policy, and submit my public conduct to the country, that I sought to control no man's course, that he had a perfect right to differ with me if he chose to do so, and that if he did so the people and especially his democratic constituents, who were my friends, would judge between us. In the latter part of the conversation he was subdued in his tone, and recounted the political services he had rendered me in Tennessee, and alluded to and dwelt on the abuse he had received from the Whigs in his district & especially from Brownlow [1] in his paper at Jonesborough. I told him that his course and that of Mr. Jones, coming as they did from my own State, had given me great concern and pain, and that I had no desire to have any collision with them, but that their course had almost forced it upon me. He left professing to be a good democrat and denying that he was opposed to me or my administration. The truth is that neither Johnson or Jones have been my personal friends since 1839. They were in the Baltimore Convention in 1844, and were not my friends then. I doubt whether any two members of that convention were at heart more dissatisfied with my nomination for the Presidency than they were. This I learned from members of the convention from Tennessee. Mr. Johnson, I was informed, said at Baltimore when my nomination was suggested that it was a "humbug." There are no

[1] Rev. William G. Brownlow, began publishing the *Whig* at Jonesborough in 1837, but soon removed it to Knoxville. Noted for the bitterness of his political invective; better known as Parson Brownlow.

two districts in Tennessee more democratic or in which I have more devoted friends than those represented by Johnson and Jones, and though I have it in my power, as I believe, by communicating the truth to their constituents to destroy them politically, I have not done so. They seem to assume to themselves the right to judge of the appointments in Tennessee, and to denounce them among members of Congress and in boarding houses as though they were responsible for them. I think it fortunate that they have now learned that their course has not been unobserved by me. Perhaps their course may hereafter be better, but I am satisfied if it is so it will only be from the fear of their constituents. I would almost prefer to have two Whigs here in their stead, unless they act better than they have done at the present Session of Congress.

The Cabinet met between 11 & 12 O'Clock to-day, all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury. Nothing of importance was brought up. I sent to the Senate to-day the correspondence between the Secretary of State & Mr. McLane, U. S. Minister to England. I sent the whole of the instructions and correspondence of the Secretary of State, and such extracts from Mr. McLane's despatches as I thought compatible with the public interest to communicate.

This was reception evening, and about 100 persons, ladies & gentlemen, attended.

WEDNESDAY, *22nd July, 1846.*— Had the usual round of Company to-day, and the usual annoyance

from office seekers until 12 O'Clock, when I closed my doors. Among others the Hon. James M. Porter[1] of Pennsylvania, late Secretary of War, called. He desired to see me on the subject of the Bill which had passed the Ho. Repts. and is now before the Senate to reduce and modify the tariff act of 1842. I held a conversation with him of the same substance and import of the conversation which I held with certain gentlemen from Pennsylvania on the same subject on monday, the 20th Instant (see this diary of that day). He informed me that the democratic members of Congress from Pennsylvania, and certain citizens of Pennsylvania, of whom he was one, held a caucus in this City on monday last on the subject of the tariff, but had come to no definite understanding of the precise terms of compromise they would offer. This was a rainy evening, & the marine band which usually plays on the President's grounds on each wednesday evening, did not appear.

I omitted to state that this morning the Secretary of the Navy, attended by about 20 Captains of the Navy in full uniform, called and paid their respects to me in my office. They were headed by Commodore Stewart, the Senior Commodore among them. These officers are assembled here to consider and report to the Secretary of the Navy concerning certain regulations proposed to be adopted in relation to promotions in the Navy, *viz.*, whether in their opinion it should be by seniority or by merit.

[1] Secretary of War 1843–1844, and a prominent jurist of Pennsylvania.

THURSDAY, *23rd July, 1846.*— Saw company today until 12 O'Clock. Nothing worthy of note occurred. At about 2 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Pakenham, the Brittish Minister, called and delivered to me an autograph letter from Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Brittain and Ireland, [which] announced the birth in the month of May last of a Princess. I told Mr. Pakenham that I congratulated her Majesty, and added that it was not probable that there would be any failure in the lineal line of a successor of her Majesty to the Throne. Mr. Pakenham remarked that he had made a similar annunciation to the President every year since her Majesty had been married.

Senator Haywood called during the time I was receiving Mr. Pakenham in the parlour and remained in my office until my interview with Mr. Pakenham was over. I had addressed a note to Mr. Senator Haywood on yesterday morning requesting him to call. He called about the time that Mr. Pakenham did. I met him in the hall below stairs on my way to the parlour to see Mr. Pakenham. He remained in my office until I returned. I made an earnest appeal to him in regard to what was understood to be his intended course on the Bill of the Ho. Repts. to modify and reduce the tariff of 1842, and urged him to give it his support. I found him much opposed to the Bill. Indeed he used the strong expression, " I would rather die than vote for it." He said if the Senate would agree to vote in an amendment to postpone the commencement of its operation from the 1st of December next until the 4th of March

next he would vote for it. I told him that the principal objection to such an amendment would be that it might put in jeopardy the fate of the Bill in the Ho. Repts. He seemed to have no other objection to the Bill, except that he thought it would be too sudden a revolution of the existing system. I told him that the Senate in my opinion had to choose between the Bill of the Ho. Repts. and the act of 1842, and that if he voted against the House bill he would be voting in effect to rivet & continue the act of 1842 on the country, which was manifestly oppressive and unjust. I had a long conversation with him, but it would be too tedious to repeat the arguments I used to induce him to vote for the Ho. Bill. He left leaving me satisfied that unless he changed his mind he would vote against the Ho. Bill. After he left I addressed him a note requesting him to call again, and he did so about 9 O'Clock P. M., when I had a further conversation with him on the subject. I told him that I regarded it as the most important domestic measure of my administration, and that from all I had learned its fate would depend on his vote. I suggested to him whether he could not vote for it, as a choice between it & the tariff act of 1842, and if it passed bring in a Bill, if he chose, postponing its operation until the 4th of March next as he desired. I told him that if he voted against it, he would be the only Democratic member of either House from the South who would do so, that the 6 Democratic members from his own State had voted for it. I told him if he voted against it he would strike a

severe blow upon my administration, inflict great injury on the country, and as a friend I must say to him that I thought he would ruin himself. I begged him for his own sake, for the sake of the country, and for the success of my administration to consider well before he voted against it. He was manifestly deeply impressed with the appeal which I made to him, and left saying that he would think of it to the last moment before he voted. Before he left I told him I had been informed that a rumour was abroad that he had spoken of resigning his seat in the Senate, and I begged him not to do so. I told him if he resigned the effect would be the same as if he voted against the Bill, for it was understood that if he voted for the Bill the Senate would be equally divided and that would enable the Vice President to give his casting vote for the Bill.

After Mr. Haywood left at about 9½ O'Clock P. M. I saw Senators McDuffie & Lewis and Gen'l McKay of N. C., and had a full conversation with them about the prospects of passing the House Bill to reduce the tariff. They agreed that it depended on Mr. Haywood's vote, unless Senator Jarnegan of Tennessee voted for the Bill, as he had repeatedly said he would do, in which event the Senate would still be tied even if Mr. Haywood voted against it. The Secretary of the Treasury came in during the conversation and participated in it. All agreed that they would ascertain on to-morrow whether the Bill in its present form could pass, and if they ascertained it could not, they would en-

deavour to effect some compromise with the Pennsylvania Senators, and if possible to pass it in some modified form.

FRIDAY, *24th July, 1846.*— Saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day. Saw in the course of the morning Senators Bagby and Dix, and had an earnest conversation with each on the subject of the tariff Bill and the probabilities of Mr. Haywood's vote, upon which they thought the fate of the Bill depended. Each of them said he would see him again and urge him to vote for it. I devoted the day until the evening in disposing of the business on my table.

At 6½ O'Clock the Comanche and other wild Indians, about 40 in number, called to take leave of me before they left for their homes. The Secretary of War, the commissioner of Indian affairs, and several other persons were present. I presented to each of the Chiefs, about 18 in number, a Silver Medal as a token of friendship, with which they seemed to be well pleased. The Secretary of War & Commissioner of Indian affairs had presented to each Indian some presents before they called on me. They left apparently well pleased, promising to keep the peace and be friendly with the U. States.

This was reception evening. About the usual number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, attended.

After the company retired Vice President Dallas & the Secretary of the Treasury retired to my office to talk with me about a proposed compromise of the tariff question, which had been suggested by a lead-

ing manufacturer to the Secretary of the Treasury. It was to reduce now all the existing duties one-fourth of the excess above 30 per. ct.; at the end of 5 years another ¼, & at the end of 10 years to bring the duties down to the rates of the pending Bill. Mr. Dallas was in favour of the proposition. I did not encourage it, fearing it might produce confusion & be the means of losing the Bill. Mr. Dallas said if the Democrats did not agree to it he would let them know, if it came to his casting vote they might loose [lose] the Bill as it was.

SATURDAY, *25th July, 1846.*— This was cabinet day; all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury. Some unimportant business was transacted. The Secretary of the Navy left early to attend to business at his office.

About 1 O'Clock P. M. Senator Jarnigan and Mr. Wheaton of the Ho. Repts. called as a committee on enrolled Bills, and presented to me several Bills for my approval, & among the[m] the Harbour and River Bill. On presenting them Mr. Jarnagan jocosely remarked, now you have a chance for a veto, and to that purport.

Mr. Buchanan in a familiar and jocose manner inquired of Mr. Jarnegan about the prospects of passing the tariff Bill now before the Senate, and said there were speculations abroad in the City to know how the Senators from Tennessee would vote. Mr. Jarnegan immediately replied in a serious & emphatic tone that his vote was no secret, that he was instructed to vote for just such a Bill as this was, and

that he should do so. I have heretofore doubted Mr. Jarnegan's vote, though he had before declared to me that he would vote for the Bill, but I have now no doubt from his positive declaration in the presence of the Cabinet and of Mr. Wheaton that he will do so.

After the Cabinet adjourned, and about 3½ O'Clock, I was astonished to learn that Senator Haywood had to-day addressed a letter to the Vice President resigning his seat in the Senate of the U. S.[1] It was a great error, and I am sure he will deeply regret it. The fate of the tariff-bill will now depend on the vote of Senator Jarnegan. If he votes as he declared he would to-day, the Bill will still pass. I sincerely regret Mr. Haywood's course. I was at college with him and have ever been his friend. I believe him to be an honest and pure man, but a man of great vanity and possessing a good deal of self esteem. He is, I think, ambitious, and had probably a desire to have some participation or authorship in effecting the contemplated tariff reform. From some feeling of this sort and without due reflection, I conjecture, he took ground against the tariff bill, and having committed himself was of too proud a spirit, when he found himself separated from all his friends and that none of them would go with him, to recede. He is moreover nervous, & in an excited state, no doubt, tendered his resignation. I give not the slightest heed to the painful insinu-

[1] Haywood issued an address, August 10, 1846, to the people of North Carolina, giving the causes and a defence of his resignation. Printed in *Globe,* 29 Cong. 1 Sess. *App.* 107.

ations which I learn this evening are made by illiberal persons as to the motives & causes which have induced his course. I differ with him in opinion and think he has erred in resigning, but that he has done so from good motives and from the causes stated above I have as little doubt.

About 6 O'Clock the Secretary of the Treasury called and informed me that he had just been informed that Mr. Senator Jarnegan had spoken this evening about resigning his seat also. Should he do so, and Mr. Haywood's successor reach here in time, the tariff bill will be lost by one vote. On hearing this I immediately sent for Senator Turney and informed him of it. He left for the purpose of seeing Mr. Jarnegan, but before he did so he informed me of a very important fact. It was this, that a manufacturer who was in the City a few days ago had urged him to vote against the tariff-bill and had called to see him on the subject two or three times; that in his last conversation this person (whose name he did not mention) had described the prosperity which would prevail if the pending Bill did not pass, and had said to him, Turney, that if it did not pass he could loan to him (Turney) any amount of money which he might want. Turney was indignant at it, and considered it an attempt in this indirect way to induce him to vote against the Bill; or in other words an attempt to bribe. Turney expressed the opinion to me that money would be used, if it could be, to defeat the Bill. I was shocked at the story, and said nothing but to express my astonishment.

SUNDAY, *26th July, 1846.*— I was unwell to-day and did not attend church. Mr. Cave Johnson called early in the morning and took breakfast with us. Mrs. Polk & Miss Rucker attended church accompanied by Mr. Johnson.

Senator Turney called about 1½ O'Clock and took dinner with us. He told me he had seen Senator Jarnegan who told him he would not resign his seat in the Senate, but would vote for the tariff-bill now before the Senate; that he had read to him the speech which he had written out, and which he intended to deliver to the Senate before he gave his vote, & he, Turney, had no doubt he would do as he said he would.

Col. Benton called this evening, having been requested by Mr. Cave Johnson to do so. I read to him a despatch [1] to the Mexican Government proposing to renew negotiations with a view to peace, which Mr. Buchanan had prepared, and asked him his opinion as to the policy of sending it. He approved it & advised that it be sent. I told Col. Benton that if Congress would pass an appropriation of two millions of dollars, such as was passed in 1803 to enable Mr. Jefferson to purchase Louisiana, or in 1806 to enable him to purchase the Floridas, I had but little doubt that by paying that sum in hand at the signature of a Treaty we might procure California and such a boundary as we wished, and that in the present impoverished condition of Mexico the knowledge that such a sum would be paid in hand might induce Mexico to Treat, when she might not

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 40.

otherwise do so. Col. Benton approved the suggestion and advised that I should see some members of the committee of Foreign affairs on the subject.

We had some conversation in relation to Senator Haywood's resignation of his seat in the Senate. We both thought it was a great error, but agreed that he was an honest and pure man, but that he was nervous and had acted hastily.

MONDAY, *27th July, 1846.*— I was occupied as usual until 12 O'Clock to-day in seeing company, office seekers and others. I spent the balance of the day in writing a veto message on the Harbour and River Bill, appropriating between one and two millions of dollars, which has passed Congress and was presented to me by the committee on enrolled Bills on saturday last, the 25th Instant. As I cannot approve this Bill and have resolved to veto it, I was occupied to-day in examining the subject and preparing a message assigning my objections to its passage.

About 6 O'Clock P. M. my Private Secretary returned from the Capitol and informed me that the Bill of the House to reduce the tariff had been committed to the committee on Finance after a stormy and violent debate by a majority of one vote, Mr. Jarnegan having disregarded his instructions and voted with his Whig friends. Jarnegan holds the fate of the Bill in his hands and there [is] no reliance to be placed upon him. He declared on saturday last in presence of the Cabinet, when he called on me as a member of the committee of enrolled Bills to

present to me some Bills which had passed Congress, that he would vote for the Bill, and yet to-day he voted to embarrass and defeat it. The folly and great error of Senator Haywood in resigning his seat in the Senate has put the control of the Bill in the hands of Mr. Jarnegan and he may defeat it, notwithstanding his pledges repeatedly made to vote for it.

TUESDAY, *28th July, 1846.*— Saw several members of Congress this morning, who were much concerned about the fate of the Bill to reduce the tariff which it was expected would be decided by the Senate to-day. All agreed it would depend on Mr. Jarnegan's vote. The Cabinet held a regular meeting to-day at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury. No business of importance was brought before the Cabinet, and after a short sitting the Cabinet adjourned.

About 2 O'Clock I received a note from Senator Bagby informing me that the tariff bill had been ordered to a third reading by the casting vote of the Vice President, Mr. Jarnegan declining to vote. A slight amendment had been made to the Bill. At 5 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Ritchie called and informed me that the Bill had passed its final reading by a majority of one vote, Senator Jarnegan voting for it. If the amendment be concurred in by the Ho. Repts. the Bill will only require the approval of the President to become a law.

This was reception evening and an unusually large number of persons attended, ladies and gentlemen,

among whom were an unusual number of members of Congress, all of them I believe of the Democratic party, who were exchanging congratulations on the passage of the tariff bill in the Senate to-day. They seemed to be confident that the Ho. Repts. would concur in the amendment made by the Senate, but I had my doubts and expressed them to several members.

After the company had nearly all retired Mr. Woodworth of N. Y. of the Ho. Repts. called and informed me that the N. Y. Democratic members of the Ho. Repts. had held a caucus to-night at which he was present. He informed me that five of them who had voted in favour of the Bill, *viz.,* Rathbun, King, Wood, Grover, and Goodyear would, he thought, vote against concurring in the amendment of the Senate to the tariff Bill, with a view [of] defeating the Bill by a disagreement between the two Houses. This gave me great uneasiness especially as I learned that the Whigs with the same object in view would vote against it, and that the Democratic portion of the Pennsylvania delegation would unite with them and make great efforts to defeat the Bill. Upon hearing this, after the violent struggle which had taken place in the Senate on yesterday & to-day, I had great fears that there might be a sufficient defection in the Ho. Repts. to defeat it. The City is swarming with manufacturers who are making tremendous exertions to defeat it. The truth is that such a struggle has rarely been witnessed in Congress, as that between the Capitalists engaged in manufactures on the one hand, and the advocates of mod-

erate and reasonable taxes. The deepest anxiety prevails & will continue to prevail until the decision of the House on the Senate's amendment shall take place.

WEDNESDAY, *29th July, 1846.*— Saw company this morning. Fewer persons than usual called. After 12 O'Clock I was occupied in disposing of the business on my table, and in examining the provisions of the Harbour and River Bill, which passed Congress some days ago and was presented to me for my approval on saturday last. Upon the first examination of the Bill I was satisfied that I could not consistently with my opinions give it my approval, and the more I have examined the more important questions of constitutional power which it involves, the more I am confirmed in that opinion. I have accordingly written a portion of what I propose to incorporate in a veto message to Congress.

About 2 O'Clock P. M. Senator Bagby called and informed me that the Ho. Repts. had concurred in the amendment of the Senate to the Bill to reduce the tariff of duties. The five N. York democratic members named in yesterday's Journal voted, as I learn, with the opponents of the Bill (the Whigs) upon all the collateral & incidental questions which arose, the vote on some of which was very close, being decided by a single vote in favour of the Bill. It is certain from what I learn of the proceedings of the House, that Messrs. Grover, Goodyear, King, Rathbun, & Wood of the N. York delegation desired to defeat the Bill, and yet feared upon a direct vote

to record their votes against it. This great measure of reform has been thus successful. It has given rise to an immense struggle between the two great political parties of the country. The capitalists & monopolists have not surrendered the immense advantages which they possessed, and the enormous profits which they derived under the tariff of 1842, until after a fierce and mighty struggle. This City has swarmed with them for weeks. They have spared no effort within their power to sway and controll Congress, but all has proved to be unavailing and they have been at length vanquished. Their effort will probably now be to raise a panic (such as they have already attempted) by means of their combined wealth, so as to induce a repeal of the act. The Pennsylvania Democracy have been placed in a false position upon this subject. Her public men have not had the moral courage to take bold ground and proclaim the true doctrines to her people. Pennsylvania is essentially an agricultural state, & as a community cannot be interested in imposing enormous taxes on the many for the benefit of the few. I do not doubt that Pennsylvania will continue to be democratic if her public men and presses shall have the independence and moral courage to avow the truth as they know it to exist.

THURSDAY, *30th July, 1846.*— Was engaged in receiving company this morning until 12 O'Clock. Fewer persons than usual called.

About 1 O'Clock P. M. the committee of enrolled Bills of Congress called and presented to me the Bill

to reduce the tariff of duties which had passed Congress. As soon [as] the Committee retired I read the Bill carefully and approved and signed it.

I devoted some time to-day to a further examination of the Harbour and River Bill, which was presented to me for my approval on saturday last.

Senator McDuffie (Ch. of the Com. of Foreign affairs) called this morning to see me on the subject of our relations with Mexico, and other foreign matters. I told [him] my object in the existing war was not conquest, but that in concluding a peace I desired in consideration of a fair equivalent to acquire California and otherwise adjust a suitable boundary. This he approved. I then told him that in the present state of the Mexican finances, I had but little doubt if I possessed some $2,000,000 of dollars to pay down on the signature of the treaty, that the matter could be settled. He concurred in this opinion.

FRIDAY, *31st July, 1846.*— I received no company to-day except a few persons on special business. I devoted the greater part of the day in writing and revising my message assigning my objections to the River & Harbour Bill, and giving my reasons for withholding my approval of the Bill. Senator Cass (a member of the committee of Foreign affairs of the Senate) called to-day, and I saw him. We had a long conversation on the subject of our Mexican relations, in which I made the same suggestions which I had done to Senator McDuffie on yesterday. I called his attention to the act of Congress of 1803 placing $2,000,000 of dollars at the disposition of

Mr. Jefferson to enable him to purchase Louisiana; and to a similar act in 1806 with a view to the purchase of the Floridas. I expressed my opinion of the importance of Congress passing a similar act appropriating $2,000,000 to be used if necessary in a Treaty with Mexico, by which a suitable & satisfactory boundary should be obtained, including California as well as New Mexico, and perhaps further South if practicable. I expressed my opinion that if I was authorized to pay such a sum as a part of the price, that the Government of Mexico in the present straightened condition of her finances might be induced to treat, when without such prompt payment she might not be willing to do so. In all this Gen'l Cass fully concurred. I suggested that I might send a message to the Senate in Executive Session, and if the suggestion was approved that the Senate could in open Session passed [pass] such an act. This he also approved. I authorized him to consult with a few Senators confidentially on the subject. He advised me to see Mr. Archer (a member of the com. of for. affairs of the Senate) on the subject.

When my private Secretary went to the Capitol I told him to request Senator Archer to call at 7 O'Clock. He did so and at that hour Mr. Archer called. I made the same communication to him on the subject of our Mexican affairs, which I had made to Gen'l Cass this [morning]. We had a full conversation on the subject, and Mr. Archer was inclined to concur in my views. I told him I did not desire to make such a movement, or that Congress should attempt to make the appropriation, if it was

to be a party question. Mr. Archer said he would consult with some of the Whig Senators and let me know their views.

This was reception evening. The usual number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, attended.

SATURDAY, *1st August, 1846.*— The Cabinet held a regular meeting to-day, all the members present. I informed the Cabinet that I had made up my mind to put my veto on the Harbour and River Bill, which had passed Congress and was presented to me for my approval and signature on saturday last. I told them that I had prepared the draft of [a] message assigning my reasons for withholding my approval of the Bill. I read the message. I had not before shown it in its revised form to any member of the Cabinet, except to Judge Mason, to whom I had submitted my first rough draft, which he took at my request and suggested some modifications in a draft of his own, but at the same time adopted the principal part of mine. This occurred on Wednesday last. I took the two drafts and rewrote it. I did not consult the Cabinet to ascertain their opinions on the subject. Having made up my mind that I could not sign the Bill under any circumstances, it was unnecessary to consult the Cabinet on the subject. No one of the Cabinet expressed an objection to my course; though I have a strong impression that, if they had been consulted, Messrs. Buchanan, Marcy, Bancroft, & perhaps Walker would have advised me to approve and sign the Bill. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Mason I know concurred in opinion with me, and I

am not positively certain as to the opinions of Messrs. Bancroft and Walker. They all, however, expressed the opinion that the draft of the message which I had read was a strong paper & was well drawn.

I brought before the Cabinet the present condition of our Mexican relations, and submitted to them whether they would advise me to make a message on the subject to the Senate in Executive Session, communicating with it a copy of Mr. Buchanan's last despatch to the Minister of Foreign affairs of Mexico proposing to renew negotiations, written some week or ten days ago, and submitting to the Senate in my message the importance of Congress making an appropriation similar to that made in 1803 in reference to the acquisition of Louisiana & that in 1806 in reference to the acquisition of the Floridas. At first there appeared to be some division of opinion on the subject. Mr. Walker expressed his doubts. Mr. Buchanan went to the State Department and brought his dispatch addressed to the Minister of Foreign affairs of Mexico referred to above. I explained the objects which I had in view, as I had done to Senators Cass & Archer on yesterday, and to Senator McDuffie on thursday last (see this diary for those days). I stated that if it was advised by the Cabinet I proposed to make the communication in the first instance to the Senate in Executive Session; that my object in this was, that if it was not approved by the Senate that it need not be made public, but if approved with an approximation to unanimity, a law similar to the acts of 1803 & 1806 could be introduced

& passed through the Senate with little or no debate. After a very full discussion of the subject Mr. Walker expressed himself entirely satisfied of the wisdom of the course. All the other members of the Cabinet expressed their approval, and advised that such a message be sent to the Senate. I then requested Mr. Buchanan, as my time would be much occupied, to prepare the draft of a message & submit it to me on monday next.

This morning the Post Master Gen'l informed me that he had held a conversation with Mr. Buchanan, and that he thought he had made up his mind to remain in the Cabinet, and not to go on the bench of the Supreme Court of the U. S. I had some weeks ago informed Mr. Buchanan that he could have the judgeship or remain in his present position in the State Department as he might [think] proper. I had no doubt at that time that he would elect to go on the bench, and indeed at one time it was so understood between us, but I would not agree that he should retire from the State Department until near the close of the present session of Congress (see this diary).

After the Cabinet adjourned Mr. Mason & Mr. Johnson remained a few minutes, and I informed Mr. Mason of what Mr. Johnson had communicated to me. As Mr. Johnson was leaving I requested him to ask Mr. Buchanan to call in the course of the afternoon.

After Mr. Johnson retired I informed Mr. Mason that Mr. Bancroft desired to retire from the Navy Department and take the mission to France at the

close of the next Session of Congress, and that I had informed him that I would gratify his wishes. I informed him also that Mr. Bancroft had intimated to me a preference for the English over the French Mission. I then said to Judge Mason that if Mr. Buchanan decided to remain in the Cabinet, that I would tender the English mission to Mr. Bancroft, and that if he accepted it I would desire him (Judge Mason) to take his place as Secretary of the Navy. Judge Mason responded that he had no desire to change his position in the Cabinet, but intimated that he would be disposed to yield to my wishes & aid me in my administration in any situation that I might desire him to occupy.

Mr. Buchanan called about 6 O'Clock P. M. and informed me that he had decided to remain in the Cabinet and not to accept the offer which I had made him to appoint him Judge of the Supreme Court. He said that he did this cheerfully, although he had long desired a seat on the bench, and that now he would stick to me & go through my administration with me. I then told him that I would nominate Judge Greer of Pittsburg to the vacant seat on the bench on monday next. He replied that he would be entirely satisfied with Judge Greer's appointment.

At 7 O'Clock P. M. the Hon. Mr. Dromgoole of Va. of the Ho. Repts. called, as I had previously requested him to do. I informed him of my intention to veto the River & Harbour Bill, and read to him the message which I had prepared, which he approved.

SUNDAY, *2nd August, 1846.*— My nephew, Marshall T. Polk, who has been with me for more than two years, and since September last has been at Georgetown College, left this morning to pay a visit to his mother at Morganton, N. Carolina. It is vacation in the college at Georgetown, and he will return at the commencement of the next Session, which will be about the middle of September next.

Attended the dedication of a Baptist church on E Street, near the Gen'l Post office to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. Heard an excellent sermon from the text " For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

I saw Mr. Bancroft (the Sec. of the Navy) this morning and informed him that if he preferred the English to the French Mission as he had intimated to me some weeks ago that he did, that he could have it, but informed him at the same time that if he accepted it he would have to go out in September. He received the offer I thought favourably, but said he would like to think of it for twenty four hours. I had previously promised him to appoint him Minister to France towards the close of the next Session of Congress.

My Private Secretary at my request invited Messrs. McKay of N. C., McClernand of Ill., Boyd [1] of Ky., and Martin of Tennessee, members of the Ho. Repts., to call this evening at 8 O'Clock. They called at that hour., I informed them that I would put my veto on the Harbour and River Bill, and read

[1] Linn Boyd of Kentucky, Speaker of the House of Representatives 1851–1855.

to them the message which I had prepared. I did this that they might be prepared to vindicate my course if I should be assailed on the floor of the House. They approved of my course. Mr. McKay said he would have gone further than I had done in the message, but was satisfied with it. The provisions and principles of the Bill were the subject of a conversation of some length, and I explained to them the objections to particular items in it. They retired between 9 & 10 O'Clock.

MONDAY, *3rd August, 1846.*— Saw company until 11 O'Clock this morning. Between 11 & 12 O'Clock my Private Secretary went to the Capitol with my message to the Ho. Repts. putting my veto on the Harbour and River Bill. I sent to the Senate also a nomination of Robert C. Grier of Pittsburg, Penn., as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the U. S. to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judge Baldwin.

Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll called and inquired at what time I proposed to send in his nomination to the Senate as minister to Russia. I answered him, not before friday or saturday next. I had promised to appoint Mr. Ingersoll some months ago, and before his difficulty in Congress with Mr. Webster concerning the Secret service fund. Since that time I had learned from one or two members of my Cabinet (to whom alone & to the Vice President I had made known my intention to appoint Mr. Ingersoll) that Mr. Ingersoll since his controversy with Mr. Webster had become unpopular in the Senate, &

would probably be rejected. Before I made the pledge to Mr. Ingersoll I had consulted the Cabinet, and they had concurred in the opinion that he was a suitable person & that I could not make a better selection. I felt it to be my duty this morning to communicate to Mr. Ingersoll what I had heard of the danger of his rejection by the Senate & I did so. He seemed to be surprised and said he would make some inquiry about it.

About 2½ O'Clock P. M. Mr. Kaufman of the Ho. Repts. from Texas called and informed me that my veto Message was under discussion in the House. He was in great difficulty about his course, & called to get information about the provisions of the Bill from me. Red River, for the Improvement of which there is an appropriation in the Bill, runs through his District. I gave him the information which he desired. Whilst he was with me I received a note from Mr. McKay of N. C. requesting me to send to him the papers explanatory of the different items of the Bill which I had caused to be prepared at the Treasury and War Departments, and which I had showed to him and the gentlemen who were with him last evening. I told Mr. Kaufman that as they were addressed to me as President it would not be proper that I should furnish them to be used in the House, in any other way than by a Message. Mr. Kaufman said he desired to have them also, and that if I would let him have them he would take them to Mr. McKay, and would tell him that they were not to be used in the House. I told Mr. Kaufman that any member could readily procure copies by address-

ing a note to the Secretaries of the Treasury and of War, and in whose Departments they were of record. Mr. Kaufman said he would not vote against the veto, though he was very anxious to have the appropriation for Red River.

TUESDAY, *4th August, 1846.*— Saw a number of members of Congress this morning. Though it was Cabinet day it was so near the close of the Session of Congress that I could not with propriety refuse to receive them.

Mr. Bancroft, the Secretary of the Navy, was the first of the Cabinet who attended. Referring to my conversation with him on the subject, I enquired of him whether he had made up his mind to accept the English Mission. He enquired of me, if he accepted, at what time I would desire him to leave for London. I told him that Mr. McLane would probably leave London on his return by the Steamer which will leave Liverpool on the 19th of August or the 4th of September, and that I supposed it would be time enough for him to sail from this country by the Steamer of the 1st of October. He then agreed to accept it. The understanding was that he was to remain in the Navy Department until Mr. McLane's arrival in the U. States, when I would appoint him.

The Cabinet assembled at rather a later hour than usual; all the members present. Whilst considering some matters of inconsiderable importance, I received information from the House of Representatives that the vote on the Harbour and River Bill,

the President's objections to the contrary notwithstanding, stood yeas 95, noes 91. There not being two-thirds in favour of the Bill it was of course rejected. I was informed by my Private Secretary that the Whig members from Tennessee, except Mr. Crozier, who had voted against the Bill on its original passage through the House, had to-day declined to vote. I can conceive of no reason for this, unless it was the apprehension on their part if they voted consistently against the Bill there would be a majority sustaining the veto. A number of Democrats opposed to the Bill, I learn, were absent from the House by accident. About 1½ O'Clock A. M. [P. M.] I sent to the Senate a confidential message [1] concerning our relations with Mexico. It was concurred in unanimously by the Cabinet. After transacting some other business the Cabinet at about 2½ O'Clock adjourned.

I requested Judge Mason to remain and he did so. I informed him that Mr. Bancroft had accepted the English Mission & would retire from the Navy Department some time in the month of September. I then tendered the office of Secretary of the Navy to Judge Mason, upon Mr. Bancroft's retirement. He expressed himself as being entirely satisfied with his present office of Atto. Gen'l, but said he would go into the Navy Department if I desired it, and thought that it would advance the success of my administration. It was understood between us that when Mr. Bancroft retired I would appoint him

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 456.

Secretary of the Navy. This was reception evening. The usual number of persons attended.

WEDNESDAY, *5th August, 1846.*— Saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day. Many members of Congress called, some of them after that hour on business. As the Session of Congress approaches its close, I am kept exceedingly busy in my office. Gen'l Rob't Armstrong, special bearer of despatches, arrived this morning from London, bringing with him the exchange of ratifications of the Oregon Treaty. In the course of the day I had a message [1] prepared, and transmitted it with the ratified Treaty to Congress, and recommended the establishment of a Territorial Government in the Oregon territory.

I transacted much business to-day, some of it of an important character.

The Marine band played on the President's grounds this afternoon.

THURSDAY, *6th August, 1846.*— Company called as usual to-day, and I saw them until 12 O'Clock. Had a very busy day, saw many members of Congress, but nothing occurred worthy of special note, except the presentation to me by a committee of Congress of a Bill appropriating $5,000,000 to be paid in land scrip for the payment of claims for French spoliations prior to 1800. I had heard much of these claims & had given them some examination when I was a Representative in Congress. I ex-

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 456.

amined the Bill and made up my mind that I ought not to approve it. At my request the Atto. Gen'l & [the] P. M. Gen'l agreed, as I was exceedingly occupied & was subjected to constant interruptions by persons calling, to give to it a further examination and prepare the draft of a message for me assigning my reasons for withholding my approval. I handed to them a hasty sketch, in the form of full notes, indicating the points of my objection to the Bill, which I had prepared. Anticipating that the Bill would come to me and having learned its provisions, I had requested them on yesterday to aid me in preparing a veto message. In the afternoon Judge Mason called with my draft or notes and one of his own. I suggested some changes and he took them to his house promising to call on to-morrow morning. Senator Dix, who had made a very able speech [1] in the Senate against the Bill, called in the evening, and knowing that he was perfectly familiar with the subject from a recent examination, I informed him of my intention to veto the Bill, and requested him to prepare for my use a condensed statement of the objections to it. He promised me that he would do so.

Col. Benton, whom I had requested to call on other business, called after night. After conversing about other business, I informed Col. Benton that I intended to put my veto on the French Spoliation Bill. He expressed himself to be delighted to hear it, and said when I returned it to the Senate he would block it. He denounced the Bill in strong

[1] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 1 Sess. *App.* 514.

terms. He told me that he had addressed me a note on the subject to-day, but I had not received it. I told him if he found he had leisure to-night or on to-morrow to furnish me a statement of his objections to the Bill, I would be obliged to him if he would do so. He promised me to do so. Quite a number of other members of Congress called to-night, & without knowing anything of my intentions urged me to veto the French Spoliation Bill. Some of them, and among others Mr. Chapman of Al. & Mr. Wick of Indiana, expressed the opinion that members of Congress had been made interested in these claims and that the Bill had been passed by corrupt means. I did not inform them what my intentions were.

FRIDAY, *7th August, 1846.*— Saw many members of Congress and others who called this morning. Senator Dix called & handed to me a brief statement of his objections to the French Spoliation [Bill] as he had promised me to do on last evening. Judge Mason called & I handed to him Senator Dix's statement, to aid him in preparing the paper which he was drawing up. After an absence of two or three hours Judge Mason returned & read to me his draft. I suggested some changes, which he made & left the papers with me. After dinner I took all the drafts, my own notes or draft inclusive, and resolved to prepare a paper for myself. I was occupied in writing it, subject to occasional interruptions, until 10 O'Clock P. M. when I finished it.[1]

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 466.

On tuesday last, the 4th Instant, I communicated a confidential message to the Senate in Executive Session giving them information of the existing state of our relations with Mexico, and of my desire to treat with that Power. For the reasons assigned in that message, I recommended, if the Senate approved my policy, that an appropriation might be made by Congress to facilitate negotiations with Mexico. The message will explain itself. On the 6th Instant the Senate in Executive Session passed two Resolutions, with a copy of which I was furnished, approving my recommendations. I learned from several Senators that it was expected by the Senate that I would now send in a confidential message to both Houses asking the appropriation. I objected to this course as unnecessary, and well calculated to defeat the object I had in view altogether. To send a confidential message to so numerous a body as the Ho. Repts., composed as that body unfortunately is of so many discordant factions, and expect my message to be kept a secret, would be as I thought a perfect farce. No confidential message has been made to the House for more than a dozen years, and to do it now would excite universal curiosity in our own country, and ultimately give to the proceeding greater publicity than if a public message were at once sent in. It would, moreover, excite the jealousy and alarm of Foreign Powers as to our designs upon Mexico. I advised the Senators with whom I conversed, as the Senate had approved the object in view, to pass the appropriation through the Senate in Legislative Session without debate, and I

had no doubt by seeing and explaining to a few leading members [of the House of Representatives] the object of the appropriation, it would pass that House also, without attracting much public attention. This course I hoped would have been adopted. I learned last evening and this morning that certain Whig Senators objected to the appropriation unless I first took the responsibility of recommending it. To this I answered that I had done so in my confidential message. In order to remove all pretext, however, to resist the appropriation on such grounds, I saw Mr. Buchanan, and upon consultation with him it was agreed that he as Secretary of State should address a letter (a mode not unusual in the intercourse between the Executive Departments & Congress) to the Chairman of the committee of finance in the Senate [and] of Ways and Means in the Ho. Repts., asking the appropriation. He prepared such a letter [1] accordingly in which he spoke in my name, & took it to the Capitol to deliver it in person. About 9 O'Clock P. M. he returned and informed me that both Houses were in Session, and that before he had delivered the letters he had read them to Col. Benton, who still advised that I should send a confidential message to the Ho. Repts., and that he, Mr. Buchanan, had returned to consult me, before he delivered the letters to Mr. Lewis & Mr. McKay. I told him I would not send a confidential message to the House, that I had done my duty, and that if the factious spirit prevailing in Congress prevented them from making the appropriation, I regret[ted]

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 52.

it on account of the country, but that the responsibility would not be mine. Mr. Buchanan returned to the Senate & as he afterwards informed me delivered the two letters which he had written (being copies of each other) to Mr. Lewis & Mr. McKay, to be used if they thought proper in Legislative Session in the two Houses.

SATURDAY, *8th August, 1846.*— This was the day for the regular meeting of the Cabinet. All the members of the Cabinet called at different periods of the day, but were not together at any one time. Congress had passed a Resolution to adjourn on monday next, the 10th Inst., and the members of the Cabinet had business with members of Congress, and were looking after bills pending before the two Houses connected with their respective Departments.

Early in the day I was informed by a Senator that the Whig Senators, although committed by their votes in Executive Session to vote for the appropriation which I had asked in my confidential message to the Senate to enable me to make peace with Mexico, were now interposing objections & saying that they would not do so unless the President took the responsibility of the measure. While they made this objection as a pretext for withholding the appropriation, they knew well that I had taken the responsibility, 1st, in a confidential message, and 2nd, in the official letter addressed on yesterday by the Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Committee of Finance in the Senate, and the Committee of Ways & Means in the Ho. Repts. I was now informed

that in Executive Session last night they had taken the ground that the President must communicate a message in confidence to the House as well as the Senate, before they would vote the money. I sent for Mr. Buchanan & informed him of what I had learned, & told him that to send a confidential message to the House, a thing which had not been done for near 20 years, would be a farce, that it would be to give it more publicity & more consequence than to send it in in Legislative Session. I expressed the opinion that a message should be immediately prepared & sent in to both Houses in open Session asking for the appropriation, and thus place the responsibility of refusing it, if it was not made, on Congress. Mr. Buchanan agreed to this suggestion. A message [1] was accordingly prepared & sent in to both Houses before 12 O'Clock to-day.

At about 7 O'Clock P. M. I went to the Capitol as is usual on the last nights of the Session. This is done for the convenience of Congress, and especially of the Committee of enrolled bills. I occupied the Vice President's Room. All my Cabinet were with me. A large number of enrolled bills were presented to me, which I examined, approved, and signed. I sent to the Senate a veto message on the French Spoliation bill. I sent in also a number of nominations, some of them to fill new offices created by laws which I had just approved. About 10½ O'Clock I learned that the Ho. Repts. had adjourned for the day. The Senate adjourned about 11¼ O'Clock P. M.

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 459.

Great confusion, I learned, prevailed in both Houses during this night's Session and what is deeply to be regretted several members as I was informed were much excited by drink. Among others I was informed that Senators Webster & Barrow[1] were quite drunk, so much so that the latter gentleman, it was said, was noisy and troublesome. From all I learned it was a most disreputable scene. At 11½ O'Clock I left the Capitol. Both Houses adjourned to meet, the House at 8, & the Senate at 8½ A. M. on Monday next.

Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll called & requested, for reasons which I have no time to state, that his name should not be sent to the Senate as Minister to Russia. He would probably have been rejected by the Senate.

SUNDAY, *9th August, 1846.*— In consequence of my constant confinement to my office and great labour for many days past, I was much enfeebled and prostrated to-day. I did not attend church and remained quietly at home and rested. Mrs. Polk & Miss Rucker attended church.

MONDAY, *10th August, 1846.*— The House of Representatives having adjourned to meet at 8 and the Senate at 8½ O'Clock this morning, I attended at the Capitol as is usual at the close of a Session of Congress. I was at the Capitol with my Cabinet a few minutes after 8 O'Clock. I approved and

[1] Alexander Barrow, Senator from Louisiana.

signed a number of enrolled bills which were presented to me.

The two Houses had by a joint Resolution agreed to adjourn for the Session at 12 O'Clock. At precisely that hour by the House Clock the Speaker adjourned the House. The House clock was 10 minutes faster than the Senate clock, and the Senate remained in Session that much longer, when the President of the Senate adjourned that body also. Many important measures were lost by this summary and prompt adjournment of the two Houses. Several Bills which had passed both Houses were not signed by the Speakers. The appropriation for $2,000,000, to enable the President to negotiate a peace with Mexico came up in the Senate some 30 or 40 minutes before 12 O'Clock. Senator Davis[1] of Mass. took the floor and spoke until the time had expired, so as to defeat action on it. The history of this measure is given up to that time in this diary of the 7th & 8th Inst.

Late in the evening of saturday, the 8th, I learned that after an excited debate in the House a bill passed that body, but with a mischievous & foolish amendment[2] to the effect that no territory which might be acquired by treaty from Mexico should ever be a slave-holding country. What connection slavery had with making peace with Mexico it is difficult to conceive. This amendment was voted on to the Bill by the opponents of the measure, and

[1] John Davis, 1787–1854, Senator from Massachusetts, 1835–1841, and 1845–1853.

[2] The Wilmot Proviso, *Globe,* 29 Cong. 1 Sess. 1214–1218.

when voted on, the original friends of the Bill voted against it, but it was passed by the Whigs and Northern Democrats, who had been opposed to making the appropriation. In this form it had gone to the Senate. Had there been time, there is but little doubt the Senate would have struck out the slavery proviso & that the House would have concurred. Senator Davis however resorted to the disreputable expedient of speaking against time & thus prevented the Senate from acting upon it, until the hour of adjournment arrived.

My object in asking this appropriation has not been fully stated in this diary. It was this. Mexico is indebted to the U. S. in a large sum, which she is unable to pay. There is also a disputed question of boundary. The two countries are now engaged in War. When peace is made the only indemnity which the U. S. can have will be a cession of territory. The U. S. desires to acquire Upper California, New Mexico, and perhaps some territory South of these Provinces. For a suitable cession of territory we are willing to assume the debts to our own citizens & to pay an additional consideration. My information induces the belief that Mexico would be willing to settle the difficulty in this manner. No Government, however, it is believed, is strong enough to make a treaty ceding territory and long maintain power unless they could receive, at the time of making the treaty, money enough to support the army. Whatever party can keep the army in its support can hold the power. The present Gov-

ernment is without any regular revenue, & without a prompt payment as a part of the consideration would not venture to make a Treaty. Having no doubt that I could effect an adjustment of the pending war if I had the command of $2,000,000, I felt it to be my duty to ask such an appropriation. This I did in the first instance by a confidential communication made to the Senate in Executive Session on the 4th Instant. The Senate on the 6th Inst. passed resolutions approving my views and declaring that it was proper to make the appropriation asked. The Resolution approving my views passed the Senate by a vote of ayes 43 to nays 2, and the Resolution approving the appropriation by yeas 33 to nays 19 (see Executive Journal, from which the Injunction of Secrecy was this day removed). With a full knowledge of all this Senator Davis had recourse to the desperate resort of speaking against time, to defeat a measure which he had been unable to defeat by his vote. Had the appropriation been passed I am confident I should have made an honorable peace by which we should have acquired California, & such other territory as we desired, before the end of October. Should the war be now protracted, the responsibility will fall more heavily upon the head of Senator Davis than upon any other man, and he will deserve the execrations of the country. I desired when I made the communication to the Senate in Executive Session, to consult that body in secret Session, to the end that the appropriation, if approved, should have been passed quietly and without attract-

ing public attention, or exciting the jealousy of the Powers of Europe; but contrary to my wishes great publicity has been given to it by Congress.

After the two Houses had adjourned I learned that a Resolution had passed each House & that a committee in each had been appointed [to] wait on the President and inform him that the two Houses were ready to adjourn, but the Committees did not wait on me.

A few minutes after the adjournment I left the Capitol and returned to the President's House. Shortly after I reached my office Senator Atchison of Mo., President *Pro Tempore* of the Senate, in company with Senator Chalmers of Miss. called and stated to me that a committee had been appointed to wait on me by both Houses, but that it was done in the Senate so short a time before the hour of 12 O'Clock fixed for the adjournment that they had not come together and waited on me until the two Houses had adjourned. Mr. Atchison said he made this explanation and had called expressly to make it, fearing that I might take up an impression that as presiding officer of the Senate he had neglected his duty. On leaving, Mr. Atchison remarked that he had been excited on the Oregon question, but that he was my personal and political friend.

During the afternoon a number of members of Congress of both Houses called to take leave of me before leaving the City.

TUESDAY, *11th August, 1846.*— Before the meeting of the Cabinet to-day, several members of Con-

gress called on me to take leave before their departure for their homes.

The Cabinet met at 11 O'Clock; all the members present. A question arose as to the power of the President to appoint a Deputy Post master at Buffalo in New York. The facts are these. During the last recess of the Senate I appointed Philip Dorsheimer, whose commission under the Constitution would expire at the end of the next Session of the Senate. During the Session of the Senate, I nominated W. L. Smith to be Dep'y P. M. in place of Mr. Dorsheimer & the Senate rejected the nomination. I then nominated Henry K. Smith for the same office, & the Senate adjourned without acting on the nomination. The question now was whether, as Mr. Dorsheimer's commission had expired with the adjournment of the Senate and the office was now vacant, it was such a vacancy as could be filled by a temporary appointment by the President. The Atto. Gen'l was clearly of opinion that the President possessed the power. Mr. Buchanan was of a different opinion. A long discussion ensued, during which all the members of the Cabinet except Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that the President possessed the power and ought to exercise it. The Atto. Gen'l cited the opinions of Atto. Gen'ls Wirt & Taney in similar cases in favour of the existence of the power. Though I did not myself doubt the power, it was yet an important question, and without expressing my opinion I required the Atto. Gen'l to give me his opinion in writing before I decided. No other busi-

ness of importance was transacted and the Cabinet adjourned.

This was the regular evening for receiving company. A few gentlemen and ladies called, the company being much smaller than usual.

WEDNESDAY, *12th August, 1846.*— At 6 O'Clock this morning my Private Secretary, J. Knox Walker, left on a visit to Tennessee. He expects to be absent five or six weeks. The Post Master Gen'l left at the same time for Tennessee to visit his family, and expects to be absent about the same length of time.

Several members of Congress who still remain in the City called this morning. I occupied the day in disposing of a mass of business which had accumulated on my table. The Marine-band played on the President's grounds this afternoon. Feeling no particular interest in the performance, I took a ride on horseback in company with the Secretary of the Navy.

THURSDAY, *13th August, 1846.*— I saw no company to-day until 12 O'Clock, but devoted the morning to the business on my table. At 12 O'Clock I opened my office & received company for an hour. During that time a crowd of persons called seeking small offices. I had one answer for all, which was, "there are no vacancies." I am resolved not to be annoyed as I have been by this class of persons.

About 1 O'Clock, the Cherokee Chiefs, including those of the Ross-party, the Treaty-party, and the

Old Settlers, called in a body to take leave of me, being about to depart for their home in the West. They had to-day given their assent to the amendments made by the Senate to the Treaty lately concluded with them. They had settled all the difficulties between themselves, and between the nation and the Government of the U. States. John Ross, the Principal Chief, addressed me & said they were all now in harmony and were satisfied. I told them that I congratulated them upon the happy adjustment of the difficulties which had distracted and divided them for more than a dozen years, and that I was rejoiced to learn that they were returning to their nation to live as brothers and friends. They were all in a pleasant humour and well satisfied. This event in my administration I consider an important one. From the commencement of Gen'l Jackson's administration down [to] the present time this tribe (which is probably the most enlightened on the Continent) has been torn by factions arrayed in deadly hostility against each other. Ross's party resisted with great stubbornness the wise policy of Gen'l Jackson to remove all the Indian Tribes residing within the States to the West of the Mississippi. This party constituted the majority of the Nation, and since their removal West have pursued and persecuted the Treaty party, so called because they made the Treaty of 1835.[1] Many murders have been committed among them, and even this year sev-

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* VII, 478. For an account of the troubles between the Creek Indians and the State of Georgia, which led to this treaty, see Schouler, *History of the United*

eral of the Treaty party and old settlers have been slain by the Ross party. The Treaty which I have caused to be made recently has put an end to all these troubles, and I hope they may hereafter be a united and happy people.

About 2 O'Clock P. M. some 20 or 30 young men from Philadelphia called to pay their respects. They were plain looking young men. They informed me that they had come round in a vessel, and were on a tour of pleasure and recreation.

FRIDAY, *14th August, 1846.*— I saw no company until 12 O'Clock to-day. Saw company for an hour commencing at 12 O'Clock, when I again closed my office. I cleared my table or nearly so, of the business upon it. In the course of the day I examined several applications for pardon, and the proceedings of Courts Martial, Naval and Military, and decided upon them.

This was the regular evening for receiving company. Not more than a dozen persons called.

Nothing worthy of special notice occurred to-day.

SATURDAY, *15th August, 1846.*— The Cabinet held a regular meeting to-day; all the members present except the Post Master Gen'l, who is absent from the City on a visit to his family in Tennessee. The Secretary of War laid before me the finding of the Court of Enquiry lately convened at Fortress Monroe in the case of Gen'l Gaines. The Court find

States, III, 233. For the treaty of August 6, 1846, which Polk concluded with the Creeks, see *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 871.

Gen'l Gaines guilty of violating orders and acting illegally in several instances, in ordering out volunteers in Louisiana and other Southern States and mustering them into service; but the Court recommend, in consideration of his long service & the supposed patriotism & purity of his motives, that no further proceedings be had in his case. It is evident from the finding of the Court, that they have laboured to give a construction to General Gaines's [conduct] most favourable to him, and if possible to excuse him. Gen'l Gaines is now a very old man & although guilty of acts which cannot be justified, and for the commission of which, if brought before a general Court Martial he would without doubt be punished, yet I determined in lenity to him to yield to the recommendation of the Court of Enquiry and take no further proceedings against him. His late conduct at New Orleans greatly embarrassed the Government & will cost the Treasury many hundreds of thousands of dollars. He is now however removed from that command & cannot repeat the mischief. The whole cabinet concurred in my views and decision. I directed the Secretary of War to issue a general order based upon the finding of the Court, condemning his conduct, but for the reasons stated by the Court discharging him from further prosecution. I directed further that he be ordered to the North and stationed there, so as to put it out of his power further to embarrass the Government during the pendency of the Mexican War. Some other matters connected with the War & the movements of our army were considered. I directed the

Secretary of War to have the New York Regiment, under the command of Col. Stephenson,[1] despatched for California at the earliest practicable period.

At 4 O'Clock P. M. I took a ride with the Secretary of the Navy in his carriage to the country. We drove to the residence of Francis P. Blair, Esqr. (late Editor of the *Globe*) some six miles from Washington. His residence is in Maryland. It was the second time I had been without the District of Columbia since I came to Washington in February, 1845. In May, 1845, I visited Mount Vernon and viewed the tomb of Washington. Mr. Blair was alone, his family being absent from home. He received me very cordially and was very friendly. During our stay of an hour, he took occasion to remark to me that I had been eminently successful in my administration, and that he approved all my leading measures. In speaking of the tariff he said he entirely approved the act which had recently passed, and had been more anxious for its passage than some of the members of Congress who had voted for it. He said he had argued with Senator Haywood, and had endeavoured to convince him that he ought to vote for it; & that he had dissuaded him from resigning his seat in the Senate. I told him I thought Mr. Haywood had committed a great error, that I thought him an honest and pure man, but one of peculiar organization of mind. In this he agreed with me, and said he had a kink in his head. We returned to Washington about dark.

[1] Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson of the Seventh New York Volunteers.

SUNDAY, *16th August, 1846.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and Mrs. J. Knox Walker.

MONDAY, *17th August, 1846.*— I gave orders to my porter this morning to admit no company until 12 O'Clock. Having occasion however before that hour to pass from my office to that of my Private Secretary, I encountered a number of persons in the passage in waiting to see me, and was compelled to see them or seem to act rudely. They were shown in. As I anticipated they were on the patriotic business of seeking office. Some of them were my old customers who had made frequent calls upon me for more than a year past. I concluded that it was useless to be annoyed by them any longer, and I was more than usually stern and summary with them. I said no! this morning with a free will and a good grace. The truth is that the persons who called today, with but few exceptions were a set of loafers without merit. They had been frequently here before, and I find as long as I treat them civilly I shall never get clear of them.

At 12½ O'Clock P. M. the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from Chili was presented to me by the Secretary of State. He presented to me his letter of credence & made me an address to which I responded. He was accompanied by his Secretary of Legation. I received him in the parlour below stairs.

I devoted the remainder of the day to business in my office.

My relation, Maj'r Ezekiel P. McNeal of Bolivar, Tennessee, his wife & daughter and Miss Williams, the sister of his wife, called. Maj'r McNeal is an especial friend as well as a relation, and upon the invitation of Mrs. Polk and myself, he & his family took apartments in the Presidential Mansion during their stay in Washington.

TUESDAY, *18th August, 1846.*— This was the regular day of the meeting of the Cabinet. Senators Bagby & Benton & Mr. Rhett of the Ho. Repts. and a few other persons called before the regular hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the P. M. Gen'l, who is on a visit to his family in Tennessee.

The Secretary of War read the order which he had prepared based on the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry in the case of Gen'l E. P. Gaines. Some alterations were made in the paper, and as amended I approved it.

Mr. Buchanan communicated a letter to me which he had received from a person known to him to be respectable written at New Orleans, representing that great extravagance & abuses existed in the purchase of horses in the Quarter-Master's Department at N. Orleans. I endorsed the letter, referring it to the Secretary of War, and directed an immediate inquiry to be made into the charges preferred against Col. Hunt, the Quarter master at New Orleans. I endorsed further on the letter, that from representa-

tions made from various sources I apprehended that there was a want of economy and great abuses in the Quarter master's Department, and that I feared the wasteful extravagance of the Florida War was being repeated in the existing war with Mexico. I directed the Secretary of War to investigate the matter.

Several other subjects of no great importance were considered. The Cabinet adjourned about 2 O'Clock P. M.

WEDNESDAY, *19th August, 1846.*— This morning at 9 O'Clock I went on board the Steamer Osceola with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and two servants to take an excursion to Fortress Monroe. We took with us two servants. Maj'r E. P. McNeal, his wife, daughter, and Miss Williams, the sister of Mrs. McNeal, all of Tennessee, who had been a day or two at the Presidential Mansion, accompanied us. My intention is to take an excursion of only three or four days. It is my first absence from Washington since I have been President, except a single day in the spring of 1845 when I visited Mount Vernon, going and returning on the same day. My long confinement to my office has considerably enfeebled me & rendered some recreation necessary. After having looked into the laws passed by the last Session of Congress and given the necessary directions for carrying them into effect, no public interest will, I think, suffer by my absence for a few [days]. All the members of the Cabinet agreed to remain at their posts, except Judge Mason, the Atto. Gen'l, who at

my request accompanied me. Mr. Buchanan promised me to call at my office daily and examine my letters, and if anything should occur requiring my personal attention I am to be immediately advised of it. The mail passes daily from Washington to Fortress Monroe, so that in less than 24 hours I can hear from Washington. In the absence of my Private Secretary from Washington, I left William V. Voorhies, Esqr., a confidential and trust-worthy young man, in charge of my office. At 9 O'Clock I went on board the Osceola. I found the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, and Navy at the Steam-boat. They accompanied me as far as Alexandria & returned to Washington. The passage down the potomac was a pleasant one. Before dark the wind rose, and after passing the mouth of the Potomac we found the Bay very rough. Always [almost] everyone on board was affected by sea-sickness. Mrs. Polk, Miss Rucker, & Mrs. McNeal were very sick. I was not myself sick. Between 1 & 2 O'Clock A. M. of Aug't 20th we reached the Fortress, where I was received by Col. Derusser [1] and conducted to the Quarters which had been provided for me. Col. Totten [2] of the Engineer corps with his wife accompanied me. Col. Totten had written to Col. Derusser to provide quarters for me. Col. Totten was very polite and attentive and caused every necessary provision to be made for our comfort. My quarters

[1] Réné Edward De Russy, Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers 1838–1863; in charge of the defences of the Pacific coast during the Civil War.

[2] Joseph Gilbert Totten, Chief of Engineers.

were in a comfortable cottage with four rooms near the sea-beach, being the same heretofore occupied by President Tyler when visiting this Post.

THURSDAY, *20th August, 1846.*— This morning I had many calls. Col. Walker, the Commandant of the Post, called with all the officers now at the Post. He caused a salute to be fired, and the fine band attached to the Post played. During the day a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. Many strangers are here, it being a place of resort for fashionable person[s] & those seeking health.

Commodore Wilkinson,[1] who is in command of the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, came up to-day and invited me to visit the Navy Yard, tendering to me a Government Steamer to carry myself and my party to the Yard at such time as might suit my convenience. He had with him several Naval officers. I agreed to go down on to-morrow. In the course of the afternoon a number of visitors at the post called. About sun-set, I walked around the fortress and examined the defences.[2] I was accompanied by Col. Derusser, Col. Totten, Col. Walker, Gen'l Brooke, and several junior officers. The area enclosed within the walls is about 70 acres, and the officers

[1] Jesse Wilkinson, Commandant of the Norfolk navy-yard 1843–1847.

[2] The construction of Fortress Monroe, begun in 1819, cost the government two and one half million dollars. It was designed to constitute the most extensive military work in America; an area of nearly seventy acres was enclosed by granite walls thirty-five feet in thickness, mounting in 1861 four hundred heavy guns.

who accompanied me informed me that the works were constructed for 345 Guns, and more might be used if necessary, and that it would require 5,000 men to man the fortress, besides an infantry force which, in the event of war, it would be prudent to have within the walls. Most of the guns are mounted, and are all 32 pounders, except a few Baxion guns which are 64 pounders. The distance around the fortress and the exterior wall is one & a third miles. There are no soldiers now here except less than a single company, and between one & two hundred raw recruits. All the soldiers who were usually stationed here have been ordered to the Rio Grande and are now with General Taylor's army.

After night the Band of Music attached to the Post played in front of my quarters. Several hundred persons assembled with the band. All were orderly and remained without the enclosure. A few friends came in.

FRIDAY, *21st August, 1846.*— About 9 O'Clock A. M. an officer commanding a small Government Steamer called the Engineer, reported to me that he had come up from the Navy Yard to carry myself and party to that place, according to the arrangement made with Commodore Wilkinson on yesterday. About 9½ O'Clock our party went on board. We were accompanied by Col. Totten & lady, Col. Derusser, Gen'l Brooke, and several other officers, military and naval. The Hon. Mr. Hopkins of Va. & the Hon. Mr. Brokenborough of Florida, members of the Ho. Repts. of the late Session of Congress,

Mrs. Brokenborough, and several other persons accompanied me. About five miles from the post we met a Steam-boat from Norfolk having on board a committee of gentlemen from that City, who had been deputed to invite me to visit Norfolk. They were taken on board and returned with us. They were introduced to me and made known the object of their visit. I informed them that my absence from the seat of Government would be a very short one, intending to return on monday next; that after close confinement to my office for nearly eighteen months I had sought only a few days of recreation; that I was not on a tour of ceremony, and desired no parade or public attentions. I informed them that I had promised Commodore Wilkinson on yesterday to visit the Navy Yard and public armed vessels to-day, and intended nothing more. I begged them under the circumstances to excuse me from visiting Norfolk. They insisted that I should appoint some other day (saturday or monday next) to visit Norfolk, which I declined to do. As, however, Norfolk was immediately opposite to the Navy Yard, I agreed, upon their earnest importunity, to pass over to Norfolk to-day for half an hour in an informal manner. On reaching the Navy Yard a salute was fired from the ship Pennsylvania & a Revenue Cutter, which were lying at anchor near the Yard. Our party were conducted on board the Pennsylvania where I was received by Commodore Wilkinson and the Naval officers attached to this station. After examining this fine ship, we were conducted on shore, examined the dry-dock, and were conducted from

there on foot through a broiling sun (it being one of the hottest days of the season) to Commodore Wilkinson's House where refreshments were furnished. After spending three-fourths of an hour at the Commodore's House, we went on foot through the sun several hundred yards to the Steamer which had brought us down, and were taken to Norfolk. On landing a salute was fired from a battery of brass field pieces. I was met on board by the Mayor and civil authorities of Norfolk, who welcomed me to their City. Some companies of military were paraded on the wharf. A large crowd of citizens were also assembled. On going on shore the ladies of our party (Mrs. Polk & others) were provided with carriages. At the request of the Mayor I walked with him on foot, surrounded by a dense crowd of citizens and preceded by the military, to the Hotel at which I was to be received. The Hotel was situated more than a fourth of a mile from the wharf where we landed. On reaching it, I found a large crowd assembled. I was conducted into a parlour, where I was introduced to several hundred persons. I was almost overcome with excessive heat, for it was one of the hottest days I ever felt, but still I made an effort and endured the fatigue, though it was anything but pleasant to me. The ladies had been conducted to a different apartment in the Hotel. After remaining in the Hotel an hour or more, constantly on my feet receiving and shaking hands with persons who were introduced to me, I spoke of returning to the steamer, when to my surprise I learned that a dinner was being prepared. This I regretted as my

fatigue and suffering from heat were great. There was, however, no alternative but to remain or to act with seeming rudeness. I was kept an hour and a half longer when I was shown to the dinner-table. About an hundred persons sat down. Through my friend, the Hon. Mr. Hopkins, and the Hon. Mr. Loyall I prevailed on the Mayor & those who conducted the entertainment to have no toasts or ceremony at the table. It was an excellent dinner to have been gotten up upon such short notice.

After dinner I was conducted on foot, accompanied by the military and a crowd of citizens, from the Hotel to the Steam-boat, where the Mayor and civil authorities took leave of me. Another salute was fired on shore as the Steamer left. My reception at the Navy yard and at Norfolk was highly gratifying to me. Every mark of respect was paid to me. I found myself on returning to Fortress Monroe in the evening, greatly fatigued & perfectly wet with perspiration. We reached the Fortress about sunset, and I was heartily rejoiced to get into my quarters where I could have some repose and rest.

Judge Mason (the Atto. Gen'l) who accompanied me from Washington, was taken with an attack of gout in the feet last evening and was unable to accompany me on the excursion to day. He was confined to his bed all day. This he regretted very much.

After night the band of music attached to the Post assembled and played in front of the cottage which I occupied. There was also an exhibition of fireworks, or sending up of rockets near my cottage.

The ladies crossed the street to Col. Derusser's House to have a fairer view of the fire-works. I was so much fatigued that I retired but could not rest. I spent a restless and uncomfortable [night], sleeping but little.

SATURDAY, *22nd August, 1846.*— I rose this morning feeling quite unwell. My stomach was deranged & I felt a soreness & aching in my limbs. This was caused by the excessive fatigue of yesterday which was one of the hottest days I ever felt. I felt so unwell that I declined receiving many visitors who called, and requested a friend to let it be known that I was too unwell to see company to-day.

About 10 O'Clock a Steamer from Norfolk arrived with Gov. Tazewell,[1] the Hon. Geo. Loyall, his wife and two daughters and some other persons on board, who had come expressly to see me. I invited Mr. Loyall on yesterday to visit me, and to bring Gov. Tazewell with him, and of course however unwell I was I felt bound to receive this party. They called at my cottage. I was much gratified to meet them and especially Gov. Tazewell. I had not seen Gov. T. since he retired from the Senate of the U. S. in March, 1833. I had lived several winters in the same boarding house at Washington with him, had become intimate with him, and admired him for his talents and as a man of great purity and uprightness of character. I then thought him, and still do, one of the greatest men I have ever known. I was glad

[1] Littleton Waller Tazewell of Virginia, 1790–1860, Governor of Virginia in 1834.

to see him and made an effort to entertain him, though I was compelled occasionally to retire to my room & rest. Gov. Tazewell, Mr. Loyall, his wife, & two daughters dined with us at our cottage. Judge Mason, who was better of his attack of gout, also dined with us. I was able to sit at the table but eat nothing.

After dinner Gov. Tazewell talked freely of public affairs, and among other things took occasion to remark that it had been my fortune to meet more great and important questions in the early period of my administration than any of my predecessors had done. He said that my administration had successfully disposed of and settled more important public subjects of great interest in the first eighteen months of my term than any of my predecessors had ever done in eight years. A part of these questions, he said, I had brought forward myself, while others may have come up for action by accident, or without any immediate and direct agency of mine. He enumerated the great questions which had been settled, *viz.*, the Annexation of Texas; the Settlement of the Oregon question by a definitive Treaty, a question which preceding administrations had been endeavouring to settle for more than thirty years; the reduction of the tariff; the establishment of the Constitutional Treasury; and the establishment of [the] Ware-house system; any one of which he remarked would have been sufficient to mark the success of any one administration if nothing else had been done during its term. He spoke in terms of approbation also of my two vetoes on the Harbour and River Bill,

and the French Spoliation Bill. He spoke in strong terms against the latter Bill, said that he was perfectly familiar with the origin of the claims, and that they had no foundation in equity, none whatever. I was surprised but of course gratified to hear these opinions from such a man as Gov. Tazewell, and expressed my gratification to him. He approved, too, my action in relation to Mexico. In the course of the conversation he remarked that upon the Oregon question he thought that both Mr. Pakenham and Mr. Buchanan had conducted the negotiation bunglingly, but did not specify in what particulars and I did not ask him.

Gov. Tazewell, Mr. Loyall, & his family returned to Norfolk in the evening, and I retired to my chambers.

After night the band of music attached to the Post again played in front of the cottage which I occupied. Mrs. Polk received company this evening. My relation, Maj'r McNeal of Bolivar, Tennessee, his wife and daughter, & Miss Williams, his sister-in-law, who accompanied us from Washington, occupied a part of the cottage with me, & formed a part of my family. They accompanied us to the Navy Yard and to Norfolk on yesterday. We found them very pleasant and agreeable.

SUNDAY, *23rd August, 1846.*— Continuing to be quite indisposed to-day, I did not feel able to attend church. I saw no company, but remained quietly in my Cottage all day. Many visitors at the Hotel, I was informed, desired to call, but I declined to re-

ceive them. Col. Totten & his wife, and Col. Derusser called after night to see how I was. Two or three other persons called in the course of the day, who were probably not apprised that I had declined to see company. I told Col. Totten to-night that I was resolved to return to Washington by the Steamer Osceola which would leave here on to-morrow evening.

MONDAY, *24th August, 1846.*— I was much improved in my health this morning. I remained at my cottage and saw company during the day. Many persons called. About 4 O'Clock P. M. I walked with Judge Mason to the Hotel, where I was introduce[d] to many persons, ladies and gentlemen, who had visited this point and were spending some time here for their health or for recreation. It is a fine Hotel and a pleasant place for a summer recreation. After spending an hour at the Hotel I returned to my cottage. Among other persons who visited me to-day was Gen'l E. P. Gaines of the U. S. Army. It was his first visit since my arrival. He delivered to me a letter which he had written to me (which I will place on my files) assigning as a reason why he had not called sooner that he had not learned the result of the proceedings of a Court of Enquiry recently convened at this point upon his late conduct in calling volunteers into service without authority of law, but that having learned that the case had been disposed of before I had left Washington he had called. He also in his letter asked to be informed on the subject and for orders. In the afternoon when I

visited the Hotel I again met him, and took occasion to inform him that the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry in his case had been acted on and disposed of by me before I left Washington, and that he would be duly informed of the result through the War Department. I informed him that I had supposed he would have been officially informed of the result before this time, and that I did not know the cause of the delay. I had resolved on yesterday to return to Washington this afternoon in the Steamer Osceola. The wind blew briskly nearly the whole day, and the sea was rough, & as the hour of her departure approached, which was six O'Clock P. M., several Naval officers and others advised me not to go on board of her, as they were sure that, although she was a safe boat, she was yet small and that I would have a very uncomfortable passage in her. They represented also that if the wind should continue she would be compelled to put into some harbour and there remain until the wind fell. These representations induced me to abandon the idea of taking passage in her. At 9 O'Clock I took passage in the Steamer Augusta for Richmond in company with Mrs. Polk and the party who came down with me on Wednesday last, calculating that I would reach Washington by this route on to-morrow in the afternoon. Col. Derusser, Col. Walker, and other officers accompanied me to the Boat and remained until she left. When I left my cottage the Band of Music attached [to the Post came to] my cottage [and] were playing in front of it. As I passed them on my way to the Boat I thanked them for their polite-

ness in playing every evening in front of my cottage except on the Sabbath since I had been at the Post.

My visit to Fortress Monroe was a very pleasant one. I received all the attention I expected and more than I desired. My indisposition on saturday and sunday prevented me from enjoying the visit as much as I should otherwise have done.

TUESDAY, *25th August, 1846.*— Having left Fortress Monroe at 9 O'Clock P. M. on yesterday on our return to Washington via Richmond on board the Steamer Augusta, this morning at 4 O'Clock we were landed a few miles from Petersburg, where we took the Rail Road to Richmond. It rained during the morning. We breakfasted at Richmond. No one was expecting me. After I rose from breakfast I was introduced by Judge Mason to a few persons who had accidentally learned that I was at the Hotel and had come through the Rain to see me. They invited me to spend the day in Richmond, but I declined and informed them that it was only in consequence of the roughness of the Bay on last evening that I was returning to Washington by that route. We remained at Richmond only during breakfast, and proceeded by the Rail Road via Fredericksburg to Washington where we arrived between 4 & 5 O'Clock P. M. About 20 miles after leaving Richmond my relation, Maj'r E. P. McNeal, his wife & daughter, & his sister-in-law, Miss Williams, seperated from us, and proceeded on their way to their home in Tennessee via the White Sulphur Springs in Va., where they contemplated spending a few days.

Judge Mason & Col. Totten & his wife, who had left Washington with me, returned with me. Judge Mason had entirely recovered from his indisposition. We found the family at the White House well. Mr. Bancroft & Mr. Buchanan called in the course of the evening & I learned from them that nothing requiring my personal attention had occurred during my absence.

Judge Grier, whom I appointed an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the U. S., called with Mr. Buchanan to pay his respects to me.

WEDNESDAY, *26th August, 1846.*— I opened my office for the reception of visitors and persons on business immediately after breakfast this morning. Among the first of my visitors were two of my old customers on the patriotic business of seeking office. One of them had been annoying me since March, 1845. His name is Grindale[?] from Accomac Cty, Va. I gave them very prompt & flat denials, & I hope for the future I may not be troubled by them.

The Secretaries of the Treasury and War called this morning to pay their respects after my return from Fortress Monroe. Mr. Wm. V. Voorhies, whom I had left in charge of my office, gave me a full account of all that had occurred during my absence. My letters, which he had opened by my direction, were all properly endorsed indicating their contents, and every thing as far as I have learned has gone on well in my absence.

Twelve months ago this day, a very important con-

versation took place in Cabinet between myself and Mr. Buchanan on the Oregon question. This conversation was of so important a character, that I deemed it proper on the same evening to reduce the substance of it to writing for the purpose of retaining it more distinctly in my memory. This I did on seperate sheets. It was this circumstance which first suggested to me the idea, if not the necessity, of keeping a journal or diary of events and transactions which might occur during my Presidency. I resolved to do so & accordingly procured a blank book for that purpose on the next day, in which I have every day since noted whatever occurred that I deemed of interest. Sometimes I have found myself so much engaged with my public duties, as to be able to make [only] a very condensed and imperfect statement of events and incidents which occurred, and to [be forced to] omit others altogether which I would have been pleased to have noted. The statement of the events which occur[r]ed on the 26th of Aug't, 1845, were never transcribed into the bound book, but will be found on the seperate sheets on which they were written preceding Book No. 1.

THURSDAY, *27th August, 1846.*— I did not see company until 12 O'Clock to-day. After that hour and until dinner at 4 O'Clock P. M. I was occupied with company, many of them office seekers. I had no offices to give and made short work with them by saying no!

Nothing of much interest occurred to-day. I disposed of several small matters of business.

I addressed a letter in the evening to the Hon. Franklin Pierce of N. Hampshire, tendering to him the office of Attorney Gen'l of the U. S. A vacancy of that office will occur by the transfer of the Hon. John Y. Mason to the office of Secretary of the Navy, which latter office will be vacated by the appointment of Mr. Bancroft as Minister to England. These changes will probably take place during the month of September next.

FRIDAY, *28th August, 1846.*— I resolved this morning not to be annoyed by company, and kept my doors closed until after 1 O'Clock P. M. Several of the subordinate officers of the Government called on official business, whom I saw. Col. Benton of the Senate called. I had a long conversation with him in relation to the Mexican War and the proper manner of conducting it. I had resolved before Col. Benton called to tender to him the Mission to France, and had written a note to him requesting him to call, but had not sent it before he called. I informed him that I had written the note, which was still on my table. I then informed him that Mr. King, the U. S. Minister to France, would return during the next or the succeeding month, and I invited him to accept that mission. He thanked me, and said it would not suit him to accept it. He told me that Gen'l Jackson and Mr. Van Buren had both tendered him a mission abroad, but that he had declined both offers as he had never desired to engage in the Foreign service. He seemed to be gratified & again thanked me for the offer.

During the time Col. Benton was in my office my porter announced to me that a Foreign minister had called and was in the parlour below desiring to see me. Mr. Buchanan had informed me on yesterday that the chargé d'affaires of Sweden recently appointed would call to-day at 12 O'Clock to be presented to me. I excused myself to Col. Benton, and leaving him in my office went below and received the chargé d'affaires from Sweden. Mr. Swift [Trist], the chief clerk of the Department of State, accompanied him and presented him to me. I received him and for some time he stood looking at me without uttering a word, until he must have felt embarrassed, and I know I did. He at length addressed Mr. Trist, the ch. Clk., in French, which being communicated to me, I responded in English. The Minister was either alarmed or much embarrassed. Take it altogether it was a very awkward interview. Mr. Trist appeared to be quite as much embarrassed as the Minister. I returned to my office and after some further conversation with Col. Benton he retired.

This was reception evening. But few persons called; among them the Secretaries of State & Navy & the chargé d'affaires from Sweden.

SATURDAY, *29th August, 1846.*—The Cabinet held a regular meeting to-day; all the members present, except the P. M. Gen'l, who is absent on a visit to his family in Tennessee. Several matters of minor importance were considered, when I brought up the subject of the Mexican War. I expressed to the Sec-

retary of War my dissatisfaction at the delay which had occurred in the departure of Col. Stephenson's Regiment in New York, destined for California. I directed the Secretary to have them embarked and sent off with the least possible delay. I next brought up the plan of conducting the War, in the event peace should not be made before the setting in of the healthy season (say in November next) and suggested the importance of taking Vera Cruz by a land force to be landed out of reach of the fortress, who could invest the town of Vera Cruz in the rear and by coöperating with the blockading squadron by sea, and submitted whether by these means the Fortress of San juan de Ulloa would not be compelled to surrender for want of supplies in a very few days. I suggested further that if this could be done the fortress after surrendering could be dismantled and blown up, and that our troops on land might then march on the City of Mexico. These suggestions met with a favourable consideration in the Cabinet. The propriety of taking Tampico was also considered, and the impression of all was that it should be done if peace was not made before the healthy season set in. Whilst considering these questions, Mr. Bancroft for the first time informed me that he had received letters giving information on some of these points from Commodore Conner commanding the Gulf Squadron. I requested him to go to his Department & bring them to the Cabinet. He did so, and on reading them they were found to be very important. Mr. Bancroft had not communicated them to me or to the Cabinet, be-

cause as I suppose he had not appreciated the great importance of the information which they conveyed. I directed a letter to be addressed to Commodore Conner, based upon the information which he had given in these letters, asking him to be more specific upon certain points, and also to give information upon certain other points. The Cabinet adjourned about 2½ O'Clock P. M.

SUNDAY, *30th August, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day, accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker, and Wm. Voorhies, Esqr., who is acting as my Private Secretary during the absence of J. Knox Walker, who is at present on a visit to Tennessee.

MONDAY, *31st August, 1846.*— I did not open my office to-day for the reception of visitors generally until 12 O'Clock. At that hour my doors were opened and quite a number of persons appeared, a majority of whom were upon the patriotic business of seeking office. I was ready to exclaim, will the pressure for office never cease. I have been in office within a few days of eighteen months, a long session of Congress has intervened, and still the pressure for office and place is unabated. I have long since come to the conclusion that the most importunate seekers for place are not the most worthy. I have much less difficulty in giving a positive & flat refusal to those who personally importune and annoy me for office than I had when I first came into office. To-day I said no! with a free will and a good

grace to several persons who have been annoying me for months, and to whom I had no time given any encouragement. I was resolved to get clear of them, and to do so I have been compelled to be almost rude to them.

About dark this evening Mr. Buchanan brought over and left with me for my examination the draft of a letter which he had prepared, and which he proposed to address to Morris Longstreth, Esqr., of Pennsylvania, on the subject of the tariff. Mr. Buchanan desired my opinion whether he should address such a letter or not, expressing his own opinion to be that after so much time had elapsed since the passage of the tariff [act] of 1846, that it would do no good & might do harm to write such a letter. After reading it I am free to say that my opinion is that such a letter would do great harm. The views [1] presented in the proposed letter I cannot approve. He expresses his opposition to the tariff of 1842 and so far I agree with him. His opposition to the tariff of 1846, and his remarks and reasoning on the subject I do not approve. A reasonable modification on coal & iron I would assent to, to conciliate Pennsylvania, though I think that 30 per cent added to freight, insurance, & charges is sufficient incidental protection to these or any other articles. The general scope of Mr. Buchanan's proposed letter adheres too much to the protective principle. It is a letter of considerable length & I cannot undertake to state its contents more at large. I will advise

[1] For Buchanan's views on the tariff question at this time, see Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 43 and 46.

Mr. Buchanan not to write such a letter, as it would put him in conflict with the declared views of the administration on the subject, & do great harm by keeping the tariff open for political agitation.

Mr. Bancroft, the Secretary of the Navy, I learn is quite ill to-day, being confined to his house by a bilious attack.

TUESDAY, *1st September, 1846.*—This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. At the usual hour four members of the Cabinet attended. The Post Master Gen'l is absent on a visit to Tennessee, and the Secretary of the Navy is confined to his house by sickness. The Secretary of State remained but a few minutes, remarking that unless something important was expected to be brought before the Cabinet to-day, he would retire, as he was much engaged in preparing to leave the City for a few days. I followed Mr. Buchanan to the door as he left, and informed him that I had read the draft of his proposed [letter] on the subject of the tariff, and that I advised him not to write such a letter, as it would necessarily put him in conflict with myself & the declared policy of my administration on the subject of the tariff. He promptly said he entertained the opinions expressed in the letter, but thought himself it would be better not to send it, and he would not do so. The other members of the Cabinet remained for an hour conversing in relation to public matters, but nothing of importance was taken up for consideration.

About 2 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Buchanan returned

and informed me that he had just received a note from the Secretary of the Brittish Legation (Mr. Pakenham being at present absent on a visit to Canada) which he read. On last evening it appears a special messenger arrived in Washington from the City of Mexico bearing despatches to the Brittish Minister here. The substance of the information brought by this messenger, as far as communicated to Mr. Buchanan, is that Commodore Sloat, commanding the U. S. Squadron in the Pacific, took Monterey on the 6th of July last and hoisted the American flag; the same thing had been done by another naval officer at a point South of Monterey. Commodore Sloat had issued a Proclamation declaring California to be in the possession of the U. S. &c, a copy of which the Brittish Secretary of Legation had submitted to Mr. Buchanan, but to be returned to him. Mr. Buchanan read the Proclamation to me. Further intelligence was also communicated that Col. Fremont[1] with his men had been attacked near St. [San] Francisco, by Castro, the Commandant Gen'l of Mexico in California, and that after a short skirmish Castro had retreated. This important intelligence comes to us through no other channel, and we are indebted for it to the courtesy of the Brittish Legation.

About dark Mr. Buchanan called again & seemed to be deeply concerned at the removal of a clerk today named King, by Mr. Piper, the acting commissioner of the Public Lands, and asked me if I knew

[1] For an account of Fremont in California in 1846, see Garrison, *Westward Extension,* 235–239.

when I advised it that he felt a deep interest in having Mr. King retained. I told him I had not advised the removal; but Mr. Piper had informed me that King was so negligent and inattentive to his duties that he was of no use in the office, and that his services were much needed. I told him further that King was a Whig. I informed him that upon receiving Mr. Piper's representations I had remarked to him that the clerks employed in the public offices must do their duty, and that if King had failed to do his duty he could exercise his own judgment in the matter. I told Mr. Buchanan that Mr. Piper had mentioned to me that he had understood that he (Mr. Buchanan) took a particular interest in King, and had when Judge Shields was Commissioner caused him to be retained when Judge S. thought he ought to have been dismissed, and that I had told Mr. Piper that perhaps he ought to see Mr. Buchanan before he was dismissed, but that I had left it to Mr. Piper to act in the premises as he might think proper. Mr. Buchanan replied that King's wife was a Democrat and that he did not believe that King had any politics or interfered in any way in political matters. I told him that the ground of his removal was his inattention to business. He then said that he and Col. Wm. R. King[1] of Alabama had boarded with King (the clk.) for seven years, and that his life, when he had a severe attack of illness whilst boarding with King, had been saved by

[1] William Rufus King, Senator from Alabama, 1819–1844, and 1846–1852. Elected Vice-President of the United States in 1852, but died before entering upon the duties of the position.

Mrs. King by her kind attentions to him in his illness. He said he had just been to King's house and had left his wife and children in tears, while King himself was lying ill of an attack of fever. Mr. Buchanan said he had no relation in office at Washington, that it seemed he had no influence, & could not keep even a poor Clerk in office. I then said to Mr. Buchanan that as he seemed to take the matter so much to heart, Mr. King should be restored or appointed to some other place, but upon the express condition that he should hereafter do his duty. He said he desired it very much & I told him it should be done. With this he was satisfied & immediately assumed a cheerful tone in his conversation. Mr. Buchanan is a man of talents & is fully competent to discharge the high duties of Secretary of State, but it is one of his weaknesses (and perhaps all great men have such) that he takes on & magnifies small matters into great & undeserved importance. In this instance I have never known any one to be seemingly so much concerned or to take on more, and with so little reason. I discovered this and although I had no doubt King ought to be dismissed I thought it too small a matter upon which to make a grave issue with my Secretary of State. The truth is that King had been dismissed some months ago by Judge Shields, and had been restored at Mr. Buchanan's earnest request, and Mr. Piper informed me that he thought this circumstance induced him to think that he was secure in his position, that he relied on Mr. Buchanan to keep him in and was therefore indifferent to his duty or any orders that were issued to him

by the Head of the General Land office. I did not think it necessary to inform Mr. Buchanan of this. I agreed to restore King solely because Mr. Buchanan manifested so much feeling about it, and because I was unwilling to give him pain about so small a matter; but I told him expressly that I did so only on the condition that King should hereafter perform his duty faithfully. My steward (Henry Bowman) left here this morning for New York with funds which I had furnished him to purchase oil, candles, and other articles needed in the President's House.

This was reception evening and a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called, though there was not a large crowd. Among others Mrs. Madison was present.

WEDNESDAY, *2nd September, 1846.*— Kept my doors closed until 12 O'Clock to-day. At that hour a number of persons called, but nothing of particular interest occurred. I attended afterwards to the business on my table and cleared it off.

I sent for the Secretary of the Treasury & Mr. Piper, the commissioner of Public Lands, and stated to them the very great interest which Mr. Buchanan took in Mr. King's restoration to his clerkship (see this diary of yesterday). They at once agreed, in order to gratify the wishes of Mr. Buchanan and for that reason alone, to appoint Mr. King to another clerkship in the Land [office], but upon the express condition that he would hereafter do his duty. I directed Mr. Piper to address a letter to Mr. King in-

forming him that he was again employed, only on the condition that he would hereafter attend to his duty, and perform it as other clerks did.

I sent for Mr. Buchanan and informed him of what had been done. I told him that Mr. King's place had been filled by the appointment of the Rev. Mr. Matthews, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Lexington, Kentucky, during the Presidential canvass of 1844, who had been discharged by that church solely for the reason that he had voted the Democratic ticket. I told him that Gen'l Jackson had spoken to me before I left Tennessee, and shortly before his death had written to me in Mr. Matthews' behalf, that Gen'l Jackson regarded him as a good christian who was persecuted by Mr. Clay's friends simply because he had voted for me, and that as Mr. Piper had appointed him in King's place, I could not discharge him so as to enable King to take his old place, but that another place would be given to King, who would be taken on trial. With this Mr. Buchanan expressed himself as being entirely satisfied.

Mr. Buchanan left to-day at 12½ O'Clock for Saratoga and other places in the North, where he proposes to spend a few days and take some recreation from the labours of his office.

I visited Mr. Bancroft this afternoon at his house, and found him quite ill of a bilious attack.

THURSDAY, *3rd September, 1846.*— Saw no company until 12 O'Clock to-day. A number of persons called at that hour, but I am happy to say they

were persons on visits of ceremony or old friends, among whom was my old acquaintance Col. Andrew A. Kincannon of Mississippi, now U. S. Marshall of that State. What is very remarkable, not a single office seeker made his appearance, a thing which I believe has not happened before any day since I have been President when I saw company.

Gen'l Edmund P. Gaines of the U. S. Army called and paid his respects to-day. He was in a pleasant humour & I had a pleasant interview with him. He was on his way to take command of the Northern Division to which he had been ordered.

FRIDAY, *4th September, 1846.*— Saw but few persons to-day; kept my office closed until 12 O'Clock. The pressure for office has been less for the last two or three days than usual. The truth is, those who have recently called on that business have met with no encouragement, and I begin to have some relief from the importunities of office-seekers.

I informed Mr. Wm. Noland, the commissioner of Public Buildings, on yesterday that I had kept him in his office for 18 months & in doing so had resisted a great and almost a constant pressure for his removal. I told him that this pressure proceeded not only from citizens of Washington but from the adjoining districts in Maryland, and from many Members of Congress during the late Session. I informed him that for these and other considerations I felt it to be my duty to make the change, but that as I did not desire unnecessarily to wound his feelings, he could resign to take effect on a future day

between this time and the meeting of the next Session of Congress. A final decision on the subject was postponed on yesterday until to-day. Mr. Noland called this morning, and insisted that though he was once a Federalist he had been a Democrat for many years, and that he was my friend. To the charge that he kept none but Whigs in his employ, which had been made by certain citizens of Washington, he replied that he retained those that he had found in the public service when he came into office about 12 years ago. He partly denied the charge, but was not satisfactory on this point. I did not deem it to be necessary to enumerate to him more particularly than I had done on yesterday the several reasons which existed in my mind which made his removal proper. Although not the only reason making the change proper, I have no doubt he is a Whig in all his feelings, and that his patronage is bestowed exclusively on the members of that party, as far as he thinks he can do so with safety to himself. I told him finally that I had made up my mind that it was my duty to make the change, and repeated to him what I had said on yesterday, that he could resign if he chose to do so. He then presented to me his resignation, which he had previously written to take effect on the — day of —. I told him in answer to an enquiry from him that he could fill the blank with the 1st day of Nov. He suggested a more distant day, for the reason that he had certain contracts on hand with persons employed by him, which he desired to have completed & executed before he retired. I told him I thought they could be

executed by the time named. He then filled the blank with the 1st of November & handed to me his resignation. I told him I had no unkind feelings towards him personally, and that if it had been otherwise I should not have held this conversation with him, but would have made the removal without seeing him. I told him it was a painful duty, but one which I felt bound to perform.

Senator Archer of Va. called to-day on his return from a tour to the North. I had a long conversation with him in relation to public affairs and especially in relation to the Mexican War. He expressed a great desire for peace, in which I concurred with him, if it could be obtained on honorable terms. He expressed his regret at the loss of the two million appropriation at the late Session of Congress, and in connection with it said that the proviso in relation to slavery attached to the Bill on the motion of Mr. Wilmot in the House he could never approve, and that if such a stipulation were embraced in a Treaty it could not be ratified, and that he himself would vote against such a Treaty. He was willing to acquire California if it could be done for a fair consideration by Treaty, but beyond this seemed to be averse to extending our territorial boundaries. I asked him if I could obtain California what sum of money he would think I could safely stipulate to pay for it, to which he replied he would be willing to pay 10 or 15 millions of dollars. I asked him if I could not agree to pay 25 millions if it could not be obtained for less, to which he replied he would not stand on the amount, because, he said, if the war

continued it would cost the country 30 millions annually. We had a long conversation; I gave him the information in my possession & informed [him] of my policy. I did this confidentially, as I felt safe in doing, for although differing with me in politics Mr. Archer is an honorable man, and I have been upon terms of personal friendship with him since I first met him in Congress in December, 1825. Among other things he spoke of a Brittish mediation & of his personal intimacy with Mr. Pakenham, the Brittish Minister, and said if such a mediation should be at any time desired with a view to peace with Mexico, if I would inform him of it he would come to Washington, and expressed great confidence that he could effect it through Mr. Pakenham. I told him no such mediation had been offered, and that I thought that no circumstances were likely to arise to make it desirable.

Judge Douglass of Illinois called to-night on his return from Georgia, where he had been attending the marriage of the Hon. Mr. Ficklin of Illinois to the daughter of Senator Colquitt of Georgia.

This was reception evening. Very few persons called. The weather is unusually warm for the season.

SATURDAY, *5th September, 1846.*—This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. At the usual hour the Secretaries of the Treasury and of War & the Atto. Gen'l attended. The Secretary of State and the P. M. Gen'l were absent from the City, and the Secretary of the Navy was confined to his

house by an attack of bilious fever. Several public matters were the subject of conversation, but none of them were brought up for final action.

I repeated to the Secretary of War what I had several times before said to him, that I was dissatisfied with the long delay in the departure of the Regiment of Volunteers under the command of Col. Stephenson from N. York, destined to California. Having learned from him that the delay was occasioned by the want of vessels in which to transport, I requested him to send for Gen'l Jessup,[1] the Quarter Master Gen'l, that I might enquire into it. He did so, and Gen'l Jessup called. I enquired of him the cause. He gave no satisfactory reason, but said that orders had been issued to the officers of his Department at New York to engage and have the vessels ready. I expressed to him my astonishment that it should require a month and more to do so, and said to him that though I did not mean to censure him that I thought there had been culpable delay on the part of the subordinate officers charged with this duty. I told him that many of the officers of the regular army had, I apprehended, been serving so long in peace that they had become gentlemen of entirely too much leisure for a period of war, and that some of them required to have a coal of fire put on their backs to make them move promptly. I directed Gen'l Jessup to order the officers charged with that duty to have the vessels ready with the least practicable delay. I told him that the Regiment had been mustered into service for many days, and that

[1] Thomas Sydney Jesup.

the vessels to transport them must be got ready without further delay.

I asked Gen'l Jessup's opinion as a military man, as to the proper means of transportation for Gen'l Taylor's army as they penetrated into Mexico, remarking to him that I had no military experience but that I had a strong conviction that the immense train of baggage wagons which accompanied the army must greatly impede its progress, if indeed it was practicable to take them through such a country. I asked him if in all the wars in Mexico which had preceded the present, the baggage and munitions of war had not been transported on mules. Gen'l Jessup gave it as his decided opinion that baggage wagons should be dispensed with and mules employed, and added that such had been the mode of conducting all the wars which had occurred heretofore in Mexico. I then asked of him and the Secretary of War why a similar means of transportation had not been provided in this instance. Gen'l Jessup replied that he had received no communication from Gen'l Taylor or the War Department on the subject, and said if he commanded in Gen'l Taylor's place he would take mules and not be encumbered with wagons, that he would not take a single tent with him, and that officers & men would cheerfully submit to this if the commanding Gen'l set them the example. I invited the special attention of the Secretary of War to the subject, and desired him to see me on the subject again shortly. I find it impossible to give much attention to the details in conducting the war, and

still it is necessary that I should give some attention to them. There is entirely too much delay and too much want of energy & promptness in execution on the part of many of the subordinate officers, which must be corrected. Gen'l Taylor, I fear, is not the man for the command of the army. He is brave but he does not seem to have resources or grasp of mind enough to conduct such a campaign. In his communications to the War Department he seems ready to obey orders, but appears to be unwilling to express any opinion or to take any responsibility on himself. Though he is in the country with means of knowledge which cannot be possessed at Washington, he makes no suggestion as to the plan of the campaign, but simply obeys orders and gives no information to aid the administration in directing his movement. He is, I have no doubt, a good subordinate officer, but from all the evidence before me I think him unfit for the chief command. Though this is so, I know of no one whom I can substitute in his place. After the late battles, which were well fought, the public opinion seems to point to him as entitled to the command.

Judge Douglass of the Ho. Repts. from Illinois called to-night, and I had a long and free conversation with him about public affairs.

SUNDAY, *6th September, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Miss Rucker and Mr. Wm. V. Voorhies, who is acting as my Private Secretary in the absence of J.

Knox Walker. Mrs. Polk was somewhat indisposed and did not attend church. The weather continues unusually warm for the season.

MONDAY, *7th September, 1846.*— This was an unusually quiet day with me. After 12 O'Clock a number of visitors called. Their visits were generally those of ceremony. But few office seekers called, and such as did met with no encouragement. I disposed of much business consisting of details in the discharge of my duty. Much such business devolves on the President of which the public knows nothing.

This was the day appointed by a late act[1] of Congress for the meeting in Washington of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute. The Regents, I learn, assembled at 12 O'Clock in a room in the General Post Office and organized. Senator Pennybacker of Va., one of the Regents, called this morning. Vice President Dallas and the Hon. Richard Rush, who are Regents of the Institute, called after night & spent an hour with me. The weather continues to be excessively hot for the season.

TUESDAY, *8th September, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretaries of the Treasury & War and the Attorney General attended at the usual hour. The Secretary of State and the Post Master General are absent from the City. The Secretary of the Navy is now,

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 102.

as he has been for a week past, confined to his room by indisposition. No business of importance was transacted. Several public subjects were considered, and the members of the Cabinet who attended retired after being together about an hour. Upon their retirement I walked to Mr. Bancroft's House, which is situated on the President's square, to see how he was. Judge Mason accompanied me. I found Mr. Bancroft walking about his house and much better than he had been for several days. I held a conversation with him in reference to his contemplated mission to England, and it was agreed that I should issue his commission to him as minister on to-morrow. I informed him that I would commission Mr. Mason at the same time as Secretary of the Navy. I have received no answer from the Hon. Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, to whom I wrote on the 27th ultimo tendering to him the office of Attorney General. I informed Mr. Bancroft of this fact, but added that when Judge Mason was appointed Secretary of the Navy and resigned the office of Attorney General I would give him a temporary appointment to act as Atto. Gen'l *ad interim* until his successor in the Atto. General's [office] was appointed. All this occurred in the presence of Judge Mason, and was satisfactory both to him and to Mr. Bancroft.

In the course of the conversation I remarked to Mr. Bancroft that my intercourse with him during the period he had been Secretary of the Navy had been of a very pleasant character, and intimated to him my desire to address a letter to that effect to

him upon his retirement from the Navy Department, which might be published if he desired it. He said he would be gratified to have such a letter as I might choose to address to him for his private files, but not for publication. He thought the publication of such a letter approving his conduct of the Navy Department might be construed by the public as being considered necessary to sustain him. I yielded to the suggestion. It was concluded that a simple announcement in the *Union* of his appointment was best; and that it should be accompanied with a short editorial article. I told him that when I returned to my office I would send for Mr. Appleton,[1] his chief clerk, & request him to write a proper article (Mr Ritchie, the Editor of the *Union,* was absent from the City). Mr. Bancroft said he would save me the trouble of sending for Mr. Appleton, by sending his servant over to the Navy Department. I told him to do so, and to send a message to Mr. Appleton that I desired him to call at my office. Mr. Bancroft said he thought he would leave Washington in the course of ten days or two weeks. I told him it was possible that I might accompany him as far as New York, as I had some thought of relieving myself from my constant labours at Washington by making a short excursion as far North as New York. He expressed himself highly pleased at the suggestion and said he would be delighted to have my company.

I returned to my office in company with Judge

[1] John Appleton of Maine, chief clerk of the Navy department; *chargé d'affaires* to Bolivia in 1848.

Mason and found Mr. Appleton at the Presidential Mansion. I informed him of the article for the *Union* in relation to Mr. Bancroft's appointment as Minister to England which I desired him to prepare, & requested him to submit it to Mr. Bancroft's inspection. He promised me to do so.

Hon. Felix G. McConnell, a Representative in Congress from Alabama, called. He looked very badly, and as though he had just recovered from a fit of intoxication. He was sober, but was pale, his countenance haggard and his system nervous. He applied to me to borrow $100. and said he would return it to me in ten days. Though I had no idea that he would do so I had a sympathy for him even in his dissipation. I had known him in his youth, & had not the moral courage to refuse. I loaned him $100. in gold and took his note. His hand was so tremulous that he could scarcely write his name to the note legibly. I think it probable that he will never pay me. He informed me he was detained at Washington attending to some business in the Indian office. I supposed he had returned home at the adjournment of Congress until he called to-day. I doubt whether he has any business in Washington, but fear he has been detained by dissipation.

Mr. Noland, the Commissioner of Public Buildings, called, as he said, at the request of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute, to know at what hour on to-morrow it would suit my convenience to accompany them to the public grounds, with a view to select the site for that Institution. He said they had suggested 9 O'Clock in the morning or 6 O'Clock

in the evening. I told him to inform them that I would accompany them at such hour on to-morrow as they might designate. He returned and informed me that 9 O'Clock in the morning had been appointed by the Regents.

This was reception evening. A number of persons called, and among them the Vice President of the U. S., Senator Evans[1] of Maine, Mr. Choate[2] of Mass., Hon. R. Rush of Phila., and Hon. Mr. Pennybacker of Va., Regents of the Smithsonian Institute.

WEDNESDAY, *9th September, 1846.*— At 9 O'-Clock this morning, accompanied by the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, & the Atto. Gen'l, I rode out in my carriage to meet the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute on the Public grounds lying West of the Capitol and South of the President's House, with a view to locate the site of that Institution. I met the Regents on the grounds, and spent nearly an hour with them on foot in examining the grounds. Opinions were freely expressed. The most elevated ground and, as I think, the most eligible site lies between 12th & 14th Street containing about 32 acres. If more space be required the ground West of 14th Street may be added, which contains about 45 acres. If this be added the whole area would contain about 77 acres. Most of the Regents expressed a preference for this location.

[1] George Evans, Senator from Maine 1841–1847.

[2] Rufus Choate, noted for his oratorical ability. He succeeded Daniel Webster as Senator from Massachusetts in 1841.

Mr. W. W. Seaton, the Mayor of Washington, who is *ex officio* one of the Regents, earnestly urged that the location should be made West of 12th Street & between that street and the Capitol grounds. This is a lower situation than that West of it, and in no sense, as it strikes me, so eligible. I have heard from private sources that the property holders in the vicinity of the Centre market were exceedingly anxious for their private benefit to have the location at the place insisted on by Mr. Seaton. I think it is to be regretted that any citizen of Washington was appointed a Regent. The Smithsonian Institute is a national Institution, and should be located & conducted without reference to individual or private interests. The Regents have the power to select the site, but it cannot be established without the approval of the President & his Cabinet. The Regents returned to their consultation room in the City without coming to a decision, and I returned to the President's Mansion with the members of my Cabinet who had accompanied me. The Secretary of State & the P. M. Gen'l are absent from the City, and the Secretary [of the Navy] though recovering from a recent attack of bilious fever is still confined to his house.

To-day I appointed Mr. Bancroft, the Secretary of the Navy, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to England. Upon receiving his commission he sent to me his Resignation as Secretary of the Navy. Upon receiving it I appointed Mr. Mason, the Atto. Gen'l, to be Secretary of the Navy. Upon receiving his commission he resigned

the office of Attorney General of the United States. I immediately appointed Mr. Mason Atto. Gen'l *ad interim* to act until a successor in the Atto. Gen'l's office shall be appointed. On the 27th ultimo, I wrote to the Hon. Franklin Pierce of N. Hampshire, tendering to him the office of attorney Gen'l but have received no answer from him.

I was informed by N. P. Trist, Esqr., Chief Clk. in the State Department, & at present acting Secretary of State (during the absence of Mr. Buchanan from the seat of Government) that Madison Cutts, a clerk in the Treasury Department, had informed him that he desired to make an important communication to me, & Mr. Trist desired to know of me if I would see him. I informed him that I would do so. In the course of half an hour Mr. Cutts called. He informed me that in his capacity as clerk it had been his duty to investigate accounts connected with the Indian service, and especially had been his duty to examine the accounts connected with the Chickasaw Tribe. He informed [me] that an account had been reported by some of the accounting officers of the Treasury for payment amounting to $112,000 or thereabouts, and that it was to-day passing the different offices, and that it would probably be paid if it was not arrested. He informed me that Dr. Gwinn of Mississippi was the agent pressing this claim and that he was now in Washington pressing it; & that Gwinn was to receive half the amount he received. Mr. Cutts said it was a claim improperly allowed. He said it had been before Congress at the session of 1844–5, and

was defeated at that time by Cave Johnson.[1] He showed a Report of the debate at that time in a newspaper, and a Report[2] made in favour of the claim in the Senate at the same session by Mr. Walker of Miss., now Secretary of the Treasury. It appeared from his statement that the accounting officers during Mr. Tyler's administration had refused to allow it, that the claimants had applied to Congress and failed to succeed; that a long session of Congress had since intervened and Congress had done nothing on the subject, and that now the decision made during Mr. Tyler's administration was about to be reversed. Mr. Cutts said he gave me this information as a matter of public duty, but begged me not to expose his name. I told him I would not do so. My suspicions were excited by this communication that all was not right, and as the claim was connected with the Indian service I immediately sent for the Secretary of War. He came to my office in a few minutes, when I told him the information which I had received, when he told me that he had this morning had an interview and discussion on the subject with Dr. Gwinn & had refused to sign a requisition for the money. He said he had done so without going into the examination of the claim, upon the ground that there was no fund out of which it could be paid. I asked him how such a claim could have passed the accounting officers of the Treasury? He said he did not know. I then sent for Mr. Paris, the 2nd Comptroller, who came

[1] *Globe,* 28 Cong. 2 Sess. 394.

[2] *S. Doc.* 49, 28 Cong. 2 Sess. II.

over. I stated the case to him and the Secretary of War's decision. He said he was greatly relieved, that he had been exceedingly pressed about the claim for two [—— ?], and had not finally signed the adjustment of it as made out and signed by the 2nd Auditor, but had written a letter and sent it with the papers to the Commissioner of Indian affairs. He alluded delicately to the opinion of the Secretary of the Treasury that the claim ought to be paid, as the cause of his embarrassment in acting upon it. He concluded by repeating that he was much relieved by the decision of the Secretary of War not to pay it. It was clear that Judge Paris thought it wrong to pay it. This is a singular transaction, and it may be necessary to investigate it further hereafter. Judge Paris said the money could not be paid without the requisition, if one was drawn, passing again through his office. I told him not to suffer it to be paid, and that if it was further pressed by Dr. Gwinn or any one else, the whole matter must be fully and thoroughly investigated.

Vice President Dallas called to see me to-night and spent an hour or more with me.

THURSDAY, *10th September, 1846.*—The Hon. John Y. Mason entered this morning upon the duties of the office of Secretary of the Navy, to which I appointed him on yesterday in place of Mr. Bancroft resigned, the latter having been appointed Minister to England.

I transacted business with officers of the Government who called as usual this morning. The Sec-

retary of War, who called on other business, remarked to me that he had since yesterday examined the claim of Dr. Wm. M. Gwinn upon the Chickasaw Indian fund, and found it to be a much worse case than he had supposed it was on yesterday. (See this diary of yesterday.)

I opened my office as usual for the reception of company at 12 O'Clock. Quite a number of persons called, and among them a female beggar who was genteelly dressed & who represented that she resided at Newbern, N. C., & that she had borrowed money [to] bear her expenses & come to Washington expressly to get money from me to support herself and educate her two children. She brought no letters and I did not learn her name. She was in appearance between 40 & 50 years of age. She is either a very simple person or unworthy. I did not consider it charity to give her anything. I have many calls for money, but this was a remarkable case and therefore I note it.

N. P. Trist, Esqr., Acting Secretary of State during the temporary absence of Mr. Buchanan from the seat of Government, called this afternoon and informed me that Mr. Pakenham, the Brittish Minister, had called on him at the Department of State to-day and read to him two dispatches which he had received from his Government (one of them dated Aug't 18th, 1846) directing him to ascertain whether the mediation of England would be accepted by the U. States with a view to terminate the existing war between the U. States and Mexico, and in the event such mediation would be accepted to offer the same.

He informed me that Mr. Pakenham informed him that he would call on to-morrow at 12 or 1 O'Clock to receive an answer. I informed Mr. Trist that the mediation would not be accepted, and proceeded to assign to him the reasons why it could not be. For greater certainty, however, I requested Mr. Trist to call on to-morrow at 9 O'Clock A. M. and I would at that time furnish him in writing the answer which he should make to Mr. Pakenham when he called.

About dark this evening I learned from Mr. Voorhies, who is acting as my Private Secretary during the absence of J. Knox Walker, that Hon. Felix G. McConnell, a Representative in Congress from the State of Alabama, had committed suicide this afternoon at the St. Charles Hotel where he boarded. On tuesday last Mr. McConnell called on me and I loaned him $100. (see this diary of that day). I learn that but a short time before the horrid deed was committed he was in the bar-room of the St. Charles Hotel, handling gold pieces & stating that he had received them from me, that he had loaned $35. of them to the bar-keeper, that shortly afterwards he had attempted to write something, but what I have not learned, but had not written much when he said he would go to his room. In the course of the morning I learn he went into the City and paid a hack-man a small amount which he owed him. He had locked his room door, and when found he was stretched out on his back with his hands extended weltering in his blood. He had three wounds in the abdomen and his throat was cut. A hawk-bill knife was found near him. A jury of

inquest was held and found a verdict that he had destroyed himself. It was a melancholy instance of the effects of intemperance. Mr. McConnell when a youth resided at Fayetteville in my Congressional District. Shortly after he grew up to manhood he was at my instance appointed Post Master of that town. He was a true democrat & a sincere friend of mine. His family in Tennessee are highly respectable and quite numerous. The information as to the manner and particulars of his death I learned from Mr. Voorhies, who reported it to me as he had heard it in the Streets. Mr. McConnel removed from Tennessee to Alabama some years ago, and I learn has left a wife & three or four children.

I wrote down to-night the substance of the answer which Mr. Trist was to give to Mr. Pakenham when he called on to-morrow, in relation to the proposed mediation of England with a view to adjust the existing difficulties between the U. S. & Mexico.

FRIDAY, *11th September, 1846.*— On reflection I considered the proposed mediation of Great Brittain between the U. S. & Mexico, with a view to effect an honorable peace between them, of sufficient consequence to consult the Cabinet in reference to it. Although my own mind was made up to reject the proffered mediation, I considered it respectful to inform the Cabinet of it. I desired, too, to ascertain what their views upon the subject were. I accordingly before breakfast this morning addressed notes

to each member of the Cabinet who are now in the City to meet me at 9 O'Clock this morning. I invited Mr. Bancroft, late Secretary of the Navy but now Minister to England, to attend also. The Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, and Mr. Bancroft attended. Mr. Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, had gone to the country last evening and did not return in time to attend the meeting. I took the opinion of the three gentlemen present, all of whom were opposed to accepting the proffered mediation. Mr. Trist was present. I then read to them what I proposed to instruct Mr. Trist to say to Mr. Pakenham when he called to-day. It was as follows, *viz.:*

"I have communicated to the President the substance of the conversation which occurred in our interview on yesterday, and have been instructed by him to say that he duly appreciates the friendly spirit by which the Brittish Cabinet are actuated in signifying their willingness to tender the mediation of Great Brittain with a view to terminate the existing war between the United States and Mexico. He is, however, of opinion that the formal acceptance by the United States of the mediation of a Foreign Power might rather tend to protract the War than to facilitate an adjustment. He is sincerely desirous to conclude a peace with Mexico upon terms just & honorable to both nations, and for that purpose on the 27th of July last he directed an overture to be made to Mexico to reopen negotiations. To that overture no answer has as yet been received. While, therefore, he would deem it un-

necessary & inexpedient to accept the formal mediation of a Foreign Power, he would regard with favour any influence which the good offices of Great Brittain or any other Power might exert with the Authorities of Mexico to dispose them to accept the overture which has been made by the United States to enter upon negotiations with a view to an equitable adjustment of the existing differences between the two countries and the restoration of a permanent peace."

Upon reading this paper the members of the Cabinet present and Mr. Bancroft approved it unanimously. Mr. Trist was directed to communicate its substance wholly to Mr. Pakenham. Mr. Trist made a copy of it & took it with him.

I was notified by the Clerk of the House of Representatives last evening of the death of the Hon. Felix G. McConnell of Alabama, and that his funeral would take place at 12 O'Clock to-day. He invited me as is usual in such cases to attend the funeral. At 11½ O'Clock when I was about leaving my office to do so, my porter informed me that the Hon. Louis McLane, late U. S. Minister to London, accompanied by Mrs. McLane, had called & were in the parlour below. I met them in the parlour, and after remaining a few minutes with them I made my apology and asked them to remain with Mrs. Polk until I could attend the funeral & return. I met Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, in the parlour with them. Judge Mason took a seat in my carriage & accompanied me to the St. Charles Hotel, where the body of Mr. McConnell

was, and where appropriate funeral ceremonies were performed by the Rev. Mr. Slicer of the Methodist church. After the services were over we joined the procession of carriages as far as the Capitol and returned. On our return we called at the lodgings of Senator Bagby of Alabama, who is confined to his bed by an attack of bilious fever. We saw Mr. Bagby in his chamber.

On returning to the President's mansion I found Mr. & Mrs. McLane with Mrs. Polk as I had left them. Mr. McLane and myself retired to my office. I had a long conversation with him in relation to his mission and public affairs in this country and in Europe. He had not received my letter written to him early in August (see letter Book) informing him of Mr. Buchanan's final decision to remain in the Cabinet, and not to go on the Bench of the Supreme Court of the United States. Mr. McLane expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with my course on the subject. He said he was my friend and was induced to accept my tender of the office of Secretary of State in the event of Mr. Buchanan's retirement from it, which in my letter of the 22nd of June last I had invited him to accept, because he was desirous of serving me and my administration. I inferred from what he said that he was not satisfied with Mr. Buchanan, not because he had not resigned, but because he thought Mr. Buchanan had desired that Col. King, U. S. Minister at Paris, should succeed him as Secretary of State, and finding that he could not do so, had de-

termined to retain his place in the Cabinet. I told Mr. McLane that I thought he was probably mistaken in this opinion, and that other reasons had influenced him in his decision. Among these reasons I mentioned the uncertain State of the Senate near the close of the late Session, rendering it uncertain whether I had a majority in that body on any nomination. I told him I thought Mr. Buchanan would have been confirmed if he had been nominated as a Judge of the Supreme Court of the U. States, though from all I had learned he would have been violently opposed. I did not know that this circumstance had any influence with Mr. Buchanan in making his decision to remain in the Cabinet, but my impression was it had. Mr. McLane inclined to adhere to the opinion which he had expressed, and gave as reasons for it the fact that a short time before he had left London Mr. King had visited him and had inquired of him (Mr. McLane) if he was to go into the Department of State, to which he had replied that there was no vacancy; that Mr. King had then said that he himself had been urged to accept the office of Secretary of State. I told Mr. McLane that so far as I was concerned there was not the slightest foundation for such a statement; that I had not written to Mr. King on any subject since I had been President, and had never thought of inviting him to take charge of the Department of State. I did not say so to Mr. McLane, but as Mr. Buchanan is very intimate with Mr. King and in the habit of corresponding with him, I think it prob-

able that without consulting me on the subject and without my knowledge he had written to Mr. King suggesting it.

In the course of the long conversation which I held with Mr. McLane I called his attention to a passage in his answer[1] to the address of the Chamber of Commerce of the City of N. York, made on his arrival in that City a few days ago, and to the comments upon it in the *National Intelligencer* of this morning. He said at once that the construction placed upon his language by the *Intelligencer* was a false one. He said that what he meant to convey, when he said in that paragraph that in the part he bore in the Oregon negotiation he was carrying out the views of his Government & the President's wishes, was that though my opinion upon the abstract question of title was in favour of our right to 54° 40′ that yet for the reasons assigned in my message to Congress I had in July, '45, offered to compromise on 49°, and that his instructions were to promote an adjustment on that parallel, and that in doing this he was carrying out the views of the Government and my wishes. I told him I was myself satisfied on reading the paragraph that such must have been his meaning, for that none other would have been correct, but I Said to him that he would perceive that it would be subject to be misrepresented as it had been by the *Intelligencer*. I told him that the impression attempted to be made by

[1] McLane's address, given September 7, 1846, was published in *The New York Herald* September 8, and in the *National Intelligencer* September 11, 1846.

the *Intelligencer* was, that I had held one doctrine in my message to Congress, and another in my private intercourse with him, which he knew was not true. I told him that in all my private letters to him, press copies of which I had kept, I had held the same doctrine that I had in my messages to Congress and before the country. He replied that he knew that was so, and said that he would cause the misrepresentation of the *Intelligencer* to be corrected by the Baltimore papers on his return to that City. He said he would see his son Robert & have a paragraph inserted in one of the Baltimore papers correcting the error. Mr. & Mrs. McLane remained and took a family dinner with me. On leaving he gave me strong assurances of his personal and political friendship. My interview with him was an interesting and a pleasant one.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *12th September, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretaries of the Treasury, War, & Navy attended at the usual hour. The Secretary of State and the P. M. Gen'l are absent from the City, and the office of Attorney Gen'l, since Judge Mason's appointment as Secretary of the Navy on the 9th Instant, has not been filled. A full conversation occurred in relation to the Mexican War and the manner of conducting it. Some other business was transacted, and the Cabinet retired about 1 O'Clock P. M.

Senator Breese of Illinois called to-night. He

had returned from his residence in Illinois to which he had gone after the adjournment of the late Session of Congress, to attend the meeting of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute, of whom he is one. He was not notified of his appointment by the Vice President until after he had reached home. The Board of Regents adjourned before his arrival in this City.

SUNDAY, *13th September, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

I received by to-day's mail a letter from the Hon. Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, declining to accept the office of Attorney General of the United States, which I had tendered to him by my letter of the 27th ultimo.

MONDAY, *14th September, 1846.*— Was much engaged in disposing of the business on my table until 12 O'Clock to-day. Opened my office at that hour. Quite a number of persons called, some seeking office, others begging money, and others to pay their respects. I told the office seekers I had no vacancies to fill, and such as wanted money that I had none to give, unless in cases of charity or when it was a christian duty to relieve the wants of the needy. To one old man I directed Mr. Voorhies to give something.

Gen'l Robert Armstrong, U. S. consul at Liverpool, who had been on a visit to his family in Tennessee, called to-day. He had his son, Josiah N.

Armstrong, and his youngest daughter (Henrietta Rachel) with him. I invited him during his stay in Washington to take rooms in the President's House with his daughter, & he agreed to do so.

I received to-night a letter from Rob't McLane of Baltimore (son [of] Hon. Louis McLane, late U. S. Minister to England) enclosing the Baltimore *Republican Argus,* containing an article refuting the false impression attempted to be made by the *National Intelligencer* of Friday last in relation to a paragraph in Mr. Louis McLane's late address to the Chamber of Commerce in New York upon the subject of the Oregon negotiation. (See this diary of Friday, 11th Instant.)

TUESDAY, *15th September, 1846.*— The Cabinet held a Regular Meeting to-day; present the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of the Navy; the Secretary of State and the P. M. General being still absent from the City, and the Office of Attorney General being vacant.

The Secretary of War read despatches which he had received from the army in Mexico. The manner of prosecuting the War was discussed. Great embarrassments exist in directing the movements of our forces, for want of reliable information of the topography of the country, the character of the roads, the supplies which can probably be drawn from the country, and the facilities or obstructions which may exist in prosecuting the campaign into the interior of the country. Gen'l Taylor though in the country gives but little information on these points. He

seems to act as a Regular Soldier, whose only duty it is to obey orders. He does not seem to possess the resources & grasp of mind suited to the responsibilities of his position. He seems disposed to avoid all responsibility of making any suggestions or giving any opinions. Some other public subjects were considered and the Cabinet retired about 1 O'Clock P. M.

This was reception evening. A few persons called.

Gen'l Armstrong & his son, whom I had invited to take rooms in the President's House, declined to do so, preferring to remain at the Hotel. Miss Armstrong is a part of our family during the stay of her father in Washington.

WEDNESDAY, *16th September, 1846.*—Nothing worthy of note occurred to-day. I was in my office as usual an hour before breakfast and throughout the day, taking my daily walk on rising in the morning and about sun-set. I opened my office as usual at about 12 O'Clock. A number of persons called, some of whom were seeking office, and one (a female) begging money, but these are such common occurrences that they are scarcely worthy of remark.

My nephew, Marshall T. Polk, who had been several weeks absent on a visit to his mother in N. Carolina, returned to-day. He will resume his studies at the Georgetown College on to-morrow. The Session of the College commenced on yesterday.

THURSDAY, *17th September, 1846.*— I was occupied as usual this morning in disposing of the business on my table until 12 O'Clock, when I opened my office for the reception of visitors. But a few persons called and there was no importunity for office.

My nephew, Marshall T. Polk, who returned from a visit to his mother in N. Carolina on yesterday, was taken with a chill last night, and I thought it prudent that he should remain with me to-day. If he should have no return of his chill he will go to the Georgetown college on to-morrow. Mr. Bancroft called and informed me that he would leave Washington on Saturday next, and embark for England in the Steamer of the 8th of October. He expressed a desire that Mr. Boyd might be retained as his Secretary of Legation for the present, saying that if after he became acquainted with him he desired a change to be made he would make it known to me.

FRIDAY, *18th September, 1846.*— The Secretary of War called this morning on business, and while in my office Judge Mason (the acting attorney General) called to state some difficulties which existed in his mind in placing a construction on the Constitutional Treasury law of the last Session of Congress. The question of construction had been referred to him by the Secretary of War or of the Treasury or both, upon the following point, *viz.:*

Whether a disbursing officer having drawn money from the Treasury for disbursement can legally deposite the same with the Treasurer or Assistant

Treasurer, and draw checks upon the same to be paid in gold or silver and pass such checks to the public creditor in payment. As this was an important question affecting the operations of the Treasury I sent for the Secretary of the Treasury, who called and the subject was fully discussed. Mr. Mason stated the question and the difficulty in his own mind in coming to a satisfactory decision. The Secretary of the Treasury was of opinion that a disbursing officer might deposite his funds with the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer and draw checks on the funds thus deposited to his credit to be met by gold & silver and make payment in that mode. The Secretary of War expressed no distinct opinion, but my impression from what he said is that he agreed with the Secretary of the Treasury in his construction of the law. Judge Mason said he had not examined the law as critically as he desired to do; but that he would give it further consideration and be prepared to make his decision on monday next. I expressed no opinion, not desiring in any way to influence the Attorney General in the decision to which he might come. I only remark that if the construction insisted on by the Secretary of the Treasury be not admissible, it will be almost impossible for the disbursing officers to pack the Specie for the army and Navy to distant and widely seperated points so as to pay it out. Whatever the inconvenience or embarrassment may be, the law must be construed according to its meaning as this is to be collected from its language.

Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft took a family dinner with

me to-day. Mr. Bancroft expects to leave Washington on to-morrow afternoon for Boston, and expects to sail on his mission to England by the Steamer of the 8th proximo.

My nephew, Marshall T. Polk, returned to Georgetown College to-day.

This was reception evening. Mrs. Madison and two or three dozen other persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *19th September, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretaries of the Treasury, of War, and of the Navy, attended at the usual hour; the Secretary of State and the P. M. Gen'l being still absent from the City, and the office of Attorney Gen'l being vacant, in consequence of the transfer of Mr. Mason to the Navy Department in place of Mr. Bancroft, appointed Minister to England. Mr. Bancroft being about to depart this afternoon for Boston preparatory to sailing on his mission, spent an hour with the Cabinet. The utmost harmony and good feeling prevails between Mr. Bancroft and the Cabinet as far as I know. He took his leave and all seemed to regret that he would no longer constitute a part of the Executive council.

The Cabinet were engaged in considering various details connected with the operations of the army in Mexico, and also as to the manner of executing the Constitutional Treasury act passed at the last Session of Congress. The Cabinet adjourned, and between 2 & 3 O'Clock Mr. Bancroft returned, and

I had a free conversation of an hour with him on the subject of his mission, and the State of political parties in the U. States, and particularly in the State of New York, where the Democracy seemed to be torn and distracted by factions. Mr. Bancroft informed me that he would stop a short time in the City of New York and would probably spend a few hours at Kinderhook and Albany on his way to Boston, and would write to me what he ascertained to be the true state of things and of feeling towards the administration among the leading men whom he might see.

Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft, I learn, left in the evening cars for Baltimore.

About dark this evening the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of War called. Mr. Mason informed me that he had received a despatch from Commodore Conner off Vera Cruz, transmitting the answer [1] of the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs to the overture made by the Secretary of State on the 27th of July last, proposing to re-open negotiations with a view to conclude a peace just and honorable to both countries. Mr. Trist, ch. Clk. of the State Dep't, and during the Temporary absence of Mr. Buchanan the acting Secretary of State, came in to deliver to me some despatches received by the last Steamer. The answer from the Mexican Government was in the Spanish language. Mr. Trist read it, translating it into English. It is in substance a postponement of any definitive decision

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 82. For Buchanan's overture of July 27, *ibid,* 40.

until the meeting of a new Congress in Mexico on the 6th of December next, to whom the overture will be submitted for their decision. I directed Mr. Trist to prepare a written translation and furnish it to me to-night or early on to-morrow. I then stated to the Secretary of War & of the Navy, that our overture for peace having been in effect declined, my strong impression was that the character of the war which we were waging in Mexico should be in some respects changed. For the purpose of conciliating the Mexican people in the Northern & Eastern Provinces, we had heretofore deemed it to be our policy to pay liberally for the supplies drawn from the country for the support of the army. This was rather a helping than an injury to them & my opinion now was, seeing that their Government refused to negotiate for peace, to quarter upon the enemy by laying contributions upon them, or seizing the necessary supplies for the army without paying for them, making proper discriminations in favour of such Mexicans as were ascertained to be friendly to the U. States. In these opinions they concurred, but as this was an important subject and as but two members of the Cabinet were present, it was adjourned until to-morrow at 9 O'Clock. I suggested also a descent upon the coast of Mexico by land as well as by sea, so as to take military possession of Tampico and all the principal places in the Province of Tamaulipas. A meeting was appointed for to-morrow at 9 O'Clock, the Secretary of the Navy being in the meantime instructed to write to Pensacola to-night, ordering the commander of the

Steamer which brought the despatches from Vera Cruz to remain at that place, until he again heard from the Department. The object of detaining the Steamer was that she might carry out orders to the squadron off Vera Cruz.

SUNDAY, *20th September, 1846.*— Addressed a note to the Secretary of the Treasury requesting him to call at my office at 9 O'Clock. He called at that hour, as did also the Secretaries of War & the Navy agreeably to the appointment made with the two latter last evening. Mr. Trist furnished the written translation of the answer of the Mexican Secretary of Foreign affairs in answer to the overture for peace made by the Secretary of State on the 27th of July last. It was considered & the policy to be pursued consequent upon it was discussed. All agreed in the views which I had expressed last evening (see diary of yesterday). The Secretary of War was directed to ascertain what corps of the volunteers & regulars now on the Rio Grande, & not with Gen'l Taylor's & Gen'l Wool's columns marching upon Chihuahua, could be organized & spared from their present posts to make a descent by land or by sea to Tampico and other points in Tamaulipas. After some further conversation the Cabinet dispersed to meet again at 7 O'Clock this evening.

I attended the Methodist Episcopal church on 9th Street (Rev. Mr. Slicer's) to-day, accompanied by Mrs. Polk, Gen'l Armstrong, U. S. consul to Liverpool, & his daughter.

After returning from church The Secretary of

War called in company with Col. Stephenson, the commander of the Regiment of Volunteers at New York destined for the coast of California. I expressed in strong terms my disapprobation at the delay in the departure of the Regiment to its destination. Col. Stephenson gave some explanations which were not satisfactory, but said he would return forthwith to New York and have the Regiment at sea before Wednesday evening next. I spoke in decided terms & told him I expect[ed] him to do so. He left me fully impressed with my dissatisfaction at the great & as I think culpable delay which has occurred. Col. Stephenson was disposed to attribute the delay to others, & said the transports had not been ready in time. I suppose the truth is that the Quarter Master's Department as well as Col. S. are to blame. I intimated plainly to Col. S. that if further delay occurred I would cause the officers who produced it to be arrested & tried.

At 7 O'Clock P. M. the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, & Navy called according to adjournment made this morning. The subject of the movements of the army & navy which were considered last evening and this morning were further discussed. The Secretary of the Navy read the draft of a letter which he had prepared to Commodore Conner instructing him to take & hold Tampico. The Secretary of War had not drafted his orders to Gen'l Taylor in regard to the expedition of a column of the Army to the Southern & Eastern part of Tamaulipas including the City of Tampico. The Cabinet determined that the Secretary of the Navy should

make some modifications of the draft of his letter, and discussed and agreed upon the points to be embraced in the order of the Secretary of War to the commanding Gen'l of the army in Mexico. The Cabinet adjourned with the understanding that these documents should be prepared by to-morrow.

Mrs. Polk on returning from church to-day complains[ed] of indisposition and did not go to dinner. Her symptoms indicate that it is a bilious attack, such as is very prevalent in the City at this time. I proposed to send for a physician, but she thought it unnecessary and insisted that I should not.

MONDAY, *21st September, 1846.*— I ordered my office to be kept closed as usual until 12 O'Clock today, but was much annoyed before that hour by persons making special calls who sent in their cards and I was compelled to see them. At 12 O'Clock a woman begging money and several persons seeking office called. I gave the woman a small amount of money in order to get clear of her. I doubt whether she was a proper object of charity. To the office seekers I had but one answer and that was that there were no vacancies and that I had no offices to bestow.

The Secretary of War called and read to me the draft which he had prepared of an order to fit out an expedition to Tampico & the Southern or Western part of Tamaulipas. I suggested some alterations and requested him to have it ready at the meeting of the Cabinet on to-morrow. As Maj'r Gen'l Butler and Brigadier Generals Quitman & Hamer of the Volunteers were with Gen'l Taylor in his ad-

vance upon Monterey, I suggested to the Secretary that the expedition to Tampico should be placed under the command of Maj'r Gen'l Patterson,[1] to be accompanied by Brigadier Generals Pillow[2] and Shields of the Volunteers. The Secretary of the Navy was present at this interview and concurred in the decision to which the Secretary of War and myself had come. It was concluded that the despatches to the army and Navy should be prepared & revised & submitted to the Cabinet on to-morrow.

Gen'l Armstrong took his daughter, who had been spending a few days in my family, & place[d] her at Miss English's boarding school in Georgetown.

Mrs. Polk continues slightly indisposed & took medicine to-night.

TUESDAY, *22nd September, 1846.*— Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, returned from his Northern tour last evening, and called on me before the meeting of the Cabinet this morning.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, present the Secretaries of State, War, & Navy. The Secretary of the Treasury did not attend. The P. M. Gen'l is still absent on a visit to Tennessee. The Secretary of War read the draft of his letter to Gen'l Taylor and one to Gen'l Patterson. Several modifications of them were suggested and made. The responsi-

[1] Robert Patterson, native of Ireland, served in the War of 1812 and in the Mexican War.

[2] Gideon J. Pillow of Tennessee, served in the Mexican and the Civil Wars; in the latter he opposed Grant at Belmont, and, as second in command, at Fort Donelson.

bility was taken of ordering an expedition to Tampico and Eastern Tamaulipas to consist of a column of three or four thousand men, provided such a movement did not interfere with the plan of campaign previously ordered by Gen'l Taylor. This column to be under the command of Maj'r Gen'l Patterson who will be accompanied by Brigadier Generals Pillow & Shields. The letters of the Secretary of War to Gen'ls Taylor and Patterson will fully set forth the decisions made in Cabinet. The Secretary of the Navy read the draft of a letter to Commodore Conner, ordering him if practicable to take Tampico, and to co-operate in that enterprise with the land forces. A slight modification of it was suggested and made. I sent for General Jessup, the Quarter Master Gen'l, after the Cabinet adjourned, and held a conversation with him in relation to the proper provision for transportation, in view of this new movement of a part of the army. Maj'r Eastland, one of the Brigade Quarter Masters of Volunteers, was present, and upon consultation with him & Gen'l Jessup, I advised the purchase of two additional Steam Ships for the Gulf. I find that I am compelled to give some attention to these details or the movements of the army will be delayed and embarrassed. The Secretary of War is overwhelmed with his labours and responsibilities, and is compelled to rely for the execution of many details of his Department to [on] his subordinate officers, some of whom I fear do not feel that they have any responsibility, and others seem to act as

though they were indifferent about the success of our military operations. Several of these officers are politically opposed to the administration and there is reason to apprehend that they would be willing to see the Government embarrassed. With these apprehensions I shall for the future give more attention than I have done to their conduct. Gen'l Scott is of no aid to the Department, but his presence at Washington is constantly embarrassing to the Secretary of War. I will observe his course, and if necessary will order him to some other post. I addressed a private and unofficial letter to-day to Brigadier Gen'l Pillow on the subject of the War in Mexico; (see letter Book).

Gen'l Armstrong, U. S. Consul at Liverpool, left this afternoon on his return to England. Mrs. Polk continues[ed] to be so much indisposed this evening that I prevailed upon her to permit me to call in a physician. I had several times in the course of the day proposed it, but she had insisted that it was not necessary. She had fever this evening and upon making an earnest appeal to her she yielded that a physician should be sent for. I accordingly sent for Dr. Miller, who called and prescribed for her. She took the medicine prescribed but rested badly through the night.

Several of our servants are affected with chills and fevers, and I understand there are many cases of the kind in the City.

This was reception evening. A few persons, all gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *23rd September, 1846.*— Having many matters of business on my table requiring my attention, I instructed my messenger this morning to admit no visitors and bring no cards to me. Whenever a card is brought to me and I refuse to see the person I am apt to give offense. If I refuse to receive cards and do not know who calls I am more likely to avoid giving offense. Though this was my general order to-day, my porter acted with proper discrimination by bringing to me the card of the Hon. Ralph I. Ingersoll [1] of Connecticut, recently appointed U. S. Minister to Russia. Mr. Ingersoll informed me that he had concluded to accept the Mission, and that he had visited Washington in order to make the necessary arrangements, receive his instructions &c, preparatory to leaving the country. I had a conversation with Mr. I. upon the subject of his mission. He retired, and after having visited the Secretary of State, returned and informed me that he found he would not have time at present to attend satisfactorily to the object of his visit, and that he had concluded to leave this afternoon and return to Washington again in October. He informed me that he expected to leave the country on his mission in November.

After night Mr. Conner, a leading citizen of Charleston, S. C., called. Mr. C. is President of one of the Banks at Charleston. He is a native of Mecklenburg County, N. C., the same County in which I was born. His family are distantly related

[1] Ralph Isaac Ingersoll, 1789–1872, minister to Russia 1846–1848.

to mine, and I remember to have called at his father's house near Beatty's Ford in the fall of 1815, when I was on my way to College. Mr. C. is a democrat upon principle, and I had a pleasant and interesting conversation with him. He expressed his full approbation of the leading measures of my administration. Mrs. Polk is still indisposed, but is better this evening.

THURSDAY, *24th September, 1846.*— I had scarcely got into my office this morning until I received a note from a man signing his name F. E. Bramhall begging money. Similar applications are made to me almost daily. I cannot supply all their wants, and if I could a large majority of such beggars I have no doubt are unworthy. I am compelled to decline giving, except in a few cases where I am satisfied that the persons applying are objects of charity or are in great distress. Since it has become known that I gave the unfortunate Felix G. McConnell of Alabama $100. a few days before he committed suicide, these applications have become much more numerous than heretofore. I opened my office & received visitors at 12 O'Clock. Among others who made their appearance was Mr. Bramhall from [whom] I had received the note this morning begging for money. He told me his name and asked me if I had received his note. I told him I had but could not accommodate him. He was a person apparently about 30 years old and was well dressed. He stepped out of the office and returned in a minute or two and introduced his wife to me. She was as

well dressed as my wife is when she goes to church. Whilst he was in the office another strong & athletic looking young man applied for money. I gave him the same answer. I have every reason to believe that my kindness to poor McConnell has brought these trifling loafers upon me.

I sent for the Secretary of War this morning and told him it was necessary that he should give his personal attention to the Quarter-Master's and Commissary's Departments and see that the necessary provision was made on their part to supply the column of the army recently ordered to move to Tampico and other points on the coast. I told him that I feared some of the lower officers at Washington cared but little what disasters happened, provided they could avoid censure or responsibility. The Secretary expressed his distrust of their fidelity to the administration, and said he would return to the Department and issue stringent orders such as I had suggested at once.

I disposed of the current business on my table.

I was somewhat indisposed to-day. Much sickness prevails in the City. Mrs. Polk is still indisposed and has been taking medicine yesterday and to-day.

FRIDAY, *25th September, 1846.*— I was engaged as usual in my office until 12 O'Clock to-day when I opened my doors for the reception of visitors. Several office seekers called. I soon disposed of them by telling them that I had no vacancies to fill. A female called to beg money. She was no object of

charity and I refused to give her any. My kindness to poor McConnell of Alabama has brought upon me a horde of beggars who seem to think it is a fine opportunity to supply their wants.

Mr. Buchanan called and read to me despatches from Mr. Harris, U. S. charge d'affaires to Buenos-ayres. I Had a long conversation with him in relation to our foreign affairs, and particularly with the South American States. The conduct of Mr. Wise at Brazil and Mr. Brent at the Argentine Republic in interfering in the internal contests of the South American Governments, and especially in the tender of the mediation of their Government, was not only unauthorized, but is calculated to do much mischief. Mr. Brent has been superseded by Mr. Harris, and Mr. Wise will return during the next winter. Their successors will be instructed to avoid embarrassing & involving their Government in a similar manner. It is indeed provoking that any foreign representatives should have acted with so little discretion and judgment as Mr. Wise and Mr. Brent have done.

My Private Secretary, J. Knox Walker, returned to-night, having been absent on a visit to Tennessee since the morning of the 12th of August last. I shall hereafter be relieved from the labour of signing land Patents which I have had to perform during his absence.

I learn from Col. Walker that Mr. Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, who left at the same time, returned with him.

SATURDAY, *26th September, 1846.*— Mr. Cave Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, having been absent on a visit to Tennessee since the 12th day of August last, returned to the City last night and called on me this morning.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, the Atto. Gen'l's office being vacant. The Secretary of State read a letter [1] which he had prepared in reply to that of the Secretary of Foreign affairs of the Mexican Government received on the 19th Instant (see this diary of that day) in answer to the letter of the Secretary of State of the 27th of July last proposing to renew negotiations with a view to conclude a peace just & honourable to both nations. As the Mexican Government had, as appears by their answer, postponed a definitive decision upon the proposition made by the Secretary of State until the meeting of the Mexican Congress on the 6th of December next, and had placed a false construction upon his language, it was deemed proper to make a response. The letter in reply prepared by Mr. Buchanan having been read by him, he remarked that he desired the opinion of the Cabinet and then of the President. I remained silent until the views of the Cabinet were expressed. The Secretary of War objected to that part of the letter which announced that the expenses of the War must be defrayed by Mexico, as impolitic to be announced at this time, because it would be likely to prevent Mexico from entering into negotiations. He was in fa-

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 87.

vour of securing indemnity for the expenses of the war in a treaty of peace, but doubted the policy of announcing that fact in this preliminary stage of the proceedings. The Secretary of the Treasury was in favour of retaining this part of the letter. A discussion ensued in which I took no part. The P. M. Gen'l seemed to concur with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury that the part of the letter claiming indemnity for the expenses of the war should be retained. The Secretary of War after the discussion had proceeded for some time seemed willing to yield his objections. Mr. Buchanan then addressing me said, "and what is the President's opinion?" I remarked to him that I should insist when a Treaty was made upon being indemnified for the expenses of the War, and that in arranging a boundary these expenses must be taken into the account, but that I had serious doubts whether this fact should be announced at this time, and that my opinion inclined that it would be time enough to insist upon it after negotiations were opened, and we came to settle the terms of a Treaty. I remarked further that whatever indemnity was acquired for the claims of our citizens, for the outrages committed by the Mexicans for a long series of years, as well as for the expenses of the war, must be in the acquisition of territory on our part, because it was well known that Mexico had no money to pay. My opinion was further, that to announce the fact now that Mexico was to pay the expenses of the War, would excite that stubborn and impracticable people and prevent them from entering into negotia-

tions. I suggested that this paragraph of the letter should be modified so as to state that the delay on the part of Mexico in acceding to our overture to open negotiations would render a satisfactory adjustment more difficult because of the increased expenses of the War. This suggestion was acceded to, and Mr. Buchanan said he would modify the letter accordingly. I requested him to submit it to me before he sent it off, and he said he would do so.

Before the meeting of the Cabinet this morning Gen'l Jessup, the Quarter Master Gen'l, called & informed me that so great were the responsibilities of his Department that he was not satisfied to rely upon his subordinates at so great a distance from him to make the proper provision for the army and that he thought he ought to go in person to the seat of operations. He said he did not ask to go to the army with any rank giving him the right to take command, but in his capacity as a staff officer. He satisfied me that this was necessary and proper for the efficiency of the service, and I so expressed myself, but told him before I decided I would consult the Secretary of War. After other business was disposed of, I brought this matter before the Cabinet, and after assigning the reasons for it which General Jessup assigned to me, the Secretary of War and the other members of the Cabinet present assented to its propriety. I then directed that General Jessup should be ordered to the army, as he had suggested.

The Secretary of War complained of being indisposed & retired before the Cabinet adjourned.

Some other business not worthy of note was attended to.

Before the Cabinet adjourned, I remarked to them that as the Hon. Franklin Pierce to whom I had tendered the office of attorney Gen'l had declined to accept it, that I must select some other person for that office. I informed them that the Hon. Nathan Clifford [1] of Maine had been recommended to me, but that I had very little knowledge of him and did not know his qualifications as a lawyer, and added that I did not desire to bring any one into the Cabinet who would be exceptionable to any of its members, as I desired to preserve the harmony which had hitherto prevailed in our councils. All the members present expressed their entire satisfaction with Mr. Clifford, but none of them were able to inform me what his legal attainments were. They knew him to be a man of talents and to stand high in Maine, but they had not sufficient knowledge of him as a lawyer to speak with confidence. At my request the Secretary of the Treasury agreed to consult Judge Paris of Maine confidentially (the 2nd Comptroller of the Treasury) as to Mr. Clifford's standing in Maine as [and] especially as to his legal attainments. The Cabinet adjourned & in about an hour the Secretary of the Treasury returned and informed me that he had seen Judge Paris, who informed him that Mr. Clifford was a man of very high standing; that he had filled the office of attorney Gen'l under the

[1] Nathan Clifford, 1804–1881, U. S. Attorney General 1846–1848, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court 1858–1881.

State Government of Maine for several years, and that his attainments as a lawyer were respectable. I sent for Mr. Appleton of Maine (ch. Clk. in the Navy Department) and consulted him confidentially as to Mr. Clifford & his legal attainments. He gave me about the same account of him which Judge Paris had given to the Secretary of the Treasury.

SUNDAY, *27th September, 1846.*— General James Hamilton [1] of S. C. addressed me a note this morning stating that he was compelled to leave the City to-day, and that he desired to see me at 9 O'Clock. He called at that hour. In the course of a conversation of half an hour he expressed in very strong terms the opinion that it was the duty of the whole South to give to my administration an ardent & hearty support, approving as he said he did of all the leading measures of my administration, and he enquired with some anxiety & great earnestness whether there was any alienation or unkind feelings between Mr. Calhoun and myself. I told him that there was none, not the slightest on my part. He said he disapproved Mr. Calhoun's course in reference to the Mexican War, that he had written him at the time on the subject, and that on his return to the South whither he was now going, having spent some weeks at the North, he would see Mr. Calhoun and urge him to give to my administration a zealous support. He expressed the opinion that the Whigs of the North would violently assail my

[1] Governor of South Carolina 1830–1832, an advocate of free trade and State rights.

administration & repeated that it was the duty of the whole democracy and especially of the South to sustain me. Whilst Gen'l Hamilton was with me it was announced by my porter that Gov. Brown [1] of Tennessee and my old friend, Daniel Graham,[2] of Tennessee had called and were in the parlour below stairs. As soon as Gen'l H. left I went to the parlour & saw them. I learned from them that their wives accompanied them. After spending a short time with them they left, with the understanding that I would drive by Brown's Hotel, where they stopped, and take them with me to church.

General Jessup sent a message to me by my porter that he wished to see me on special business. Though contrary to my practice to see company on this day, I directed him to be shown into my office. After conversing with him for a few minutes in reference to his departure for the army (see this diary of yesterday) he retired.

Mrs. Polk although convalescent, was too feeble from her late indisposition to attend church to-day.

My [her] niece, Miss Rucker, and myself attended the first Presbyterian church. We called on the way at Brown's Hotel, and Mr. & Mrs. Graham accompanied us to church. Gov. Brown & his wife did not attend church. I invited Gov. Brown and Mr. Graham, being both of them old and intimate

[1] Aaron V. Brown, Governor of Tennessee 1845–1847, and for many years an influential leader of the Democratic party.

[2] Appointed Register of the Treasury in 1847 to succeed Ransom H. Gillett.

friends, to take rooms in the President's House during their stay in Washington.

About dark the P. M. Gen'l called and shortly afterwards Gov. Brown & Mr. Graham called. Mrs. Polk saw the ladies in her chamber, and I saw the gentlemen in my office. I spent an agreeable evening with these old friends. In the course of the evening Mr. Buchanan called and spent half an hour. I saw the ladies in the parlour before they left.

MONDAY, *28th September, 1846.*— Had several special calls before 12 O'Clock this morning, and among them several genteel strangers who called simply to pay their respects. At 12 O'Clock agreeably to previous arrangement I received in my office a delegation [of] about twenty Head men and braves of the Winnebagoe tribe of Indians, accompanied by Gen'l Fletcher, the U. S. Sub Agent. They were the largest and finest looking men of any tribe who have visited me. I made them a short address through Mr. Lowry, the U. S. Interpreter, to which one of the chiefs responded. I informed them that I would appoint commissioners to meet them in council and hold a talk with them on the subject of their business, on the day after to-morrow. One [of] the chiefs then made an address to me and presented to me a pipe with a flat wooden Stem 4 or 5 feet long richly ornamented with beads and feathers & with a silver band around it, on which was the following inscription, *viz.*, "Wee-no-Shick, Head Chief of the Winnebagoes, to James K. Polk."

This pipe was presented by the brother of the chief who, he said, was old and could not come so far, but had sent it as an emblem of friendship for his Great Father. One of the chiefs struck fire with flint and steel and lighted the Pipe, when the brother of the chief presented it to me to smoke. I smoked it, and he then passed around the room and presented it to each chief and Brave, who also smoked it. I then made a short address to the brother of the absent chief, returned my thanks for the Pipe, & told him I would send his brother, the Principal chief, a present in return. I urged them to preserve peace with the White men, told them that as long as they did so I would be their friend & the friend of their people. I requested them to call that I might shake them by the hand again before they left the City. They appeared to be well pleased.

After they retired I saw a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, who called. After night Gov. Brown and Mr. Daniel Graham spent an hour or two in my office.

TUESDAY, *29th September, 1846.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the P. M. Gen'l attended at the usual hour. The Secretaries of War and the Navy I learned were confined to their houses by indisposition.

The subject of a loan or issue of Treasury notes was considered. The Secretary of the Treasury expressed the opinion that a loan or an issue of Treasury notes would be necessary, as there was now in

the Treasury only a fraction over Four millions of Dollars, which in his opinion was too small a sum for a period of War. The income into the Treasury is greatly diminished in consequence of the prospective reduction of the rates of duty on the 1st of December next, under the tariff of 1846, and in consequence of the operations of the Warehousing Bill. The necessity of the loan being settled, the mode & form of affecting [effecting] it was next considered. The issue of Treasury notes redeemable in 12 Months bearing an interest of 6 per Cent was the plan approved by me. Mr. Buchanan favoured this mode and the Secretary of the Treasury inclined to the same opinion. At the same time that I intimated my opinion I informed the Secretary of the Treasury that as the responsibility would fall in great part on him, I would leave it to him to adopt this mode or to resort to a funded debt for the amount needed. He said he would give the subject his immediate attention.

My steward (Henry Bowman) who has been absent from the City near a month returned to-day. During his absence he laid in supplies for the President's House at New York & Baltimore.

Gov. Brown of Tennessee & his wife, Mr. Daniel Graham and his wife of Tennessee, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Cave Johnson, and Mr. Ritchie, Ed. of the *Union,* took dinner with me to-day.

This was reception evening. A few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called, & among others Mrs. Madison.

WEDNESDAY, *30th September, 1846.*— Saw company at 12 O'Clock to-day. A number of persons called, and among them several office seekers for whom I had no offices.

Nothing worthy of note occurred during the day. After night Gen. Jessup, the Quarter Master Gen'l, called and I had a long conversation with him in relation to the operations of the army in the Mexican War. Gen'l Jessup will leave on to-morrow for the Rio Grande in his staff character of Quarter Master General, with a view to make prompt and more effective provision for the army, so far as his Department is concerned. I requested him when he reached the seat of War to write to me unofficially and give me information and also his opinions in relation to the prosecution of the War.

This afternoon I rode with Gov. Brown & Mr. Daniel Graham of Tennessee to visit Judge Mason, who had been indisposed. We found him convalescent.

THURSDAY, *1st October, 1846.*— I opened my office for the reception of company as usual at 12 O'Clock to-day. A number of office-seekers attended as usual, and retired without having their wishes gratified. I had no vacancies to fill, and did not choose to turn out better men to put them in. My greatest annoyance is the constant stream of persons seeking office & begging money.

To-day I wrote some paragraphs for my message at the meeting of the next Session of Congress.

They were upon the subjects which I foresaw it would be proper to bring to the notice of Congress, but subject of course to such modifications as a changed state of facts may render proper.

I received a note about noon to-day without date from the Hon. Rob't J. Walker, Secretary of the Treasury, informing me that he had "found it necessary to go on immediately to the North to effect the nego[tia]tion" (of a loan) "on twelve months Treasury notes" (see his note on my files). I was greatly surprised at this, and especially that he had not informed me before leaving. I immediately sent for Mr. McClintock Young, the chief clerk in the Treasury Department, in order to obtain further information. Mr. Young informed me that Mr. Walker left last evening, and did not desire it to be known to the public that he was gone to the North; that he intended to stop at Princeton, N. Jersey, and send for Mr. Lawrence,[1] the collector at New York, & Mr. Newbold[?] with a view to negotiate the loan through their agency. I cannot understand the necessity of all this secrecy and mystery in the movements of the Secretary, and still less can I understand why he should have left the City on public business of so much importance without at least advising me of it, if not consulting me before he left. I am wholly at a loss to understand the necessity of such a movement. There could have been no necessity to conceal it from me. How it happened that his note to me, without date, was not delivered until

[1] Cornelius Van Wyck Lawrence, capitalist and banker of New York.

noon to-day remains to be explained. I told Mr. Young that I would appoint him acting Secretary of the Treasury *ad interim*. He said it would not probably be necessary as he expected Mr. Walker to return in two or three days.

I omitted to state in yesterday's Diary that I addressed a letter on that day to the Hon. Nathan Clifford of Maine, tendering to him the office of Atto. Gen'l of the U. S. in place of Judge Mason, appointed Secretary of the Navy: (see letters to Mr. Clifford & to the Hon. John Fairfield, U. S. Senator from Maine, by whom among others Mr. Clifford was recommended).

Mr. N. P. Trist, the ch. Clerk in the Department of State, handed to me some days ago two letters from Mr. Richard Rush, the one dated Sept. 19th and the other Sept. 21st, whilst he was acting Secretary of State, during Mr. Buchanan's temporary absence from the City. They treated of the Oregon negotiation, and controverted Mr. McLane's statement in his late response to the address made to him by the Chamber of Commerce of N. York. The statement the correctness of which Mr. Rush controverts is as follows, *viz.*, "Having some knowledge from my official position at that time of the policy and objects of the Convention of 1828, I am quite persuaded that its main design was to lead, in a future partition of the territory, to the recognition of our claim to the country not North, but South of the 49th parallel, and between that and the Columbia River." Mr. Rush says this was new to him; that he was a member of Mr. Adams's Cabinet when

the Treaty of 1828 was concluded and ratified, and that he did not understand the object of the Convention as Mr. McLane presents it. He states that Mr. Adams's opinion[s] of title were then the same as those expressed in debate on the floor of Congress last winter. The object of Mr. Rush's letters to Mr. Trist (acting Secretary of State) was to ascertain whether there was any evidence in the State Department which he may have overlooked favouring Mr. McLane's idea. The closing paragraph of Mr. Rush's letter of the 21st Sept., 1846, to Mr. Trist is as follows, *viz.:*

"For one, I am unshaken in the belief that it was the President's opening message to the first Congress he met, on the second of December last, that produced the settlement of the Oregon difficulty. It was like a great bumb-shell thrown into the Brittish Cabinet. It took them by surprise and first roused them to the unavoidable necessity of a settlement. I thought when it appeared that it would lead to War, so bold was it, though every word was just; whereas it lead [led] to peace."

I was much engaged when Mr. Trist handed to me these letters of Mr. Rush. Not knowing their importance I laid them aside & did not examine them until to-day. I think Mr. McLane's statement in his address was not only erroneous as the public have understood it, but was ill-timed and calculated to do mischief rather than good. I regret that he made it. He has explained that he referred only to his instructions now published. (See this diary some two or three weeks ago.)

FRIDAY, *2nd October, 1846.*— I did not open my office for the reception of company generally to-day, though a number of persons were admitted at different periods of the day.

At 10 O'Clock this morning the Secretary of War and commissioner of Indian affairs called. They were accompanied by Albion K. Parris, 2nd Comptroller, Col. Abert, and Maj'r Andrews of the army, whom I had appointed commissioners to treat with the Delegation of the Head men & chiefs of the Winnebagoe Tribe of Indians, now on a visit to this City. The object of the call of these gentlemen was to consult with me and receive my directions as to the terms of the Treaty which they should propose, and particularly as to the country which they should offer to give to the Winnebagoes in exchange for the country which they now occupy in the Iowa Territory. After examining a carefully prepared map presented by Col. Abert and discussing the various matters connected with the subject with the commissioners, I gave my views to the commissioners and they retired.

The Secretary of War remained. He had been indisposed for some days past, and, although feeble, was recovering. He had received letters from Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Kearney, which I read. Gen'l Taylor's letters were under date of Sept. 4th, 1846. He was about leaving Carmaga [Camargo] for Monterey, and the probability was that a battle would take place at the latter place. Gen'l Kearney on the 18th of August had taken possession of Santa Fe without firing a gun or shedding blood, and had

proclaimed New Mexico to be a conquered Province and a part of the U. States. He expected to leave with a part of his command for Upper California early in September, leaving a sufficient force to hold Santa Fe and New Mexico. Gen'l Kearney has thus far performed his duty well.

I held a conference with the Secretary of War on various matters connected with the War, and the manner of conducting it.

Mr. Buchanan called and read to me two articles, No. 3 & 4, which he had prepared for the *Pennsylvanian* of Phila. in vindication of the administration on the Oregon question. He informed me that the 1st of the Series had been published in the *Pennsylvanian*.[1] He informed me that there would be four or five additional numbers, & that when completed he intended to have them printed in pamphlet form and circulated. The numbers which he read to me I thought were well prepared & presented correct views.

Mr. Ritchie called and I told him I regretted exceedingly the appearance of an article in the *Union* of last evening on the Oregon question, because it did not present the position of the administration truly, and because I feared it would be misunderstood by Mr. McLane, & was well calculated to make an unnecessary issue with that gentleman. I pointed out to him the errors in the article & the false positions which it had assumed. Mr. Ritchie said the article was written by his assistant Editor, Mr. Ames,

[1] For the series see the *Pennsylvanian*, October 1 to November 26, inclusive.

that he was very busy at the time, and that it had been inserted without much examination. I expressed my regret that more care had not been taken.

This was reception evening. It was raining and only half a dozen gentlemen called.

SATURDAY, *3rd October, 1846.*— At the usual hour to-day the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, & the P. M. Gen'l met in Cabinet. The Secretary of the Treasury is absent from the City & the Secretary of the Navy is still indisposed as I understand. The subject of the prosecution of the war and the state of the finances were topics of consideration.

I had been examining for a day or two past the subject of making appropriations for the Improvement of Harbours & Rivers, and expressed to the Cabinet my decided impression that the whole system should be checked, and informed them that I was seriously examining the subject and that I would probably in my next annual message take strong ground against all such appropriations as not warranted by the Constitution and wholly inexpedient. The subject was discussed at some length. I was surprised, because I did not expect it, to find that Mr. Buchanan concurred with me in my views, and thought it indispensable that the practice of making these improvements by the Federal Government should be checked, if not totally arrested. Mr. Marcy & Mr. Johnson also expressed their concurrence in my views. I then stated that I would examine the subject further, & that with my present

impressions I would probably take strong grounds in my message against the whole system.

Robert M. McLane, Esqr., of Baltimore (son of the late Minister to England) called, and after some general conversation he introduced the subject of an article which appeared in the *Union* on the evening before the last on the Oregon question. He said it had annoyed his father very much, and that he apprehended that Mr. Ritchie would force an issue upon him. I at once told Mr. McLane that I had not seen the article until 10 O'Clock on the day after it was published, and that on reading it I at once condemned and disapproved it. I told him I had seen Mr. Ritchie and informed him so. (See this diary of the 2nd Instant.) Mr. McLane added that the three preceding articles on the Oregon question which appeared in the *Union* some days previous to the last article were entirely satisfactory to himself and his father; that at the close of these three articles the case stood well; but that the last article took erroneous ground and was most unfortunate. I told him that Mr. Ritchie had informed me that the last article was written by his assistant, Mr. Ames, and that it had been hastily inserted without much examination. Mr. McLane expressed himself to be satisfied. I told him that I had no doubt Mr. Ritchie would be ready to make any proper explanation of the article, and that I had no idea that he sought or desired to make any issue with his father. He said he had better write nothing more on the subject, unless the course of the Whig press should make it necessary. Mr. McLane did not say that his visit

to Washington to-day was on the subject of the article in the *Union,* but I have no doubt it was so.

I saw Mr. Ritchie in the afternoon and informed him of my interview with Mr. McLane. He regretted the publication of the article. The truth is Mr. McLane's language in his New York address was susceptible of being misinterpreted, and that has given rise to the whole controversy. The Whig press has seized upon it for political capital, and [this] has made it necessary to set forth in the Democratic papers the true State of the facts. It is much to be regretted that Mr. McLane employed the language that he did in that address, for although he has [in] the Baltimore *Argus,* and in a personal conversation with me shortly after his return from England, explained what he meant by it, still standing alone & without explanation it is subject to be misunderstood. (For Mr. McLane's personal explanation to me, see this diary of the 11th of Sept. last.)

Gov. Brown of Tennessee called to-night and spent two or three hours with me in my office.

SUNDAY, *4th October, 1846.*— Attended the First Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and Governor and Mrs. Brown of Tennessee. We drove to the Indian Queen Hotel on our way to church, where Governor & Mrs. Brown joined us.

MONDAY, *5th October, 1846.*— I occupied the morning until 12 O'Clock in disposing of the business on my table. At that hour I opened my office

for the reception of visitors and persons on business. A number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called on visits of ceremony. A number of office-seekers called as usual, but I had no offices to give them.

The Secretary of the Navy called, & I had a conversation with him in relation to the operations of the Navy in the Mexican war, and upon other branches of the service connected with his Department. He had been indisposed for several days and was still feeble, but was recovering from his attack.

Gen'l Robert Armstrong, U. S. consul at Liverpool, called unexpectedly. I supposed he was on his voyage to Liverpool. He informed me that he had taken passage in the Steamer Great Western for the 8th Inst., & having a day or two of leisure had concluded to come to Washington.

TUESDAY, *6th October, 1846.*— The Hon. Ralph I. Ingersoll of Connecticut called on me on yesterday. He visits Washington preparatory to his departure on his mission to Russia.

The Cabinet met to-day at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, who is absent from the City on a visit to New York on business connected with his Department. The Attorney General's office has not yet been filled.

The Secretary of State presented and read a correspondence between the U. S. Consul & the French consul at Tripoli upon their respective claims to precedence in rank, together with a communication from the French Minister here transmitting a despatch from Mr. Guizot, the French Minister of

Foreign affairs, upon the subject. It was a mere question of etiquette & ceremony between the consuls at Tripoli, & but for the consequence attached to it by Mr. Guizot's [despatch] would be unworthy of notice. An anecdote is told of Mr. Jefferson to the effect that the French minister, whom he invited to Dinner with the Diplomatic corps, had taken offence because he had not been assigned his proper place at the table. Mr. Jefferson had been informed that he was dissatisfied & that he intended to call for an explanation. While in his office his porter announced to him that the French minister was in waiting. Mr. Jefferson was in his shirt sleeves but said promptly, show him in. The French minister entered in State attired in his Court dress & found Mr. Jefferson with one foot up in the act of drawing on his boot. Mr. Jefferson turned his head as he entered & said, " Come in, Sir; we have no ceremonies here." The Frenchman was astonished, sat a few minutes & retired with [out] making known his business, and afterwards said it was useless to raise any question of etiquette or ceremony with such a people. This anecdote illustrates the folly of the quarrel between the American and French consuls at Tripoli. I told Mr. Buchanan I was not a man of ceremonies, & that he and Mr. Guizot might settle the dispute between the consuls in any way they pleased.[1]

The Mexican war was the subject of conversation.

[1] For Buchanan's action in this affair see his letters to Joshua L. Martin, acting *charge d'affaires* at Paris, in Moore, ***Buchanan,*** VII, 96 and 102.

A letter from Gen'l Tomson to the Secretary of War, giving his opinion of the proper mode of prosecuting it, was read. Gen'l Tomson's plan is to seize and hold the part of the country which we intend to retain, to indemnify our citizens for their claims on Mexico and to defray the expenses of the War, and not to prosecute a war of invasion beyond this point. It was the subject of conversation but the Cabinet came to no decision upon it. Some other matters of minor importance were considered.

This was reception evening. More persons called than has been usual since the adjournment of Congress, ladies & gentlemen. Mrs. Polk was too much indisposed to be in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *7th October, 1846.*— I was engaged this morning as usual in disposing of the business on my table until 12 O'Clock. Before that hour I sent for Mr. Buchanan and requested him to accompany me to the Commencement of the Columbia College to-day, to which I had been invited. He readily answered me that he would call at that hour and accompany me. A few minutes before 12 O'Clock Mr. Marcy, the Secretary of War, called on business, which being transacted he inquired of me if I intended to attend the commencement of the College to-day. I answered him that I did and invited him to take a seat in my carriage and accompany me, stating to him that I had invited Mr. Buchanan to go also. Mr. Marcy agreed to do so. A few minutes after the hour of 12 O'Clock Mr. Marcy, my Private Secretary, and myself proceeded to the front

door where my carriage was in waiting and where we met Mr. Buchanan, who had just come from his office. Mr. Buchanan was invited to take a seat in my carriage, but declined doing so, saying that he had not been invited by the President or authorities of the college. I could not avoid the conclusion that this was not the real reason, and feared that what I had heard was true, *viz.,* that there was some coolness between Mr. Marcy and himself growing out of the selection by Mr. Buchanan of the Albany *Atlas* instead of the Albany *Argus*[1] as one of the papers in which to publish the laws of the U. States. I shall deeply regret if any serious misunderstanding shall exist between these two members of my Cabinet in consequence of so trivial a cause. Mr. Buchanan returned to his office, and we proceeded to the Baptist church on E Street and attended the commencement. The exercises were interesting, the young men acquitting themselves well. The Secretary of the Navy was also present. I returned to my office about 2 O'Clock.

After night Mr. Cave Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, Mr. Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, Gov. Brown, and Maj'r Graham of Tennessee called, and I spent a very agreeable evening with them. They left about 10 O'Clock P. M.

Mr. Buchanan left with me for my examination to-day the 4th No. of the articles which he is pre-

[1] The *Argus* was the organ at this time of the faction of the New York Democracy opposed to Wright and Van Buren. For an account of the political affiliations and management of the two papers, see Hudson, *History of Journalism in the United States.*

paring and which are in course of publication in the *Pennsylvanian* vindicating the course of the administration in the Oregon negotiation.

THURSDAY, *8th October, 1846.*— This morning at 10 O'Clock, the Secretary of War, the commissioner of Indian affairs, Judge Paris, Col. Abert, & Maj'r Andrews, the three latter being commissioners appointed to treat with the Head men and chiefs of the Winnebago Tribe of Indians now in this City, called. They stated to me the propositions which had been made by themselves & the Indians in reference to the terms of cession of the Indian Territory in Iowa at present occupied by that tribe, and stated to me that they desired to receive my directions on the subject. After conversing with them for a considerable time & understanding the subject I gave them my views & they retired.

At 12 O'Clock I opened my office for the reception of visitors. But few persons called. Among them was an old visitor who has been seeking an office from me since March 1845. I think in self-defense I shall be compelled to give him one & thus get clear of him.

Nothing of interest occurred during the remainder of the day.

I returned to Mr. Buchanan the article for the *Pennsylvanian* on the Oregon negotiation, which he left with me for my examination on yesterday. I made no suggestion of change in it.

FRIDAY, *9th October, 1846.*— Was occupied in business until 12 O'Clock to-day. At that hour I

opened my office and saw company. A number of persons called, but nothing worthy of notice occurred. Mr. Daniel Graham of Tennessee and his wife took a family dinner with me to-day. This was reception evening and a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called, & among others Gov. Brown of Tennessee & his wife. Gov. Brown and Mr. Graham have been in the City for several days on business with the War Department relating to disbursements made by the State of Tennessee for the Volunteers from that State who are now with the army in Mexico.

SATURDAY, *10th October, 1846.*—This was the Regular day of the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members attended at the usual hour except the Secretary of the Treasury, who is still absent from the City, having gone to the City of New York on business connected with his Department, and especially for the purpose of negotiating a loan for the Government. The office of Attorney General has not yet been filled, no answer having been received from Mr. Clifford of Maine, to whom I had tendered the office on the 30th ultimo (see this diary of the 1st Instant). The manner of prosecuting the Mexican war was the chief subject considered. The expedition to Tampico having been heretofore resolved upon, the question of extending that expedition to Vera Cruz was discussed. From information recently received it appears that an army may land near Sacraficias within 3 & [or] 4 miles of Vera Cruz, and invest the town of Vera Cruz in the rear.

This was information not heretofore known, & fearing that it might not be correct I requested Mr. Buchanan to write to the late U. S. Consul at Vera Cruz (Mr. Dimond) now in Rhode Island, & request him to come immediately to Washington, believing that from him reliable information could be obtained. It is believed that if an army of a few thousand men can land at the point suggested that they could by besieging the City in the rear cut off all supplies from it, and that by keeping up a strict blockade by sea, the City and fortress of San Juan de Ulloa must in the course of a very few days surrender. If this be practicable, it is of the greatest importance that it be done. In this the Cabinet agreed, but postponed a final decision until Mr. Dimond arrived, who from his long residence in Vera Cruz could probably give much valuable information not only of the practicability of landing at the point suggested and of the topography of the country in the rear of Vera Cruz, but also much other information important to be known before such an expedition is resolved upon. This Dimond it is believed may be here before the meeting of the Cabinet on tuesday next.

SUNDAY, *11th October, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church in company with Mrs. Polk today. We drove by the Indian Queen Hotel & took Maj'r Graham of Tennessee & his wife with us to church. I learned from Maj'r Graham that Gov. Brown of Tennessee and his wife left the City this

morning for New York from which they would return home by the Northern route.

About dark Capt. Eaton of the U. S. Army called in company with the Secretary of War & the Adjutant General. Capt. Eaton was the bearer of despatches from Gen'l Taylor, having left Monterey on the evening of the 25th ultimo. These despatches announced that a battle had been fought between the two armies at Monterey commencing on the evening of the 20th ultimo & continuing for between three and four days. The result was a capitulation by which the American army were left in possession of the City, and the Mexican army permitted to retire with their arms, except the larger part of their ordinance & munitions of war which were delivered over to the American forces. An armistice was also agreed upon to continue for eight weeks. In agreeing to this armistice Gen'l Taylor violated his express orders & I regret that I cannot approve his course. He had the enemy in his power & should have taken them prisoners, deprived them of their arms, discharged them on their parole of honour, and preserved the advantage which he had obtained by pushing on without delay further into the country, if the force at his command justified it. Our troops fought well, though with some loss of officers & men. It was a great mistake in Gen'l Taylor to agree to an armistice. It will only enable the Mexican army to reorganize and recruit so as to make another stand.

Besides Capt. Eaton, the adjutant Gen'l & Secre-

tary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Post Master General, Maj'r Graham of Tennessee, & my Private Secretary were present in my office while the official report from Gen'l Taylor was reading. Some opinions were expressed, but disapproving of the armistice I remained silent and was careful to express no opinion, except to regret the loss of the brave officers and men who had fallen and to say that they had fought bravely. The Adjutant Gen'l seemed anxious to justify Gen'l Taylor for having entered into the armistice. I expressed my disapprobation of it to the Secretary of War aside, & he agreed with me. Mr. Ritchie came in after the papers were read. When the Gentlemen were retiring I requested the members of the Cabinet to meet me at my office on to-morrow at 11 O'Clock at which hour a special meeting of the Cabinet I informed them would be held.

After they had retired Mr. Buchanan called, & condemned Gen'l Taylor in strong terms for having entered into the armistice. I informed him that there would be a meeting of the Cabinet on to-morrow at 11 O'Clock.

I received to-night interesting letters from Brigadier General Shields, commanding the Brigade of Volunteers from Illinois now on the Rio Grande, in relation to an expedition to Tampico. These letters I will preserve. There is a remarkable coincidence between the views which they present & the orders which were issued here on the 22nd ultimo ordering an expedition upon the Department of Tamaulipas including Tampico.

MONDAY, *12th October, 1846.*— I gave orders to my porter this morning that I would see no company to-day. I carefully examined the correspondence between Gen'l Taylor & the War Department since the commencement of hostilities with Mexico. At 11 O'Clock A. M. the Cabinet met, the Secretary of the Treasury being still absent in New York. What detains him so long I cannot imagine.

Gen'l Taylor's despatches from Monterey received last night were read in Cabinet. They were fully considered and discussed. The Cabinet were unanimous in the opinion, judging from all the information which Gen'l Taylor had communicated, that he had committed a great error in granting the terms of capitulation to the enemy which he had, and in agreeing to an armistice for the term of 8 weeks. But two reasons could have justified the terms granted to the enemy in the capitulation. The first is, if he believed that he could not capture them; & the 2nd. is, that Gen'l Ampudia may have induced him to believe that in consequence of the recent change of rulers in Mexico that Government was disposed to make peace. If the first reason existed Gen'l Taylor has not stated it in his despatches, and we have no information to justify the existence of this reason, though it may have existed. If the second reason was the one upon which he acted, then Gen'l Ampudia has overreached & deceived him. From all that appears in Gen'l Taylor's despatches it would seem that the U. S. Army had been successful during more than three days fighting, and had taken & held nearly all the strong positions of

the enemy, and by prosecuting their successes a little longer might have captured the whole Mexican army. Gen'l Taylor in his despatches states nothing of what Gen'l Ampudia had assured him of the dispositions of the Mexican Government for peace, but makes a general allusion to that point. The Cabinet were united in the opinion that the reasons assigned by Gen'l Taylor (as far as any reasons are assigned) for granting the terms of capitulation he did and for granting the armistice of eight weeks, are not satisfactory. Further information and explanations may be hereafter given by him. The Cabinet were united in the opinion that if Gen'l Taylor had captured the Mexican army, deprived them of their arms, and discharged them upon their parole of honour not to bear arms during the war or until they were regularly exchanged, that it would have probably ended the war with Mexico. As it is, he has permitted them to retire from Monterey, each officer and soldier with his arms, and with 6 pieces of artillery, not as prisoners of war on parole, but at perfect liberty to reorganize and renew the war at their own time and place, and by granting the armistice has given them 8 weeks to effect this object.

It was agreed unanimously that orders should be forthwith sent to Gen'l Taylor to terminate the armistice to which he had agreed, and to prosecute the war with energy and vigor. It was agreed that this should be done in terms neither to approve or condemn his conduct in granting the capitulation and the armistice. All agreed that the officers & men had fought gallantly and deserved the thanks

of the country, but regretted that the victory had not been crowned by the capture of the enemy's army. All agreed also that at the same time that the Secretary of War in his letter should not express approbation of Gen'l Taylor's course, he should not condemn it. This question was reserved until further information or explanations were received from Gen'l Taylor. From the order to terminate the armistice Gen'l T. will of course infer that that part of his course is not approved.

Some views in addition to those contained in the order to Gen'l Taylor of the 22nd. ultimo in relation to an expedition to Tampico and through the Department of Tamaulipas were considered and agreed upon, and that they should be embraced in the letter of the Secretary of War to be written to Gen'l T.

The Cabinet adjourned with the understanding that they should meet again at 9 O'Clock to-night to hear the letter of the Secretary of War to Gen'l Taylor in reply to his despatches received last night, which he said he would return immediately to his office & prepare.

Mr. Buchanan called at the appointed hour (9 O'Clock P. M.) but no other member of the Cabinet being in attendance he retired.

Maj'r Daniel Graham of Tennessee and his wife took a family dinner with me to-day, and after dinner took leave of the family, intending as they stated to leave the City on to-morrow morning for home. They will travel to Tennessee by the Southern route, via Charleston, S. Carolina.

TUESDAY, *13th October, 1846.*— This being Cabinet day, all the members attended at the usual hour except The Secretary of the Treasury, who is still absent in New York. I am wholly at a loss to know what detains him so long.

The Secretary of War read the draft of a letter to Gen'l Taylor which he had prepared in answer to his letters giving an account of the attack on Monterey. This letter was critically and carefully examined. Several modifications were made at my suggestion, & others at the suggestion of Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Mason. The letter was finally unanimously agreed upon. In the present state of the war with Mexico, it is a very important letter. I have no copy of it, but it may be found on the records of the War Department. The Cabinet adjourned about 2 O'Clock P. M.

This was reception evening, there had been rain & a strong wind almost the whole day; the evening was unpleasant and but a few gentlemen called. There were no ladies.

WEDNESDAY, *14th October, 1846.*— Col. Medill, the commissioner of Indian affairs, called this morning and informed me that a Treaty had been concluded and signed by the commissioners appointed by me, *viz.,* Judge Paris, Col. Abert, & Maj'r Andrews, with a delegation of Head-men and Chiefs of the Winnebagoe Tribe of Indians now in this City, by which they agreed to cede the country which they now occupy in the Territory of Iowa to the U. S. He read to me the Treaty. It had been made in pur-

suance of instructions & I approved it. At 12 O'Clock the Indians called accompanied by the U. S. agent & the commissioner of Indian affairs. The Secretary of War & the commissioners who had negotiated the Treaty were also present. I held a talk with the Indians, in which I impressed upon them the duty as well as the importance of their remaining at peace with the U. S. They appeared to be in a fine humour and well pleased with the Treaty. I then presented to the brother of Wee-no-Shick, Head chief of the Winnebagoes, a fine double-barrelled gun to take to his brother as a present, in return for the Pipe which he had sent to me and which had been presented to me by his brother on the 28th ultimo (see this diary of that day). After some further conversation with them they took leave, apparently well pleased. Before they left I told them that the commissioner of Indian affairs would furnish their agent (Gen'l Fletcher) with $500. to purchase presents for them.

After the Indians left I was occupied for more than an hour by the Rev'd Wm. L. McCalla [1] of the Presbyterian church, & brother of the 2nd Auditor of the Treasury. His ostensible object was to be appointed a chaplain in the army. I found him to be a fanatic, proscriptive in his religious opinions, and most unreasonable. He read to me a number of letters addressed to me (but which he did not deliver to me) from persons in Philadelphia, & among others from Mr. Dallas, Judge Kane, & Mr.

[1] William Latta McCalla, 1788–1859, a Presbyterian minister of Philadelphia, author of *Adventures in Texas*.

Leiper, giving him a good character and recommending him for a chaplaincy. He read also a most intemperate & violent petition which had been written and signed in a blank book, purporting to be addressed to me, but which he did not offer to deliver to me. His petition was a violent & most intolerant attack on the Roman Catholics & a censure on the administration for employing, as it represented, two or three Roman Catholic Priests with the army in Mexico as chaplains. The prominent idea, aside from its abuse of Catholics & its fanaticism, was that unless I appointed the Rev'd Mr. McCalla a chaplain, the petitioners intended to go before the public & attack the administration upon religious grounds because of the employment of these Catholic Priests. I felt great contempt for Mr. McCalla and for his religion and gave him my mind freely. I told him that, thank God, under our constitution there was no connection between Church and State, and that in my action as President of the U. S. I recognized no distinction of creeds in my appointments to office. I told him that his position [petition] was false, and that before he had written it & caused it to be signed he ought, as a man of God as he professed to be, to have ascertained the facts better. He attempted to explain the petition and denied that it was intended as an attack on the administration; to which I replied that its plain language was not susceptible of the explanation which he gave. I then stated to him how it happened that two or three Catholic Priests had been employed with the army. I told him it was known that Mex-

ico was a Catholic country, that their Priests had great influence over that ignorant people, and that they would probably deceive them by representing that the U. S. was waging war against them to overturn their religion, and that if they succeeded in imposing such a falsehood as this upon the people of Mexico they would infuriate them and induce them to carry on a desperate and more sanguinary war against our army, and that to undeceive the Mexicans two or three Catholic Priests who spoke their language, it was thought, would be useful with the army. I told him that these were the reasons and these alone which induced their employment. I told him that Col. Benton and other members of Congress who were well acquainted with the Mexican people had advised their employment for these reasons. I told him that they were not chaplains, that there was no law authorizing the appointment of chaplains for the army, but that they were employees, such as armies often require, who had been sent out for the purposes stated. I told him further that in the Navy, where Chaplains were authorized by law, I had appointed several since I came into office, without regard to the sects of religion to which they belonged, and that I had appointed no Catholic Priests. He intimated that he wished to have an appointment of Chaplain in the Navy. I told him there was one vacancy, but that I expected to fill it by the appointment of some pious good Clergyman of some one of the religious denominations residing in Ohio or some one of the Western States, from which section of the Union no Chap-

lain in the Navy, I believed, had ever been taken. I could not resist the conclusion that one of two things was true; either that Mr. McCalla expected to alarm me into his appointment to avoid an attack before the public from him, or that he hoped to be refused so as to give him a pretext to make such attack. If either was true I had great contempt for him, and I gave him distinctly to understand that I would not appoint him. I told him that if I were to appoint a chaplain of his own denomination, & I might do so for aught I knew, that if he really desired the place that I supposed he would still be infuriated. I told him I had appointed his brother 2nd Auditor and that he was among the last men who should be engaged in such a business. He denied any intention to attack the administration. I consider him either a knave without vital religion or a fanatic without reason. I have met with no man during my administration, among the numerous office-seekers who have beset me, for whom I have so profound a contempt. To attempt to connect me with religious feuds between sects, either for the purpose of coercing me to give him an office or to give him a pretext to attack me upon affected or pretended religious grounds if I did not, proves him to be a man destitute of both religion and principle. He delivered to me none of the letters or the petition which he read, & after interrupting me from my business for more than an hour he retired, & I was glad to be rid of him. I have a great veneration and regard for Religion & sincere piety, but a hypocrite or a bigotted fanatic without reason I can-

not bear. Whether he be the one or the other, his God alone is competent to judge. He has not succeeded in getting the office & I shall not be surprised to be assailed & slandered by him in the newspapers.

THURSDAY, *15th October, 1846.*— I received this morning a letter from the Hon. Nathan Clifford of Maine, accepting the office of Attorney General of the United States in place of Mr. Mason resigned, which I had tendered to him in a letter addressed to him on the 30th ultimo. Mr. Clifford states in his letter of acceptance that he will be in Washington in a day or two after his letter would reach me, ready to enter upon the duties of the office. He may therefore be expected in a day or two.

I received company to-day at 12 O'Clock. Quite a number of persons called, some on visits of ceremony and others on business & seeking office. I transacted business to-day with the Secretaries of State and the Navy. About 4 O'Clock P. M. while at dinner my porter announced to me that Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, had called, but finding me at dinner would call again. Mr. Walker left Washington on the 30th ultimo for New York (see this diary of the 1st Instant) and did not return until to-day. What detained him so long I am wholly at a loss to know. He may explain the cause of his long and unexpected absence when I see him.

Received a note this afternoon from Mr. Crampton,[1] Secretary of the Brittish Legation, announcing

[1] John F. T. Crampton, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister

to me the death in Washington on the 13th Instant of Henry Stephen Fox, late Her Brittanic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, and that his funeral will take place on to-morrow at 11 O'Clock.

FRIDAY, *16th October, 1846.*— Mr. Robert J. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, called this morning, having been absent from the City on a visit to New York since the 30th ultimo (see this diary of the 1st Instant). He reported to me that he had concluded no arrangement for a loan, that having been the object of his visit. The banks & capitalists insisted on terms to which he would not exceed [accede]. He now proposes to issue Treasury notes to the public creditors bearing an interest of 5 2-5 per cent. The subject will be considered in Cabinet on to-morrow.

At 11 O'Clock to-day accompanied by my Private Secretary and my Cabinet, except the Secretary of the Treasury, I attended at his residence the funeral of Henry Stephen Fox, late her Brittanic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, who died at Washington on the 13th Instant. I directed my coachman to turn out of the procession as it passed the President's mansion. The carriages of my Cabinet proceeded in the procession. I devoted the remain-

Plenipotentiary of Great Britain to the United States 1852–1856. He was given his passports by the American Government in May, 1856, because of his course in enlisting recruits for the Crimean War.

der of the day to the business on my table. I wrote some paragraphs for my message at the meeting of Congress in December next. My Private Secretary reported to me to-night that he had seen the name of the Hon. Nathan Clifford, to whom I had tendered the office of Attorney General of the U. States, on the Register at Coleman's Hotel this evening. On enquiring of my porter I learned that Mr. Clifford called during my absence to-day, while attending the funeral of Mr. Fox, and that he had told him that I would receive company this evening.

This was reception evening. Several persons, ladies & Gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *17th October, 1846.*—The Hon. Nathan Clifford of the State of Maine, to whom I had tendered the office of Attorney General of the United States, called this morning. I handed to him a letter which I had addressed to him enclosing a copy of a letter which I had addressed to each member of my Cabinet in March, 1845, when I was about to organize my administration (see letter Book). I had a conversation of some length with Mr. Clifford. I addressed a note to the State Department, directing a commission for Mr. Clifford as Atto. Gen'l of the U. S. to [be] prepared. The commission was sent to me as directed, when I signed it and delivered it to him.

This being Cabinet day I invited Mr. Clifford, though he had not taken the oath of office, to remain with me in Cabinet during the meeting to-day, & he did so.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. It is the first occasion on which I have had a full attendance of the Cabinet since the adjournment of Congress, on the 10th day of August last.

After attending to various matters of minor importance I called on the Secretary of the Treasury to Report the result of his late attempt to negotiate a loan in New York. He made a detailed statement of his attempt to negotiate the loan, the result of which was, that not being able to agree upon the terms he had returned without effecting the loan. The mode of effecting [it] became the subject of consideration and discussion. The Secretary of the Treasury at first inclined to the opinion that Treasury notes bearing an interest of 5 2-5 per cent should be issued, and paid to the public creditors as the public exigencies should require. The objection stated to this mode by Mr. Buchanan was that the Treasury notes thus issued would be subject to be constantly returned to the Treasury in payment of public dues. Mr. Buchanan proposed that a loan of four or five millions of Dollars should be made by the issue of Treasury notes to that amount bearing an interest of 6 pr Ct., upon condition that these notes should not be returned to the Treasury by paying them for public dues, for one year after their issuance. This proposition was the subject of some conversation, in which the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy agreed with Mr. Buchanan and expressed their approbation of it. The P. M. Gen'l expressed no opinion. The Secretary of the

Treasury yielded his own suggestion and said that perhaps the plan proposed by Mr. Buchanan would [be] less embarrassing to the Treasury than his own. Indeed he gave his full assent to it, and expressed a confidence that he could obtain the loan upon these terms from the Banks and Capitalists in New York. I then told him that as he was more immediately responsible than any other member of the administration, he could negotiate the loan in this mode if he chose. The Secretary of the Treasury then said that he would take immediate steps to effect the loan in this mode.

No other business of much importance was transacted.

Mr. Dimond, late U. S. consul at Vera Cruz, called this morning. Mr. Dimond was invited to visit Washington in a letter addressed to him by Mr. Buchanan on the 10th Instant (see this diary of that day) for the purpose of obtaining from him information of the topography of the country around the City of Vera Cruz, and the practicability of landing a force near that City, so as to invest it in the rear. Mr. Dimond at my request remained in my Private Secretary's office until after the Cabinet adjourned. I then invited him into my office, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of war remaining. I told Mr. Dimond that our interview with him must be regarded as strictly confidential, to which he assented. Mr. Dimond, the object of the interview having been explained to him, then stated that it was perfectly practicable to land a military force at Sacraficias, about 4 miles from Vera Cruz

and out of reach of the guns of the Castle. He made a rough diagram representing the position of the Castle, the City, Sacrificias, the place of landing of troops, and gave much other valuable information. I then requested him to call again at 7 O'Clock P. M., and in the mean-time to make a more perfect diagram. I requested the Secretary of War to attend at that hour and to bring Gen'l Tomson, an officer of experience, with him. I requested my Private Secretary to call on the Secretary of the Navy and ask him to attend at the same hour and bring with him Commodore Warrington of the Navy. I requested the Secretary of State also to attend.

At the appointed hour, 7 O'Clock P. M., The Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of State, Mr. Dimond, Gen'l Tomson, & Commodore Warrington attended. Mr. Dimond exhibited the rough diagram which he had prepared of the City of Vera Cruz and its defences, the Castle, the position of the Navy at Sacraficias, the place of landing, &c., and gave verbal explanations. From these explanations all present agreed that it was practicable to take Vera Cruz with a force of 3 or 4 thousand men, to be landed and to invest it in the rear, whilst the Navy should keep up a strict blockade by sea, and threaten or attack the Castle. After a consultation of near two hours on the subject the gentlemen present retired, but before they did so I enjoined secrecy on all present, stating to them that if such an expedition should be undertaken it was of the greatest importance that it should

be concealed from the enemy. Mr. Dimond was requested to prepare a written explanation of the rough diagram he had drawn & to reduce to writing the information he had given. Commodore Warrington was requested to prepare a more perfect diagram from the information given by Mr. Dimond; and Gen'l Tomson was requested to designate the troops which could be spared for the expedition.

SUNDAY, *18th October, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk.

At dark this evening Gen'l Tomson called with a written memorandum of the force which in his judgment would be sufficient for the expedition against Vera Cruz, as I had requested him to do in my interview with him on last evening (see this diary of yesterday). Gen'l Tomson intimated a desire to be ordered to take part in the contemplated expedition against Vera Cruz, to which I gave him no answer.

MONDAY, *19th October, 1846.*— Monday is usually a busy day, as I have generally more calls on that than on any other day of the week. It was so to-day. At 12 O'Clock M, when I opened my office, I had a large number of visitors, and among them a woman from Fredericksburg, Va., in appearance and dress a lady, begging money. I gave her a small sum, though I doubt whether she was worthy of it.

I transacted business at different periods of the day with the Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, &

Navy. I disposed of much business on my table, but nothing worthy of note took place.

TUESDAY, *20th October, 1846.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour this morning (11 O'Clock A. M.) all the members present. After the transaction of some other business I brought before the Cabinet the subject of the Mexican War and the manner of conducting it, & stated to them that it became necessary to decide the very important question whether Gen'l Taylor should advance with the main column of the army further into the interior of Mexico than Monterey where he now is, or whether he should hold & fortify that position and also hold the adjacent Northern Provinces, and send a part of his force to coöperate with the expedition ordered on the 22nd ultimo to invade Tamaulipas and by a combined operation of the Navy and the army to take Tampico and, if practicable, Vera Cruz. The subject was fully discussed, and the Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that under existing circumstances Gen'l Taylor should not advance beyond Monterey and the positions necessary to secure that City and the Department of New Leon of which it is the Capital. The reasons for this were numerous, among the most prominent of which were, that it was now ascertained that the population of that part of the Mexican territory were very hostile to the U. S.; that Gen'l Ampudia, by the terms of the capitulation of Monterey on the 24th ult., had been permitted to retire with a force estimated from 7 to 11 Thousand men, with their arms in their hands; that since that

time Gen'l Sa[n]ta anna in his letter to Gen'l Almonte of the 14th ultimo announced his purpose to place himself at the head of a large army which would undoubtedly unite with Ampudia's forces, and that thus united the Mexican army would probably number four or five times Gen'l Taylor's forces; that it was to be apprehended that the population beyond Monterey would be hostile, and there was no assurance that Gen'l Taylor could procure supplies for his army, or keep open the long line to Carmargo in his rear. Another reason was that there was no object to be attained by advancing further in that direction towards the attainment of peace. It was deemed best for Gen'l Taylor to stop at Monterey, & indeed such seemed to be his own opinion in his letters to the War Dep't of the 2nd July & 1st of August last, which were read in Cabinet. This point being settled it was agreed that a special messenger should be sent with dispatches to Gen'l Taylor to that effect. It was agreed also that Gen'l Taylor should be authorized to stop Gen'l Wool's expedition to Chihuahua, if he deemed it proper to do so. At the time Gen'l Wool was ordered to Chihuahua the general belief was that that Department was inimical to the Central Government of Mexico and would be disposed to dissolve its connection with it. Since that time, however, Paredes had been deposed, and declared in favour of restoring the confederation of 1824, and our information now is that the people of Chihuahua are favourable to that plan, and would probably be as hostile to the U. S. as the people of Monterey or any other part of the Mexi-

can Republic. This and other subsequent events have rendered the objects expected to be attained by the expedition to Chihuahua less certain, & indeed comparatively unimportant. Moreover the contemplated expedition to Tampico and Vera Cruz is regarded as much more important. It was agreed therefore to leave it to Gen'l Taylor's discretion to order Gen'l Wool to abandon the Chihuahua expedition and join the main army, as this would enable Gen'l T. to spare 2000 additional troops or more for the Tampico and Vera Cruz expedition.

Rob't M. McLane, Esq'r., of Baltimore, having tendered his services a few days ago to bear despatches to the army, or to serve in any capacity it might be desired, it was agreed that he should bear the despatches. The Secretary of War said he could in the course of to-morrow have the despatches prepared. I wrote a note to Mr. McLane and requested him to come to Washington to-night or to-morrow morning. My object was to put Mr. McLane fully in possession of all our views, that he might communicate them to Gen'l Taylor more fully than they could be expressed in writing. Mr. McLane is a graduate of West Point, was many years in the army, and is a very intelligent gentleman. His mission to the army will be more important than as the mere bearer of despatches.

The subject of the loan was further discussed, and the Secretary of the Treasury having concluded no definite arrangement, I expressed the opinion which I entertained that he should at once issue & pay out to the public creditors, or to capitalists who would ad-

vance the specie for them, Treasury notes bearing an interest of 5 2-5 per cent. I told him, however, that as he was more immediately responsible I would not direct him. He inclined to adopt the course which I recommended, but did not definitely decide. The Cabinet after a long sitting adjourned at 3 O'Clock P. M.

During the sitting of the Cabinet an incident occurred, which though not important, it may be proper to note. Mr. Buchanan handed to me a letter addressed to him by a man, if I remember the name correctly, named Lescure,[1] complaining that Mr. Peacock, Post Master at Harrisburg, Penn., had not been removed & Mr. McKinley, the Editor of the paper called the *Democratic Union,* or *Harrisburg Union,* appointed. I read the letter & without any remark handed it back to Mr. Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan had several times within the last few months insisted upon me to remove Mr. Peacock, the Present P. M., and appoint Mr. McKinley. Mr. Peacock was admitted to be a Democrat and to have discharged his duties, and his removal was insisted on on the ground that he had held the office for more than 20 years. I had several times told Mr. Buchanan that I would not remove one democrat to appoint another, and had refused to accede to his wishes. To-day it seems he desired to bring me to a final decision, and some time after I had read the letter alluded to and handed it back to him, he spoke to me aside, or rather in a tone not intended to be

[1] McKinley and Lescure were the publishers of the *Democratic Union* of Harrisburg.

heard by the other gentlemen, and asked me what he should write in answer to his correspondent. I told him that I had not changed my opinion, and that I should not remove Mr. Peacock. I told him also that if I were to remove him that I would not feel inclined to appoint Mr. McKinley, because in his paper during the late election in Pennsylvania he had violently opposed that great measure of my administration, the modification of the tariff by the act of 1846. I told Mr. Buchanan that he had no claims to be rewarded by me for opposing this leading measure of my administration. To this Mr. Buchanan replied that he had not been in the habit of reading his paper. In the early part of my administration I removed some democrats from office to make places for others, and did this in many instances at the urgent request of Mr. Buchanan. I am now satisfied that [I] ought not to have done so, and that my administration was greatly weakened by it. The truth is that Mr. Buchanan, I am satisfied, is governed more by his feelings and personal friendships than by his judgement in such matters. He was evidently dissatisfied with my determination in this case, but I am sure I am right.

This was reception evening. Twenty or thirty persons, ladies and gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *21st October, 1846.*— Before 12 O'Clock, the hour at which I open my office, I was a good deal disturbed by persons calling & sending in their cards asking the favour of personal interviews.

They were such persons as I could not well refuse to see. Their business was of no sort of consequence, and only had the effect to consume my time without profit to them or to myself. At 12 O'Clock when I opened my office an unusual number of persons called, chiefly office seekers, and among them one or two who have been occasionally annoying me for the last 18 months. I had no offices to give them, & gave them my prompt answer to that effect.

The Secretary of War called & left with me the rough draft of a letter he had written to Gen'l Taylor in pursuance of the decision of the Cabinet on yesterday. He left it with me for my revision. Shortly after he left the Secretary of the Navy called on business. After transacting it I requested him to examine the draft of the letter of the Secretary of War with me. He did so & we noted in pencil several modifications of the letter. At my request the Secretary of the Navy took the letter, with the modifications suggested, and said he would see the Secretary of War & examine it with him.

I attended to-day to several matters of business of minor importance on my table, though I was much interrupted by frequent calls.

Rob't M. McLane, Esq'r., of Baltimore, to whom I had written on yesterday called to-night, and informed me that he had received my letter & was ready to proceed to the army in Mexico as bearer of despatches. I then informed him confidentially of the views of the Government, which he would bear to Gen'l Taylor.

THURSDAY, *22nd October, 1846.*— I called a special meeting of the Cabinet for 11 O'Clock A. M. to-day. At that hour all the members of the Cabinet attended. The Secretary of War read the letter which he had prepared to Gen'l Taylor in pursuance of the decision of the Cabinet on the 20th Instant (see this diary of that day). It was fully considered paragraph by paragraph, and after undergoing various modifications was unanimously agreed to. It was a matter of so much importance that I was particular to take the opinion of each member of the Cabinet individually, commencing with the Attorney General. The subject was under consideration for more than two hours. I refer to the letter itself, which will be recorded in the War Department. The Secretary of War inquired of me if he ought not to inform Gen'l Scott of it, and to read the letter to him. I told him he ought to do so, but to enjoin the strictest secrecy on him as to its contents. Mr. Robert M. McLane, who had been selected to bear the letter to Gen'l Taylor, being in my Private Secretary's office, I asked the Cabinet if it should not be read to him under a strict injunction of confidence. All agreed that it would be proper to do so. The Secretary of War & the Secretary of State and myself then walked into my Private Secretary's office where Mr. McLane [was] and the letter was read to him by Mr. Buchanan. We held a conversation with Mr. McLane and gave him our views fully but in confidence. This was done to enable Mr. McLane to confer the more un-

derstandingly with Gen'l Taylor when he reached his camp.

The Secretary of the Treasury informed me to-day that he had made up his mind to issue Treasury notes bearing an interest of 5 2-5ths per cent, not exceeding in amt. Four million of Dollars. He addressed a communication to me stating that the public exigencies required a loan of this amount, & that in his opinion the issue of Treasury notes bearing that interest would be the best mode of obtaining it. I approved his suggestion & gave authority for the issue of the notes accordingly.

At 8 O'Clock to-night The Secretary of War called with his despatch to Gen'l Taylor copied and signed. Mr. McLane was also present. We had a full conversation in relation to the despatch and its objects. The Secretary of War stated that he had communicated its objects and contents to Gen'l Scott, who had interposed objections to the contemplated Vera Cruz expedition; that he had expressed a desire to command the expedition himself but thought twenty five or [thirty?] thousand men were necessary before it could be undertaken with safety. I told the Secretary that after Gen'l Scott's letter in May or June last,[1] I was unwilling to assign him to the command, and that I considered his objections as intended to embarrass the administration. The despatches were delivered to Mr. McLane. I wrote also private & unofficial letters to Maj'r Gen'l Patterson & Brigadier Gen'l Pillow (see letter Book)

[1] See Diary entry for May 21, 1846.

which I delivered to Mr. McLane. The Secretary of War & Mr. McLane retired about 10 O'Clock P. M., and I retired to rest.

To-day the Rev. Mr. Sprole & the Rev. John C. Smith of the Presbyterian church, and the Rev. Mr. Slicer of the methodist church, the Rev. Mr. Sampson of the Baptist church, and the wives of Mr. Smith and Mr. Sampson dined with me. The wives of Mr. Sprole & Mr. Slicer were also invited, but did not attend. The Rev. Mr. Morgan & his wife of the methodist church were invited, but did not attend.

FRIDAY, *23rd October, 1846.*— I devoted the morning to writing some paragraphs of my annual Message. At 12 O'Clock I opened my office for the reception of visitors. Quite a number of persons called, but nothing of much interest occurred. Among others the Hon Mr. Sawyer of Ohio, a representative in Congress, called. He said he was on a visit of business to the neighborhood of the City, and had merely called to pay his respects. He appeared to be in a much better humour than when Congress adjourned. He informed me that my administration was never stronger in Ohio than it was at present; that the tariff of 1846 was approved and sustained by the whole Democratic party of that State, & that he did not believe that my veto on the Harbour & River Bill had lost the Democracy a single vote in the State.

Mr. Buchanan called and informed me that the Hon. Charles J. Ingersoll of Phila. was in the City,

and had asked him to request me to return to him his letter to me desiring to know whether I intended to appoint him as minister to France. Mr. Buchanan had informed me some days ago that Mr. Ingersoll was offended because I had not answered his letter, and when I was informed by Mr. B. that he wished it to be returned to him the impression on my mind was that he had come to Washington in a spirit of hostility, and intended to make an issue with me because I had not promised to appoint him Minister to France. I so expressed myself to Mr. Buchanan & told him if Mr. Ingersoll intended to make such an issue that I was perfectly indifferent about it, and that he might take his own course. I told him that I intended to be respected as President of the U. States, & that Mr. Ingersoll need not think to coerce me into a compliance with his wishes by appointing him Minister to France, by such an apparent course of his intended hostility to my administration. I spoke in strong terms and perhaps in terms of rashness of Mr. Ingersoll, if such was his intention. Mr. Buchanan informed me that he had explained to Mr. Ingersoll the reasons which had prevented me from answering his letter, and that he was in a good humour, and wanted his letter because he did not wish it to appear of record that he had applied to me for the mission to France. I then told Mr. Buchanan that I would search for his letter and send it to him, Mr. B., to be delivered by him to Mr. Ingersoll. I searched for and found the letter after Mr. Buchanan left, and enclosed it to Mr. Buchanan inclosed in a note to him (see letter Book of this

date). The letter of Mr. Ingersoll was dated on the 18th of August last. I left Washington on a short excursion to Old Point Comfort on the 19th of August and returned on the evening of the 25th of that month, & Mr. Ingersoll's letter arrived in my absence, and was not answered, for the reason stated in my note to Mr. Buchanan of this date.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called, and among others Mr. Buchanan & Mr. C. J. Ingersoll. I received and treated Mr. Ingersoll courteously, as I do all persons who call, but no reference was made to his application to me to be appointed Minister to France, or to his letter which he had requested, through Mr. Buchanan, to be returned to him. I told Mr. Buchanan in the course of my conversation with him to-day, that Mr. C. J. Ingersoll's hostile position at present was a poor requital to me for my offer to nominate him to the Senate as minister to Russia.

SATURDAY, *24th October, 1846.*—This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet, and at 11 O'Clock A. M. all the members attended except the Secretary of War, who informed [me] last evening that he would go to Baltimore last night, where he expected to meet Mrs. Marcy on her return from New York to Washington.

Several public matters were the subject of conversation, but nothing important occurred. The Cabinet after remaining together one or two hours retired.

SUNDAY, *25th October, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and Mrs. J. Knox Walker and her little girl Maria.

Rec'd to-night important despatches from our squadron in the Pacific. The Secretary of the Navy called with them.

MONDAY, *26th October, 1846.*— I sent for the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy this morning and had a conversation with them in regard to the Mexican War. Among other things it was resolved to order one of the Steamers of the squadron to make weekly voyages between Vera Cruz and the Brasos Santiago, so as to keep up a regular communication between the Navy and Army. It was resolved also that Col. Mason [1] of the army, now at New York, should be ordered forthwith to California, to take command of the land forces in that quarter until Gen'l Kearney arrived. He will proceed by the way of Chagres. I saw the Secretary of State and handed to him the paragraphs which I had written in relation to the Mexican war and the causes of it, which were designed for my next annual message. He took them and promised to [submit] such views as he might think were proper. His views or draft when presented will of course be subject to my revision. I think it prudent to be preparing to meet Congress before my time shall be too much occupied, and therefore at my leisure mo-

[1] Richard B. Mason, Colonel of the First Dragoons, commander in California and *ex officio* Governor 1847–1848.

ments I write such paragraphs for the message as occur to me.

Saw company at 12 O'Clock to-day. The company that called were generally persons of respectable appearance, and desired simply to pay their respects. Two women called begging money. A few office seekers also called, but I gave them no encouragement.

After night the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of War called. The Secretary of the Navy read to me a despatch which he had prepared to Commodore Conner commanding the Gulf Squadron. We had some conversation in relation to the operations of the army and navy in the Mexican war; and they retired about 9 O'Clock P. M.

TUESDAY, *27th October, 1846.*— This being the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet, all the members attended at the usual hour. Various public matters were the subject of conversation, but none of much importance.

The Cabinet retired about 1 O'Clock P. M. I was engaged in disposing of the business on my table during the remainder of the day.

This was reception evening. A number of persons called, ladies and gentlemen.

WEDNESDAY, *28th October, 1846.*— I desired to be alone to-day, and so informed my porter this morning. It so happened however that I was almost constantly occupied during the day by the calls of

officers of the Government or by persons who called on special business and asked the favour to have an interview with me.

The Vice President of the U. States, who came to the City a day or two ago, called & spent an hour or more with me.

Mr. Burke, the Commissioner of Patents, called and informed me that he contemplated resigning his office shortly and returning to New Hampshire, at the urgent request of his friends in that State, for the purpose of assuming the Editorial Department of the *New Hampshire Patriot.* I did not advise him on the subject but requested him, if he did resign, to give me a few days notice of the time he would retire, that I might select his successor.

Mr. Bodisco, the Russian Minister, called at 2 O'Clock P. M. and delivered to me a letter from his Sovereign, the Emperor, announcing the marriage of his second daughter.

I wrote some paragraphs for my message this evening.

I received by the Southern Mail to-night letters from Quarter Master R. B. Reynolds & Brigadier Gen'l Pillow of Tennessee, both with the army in Mexico. The Secretary of War called and I read them to him. They gave an account of great dissatisfaction in the army at [with] Gen'l Taylor, for having granted the terms of capitulation he did to the enemy at Monterey, and for some other acts indicating partiality among his officers. These letters are confidential & I will preserve them.

THURSDAY, *29th October, 1846.*— Being much engaged to-day I told my porter that I desired to see no company. I found it impossible however to avoid seeing a few persons who insisted to come in, without being rude. I admitted them, and found that they had no business of any public importance. They took up my time about matters of their own in which I took not the slightest interest. This is a sort of annoyance that has become almost intolerable.

Mr. Calderon,[1] the Spanish minister, having spent the summer at the North, called to pay his respects. I saw him in the parlour below stairs. He is a pleasant gentleman. Several of the Heads of Departments and other officers of Government called, with whom I transacted business. The Secretary of War submitted to me a despatch to Gen'l Taylor which he had prepared. The Secretary of the Navy was present. Some amendments and alterations in the despatch, after consultation, were made.

To-night I wrote some additional passages for my annual message, desiring as I do as far as possible to have it off my hands before the members of Congress begin to assemble, when my time will be much occupied & I will have but little time to write.

FRIDAY, *30th October, 1846.*— I saw company at 12 O'Clock to-day. A larger number than usual called. I passed through the old scene of answering

[1] Señor Angel Calderon de la Barca, minister resident of Spain at Washington 1844–1853.

the applications of office seekers. I had no offices for them and made short work of it with them.

Many persons called to pay their respects, & among others Gov. Coles,[1] formerly of Illinois. Gov. C. was Mr. Madison's Private Secretary during a part of his administration.

The Secretary of the Treasury called and informed me that he apprehended that he could not raise the amount of money needed upon the issue of Treasury notes bearing an interest of 5 2-5ths pr. ct. The Secretary of the Navy & Secretary of State happened to come in on other business. The Secretary of the Treasury expressed the opinion that it would be necessary to make a funded loan. In this I concurred, judging from his statement of the condition of the Treasury and the difficulty he had experienced in raising money on Treasury notes. The Secretary of State and Secretary of the Navy concurred in this opinion also. The Secretary of the Treasury then said he would to-day advertise for a funded loan of four or five millions of dollars, & take the offer of the lowest bidder.

The Hon. Mr. Roberts,[2] a Representative in Congress from the State of Mississippi, called to-day. He informed me that he was going North with a part of his family & should not return to Mississippi until after the next Session of Congress.

This was reception evening. A larger number of persons than usual, ladies & gentlemen, attended.

[1] Edward Coles, 1786–1868, Governor of Illinois 1823–1826.

[2] Robert W. Roberts of Delaware, removed to Mississippi and served as Representative from that State 1843–1847.

SATURDAY, *31st October, 1846.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present. Nothing of importance was considered or decided on to-day. A number of matters of detail connected with the public service were the subject of conversation.

The Cabinet dispersed at an earlier hour than they usually do.

SUNDAY, *1st November, 1846.*— This was a wet & stormy day. In consequence of the weather Mrs. Polk declined attending church. We could have gone in the carriage as we always do, and been protected from the rain; but our coachman and footman must have been exposed. They had both had attacks of intermittent bilious fever, or chills & fever, during the fall & Mrs. Polk thought it would be wrong to expose them. We remained quietly at home through the day.

MONDAY, *2d November, 1846.*— Desiring to devote my time to the preparation of my message & to the business on my table, I directed my porter this morning to admit no visitors to-day, except officers of Government on public business.

The Secretary of War called with Col. Mason of the army (1st Dragoons) who had been ordered by my direction a few days ago to proceed to California. I had a conversation with them in relation to the military operations in California. One object of ordering Col. Mason to that service was, that in the event Gen'l Kearney should not be able to reach

California from Sante Fe this season, that Col. M. should be first in command. I had not sufficient confidence in Col. Stephenson of the New York Volunteer Regiment, who had been ordered round by sea, to entrust the command to him. Col. Mason will proceed by way of Chagres & Panama & probably reach California by that route before Col. Stephenson with his Regiment, who have been now more than a month at sea, can arrive there.

Mr. Pakenham, the Brittish Minister, called to deliver to me a letter from her Majesty, Victoria, in answer to my letter addressed to her Majesty recalling Mr. McLane at his own request as Env. Ex. & min. Plenipotentiary of the U. S. at her Majesty's Court. I received Mr. Pakenham in the Parlour below stairs. He was in full court Dress attended by an Attache of legation, also in full dress. He delivered to me the letter & retired.

A short time after Mr. Pakenham retired Mr. Figaniere,[1] the Portuguese Minister, called. I received him also in the parlour below stairs. He was not in full Court dress, but wore a Coat with a star and some embroidery on it. He delivered to me a letter from his sovereign announcing the birth of a princess. He talked familiarly, and among other things he said that [her] Majesty had one every year; that she had now six or seven; and I was much amused at the solemn account which he gave me of one of which she had been delivered some time ago that was still-born. He seemed to regard it as a

[1] Commander de Figaniere e Morao, minister resident of Portugal at Washington 1840–1854.

great misfortune, and went almost as minutely into the Queen's sufferings on the occasion as if he had been the attending physician or the mid-wife. Of course it was my duty to congratulate him on the event which he announced, & I remarked to him that there was no probability, I thought, of failure of a successor of the direct line to the throne. These ceremonies seem to be regarded as of Great importance by the Ministers of the Foreign Monarchies, though to me they are amusing & ridiculous.

This is my birth day. According to the entry in my father's family Bible I was born on the 2nd day of Nov., 1795, and my mother has told me that the event occurred as near as she could tell about 12 O'Clock, Meridian, on that day. I am consequently 51 years old to-day. The last year has been one of great anxiety and labour to me.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called.

TUESDAY, *3rd November, 1846.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present. Many matters of minor importance were considered, though nothing worthy to be noted. After a sitting of one or two hours the Cabinet dispersed. I devoted the remainder of the day to the preparation of my annual message.

WEDNESDAY, *4th November, 1846.*— I directed my porter this morning to admit no company until 2 O'Clock P. M., as I desired to devote my time to the preparation of my annual message, and to disposing of the business on my table. Some of the officers of the Government called before that hour on business,

whom I saw. At 2 O'Clock P. M. a number of persons called, chiefly office-seekers, but as I had no offices to bestow I had a short answer for them.

THURSDAY, *5th November, 1846.*— I instructed my porter this morning to admit no company to-day, as I desired to spend the day in a minute examination of the facts which had occurred connected with the Mexican war and the causes which led to it, with a view to incorporate them in my annual message. I spent the day in the examination accordingly and in writing some paragraphs of my message.

Some officers of the Government called on business in the course of the day, whom I saw.

Mr. Ritchie, the Editor of the *Union,* called and expressed some concern at a statement which he had seen in a letter purporting to have been written at Washington, published in a Phila. paper, stating that Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, was preparing a letter for publication on the subject of the tariff. I told him I had heard nothing of it from Mr. B. or from any other source, & could not believe that he would publish such a letter without informing me of it beforehand.

After night Mr. Buchanan called & had a long conversation with me on public affairs. He expressed the opinion among other things that it was the tariff of 1846 which had caused the Defeat of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania,[1] at the late elec-

[1] For Buchanan's views at this time on Pennsylvania politics and the tariff of 1846, see his letter to Henry D. Foster, November 19, 1846, in Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 117.

tion. I told him that in my next message I should recommend to Congress not to modify or change that act, until it could have a fair trial. The causes of the defeat of the Democratic party in the New York election, which had just taken place, were spoken of. I expressed the opinion that it was attributable to the bad faith of that portion of the Democratic party in New York opposed personally to Gov. Wright, called Old Hunkers. I expressed my deep regret at Gov. Wright's defeat, and my strong condemnation of that portion of the Democratic party who had suffered their State factions to control them, and had voted against him. I told him I could not regard any man as a true democrat who had taken that course. It is true that other causes existed in New York, such as anti-rentism, to produce the result, but the main cause I have no doubt was the lukewarmness and secret opposition to Gov. Wright of that portion of the Democratic party calling themselves Old Hunkers. This faction shall hereafter receive no favours at my hands if I know it.

FRIDAY, *6th November, 1846.*— I saw no company to-day, and devoted myself to an examination of the Mexican question and to the preparation of my annual message, especially that part of it which relates to that subject. I saw some of the officers of Government on public business in the course of the day.

This was reception evening. I[t] was a gloomy, wet to-night [evening], as it had been throughout the day. A few persons called, ladies & gentlemen.

SATURDAY, *7th November, 1846.*— This morning Senator Benton called, having returned to the City on yesterday. He had sent to me on yesterday letters which he had received from Col. Fremont, written in California, and from Gen'l Kearney in command of a division of the army, written at Santa Fe in New Mexico. He read to me from a Mexican Newspaper printed in Spanish, translating as he read, a report from Gen'l Castro to the Mexican Government, giving an account of Capt. Fremont's expedition into California, and attributing to that officer false objects and views. Col. Benton said that this document would be published in Europe & throughout the world, and from the false account given of the objects of that officer's expedition would do great injury to the United States, unless it was met & contradicted in an authentic manner. For this purpose he proposed to answer it & correct its misstatements to me as President of the United States, over his own name, so that in this form the refutation of Gen'l Castro's statements might be published in the newspapers. I told him I saw no objections to his doing so. The Cabinet being about assembling, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Clifford having come in, Col. Benton retired. As he was leaving I requested him to call again to-night & he said he would do so.

All the members of the Cabinet attended at the usual hour. The estimates of expenditures for the next fiscal year, commencing on the 1st day of July, 1847, required by law to be submitted to Congress at the commencement of the Session, was the chief

subject considered to-day. The Navy and War estimates were much the largest and most important. The estimates of the Navy & [as] stated by the Secretary of the Navy, did not exceed [by] more than about two millions, the ordinary expenditures for that branch of the public service in time of peace. The estimates of the war Department, as stated by the Secretary of War, exceeded by about twenty millions the ordinary expenditures for that branch of the service in time of peace. This was so large an increase that it gave rise to grave consideration to see whether it could not be reduced. The Secretary had estimated for 15,000 regular troops and 25,000 volunteers. The question was whether a less number of troops could prosecute the war with proper vigor. The decision of this question depended in some degree upon the plan of conducting the war which should be settled upon. If it was resolved to hold the provinces which we have taken simply, a less number would be sufficient; but if a war of invasion was to be pushed into the heart of Mexico, a less number would not answer.

Mr. Buchanan was of opinion that we should hold what we had. He thought the large estimate proposed by the Secretary of War would alarm the country and injuriously affect the public credit. He proposed that the estimate should be reduced, so as to provide for the 15,000 regular army and for 10,000 additional troops to be enlisted to serve during the war & to dispense with volunteers, and that Congress should be called upon to pass an act to this effect. Without deciding the question as to the man-

ner in which the war should be prosecuted, it was finally agreed that the estimate for the fiscal year commencing on the 1st of July, 1847, should be made for the regular army of 15,000 men, for 10,000 additional troops, either enlisted for the war or volunteers, and for an additional 10,000 men contingently, to be called into service if necessary. This would make an army of 35,000 men. To this the Cabinet agreed unanimously. The question was left open as to the manner of conducting the war hereafter; that is to say, whether we should simply hold possession of the Provinces we had taken, or should prosecute the war into the heart of Mexico. Much conversation took place in regard to the loan which had been proposed by the Treasury Department. It was stated, and I have no doubt truly, that there was a combination of the Banks in New York and Boston to prevent the loan being taken, with the view probably to force the Government to repeal the Constitutional Treasury law of the last session. Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that it would be impossible to conduct the war upon hard money, and that although he had been an advocate of the Independant Treasury law he was satisfied that the Government could not get on during the war under its operations.

After night Col. Benton called as I had requested him to do when the Cabinet were about to assemble this morning. I had a long and interesting conversation with him on the subject of the Mexican war & the proper manner of prosecuting it with a view to obtain an honorable and speedy peace. He ex-

pressed the opinion that a bold blow should be struck at once. He thought the City of Vera Cruz should be taken at once & with it would fall the Castle at that place, & that after this was done there should be a rapid crushing movement made from Vera Cruz on the City of Mexico. He said that Commissioners composed of the first men in the country of both political parties, should accompany the Head Quarters of the army, who were authorized to offer peace before a battle, during the battle, & after it was over. He said this had often been done in the European wars. He then said, some months ago, you offered me the first mission in the world. (I had offered him the mission to France near the close of the last Session of Congress) I declined that, but I am willing to accompany the army as one of these commissioners of peace. I told him if [it] was thought expedient to institute such a commission I would be most happy to avail myself of his services in that capacity. We had much conversation on the subject of the war & the manner of conducting[1] it. Col. Benton was evidently in a fine humour & said he had returned to Washington to render my administration any aid in his power in conducting the war. He condemned the policy which had been suggested in some quarters of holding the Mexican territory which we had acquired, & not prosecuting the war

[1] Benton, *View,* II, 693, gives Benton's ideas in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war, and tells how he won over the President to this policy after the latter had already incorporated in his annual message a recommendation in favor of the policy of inactive occupation of the Mexican territory already acquired.

further into the Mexican territory. He said the war would be much protracted by such a policy, & might not be ended for years. He said further the late elections have gone against the administration & that if such a policy of inactivity was adopted the patriotic spirit of the country would flag & the Democratic party would be overthrown. He said ours were a go-ahead people, and that our only policy either to obtain a peace or save ourselves was to press the war boldly.

SUNDAY, *8th November, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk & her niece, Miss Rucker.

MONDAY, *9th November, 1846.*— This was the day of interring the remains of Col. Cross, late of the U. S. Army. Col. Cross was murdered by the Mexicans near Gen'l Taylor's camp on the Rio Grande in April last. His remains were removed to this City where his family reside. They arrived here on friday evening last. I had been invited to attend the funeral at his family residence, had resolved to do so, & had requested the members of my cabinet to do so. Shortly before the hour of leaving Col. Benton called & told me he had prepared the letter which he had informed me on saturday last he would address to me, defending Col. Fremont's conduct in California against the calumnious Report of Governor Castro to the Mexican Government against that officer. He commenced reading the letter to me, but finding that he would not have time to conclude it before the hour

of attending the funeral, & one or two members of the Cabinet having called for the purpose of accompanying me, I made my apology to him and asked him to call at 2 O'Clock P. M., by which time I would return. He said he would do so, but as he wished to have it published in to-morrow morning's papers, he would while I was gone to the funeral have a proof sheet of it struck off & meet me at the hour suggested. I told him I would invite the Secretary of War to return from the funeral with me, & we desired to converse further with him on the subject of the Mexican War.

Accompanied by all the members of my Cabinet, I attended the funeral of Col. Cross at the residence of his family in this City. It was attended by many military and Naval officers in full uniform, & by a large number of citizens. The services were brief. The procession moved towards the Congressional burying ground. On reaching Pennsylvania Avenue I directed my carriage to leave the procession & I returned to the President's mansion. The Secretary of State & of War & my Private Secretary accompanied me. I informed the Secretary of War that Col. Benton was to call at 2 O'Clock P. M., & that I desired him to be at my office at that hour that we might converse with him on the subject of the Mexican war. He said he would go to his office & return at that hour. I told him to bring the Secretary of the Navy with him. He returned at that hour & some time afterwards Col. Benton called. Col. B. read the proof sheet of his letter [1] to me de-

[1] Published in the Washington *Union,* November 9, 1846.

fending Col. Fremont against the attack of Gov. Castro of California.

I then introduced the subject of the Mexican war, and after the conversation had proceeded a few minutes the Secretary of the Navy came in. We had a full & free conversation with him and communicated what information we had, what orders had been issued to the army and navy, & what was contemplated. He repeated the views which he had expressed to me on Saturday, that Vera Cruz should be taken and a rapid & crushing movement made with a large force on the City of Mexico, which should be accompanied by commissioners authorized to make peace, as he had before suggested. I told him the subject was engaging my serious attention & that it would continue to do so. No decision was made, & about 4 O'Clock the conversation ended.

Just before I started to attend Col. Cross's funeral to-day, Mr. Robertson, U. S. consul at Bremen, called and delivered to me a package which he stated contained a small quantity of cotton prepared as a substitute for gun-pow[d]er, which he had brought with him from Europe with instructions that it was only to be opened in the presence of the President of the United States. The package was addressed to me with the superscription that it was only to be opened in my presence. The discovery had been made in Germany. I told Mr. Robertson I was rather an unbeliever in the merits of the discovery, but that [as] I was about attending the funeral of Col. Cross I had no time then to attend to it. He requested me to open the outer envelope, as he which

[wished] to procure the specification which it enclosed for the purpose of filing it in the Patent office, with a view to have the discovery patented. I opened the seal and delivered to him the papers which he wished. The inner package which contained the cotton was still sealed & was directed, as was the outer envelope, that it was only to be opened in the presence of the President of the U. States. I put the inner package in my drawer & requested him to call on to-morrow.

When Col. Benton was retiring from my office this afternoon I requested him to call again on to-morrow morning & he said he would do so.

TUESDAY, *10th November, 1846.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present.

Before the Cabinet assembled Col. Benton called, as I had requested him to do on yesterday. The subject of the Mexican war was resumed. Col. B. repeated the views which he had before expressed, but more in detail & enforced them. I told him if the movement on the City of Mexico was made, it would be necessary to call out a considerable number of additional troops. I had before informed him of the orders which had been issued for the contemplated expedition against Tampico and possibly Vera Cruz, but a movement on the City of Mexico had not been at present contemplated, nor unless it was ascertained that peace could not be obtained without it. He said that a small force could, he had no doubt, in co-operation with the Navy, starve out or take the

town of Vera Cruz, and with it would fall the Castle, but that would not bring peace unless it was followed with a large force on the City of Mexico. I told him I apprehended from all I had learned that Gen'l Taylor would not willingly spare any considerable portion of the force with him at Monterey, & that I apprehended he would not heartily cooperate with the Government in carrying into effect such an expedition unless he commanded it himself, and that I thought Gen'l Taylor a brave officer but not a man of capacity enough for such a command. In this he concurred. I asked who would be the proper officer to command so important an expedition. He did not answer. I spoke of Gen'l Scott. He said he had no confidence in him. Some other officers were named by me. He then said there ought to be a Lieutenant General of the army who should be General in chief. He said it required a man of talents and resources as well as a military man for such a command, & that with a view to obtain peace more depended upon the talents & energy of the officer than upon mere bravery. He then said that if such an office was created by Congress, he would be willing to accept the command himself. I remarked Generally that I would have confidence in him and would be pleased to see him at the head of the army in such an expedition. He alluded to what was apparent to every one, that the Whigs were endeavouring to turn this war to party & political account. He said "I have been looking at events as they have transpired this summer, & left Kentucky where I have spent some weeks and returned to

Washington to render you any aid in my power. He said, You know what my position has been (alluding as I inferred to his preference for Mr. Van Buren in the last Presidential election) but let By-gones be by-gones. I quarrelled & fought with Gen'l Jackson; I made friends with him & came to his support, and during the gloomy period of the Bank panic, I have held many consultations with him in this room. Now I will give you any support in this war in my power." I expressed my gratification at hearing these sentiments and said frankly to him that I had never entertained any but the most [cordial] feelings for him.

After much further conversation in relation to the war he left. Shortly afterwards the Cabinet assembled. The chief topic of conversation to-day was the Mexican war and Col. Benton's views of the manner of conducting it, which I communicated to the Cabinet, of course in the confidence which belongs to all Cabinet consultations.

No distinct question was presented for a decision but the views of the different gentlemen were freely expressed. The general impression seemed to be that it would be necessary to call out additional troops with a view to the successful prosecution of the campaign against Vera Cruz, & especially if an expedition against the City of Mexico was resolved upon. No answer had been received from Gen'l Taylor to the despatch of the Secretary of War of the 22nd of September, and it was deemed prudent before any decision was made in regard to the future course of the campaign to await his answer which

must undoubtedly be received soon. Mr. Buchanan was in favour of taking Vera Cruz, but disinclined to favour the expedition against the City of Mexico. After much conversation on the subject, & in relation to the state of the finances & the probability of obtaining a loan, the Cabinet adjourned.

This was reception evening. A larger number of persons attended, ladies & gentlemen, than usually do; among them was Col. Benton & his daughter, Mrs. Fremont. The Secretary of War called & informed me that he had received by to-night's [mail] despatches from Gen'l Taylor. Before the company dispersed, I retired to my office with the Secretary of War, and he read the despatches. They were dated from the 6th to the 13th of October inclusive. They contained no satisfactory information upon the points on which Gen'l Taylor had been asked for information in the Secretary's despatch to him of the 22nd of September. The truth is, from my private letters from Gen'l Pillow and from information from other sources, I apprehend that Gen'l Taylor's feelings are anything but friendly to the Executive Government. He is, I fear, disposed to cast all responsibility off himself, and not heartily to co-operate with the Government in prosecuting the war. He has no sympathies for the administration and cares only for himself. This is most reprehensible on his part for I have not only treated [him] with great kindness, but have given him his present promotion. I have known nothing of politics in my treatment of him, but I am forced to believe that he has been recently much influenced by Baylie Pey-

ton and other political partisans, and has suffered his bitter political feeling to have much more to do with his conduct than he should have done. I form this conclusion from several sources of information, but refer particularly to my private letters from Mr. Robert B. Reynolds and Gen'l Pillow.

The Secretary of War was disappointed & dissatisfied with his answer. The want of the information which he had asked from Gen'l Taylor, and which he has failed to give, is very embarrassing to him & to me.

To-day at 3 P. M. I went with Mr. Robertson, U. S. Consul at Bremen, to the War Department, where the package of Gun cotton which he delivered to me on yesterday was opened, [and] some experiments made by Col. Totten. Its explosive qualities surprised me.

WEDNESDAY, *11th November, 1846.*— I gave orders to my porter that I would see no company today, but was constrained to see a few persons on special business. I was occupied in preparing my message, and in a conference with the Secretary of War.

At 3 O'Clock P. M. The Brazilian Minister called and announced to me the birth of a Princess. I received him in the parlour & he delivered [to] me a letter from his sovereign announcing the event, accompanied by quite a speech of his own as though it was a matter of great importance.

Andrew Jackson, jr., of the Hermitage, the adopted son of Gen'l Jackson, called on me to-day.

Col. Benton called on me to-night at my request. I had a still further conversation with him in relation to the Mexican war. I told him I did not think it probable that Congress would create the office of Lieutenant General which he had suggested on yesterday. He said he thought himself it was doubtful. After speaking about the propriety of calling out an increased force, I told him that in that event I might appoint an additional Maj'r Gen'l. He said that if I did so the General appointed would be the junior officer of his rank, and he would not desire it. I remarked to him that I had supposed he would not desire it, and that in addition to this I had come under some commitment to Gen'l Houston of Texas, if another Maj'r Gen'l was to be appointed. I told him that if the commission to treat for peace, which he had suggested in a former conversation should accompany the army, should be created, it would give me pleasure to place him at the head of that commission. He said if it was settled that a large force was to march from Vera Cruz on the City of Mexico he would accept, for then it would be important & there would be dignity in it. I told him that the inclination of my mind was to call for eight additional Regiments, with a view to the bold movement which he had suggested, & that in the course of tomorrow I would probably decide. I read to him Gen'l Taylor's last despatch & also all the orders & communications which had been sent to him relating to the contemplated expeditions against Tampico & Vera Cruz. He agreed with me that Gen'l Taylor's answer was unsatisfactory & that he was unfit for

command. After much further conversation of a free and friendly character he retired.

THURSDAY, *12th November, 1846.*— I did not open my office for the reception of company generally to-day. Mr. Buchanan called and spent several hours in the room adjoining my office, in examining the draft of my message which I had made, in part from a rough draft of his, on the subject of the Mexican War.

The Hon. Wm. R. King, late U. S. Minister at Paris, called. He reached the City, he informed me, on last evening.

Andrew Jackson, jr., & his wife called. I saw them in the parlour.

The Secretary of War called this morning & informed me that Gen'l Scott had informed him that he was preparing, & would deliver to him to-day, his views of the manner in which the Mexican war should be prosecuted. After night the Secretary sent the communication of Gen'l Scott to me and shortly afterwards called himself. After reading it I returned it to the Secretary, who said he would call on Col. Benton to-night and consult further with him on the subject & communicate to him Gen'l Scott's views.

FRIDAY, *13th November, 1846.*— I occupied myself chiefly to-day in revising what I had written and preparing additional passages of my annual message. Hon. Mr. Rhett of S. C. called with a friend. Col. Benton called and repeated his views & urged them,

of assembling a large and overpowering force, taking Vera Cruz, and marching upon the City of Mexico, as the only mode of conducting the present war with Mexico to a speedy and successful termination. The Secretary of War came in while Col. Benton was with me, and the conversation was continued. I told Col. Benton that I had made up my mind to call out immediately six or eight Regiments of additional Volunteers, & that I should probably do so on to-morrow. After Col. Benton retired, the Secretary of War & myself had some further conversation on the subject. The Secretary expressed his decided opinion that I should call out the additional forces which I had proposed immediately. He left saying that he would hold a further conversation with Gen'l Scott on the subject to-night, & would inform me of the Gen'l's views & opinions on to-morrow.

This evening at 4 O'Clock, Andrew Jackson, jr., & his wife and daughter of the Hermitage, and Miss Taggart, the niece of Mrs. Jackson, of Georgetown, D. C., took a family Dinner with me. Mr. Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, also dined with me.

This was reception evening, but being much engaged in my office, I did not go into the parlour. I learn from the family that quite a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *14th November, 1846.*—The Hon. John W. Davis of Indiana, Speaker of the Ho. Repts., called this morning. He informed me that he had arrived in Washington on the day before yes-

terday. I had a long conversation with him on public subjects. His opinion was that the administration and the Democratic party were never stronger than at present in Indiana. In the course of the conversation he informed me that he expected to decline being a candidate for re-election to Congress from his District, and expressed a desire to be appointed Minister to Brazil if Mr. Wise returned from that Court. I told him that it was probable that Mr. Wise would return in the course of a few months, but that in that event I was under some commitments as to his successor, and should probably feel bound to confer the office upon some citizen of Ohio. I advised him to be a candidate for re-election to Congress and continue to hold the office of Speaker.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. The chief and almost the only question of conversation to-day was whether there should be a further call upon the States for an additional force of Volunteers, with a view to the vigorous prosecution of the Mexican war. The subject was fully discussed. The Secretary of War expressed his opinion that it was necessary to call out such a force. Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, expressed his opinion in favour of taking Vera Cruz, but strongly against sending any expedition against the City of Mexico. He thought such an expedition would cost a vast sum of money, that it was doubtful whether it could be successful, and if it could there was no object to be obtained by it, as it would not, as he thought, facilitate peace. As, however, the Secretary of War thought the additional force neces-

sary, he would yield his assent to it, though reluctantly. The Secretary of the Treasury said he regarded the capture of Vera Cruz as very important, and as the Secretary of War thought the additional force necessary he would yield his assent to it. All the other members of the Cabinet were in favour of it, the P. M. Gen'l saying that he assented to it as the Secretary of War thought it necessary. The Cabinet having all expressed their opinions, I then observed that the Secretary of War had communicated to the Cabinet all the information which he possessed, and that we all had the same means of judging of the propriety of the proposed call that he had. I stated that I was in favour of the call, and that I did not base my opinion upon that of the Secretary of War, but upon the facts which were in the knowledge of every member of the Cabinet. I did not think that the Secretary of War should be held solely responsible for the measure because every member of the Cabinet possessed the same information which he did, and had the same means of judging which he had. I thought therefore that each member of the Cabinet should take his own full responsibility, and not escape that responsibility by saying that he yielded his assent to the call because the Secretary of War thought it necessary, and therefore it was that I made the remark I did that I was in favour of it because I thought it proper, and not because the Secretary of War thought so. It was then unanimously agreed that nine additional Regiments to serve during the War should be called for from the States. The Cabinet proceeded to consider

of the States from which the call should be made. There was some difficulty in determining this, but finally it was agreed upon. The Cabinet fully discussed the conduct of Gen'l Taylor and were agreed that he was unfit for the chief command, that he had not mind enough for the station, that he was a bitter political partisan & had no sympathies with the administration, and that he had been recently controlled, particularly in his expedition to Monterey, by Bailey Peyton, Mr. Kendall,[1] Editor of the *Picayune* at New Orleans, and ass't adjutant Gen'l Bliss,[2] who were cunning & shrewd men of more talents than himself, and had controlled him for political purposes. I expressed my deep regret that I was compelled from all the information I had received to come to this conclusion. I stated, what all the Cabinet knew, that I had never suffered politics to mingle with the conduct of this war; that I had promoted Gen'l Taylor & treated him very kindly & given him my confidence as chief in command of the army, but that I was compelled to believe that he had been weak enough to suffer himself to be controlled by political partisans, who had no command in the army, but had attached themselves to it & had attended his camp for political purposes. All were at a loss to designate who should be the chief in command in the expedition against Vera Cruz. I sug-

[1] George Wilkins Kendall, founder, with Francis A. Lumsden, of the *Picayune* in 1838. He accompanied the armies of Taylor and Scott and organized a very effective news service.

[2] William Wallace Smith Bliss, 1815–1853, General Taylor's chief-of-staff during the Mexican War.

gested Maj'r Gen'l Butler of the Volunteers, & I think him the best man. Nothing upon this point was decided.

The Secretary of the Treasury stated that the loan of five millions of Dollars for which he had advertised had been all taken. He said the whole sum was proposed to be taken by a single individual in New York upon better terms than had been proposed by other bidders; that he had doubted whether there was such a person, that he had communicated by Telegraph with the collector of New York, who had answered that there was such a person in N. York, but that he was without credit. He said he was bound to accept the bid of this person if he performed what he proposed, because it was the best which was offered, and that he had determined to send the Chief Clerk of the Treasury Department (Mr. Young) to New York this afternoon with instructions to give this person the loan, if he paid the money. If he failed to comply with his bid the loan would be given to others who had bid, but whose offers were less favourable to the Government.

The Cabinet after a longer sitting than is usual adjourned between 3 & 4 O'Clock P. M.

To-night Senator Dix of New York called, with whom I had a long conversation in relation to the present condition of public affairs.

Mr. Buchanan proposed in the Cabinet meeting to-day, after it had been determined upon to call out 9 additional Regiments of Volunteers, that one of them should be called from Massachusetts. It did not strike me favourably. My first impression was

that we should not extend the call further North than the State of New York. Mr. Clifford doubted the policy on other grounds. He feared that the other New England States might feel that they were overlooked if Federal Massachusetts was the only one among them from which a requisition was made. Upon further reflection, however, he doubted upon the subject.

SUNDAY, *15th November, 1846.*—The more I had reflected upon the suggestion made by Mr. Buchanan in Cabinet on yesterday, that one of the nine Regiments of volunteers to be called out should be taken from Massachusetts, the more favourably I thought of it. I sent for the Secretary of War this morning to consult him on the subject. He inclined to favour the suggestion, but said it might be well to consult Mr. Clifford again before it was decided upon. The Secretary left, and I sent for Mr. Clifford. He said he thought more favourably of it, than he did on yesterday. It was concluded that Mr. Clifford should consult Mr. Burke of New Hampshire (the commissioner of Patents) & see me again after church to-day.

I attended the first Presbyterian church in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

At 3 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Clifford, the Atto. Gen'l, called and informed me that he had seen Mr. Burke, who entirely approved the suggestion that one of the Regiments of Volunteers should be called from New Hampshire [Massachusetts]. If she obeyed the call all would be well. If she refused to obey it and

acted as she did in the last war with Great Brittain, the country would know it.

MONDAY, *16th November, 1846.*— The Secretary of War called this morning, and I informed him of the opinion of Mr. Clifford and Mr. Burke in regard to the call on the State of Massachusetts for one of the Regiments of Volunteers to be called into the public service. It was then agreed upon that one of the Regiments should be taken from Massachusetts (see this diary for the last two days). The Secretary of War read the draft he had prepared of his requisition upon the Governors of the several States, upon whom it had been resolved in Cabinet to call for additional Volunteers. I suggested some alterations which were made.

Col. King, late U. S. Minister to France, called and spent an hour with me in agreeable conversation about public affairs.

To-night I received from Col. Benton a written plan for the prosecution of the war against Mexico. My porter, who delivered it to me, informed me that Col. Benton said when he handed it to him at the door, that he would call on me to-morrow morning.

TUESDAY, *17th November, 1846.*— Col. Benton called this morning before the meeting of the Cabinet, and held a conversation with me in relation to his plan of the campaign against Mexico, an outline of which he had communicated to me in writing last evening.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. The Mexican war occupied exclusive attention to-day. I read to the Cabinet Col. Benton's plan of the campaign as communicated to me last night. The Secretary of War read a written memorandum from Gen'l Scott giving a statement of the forces now in Mexico, and of the additional forces and preparations which in his opinion would be necessary to make an attack on the City of Vera Cruz and march to the City of Mexico. The force he proposed was about 14,000, and the whole plan was upon a large scale. Much conversation took place on the subject. It had been heretofore resolved to take Vera Cruz if practicable, but it had not been resolved to march from that point on the City of Mexico. In the discussion Mr. Buchanan seemed to consider that such was the determination, and expressed his opinion strongly against it, but remarked that as he was overruled he would have to acquiesce. Mr. Marcy remarked to him that he had not been overruled, for as he understood it no decision had been made by the President and the Cabinet, that he had read Gen'l Scott's plan, but the subject was one for consideration, not yet decided upon. Mr. Buchanan said he was decidedly in favour of taking Vera Cruz but was against marching upon the City of Mexico. Among other reasons which he assigned and he gave them at some length, he remarked that he had not yet seen the budget and did not know where the money was to come from. It being resolved upon to send an expedition to take Vera Cruz, I myself considered it an

open question, to be determined according to circumstances hereafter, whether a column should be sent from Vera Cruz against the City of Mexico. If peace should not be made I am decidedly in favour of taking the City of Mexico if we have sufficient force in the field to do it. Great difficulty existed in selecting the commander of the expedition against Vera Cruz. In Gen'l Taylor a want of confidence was expressed in his capacity, while it was known that he had suffered his partisan political feelings to render himself hostile to the administration. His constant effort has been to throw the responsibility of any disaster which might happen on the administration. In this he has been most ungrateful for the kindness which he has received at my hands. All agreed that he was unfit, after what had occurred, for the command of the expedition against Vera Cruz. The difficulty was in selecting a proper officer. Maj'r Gen'l Patterson of the Volunteers, who had been named for the Tampico expedition, it was feared had not sufficient experience. Gen'l Scott it [was known] was hostile to the administration, and it was apprehended would have no sympathy with it in carrying out its plans. After much discussion Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Walker, Mr. Marcy, & Mr. Mason, although all of them had serious objections to him, yet came to the conclusion that as he was the highest officer in command in the army, he should be entrusted with the conduct of this important expedition. Mr. Johnson was opposed to him, and Mr. Clifford was inclined to be so, but expressed no decided opinion. After a long con-

versation I informed the Cabinet that I would think further on the subject before I decided. I have strong objections to Gen'l Scott, and after his very exceptionable letter in May last nothing but stern necessity and a sense of public duty could induce me to place him at the head of so important expedition. Still I do not well see how it can be avoided. He is the Gen'l-in-chief of the army. If I had the power to select a Gen'l I would select Col. Benton to conduct the expedition. Without coming to any decision the Cabinet adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, *18th November, 1846.*— I sent for the Secretary of War this morning, & held a further conversation with him in regard to the officer to be selected to command the expedition to Vera Cruz. He said he had had great anxiety and trouble about it, but upon full reflection, although he would do so reluctantly, he thought we would be compelled to take Gen'l Scott. After some further conversation I requested him to call on Col. Benton & confer with him confidentially on the subject. He left and returned in the course of an hour & reported that he had seen Col. Benton, who thought as he did, that we would have to use the instruments which the law had given, and under all the circumstances we would, he thought, be compelled to take Gen'l Scott. I was not still [still not] satisfied, & told the Secretary that I would send for Col. Benton & see him on the subject myself. I sent my Private Secretary to invite Col. Benton to see me. Col. B. called, and upon a full view of the whole subject he ad-

vised that Gen'l Scott be assigned to the command as the best we could do, although he had no confidence in him. I told Col. Benton I must yield my objections to Gen'l Scott, & would see the Secretary and direct that he be ordered to take the command of the expedition to Vera Cruz. I told Col. Benton that if I could induce Congress to create the office of Lieut. Gen'l I would appoint him to command the whole forces. He said he would take such a command.

I was busily occupied until night preparing my message. After night upon my invitation the Secretary of the Navy called, & I read to him the part of my message which related to the Mexican war & the tariff. The Secretary of War came in, and I informed him of the result of my interview to-day with Col. Benton. The Secretary of War said that he had thought over the matter in every possible aspect and he was fully satisfied that we would be compelled to take Gen'l Scott for the command against Vera Cruz. The Secretary of the Navy concurred in this opinion. They advised me to send for Gen'l Scott & see him myself in the morning. I requested the Secretary of War to ask him to call on to-morrow at 9 O'Clock A.M. I have no great confidence in Gen'l Scott as a military commander, and after his very exceptionable letter of May last to the Secretary of War, it is with reluctance that I assign him to this important command. If I had the power I would certainly select some other, but I am compelled to use the officers provided by law, and under all the circumstances feel constrained to

assign him to this command. He is the highest in command in the regular army and it is his natural position.

To-night I read to the Secretary of the Navy that portion of my message which I had prepared in relation to Mexico & the tariff.

THURSDAY, *19th November, 1846.*— Gen'l Scott called this morning, having been invited by the Secretary of War, as requested by me on yesterday, to do so. I held a long conversation with him as to the plan of prosecuting the Mexican War. I finally said to him that the capture of Vera Cruz was very important to secure peace. To this he assented. I then told him that it was important that the officer entrusted to command that expedition should have confidence in the Government, and that the Government should have confidence in him, and that without a cordial coöperation success could scarcely be expected. To this he agreed. I then intimated to him that if I was satisfied that he had the proper confidence in the administration & would cordially coöperate with it, that I was disposed to assign him to the command. He appeared to be much affected and said at once that he had the utmost confidence in the administration & in myself, and that he would cordially coöperate with me in carrying out my views in the prosecution of the war. He said that he surrendered his whole confidence to me. I then told him that I had at the commencement of the War given him my confidence and had tendered him the command, but that circumstances had oc-

curred to change my determination. I was willing that by-gones should be by-gones & that he should take the command. He expressed himself as being deeply grateful to me & said he would show me his gratitude by his conduct when he got to the field. He was so grateful & so much affected that he almost shed tears. He then said that he would take with him any of the Volunteer Generals whom I might indicate, and asked me to suggest such as I wished to accompany him. I told him that was a delicate matter, and that all I could do was to give him, as it was my duty to do, the character & qualifications of such of them as I knew personally. I told him that the only three of them with whom I was intimately acquainted were Brigadier Gen'ls Pillow, Hamer,[1] & Shields, and I gave him such information as I possessed in regard to each of them. I spoke also of Maj'r Gen'ls Butler & Patterson, whom I knew, but not intimately. I expressed a high opinion of Gen'l Butler.[2] I requested him to prepare a statement of the forces now in Mexico, and inform me what portion of them he would propose to take with him on the Vera Cruz expedition & what corps he would leave under the command of Gen'l Taylor. He said he would do so as soon as he could prepare it. He left, apparently the most delighted man I have seen for a long time, and as he retired expressed his deep gratitude to me.

[1] Thomas L. Hamer of Ohio. He died December 2, 1846, at Monterey, Mexico.

[2] William Orlando Butler of Kentucky, 1791–1880, candidate for Vice President on the Democratic ticket in 1848.

I spent the day until 2 O'Clock P. M. in preparing my message. At that hour I opened my office for the reception of company. A number of persons called.

After night the Secretary of War and Gen'l Scott called & held a long conversation with me about the Mexican War, & especially in relation to the expedition to Vera Cruz, the command of which it had been resolved to entrust to Gen'l Scott. The Gen'l was still in a fine humour and manifestly much delighted. He told me when he called this morning that my course towards him was magnanimous, & that he would take care to inform his friends that he regarded it to be so. Among others he said he would communicate this to his friends in the army & to Senators Clayton, Crittendon, Barrow, & Archer.

FRIDAY, *20th November, 1846.*— I put the rough draft of that part of [my] message which relates to Mexico & the Mexican War into the hands of Mr. Wm. V. Voorhies, a confidential Clerk, for the purpose of having it copied in a fair handwriting. I was busy during the day in preparing other paragraphs of the Message. Senator Dix called, and having one [of] these paragraphs which I had just written on my table, I read it to him.

Late in the afternoon I received from Gen'l Scott a note accompanying a letter which he had prepared to Gen'l Taylor, & desiring my permission to address such a letter to [him]. A part of the letter I

did not approve, and particularly that part of it which disclosed the plans of the Government in the contemplated expedition on Vera Cruz. The success of that campaign may depend on keeping it a secret from the enemy. I addressed a note to Gen'l Scott and requested him to call this evening, that I might have a personal interview with him on the subject. After night Gen'l Scott called. I had a conversation with him in relation to his proposed letter to Gen'l Taylor, and he cheerfully agreed to omit that part of it which related to the contemplated expedition to Vera Cruz. The omission was made from abundant caution, lest if it become known to the young officers about Gen'l Taylor's person they might not see the necessity of keeping it secret, and that becoming public in the army the knowledge of it might reach the enemy. Moreover an intimation [of it] had been given to Gen'l Taylor by the Secretary of War on the 13th & 22nd ultimo, but in the strictest confidence. Gen'l Scott spoke at some length of the contemplated military operation against Vera Cruz. Among other things he expressed himself willing to consult my wishes as to the General officers of the Volunteers whom he should take with him. I told him that was a delicate matter, and that [I] did not wish any favour or partiality extended to any of them over others. I told him it was [my] duty to give him such information as I possessed of such of them as I knew personally. I did so of Maj'r Gen'ls Butler and Patterson & of Brigadier Generals Pillow, Hamer,

and Shields. I told him that my personal acquaintance with Brigadier Genl's Quitman & Marshall [1] was slight, and that I did not know Brigadier Gen'l Lane [2] personally. I asked him, from the number of volunteer forces he would have with him, if he would not require the services of both the Maj'r Generals. He said he thought he would and also of 4 of the Brigadiers. I[n] this I concurred with him, and he decided to take that number. He decided also to take Gen'l Worth with the Division of regulars. Gen'ls Twiggs & Wool & two of the Brigadier Gen'ls of Volunteers would remain with Gen'l Taylor. I told him that for the new requisition of 9 Regiments lately made, I would probably appoint one Maj'r Gen'l & one Brigadier Gen'l, & that if he deemed it proper they also could be attached to Gen'l Taylor's column. To all this he agreed. He was in a very fine humour, appeared to be free and open in his conversation & was very communicative.

This was reception evening. Quite a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *21st November, 1846.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present except the P. M. Gen'l, who is indisposed as I learn. Despatches were received last night from Gen'l Taylor, which the Secretary of War produced and they

[1] Thomas Marshall of Kentucky, 1793–1853, commissioned a Brigadier-General of Volunteers in the Mexican War by President Polk.

[2] Joseph Lane, appointed Territorial Governor of Oregon in 1848, afterward elected to the Senate from Oregon.

were read. They gave a more detailed account of the battle of Monterey, but contained no explanation of the reasons which induced him to agree to the armistice. A seperate despatch was [in] answer to the despatch from the Secretary of War of the 22nd of September last, in relation to the proposed expedition into the interior of Tamaulipas and against Tampico. It was written in bad temper, and was wholly unwarranted by the despatch of the Secretary of War to which it was a reply. The Secretary had proposed the expedition under the belief, which was the fact, that a sufficient force was left by Gen'l Taylor, who were idle in camp on the Rio Grande, to constitute the expedition, but still the whole matter had been left to the discretion of Gen'l Taylor. The officers left with the Troops on the Rio Grande were suggested to command the expedition. Gen'l Taylor's answer is in very bad taste and in worse temper, in which among other things he states that he places his protest on file against such interference with him as chief-in-command of the army in Mexico. I refer to the correspondence itself as containing a more full explanation and statement of the whole matter than I can now give. I was very indignant at Gen'l Taylor's letter & directed the Secretary of War to prepare a proper answer. It is perfectly manifest that Gen'l Taylor is very hostile to the administration and seeks a cause of quarrel with it. This he shall not have unless he places himself wholly in the wrong, as indeed he has already done. He is evidently a weak man and has been made giddy with the idea of the

Presidency. He is most ungrateful, for I have promoted him, as I now think beyond his deserts, and without reference to his politics. I am now satisfied that he is a narrow minded, bigotted partisan, without resources and wholly unqualified for the command he holds.

Gen'l Scott called in the evening, & referring to Gen'l Taylor's despatch which he had read, condemned it and said that he ought to explain it, and that he would cause him to do so. Gen'l Scott informed me that he would leave for Mexico to take the command of the army, travelling via N. York, where he would take a vessel on Monday next. He was in a good humour and was exceedingly grateful to me for having assigned him to the command. In truth it was the only alternative. I am now satisfied that anybody would do better than Taylor. Taylor is no doubt brave & will fight, but is not fit for a higher command than that of a Regiment. I have no prejudice against him, but think he has acted with great weakness & folly.

SUNDAY, *22nd November, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and my nephew, Marshall T. Polk. After church Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, spent an hour with me in my office examining that portion of my message which I had written relating to Mexico & the war.

MONDAY, *23rd November, 1846.*— I was occupied in preparing [my] message and attending to

other business on my table until 2 O'Clock P. M. to-day, when I opened my office for the reception of company. At that hour a number of persons called, chiefly office seekers, but I had no places for them & observed but little ceremony in telling them so.

TUESDAY, *24th November, 1846.*— Vice President Dallas called this morning. I had an hour's conversation with him, and read to him that portion of my message which I had prepared on the subject of the tariff. He expressed himself as highly pleased with it, and paid me the compliment to say that he thought it the clearest and best production which had ever come from my pen. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. I read to them that portion of my message which I had prepared in relation to the Mexican war & our relations with that country. The Cabinet expressed their approbation of it. Some suggestions were made, but not on material portions of it, and [they] made some corrections mostly verbal.

The Secretary of War read the answer which he had prepared to Gen'l Taylor's last despatch, & it was with some slight modifications agreed to.

This evening at 7½ O'Clock P. M. I accompanied Mrs. Polk and the ladies of my household to Gen'l Tomson's and witnessed the marriage of his daughter. As soon as the ceremony was over, I retired & returned to my office, leaving Mrs. Polk & the family to remain until after supper. The Secretary of the Navy & Secretary of War returned with me. The Secretary of the Navy had received by to-night's mail

despatches from our squadron in the Gulf announcing the successful expedition of Commodore Perry against Tobasco & the capture of a number of Mexican Vessels.

Mr. Clifford, the atto. Gen'l, called & informed me that he thought it necessary to visit his residence in Maine, but that he would be absent but a few days.

WEDNESDAY, *25th November, 1846.*— I saw no company to-day, but was busily engaged in my office. The Secretary of State and of the Treasury, and some other public officers called in the course of the day on public business. I revised the portions of my message which I had written.

THURSDAY, *26th November, 1846.*— This being a day of Thanksgiving set apart by the authorities of the City, I directed that the public offices should be closed.

Capt. Walker[1] of the Texan Rangers, whom I had appointed a captain in the mounted Rifle Regiment, called to pay his respect[s]. He had been in the City several days and made an apology for not having called earlier.

I was engaged during the day in disposing of the business on my table, and in the further preparation of my message.

After night Judge Catron of the Supreme Court

[1] Samuel Hamilton Walker, killed in the battle of Huamantla, October 9, 1847.

of the United States called. He reached the City, he informed me, this morning.

FRIDAY, *27th November, 1846.*— Vice President Dallas, Senator Bagby of Al., & Hon. Mr. Hough,[1] a Representative in Congress, called this morning. I saw the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, & Navy on official business in the course of the day. Some other public officers called on business. I was engaged during the day in revising the passages of my message which I had written and in disposing of the business on my table..

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *28th November, 1846.*— Vice President Dallas called this morning. I read to him a part of my message.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Atto. Gen'l, who is absent from the City on a visit to his family in Maine. I read to the Cabinet the passages of my message on various subjects which I had written. But few suggestions of modification or change were made by the members of the Cabinet. After I had read the passage relating to the tariff I remarked that it contained my sentiments and opinions, when Mr. Buchanan remarked that I knew it did not contain his. I answered that I knew we differed in opinion on

[1] William J. Hough, Representative from New York 1845–1847.

the subject, and had done so when I communicated my last message to Congress. When I read a paragraph recommending to Congress to make provision for ascertaining and marking the dividing line between the U. S. & Great Brittain in the Oregon territory, in pursuance of the convention of the 15th of June last, Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that it was unnecessary, and that it would revive an angry discussion in Congress on the Oregon question. Upon this suggestion I struck the paragraph out. Mr. Buchanan spoke of the long delay and the expenses of completing the survey of the North Eastern boundary line, and the expense it had cost the country, and intimated that it ought to be enquired into. Upon this remark Mr. Walker seemed to be excited & put a question to Mr. Buchanan to know [what] abuses had occurred, remarking that he felt some interest in that matter as he had a friend & a relative who had been connected with that survey. It was evident that Mr. Walker was excited, & to avoid anything unpleasant between the gentlemen I caused the conversation to cease by calling the attention of the Cabinet to the subject before them. All the paragraphs of my message which [I] designed to submit to-day having been read, Mr. Buchanan asked me if I had read the draft of an answer which he had prepared, & which he had sent to me on yesterday, to a communication addressed to me on the 23rd Instant, by a person named Aelaria de Masa, M. D., who represented himself to be a Mexican citizen residing in Tamaulipas. I told him I had read it, but requested him to read it again. He did

so. The letter of this person represented that inhabitants of the Northern Provinces of Mexico were ready to revolt & establish an independant Republic, & would do so if they could have a guaranty from the U. S., 1st, that they would not be annexed to the U. S., and 2nd, that we would protect & defend them in their contemplated revolution as long as the war lasted with the U. S. Mr. Buchanan's answer gave in substance the guarantees requested. After he had read it, I remarked that I was not satisfied of the propriety of giving such an answer, or any answer at all. I had doubts of giving such an answer as he had prepared, because it might seriously embarrass the U. S. when we came to make peace with Mexico. When that peace is made we must obtain a cession of territory to indemnify us, & if New Mexico and the Californias, which we expected to obtain, if not a greater extent of territory, should declare their independance, we would be bo[u]nd if this guaranty was given not to accept a cession of them from Mexico. Mr. Buchanan said he would insert a paragraph excepting New Mexico and the Californias from the guaranty. I told him still I would not like to bind myself in advance not to accept any other territory which we might obtain by a Treaty from Mexico. Mr. Buchanan expressed his opinion strongly against acquiring any more Southern territory, & said he thought if we did it would be the means of dissolving the Union. He added that he thought if it was believed by the people that our object was to make a conquest of Tamaulipas & New Leon & annex them to the U. S. the war would be

utterly odious. He expressed himself in favour of acquiring New Mexico & New Leon, but opposed to going further South. I told him I did not feel willing to decide the question in advance what we would deem it proper ultimately to acquire, that I wished to leave that an open question. In this Mr. Walker concurred with me in opinion, and was unwilling to make any such guaranty as that proposed. I told Mr. Buchanan that another objection to giving any answer at all to Dr. Masa's letter to me was, that I knew nothing of him; that he came to Washington with no credentials or authority or letters from any of his countrymen, and that I was unwilling to hold an official correspondence with a private individual of whom we knew nothing upon so important a subject, and upon full reflection I thought it was the wise course to give no answer to his letter to me, & that he should be informed in a courteous manner that as he had no credentials I declined to do so. Mr. Buchanan differed very widely with me in opinion. He asked me if I would see Dr. Masa and give him the verbal answer. I told him if it was necessary I could do so, but that I preferred he should do so. He said it was so much against his opinion that he would prefer to be excused from doing so. Much more conversation took place on the subject, when he suggested that Mr. Trist, the ch. Clk. of the Dep't of State, could give him the verbal answer, to which I assented. It was clear to my mind that Mr. Buchanan desired to have me committed against accepting a cession or annexing the Provinces on the lower Rio Grande to the U. S. under

any circumstances. Though I did not at this time contemplate such annexation, I desired to keep this an open question, & was unwilling to be committed in advance when it was unnecessary to be so.

The Cabinet after a long sitting adjourned at 3½ O'Clock P. M.

After night Hon. Lynn Boyd of Ky. & Hon. Mr. Kennedy of Indiana, members of the Ho. Repts., called.

The Secretary of the Navy also called & read to me despatches received to-night from Commodore Conner, announcing that he had captured Tampico without firing a gun.

SUNDAY, *29th November, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. Just before I started to church the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy called to consult me about sending an additional force, particularly a land force, to Tampico, sufficiently strong to hold that place. They said they called to-day, because the orders should go out immediately. I concurred with them in the necessity of prompt action. I expressed my opinion that 1,500 or 2,000 troops should be ordered to proceed without delay to Tampico. They agreed with me in opinion and the Secretary of War said he would issue the order forthwith. Official information was received from Commodore Conner last night that he had Taken Tampico, and would require a land force to hold it.

MONDAY, *30th November, 1846.*—Senators Turney and Pennybacker & Representatives Stanton & Chase of Tennessee and Sims of Missouri called this morning. The Secretary of the Treasury called and handed to me a condensed statement of the condition of the finances, necessary to be noticed in my message. I sent for the Secretary of State and conferred with him in regard to parts of the message relating to our foreign affairs.

Col. Benton called this morning. I submitted to him for his perusal that part of my message relating to the Mexican War & the tariff. He read them in the private room adjoining my office. He remained alone two or three hours, when he returned into my office and read to me the observations which he had written down upon that portion of the message relating to the Mexican War. They were not very material except in relation to the disposition to be made of the conquered territory, but I will preserve them for future reference. He said he had not had time to examine the tariff part of the message, but on leaving said he would return on to-morrow morning.

To-night I prepared the financial part of my message, from the statement handed to me by the Secretary of the Treasury to-day.

TUESDAY, *1st December, 1846.*— Col. Benton called again this morning & resumed the examination of that part of my message which I submitted to him on yesterday in relation to the war with Mexico. I had proposed in my draft to submit to Congress the

propriety, at the same time that the war should be vigorously prosecuted, to establish a line of boundary securing to the U. S. a sufficient territory to afford indemnity for the expenses of the war, and to our citizens who hold pecuniary demands against Mexico. I proposed, also, that a more permanent Government should be provided by Congress over the conquered provinces than the temporary Governments which had been established by our Military and Naval commanders according to the laws of war. Col. Benton thought these passages should be omitted, and submitted to me in writing the reasons for this opinion. This paper I will preserve.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Atto. Gen'l, who is absent on a visit to his residence in Maine, and the Secretary of the Navy, who was prevented from attending by indisposition. The sitting was a short one, each member of the Cabinet being much engaged in his office in preparing his Report preparatory to the meeting of Congress. I read the paragraph of my message relating to the finances. Several subjects were briefly considered, but nothing of importance occurred. After Mr. Buchanan retired Mr. Walker read that part of his annual report which related to the tariff.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *2nd December, 1846.*— A number of members of Congress called to-day. The Secretaries of State, Treasury, & Navy and the Post Mas-

ter Gen'l called on business at different periods of the day. I informed them severally of Col. Benton's views in relation to that part of my message relating to Mexico (see this diary of yesterday) and read to them his written observations in relation to it. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Walker differed with him in opinion & preferred to retain the passages objected to by him. Mr. Mason was strongly inclined to concur in opinion with him. All agreed, however, that it was inexpedient to retain the passage[s], if for no other reason [than] that if they were opposed by Col. Benton they would not probably pass Congress. Mr. Buchanan proposed a substitute for them which I will consider. Mr. Buchanan prepared also a paragraph for the message in relation to the letters of marque which had been issued by Mexico. This also I will revise. Mr. H. C. Williams, a confidential clerk, was engaged to-day in the private room, copying the parts of my message which were finished. After night the Secretary of the Navy occupied an hour with me in aiding me in preparing & correcting parts of my message.

On yesterday Vice President Dallas enclosed to me a letter from Judge Jno. K. Kane, suggesting the importance of my promising to appoint Gov. Shunk of Penn. to an office at the expiration of his present term, in order that he might not be a candidate for re-election, & thereby promote the harmony of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania. I returned the letter to Mr. Dallas as requested. This morning Mr. Dallas called to see me on the subject. I told him that I did not know what would be in

my power, but that I considered Gov. Shunk a worthy man and that I would be willing to give him an appointment, if at the expiration of his term there should be any that would suit him. I told Mr. Dallas that as Mr. Buchanan was a member of my Cabinet he ought to be consulted on the subject before I decided upon it, to the propriety of which he readily assented. He said that he would write to Judge Kane to come to Washington, that he might consult Mr. Buchanan on the subject. I made no promise & authorized none to be made on the subject.

THURSDAY, *3rd December, 1846.*— A number of members of Congress called to-day. Several of the members of the Cabinet also called on business. I occupied a considerable part of the day in revising my message, and in writing additional paragraphs for it. Two confidential Clerks, *viz.,* H. C. Williams and W. V. Voorhies, were engaged in preparing copies of my message. The[y] occupied the private room adjoining my office.

To-day Judge Catron, Hon. Cave Johnson, Mr. Stanton & Chase of Tennessee, and Hon. Lynn Boyd of Ky. took a family dinner with me. After night Senators Benton and Dix called. I submitted to Mr. Dix for his perusal the portions of my message relating to the Mexican War and the tariff. Whilst he was reading these parts of the message in my Private Secretary's office, I had a long conversation with Col. Benton. In presence of Mr. Dix I avowed what I had said when we were alone, which

was in brief that if Congress would pass a law authorizing it, I would appoint him Lieut. General of the army and give him the chief command in Mexico. I agreed, also, to the suggestion which Col. B. had made some time ago, to appoint a Commission of three persons to accompany the army, who should be fully authorized to Treat for peace. Col. B. had previously objected to Mr. Slidell, our late minister to Mexico, as one of this commission. I told him it would embarrass me to exclude him. He was earnest in expressing his objections to him. I told him that Mr. Slidell had been appointed chiefly on the recommendation of Mr. Buchanan, who still thought well of him, and [I] thought I would do him great injustice to exclude him, if such a commission was instituted. Mr. Benton had indicated Mr. Crittendon and Gov. Wright as members of the Commission, and wished to know if he could mention the subject to Mr. Crittendon. I told him I would prefer that he should not until I could confer with Mr. Buchanan in reference to Mr. Slidell, which I would do on to-morrow. I requested Col. Benton to see Mr. Buchanan on the subject also. He said he would do so. My conversation with Col. Benton was of a free and pleasant character.

Mr. Dix after reading the parts of my message which I handed to him, expressed his satisfaction with it. He suggested that an immaterial paragraph in relation to the Mexican war should be omitted, to which I at once assented, as it did weaken the view of the subject which I had taken. The

tariff passage he approved, but suggested that in the part in which I expressed the opinion that the tariff of 1846 should not be "changed or modified" until after it should have a fair trial, the word "modified" had perhaps better be omitted. The reason which he assigned was, that as the Whigs were for the restoration of the tariff of 1842 just as it was, they might charge the Democrats for being in favour of the tariff of 1846 just as it is. I declined striking out the word and he did not insist upon it.

FRIDAY, *4th December, 1846.*— My doors were closed to-day against all persons except members of Congress & members of the Cabinet who might call. My engagements rendered this absolutely necessary. A number [of] members of Congress called. Mr. Buchanan called at 12 O'Clock & informed me that Col. Benton had been at the Department of State this morning and informed him of the conversation he had held with me on last evening, in relation to Mr. Slidell as one of the members of the proposed Mexican Commission. Mr. Buchanan represented him as having been very violent in his opposition to Mr. Slidell. Mr. Buchanan was strongly and earnestly of opinion that if such a commission was instituted I could not exclude Mr. Slidell as a member of it without disgracing him, and to that he was opposed. He expressed a high opinion of Mr. Slidell. I should have sent for Col. Benton to have a further conversation with him on the subject, but I was so much occupied that I had not time to hold the interview with him. The two confiden-

tial clerks continued copying my message to-day, but did not finish it.

This was reception evening. An unusual number of persons, members of Congress & others, called.

SATURDAY, *5th December, 1846.*— Up to the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet my office was open for the reception of members of Congress. A number of them called & among them Gen'l Cass.

The Cabinet met at 11 O'Clock, being the usual hour, all the members present.

Gen'l Hough of New York, one of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute, [called] to submit for the approval of the President & the Cabinet & Commissioner of Patents, in pursuance of an act of the last Session of Congress, the selection which had been made by the Regents as the site for the Institute. I introduced him into my office where the Cabinet were assembled. He submitted the selection for the site which the Regents had made. It consisted of about 100 acres of land, being the greater part of the mall or vacant ground in the City of Washington. Although I thought too much ground had been embraced, I considered that the responsibility devolved on the Regents, and I at once said I was willing to give my assent. The Secretary of the Treasury & Secretary of the Navy expressed similar opinions. Mr. Buchanan objected. He thought the quantity of acres was extravagant & unnecessary, and he could not consent to it. Mr. Burke, the commissioner of Patents, objected also. As the act of Congress required the unanimous consent of the

President and the other members of the Cabinet & the commissioner of Patents, of course the Selection proposed by the Regents was rejected. I told Gen'l Hough to report to the board of Regents the result, & informed him that I would call the gentlemen together again at any time when I should be notified that it was necessary, to hear & consider any further proposition which they might make in relation to the selection of the site.

After Gen'l Hough retired, being about 1 O'Clock P. M., I commenced reading to the Cabinet the revised copy of my message which I had caused to be copied by Messrs. Williams & Voorhies, the two confidential clerks whom I had entrusted to make the copies. The reading and discussions upon various parts of the message occupied until 4 O'Clock P. M. without finishing it. Some modifications not affecting principle were made. Mr. Buchanan said he had a dinner engagement and could not remain longer. I was unwilling to send in the message without submitting the whole of it to the Cabinet, and from the necessity of the case it was agreed to have a special meeting at 9 O'Clock to-morrow morning.

SUNDAY, *6th December, 1846.*— The Cabinet met according to adjournment at 9 O'Clock this morning, all the members present, when the balance of my message was read to them. Some slight modifications were made. I disliked having a meeting of the Cabinet to-day, but as Congress meets on to-morrow, and it was important to have the message ready, there seemed an absolute necessity for it.

The Cabinet adjourned at 11 O'Clock A. M. when I attended the first Presbyterian Church in company with Mrs. Polk & her niece, Miss Rucker.

Judge Catron of the Supreme Court of the U. S., whom we met at Church, took a family dinner with us to-day.

MONDAY, *7th December, 1846.*— Saw a number of members of Congress this morning. Between 12 & 1 O'Clock, having learned that both Houses of Congress had organized, I delivered to Maj'r Heiss of the *Union* office a copy of my message to be printed. At 1 O'Clock P. M. the judges of the Supreme Court of the U. States attended by their officers made an official call. I received them in the parlour below stairs.

Between 1 & 2 O'Clock a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Congress called to notify me that the two Houses had organized & were ready to receive any communication I might have to make. I informed them that I would transmit to each House a message in writing at 12 O'Clock on to-morrow.

After night I was engaged in correcting the proof sheets of my message. Judge Mason, my Private Secretary, and the clerks who had copied it, aided by the proof reader of the *Union* office, assisted me. We did not finish until about 1 O'Clock A. M. of the 8th Dcr., 1846, when being greatly fatigued I retired to rest.

TUESDAY, *8th December, 1846.*— Many members of Congress called to pay their respects this morning.

About 10 O'Clock I discovered that in my message as furnished to the printer on yesterday I had mistaken a date, having inserted in one paragraph relating to Santa Anna's return to Mexico, the 15th, when it should have been the 13th of May, 1846, as the day on which the instructions to Commodore Conner were given not to obstruct his return if he should attempt to do so. I corrected the error in the two copies intended for Congress and sent my Private Secretary to the printing office to make the correction there also. When he returned he informed me that many copies had been struck off before he reached the office, but none of course had been circulated.

At 11¾ O'Clock my Private Secretary left with my message for the purpose of delivering it to the two Houses of Congress. He returned about 2½ O'Clock P. M. and informed me that as far as he could ascertain the message had been well received.

This was reception evening. Many persons, members of Congress & strangers, consisting of ladies & gentlemen, called. Ma[n]y of them congratulated me upon the favourable impression which my message had made.

This was the regular day of the meeting of the Cabinet. Several of the members of the Cabinet called at different hours, but no meeting was held. This evening Rob't M. McLane, Esqr., who had been despatched during the last month as bearer of despatches to the army in Mexico, returned bearing despatches from the army to the War Department. He brought also private letters from some of the

officers to me. This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & Gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *9th December, 1846.*—A number of members of Congress called and paid their respects this morning. Col. Benton called this morning. I had requested my Private Secretary to request him to do so. I had a long conversation with him, in relation to the appointment of a Lieut. Gen'l to command the army, and the appointment of a commission to negotiate a peace with Mexico. I told him, as I had previously done, that if Congress would authorize the appointment of a Lieut. Gen'l who should be commander in chief of the army in Mexico, I would appoint him to the command. With this he was satisfied, but doubted whether Congress would do so. In regard to the commission, of which I had before conversed with him, to accompany the Head Quarters of the army, to be composed of distinguished men of both parties, I had a long conversation with him. I agreed with him in the propriety of instituting such a commission. A difference of opinion existed as to the men who should compose it. I felt myself bound as a matter of personal honour to retain Mr. Slidell as a member of the commission, to which Mr. Benton objected in earnest & even violent terms. His objections to Mr. Slidell were personal. I told him that I had originally appointed Mr. Slidell Envoy Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to Mexico more upon the information of him given me by Mr. Buchanan & others than upon any personal knowl-

edge of him, as my personal acquaintance with him was very slight. I told him that Mr. Slidell's conduct had been satisfactory to me while he was in Mexico, and that upon his return he had proposed to resign his commission, but upon my request had retained it and held himself in readiness to resume his duties whenever required, & that I should regard it as doing him great injustice if I were now to dismiss him. He was still not satisfied with him. The other commissioners spoken of were Gov. Wright of N. Y., Mr. Crittendon of Ky., & himself. I was agreed to all of them, but thought it was due to Mr. Slidell that as he was now the minister to Mexico he should be associated with them as one of the commission. Not being able to agree with Col. Benton upon this point, I told him I would think further of it, & requested him to call again to-night at 9 O'Clock.

Senator Bagby called shortly after Col. Benton left & I had a full conversation with him on the subject. At my request he promised to see Senator Dix of N. Y. on the subject, and, if deemed advisable by Senator Dix & himself, they would call on Col. Benton & see if they could reconcile him to the association of Mr. Slidell with the commission. I told Senator Bagby that I thought well of Mr. Slidell, and thought Col. Benton ought to yield his personal objections to him.

At 9 O'Clock P. M. Col. Benton called according to appointment. Senators Bagby & Dix had seen him this evening. I found him still stubbornly opposed to Mr. Slidell as a member of the commission.

I finally said to him that I was anxious to appoint him Lut. Gen'l if Congress would give the authority to appoint such an officer, but that in regard to the commission I should still feel much embarrassed if I was required to dismiss Mr. Slidell & not retain him as a member of the commission. Inasmuch, however, as he still objected to him, I told him I was disposed to leave the question of instituting a commission an open question, & that I would see certain leading members of Congress & communicate to them my desire to be authorized to appoint a Lut. Gen'l of the army. Col. Benton thought Mr. Crittendon could render important aid in effecting the object, and that it might be important to confer with him freely but confidentially. I told him that I had no objection that he should do so; and said to him, if he did so, that he might intimate to Mr. Crittendon that the institution of a commission, to be composed of members of the two political parties, to treat with Mexico was under consideration by the Government, but was not yet determined upon, but that if resolved on he (Mr. Crittendon) would probably be looked to as one of the commissioners. This seemed to be satisfactory to Col. Benton.

I received to-day the chargé d'affaires of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. He was presented to me in the parlour below Stairs by the Secretary of State. This is the first Diplomatic Representative from that Kingdom who has ever been accredited by [them to] the Government of the U. States.

THURSDAY, *10th December, 1846.*— A number of members of Congress called and paid their respects to-day. Many other persons called also. I was engaged as usual in my office during the day.

I gave a Cabinet dinner to-day, at which all the Cabinet except Atto. Gen'l Clifford were present. Several Senators, and among them Mr. Benton and Gen'l Cass, were of the party. Mr. Rush of Phil. & other gentlemen were also of the party. Mrs. Madison was present. The whole party consisted of about 30 persons.

FRIDAY, *11th December, 1846.*— Both Houses of Congress having adjourned over on yesterday until monday next, a large number of members of both Houses, and of both political parties, called & paid their respects to-day. Many strangers also called. From 10 O'Clock in the morning until 3½ O'Clock in the afternoon my office was not free from company. Among the number were, of course, some office-seekers, who annoy me much.

This evening my drawing room was open for the reception of company. Many persons, members of Congress & strangers, ladies & gentlemen, called.

I requested the Secretary of War to consult Gen'l Cass this evening & obtain his opinion as to the policy of appointing a Lieut. Gen'l of the army, & a commission to treat with Mexico.

SATURDAY, *12th December, 1846.*— I received company this morning up to the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet, *viz.,* 11 O'Clock A. M. Many mem-

bers of Congress called. At 11 O'Clock the Cabinet assembled, all the members present. Several public subjects, chiefly connected with or relating to the Mexican war, were the subject of consideration.

At 1 O'Clock P. M. a committee of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institute called. The Committee consisted of Senator Evans of Maine, of Representatives Hough of N. York & Owen of Indiana. They submitted for the approval of the President & the persons named in the act of the last Session of Congress a Resolution proposing to select as the site of the Smithsonian Institution that portion of the public grounds on the Mall lying between 7th and 12th Streets in the City of Washington, containing, as they stated, about 52 acres of land. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Burke (the commissioner of the Patent office) objected to the selection made by the Regents, and particularly to the quantity of acres of land as being unnecessarally large. Mr. Walker and Mr. Mason were willing to give their assent to the selection of the site proposed, though both preferred the situation between 12th & 14th Streets, containing about 32 acres. Mr. Marcy preferred the site between 12th and 14th Street[s], but did not say positively that he would withhold his assent to the selection of the site which the Regents proposed. The Committee after considerable discussion retired, upon the understanding that their board would meet again in about a week and that before that time a definitive answer would be given to them by the gentlemen whose assent was required

by the act. After the committee retired the matter was discussed, when it was ascertained that the opinion was unanimous that the most eligible site for the Institution was on the elevated ground between 12th and 14th Street[s]. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Burke were wholly unwilling to give their assent to the selection of the site between 7th & 12th Streets, while all were of opinion that the site between 12th & 14th Streets was greatly to be preferred. Finally it was unanimously agreed that I should inform the committee that our assent would be given to the selection of the ground between 12th & 14th Street[s] and extending West of 14th Street to the Potomac River as the Site of the Institution, with the proviso that the Washington monument may be erected on that part of the ground West of 14th Street and between that Street & the Potomac River.

The Secretary of War informed me that he had seen Gen'l Cass, as I had requested him to do on yesterday (see diary of yesterday) in relation to the policy or propriety of appointing a Lieut. Gen'l of the army and a commission to treat with Mexico. The Secretary reported that Gen'l Cass, though he did not advise it, would not withhold his assent if the Government desired it, but thought that others would object, and that such a measure could not be carried through Congress. His own assent, from what the Secretary of War Reported to me, it was manifest would be reluctantly given, & only because the Government desired it.

SUNDAY, *13th December, 1846.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

Before church hour this morning Mr. Atto. Gen'l Clifford called and greatly surprised me by informing me that he had prepared his letter of resignation of the office of Attorney Gen'l of the U. S., and had called to confer with me on the subject. I at once expressed my astonishment to him, and told him I should greatly regret it, if he should take such a step. I told him that I was entirely satisfied with him, and hoped he would retain his place. He read the letter to me, which he had prepared, but did not offer to deliver it to me. In the letter he tendered his resignation, but expressed his approbation in unqualified terms of the whole course of my administration; and also that his personal relations with me, and with every member of the Cabinet, were of the most friendly and agreeable character. The letter did not contain the reasons for proposing to resign. I understood distinctly, however, from his conversation, that he had some apprehensions that, having come into the office but a short time before the meeting of the Court, he might not be able to sustain himself reputably. It seemed to be diffidence in his own capacity, which had induced him to think of resigning. I told him if he resigned now it would be assumed by his political opponents that he was not qualified, & that it would ruin him as a public man. In the course of the conversation he dropped a remark to the effect that perhaps I had some other person in my mind who could perform

the duties better than he could. I told him I had not, and that if he were to resign it would greatly embarrass me. I think Mr. Clifford an honest man and a sincere friend. He feels in his new position somewhat timid, fears that he will not be able to sustain the reputation of his predecessors, and had therefore brought himself to the conclusion that he had better resign. He finally concluded not to tender his resignation, and retired apparently well satisfied at the interview I held with him.

MONDAY, *14th December, 1846.*— My office was open for the reception of company to-day. A large number of members of Congress and strangers called. I was receiving visitors until near 2 O'Clock P. M., and in consequence of it [was] unable to give any attention to business until after that hour. From that time until night I was busily employed in disposing of the business on my table. After night Mr. Boyd of Ky., Mr. Cobb [1] of Georgia, Mr. Douglass of Illinois, and Mr. Stanton of Tennessee, all members of the Ho. Repts., called. They had been invited by my Private Secretary at my request, to call. I explained to them my embarrassment in conducting the war with the present officers, and consulted them as to the propriety of passing a law authorizing the appointment of a Lieut. General to command the army. I explained to them the objections to Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Scott, and the impossibility of conducting the War successfully when the Gen-

[1] Howell Cobb, 1815–1868, Representative from Georgia 1843–1851, Secretary of the Treasury 1857–1860.

eral in Chief of the army did not sympathize with the Government, and coöperate with it in the prosecution of the War. This they fully appreciated, but were unanimously of opinion that it would be impossible to pass a law through Congress to authorize the appointment of a Lieut. General who should supersede Generals Taylor & Scott. I urged them to pass a law promptly appropriating the two millions of dollars for which I had asked in my message; and also a law as recommended by the Secretary of War to raise 10,000 men to serve during the war with Mexico. To these measures they agreed, and promised me to have these measures brought up in Congress without delay. Gen'l Cass met me on my walk this afternoon and returned with me to my office. I consulted him as to the appointment of a Lieut. General of the army. He was agreed to it, but thought it could not pass Congress. He informed me that the rumour was out in the City that it was desired by the administration to have such an office created, & that if it was created Col. Benton was to be appointed. He had himself no objection to this, but had heard the subject spoken of this afternoon by Mr. Relfe of Mo., Mr. Dawson of Georgia,[1] & Mr. McDowell[2] of Ohio, all of the Ho. Repts. & all of whom were opposed to the measure.

TUESDAY, *15th December, 1846.*— Several members of Congress called before the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet this morning.

[1] William C. Dawson, Representative from Georgia 1836–1841, Senator from Georgia 1849–1855.

[2] Joseph J. McDowell, Representative from Ohio 1843–1847.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour (11 O'Clock A. M.) all the members present. Several subjects of some importance were considered, but which it is not important to note.

After the Cabinet adjourned I was engaged in disposing of the business on my table.

After night Senator Sevier of Arkansas called. He had been chosen chairman of the committee of Foreign Relations in the Senate on yesterday. I had a long interview with him in relation to our Foreign affairs, and especially in relation to the War with Mexico. I communicated to him the embarrassments of conducting that war without a commander who sympathized with the Government, and in whom I could have confidence. I told him that I could have no such confidence in Gen'l Taylor, and that I had been compelled to send Gen'l Scott to take the command of the army as a choice of evils, he being the only man in the army who by his rank could command Taylor. After communicating to him all that had transpired he fully concurred with me in opinion. He fully concurred, also, that I ought to be authorized to appoint a Lieut. Gen'l to command the army, and that Col. Benton ought to be the man selected. I told him of the objections which had been made by some members of the Democratic party in Congress at [to] such a step. He left me saying that he would on to-morrow converse with some of the Democratic Senators, and endeavour to ascertain whether a law to authorize the appointment of a Lieut. General could be passed by Congress.

This being reception evening a large number of ladies & gentlemen, including many members of Congress, called.

WEDNESDAY, *16th December, 1846.*— I came to my office as usual, immediately after breakfast this morning, and found a gentleman waiting in the anti-room to see me. From that time until my dinner hour at 4 O'Clock P. M. my office was not clear of company. After dinner I took my usual walk. On my return I found a member of Congress waiting to see me. Until late bed time I had company. Since the commencement of my Presidency, I have never been so harassed and annoyed as during this day. Among my visitors were many members of Congress, either seeking petty appointments for their friends or complaining of appointments which upon the best lights before me I had made. I am thoroughly satisfied that the patronage of the Government greatly weakens any President of the U. States, so much so, indeed, that I doubt whether any President will ever again be re-elected. Members of Congress and others occupying high positions in Society, make representations to procure appointments for their friends, upon which I cannot rely, & constantly lead me into error.[1] I begin, more than I have ever done before, to distrust the disinterestedness and honesty of all mankind. Some self-

[1] Gillet, *Life and Times of Silas Wright,* 1662, says that Polk on several occasions showed him papers strongly recommending applicants for office "signed by men in New York standing high in the estimation of the democracy, which were followed or some-

ish or petty local feeling seems to influence even members of Congress in their recommendations for office, much more than principle. When I act upon the information which they give me, and make a mistake, they leave me to bear the responsibility, and never have the manliness to assume it themselves. Senator Dix was here to-night, greatly dissatisfied with the nomination of Henry K. Smith as Post Master at Buffalo in N. Y., which I had sent to the Senate, and I think it probable will oppose his confirmation. This nomination I made on the last day of the last Session of Congress, upon the rejection of a former nominee, but it was not acted upon by the Senate. I appointed him immediately afterwards, but, although a good democrat, because he does not suit the taste of Senator Dix I infer from the tone of his conversation that with the aid of the votes of the Federalists in the Senate he may attempt to cause him to be rejected. Senator Dix was also much opposed to the nomination of Levi D. Slocum as a Purser in the Navy, which I had had sent to the Senate. Such petty annoyances trouble me much more than the great principles upon which I administer the Government. There is more selfishness and less principle among members of Congress, as well as others, than I had any conception [of], before I became President of the U. S.

times preceded by letters from one of the signers, requesting that no attention be paid to their names because obtained under pressure of circumstances, and not because the appointment ought to be made."

THURSDAY, *17th December, 1846.*— I submitted to-day to the usual trouble and annoyance of members of Congress and others, who called as usual to apply for petty offices for their friends. Many persons called to pay their respects, both ladies and gentlemen, and I was compelled wholly to neglect the business on my table in receiving them. This I was compelled to do or give offence. The day was spent in this way, most unprofitably.

At 5 O'Clock P. M. I had invited the Diplomatic corps residing at Washington to dine with me. At that hour they commenced assembling. All the Foreign Ministers now in the City, with their wives & those attached to their respective legations, attended & dined with me. The Secretary of State (Mr. Buchanan) and his chief clerk (Mr. Trist & his wife) also dined with me.

FRIDAY, *18th December, 1846.*— The Senate having adjourned over on yesterday until Monday next, several Senators called on me, some on business and others to pay their respects. Some members of the Ho. Repts. and many strangers called also. My whole time until my dinner hour was consumed in receiving & conversing with them. It was a day spent without profit. Nothing annoys me so much as to have my whole time occupied in seeing company, and conversing about petty offices or matters that are immaterial. I would much prefer to be relieved from this annoyance and to attend to the business of the country. To avoid seeing the company who call, however, is impossible without giving

offence. I feel that I am compelled to yield to it, and to deprive myself of the ordinary rest, in order to attend to the indispensable duties which devolve upon me.

This was reception evening. Many persons, members of Congress, citizens and strangers, ladies and gentlemen, called.

Senator Niles of Connecticut called to-day, and I had a long conversation with [him] about the propriety of having authority from Congress to appoint a Lieut. General of the army; and about the two million appropriation for which I had asked Congress, as a means of making peace with Mexico. He spoke in a friendly spirit, and was favourably disposed to my views upon both subjects.

SATURDAY, *19th December, 1846.*— This was Cabinet day, but I saw company until the hour of their assembling. All the members of the Cabinet attended. I brought before them the Resolution [1] of the Ho. Repts. of the 15th Inst., calling for information in relation to the Governments which had been established by our military and naval commanders in the conquered provinces of Mexico. Mr. Buchanan was of opinion that the Resolution should not be answered. I differed with him in opinion, and told him I had made up my mind to send in all the information called for. The documents containing the instructions upon the subject, and the Reports of our military and naval officers, were read. Among them was a document from

[1] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 33.

Brigadier Gen'l Kearney, containing a form of Government over the conquered territory of New Mexico, which among other things declared that territory to be a part of the U. S. and provided for the election of a Delegate to the Congress of the U. S. In these and some other respects he exceeded the power of a military commander over a conquered territory. It was agreed that in my message to Congress I must disapprove this part of the Document, though without censuring the Gen'l, who had misconceived the extent of his authority, but who had, no doubt, acted from patriotic motives. The subject in all its bearings, as well as the principles of international law involved in it, were discussed at considerable length, and were fully considered. I addressed a note to Senator Calhoun of S. C. this morning, requesting him to call on me to-day. He called about 5 O'Clock P. M. I stated to him my embarrassment in conducting the War with Mexico, when I had to rely upon Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Scott, neither of whom had any sympathies with the Government, and the former of whom had already thrown obstacles in the way of the prosecution of the plans of the Government. I expressed to him my desire to have authority from Congress to appoint a Lieut. Gen'l to take command of the army, and told him frankly that if I was invested with such authority I would appoint Senator Benton of Missouri to command. He was decidedly opposed to having such an officer and gave his reasons for his opinion [1]

[1] For Calhoun's views on the Lieutenant General project see *Report of American Historical Association,* 1899, II, 727.

at some length. I found that his mind was settled upon the subject, and that it was useless to press it. I next introduced the two million appropriation for which I had asked with a view to negotiations with Mexico. Of this he approved, and said he would vote double that sum, or more if necessary. He said he could not vote for it with the slavery restriction which had been attached to a bill with the same object in the Ho. Repts. near the close of the last session of Congress, & that if such a restriction were contained in any Treaty with Mexico, he would vote against ratifying the Treaty. I told him that such a restriction would be most mischievous, and would probably defeat the object in view. I then asked him what boundary I ought to insist upon in a Treaty with Mexico, saying to him that I would be pleased to have his opinion upon that point. He mentioned Upper California as being important to us, and intimated that he would be satisfied with the acquisition of that territory. I then told him that the boundary which I proposed to obtain, if practicable, would cede to the U. S. the Provinces of New Mexico, Upper and Lower California. He said that would be entirely satisfactory to him, and added that he attached but little value to Lower California and cared but little about it. I asked what sum I should agree to pay for such a boundary, in addition to the claims due to our own citizens & the expenses of the War. He answered that he would pay a blind sum, and would not stand on a few millions of dollars. I told him if such a Treaty was made Slavery would probably never exist in these Provinces. To

this he readily assented, and said he did not desire to extend slavery; but that if the slavery restriction was put into a Treaty, it would involve a principle, and that whatever the other provisions of the Treaty were, he would vote against it. My conversation with him was a frank & pleasant one. He was in a good humour, talked in a pleasant tone, and, I inferred, was pleased that I had sent for him.

Hon. Robert Dale Owen of In. [Indiana], one of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, called and submitted to me for my approval, and that of the members of the Cabinet named in the act of the last Session upon that subject, another selection for a site for the institution, which the Regents proposed. The site now proposed contains about 16 acres, and is the South half of the Mall between 9th and 12th Streets in the City of Washington. He said he had seen Mr. Burke, the commissioner of Patents, who was willing to give his assent to this selection. When the Cabinet met I submitted the proposed site to them & they all assented.

SUNDAY, *20th December, 1846.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. After dinner Senator Houston of Texas called, with whom I had a conversation of an hour. I was not apprised of his intention to call, until he came into my office.

After night the Hon. Mr. Douglass of Illinois & the Hon. Mr. Thompson of Pennsylvania, both members of the Ho. Repts., called. I stated to them confidentially the answer I would make to the Res-

olution of the Ho. Repts. of the 15th Inst., in relation to the Governments established in the conquered territories of Mexico. I submitted to them the documents which would accompany the message, and particularly the form of Government established in New Mexico by Gen'l Kearney, by which he had exceeded his authority, but no doubt with patriotic intentions. I communicated the facts to them, that they might be prepared to meet any attacks which might be made by the opposition when the message was sent in.

MONDAY, *21st December, 1846.*— Saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day. Many members of Congress and citizens called.

At 1 O'Clock P. M. the Secretary of State called and presented to me Mr. Osma,[1] Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the U. S. from the Republic of Peru. I received him in the parlour below stairs. He made an address to me in the French language. As I speak only the English language I did not understand him, but as upon such occasions of ceremony the interchange of civilities is always substantially the same, I addressed him in English, and as the Secretary of State, who understands French, afterwards informed me, I made an appropriate reply.

I was engaged to-day in disposing of the business on my table, and in preparing my message in answer to the Resolution of the Ho. Repts. of the 15th Inst., in relation to the temporary Governments established

[1] Don Joaquin José Osma.

by our military commanders in the conquered Provinces of Mexico. I requested my Private Secretary to ask Col. Benton to call to-day. He called about 3 O'Clock P. M. I had a conversation with him in relation to the propriety of creating a Lieut. Gen'l of the army, and expressed to him my apprehensions, from what I had learned from members of Congress, that such a proposition if made could not pass Congress. Without expressing an Opinion upon this point, he urged that I should make the proposition at all events, and if Congress rejected it the responsibility would be theirs, and the Country would see that they had refused to grant to me the means which I had asked in order to prosecute the war. I found Col. B. fixed upon this point. If I do not propose it, it is manifest from my interview with him that both he and his friends will be greatly dissatisfied. I told him it was a matter of too much importance to decide without first consulting my Cabinet, which I would do on to-morrow.

After dinner I spent the evening in seeing company and in disposing of the business on my table.

TUESDAY, *22nd December, 1846.*— I saw company this morning until near the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. Half an hour before the meeting of the Cabinet I sent for Judge Mason, the Sec. of the Navy, and consulted him as to the revised draft of the message which I had prepared in answer to the Resolution of the Ho. Repts. of the 15th Inst., calling for information as to the Governments which had been established over the territories of

Mexico which had been conquered by our arms. Some verbal amendments were made at his suggestion. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present except the attorney Gen'l, who was absent attending the Supreme Court of the U. S. I submitted to them the draft of my message, which after one or two verbal corrections was agreed to by all the Cabinet but Mr. Buchanan, who was in favour of omitting the declaration that I had not "recognized and approved" in its full extent the form of Government which had been established by Gen'l Kearney over the territory of New Mexico. I sent the message[1] to Congress. The subject of the two million appropriation which I had asked in my annual message, with a view to effect a peace with Mexico, was discussed. After full consideration all agreed that unless it was ascertained that it could pass Congress without being embarrassed with the slavery restriction,[2] it had better not be brought forward. Some other matters of minor importance were considered. Senator Sevier of Ar. [Arkansas], chairman of the committee of Foreign Affairs of the Senate, called during the Sitting of the Cabinet. I saw him for a few minutes in my Private Secretary's office, and made an appointment to see him, Gen'l Cass, & Senator Atherton, all of the Committee of Foreign affairs of the Senate, at 9 O'Clock to-morrow evening.

This was reception evening. The Circular parlour was crowded with visitors, ladies and gentle-

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 506.

[2] The reference is to the Wilmot Proviso.

men. Many members of Congress, several Foreign Ministers, and strangers were present. I observed that very few Federal members of Congress were present. This is probably to be attributed to the excitement growing out of the party debate now going on in the Ho. Repts., on the subject of the Mexican War and my course in conducting it.

WEDNESDAY, *23rd December, 1846.*— Many members of Congress as well as strangers called this morning. Among others Senator Archer called for the first time during the present Session of Congress. He explained to me the reason why he had not called earlier. He said he had waited to see my message in answer to the Resolution of the Ho. Repts. of the 15th Inst., in relation to the Governments established by our military and naval commanders over the Provinces of Mexico which they had conquered & taken possession of. He said he had read my message and the correspondence as published in the morning paper & was entirely satisfied with my course. He added that he could not have justified me if I had approved the usurpation of some of these officers, and as he had been personally intimate with me, he had declined calling upon me until he had learned what my course had been. Mr. Archer is a peculiar man; but has always professed great personal friendship for me. I disposed of several small matters of business on my table to-day. After night Mr. Wilmot of Pennsylvania called, and shortly afterwards Mr. Ch. J. Ingersoll came in. Mr. Wilmot called by appointment, but the pres-

ence of Mr. Ingersoll prevented me from having as full a conversation with him as I desired. I did, however, hold a conversation with him on the subject of slavery restriction, which had been attached upon his motion at the last Session of Congress to the Bill which proposed to appropriate two millions of Dollars, with a view to enable the Executive to make a Treaty with Mexico. He expressed an entire willingness to vote for the appropriation without the restriction, and said he would not again move the restriction, but that if it was moved by others he would feel constrained to vote for it. I told him I did not desire to extend slavery, that I would be satisfied to acquire by Treaty from Mexico the Provinces of New Mexico & the Californias, and that in these Provinces slavery could probably never exist, and the great probability was that the question would never arise in the future organization of territorial or State Governments in these territories. I told him that slavery was purely a domestic question, and to restrict the appropriation which had been asked for, so as to require the President to insert it in a Treaty with a Foreign Power, was not only inappropriate and out of place, but that if such a Treaty were made it must be opposed by every Senator from a slave-holding State, and as one third of the Senators could reject a Treaty it could not be ratified, though it might be satisfactory in all other respects. I told him that tramelled with such a restriction I could not use the appropriation at all and would not do so. He said he would be satisfied with a simple legislative declaration in the Bill of

the sense of Congress, without requiring it to be inserted in the Treaty, or, if it was not moved by others, he would be willing to vote for the appropriation without such a restriction in any form. Mr. Ingersoll expressed himself as opposed to such a restriction or declaration in any form, as being out of place and unwise when attached to such a Bill. Mr. Wilmot retired leaving Mr. Ingersoll. Mr. I. very soon introduced the subject of the French Mission, and applied to me in direct terms to appoint him. I told him that there were some embarrassments about it, and endeavoured to waive a direct answer, and at the same time not to give him offence. He however pressed the subject, and said that when he declined being nominated to the Senate two or three days before the adjournment of the last Session of Congress (see diary of the 8th of Aug't last) he had calculated that I intended to nominate him to France. I told him that when he withdrew his application for the Russian Mission, that I had made some general remark that if it should hereafter be in my power to serve him I would be pleased to do so. It is very painful to me to have an application made face to face, by a gentleman of Mr. Ingersoll's standing, for an office which I cannot with propriety bestow on him. There is great indelicacy in such applications. I predict that in consequence of his disappointment Mr. Ingersoll will be opposed to my administration during the balance of my term. Possibly this hostility may not show itself until after the mission to France is filled, as he may still have hope that he may yet get it.

At 9 O'Clock P. M. Senators Sevier, Cass, and Atherton of the committee of Foreign affairs of the Senate called in pursuance of an appointment which I made with Mr. Sevier on yesterday. I had a long conversation with them on the importance of obtaining the appropriation of two millions of Dollars, for which I had asked as a means of making peace with Mexico. I repeated to them the views which I had expressed this evening to Mr. Wilmot. The difficulty was the Slavery restriction which had been moved in the House when the subject was before Congress at the last Session. I informed [them] that so important did I regard the appropriation that upon it might depend a speedy peace, and that without it the war with Mexico might be protracted for an indefinite length of time. I gave my opinion that no party which might be in power in Mexico was strong enough to make peace and still retain power, without money to feed, clothe, and pay the army. I told them that a knowledge on the part of the rulers of Mexico that upon concluding a satisfactory Treaty of boundary, two or four millions would be promptly paid, would induce them to make a Treaty, because with the money they could secure the support of the army and be able to retain power. To this they all agreed. They agreed further that the slavery restriction would be improper in a Treaty, and all of them avowed their willingness to vote for the appropriation in its unrestricted form. They said they would report the Bill without the restriction, but that if it was moved in the Senate Gen'l Cass & Mr. Atherton would be in great peril

with their constitutents. to vote against it. Mr. Sevier felt no such embarrassment. He was opposed to the restriction in any form or shape. Gen'l Cass [1] and Mr. Atherton agreed to consult the Northern Democratic Senators, and if they could induce them to stand together & vote against the restriction if moved in the Senate, they would do so. Some further conversation occurred upon other topics connected with our Foreign affairs.

THURSDAY, *24th December, 1846.*— Many members of Congress called as usual this morning. After 1 O'Clock P. M. I was enabled to devote some time to the business on my table.

I had a Dinner party to-day. Between 30 & 40 persons, members of the two Houses of Congress and several ladies of their families, dined with me. Among others the Vice President, his wife and two daughters, and the Speaker of the Ho. Repts. were of the party. Mr. Calhoun, who was also of the party, remained at my request after dinner until the company had dispersed, when he [we] retired from

[1] In the few months immediately following the first introduction of the Wilmot Proviso Cass changed from his first attitude of advocacy of the measure to one of direct opposition to it. Upon its introduction, in August, 1846, he expressed his regret that the course of events in the Senate had denied him the opportunity of casting his vote for it. In the following session of Congress he opposed it, however, basing his opposition on the ground of its inexpediency. Finally, in his famous Nicholson letter of December, 1847, which won him the nomination of his party for the Presidency in 1848, he took the ground that the measure was unconstitutional.

the parlour to my office. I resumed the conversation which I had with him a few days ago, about the proper manner of conducting the Mexican War. I was particularly desirous to have his concurrence in the proposition to create a Lieut. Gen'l to command the army during the Mexican War. I found he still had objections to it, which I fear he will not yield. He expressed himself in favour of the policy of establishing a cordon of Military Posts [1] and holding a sufficient territory to indemnify ourselves, instead of making the crushing movement with a great Army upon the City of Mexico. He thought there were almost insuperable difficulties to the latter policy, & that if pursued the war might be of indefinite duration. My conversation with him was of a friendly & pleasant character.

FRIDAY, *25th December, 1846.*— Not more than half a dozen persons called to-day, and they were on business. It being Christmas day, the family attended church. I remained in my office, attended to some of the business on my table, & wrote a rough draft of a message which I have made up my mind to send to Congress recommending the appointment of a Lieut. General of the army, who shall be commander in chief during the war with Mexico; and also recommending prompt action upon the recommendations of the Secretary of War in his annual Report.

[1] For Calhoun's views at this time on the prosecution of the war see his speech of February 9, 1847, *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. *App.* 323. Also in *Works,* IV, 303–327.

This was the regular evening for receiving company, but as it was a holiday, and our servants desired to have it to themselves, the parlour was not opened. Many persons, I learn, called at the door, who were not received.

SATURDAY, *26th December, 1846.*— Several members of Congress called this morning. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present. Despatches which were received this morning by the hands of a special messenger at the Navy Department from Commodore Stockton commanding our squadron on the Pacific coast, of dates coming up to the 19th of September, 1846, were read by the Secretary of the Navy. Despatches received last night from our late Consul at the City of Mexico (Mr. Black) of dates as late as the 17th of November, 1846, were read by the Secretary of State. The latter despatches do not indicate any probability that a speedy peace can be effected with Mexico. Various matters connected with the military & naval operations in Mexico were considered. I informed the Cabinet that I had made up my mind to send a message to Congress asking for prompt authority to raise 10,000 men to serve as a part of the regular army during the war with Mexico, in accordance with the recommendation of the Secretary of War in his annual Report, and for authority to appoint a General in chief to command the army during the war. To the latter no objection was made to-day. The Attorney General (Mr. Clifford) who had been absent attending the Supreme Court when the

subject was discussed on a former occasion, gave his assent.

After night several members of Congress called, & I discussed public subjects with them in my office.

SUNDAY, *27th December, 1846.*— I attended the 1st Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and my nephew, Marshall T. Polk.

MONDAY, *28th December, 1846.*— An unusual number of visitors called this morning, and among them many members of Congress. With but few exceptions they were all on the business of seeking office for their friends. I closed my office at 12 O'Clock and disposed of a part of the business on my table. I saw Senators Benton & Dix and informed them that I would send a message to Congress on to-morrow recommending the increase of the regular army and the appointment of a Gen'l Officer to take command of the army. Mr. Buchanan called, and suggested some modifications in the Message which I had prepared on the subject. After night several members of Congress called. Judge Mason called and aided me in revising the Message which I propose to send to Congress on to-morrow. Nothing of much interest occurred to-day.

TUESDAY, *29th December, 1846.*— This being the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet, I resolved not to receive company this morning. Senators and Representatives, however, called, &

were urgent to see me, and [I] was compelled to yield or give them office [offence]. When I did see them, I found that they were upon the very patriotic & never ending business of seeking office for their constituents and friends. Every day that I remain in the Presidential office satisfies me more and more of the selfishness and want of patriotism of men high in office. To accomplish their own selfish ends members of Congress constantly deceive me in their recommendations for office, and the consequence is that many bad appointments are made; and when they are made, the whole responsibility devolves on me, & those who have importuned me to make them never assume any portion of the responsibility, but on the contrary in some instances carefully conceal the fact that the obnoxious appointments have been made at their instance. I am disgusted with the trickery and treachery practised upon me by some members of Congress in their recommendations for office.

The Vice President (Dallas) called this morning and informed me that he had learned through the telegraph that Senator Barrow of Louisiana died at 5 O'Clock this morning at Baltimore. Mr. Barrow, I learn, left this City four or five days ago, apparently in good health. It is represented to me that the day before he left he was the bearer of a note from Mr. Garret Davis of Ky. to Mr. Bailey of Va. relating to a misunderstanding between these gentlemen which had arisen in debate in the Ho. Repts. Mr. Barrow, as I am informed, accompanied Mr. Davis to Baltimore as his second or

friend, it being expected that Mr. Bailey would follow Mr. Davis to Baltimore, where the terms of a duel or hostile meeting would be arranged. It was in the prosecution of this unchristian object, that Mr. Barrow was suddenly seized with disease and cut off in the prime & vigour of life. I am a firm believer that it was a judgment of Heaven upon the immoral, unchristian, and savage practice of duelling. Mr. Bailey, I learn, was arrested by the civil authorities of this City and did not meet Mr. Davis at Baltimore as the latter had anticipated he would do.

My Private Secretary went to the Capitol to-day with several Executive messages, and a message to both Houses upon the subject of increasing the military establishment & the appointment of a commanding Gen'l of the army, but before he reached the Capitol, the Senate had adjourned (though he reached [it] before 1 O'Clock P. M.) in consequence of the intelligence of the death of Mr. Barrow, though the event was not formally announced to the Senate.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present. Nothing of much importance was considered to-day. Several matters of minor importance were considered, and the members of the Cabinet retired at an early hour.

This being the regular evening to receive company, a large number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called. The Circular parlour was quite filled.

The body of Senator Barrow, I learned, was brought from Baltimore, where he died this morn-

ing, in the evening train of cars & was placed in one of the committee Rooms of the Capitol.

WEDNESDAY, *30th December, 1846.*— My office was visited as usual by many persons this morning, & among them were many members of Congress. At 12 O'Clock I directed my messenger to close my door and to bring me in no names or cards of any persons who called. I find this is the only plan by which I can be permitted to have any time to attend to my necessary public duties. As long as I keep my doors open I am tormented by members of Congress and others seeking for office. By refusing to receive names or cards I may avoid giving offense, because I do not know who calls. I had to-day several hours of steady labour at the current business on my table, in which time I disposed of several pardon cases and despatched other business. No business, I learn, was transacted in either House of Congress to-day. Immediately after the meeting of the two Houses the death of Senator Barrow of Louisiana was announced, and both Houses adjourned. I was notified by Mr. Mangum, chairman of the committee of arrangements, that the funeral ceremonies would take place at the Capitol at 12 O'Clock on to-morrow.

I had a Dinner party to-day, numbering between 30 & 40 persons. Among the guests were the Judges of the Supreme Court of the U. S. and the ladies of their families who were in the City; several Senators and Representatives were also of the party.

THURSDAY, *31st December, 1846.*— I saw company until 11½ O'Clock this morning. At that hour, accompanied by the members of my Cabinet, I repaired to the Senate-chamber, where I attended the funeral ceremonies of Senator Barrow of Louisiana, who died at Baltimore on the morning of tuesday last. The Rev'd Mr. Slicer, chaplain of the Senate, performed [the] service, assisted by the Rev'd Mr. Sprole, chaplain of the Ho. Repts. I attended the remains of the deceased to the Congressional burial ground, where the Rev'd Mr. Slicer concluded the service. The day was damp and unpleasant, though not cold. The Secretary of State and my Private Secretary rode with me in my carriage. It was near 3 O'Clock P. M. when I returned to the President's mansion.

After night the Hon. Mr. Wilmot called & held a long conversation with me on public subjects.

FRIDAY, *1st January, 1847.*— The morning was clear, and unusually mild for this season of the year. According to an invariable custom which has been observed by all my predecessors, the President's mansion is thrown open for the reception of visitors on the first day of every year. Neither House of Congress ever sits on that day, and accordingly both Houses adjourned over on yesterday. Between 11 & 12 O'Clock A. M. the company commenced assembling. In the course of an hour an immense throng filled every hall and parlour in the House. The foreign ministers attended in their full Court

costumes. The Cabinet were of course present; as also the Judges of the Supreme Court. Many Senators and Representatives in Congress attended, and among them I observed an unusual number of the Federal members. A large number of strangers as well as citizens, including the subordinate officers of Government were present. I stood on my feet shaking hands with the immense crowd from 11½ O'Clock A.M. till 3 O'Clock P.M. I observed that the only Federal members from Tennessee who attended were Senator Jarnagin and Mr. Cocke of the House of Repts. Mr. Cocke is the only member of the Federal party of the House who has called during the present Session, and he not until to-day. A few minutes after 3 O'Clock P. M. Miss Latimer called with 30 or 40 orphan children, male & female. I received the children and shook hands with them, having something to say to each one of them. About 4 O'Clock P. M. the company had all retired. I was very much exhausted by the fatigues of the day.

SATURDAY, *2nd January, 1847.*— Several members of Congress called this morning. At 11 O'Clock A. M. the Cabinet met, this being the regular day of meeting. The subject of the Mexican war was the subject of a long & free conversation, and especially in regard to our future policy in conducting it. Mr. Buchanan repeated the opinion which upon several occasions before he had intimated, that it was bad policy to think of marching a great army on the City of Mexico; that if we could do so, and take that City, we would but excite a

feeling against us of races & religions and would probably be as far, if not further, from a peace than we now were. His policy as he expressed it was to hold New Mexico & the Californias & defend them. He wished no more territory, but thought we ought to encourage the other Northern Provinces to revolt from Mexico and form an independant Government of their own, and that to effect this we should furnish them aid & assistance. All the other members of the Cabinet seemed to concur in these views. The Secretary of War expressed the opinion that he had no confidence in the success of an expedition on the City of Mexico. Mr. Walker seemed to have changed his former opinion, & expressed his concurrence with the Secretaries of State & War. The P. Master Gen'l expressed his concurrence also in these views. The Atto. Gen'l (Mr. Clifford) was in favour of a bold movement on the City of Mexico, and gave his reasons for this opinion, but said if it was decided otherwise, his opinion would only be known in the Cabinet, and that he would coöperate with the other members of the Cabinet in carrying out whatever was resolved upon. I stated that our present object was to take & possess ourselves of Vera Cruz, and that our future operations might be left to be controlled by the circumstances existing after we should have succeeded in capturing Vera Cruz. The opinion was expressed by two or three members of the Cabinet that the proposition to appoint a Lieut. General of the army would fail in Congress. To this I replied that, having made up my mind to send a message to Congress asking authority to ap-

point such an officer, I should send the message to Congress which I had prepared some days ago recommending it. This all agreed I should do, after what had occurred. Indeed my Private Secretary went with the message to Congress on tuesday last recommending it & an increase of the army, but did not deliver it in consequence of the adjournment of the Senate before he reached the Capitol. The Senate adjourned on that day immediately after meeting, in consequence of the intelligence which had been received that morning of the death of Senator Barrow at Baltimore. On Wednesday the death was announced and both Houses adjourned. On thursday the funeral took place & no business was done in either House, & the Senate adjourned over until monday next. The delivery of my message is therefore necessarily delayed until monday next, which I much regret.

I remarked to the Cabinet that the season for active operations of an army in Mexico was rapidly passing away; that the term of service of the volunteers now in the field would expire in June next, & that it was very important that provision should be made to have troops to take their places before the end of the healthy season. As neither N. Carolina nor Massachusetts had yet responded to the requisition upon them for Volunteer Regiments, though the call was made a month & a half ago, and as it was by no means certain that these as well as some of the other states called upon would furnish the troops called for, it becomes very important that these deficiencies should be speedily supplied. Pennsylva-

nia has acted nobly. The first call was for one Regiment, which was promptly furnished; a second Regiment was received, and now a third is offered. One Regiment called for from Virginia has been raised, and an additional battallion is now offered. I expressed the opinion that the additional forces tendered from these states should be received. The Secretary of War expressed the opinion that they had better not be received until Congress should act upon the recommendations of the Message which I propose to send to Congress on to-morrow. I assented to postpone receiving these troops for a few days, to see whether Congress would act promptly or not. The state of the finances was considered. The Secretary of the Treasury expressed the opinion that it would be with great difficulty that a loan could be effected, if Congress refused to levy a duty on tea and coffee. The Cabinet adjourned at 2 O'Clock P. M.

Senator Cass & Cameron and Representatives Martin of Tennessee and Houston of Alabama called at different hours after night, with each of whom I held conversations in relation to the war, the manner of prosecuting it, and upon other public subjects.

After a labourious day, and one of great anxiety because of the importance of the subjects which occupied me, I retired about 11 O'Clock, much fatigued & exhausted.

SUNDAY, *3rd January, 1847.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs.

Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and Rachel Henrietta Armstrong, a little girl, daughter of Gen'l Robt. Armstrong, U. S. consul at Liverpool. Miss Armstrong is at a school in Georgetown, but frequently comes over and spends a day or two with us.

MONDAY, *4th January, 1847.*— I received company as usual this morning. A large number of members of Congress called. About 11 O'Clock A.M. the Secretary of War called on official business, and I directed my porter to close my doors & admit no more company to-day. I was engaged more than an hour with the Secretary of War. I sent to the Senate to-day a large number of nominations, some of them for civil offices, but chiefly for military appointments, in the line and by brevet. I sent also to both Houses a message [1] recommending prompt action by Congress for the increase of the regular army, and recommending also that authority be given to appoint a general officer to command all our military forces, regular & volunteer, during the War with Mexico, and to be disbanded upon the conclusion of a Treaty of peace.

My Private Secretary returned from the Capitol and informed me that Mr. Preston King of New York had introduced into the Ho. Repts. a Bill [2] on the subject of slavery, which had produced much sensation in the body. He informed me also that Mr. Hamlin,[3] a Representative from the State of

[1] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 104.

[2] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 105.

[3] Hannibal Hamlin, Senator from Maine 1848–1861, and 1869–1881, Vice-President of the United States 1861–1865.

Maine, had made a speech against the Bill recommended by the Secretary of War for increasing the Regular army to serve during the War. Mr. Hamlin professes to be a democrat, but has given indications during the present session that he is dissatisfied, and is pursuing a mischievous course, not only in this instance, but on the slavery question, as well as upon other matters. The slavery question is assuming a fearful & most important aspect. The movement of Mr. King to-day, if persevered in, will be attended with terrible consequences to the country, and cannot fail to destroy the Democratic party, if it does not ultimately threaten the Union itself. Slavery was one of the questions adjusted in the compromises of the Constitution. It has, and can have no legitimate connection with the War with Mexico, or the terms of a peace which may be concluded with that country. It is a domestic and not a foreign question, and to connect it with the appropriations for prosecuting the war, or with the two million appropriation with a view to obtain peace, can result in no good, but must divide the country by a sectional line & lead to the worst consequences. Of course the Federalists are delighted to see such a question agitated by Northern Democrats because it divides and distracts the Democratic party and increases their prospects of coming into power. Such an agitation is not only unwise, but wicked. I sent for Mr. Clifford, the Attorney General, to-night and had a full conversation with [him] upon the course of Mr. King of N. York & Mr. Hamlin of Maine. He agreed with me that it was deeply to be regretted,

and said he would see Mr. Hamlin and some other Northern members to-night or in the morning, & expostulate with them upon their course.

Mr. Hamlin's grievance I understand is that I did not appoint some friend of his in Maine, whom he had recommended, to some petty office last winter. Thus upon small and selfish personal grounds even members of Congress change their political principles.

Owing [to] this and similar causes Congress have not yet acted upon a single one of my recommendations for the prosecution of the War, and are likely to suffer the favourable season for military operations in the enemy's country [to] pass away, before they do so. Whilst they neglect to do this, they are agitating the slavery question, which has nothing to do with the practical business before them. The next Presidential election, too, has much to do with these agitations. The Cliques attached to their favourites for the Presidency in the Democratic party are at war with each [other], and the war, the means of prosecuting it, and all the other business of the country are overlooked and neglected. While this is so, the Federalists are united, and delighted at the unnecessary and foolish divisions in the Democratic party. I deplore this state of things; I will do all I can to correct it; I will do my duty and leave the rest to God and my country.

TUESDAY, *5th January, 1847.*— Several members of Congress and other persons called this morning.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour. The Secretary of War read despatches which had been received from Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Wool. From them it appears that Gen'l Taylor has paid no regard to the views of the Government, but has dispersed the troops in small bodies at different and distant points from each other, so that great apprehensions are entertained that they are so exposed that some portion of them may be cut off by the superior numbers of the enemy. It is manifest that Gen'l Taylor is wholly incompetent for so large a command. He seems to have no mind or powers of combination. The Secretary of War having learned that his forces were too much dispersed, wrote to Gen'l Scott some days ago urging that they should be concentrated, so as to [be] less exposed, and with the view to the expedition against Vera Cruz. Gen'l Taylor, by dispersing his forces into small bodies, has acted directly against the views of the Government, and contrary to his own views as communicated to the Government, that he could not advance beyond Monterey with safety.

The distracted state of the Democratic party in Congress was the subject of conversation and regret. The truth is there is no harmony or concert of action among the Democratic members. It is now in the fifth week of the Session, and they have passed no single act in accordance with my recommendations to enable me to prosecute the war with Mexico with vigor and success. The[y] have voted in the Ho. Repts. that it is inexpedient to levy a war tax

on tea and coffee,[1] as recommended in my message and strongly urged by the Secretary of the Treasury. The Bill for the increase of the army drags on in debate in the Ho. Repts. and its fate is even said to be doubtful.

The Slavery question has been introduced in the Ho. Repts. by Mr. Preston King of New York and is a fire-brand in the body. Slavery has no possible connection with the Mexican War, and with making peace with that country. Should any territory be acquired by a Treaty with Mexico, Congress will have the full power to raise the question of slavery in it upon the organization of a territorial Government in it, or upon its admission as a state of the Union. Its introduction in connection with the Mexican War is not only mischievous but wicked. It is, moreover, practically an abstract question. There is no probability that any territory will ever be acquired from Mexico in which slavery could ever exist. New Mexico and California is all that can ever probably be acquired by Treaty, and indeed all that I think it important to acquire. In these Provinces slavery would probably never exist, and therefore the question would never arise. The dangers of the introduction of the subject were fully considered by the Cabinet. Mr. Buchanan urged the importance and necessity of Congress declaring that we would hold these Provinces as indemnity, and establishing [establish] Governments there, sub-

[1] The vote against the measure was 105–49. *H. Journal,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 120.

ject to the provisions of a treaty of peace. He further expressed his willingness to extend the Missouri compromise West to the Pacific. All the members of the Cabinet agreed with him in these views. The Post Master Gen'l was willing to acquire these Provinces & agreed that slavery should never exist in them. I suspended any decision on the subject, though it was earnestly urged by Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Walker. Though willing myself to assent to the proposition, I was not ready, until I saw further developments, to recommend it to Congress as the policy of the administration.

Col. Benton called after night and held a long conversation with me upon this and other subjects. I suggested Mr. Buchanan's proposition to him as my own suggestion, and asked his opinion, telling [him] at the same time that if adopted I did not intend that it should interfere with the vigorous prosecution of the War. I suggested it with a view to see if any compromise upon the slavery question, which had been introduced into the Ho. Repts. [would have his support]. He told me he would consider of it and give me his opinion hereafter.

WEDNESDAY, *6th January, 1847.*— On returning from my usual walk this morning, I received in the letter box at my front door a note from Col. Benton stating in substance that he was surprised to learn, on his return home from my office last evening, that the same thing which I had suggested to him for his opinion last night in relation to taking possession of

New Mexico & California as an indemnity for our claims and the expenses of the Mexican war, had been a subject of conversation among the members of the Ho. Repts. for some days past. He expressed the opinion that the suggestion had been used by members of the Ho. Repts. as an argument to defeat the creation of the office of Lieut. General. He expressed the opinion that strange work had been going on & that he would endeavour to find out the facts. It was a singular note, & I will preserve [it]. The inference which I drew from it was that Col. Benton suspected that I had made the suggestion in order to defeat the Bill to authorize the appointment of a Lieut. Gen'l. I sent my Private Secretary down to see him. He explained to him that he meant no such thing in his note. He could not have done so with any truth or in justice to me, and yet his note unexplained was susceptible of that construction.

My office was crowded with an unusual number of members of Congress & others to-day. The business of a large majority of them was the very patriotic one of seeking offices for their friends. I am perfectly disgusted with the unceasing and never-ending applications for office, which are constantly made to me. My whole time was occupied to-day in listening to such applications. During the whole day and until after 10 O'Clock at night, I had not an hour to attend to the business on my table. I was greatly annoyed and my patience perfectly exhausted.

Judge Douglass of Illinois called this morning to renew his urgent request that I would appoint Rich-

ard M. Young[1] of Illinois Commissioner of the General Land office, in place of Gen'l Shields resigned. Senator Breese and Mr. Douglass had been urging me to make this appointment from the commencement of the present Session of Congress. Each of them had held repeated conversations with me & were very pressing and urgent on the subject. Judge Young was formerly U. S. Senator and was [is] at present a Judge of the Supreme Court of Illinois. They informed me that he would be universally acceptable to the Democracy of Illinois, that he was eminently qualified, and a gentleman of high character. In answer to an enquiry made of them by me some days ago, whether the Illinois delegation in Congress would be satisfied with the appointment, they answered that they would if Mr. Hoge,[2] a member of the present Congress, who had been recommended at the last Session, could not be appointed. I informed them that I had decided at the last Session not to appoint members of Congress to office, unless in excepted & special cases, for instance to such offices as Missions abroad, members of the Cabinet, or Judges of the Supreme Court of the U. S. I took it for granted & had not the least doubt that they had consulted the delegation from Illinois in relation to the appointment which they were urging. Certainly I had no right to think otherwise. On Monday last each of them called, and insisted on the appointment of Judge Young. I told Judge

[1] Senator from Illinois 1837–1843; Commissioner of the General Land Office 1847–1850.

[2] Joseph P. Hoge, Representative from Illinois 1843–1847.

Douglass, as I had before told Judge Breese, that my own choice was Mr. John Brough of Ohio, because of his eminent qualifications, but neither of them would consent to his appointment. I suggested to them that I might possibly have it in my power to appoint Judge Young a chargé abroad, but they would not agree to it. This morning Judge Douglass called on the subject again, and I felt myself constrained to yield to the appointment of Judge Young, not doubting for a moment but that the Illinois delegation were apprised that his appointment was pressed upon me by Messrs. Breese & Douglass. I accordingly sent the nomination of Judge Young for the office to the Senate to-day, and, what is very unusual, I received a notification by the hands of the Secretary of the Senate that his nomination had been confirmed before 5 O'Clock. About dark Messrs. McClernand, Smith, & Ficklin of the Illinois delegation called, and were greatly excited on the subject. I stated to them the facts as they were, and assured them that I supposed they had been informed & understood that Judge Young had been pressed upon me by Judge Breese & Judge Douglass. They declared that they had no knowledge of it until they heard to-day the nomination had been made & confirmed. They were very indignant and spoke in strong terms of the conduct of Messrs. Breese & Douglass, and said they had slipped up to me without their knowledge and induced me to make the nomination. They were much excited, though they said they had no personal objection to Judge Young. I assured them that I should not have made the

nomination without consulting them, if I had not supposed that Messrs. Douglass & Breese had informed them of it. I now consider that Messrs. Douglass and Breese have acted badly towards the delegation and towards me. There has been a want of fairness and open dealing in the matter that is unworthy of members of Congress, but I have learned by painful experience that I am daily imposed upon in reference to appointments, by members of Congress who have their selfish ends to accomplish. In this case Mr. McClernand intimated that it was the result of a bargain between Judge Douglass and Judge Young to prevent the latter from opposing the former in the late election for the U. S. Senate in Illinois, at which Judge Douglass was elected; and that it was the result of a bargain between Judge Breese & Young to prevent the latter from opposing the former in his re-election to the Senate. I now regret exceedingly that I nominated Judge Young, and if he had not been confirmed by the Senate in unusual haste, on the day he was nominated, I would withdraw the nomination. I regret this occurrence, because, unexplained, I must have a bad opinion of the conduct of both Judge Bre[e]se & Mr. Douglass. Messrs. McClernand, Smith, & Ficklin, who called tonight, are among the best democrats & friends I have in Congress. I will upon the first opportunity express my dissatisfaction at the course of Messrs. Douglass & Breese to those gentlemen.

THURSDAY, *7th January, 1847.*— Many persons, members of Congress and others, called to-day; all

of them or nearly all on what they may regard as the patriotic, but which I consider the contemptible business of seeking office for themselves or their friends. The passion for office and the number of unworthy persons who seek to live on the public is increasing beyond former example, and I now predict that no President of the U. S. of either party will ever again be reëlected. The reason is that the patronage of the Government will destroy the popularity of any President, however well he may administer the Government. The office seekers have become so numerous that they hold the balance of power between the two great parties of the country. In every appointment which the President makes he disappoints half a dozen or more applicants and their friends, who, actuated by selfish and sordid motives, will prefer any other candidate in the next election, while the person appointed attributes the appointment to his own superior merit and does not even feel obliged by it. The number of office seekers has become so large that they probably hold the balance of power between the two great parties in the country, and if disappointed in getting place under one administration they will readily unite themselves with the party and candidate of opposite politics, so as to increase their chances for place. Another great difficulty in making appointments which the President encounters is that he cannot tell upon what recommendations to rely. Members of Congress and men of high station in the country sign papers of recommendation, either from interested personal motives or without meaning what they say,

and thus the President is often imposed on, and induced to make bad appointments. When he does so the whole responsibility falls on himself, while those who have signed papers of recommendation and misled him, take special care never to avow the agency they have had in the matter, or to assume any part of the responsibility. I have had some remarkable instances of this during my administration. One or two of them I think worthy to be recorded as illustrations of many others. In the recess of Congress shortly after the commencement of my administration I made an appointment upon the letter of recommendation of a senator. I sent the nomination to the Senate at the last session & it was rejected, and, as I learned, at the instance of the same Senator who had made the recommendation. A few days afterwards the Senator called to recommend another person for the same office. I said to him, well, you rejected the man I nominated; O yes, he replied, he was without character & wholly unqualified. I then asked him if he knew upon whose recommendation I had appointed him, to which he replied that he did not. I then handed to him his own letter & told him that that was the recommendation upon which I had appointed him. He appeared confused and replied, Well, we are obliged to recommend our constituents when they apply to us. The Senator was Mr. Atchison of Missouri, and the person appointed & rejected was Mr. Hedges as Surveyor of the port of St. Louis.[1] Other like

[1] This sentence is crossed out after having been written in the Diary by President Polk.

cases have occurred. After 12 O'Clock to-day I was busily employed in disposing of the business on my table. Nothing worthy of note occurred.

FRIDAY, *8th January, 1847.*— A large number of persons, members of Congress and citizens, ladies and gentlemen, called this morning. My time was occupied in seeing company until near 1 O'Clock P. M. After that hour I was occupied an hour or more on business with the Secretary of War. I disposed of much business on my table. About 2½ O'Clock P. M. Senator Houston of Texas called and informed me that Judge Bowlin[1] of Missouri & himself were a committee to wait on me, and invite me to attend the 8th of January Ball at Jackson Hall in this City to-night. He desired to know if I would attend, and at what hour they should call for me. He informed me that Judge Bowlin was necessarily detained in the Ho. Repts. & had requested him to say so to me. I answered that my respect for the anniversary of the Victory of New Orleans was such as to make it my duty as well as my inclination to attend its celebration, and that I should be ready to accompany the committee at such hour as they might designate. Gen'l Houston said the committee would call between 8 & 9 O'Clock this evening.

This being my regular reception evening, I saw company in the parlour until a few minutes after 9 O'Clock, when Senator Houston & Judge Bowlin of

[1] James Butler Bowlin of St. Louis, Judge of the Criminal Court 1839, Representative from Missouri 1843–1851.

Missouri called as a committee to attend me to the 8th of Jan'y Ball at Jackson Hall. I made my apology to the company and retired with them. My Private Secretary and Mrs. Walker and Miss Rucker also accompanied us. The Ball was not very numerously attended. I observed but one Federal member of Congress (Senator Johnson of Louisiana) present. On entering the room most of the company, ladies [and gentlemen], came to me and shook hands with me, and I was enjoying myself very much when my niece, Miss Rucker, came to the part of the room in which I was [and] told me that there was smoke in another part of the room, as [and] that the House was on fire. At first I supposed she was mistaken, but in a very short time afterwards, observing a part of the company moving towards the Door, Mrs. Judge Catron, with whom I was sitting on a sofa, walked towards the Door also. Shortly after reaching the top of the stairs, a person below called out for the company to come down. I went down with Mrs. Catron, went to my carriage, and we got into it. I observed a large volume of smoke issuing from the basement. The fire companies with their engines were assembling, and [after] remaining a few minutes I directed my coachman to drive to Coleman's Hotel where Mrs. Catron got out, and I returned home. Col. Walker, Mrs. Walker, and Miss Rucker had reached home a few minutes before me. The fire, I learn, was extinguished in a short time; a part of the company reassembled and continued the festivities of the evening until a late hour.

SATURDAY, *9th January, 1847.*— Saw company as usual until the meeting of the Cabinet this morning. Many members of Congress & others called. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Nothing of importance came up to-day. After spending one or two hours in general conversation on public subjects the Cabinet retired. Between 5 & 6 O'Clock P. M. my Private Secretary returned from the Capitol and Reported to me that the Ho. Repts. had just adjourned after a very hard struggle which had lasted for several hours on the army Bill. Mr. Rathbun of New York had moved an amendment to the Bill brought in in pursuance of the recommendation of the Secretary of War, which I had endorsed in my annual message & also in a special message of the 4th Inst., to raise 10 Regiments of Regular troops to serve during the War, by substituting therefor authority to raise the same number of volunteers. Had this amendment prevailed it would have been equivalent to doing nothing, or rather to the total defeat of the measure, for I have already authority, under the act of June last, to call for volunteers. My Private Secretary reported to me that [the] whole Federal party without an exception voted for Rathbun's amendment, that a small part of the Democratic members had voted with them, and that the amendment failed of being carried by a single vote. That part of the Democrats who voted with Rathbun & the united Federal party are almost without exception disaffected and unsound men. The causes of their disaffection are petty

griefs at not having their wishes gratified in appointments to office for themselves, or not getting petty offices for their constituents and friends. A part of the New York Democratic members are in a bad temper, and I consider their course at the present session more hostile to my administration and calculated to do much more harm than if they were open political opponents. In this class are Messrs. Rathbun, King, Grover, & some others. The course in this measure of Messrs. McClernand, Ficklin, & Smith of the Illinois delegation would have astonished me, if anything could after all that I have seen of the selfish & personal considerations which influence members of Congress on great measures of the Government. These gentlemen I have regarded as among the truest Democrats in the House. They voted with Rathbun, the Federalists, & Co. on this occasion. The cause of it, I cannot doubt, was my appointment of Judge Young of Illinois a few days ago to be commissioner of the General Land office, with whose appointment they were much dissatisfied. (see this diary of the 6th Inst., for a statement of the facts attending that appointment.) What connection this appointment had with the prosecution of the War with Mexico no one can tell. Yet I have not a doubt that these Gentlemen vented their spite towards me in consequence of that appointment, by joining their political enemies and the unsound portion of their own party by voting against the army Bill to carry on the War against Mexico. Mr. Hoge of Illinois voted with them. He was an ap-

plicant for the appointment of Commissioner of Public lands & was disappointed. He therefore showed his patriotism by voting against his country, and the furnishing the means to enable the Government to fight its battles against a Foreign enemy. It is sickening to the heart of the patriot to witness, as I have done during my term, the numerous instances which have occurred in which members of Congress elected as Democrats have voted against the measures of the Government because they had been disappointed in their selfish applications for office for themselves and their friends. Many of them are Governed by no fixed principles, but are sordid & selfish, if not worse, in all they do. Fortunately the combination in the House to-day failed by one vote to effect the defeat of this indispensable war measure of the Government.

Senator Dix of N. York happened to be in my office when my Private Secretary informed me of the proceedings of the House to-day. I expressed my utter surprise to him at the course of Rathbun, King, & others of the New York delegation, and told him I could attribute it to nothing but some petty disappointment about some petty offices. He expressed his dissatisfaction also, and said he would see them to-night or to-morrow. My Private Secretary did not speak of the course of the Illinois members, named above, in the presence of Senator Dix.

SUNDAY, *10th January, 1847*.— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk & her niece, Miss Rucker.

MONDAY, *11th January, 1847.*— Saw company to-day until 12 O'Clock. Many persons, members of Congress and others, called.

Immediately after 12 O'Clock the Secretary of War & the Secretary of the Navy called. The Secretary of the Navy read to me the rough draft of a despatch which he had prepared to Commodore Stockton in the Pacific, defining his rights and powers over the Province of the Californias which he had conquered. This despatch embodies the laws of nations on the subject. I assented to the general principles which it embodied. The Secretary of War said he would address a similar communication to Gen'l Kearney as applicable to the Province of New Mexico, which he had conquered. The Secretary of the Navy said he would revise and copy the rough draft of his despatch which he had read to me & would show it to me before he sent it off. I told him that I desired that he would do so. I spent the balance of the day in disposing of the business on my table, and despatched many minor matters which had been on my hands for some time. Indeed I almost cleared my table.

After night Mr. Ch. J. Ingersoll called & I had a long conversation with him in relation to public affairs, and particularly upon the subject connected with the Mexican War, now pending before Congress. I sent for Senator Cass to-night [and] had a similar conversation with him. After 10 O'Clock P. M. I retired from my office feeling that I had performed a good day's work.

TUESDAY, *12th January, 1847.*— I learned with deep regret that Senator Pennybacker of Virginia died at his lodgings in this City at 5 O'Clock this morning. He had been ill for some days. The last time he visited my office he was labouring under an attack of yellow jaundice and was very yellow. He was an excellent man, and was my personal and political friend. None of his friends will deplore his loss more than I do. I saw company until the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet to-day. Several members of Congress & others called.

The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour. The Secretary of the Navy read the despatch to Commodore Stockton, commanding our Naval forces in the Pacific, which he had prepared, and the rough draft of which he read to me on yesterday. It defined more at length than had heretofore been done the powers and rights of our naval and military commanders in establishing temporary Governments over the Californias and other provinces of Mexico which had been conquered by our arms. It was slightly modified in one or two particulars, and as modified was unanimously agreed to by the Cabinet. My Private Secretary went to the Senate to-day with several Executive Messages, containing an answer [1] to a call of the Senate for the correspondence with the Government of New Granada, & several nominations, which he did not deliver in consequence of the adjournment of the Senate, in consequence of the announcement of the death of Senator Pennybacker, immediately after the meeting of the Senate. I was

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 509.

notified by the committee of arrangements this evening that the funeral of Senator Pennybacker would take place at the Senate chamber at 12 O'Clock on to-morrow. Neither House sat to-day in consequence of the announcement of this death.

This was reception evening. Many persons, ladies and gentlemen, called. My old Congressional acquaintance, Gen'l Walter Coles[1] of Va., with whom I served many years in Congress, took a family Dinner with me to-day.

I omitted to state in the proper place that Mr. Buchanan in Cabinet to-day recited the substance of a conversation held with him last night by Col. Atocha formerly of Mexico, and recently from Havana, in which he professed to disclose to him the views and opinions of Santa Anna & Almonte, in favour of peace between the two countries. Mr. Buchanan said that Col. Atocha said he had in his pocket letters from Santa Anna and Almonte and Rigon, but did not show them. Atocha also told him that he intended to see Col. Benton on to-morrow. I requested Mr. Buchanan to address a note to Col. B. requesting him to get a perusal of the letters which Atocha professed to have from Santa Anna, &c.

WEDNESDAY, *13th January, 1847.*— Saw company until 11½ O'Clock A. M., when, accompanied by my Cabinet, I went to the capitol and attended the funeral services occasioned by the death of Sena-

[1] Walter Coles, 1789–1857, Representative from Virginia, 1835–1845.

tor Pennybacker of Virginia. The Rev'd Mr. Slicer, chaplain of the Senate, opened the service with an appropriate prayer, and the Rev'd Mr. Sprole, chaplain of the Ho. Repts., preached a sermon on the immortality of the soul. I accompanied the procession to the Congressional burial ground, and returned to the President's Mansion about 3 O'Clock P. M. Judge Mason was the only member of my Cabinet who accompanied me to the Grave Yard. The other members of the Cabinet were called to their respective offices by their public duties.

I devoted the remainder of the day until night in disposing of the business on my table. After night an unusual number of members of Congress called, who wished to see me on various matters of business, and to converse with me about the measures now before Congress with a view to the prosecution of the War with Mexico. At a later hour than usual I retired from my office.

THURSDAY, *14th January, 1847.*— I saw company until 12 O'Clock to-day. I had the usual round of visitors, members of Congress and others, some seeking office and others on visits of ceremony. After 12 O'Clock I was not interrupted by company until night, except that I gave a short sitting to an artist named Ellis. He was taking my head on ivory or some kind of shell. Mr. Gillet,[1] the Register of the Treasury, had some days ago requested that Mrs. Polk & myself would each give him a short sitting,

[1] Ransom H. Gillet of New York, author of *The Life and Times of Silas Wright.*

in order that he might take our likenesses for Mrs. Gillet. I had given him two or three short sittings before which I had neglected to note in this diary.

Mr. Buchanan called about 2 O'Clock and showed me a note which he received to-day from Col. Benton, stating that he had [seen] Col. Atocha, the person of whom Mr. Buchanan had spoken in the Cabinet on tuesday last. Col. Benton stated in the note that he had read letters addressed to Col. Atocha by Santa Anna & Almonte, which he regarded as very important, & which he had been permitted to retain with liberty to show them to me & to Mr. Buchanan. Col. B. regarded the disclosure made in these letters and by Col. Atocha as very important. Mr. Buchanan said he had invited a Dinner-party to his house to-day & could not see Col. Benton to-day. I requested him to write a note to Col. Benton requesting him to call on me to-night, and to bring with him the letters which Atocha had given to him.

About 6 O'Clock Col. Benton called & read to me several letters from Santa Anna & Almonte addressed to Atocha, and among others one from Santa Anna dated at San Louis Potosi on the 24th of November, & one from Almonte dated at the City of Mexico on the 29th of November last. They both expressed a desire for an honourable peace and it is manifest that Atocha possesses their confidence & is in correspondence with them. From these letters it is manifest, also, that Atocha's visit to Washington is at their instance. His object no doubt is to open the way for negotiatians, and to ascertain the terms upon which peace would be made. The letters

which Col. Benton read to me were in the Spanish language, but he translated them to me into English. As an additional proof that Atocha is in the confidence of Santa Anna, he was fully advised of the visit made to Santa Anna by Alexander Slidell McKenzie [1] at Havana last summer. Col. Benton informed me in some detail of Atocha's conversation with him. Atocha assured him that Santa Anna, Almonte, & Rejon were all anxious for peace. Upon being enquired of by Col. B. what terms of peace they would make, he answered that they would agree to the Rio Grande as the boundary, reserving a space of territory between that River & the Nueces as a barrier between the two countries, and that they would be willing to cede California to the U. S. for a consideration, and he named fifteen or twenty millions of Dollars as the consideration with which they would be satisfied. Atocha also stated they would desire to have commissioners from the two countries appointed, who should meet at Havana to negotiate for peace, and added that they would desire that the blockade before Vera Cruz should be raised, pending negotiations. I asked Col. B. if he said anything about ceding N. Mexico to the U. S. He said he had asked him that question, but upon that point he seemed to be uninformed. Col. B. was of opinion that Atocha was the confidential agent of Santa Anna and that his representations were true. Col. B. was in favour of agreeing to appoint Com-

[1] For an account of McKenzie's mission to Havana and its results see Reeves, *American Diplomacy under Tyler and Polk*, 299.

missioners to meet at Havana if Mexico would do so, and thought such an intimation should be given in some way to the Mexican Government. I told him I was perfectly willing to [assent to] the proposition, but doubted whether it would be politic for me to make another overture, after all that had occurred. I suggested to him that Atocha might be so informed through him or Mr. Buchanan, and in this informal way it might be made known to the Mexican Government. He seemed to assent that this mode would do. He said he was to see Atocha again on to-morrow. I told him I would consult Mr. Buchanan, and request him to call on him in the course of the day on to-morrow. This Col. Atocha is the same person with whom I had several confidential interviews during the early part of last year. He brought no letters, and at that time I was suspicious & cautious of him. I learned all I could from him, but communicated nothing to him. My interviews with him are noticed in this diary. He complained to Col. Benton that I had been reserved & had not given him my confidence. I am now satisfied that he is an agent of Santa Anna and he may be made useful.

I had a further conversation with Col. B. about Gen'l Taylor's mismanagement of the war; and about a publication in the New Orleans papers of the contemplated plans of the campaign. This could only have gotten to the public through Gen'l Scott, who was necessarily intrusted with it confidentially before he set out from Washington for the seat of War. He has from his inordinate vanity or

from some other cause given it out, so that it has gotten before the public. The truth is neither Taylor nor Scott are fit for the command of the army in the great operations in progress and which are contemplated. To add to my embarrassment, & it does greatly do so, Congress does not strengthen the Executive arm. Nearly half the session has passed and they are engaged in debates about slavery and party politics, and have passed none of the essential measures which I have recommended as indispensible to the vigorous & successful prosecution of the war. With a large nominal majority in both Houses, I am practically in a minority. The several cliques & sections of the Democratic party are manifestly more engaged in managing for their respective favourites in the next Presidential election, than they are in supporting the Government in prosecuting the war, or in carrying out any of its great measures. The only corrective is in the hands of the people. I will do my duty to the country and rejoice that with my own voluntary free will & consent I am not to be again a candidate. This determination is irrevocable.

FRIDAY, *15th January, 1847.*—When I entered my office this morning I found visitors waiting in the anti-room. I directed them to be shown in, and from that time until my dinner hour I was not alone for 10 minutes. The Constant pressure and importunity for office is not only disgusting, but is almost beyond endurance. I keep my temper, or rather suppress the indignation which I feel at the

sordid and selfish views of the horde of people who continually annoy me about place. Members of Congress have caught the prevailing desire for office for themselves, and to-day I had another application for an office for one of them. It was made by Senator Cameron of Penn. in behalf of Mr. Leib [1] of the Ho. Repts. He wished to have me appoint Mr. Leib a purser in the Navy, information of the death of a purser having reached the Navy Department last evening. I told him plainly that I would not appoint a member of Congress to office, unless it was for a high military Station in time of War, or for a Mission abroad, or some such station. In other words that my general rule was not to appoint members of Congress to office. Judging from what has occurred in similar cases heretofore, I have no doubt Mr. Leib will be an opponent of my administration during the balance of my term. At least 20 members of the present Congress have been disappointed in the same way, and in all the cases I have observed that they have afterwards voted against the measures which I have recommended. They have, however, taken special care never to assign the true reasons for their course. They have not openly opposed my administration, but whenever they could do so without exposure to their constituents and the public, they have done so. If God grants me length of days and health,[2] I will, after the expiration of my term, give a history of the selfish and corrupt

[1] Owen D. Leib, Representative from Pennsylvania 1845–1847.

[2] Polk lived less than three months after the expiration of his Presidential term, dying June 15, 1849.

considerations which influence the course of public men, as a legacy to posterity. I shall never be profitted by it, but those who come after me may be. I learn this evening that Congress has done nothing with the army Bills which are before them, and which I have earnestly recommended should be passed promptly. The Presidential Election of 1848 seems to influence the various cliques of the Democratic party more than the prosecution of the War with Mexico, or the public good. The truth is there seems to be no patriotism, but all is selfishness with many of the members. The Federalists of course act in a body, and unite with any dissatisfied or corrupt faction of the Democratic party who oppose the measures of my administration. I use the term corruption not in its personal sense, but politically the conduct of certain persons is so. The people of the country do not understand the unworthy motives by which not a few (I am sorry to say) Of the members of Congress are influenced in their course. After night I attended to some of the business on my table. This evening Mr. Ellis, an artist, who is taking a Cameo likeness of me, called. He sat at my table while I was engaged in business half an hour & proceeded with his work. I had not time to give him a sitting in any other way.

This was reception evening.

SATURDAY, *16th January, 1847.*— My office was crowded with company, members of Congress and others, this morning until the hour for the meeting of the Cabinet. Indeed after that hour, and after

several members of the Cabinet had come in, I saw several members of Congress in my Private Secretary's office.

All the members of the Cabinet were present today. Mr. Buchanan stated that on last night he held a long conversation with Col. Benton, on the subject of the visit of Col. Atocha to this City, and the communications made by that person to himself and Col. Benton in relation to the wishes of the Mexican Government for peace. Mr. Buchanan stated, also, that he had held another conversation with Col. Atocha this morning, and expressed the clear opinion that this person was in the confidence of Gen'l Santa Anna and Almonte and other principal men now conducting the Government of Mexico, and had no doubt he had been sent to Washington by them to prepare the way for peace. The letters which he exhibited from these persons, as well as the information he communicated, he thought was conclusive evidence of that fact. He said that Atocha had stated the terms upon which, he had no doubt, the Mexican Government would make peace. They were the same which he had communicated to Col. Benton, & which are stated in this diary of the 14th Inst. I told Mr. Buchanan that we could not agree to the proposed reservation of a neutral territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, and that we must obtain a cession of New Mexico as well as the Californias for a consideration. Mr. Buchanan said he had so informed [Atocha]. He said Atocha earnestly insisted upon the appointment of commissioners by the two Governments to meet

at Havana to negotiate for peace, and that if the U. S. would agree to this, & make such a proposition, he would proceed forthwith with it to Mexico, and had no doubt it would be accepted. He said Atocha represented that this would be flattering to the Mexican pride, and would enable them to reconcile the public opinion of Mexico to the opening of negotiations for peace. Atocha also, as Mr. Buchanan said, suggested that if Mexico accepted the overture and appointed Commissioners to treat for peace, the blockade of Vera Cruz by the U. S. Naval forces should be raised. To this I objected because Mexico might not be sincere in the matter, and might desire to have our naval forces withdrawn from Vera Cruz for a time so as to enable her to import arms & munitions of War into Vera Cruz, and after that was accomplished might refuse to treat or to agree to such terms as we could accept, and that if this should turn out to be so we would be overreached, and Mexico would thereby obtain an important advantage, and subject the administration to the ridicule of the whole world for its credulity and weakness. I was unwilling therefore to raise the blockade or to relax our warlike movements, either by land or sea, until a Treaty was actually concluded and signed. After that was done, I would be willing to suspend military operations for a reasonable time, until it was ascertained whether the Treaty would be ratified by the two Governments. The opinion of the Cabinet was then taken and they were unanimously of opinion that a letter should be addressed by the Secretary of State to the minister of Foreign

affairs of Mexico, proposing the appointment of Commissioners on the part of both nations to meet at Havana to negotiate for peace. All except The Post Master Gen'l agreed that Col. Atocha should be the bearer of a sealed letter to this effect, not as a bearer of despatches or an employee of the Government of the U. S. but as an individual to whom a sealed letter was entrusted to be delivered. Mr. Buchanan took from his pocket the rough draft of such a communication, which he said he had prepared after his interviews with Col. Benton & Atocha, which he read. Some slight modification was suggested. Mr. Buchanan retired to my Private Secretary's office and prepared a revised draft of the letter. The P. M. Gen'l being unwell retired. The balance of the Cabinet remained near an hour, when Mr. Buchanan returned to my office & read the revised draft of the letter,[1] which was approved by all present. When the Cabinet retired Mr. Buchanan, at my request, left the letter with me. He said he would call to-night about 10 O'Clock for it, observing that he had an engagement to dine out to-day. I told Mr. Buchanan that as Col. Benton had been consulted on the subject, I would show the letter to him, to which he made no objection, but remarked that he thought it would be proper to do so. I wrote a note to Col. Benton requesting him to call on me this evening. He did so about 6 O'Clock P. M. I showed him the letter, and he approved the policy of writing a letter of the kind, and approved the draft which Mr. Buchanan had prepared. I had a

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 198.

full conversation with him, repeating substantially the opinions which I had expressed in the Cabinet to-day; in all of which he concurred. I had much conversation with him, also, about the dilatory proceedings of Congress on the measures which I had recommended for the vigorous prosecution of the war. The Session was now nearly half over, the winter season, which is the only part of the year favourable for the prosecution of Military operations in Mexico, was passing away, and Congress had not yet given me any one of the measures which I had recommended in my annual message and my special message of the 4th Instant. On the contrary, they had rejected a Bill in the Senate[1] to authorize the appointment of a General in chief of the army, and I feared were not likely to pass any of the other measures which I had recommended. He agreed with me that the Democratic party in Congress were in a most distracted and feeble condition. Instead of acting upon the great measures of the country, they are spending day after day and week after week in a worse than useless discussion about slavery. This fire-brand was first introduced by Mr. Preston King of New York, and a fierce & violent discussion has followed. It is a mischievous & wicked agitation, which can result in no good, and must lead to infinite mischief. The pretext for it is to declare in advance that slavery shall never exist in any territory which we may acquire from Mexico. In the Cabinet to-day this subject was one of conversation. All depre-

[1] The bill was laid on the table, January 15, by a vote of 29 to 28. *S. Journal,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 104.

cated the discussion now going on in Congress, but all feared it would be impossible now to arrest it. The Cabinet were unanimous, also, in opinion that if by treaty or otherwise the U. S. should acquire any territory from Mexico, the line of the Missouri Compromise, *viz.*, 36° 30′, should extend West to the Pacific and apply to such territory. This question was not inconsiderately decided by the Cabinet, but was fully discussed and deliberately considered, and I took the opinion of each member of the Cabinet seperately.

Several members of Congress called after night, and among others Senator Sevier, Ch. of the committee of Foreign affairs of the Senate; & Mr. C. J. Ingersoll of the House, Ch. of the committee of Foreign affairs of that body; with each of whom I held a conversation on public affairs, & particularly the measures now pending before Congress.

SUNDAY, *17th January, 1847.*— I attended Divine services at the Capitol to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. Service was performed in the Hall of the Ho. Repts. by the Rev'd Mr. Slicer, chaplain of the Senate. He preached an excellent sermon.

MONDAY, *18th January, 1847.*— This morning on going to my office immediately after breakfast, I found Senator Benton & the Secretary of State waiting for me. Mr. Buchanan was in the office, and Mr. Benton walking in the passage without. I met the latter on my way to the office and invited him in.

Col. Benton read an article from a Mexican paper which strongly confirmed the account which Col. Atocha had given of the disposition of Santa Anna for peace. They then informed me, sometimes one of them talking and then the other, that they had spent last evening until a late hour in conversation with Col. Atocha, in which Atocha disclosed more fully than he had done the object of his visit to Washington. They were both fully and entirely satisfied that he was the confidential agent of Santa Anna, sent to Washington to open the door for negotiation and the conclusion of a peace. Mr. Buchanan had read to him the despatch to the Sec. of For. affairs of Mexico, considered in Cabinet on saturday last. To that passage of the despatch which declared that the War would continue to be prosecuted until the commissioners proposed to be appointed should conclude a peace, Atocha objected on the ground that he feared it would wound the mexican pride. He had insisted that instead of this passage one should be inserted to the effect that the commissioners on the part of the U. S. should be invested with authority in their discretion, after meeting the Mexican commissioners, either to raise the blockade of Vera Cruz or to suspend hostilities. To this I at once said I saw no objection. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Benton both thought it proper, and I directed that the passage should be modified accordingly. Then they asked me if Atocha could be conveyed from New Orleans or Pensacola in a Steamer (a Government vessel). I told them that the Secretary of the Navy had said on saturday that he had

no such vessel at either place; but that I would send for him & also for the Secretary of the Treasury, and ascertain whether either a Steamer (a vessel of War) or a Revenue cutter could be used to convey Atocha speedily to Mexico. Atocha had informed them that if he could have the use of such a vessel he could go to Mexico and return to Washington City before the adjournment of the present Session of Congress. They said that Atocha was very anxious upon the subject, and was ready to leave upon an hour's notice, and repeated that they were thoroughly satisfied that he was the confidential agent of Santa Anna, and that he was fully possessed of his views, and also of those of Almonte and Rejan and other leading men now in authority in Mexico.

After Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Benton left, my messenger informed me that a great number of persons were in waiting to see me, in the anti-room and in the passage without. I directed him to show them all in at once. He opened my door & my office was at once crowded, as though it had been levee night or an evening when my drawing room was open for the reception of visitors. Members of Congress and many others were of the number, and with scarcely an exception they were seeking office for themselves or their friends. Most of the members of Congress came with their friends, who were animated by the patriotic desire to serve their country provided they could get an office with a good salary.

The company having left at 12 O'Clock, I sent for the Secretary of the Navy. He called, & in answer to the enquiry whether there was any Govern-

ment vessel at New Orleans or Pensacola which could convey Atocha to Vera Cruz, he said there was not. I then sent for the Secretary of the Treasury to know whether he could furnish a Revenue Steam cutter to convey Atocha from New Orleans or Pensacola to Vera Cruz. He said there was such a vessel (The Bibb) at New Orleans which could be employed in that service, and could remain at Vera Cruz to bring him back. I requested him to call on Mr. Buchanan and inform him of the fact, and he said he would do so. Mr. Buchanan, to whom I had written a note requesting it, called shortly afterwards. He read to me his despatch, as modified, to the Secretary of Foreign affairs of Mexico, and said he had seen the Secretary of the Treasury, and that they would meet Atocha at Col. Benton's House to-night and arrange the whole matter.

Mr. Buchanan had mentioned casually in Cabinet on saturday, when the subject was under consideration, that he would like to go himself as one of the Commissioners to negotiate a peace with Mexico. I alluded to it to-day & he repeated the same desire. I told him it struck me favourably, but that if he went he must do so in his character of Secretary of State, & go alone & without being associated with others. I told him that would be due to his position, & that the administration, if he went alone, would be entitled to the whole credit of the arrangement. It seemed to strike him favourably. Indeed I had no doubt he was highly delighted with the idea. I said to him that I would consider further on the subject,

if I learned that Mexico agreed to open negotiations.

After night several members of Congress called, and among them Senator Bright of Indiana, who is an honest man & one of the soundest and most consistent & reliable democrats in the Senate. I had a conversation with him about the measures relating to the war & now pending before Congress.

TUESDAY, *19th January, 1847.*— My office was crowded as usual this morning with visitors, almost all of whom were seeking office for themselves and their friends. I most heartily wish that I could divest myself of all the patronage attached to my office. If I could I would be rid of great consumption of my time and infinite vexation. Between 11 and 12 O'Clock the Cabinet assembled, all the members present. I enquired of Mr. Buchanan if he had seen Col. Atocha last evening. He replied in the affirmative & said he had delivered to him the despatch to the Minister of Foreign affairs of Mexico, which he had prepared. He said that Mr. Walker (sec. of the Treasury) and himself had met him at Col. Benton's and held another conversation with him. Mr. Walker said he had given him a letter to the Commander of the Revenue Cutter "Bibb" at New Orleans, & had directed the captain to proceed with him to Vera Cruz and to remain there until his return from the City of Mexico, and to bring him back to the U. S., landing him either at New Orleans or Pensacola. I am the more solicitous to open negotiations & conclude a peace with

Mexico because of the extraordinary delay of Congress to act upon the War measures which I have recommended to them. It has been now more than six weeks since Congress met, & they have passed but two laws, the one to admit the State of Iowa into the Union,[1] and the other to allow a bounty[2] to the enlisted soldiers of the regular army. All the measures recommended in relation to the War are dragging slowly along, and their fate is doubtful. Faction has made its way into the Democratic party in Congress, which paralises all my efforts to prosecute the War vigorously. A small faction of the Democratic party in one House or the other opposes one measure, and another faction another measure, while the Federalists, true to their instincts in opposition to the War, never fail to unite as one man for party purposes with the minority of the Democratic party, and thus defeat or put in danger of defeat, one after another, all of my measures. The State of things in Congress is lamentable. Instead of coming up to the mark as patriots & sustaining the administration and the country in conducting a foreign War, they are engaged in discussing the abstract question of slavery, & gravely considering whether it shall exist in a territory which we have not yet acquired & may never acquire from Mexico. The Presidential election of 1848 has evidently much to do with this factious state of things. The aspirants to the Presidency & their friends in Congress make all the great measures which are now

[1] Act of December 28, 1846. *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 117.
[2] Act of January 12, 1846. *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 117.

before them yield to their selfish and ambitious views. The Federalists stand bye & avail themselves of all the party advantages which the divisions in the Democratic party afford them. In view of this State of things I remarked to the Cabinet that unless a corrective was speedily applied, that my administration and with it the Democratic party must be overwhelmed. I suggested, & indeed urged, that each member of the Cabinet should see the members of Congress from his own section of the Union, and impress upon them the great importance of harmony and of immediate action upon the war measures now before them, and especially upon the loan-bill in the Ho. Repts. & the army Bill in the Senate. They were all impressed with the importance of these suggestions, and promised me that they would attend to them without delay. I informed the Cabinet that if Congress delay[ed] much longer to act on these and other War measures, I would send a Message to Congress, and make an earnest and solemn appeal through them to the country, to come to the support of the Executive in a vigorous prosecution of the War against Mexico. This I told them I would do, & that I did not fear the result of the public opinion of the country.

About an hour after the Cabinet retired Mr. Buchanan returned & informed me that Atocha was still in the City, but would leave for Mexico via New Orleans to-night, and that he had written a short letter to Mr. Black, late U. S. consul at Mexico, and also one to Mr. Beach [1] of the New York

[1] Moses Y. Beach, 1800–1868, editor of the New York *Sun*.

Sun, now a confidential agent of the U. S. in Mexico, which Atocha would bear to them. He read the letters to me.

This was the regular evening for receiving company, but as to-morrow evening public notice had been given that there would be a drawing room at the President's mansion, not more than half a dozen gentlemen attended. I met them in the parlour. Among them was the Vice President & Mr. Richard Rush of Philadelphia. Mr. Rush remained for near an hour after the other gentlemen retired. He is an exceedingly intelligent gentleman, and I had a very interesting conversation with him about public affairs. He agreed with me entirely that the dilatory proceedings of Congress were without apology or excuse, and that the spirit of the country in regard to the war was far in advance of that of their Representatives.

Mr. Rush gave me some interesting details which occurred when he was connected with Mr. Madison's administration & when he was a member of Mr. Adam's Cabinet.[1] He said that he was abroad when Mr. Adams was elected President, that he was unexpectedly invited to accept a place in his cabinet & did so, & remarked that in the election he had been in favour of Mr. Crawford[2] as the nominee in

[1] Rush was Attorney General under Madison 1814–1817, and Secretary of the Treasury under Adams 1825–1829.

[2] William Harris Crawford, 1772–1834, a prominent candidate for the Presidency in the campaign of 1824. He received the nomination at the hands of the Congressional caucus, but upon the election being thrown into the House of Representatives Adams was chosen President by means of the assistance of Henry Clay.

Caucus of the Republican party. He gave me a very interesting account of the appointment of a General-in chief of the army upon the death of Maj'r Gen'l Brown.[1] He said that Gen'l[s] Gaines & Scott had both written very exeptionable & violent letters to the President, each claiming the office, the one by virtue of his *lineal* & the other of his *Brevet* rank. He said that Mr. Clay[2] was warmly in favour of Gen'l Scott; that Messrs. Barbour, Southard, & Wirt also expressed a preference for Gen'l Scott. He said that for himself he had been silent during the discussions, which had occasionally taken place during a period of more than six weeks, but that finally his opinion was asked in Cabinet by the President & he gave it in favour of Gen'l Macomb, upon the ground that he thought neither Gaines nor Scott ought to be appointed after the very exceptionable letters which they had written. The President (Mr. Adams) who had never before expressed an opinion, Mr. Rush said, upon hearing his opinion in favour of Gen'l Macomb straightened himself up in his seat, and in his peculiar manner said " and I think so too." Mr. Rush said this was unexpected and produced great astonishment in the Cabinet, and came very near breaking up the Cabinet. He said as the members of the Cabinet retired, on the walk

[1] Jacob Brown of New York, 1775–1828, distinguished for his services in the War of 1812, commander-in-chief of the army 1821–1828.

[2] Henry Clay was Secretary of State in the Adams Cabinet, James Barbour of Virginia Secretary of War, Samuel Southard of New Jersey Secretary of the Navy, William Wirt Attorney General, and Richard Rush Secretary of the Treasury.

from the President's mansion Mr. Clay was vehement on the subject, and expressed warmly the opinion that they could not get along under such treatment from the President. He said he interposed to allay the excitement & advised moderation. The President appointed Gen'l Macomb and the matter here ended.

WEDNESDAY, *20th January, 1847.*— I had a large number of visitors to-day as usual. Many members of Congress were of the number who called, to several of whom I expressed myself freely and without reserve in condemnation of the delay of Congress in acting upon the war measures which I had recommended, and urged them to act without delay.

Between 12 & 1 O'Clock I closed my office & gave orders that no names or cards of persons who might call were to be brought to me. In this way I was enabled to dispose of many matters of business which were on my table.

Public notice having been previously given, my drawing room was open. All the parlours were brilliantly lighted up. The Marine Band were stationed in the large Hall. About 8 O'Clock P. M. the company began to assemble. All the parlours including the East Room were filled with ladies & gentlemen. The Foreign Corps, members of the Cabinet, of the Supreme Court of the U. S., members of Congress, citizens, & strangers were present. Though the snow was falling & it was a cold night it was a numerous and brilliant assembly. The Company retired between 11 & 12 O'Clock.

THURSDAY, *21st January, 1847.*— Saw company as usual this morning, and was not able to get my office clear of visitors untill near 2 O'Clock P. M. It was the old story over again; office, office, office, was the business of most of them. I urged several members of Congress who called to act promptly upon the loan-bill and other War measures which I had recommended. At night I learned that the loan-bill had passed the Ho. Repts. I have no doubt but that my personal appeal to members of Congress, and the like appeals made by my Cabinet, as I had requested them to make them on tuesday, produced this result. Among other visitors to-day, the Hon. Powhattan Ellis[1] of Mississippi called. He occupied me for more than an hour. He desired to be appointed minister to Brazil in place of Mr. Wise. Mr. Ellis is an exceedingly worthy gentleman, & it gave me sincere regret as well as pain to be compelled to refuse his request. I dislike nothing so much as personal applications for office, especially from old acquaintances and friends whom I cannot gratify.

After 12 O'Clock to-day when I had business with my Private Secretary, I learned with surprise that without giving me any notice he had gone to Annapolis on a party of pleasure. I was vexed at the occurrence, and think it so thoughtless & inexcusable on his part that I must require an explanation when he returns. In truth he is too fond of spending his time in fashionable & light society, and does

[1] Senator from Mississippi 1825–1826, and 1827–1832, minister to Mexico 1839–1842.

not give that close & systematic attention to business which is necessary to give himself reputation and high standing in the estimation of the more solid & better part of the community. This I have observed for some months with great regret.

FRIDAY, *22nd January, 1847.*— I passed through the usual scene of receiving visitors this morning. Several members of Congress called, all of whom I urged to pass promptly the measures relating to the War now before Congress. To several Senators who called I made an earnest appeal to pass the Bill through the Senate providing for raising 10 Regiments of the Regular army to serve during [the] War. This Bill has passed the Ho. Repts. & has been unaccountably delayed in the Senate. Senator Houston has moved to convert it into a Volunteer Corps, which would be doing nothing as I have already the power, under the act of May last, to call for volunteers. An additional regular force was deemed indispensible for the successful prosecution of the War, & therefore I recommended the measure to Congress in my opening Message at the commencement of the present Session, & finding that no action had been taken, I again recommended it in a Message on the 4th Inst. After a great struggle it passed the House. A motion was made in that body to convert it into a Bill to raise volunteers, which was defeated by only one vote. A faction of the Democratic party, being a small minority of the whole number, voted for this motion, and every Federalist in the body united with them as a party

measure, intending thereby to embarrass the administration. The same thing is likely to occur in the Senate. Senator Houston and a small faction of Democratic Senators will vote for it, and I fear that the whole Federal party will vote with them & defeat a measure which I deem essential to the vigorous and successful prosecution of the War. The Federalists are always united and vote with the minority of the Democratic party upon every administration measure. This is a part of their party tactics. Several party measures have already been lost in this way, and among them I may note the Bill in the Senate for the appointment of a Lieut. Gen'l to command the army. Mr. Calhoun & two or three Democratic Senators, aided by the United Federal vote, defeated that measure. The War tax on tea & coffee was defeated in the Ho. of Repts. in the same way. The whole Federal party united with Mr. Wentworth [1] & others and voted it down. I have a nominal majority of Democrats in both Houses of Congress, but am in truth in a minority in each House. The disappointments about office among the members, and the premature contest which they are waging in favour of their favorites for the Presidency in 1848, are the leading causes of this lamentable state of things. The truth is the different factions of the Democratic party in Congress are engaged in scheming & intriguing for their respective favourites for the Presidency in 1848, & even the

[1] John Wentworth of Illinois, 1815–1888, Representative from Illinois 1843–1851, 1853–1855, and 1865–1867; Mayor of Chicago in 1857 and again in 1860.

pendency of a foreign War does not seem to prevent this. The Federalists manifestly enjoy the divisions in the Democratic ranks, and make it a rule of party action always to unite with the minority of the Democratic party, because in that way they hope and expect to make party capital for themselves. I am perfectly disgusted with the want of patriotism which seems to control the votes and course of a portion of the Democratic members. I am resolved to do my duty to the country & if I am not sustained by Congress I will fearlessly appeal to the people.

Even the question of slavery is thrown into Congress and agitated in the midst of a Foreign War for political purposes. It is brought forward at the North by a few ultra Northern members to advance the prospects of their favourite. No sooner is it introduced than a few ultra Southern members are manifestly well satisfied that it has been brought forward, because by seizing upon it they hope to array a Southern party in favour of their favourite candidate for the Presidency. There is no patriotism on either side, & it is a most wicked agitation that can end in no good and must produce infinite mischief.

I omitted to note in yesterday's Diary that Senator Hannegan of Indiana called on me. He was in company with Senator Atchison of Missouri. It is the first time he has called since the settlement of the Oregon question last summer, about which he suffered himself to become unnecessarily excited. He had certainly no cause of complaint against me, for my course was a consistent one. I received him in a courteous manner.

SATURDAY, *23rd January, 1847.*— Saw company this morning until the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. Among others who called was Senator Crittendon of Ky. Mr. Buchanan had previously informed me that he desired to see me, and that he would call this morning. He desired to converse with me on the subject of the Mexican War, & the means of prosecuting and bringing it to a close. I told him I was happy to have a conversation with him on that subject, and that I would give him my views unreservedly. Mr. Crittendon though differing with me in politics is an honorable gentleman, and in the confidence that ought to exist between a Senator & the President I was unreserved in my conversation. It was in substance what I had said [to] other Senators & a few others. I informed him that I was sincerely desirous for peace, but that I believed the most effective mode of obtaining it was by a bold and vigorous prosecution of the War; that while this was done I thought it important that Congress should make the appropriation of the two millions of dollars for which I had asked at the last and at the present Session [of] Congress, so that while I presented a formidable army invading Mexico on the one hand, I might have the means of inducing her to negotiate for peace on the other. The two millions I would calculate to pay as a part consideration for any cession of territory which by a definitive Treaty of peace she might make to the U. S. I told him that I did not prosecute the War for conquest, that I hoped by a Treaty of peace to obtain a cession of the Californias & New Mexico, and to pay

for them a reasonable equivalent. That equivalent would probably be the assumption of the Debt due by Mexico to our own citizens, to bear the expenses of the War, and to pay to Mexico some Millions of Dollars besides. He expressed his concurrence in these general views & his gratification at hearing them. I told him I deprecated the agitation of the slavery question in Congress, and though a South-Western man & from a slave-holding State as well as himself, I did not desire to acquire a more Southern Territory than that which I had indicated, because I did not desire by doing so to give occasion for the agitation of a question which might sever and endanger the Union itself. I told him the question of slavery would probably never be a practical one if we acquired New Mexico & California, because there would be but a narrow ribbon of territory South of the Missouri compromise line of 36° 30′, and in it slavery would probably never exist. He expressed himself highly gratified at these views. He expressed an opinion that he would be satisfied with the Rio Grande as a boundary, and with a smaller country including the Bay of San Francisco on the Pacific, than that which I had indicated. I urged him to have speedy action in the Senate upon the War measures which I had recommended. My interview with Mr. Crittendon was a gratifying one. He seemed to be well satisfied with it, but how far party-ties may induce [him] to act in opposition to my views, in which he concurred in our conversation, remains to be seen.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of War. The Secretary of War called this morning & informed me that he would be absent from the Cabinet to-day, in order to meet the Committees on Military affairs of the two Houses of Congress, who were to be at the War Department at 10 O'Clock. This joint meeting of the two committees was to take place in pursuance of the request of the committee of the Senate, made known in a note addressed by its chairman to the Secretary of War two or three days ago. The objects were to examine confidentially the correspondence between the War Department and Gen'l Taylor & Gen'l Scott, and also into other matters connected with the War, which it might be prejuducial to the public interest to make public at this time. The business of chief interest before the Cabinet to-day were our relations with Brazil, which from those of amity had been recently disturbed by an unfortunate occurrence at Rio Janeiro. A riot had taken place among some American Sailors on shore, and in the progress of the affair Lieut. Davis and three of the seamen were imprisoned. The whole correspondence on the subject was read by Mr. Buchanan. After this Mr. Buchanan stated that Mr. Lisboa, the Brazillian Minister, had called at the Department of State & held a long conversation with him on the subject, and that he (Mr. Lisboa) was very anxious to adjust the difficulty in a manner honorable to both nations, and with that view had promised to address a note to Mr. Bu-

chanan on the subject. Any decision on the matter was postponed until Mr. Lisboa's note should be received.

After night several members of Congress called. About 10 O'Clock at night Senators Benton & Allen called together. They had been dining out. Mr. Benton proceeded immediately to converse in a very animated strain of the developments [revelations] to the two military committees of Congress, which had been made by the exhibition to them by the Secretary of War to-day of the correspondence of the Department with Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Scott, including the letters of these officers to the Department. He was very strong in his condemnation of both Taylor & Scott, and both he and Mr. Allen concurred in opinion that neither of these officers were fit for the command of the army & that they ought to be superseded. They were both strong & vehement on the subject. Col. Benton among other things said, I was willing to take the command of the army as Lieut. General, but the Senate had rejected the proposition to appoint such an officer; but now, Sir! seeing what I have to-day I will go as a Maj'r Gen'l or a Lieut. Col., or in any other rank, provided I can have the command of the army, & if I can have such command I will close the War before July. They held a conversation with me on the subject of more than an hour. Col. Benton said that every member of the two committees were astonished at the conduct of both Taylor & Scott. At about 11½ O'Clock they retired.

SUNDAY, *24th January, 1847.*— I attended Divine Worship to-day at the Capitol accompanied by Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and Miss Lane,[1] the niece of Mr. Buchanan, who upon Mrs. P.'s invitation is spending a few days with my family. She came on yesterday. Service was performed in the Hall of the Ho. of Repts. by the Rev'd Mr. Sprole, chaplain of the House. He preached an excellent sermon.

MONDAY, *25th January, 1847.*— Saw company as usual until 12 O'Clock this morning. A large number of persons [called], most [of them], as usual, seeking office. I had no offices to give and dispatched them as summarily as possible.

Two or three days ago a letter bearing the signature of Gen'l Taylor & purporting to have been written near Monterey in Mexico, said to have been addressed by him to a friend in New York, was published in the New York *Express,* and copied into the *Herald.* I read it in the *Herald* on yesterday. It is a highly exceptionable letter, assailing as it does the administration, uttering unfounded complaints, and giving publicity to the world of the plans of campaign contemplated by the Government, which it had been desired by the Government to keep concealed from the enemy until they were consummated. Several persons have spoken to me of the letter, and expressed doubts whether it was genuine or not. I

[1] Harriet Lane, Buchanan's ward, the daughter of his sister, Mrs. Lane, who died in 1839. During Buchanan's Presidential term Harriet Lane presided as mistress of the White House.

have myself no doubt it is genuine. Considering the letter not only injurious to the public interests, but unjust to the Government and its publication highly unmilitary, I sent for the Secretary of War to consult him as to the steps proper to be taken in reference to it. The Secretary of War called. The Secretary of the Navy was also in my office. I conferred with them fully on the subject. I told the Secretary of War that I thought a letter should be immediately addressed to Gen'l Taylor enquiring of him whether he was the author of the letter, and that in the mean-time a proper article vindicating the Government and exposing Gen'l Taylor for writing such a letter should be published in the *Union*. The further consideration of the subject was postponed until to-morrow when the Secretary of War promised to have a suitable article prepared for publication. After the Secretary of War left, a card was brought to me by my porter from Gen'l Gaines with a letter addressed to the Secretary of War, which I opened and read. It was a letter from Gen'l Gaines in which he states that the letter of Genl Scott [Taylor] which had been published in the newspapers was addressed to him. About dark the Secretary of War came in, & while I was conversing with him about the letter of Gen'l Taylor & Gen'l Gaines's avowal that it had been addressed to him, Gen'l Gaines was announced at my office door & I directed my porter to show him in. He very soon introduced the subject of Gen'l Taylor's letter, and repeated in substance what he had written in his letter to the Secretary of War. I told Gen'l

Gaines that I regarded the letter as a highly improper one, and its publication as highly prejudicial to the success of our military operations in Mexico, inasmuch as by its publication information of the contemplated movements of our army were given to the enemy, as well as to our own people. I told him that so far as it complained of the Government or reflected upon it it was unjust and without the slightest foundation, as the public records when published would show. The Secretary of War expressed the same opinion. The Secretary left my office & Gen'l Gaines continued the conversation. He said that the Editor to whom he had given the letter had published more of it than he intended he should & had accompanied it with comments which he did not approve. He attempted to excuse Gen'l Taylor by saying that though the letter was not confidential it was not written for publication by Gen'l Taylor, and he was responsible for its publication. He said that after it was published in New York it produced some excitement, & he had come immediately to Washington. I expressed to him in strong terms my condemnation of the letter & of its publication. He left me apparently much concerned about it. The truth is that Gen'l Taylor is in the hands of political managers, and this letter is another of the many evidences that I have had that he is wholly unfit for the chief command in Mexico. It was this conviction which forced me in November to send Gen'l Scott to the field to supersede [him]. I have no confidence in Scott, & it was but an alternative when I was compelled to send him. I am held responsi-

ble for the conduct of the War, & yet Congress refused to give me a commander in whom I have confidence, & I am compelled to employ the officers whom the law has provided, however unfit they may be.

TUESDAY, *26th January, 1847.*— Saw company this morning until near 12 O'Clock. Among the visitors were several members of Congress, to whom I spoke very freely of the inexcusable delay of Congress in acting upon the War measures which I have recommended to Congress. I condemned the delay in decided terms as embarrassing to the Government & prejudicial to the public service. While I was speaking on the subject, the Committee on Enrolled Bills called & presented to me for my approval two unimportant Bills, when I took the occasion to repeat my complaint of their delay to them. It is now near the close of the 2nd Month of the Session and but two laws, besides the two Bills now presented, have been passed.

The Cabinet met, all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, who was understood to be at the Capitol pressing members to pass [push] the speedy passage of the loan-bill. The published letter of Gen'l Taylor and Gen'l Gaines's avowal that it had been addressed to him, & had been published by his permission (see yesterday's diary) were considered. The Cabinet were unanimous in condemning Taylor for writing such a letter & Gaines for publishing it, as being not only unmilitary and a violation of their duty as officers, but calculated

seriously to embarrass & injure the pending military operations in Mexico. It was agreed that a letter should be written by the Secretary of War to Gen'l Taylor condemning his conduct. It was agreed also that as the letter had been published in several public journals, it should be republished in the Washington *Union*,[1] with proper comments. The Secretary of War & the Secretary of the Navy stepped into my Private Secretary's office and prepared an article for the paper. The Secretary of State took their draft and prepared one from it which I thought too mild but assented to it in this form. The Secretary of War took it with him when he retired.

This was reception evening. An unusually large number of visitors attended, ladies & gentlemen. The Circular parlour was filled.

WEDNESDAY, *27th January, 1847.*— A large number of visitors called this morning and among them several ladies. They were generally ladies & all seeking office for their friends. After 12 O'Clock I closed my doors and despatched a considerable mass of small business which had accumulated on my table. About 2 O'Clock P. M. The Secretary of the Treasury called & informed me that he had just returned from the Capitol & that the loan-bill

[1] Taylor's letter, dated at Monterey, November 9, 1846, was printed in the *Union*, accompanied by a deprecatory notice, January 26, 1847. The strictures of the War Department elicited a second letter from Taylor, March 3, 1847. It was sent by the President to the House, in answer to a resolution calling for it, February 4, 1848, and was printed in the New York *Herald* the following day.

had passed both houses. This is the first [of] my war measures which has been acted on by Congress during the present Session. The Secretary informed me that it required his presence at the Capitol yesterday & to-day & all his exertions to prevent mischievous amendments proposed by Federal members from being engrafted upon it.

I had a small Dinner party to-day; among the company were Mr. & Mrs. McKenzie of St. Louis, Judge and Mrs. Catron, & Mrs. Benson; Gov. Morton of Boston, Senator Mason [1] of Va., who took his seat in the Senate on monday as the Successor of the lamented Pennybacker, Hon. John McKeon of New York, & Hon. Mr. McDaniel of Missouri.

After Dinner the Secretary of War called & read to me the draft of a letter to Gen'l Taylor, which he had prepared on the subject of Gen'l Taylor's letter published in the newspapers, and which is noticed in this diary of yesterday and the day before. He said he had submitted it to Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Mason, and that Mr. B. thought one part of it too strongly expressed. He read to me two forms of that part of it, the one milder than the other. I decided at once in favour of the stronger form. The offense was highly unmilitary, and if dealt with strictly would subject both Gen'l Taylor for writing the letter & Gen'l Scott [Gaines] for publishing it to arrest & trial. My opinion, therefore, was that it

[1] James Murray Mason, 1798–1871, Senator from Virginia 1847–1861. A strict constructionist, he followed his State in its secession from the Union and was one of the Confederate commissioners to England taken by Captain Wilkes in the *Trent* affair.

merited and ought to receive a decided rebuke from the Government. This I thought was the mildest course we could take. The Secretary agreed with me in opinion. The Secretary informed me that some of the Federal members, as he learned, had indulged in a violent party debate in the Senate today. He informed me, also, that he had received a note from Col. Benton informing him that a call would be made by the Senate for the correspondence between the War Department & Gen'l[s] Taylor and Scott, and requesting him to have the copies prepared & in a state of readiness, so as to answer the call promptly. The publication of Gen'l Taylor's [letter] will force the publication of the official correspondence, so as to expose his unfounded attack on the administration. Taylor is a vindictive & ignorant political partisan, and after all the kindness and indulgence I have shown him has suffered himself to be controlled & managed by bad men for political purposes. I shall regret the necessity for the publication of the Official Documents, but a state of things has been produced by Gen'l Taylor which renders it necessary for the vindication of the truth & the good of the service. If therefore the call is made by the Senate I will answer it.

THURSDAY, *28th January, 1847.*— This morning my office was crowded with visitors as usual, and upon the usual business, *viz.,* seeking office. I had directed my porter to close the doors at 12 O'Clock, but so many persons had gotten into the anti-room before that hour that my time was occupied until

near 2 O'Clock P. M., before I got clear of them. The Secretary of State & the Secretary of the Navy called. The Secretary of State read to me the translation of a note of the Brazilian Minister, designed as a reperation of the wrong complained of by the U. S. in consequence of the imprisonment of Lieut. Davis & some American Sailors at Rio Janeiro. With a modification of the note which the Secretary of State suggested and which he supposed Mr. Lisboa would make, it would be satisfactory. The note has not been formally delivered to the Secretary of State, but had been informally submitted to him to know if delivered whether it would be satisfactory. I transacted some other business both with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Navy. After they retired I disposed of several matters of business on my table. I learned to-night that the Senate without disposing of the army bill, adjourned until to-morrow. The delay in Congress in acting upon the War Measures recommended is most embarrassing & is inexcusable.

It is two years ago this day since I left my residence at Columbia, Tennessee, to enter on my duties as President of the U. S. Since that time I have performed great labour and incurred vast responsibilities. In truth, though I occupy a very high position, I am the hardest working man in this country.

FRIDAY, *29th January, 1847.*— This was an inclement morning; the rain was falling & freezing as it fell, and yet it did not prevent a number of persons from visiting me, on the patriotic business of

seeking office. Neither ice nor fire I believe would stop them. I am perfectly disgusted with the prevailing passion for place which brings crowds of persons to Washington. Even females, and many of them in the garb and appearance of ladies, call, in behalf of their husbands, brothers, and sons. How much better it would be if the horde of office seekers who infest Washington would apply themselves to some honest calling for a living. It was not until near 1 O'Clock that I was enabled to open a letter or attend to any other business on my table. Shortly after that hour the Secretary of War called on official business, which occupied my time for one or two hours. The Secretary of State also called & I spent some time with him. He informed me among other things that he had held a conference with the Brazillian Minister to-day on the subject of the imprisonment of Lieut. Davis an[d] three sailors at Rio de Janeiro, the result of which was that Mr. Lisboa would address him (the Secretary of State) a note making an apology for the conduct of the Brazillian authorities in that affair, which would be satisfactory. Mr. Buchanan read to me a translation of the proposed note, which had not yet been officially delivered, but would be as soon as Mr. Lisboa could revise and copy it.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *30th January, 1847.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. It was also the last day upon which letters for Europe by

the Steamer which will leave Boston on the 1st proximo could be written. Desiring to write one or two letters before the Cabinet met, I directed my porter to admit no visitors this morning. He obeyed my orders, but several persons, members of Congress with their friends, made their way to my Private Secretary's office & I was compelled to see them, much to my annoyance. They were upon the usual business, *viz.,* seeking office. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who was understood to be detained at his house by indisposition. The subject of Gen'l Taylor's late letter to Gen'l Gaines, published in the newspapers, was one of conversation. The *National Intelligencer* of this morning contains an unjust attack upon the administration upon the subject. Heretofore I have discouraged several members of Congress, who had consulted me on the subject, from calling for the correspondence between the War Department and Gen'l Taylor, because I thought its publication at this time would be prejudicial to the public interest. Gen'l Taylor, however, has chosen to write a letter to Gen'l Gaines, which has been published in the newspapers, disclosing the plans of campaign to the world, and the same reason does not now exist for withholding from the public the official correspondence. The Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that the official correspondence should now be published, and that if called for by Congress, it should be communicated to them. This is the only mode in which the truth can be set before the public, & the administration fully vindi-

cated against the unjust (to use no stronger term) attack of Gen'l Taylor in his letter.

Mr. Buchanan brought before the Cabinet a Treaty[1] recently signed by the U. S. chargé de affairs to New Granada and the Secretary of Foreign affairs of that Republic. As a commercial Treaty it was liberal & in all respects satisfactory, but in addition to its commercial provisions it contained an article giving the guaranty of the U. S. for the neutrality of the Isthmus of Panama, and the sovereignty of New Granada over that territory. Serious doubts were entertained whether this stipulation was consistent with our long-settled policy to "cultivate friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." The subject was discussed at some length, and was finally postponed to enable the Secretary of State to give to it a further examination and Report upon the subject.

After night several members of Congress called & among them Senators Cass & Bagby.

SUNDAY, *31st January, 1847.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by my niece, Miss Rucker; Mrs. Polk was indisposed and did not attend church.

MONDAY, *1st February, 1847.*— This morning my office was crowded with visitors. The prospect of the passage of the Bill before Congress to raise 10 Regular Regiments for the War against Mexico, brought a large number of members of Congress with

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 881.

their constituents and friends seeking commissions in the army. I was unable to close my office at the usual hour without giving offense to those who were present, and the result was that up to my dinner hour at 4 O'Clock P. M. I had not a moment of time to devote to my business on my table. After Dinner I took my usual walk around the grounds of the President's Mansion, and almost immediately after my return a member of Congress called, and shortly afterwards several others. At one time after night my office was filled with members of Congress and their friends who were seeking military appointments. It was after 11 O'Clock P. M. when I retired from my office, having spent a day without any benefit or usefulness to the country. I retired much exhausted and fatigued.

About 2 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Kaufman, one of the Representatives from the State of Texas, called and had a long conversation with me about several matters of business, but chiefly about appointments in Texas. Among other things he informed me that Gen'l Houston was dissatisfied with the administration. I told him that I had received an intimation of the kind before, but that he had no cause to be so. The truth is that Senator Houston desires to be a candidate for the Presidency and probably thinks that I do not throw my official influence into the scale to promote his views. He probably thinks, also, that he should have been looked to instead of Col. Benton for Lieut. General.

My niece, Sally Polk Walker, now Mrs. Green, with her husband, Dr. Green of Va., arrived from

Tennessee to-day & took rooms in the President's mansion.

TUESDAY, *2nd February, 1847.*— I saw company this morning until between 11 and 12 O'Clock, when my Cabinet met, this being the regular day of meeting, all the members present. Mr. Buchanan read a note from Mr. Lisboa, the Brazilian Minister, making explanations and expressing the regret of his Government at the occurrence which had taken place at Rio de Janeiro on the 31st of October last, which had resulted in the imprisonment of Lieut. Davis and three seamen of the U. S. Navy. Mr. Lisboa gave assurance in his note that proper measures should be taken by his Government to prevent the occurrence of a similar occur[r]ence hereafter. I told Mr. Buchanan that the explanation & apology was satisfactory. He replied that he thought it was all we could demand or expect, and the other members of the Cabinet were unanimously of the same opinion. Mr. Buchanan then read the draft of a note in reply, which he had prepared, which was approved by the Cabinet.

The tardy and embarrassing action of Congress on the war measures was freely discussed and regretted by all. I inquired of the Secretary of the Treasury concerning the state of the finances, and the measures which he proposed to take to negotiate a loan. The war and the measures necessary for its vigorous prosecution were also the subject of free conversation.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, but not as large a number as usual, called.

WEDNESDAY, *3rd February, 1847.*— I directed my porter this morning to exclude company after 11 O'Clock, which hour I had appointed for the Secretary of War to meet me at my office. Many persons called. Between 11 & 12 O'Clock the Secretary of War called. He sent for Maj'r Cooper of the army, who is acting as his chief Clerk. I spent the day until 3 O'Clock P. M. with them in examining the correspondence between the War Department & Gen'l Taylor, which had been called for by a Resolution [1] of the Ho. Repts. Not having finished the examination they retired at that hour, with the understanding that they would return again at 6 O'Clock. Accordingly at that hour they returned & resumed the examination of the correspondence, which was not completed until near 11 O'Clock. I directed every thing to be copied to be transmitted to the House, except such parts as might impart to the enemy the plans of the pending campaign.

THURSDAY, *4th February, 1847.*— This morning I passed through the usual scene of receiving visitors until after 12 O'Clock. Many of them as usual were seeking office and especially military appointments. The military Bill which proposes to raise 10 additional Regular Regiments, still hangs in Congress. When it will pass, God only knows. Had it passed six weeks ago, as it ought to have done, it would have been of great importance. As it is,

[1] *H. Journal*, 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 287. The President's message in answer to the resolution, with the accompanying documents, is printed in *H. Ex. Doc.* 119, 29 Cong. 2 Sess. IV.

the favourable season for military operations in Mexico has already nearly half passed. Mr. Buchanan called & read to me a despatch to Mr. Wise, U. S. Minister in Brazil, communicating to him the correspondence between Mr. Lisboa & himself by which the difficulty which arose at Rio de Janeiro on the 31st of October last, in consequence of the arrest of Lieut. Davis & three sailors of the U. S. Navy, was satisfactorily settled. The Secretary of War called and spent some time with me on official business. I disposed of some of the business which had been accumulating on my table for some days past.

After night two members of Congress called. Mr. Ficklin of the Ho. Repts. presented to me a walking cane, sent to me by Mr. Wm. Wade of Illinois, as an evidence of his respect and of his approval of my administration.

I omitted to mention in yesterday's diary that Mr. Calderon, the Spanish Minister, called at 12 O'Clock on yesterday, and delivered to me two letters [from his sovereign [1] which] announced her own marriage and that of her sister. Such matters of ceremony appear very ridiculous to an American citizen but are deemed to be important by the Monarchical Courts of Europe.

FRIDAY, *5th February, 1847.*— I endured this morning the usual round of visits from members of Congress & others, most of the members seeking mili-

[1] Isabella II, Queen of Spain 1833–1868, mother of Alphonso XII and grandmother of Alphonso XIII of Spain. She married her cousin, the Infante Francisco, October 10, 1846.

tary offices for their friends, and many of the other visitors seeking such appointments for themselves. The annoyance of office seekers is very great to me. Whilst much of my time is daily occupied by their visits, I am much embarrassed by the want of support in Congress to the measures which I have recommended. The Military Bill still hangs in Congress. It is now in the third month of the Session and none of my war measures have yet been acted upon. There is no harmony in the Democratic party. They are cut up into factions, each faction following their favourable [favorite] leader, and looking more to the Presidential election of 1848 than to principle or the good of the country. In truth faction rules the hour, while principle & patriotism is forgotten. While the Democratic party are thus distracted and divided and are playing this foolish and suicidal game, the Federal party are united and never fail to unite with the minority of the Democratic party, or any faction of it who may break off from the body of their party, and thus postpone and defeat all my measures. I am in the unenviable position of being held responsible for the conduct of the Mexican War, when I have no support either from Congress or from the two officers (Scott & Taylor) highest in command in the field. How long this state of things will continue I cannot forsee. I am seriously deliberating upon the propriety, if not necessity, of sending a message to Congress, earnestly and boldly but respectfully appealing to Congress, and through them to the country, and calling for action upon the War measures which I

have recommended, and which are indispensible to maintain the honour & the rights of the county.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *6th February, 1847.*— My office was open for the reception of visitors until the hour for the meeting of the Cabinet to-day. A number of persons, members of Congress & others, called.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. I stated fully to them the embarrassments to the Government, and especially in the prosecution of the War, in consequence of the failure of Congress to act on the war-measures which I have recommended. I stated to them that I was seriously considering of the propriety, and indeed the duty, of sending to Congress a message boldly and strongly appealing to Congress and through them to the country, in favour of speedy action on my war measures. This I thought necessary to vindicate myself before the people & to throw the responsibility of the failure to act upon Congress. All the Cabinet approved the suggestion but Mr. Buchanan, who thought I had better postpone taking such a step until it was ascertained whether the Bill to raise 10 Regiments of regular troops now before the Senate would pass. If that Bill failed to pass, Mr. Buchanan was then decidedly in favour of my sending in such a message.

A question arose as to the propriety of sending to the Ho. Repts. certain portions of the correspondence between the War Department & Gen'l Taylor,

which had been called for by the House, and especially of sending in a letter to Gen'l Taylor dated Oct. 22nd, 1847[6]. This letter communicates to Gen'l Taylor the views of the Government and the plan of a campaign against Vera Cruz, which is now in progress under the command of Gen'l Scott and is not yet executed. All agreed that this letter was important to the full vindication of the course of the Government, and in connection with the other correspondence would place Gen'l Taylor in his true position & [be] much to his prejudice as an officer, and indeed show that he had perversely thwarted the views of the Government; but on the other hand if published it might possibly reach Mexico before the campaign which it planned was executed, and might embarrass if not defeat it. It was finally agreed to suspend any final decision on the subject for the present. It was thought that despatches might be expected soon from Gen'l Scott, showing that the campaign had progressed so far as to render the publication of this part of the correspondence safe and proper.

SUNDAY, *7th February, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

MONDAY, *8th February, 1847.*— A large number of persons called this morning, most of them seeking office, and especially military appointments. My daily annoyance on the subject of office continues without abatement. Between 12 and 1

O'Clock my office was closed, and I devoted two hours or more in preparing the draft of a message to Congress, such as I had suggested to the Cabinet on saturday last.

Near night Senator Cass called, and informed me that the Senate had rejected the Report of the committee of conference of the two Houses on the disagreeing votes between them on the Bill to raise 10 additional Regiments. The effect of this vote is the rejection of the Bill. I learn it was rejected by the united vote of the Federal party in the Senate, and by the votes of Mr. Calhoun and his peculiar friends in the Senate. I now regard Mr. Calhoun to be in opposition to my administration. He has been dissatisfied ever since I refused to retain him in my Cabinet at the commencement of my administration, and is now, I have reason to believe, as decidedly opposed to my administration in his heart as any member of the Federal party. He is an aspirant for the Presidency, and the truth is that the next Presidential election has divided the Democratic party in Congress into factions, each adhering to their favourites, and the effect is to reduce the administration to a minority in Congress, and to paralyze and defeat all my measures. In the Senate 3 or 4 Democrats who may dissent from the body of the party can defeat any measure. The Federal party never fail to unite with such minority and thus constitute the majority. Mr. Calhoun can carry with him that many votes, and I now consider him the most mischievous man in the Senate to my administration. The people must be made to understand this State

of things. With a nominal majority in each House, I am in truth in a minority in both. Several members of Congress called after night, to whom I spoke freely and in terms of great indignation at the unpatriotic course of the Senate in refusing to grant the means absolutely necessary to enable me to prosecute the war with Mexico with energy and vigor.

Among others Senator Butler[1] of S. C., who had voted to reject the Bill, called, and to him I spoke in as decided terms & [as] I did to others. I think I satisfied him of his error, because he expressed the opinion that the vote rejecting the Bill would be reconsidered by the Senate on to-morrow.

TUESDAY, *9th February, 1847.*— A number of persons called this morning, members of Congress and others, to whom I spoke in strong and decided terms of disapprobation of the course of the Senate on yesterday in rejecting the Bill to raise 10 additional Regiments.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. The Mexican War, and the refusal of the Senate to grant the necessary means to prosecute it, were freely discussed. I read to the Cabinet the draft of the message which I propose to send to Congress, and which I prepared on yesterday. They approved it. I told them that since the rejection of the 10 Regiment Bill by the Senate on yesterday, I must make it stronger and more pointed in some of its parts. The Responsibility shall rest upon

[1] Andrew Pickens Butler, 1796–1857, Senator from South Carolina 1846–1857.

Congress of failing to furnish the means to enable me to prosecute the war with Mexico with vigor. Without the men and money for which I have asked I cannot do so.

Many other subjects of some importance were considered. Among others was a Treaty signed by our chargé de affaires (Mr. Bidlack)[1] with the Government of New Granada. Mr. Buchanan had prepared a message to the Senate, transmitting it for their advice & ratification, for me to sign. I took the message to examine it before I sent it in to the Senate.

In taking my usual walk this evening I met Vice President Dallas, who informed me that the vote of the Senate on yesterday rejecting the 10 Regiment Bill had been reconsidered and referred to another committee of conference.

I saw a number of members of Congress in my office to-night. The impression now is that the 10 Regiment Bill will yet pass.

This was reception evening. I was much engaged in my office and did not go into the parlour. Mrs. Polk received the company. A number of persons, I understand, called.

I learn that the vote rejecting the 10 Regiment Bill in the Senate was reconsidered to-day, and the subject referred to a second committee of Conference between the two Houses.

Mrs. Polk's relative, Midshipman Thos. B. Child-

[1] Benjamin A. Bidlack of Pennsylvania, *chargé d'affaires* to Colombia (New Granada) from 1845 until his death at Bogata in 1849.

ress of Tennessee, arrived to-day, and on my invitation took lodgings in the President's House.

WEDNESDAY, *10th February, 1847.*— The usual round of company called this morning. My time was employed in receiving them until after 12 O'Clock. Many applicants for office & especially military appointments called, to all of whom I replied that the Senate had rejected the 10 Regiment Bill, and that I had no authority to make any appointments. At 12 O'Clock I closed my office, or rather attempted to do so, but found it very difficult to prevent the intrusion of company (office seekers) after that hour. I was, however, enabled to devote some time to-day to the disposition of the business on my table.

At 1 O'Clock P. M. to-day Mr. Bodisco, the Russian Minister, called. I received him in the parlour. His business was to deliver to me with great solemnity a letter from his Emperor, Nicholas, announcing the death of one of his nieces, the daughter of one of the Emperor's brothers. These matters of ceremony are so ridiculous that I could scarcely preserve my gravity. To the very solemn manner in which the event was announced, and which was evidently affected, I simply remarked that such occurrences would take place, and at once entered into familiar conversation with the Minister.

I was much indisposed with a violent cold this afternoon, and directed my porter to admit no company after night. He afterwards informed me that many persons called.

This evening all the parlours were opened for the reception of company, notice having been given in the newspapers to that effect. An immense crowd, filling the East room and all the other parlour[s], attended. I stood on my feet shaking hands and receiving company for several hours, and was much fatigued when the company dispersed. Among the visitors were the Vice President, Senators & Representatives in Congress, strangers and citizens.

The 10 Regiment Bill, I learn, passed the two Houses of Congress to-day.

THURSDAY, *11th February, 1847.*— The 10 regiment [bill] having passed Congress on yesterday, an unusual crowd of members of Congress and others called this morning. The members of Congress called to recommend their constituents & friends for military appointments. Many persons called in person to seek military appointments for themselves. I had a ready answer for all of them, which was that the 10 Regiment Bill had not been officially presented to me for my approval. In this way I shook them off for the time being. About 2½ O'Clock P. M. the Bill was presented to me by a committee of Congress. I examined it in their presence & approved & signed it, & directed my Private Secretary to announce the fact to the House in which the Bill originated.

I learn that a motion[1] was made to-day in the

[1] The motion to expel Ritchie was made on February 10, rather than February 11.— *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 395. For an account of Ritchie's expulsion see Hudson, *History of Journalism in*

Senate by Senator Yulee of Florida to expel the editor of the *Union* from the privileged seats in the Senate, in consequence of the publication in his paper of a communication signed *Vindicator* censuring the Senate for their rejection of the 10 Regiment Bill, and that it had given rise to an animating and exciting debate in the Senate, but was undecided at the adjournment of the Senate to-day.

The hoarseness in consequence of my cold greatly afflicted me this afternoon & I received no company after night.

FRIDAY, *12th February, 1847.*—The 10 Regiment Bill having become a law I was perfectly overrun with company this morning, an unusual number seeking military appointments having called.

I had to bear the annoyance and fatigue until 12 O'Clock, when I closed my doors. I was so much indisposed and fatigued that I was not able to transact much of the business on my table during the remainder of the day. I saw the Secretary of War & several other officers on official business.

This morning I sent for Mr. H. C. Williams & Mr. George Jones, confidential clerks in the Departments, & set them to copying the message which I had prepared & the rough draft of which I read to the Cabinet on tuesday last. The Secretary of the

the United States, Chap. XVI. The obnoxious article was printed in the *Union* February 9. It was headed "Another Mexican Victory," the allusion being to the rejection by the Senate of important features of the report of the committee of conference on the Ten Regiment bill.

Navy & Senator Cass called in the morning & I submitted it to them. They examined it in the room adjoining my office, [in] which I was receiving company and enduring the importunities of office seekers. They informed me that they approved it. The Secretary of State & the Secretary of War called & examined it. They also approved it. At my request Senators Dix, Allen, & Sevier called to-night. Senator Bagby also called. The message having been copied, I read it to them & they approved it.

The debate in the Senate to-day on the Resolution of Senator Yulee to expel Mr. Ritchie from the privileged seats of the Senate was, I learn, a very exciting one. Senator Turney, I learn, made a bold charge [1] upon Senator Calhoun & his friends, charging them with professing to be Democrats, but as being the balance of Power party in the Senate, who by voting with the one party or the other controlled the result, & that they had during this Session generally voted with the Federalists, & thus defeated all my war measures. Great excitement, I learn, exists upon the subject, not only in the Senate, but in the City. The question was undecided at the adjournment of the Senate to-day, and the debate is expected to be revived on to-morrow.

This was reception evening, but I remained in my office & did not go to the parlour. I learn that a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *13th February, 1847.*— Saw company this morning until the hour of the meeting of the

[1] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 395.

Cabinet (11 O'Clock A. M.). The crowd of office seekers, and especially for military appointments, was very great. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. I read the message, which I had prepared & had [had] copied, to Congress. It was unanimously approved & I signed it & gave it to my Private Secretary to deliver to Congress. Mr. Buchanan left to visit the Capitol on business, but after an absence of about an hour returned. Most of the day was spent in considering of the military appointments proper to be made under the 10 Regiment act.

About 6 O'Clock P. M. I learned that the Senate had expelled Mr. Ritchie from the privileged seats of that body, in consequence of the publication in the *Union* a few days ago of a communication over the signature of *Vindicator*. It is a second Duane case, & strikes a blow at the liberty of the press. The foul deed was perpetrated by the votes of the undivided Federal Senators, and Senators Calhoun & Butler of S. C. & Yulee & Wescott of Florida. These four gentlemen constitute what Senator Turney denominated in debate a few days ago the Balance of Power Party. They have more frequently voted with the Federalists than the Democrats during this Session.

After night an unusual number of members of Congress called. They were Democrats & were most excited at the expulsion of Mr. Ritchie from the Senate to-day. I learn that the public opinion & sympathies are all enlisted in his behalf, & that this

act of the Senate is condemned by public opinion, as far as it has been expressed in the City.

Midshipman Thomas B. Childress of Tennessee, who has been spending a few days in my family, left this afternoon for Annapolis, where he will join the Naval school at that place.

SUNDAY, *14th February, 1847.*— Attended the 1st Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and my nephew, Marshall T. Polk.

Mr. Cave Johnson, P. M. Gen'l, & Mr. Lynn Boyd of Ky. took dinner with me to-day.

The Hon. Wm. H. Haywood, jr., of N. C. called after night. I had not seen him before since near the close of the last Session of Congress, & shortly after he had resigned his seat in the Senate of the U. S. He informed me that he was on his way to New York. He was in excellent health and spirits. He made a short visit.

MONDAY, *15th February, 1847.*— I opened my office at the usual hour this morning. A larger crowd of persons filled my office than I have received on any day since I have been President, with the exception of a few days immediately after I entered upon the duties of the office. The reason was that it was known that I was about to appoint the officers for the 10 additional Regiments authorized by Congress. Scores of persons called to press their claims for these appointments. Many Senators and Repre-

sentatives called to urge the pretensions of their friends for these office[s]. Take the day altogether I am sure I have never been so wearied and annoyed in my life. Though I attempted to close my door at the usual hour, persons would press in to see me, and it was not until a later hour at night than usual that my office was clear of company. I retired to rest exceedingly wearied, having been enabled to transact very little business during the day. I took time, however, to see the Secretary of War for half an hour in the course of the day, and prepared all the nominations to the Senate which my information enabled me to prepare. I am resolved to make all these military appointments as fast as possible, for as long as they are pending I shall have no rest.

I made several military nominations to the Senate to-day, under the act of the 11 Instant to authorize the raising of 10 additional Regiments.

TUESDAY, *16th February, 1847.*—Though this was Cabinet day, the throng of members of Congress and their friends in whose behalf they had called seeking military offices was such that I was compelled to receive them. It was not until 12 O'Clock that I was enabled to get clear of them. All the Cabinet were present. The state of the War, the embarrassment produced by the failure of Congress to act upon the measures recommended to them with promptness, were the subjects of conversation. It is difficult to estimate the public injury which has been produced by the failure of Congress, at an early period of this Session, to provide for the men and

money which were recommended in my annual message. The truth is that the available means in the Treasury were reduced to between 2 & 3 millions of Dollars before the loan bill passed authorizing a loan, and there were therefore no means in the Treasury to defray the additional expenses which must have been incurred by the calling out of an additional Volunteer force. Had such force been called, the bankruptcy of the Treasury would have been inevitable, and the exposure of that fact would have destroyed the public credit and greatly encouraged the public enemy. This fact could not be avowed publicly to Congress, because to have done so would have been to make it known to the public. The responsibility of failing to prosecute the War with the energy I have desired must therefore rest on Congress.

This was reception evening. Though much pressed with business, I felt it to be my duty to be in the parlour. The Circular parlour was pretty well filled with visitors, ladies & gentlemen.

WEDNESDAY, *17th February, 1847.*— My office was very much crowded this morning with visitors, most of whom were seeking military appointments. Many Senators and Representatives were of the number, who were pressing their friends for appointments. I directed my doors to be closed at 11 O'Clock. The Secretary of War spent two or three hours with me in arranging the military nominations, many of which I made to the Senate to-day. It was to me a very laborious day. After night

many members of Congress called. I retired about 10½ O'Clock exceedingly fatigued with the labour of the day.

THURSDAY, *18th February, 1847.*— I was doomed this morning to pass through another pressure of importunate office seekers. The number who called was unusually large. I am ready to exclaim God deliver me from dispensing the patronage of the Government. The importunities for office are exceedingly annoying to me. I spent one or two hours today with the Secretary of War, in arranging the nominations to the Senate of military officers under the 10 Regiment Bill approved on the 11th Instant. After night several members of Congress called.

FRIDAY, *19th February, 1847.*— My office was crowded this morning with visitors, most of them seeking military appointments. For the last week I have been greatly annoyed by this kind of importunity. The City is crowded with young men, many of them loafers without merit, seeking military appointments. Members of Congress tell me that they are compelled to come with their constituents to present their claims, and some of the members apologize for troubling me as much as they do. One thing is certain, and that is that I could soon have an army of officers, such as they would be, if I could appoint all the applicants. I have endeavoured in vain to turn over the horde of applicants to the Secretary of War, that I might have his Report upon their respective merits

but find it to be impossible, because I cannot refuse to give audience to my fellow citizens who call upon me. For more than a week I have been occupied three or four hours every day in hearing the speeches and representations of the office seekers and their friends who pressed their claims for military appointments. I have pushed them off and fought them with both hands like a man fighting fire, and endeavored to drive them to the Secretary of War as the regular channel of approach to the President in matters relating to the military service. It has all been in vain. I cannot, without insulting them, refuse to see Senators and Representatives who call in behalf of their constituents, and therefore I am compelled to bear their importunity with philosophical patience. I am often exceedingly disgusted with the scenes which occur in my office, but keep my temper and endure the painful labour which is imposed upon me with patience. I could bear this labour with more patience if members of Congress and others were more candid, and would not, as they do, constantly deceive me about appointments. I am almost ready at some times to conclude that all men are selfish, and that there is no reliance to be placed in any of the human race. Really such would be the fact, if I were to judge from some of the impositions which have been made upon me. Even members of Congress have no hesitation in deceiving me in order to obtain appointments for their constituents, though there is every reason to believe they know them to be unworthy. To-day I gave positive orders to close my office at 11 O'Clock. After that

hour I saw the Secretary of War and transacted business with him relating to the appointments to be made in filling up the 10 Regiments of regular troops. I transacted business also with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Attorney General, relating to their respective offices.

After night a few members of Congress called.

This was reception evening. An unusually large number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. Among them were several Foreign ministers, members of Congress, and distinguished strangers now on a visit to Washington. The Circular parlour was exceedingly crowded, so much so that one of the other parlours was lighted up and thrown open.

SATURDAY, *20th February, 1847.*— This was Cabinet day, but such was [the] pressure of members of Congress and others who called that I could not avoid receiving company. Many persons called, chiefly seeking military appointments. Many members of Congress called on behalf of their constituents & friends on the same business. I was glad when the hour for the meeting of the Cabinet arrived. All the members of the Cabinet were present. After devoting a short time to the consideration of military movements connected with the War, the Secretary of War brought up the case of Gen'l Scott's order detaching Col. Harney[1] of the Dragoons from the command of his Regiment, and assigning the command to Maj'r Sumner, a junior

[1] William Selby Harney of Tennessee; brevetted Brigadier General for gallantry at Cerro Gordo, and Major General in 1865.

officer of the same Regiment. I had some days ago directed the Secretary of War to address a letter to Gen'l Scott, disapproving his order and ordering that Col. Harney should be restored to the command of his Regiment. It seems that the Secretary of War did not agree with me in opinion and had postponed writing the letter, and now brought the subject before the Cabinet. The Official Report of Gen'l Scott with the correspondence between himself and Col. Harney were read. From these documents it appears that Gen'l Scott arbitrarily & without cause ordered Col. Harney, then at the Head of seven companies of his Regiment on the Rio Grande, to turn over his command to a junior officer and proceed himself to Monterey and take command of the two remaining companies. Col. Harney is known to be one of the most gallant and best officers in the service. He was not under any charges of any kind. He was, however, a Democrat in politics, was one of Gen'l Jackson's personal friends, and was appointed by him. I can conceive of no reason but this for the arbitrary and tyrannical conduct of Gen'l Scott in doing such gross injustice to this gallant officer. Gen'l Taylor had acted with the same proscriptive spirit, not only towards Col. Harney, but other gallant Democratic officers. I have myself been wholly uninfluenced by any reference to the political opinions of the officers of the army in the conduct of the War. It has not been so with the Federal commanders in the field. I have good reason to believe that Gen'l Taylor's camp has been converted into a political arena, and that great and pal-

pable injustice has been done to many officers of high merit who happen to be Democrats. Gen'l Scott, since he assumed command, has commenced the same proscriptive & tyrannical course, and I stated to the Cabinet that I was resolved at any hazzard to check it. Mr. Buchanan, though agreeing that great injustice had been done to Col. Harney, expressed the opinion in a zealous & strong manner that as Col. Harney had been put under arrest for disobeying & protesting against Gen'l Scott's arbitrary orders, that no order should be issued from here until the result of his trial was known. The Atto. Gen'l, Secretary of War, & [of] the Navy advised delay in issuing the proposed order. The Secretary of the Treasury expressed in strong terms his disapproval of Gen'l Scott's conduct & seemed, as far as he spoke, to agree with me in opinion, though he was not very distinct. The P. M. Gen'l expressed no opinion. I told the Cabinet that I had great respect for their opinions, but that in this case I was sure I was right, & would take the whole responsibility. I told the Secretary of War that if he was unwilling to write the letter which I had directed to be written I would do it myself. He said he would write the letter. I told him to state in it that it was written by my order. I am resolved that Col. Harney shall not be sacrified to propitiate the personal and political malice of Gen'l Scott. Were I not to interpose he may be tried, cashiered, & be out of the service & be without remedy. Gen'l Scott, I understand, has a personal hatred as well as political hostility towards him. He has availed him-

self as [of] his power as chief in command, has seized his victim, & is resolved to satiate his vengeance by destroying [him]. This I will not permit. I directed the Secretary of War to write the letter & submit it to me before it was sent off, and [he] said he would do so.

The Secretary of State informed me that Mr. Pakenham, the Brittish minister, had applied to him on behalf of a Brittish mining company in Mexico to relax the blockade of the port of Vera Cruz so far as to permit them to import a steam engine for the use of the company. He expressed his opinion that the relaxation should be done. The Secretary of the Treasury expressed the same opinion. I informed Mr. Buchanan that similar privileges might be asked by foreigners of other nations domiciled in Mexico, for permission to import other articles suited to their interest or convenience, & that there was danger that offense would be taken by the nations to which they belonged if their applications were not granted. I inclined to the opinion that the strict blockade which we had declared & were enforcing should be adhered to. I informed him that I desired him to refer me to the laws of nations on the subject. He seemed to be impatient at my doubts, & became animated in insisting upon it that I should act at once. I refused positively to do so, & required him to refer me to the public law on the subject before I would act. The subject was fully discussed. There was manifestly an unpleasant feeling on Mr. Buchanan's part at my refusal to accede to his wishes. Perceiving

this I was firm & decided in my refusal, but courteous in manner & language.

The attack on Vera Cruz became the subject of conversation, when the fact was alluded to that from Gen'l Scott's letter of the 12th of January last it would probably be made about this time. The Secretary of the Navy expressed surprise at hearing this, and said the Ohio & bomb-vessels designed to co-operate with the land forces had not gone round, & said he had [not] heard of Gen'l Scott's letter. I expressed equal surprise at hearing him say this, & addressing him & the Secretary of War I remarked that I had taken it for granted that they were constantly in conference with each other, and that each understood the movements & operations of their respective branches of the service. The Post Master Gen'l remarked that Gen'l Scott's letter had been read in Cabinet on last tuesday week, if his memory served. The Secretary of the Navy replied that he could not have been present. The Secretary of War remarked that he had supposed that the Secretary of the Navy knew all about it. Mr. Mason seemed to be much mortified & left the Cabinet to issue orders to-day to hasten the movement of the Naval forces to the Gulf.

After night several members of Congress called. I retired at a late hour, much fatigued with the week's labour, which has been one of the most intense & severe I have ever performed in my life.

SUNDAY, *21st February, 1847.*— I attended Divine worship to-day at the Rev. Mr. Smith's Pres-

byterian church on 9th Street. He preached a charity sermon for the benefit of the orphan asylum of this City. I of course contributed to the object. Mrs. Polk & Miss Henrietta Rachel Armstrong accompanied me. Miss Armstrong is the daughter of Gen'l Armstrong, U. S. consul at Liverpool. He [she] is at school at Georgetown, but occasionally obtains leave of absence from her school & spends a day in my family.

MONDAY, *22nd February, 1847.*— A large number of persons called this morning. They were chiefly office-seekers. My time is so much occupied with business & the constant round of visitors which I am compelled to receive, that I cannot note the incidents of the day. They are, however, of no importance.

About 9 O'Clock P. M. I was waited upon by a committee consisting of Senators Sevier & Houston & Mr. Kaufman of the Ho. Repts., and was conducted by them to the Birth-night Ball at Carusi's Saloon where I remained about half an hour, and from thence I was conducted to Jackson Hall where there was another Ball. The assembly at Carusi's was small. That at Jackson Hall was numerously attended. I took supper at the latter, attending Mrs. Dallas to the table. After supper and about 12 O'Clock I retired & returned to the President's mansion. It has been customary for the President to attend the Birthnight Ball, and thus pay his respect to the memory of the Father of his country.

The Secretary of War read to me to-day the draft

of a letter to Gen'l Scott on the subject of his conduct towards Col. Harney of the Dragoons, disapproving Gen'l Scott's conduct, which I approved (see diary of Saturday last). I directed the letter to be forwarded to Gen'l Scott.

TUESDAY, *23rd February, 1847.*— This was Cabinet day but notwithstanding this a large number of persons called, and it was not until near an hour after the Cabinet had assembled that I could get clear of them. The visitors were on the usual business of seeking office. All the members of the Cabinet were present. Several matters connected with our Foreign Relations were considered. Several other matters of business were also considered. My time is, however, so much occupied that I cannot give them in detail.

This was reception evening. An unusually large number of persons called. Members of Congress, Foreign Ministers, strangers, & citizens were of the number. An unusual crowd of strangers at present throng the City.

WEDNESDAY, *24th February, 1847.*— I was doomed this morning to endure the usual penance of submitting for hours to be bored by a crowd of office-seekers. They seem to me to be becoming more voracious & importunate in their demands. After I closed my doors I spent two or three hours with the Secretary of War in conferring upon the numerous military appointments which I have to make, numbering near 400. There is great diffi-

culty about it, as I cannot know one in ten of the persons appointed. I attended also to other matters of business. I have never in my life been so much oppressed with constant & most responsible public duties as at present.

I had a large Dinner party to-day, among whom were Mr. C. W. Lawrence & his wife of N. Y., Mr. Jenifer of Md., Mr. Green [1] of the Boston *Post,* the authoress, Mrs. Sigourney,[2] & Mrs. Stephens & others. Several Senators & Repts. were also of the party.

THURSDAY, *25th February, 1847.*— Saw the usual round of company to-day. As the session of Congress approaches its close my labours and responsibilities increase. When I am most pressed with important public duties the number of visitors & especially of officeseekers increase. I was not able to close my office to-day until about 1 O'Clock. I spent two hours with the Secretary of War, on business connected with his Department. The Secretary of State & of the Navy also called on business. After night several members of Congress called and occupied my time until a late hour, when I retired exceedingly fatigued.

I learn from Mr. McKay of N. C. to-night that the Democratic members of Congress were to hold a caucus at the Capitol this evening, to see if it was

[1] Charles Gordon Greene, 1804–1886, editor of the Boston *Post* 1831–1875.

[2] Lydia Huntley Sigourney, 1791–1865, widely known in Europe as well as in America for her literary works.

possible to produce harmony among them and thus secure the action of Congress upon the important war Measures which I have repeatedly recommended. The truth is that the Contending factions of the Democratic party are more engaged in President-making than in attending to the business of the country. The party is torn by factions & so divided that I am not sustained in either House of Congress. The Federalists avail themselves of this unfortunate state of things, and by being united are enabled to defeat almost all my measures. The people elected a majority of both Houses to sustain my policy, but their Representatives do not do so.

FRIDAY, *26th February, 1847*.— Received company as usual this morning. There was no abatement of the pressure which has been upon me for several days for appointments, and especially in the Military service. I directed my office to be closed at 11 O'Clock, but it was not until near 1 O'Clock P. M. that I got clear of company. I spent one or two hours with the Secretary of War, who had received despatches from the army last night. I was occupied during the balance of the day in arranging the military appointments under the 10 Regiment Act of the 11th Instant. I had an interview with Commodore Perry[1] of the U. S. Navy, who has been ordered to relieve Commodore Conner in the command of the Gulf Squadron. After night several

[1] Matthew C. Perry, 1794–1858; he served in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, and in 1853–1854 commanded the expedition which opened the ports of Japan to American commerce.

members of Congress called, and among them were Senators Dix & Benton, who called at my request. At 7 O'Clock P. M. I had another interview with the Secretary of the Navy and Commodore Perry. Com. P. will leave on to-morrow to take command of the Gulf Squadron.

This was reception evening. Many persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. The Circular parlour was filled. There are many strangers at present in the City.

SATURDAY, *27th February, 1847.*—I received company this morning until the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. Many persons called. All the members of the Cabinet were present. The P. M. Gen'l after remaining a short time retired, having official business requiring his attention. I sent a message to the Ho. Repts. communicating the information called for by their Resolution of the 1st Instant in relation to military operations in Mexico, and embracing the correspondence with Gen'l Taylor. A part of this correspondence relating to the plans of campaign would have been withheld had not the information which it contains been conveyed to the enemy by the publication of Gen'l Taylor's letter to Gen'l Gaines, and by publication in a New Orleans paper printed in Spanish, and through various other channels from Gen'l Scott's camp. Gen'l Scott has acted with so little discretion since he assumed the command that the confidential plans of the Government which were confided only to himself have been made so public that every Mexican may

know them. I have no doubt the Mexican Government and Military commander are as well apprised of the secret instructions which were given to Gen'l Scott when he left Washington as he is himself. His vanity is such that he could not keep the most important secrets of the Government which were given to him. He is, moreover, wasting himself in most extravagant preparations, and is making such a parade before the public in all he does that there is danger that the objects of the campaign may be entirely defeated. I[t] was only an alternative when I ordered him to supersede Gen'l Taylor and assume the command. Neither of them are fit for so important a command. I have asked Congress for authority to select a commander in whom I have confidence, and some weeks ago they refused it. To-day, I learn, the Ho. Repts. passed a bill [1] by a vote of ayes 112 to noes 87 giving me such authority. What may be its fate in the Senate is uncertain. My situation is most embarrassing. I am held responsible for the War, and yet I am required to entrust the chief command of the army to a Gen'l in whom I have no confidence.

Several matters of some public importance were considered by the Cabinet to-day, but I have not time to give a detailed statement of them. The present political condition of Yucatan was among the subjects considered, in view of the question whether that State should be treated as a neutral, or as a part of Mexico and of course at war with the U. S. I inclined to the latter opinion, though there was some

[1] Passed February 26, 1847. *H. Journal,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 434.

difference of opinion in the Cabinet. I devoted the latter part of the day to disposing of the great mass of business which had accumulated on my table. Mr. H. C. Williams, acting as my confidential clerk, has been for several days past opening & endorsing my letters so great has been my correspondence.

SUNDAY, *28th February, 1847.*— I did not attend church to-day. The near approach of the adjournment of Congress, and the immense importance of the public business yet to be transacted, made it absolutely necessary that I should give my attention to several public matters, and therefore contrary to my habit I did not attend church.

MONDAY, *1st March, 1847.*— Immediately after breakfast this morning a large crowd of members of Congress and others called. My office continued to be thronged with company until after 12 O'Clock. After that hour I spent some time with the Secretary of War in conferring with him in relation to the Military nominations which it was necessary to make to the Senate. I sent to the Senate several nominations for civil appointments, which it was necessary to make before the close of the Session of the Senate. I remained in my office until a late hour at night, having spent a very laborious day. I have not time to note the events of the day, some of which were important. When I retired I was much exhausted by the fatigues of the day.

TUESDAY, *2nd March, 1847.*— My office was crowded as usual this morning with members of Con-

gress and others. The numerous Military appointments rendered necessary before the adjournment of Congress brings upon me a crowd of applicants and their friends which is perfectly overwhelming. The Cabinet met to-day, all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, who wrote me a note stating that the pendency before Congress of several important measures connected with his Department made it necessary that he should attend the Capitol and watch their progress through the two Houses. I informed the Cabinet that such was the pressing character of the numerous appointments, military and civil, to be made before the adjournment, that I had not time to give my attention to any other business to-day. I informed them also that if the Bill which had passed the Senate a day or two ago appropriating half a Million of Dollars to be donated to the Government of Great Brittain for the relief of the suffering poor of Ireland and Scotland should pass the Ho. Repts. and be presented to me, I could not approve it. I stated my reasons at some length, the chief of which was the want of Constitutional power to appropriate the money of the public to charities either at home or abroad. I did not formally ask the opinion of the Cabinet on the subject, but no dissent was expressed to the opinion which I had given. After one or two hours all the members of the Cabinet retired except Mr. Mason and [Mr.] Clifford, who remained and were engaged in conversation with each other. Whilst they were conversing I wrote down very hastily my opinions on the subject, and read to them what I had written,

which they approved. I informed [them] that if the Bill received the sanction of the Ho. Repts. I would be compelled to put my veto upon it. I have all the sympathy for the oppressed Irish & Scotch which any citizen can have. A few days ago I contributed my mite ($50.) for their relief, but my solemn conviction is that Congress possesses no power to use the public money for any such purpose. I will, if I can possibly have time, revise what I have written, & if the Bill comes to me will send in a message containing my reasons for withholding my sanction of the Bill.

This was reception evening, but I was so much engaged in the business of my office that I did not go into the parlour. Several ladies & gentlemen, who were from a distance (Boston I believe) and who had never seen me, were shown into my office by the Post Master General, who had previously called in and informed me of their desire to see me. They remained but a few minutes. I retired at a late hour much fatigued.

WEDNESDAY, *3rd March, 1847.*—A crowd of visitors called at an unusually early hour this morning. It was the last day of the Session of Congress; it was known that I had many military nominations to make to the Senate, and the office seekers were more importunate and voracious than usual. I received them with all the patience and fortitude which I could command, but it was very annoying to me. I sent for Mr. Buchanan and informed him that I had apprehensions that the Irish relief Bill which

had passed the Senate would also pass the House, and that with my opinions of its unconstitutionality (see Diary of yesterday) I could not sign it. I gave him the draft of the message very briefly embodying my views, which I had written on yesterday, and requested him, as every moment of my time was occupied with company and business, to take it into the private room adjoining my office and revise it, making such suggestions as might occur to him. He did so, and after very hastily examining his suggestions I lay upon my sopha and from the two drafts dictated one to Mr. H. C. Williams, a confidential Clerk, who wrote what I dictated to him. My intention was, if the Bill was presented to me, not to retain [it] in my hands, but to put my veto on it, even though it had been very hastily prepared. It turned out that the Bill did not pass the House and there was no occasion to do so. I will preserve my own, Mr. Buchanan's, and the revised draft for future reference if need be.

In the afternoon, as near as I can judge between 4 & 5 O'Clock, the Committee of Enrolled Bills presented to me a Bill making appropriations for the improvement of numerous Harbours. It was in principle a similar Bill to that upon which I had put my veto at the last Session of Congress, and contained many of the same items. I could not approve it, but it was not possible for me to prepare a message assigning my reasons, and I determined to retain it & give my reasons at the next Session of Congress. Many other Bills were presented to me which I approved. In the course of the day I made many

nominations to the Senate, chiefly for military appointments. My old friend, James Brown of Mississippi, his two daughters, and Mrs. Porter, the widow of Thos. J. Porter dec'd, dined with me today. The Hon. Jacob Thompson & his wife also dined with me. They had been invited by Mrs. Polk. I remained but a short time at the table, made my apology, and returned to my office.

About 6 O'Clock I left with my Cabinet for the Capitol as is usual with the President on the last night of every Session of Congress, for the convenience of the Committee of enrolled Bills in presenting Bills to him for his approval and signature. I occupied the Vice President's room, where I received the committee from time to time as they had Bills to present.

A painful and unpleasant occurrence took place. A Bill was pending between the two Houses and was expected to pass, authorizing the appointment of two Maj'r generals and three Brigadier generals to command the forces to be raised under the 10 Regiment act. I went to the Capitol resolved to avoid the conflict which I anticipated would take place between the two factions of the Democratic party in New York, in the selection of one of these Generals from that state, by passing over that state and making the selections from other parts of the Union. I knew from past experience that it would be impossible to make any appointment in the state without giving great offense to one or the other of these factions. I had kept my determination to myself. About 8 O'Clock the Secretary of War (Mr. Marcy)

introduced the subject with great apparent feeling & excitement, & said it was of great importance to him & his friends in N. York that I should appoint a General Clark of that state a Brigadier General. I told him promptly that I could not do so, however anxious I was to gratify his wishes, which I would certainly do if it was a mere personal matter. I told him that I had never heard of this Gen'l Clark until he came to Washington a few days ago seeking this office, and that from what I had seen and heard of him I did not think [him] qualified for such a command, if there were no other objections. But I told him that the truth was that I had anticipated, what I had no doubt was true, that it would be impossible for me to make any appointments in N. York that would be satisfactory to both sections or parties of the Democratic party in that State, and that I had determined to make my selections from other parts of the Union. He was very greatly excited, but used no harsh or offensive expression, but insisted that it would break down him & his friends if I did not appoint Gen'l Clark. I repeated that I could not do so. He left the room shortly afterwards, returned, and left again several times. His countenance was sad. His whole mind was evidently absorbed by this matter. It was soon apparent that the members of Congress who belonged to his faction had been informed of my determination. Senator Dickinson & some of the members of the House came into the room repeatedly, conversed with Mr. Marcy aside in the deepest appar-

ent concern, & would then retire. The Cabinet were all informed of the difficulty (except Mr. Johnson who was indisposed & had retired) all of whom were much concerned at the state of things. At my suggestion Mr. Clifford went to the Senate Chamber and conversed with Senator Dix, who stands at the head of the faction in N. York opposed to Mr. Marcy & his faction. Mr. Clifford returned & reported to me that Senator Dix said that this Gen'l Clark was the most obnoxious man in N. York to the Sound Democracy in the State of New York, and that Gen'l Dix & his faction were bitterly & uncompromisingly opposed to him. This was what I had anticipated. Senator Dix and his faction had their candidate, and Mr. Marcy & his faction were as bitterly and uncompromisingly opposed to him as Mr. Dix & his faction were to Gen'l Clark. It was utterly impossible to satisfy both sections of the party by any appointment I could make. Things continued in this state for near two hours after Mr. Marcy had first introduced the subject to me. I was perfectly cool, observing what was going on. Finally I determined to make a proposition to Mr. Marcy, which I thought would certainly satisfy him and his friends & could not give offense to the faction of Gen'l Dix & his friends. I did so accordingly. It was so far to yield to his position in my Cabinet and to his wishes as to abandon the determination with which I had come to the Capitol this evening, *viz.*, to pass over N. York and make no selections of a General from that State, and to say to

him that I was willing to appoint Gen'l Enos D. Hopping[1] of N. York who belonged to his (Mr. Marcy's faction) a Brigadier General. I did this because some days ago when I was about to appoint a Colonel in N. York a fierce contest had arisen between the two factions in Congress from N. York between Gen'l Hopping & Gen'l Temple,[2] Mr. Marcy and his friends having advocated the former & Mr. Dix & his friends the latter. Gen'l Hopping had in that contest obtained the written recommendation of all the Democratic members of the Ho. Repts., except perhaps one, embracing both factions. Subsequently Gen'l Temple was recommended by about half this number, upon the ground, as I was verbally informed, that when they signed Gen'l Hopping's recommendation they were not aware that Gen'l Temple desired the Colonelcy, as he had been previously presented by them for Brigadier Gen'l. I had decided to appoint Gen'l Temple Col. & Gen'l Hopping Lieut. Col. As both factions had endorsed Gen'l Hopping in writing in the first instance for Col. and as he was a member of Mr. Marcy['s] faction, I supposed that as all were committed in writing in his favour for Col, that neither could object to him now as Brigadier General. I told Mr. Marcy that I was ready to appoint Gen'l Hopping, & that [I] did so because of my regard for him & his position in my Cabinet, and because

[1] Enos D. Hopping of New York, 1805–1847; served in the Mexican War and was appointed Brigadier General in 1847.

[2] Robert Emmet Temple; became Colonel of the 10th Infantry in 1847.

I had learned from him that Gen'l Hopping was his personal & political friend. Mr. Marcy objected to his appointment, and insisted on the appointment of Gen'l Clarke. I replied to him that in proposing to appoint Gen'l Hopping I had yielded much to gratify him, and that I would not appoint Clarke, under any circumstances. I repeated to him that from what I had seen and heard of Gen'l Clark since he came to Washington (for I had never heard of him before) I did not think him qualified. I told him, moreover, that I had heard that he had been an a[n]ti-Jackson [man], a Bank man up to 1837 or 1838, and that in other respects he had been unsound in politics. I closed the conversation by telling him that I would appoint Hopping, whom he had informed [me] was his friend, in deference to him if he desired, and that if I did not appoint Hopping I would take no one from the State of N. York. He was much excited and immediately left the room, as I supposed for the purpose of consulting his friends in Congress. When he returned he informed me that he could not, and his friends in Congress could not consent to the appointment of Hopping, but must insist on Clark. I instantly replied that my decision was irrevocable. He said if I had proposed Hopping for Gen'l when I appointed Temple Col. over him it would have been a different case and might have been satisfactory. I told him if that was so there was no reason why his appointment should not be satisfactory now. Mr. Marcy continued to be moody, with a sad [countenance], and frequently passed in & out of the room, consult-

ing, as I have no doubt, his friends. Senator Dickinson, who belongs to Mr. Marcy's faction, came in & sought a conversation with me aside, in which he informed me in an excited manner that if I did not appoint Gen'l Clarke he would resign his seat in the Senate, and that Mr. Marcy's friends of the N. York delegation in the Ho. Repts. would demand of him that he should resign his seat in my Cabinet. I felt very indignant at this attempt to bully, but restrained my temper & said to him, when you get cooler you will probably think better of it. He repeated what he had said and I turned away from him. I informed Mr. Mason & some other members of the Cabinet of what had occurred, & told them that I felt very indignant at [it], and was resolved not to be driven from my purpose. Near 12 O'Clock the Military Bill was brought to me for my approval. As soon as I had examined & signed it, I directed my Private Secretary to prepare a message nominating the Maj'r & Brigadier Generals which it authorized. When he came to New York I directed him to insert the name of Gen'l Hopping, and turning to Mr. Marcy said to him, "I shall appoint him, Sir!" He said it must be understood that he did not advise it. I told him I understood that, & also my own responsibility. The nominations were sent to the Senate & were in a few minutes confirmed by the Senate, without objection. During the whole evening Mr. Marcy was wholly absorbed with this appointment, and gave me no aid in examining Bills presented to me for my signature, though some of them related to his Department; and [nor] was he of any service

upon any other matter. I expressed my indignation at the scene which had been enacted in my presence. I had become perfectly indifferent whether Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Marcy resigned or not. I knew that neither of them could be sustained in such a course for such a cause.

A scene somewhat similar to this, but not [of] such violence, or carried to such an extent, occurred in the same room on the Saturday night preceding the adjournment of the last Session of Congress, *viz.*, on the 8th of August last, about the appointment of a petty Post Master at Buffalo in N. York. In that case I yielded to the wishes of Messrs. Dickinson & Marcy and greatly dissatisfied the faction opposed to them. I am perfectly disgusted with the petty local strife between these factions. There is no patriotism in it on either side. I have in many instances refused to lend myself to either & have alternately given offense to both.

I was notified by the Secretary of the Senate about 12 O'Clock to-night that the Senate had rejected Charles J. Ingersoll, whom I nominated to-day as U. S. Minister to France. This I deeply regretted, as Mr. Ingersoll is eminently qualified for the Mission. He was rejected, I learn, in a thin Senate, by a party vote & by a majority of one vote. It was necessary to fill the place, and without consulting the Cabinet I directed my Private Secretary to prepare a message nominating Richard Rush for that mission. In a few minutes I was notified by the Secretary of the Senate that Mr. Rush had been confirmed unanimously.

About 1 O'Clock a committee of the Senate waited on me and informed me that the Senate were ready to adjourn, unless I had some further communication to make to them. I informed them I had none. A committee, I learn, was appointed by the House for the same purpose, but they did not call on me. Mr. Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, I understand, had moved the Resolution in the House and was at the head of the Committee. Why they did not call on me I am not informed further [than] that in the confusion of the close of the session they did not get together. Both Houses adjourned a few minutes after 1 O'Clock.

Mr. [My] Private Secretary had provided some refreshments in my room. Many members of the Senate & House, Whigs and Democrats, came in & partook. Good feeling prevailed. I returned to the President's mansion a few minutes past 2 O'Clock.

In the course of the evening I tendered the office of Maj'r General in the army to Senator Houston of Texas, who declined accepting it. I then tendered the same office through Mr. Houston & Mr. Kaufman of the Ho. Repts. to Senator Rusk of Texas, who also declined accepting it, as Mr. Kaufman reported to me. I saw Senator Benton & had a few minutes conversation with him. He knew that I had intended to appoint him Lieut. General if a law had been passed creating that rank. As no such law had passed, he said to me that if I chose I could nominate him as Maj'r General. I told him [I] would do so. I did so accordingly & he was con-

firmed by the Senate with the other general officers whom I nominated to-night.

THURSDAY, *4th March, 1847.*— Senator Bright of Indiana, one of the committee on Enrolled Bills of the Senate, called immediately after breakfast this morning in company with Senator Atchison of Mo., who had been chosen last night President *Pro tempore* of the Senate. Mr. Bright presented to me a Bill which had been signed by the Presiding officers of the two Houses, entitled " An act for the relief of the Heirs of John Paul Jones," which had not been presented to me on last evening & of course had not been approved & signed by me. They informed me that it had been picked up in the Senate Chamber, where it had been accidentally dropped either by the Secretary of the Senate or by the Committee on enrolled Bills. They desired to know whether I could approve & sign it to-day. I told them I had no power to do so. They left the Bill on my table. I will return it to the Secretary of the Senate.

I kept my office open throughout the day. Many members of Congress of both political parties called to take leave of me. A great crowd of members of Congress & others called, seeking military appointments. I gave up the whole day to company and retired late at night much exhausted and fatigued.

The Secretary of War did not call to-day & I heard nothing of his resigning his office, as was threatened by Senator Dickinson last night (see diary of yesterday).

FRIDAY, *5th March, 1847.*— I ordered my doors to be open this morning. Many members of [Congress] called. A crowd of persons, chiefly young men, seeking Captaincies & Lieutenancies in the army also called. I was greatly wearied by their importunities. I referred all of them to the Secretary of War, but still they would consume my time by pressing their claims. The Secretary of the Navy called and requested me to call the Cabinet together to-day, as he desired to submit to a Cabinet consultation the manner in which he should execute an act of Congress passed on the last day of the late Session, in relation to furnishing to Commodore Key[1] & Mr. Forbes two of the Vessels of War to transport provisions donated by Private contribution to the famishing poor of Ireland & Scotland. I accordingly summoned the Cabinet to meet at 1 O'Clock P. M. The Cabinet met accordingly, and after considering the subject submitted by the Secretary of the Navy, decided unanimously that the vessels of War should be turned over to the persons named in the Resolution of Congress, instead of being commanded by officers of the Navy.

Before the Cabinet met this morning Gen'l Benton called and informed me that he would address me a letter, in which he would neither accept or [nor] decline the office of Maj'r General which had been conferred upon him, but remarked that [he

[1] The persons designated in the resolution were Captain George C. DeKay of New Jersey and Captain Robert B. Forbes of Boston.— *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 207.

would accept] if he could be placed in a position to render efficient service & control the operations in Mexico, & that he had no desire to go to Mexico simply to have a plume & bunch of feathers in his hat; which I understood to mean that if he could be General in-chief of the army he would accept, but not otherwise. When he informed me on the night of the 3rd Instant that I had his assent, if I chose to do so, to nominate him as Maj'r General, he did not mention this as a condition of his acceptance of the office. After disposing of the business submitted by the Secretary of the Navy, I reported to the Cabinet what Gen'l Benton had said this morning, and desired their advice, whether I could under the existing laws, place Gen'l Benton chief in command of the army in Mexico in any other way than by recalling all the Maj'r Gen'ls Senior in rank now in Mexico, *viz.,* Gen'ls Scott, Taylor, Butler, & Patterson. An examination of the Rules & articles of War took place & after some discussion the opinion was expressed by several members of the Cabinet, that I possessed no power to supersede the Senior Maj'r Gen'ls now in the field so as to place Gen'l Benton in command, in any other way than by withdrawing them. I requested the members of the Cabinet & particularly the Secretary of War & Atto. Gen'l to examine the legal question before the meeting of the Cabinet on to-morrow, when I desired to have the question decided. After the Cabinet retired, I continued to see company through the day.

This was reception evening. Though much fa-

tigued I attended in the parlour. Many persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

SATURDAY, *6th March, 1847.*— A crowd of persons called this morning, until the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members of the Cabinet were present. After a full discussion & examination of the laws I took their opinions seperately and individually, and they were unanimous that the only mode in which I could place Gen'l Benton in the chief command of the army in Mexico was to withdraw or order to seperate posts all the Senior Maj'r Generals now in Mexico. In this opinion I concurred (see diary of yesterday).

It was stated by Mr. Mason that he had understood that if Gen'l Benton accepted he would only do so upon condition that he was invested with Diplomatic as well as military powers. Mr. Walker objected to employing him in this capacity. The other members of the Cabinet appeared from their remarks & their acquiescence to concur with Mr. Walker in his views. I remarked that if Mexico agreed to re-open negotiations I desired that the Secretary of State should go out in the character of Commissioner & conduct the negotiation on our part. Mr. Buchanan said he would be willing to do so, if I desired it, but that I must not be embarrassed on his account; that he was perfectly willing to entrust the negotiation to any one whom I might select; & that he had no desire or feeling about it.

After the Cabinet adjourned, which was not until

about 4 O'Clock, I continued to see members of Congress & others until a late hour at night.

SUNDAY, *7th March, 1847.*— Attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk. The balance of the day I rested from my labours, which have been unusually great for the last month, indeed during the whole of the late Session of Congress.

MONDAY, *8th March, 1847.*— I directed my porter this morning to admit no visitors until 1 O'Clock to-day, except members of Congress who might still be in the City, and officers of Government who might call on official business. He obeyed my orders, but still it was but little relief to me, because it turned out that almost my whole time was occupied until 1 O'Clock by members of Congress and the friends whom they brought with them, who were seeking office. More members of Congress, it seems, are still in the City than I supposed were here. At 1 O'Clock my doors were opened for the reception of visitors generally & a great crowd rushed into my office. I referred them one after another to the Heads of the several Departments, saying to them that I could not perform the duties of President, Heads of Departments, Auditors, & clerks. I was stern and absolute in my manner & language and thus got clear of the annoyance.

To-night I found on my table a letter from Gen'l Benton dated on the 6th Instant. When it was placed there by my messenger I do not know. There

was a large mass of papers and letters on my table to which I have [had] no time to give any attention, such have been my pressing engagements. This, with many other letters with the seals unbroken, was among the number. On opening it I found that the conditions on which Gen'l Benton would accept the appointment of Major General of the army, which I had conferred upon him by & with the advice & consent of the Senate, on the last night of the Session, were, 1st, that he should have the chief command of the army in Mexico, and 2nd, that he should be invested with plenary Diplomatic powers to conclude a Treaty of peace. Shortly after I opened this letter the Secretary of State called in & I sent for the Secretary of War. I had fully examined my authority under the existing law and was satisfied that I possessed no power to assign the chief command of the army on Gen'l Benton, unless it was by recalling four senior Maj'r Gen'ls, *viz.*, Scott, Taylor, Butler, and Patterson. The two former I should have no hesitation in recalling, but I know of no reason to justify the recall of the two latter. The Secretaries of State and of War concurred in this opinion. (See this diary of the 5th & 6th Instant.) After these gentlemen retired I drew up the draft of a letter to Gen'l Benton, expressing the opinion that I was not invested with the power by the existing law to assign him, a junior Maj'r Gen'l, to the chief command, without superceding the Senior Generals of the same rank. Gen'l Benton's letter was in a kind and friendly spirit & the draft of my answer was in the same spirit. The truth is

that if Congress at its late Session had conferred upon me the power to designate a Gen'l in chief, as I asked them to do, I should have selected Gen'l Benton for that important command.

TUESDAY, *9th March, 1847.*— This being Cabinet day I directed my porter to admit no company. A few members of Congress, who still remained in the City, called. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Mr. Buchanan called before the Cabinet met. I submitted to him the draft of the letter which I had prepared in answer to Gen'l Benton's letter (see Diary of yesterday). Mr. Buchanan took my draft and prepared one from it at my request. When the Cabinet met both drafts were submitted for their consideration. The subject matter of Gen'l Benton's letter and the proposed answer were fully discussed. Several modifications of the two drafts were suggested, and finally a draft was made which received the unanimous approval of the Cabinet. After the Cabinet adjourned I addressed the revised draft to Gen'l Benton and sent it by my messenger. (See my letter Book.) I will preserve all the drafts which were prepared. This was reception evening. I attended in the parlour. A few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *10th March, 1847.*— I saw no company until 1 O'Clock P. M. to-day. Having seen in the New Orleans papers which arrived last night that Maj'r Gen'l Butler was in New Orleans, and thinking it probable that he had leave of absence

from the army in consequence of his wound or from bad health, and that possibly he might not be able to resume his command, it occurred to me, if this was so, that the difficulties which had interposed of placing Gen'l Benton in the chief command would be partially removed. I did not still see my way entirely clear to remove three Senior Maj'r Generals who had rank of Gen'l Butler, but thought it probable that I might do so in a short time. With a view to such a contingency I requested my Private Secretary immediately after breakfast to call on Gen'l Benton and request him to postpone any final decision as to his acceptance of his commission as Maj'r General for a few days, and until I could confer with him. My Private Secretary returned in about an hour & reported to me that Gen'l Benton had informed him that he had addressed letters to the adj't General & myself declining to accept the commission. His letter to me had not reached me, but came in in about an hour after my Private Secretary returned, and shortly afterwards his letter to the adjutant General was sent to me from the War Department with the following endorsement in pencil upon the envelope, *viz.*, " Rec'd five minutes before 11 O'Clock, March 10th, 1847, R. Jones, A. Gen'l."

I sent for the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of State happening to come in, I read to each the letter which I had received from Gen'l Benton & had some conversation with them. After a conference with them I addressed a note to Gen'l Benton requesting him to call on me between 7 and 8

O'Clock this evening. A few minutes after 8 O'Clock Gen'l Benton called. I informed him that I had sent him a message this morning by my Private Secretary requesting him to suspend any decision whether he would accept or decline the appointment of Maj'r Gen'l of the army for a few days, and until I could have further developments from the seat of War. I stated to him the fact that Gen'l Butler had arrived at New Orleans on leave of absence, in consequence of ill health produced by his wound, and that he might possibly not be able to return to the army. I told him that I had no power to place him in command but by recalling four senior Maj'r Generals, but that if Gen'l Butler should not be able to return to the army, there would be less difficulty in placing him in the position he desired. He replied that he could not postpone his decision. He spoke in a tone of great indignation at the speculations of some of the letter-writers connected with some of the Departments at Washington, to his prejudice. I replied that I had seen none of their letters, & did not know that there were any letter writers connected with any of the Departments. He then mentioned the name of Mr. Grund[1] as one of them, & gave a bad character of him. I told him that Mr. Grund was not connected with any of the Departments, and that I had no intercourse with him, except that he had occasionally called into my office when it was open for the reception of the public, and that on such occasions I had treated him courteously, as I did all who visited

[1] Probably Francis J. Grund.

me in my own office. The result of our conversation was that he declined suspending his decision to decline accepting the office of Maj'r General. He was in a pleasant humour & his conversation was in a friendly tone. I had a long conversation with him in which he gave his views fully of what he considered to be the proper operations of the army in Mexico under existing circumstances. He had great apprehensions from the Vomito.[1] He was in favour of raising the blockade at all the ports in our military possession, & levying a tariff of duties, as a condition upon which importation should be allowed. I had, in the first instance, stated to him that such was my policy and enquired of him if in his opinion I possessed the power under the laws of War to establish such regulations. He said he had no doubt that I possessed the power and ought to exercise it. I enquired of him if he would make any discrimination between the productions of the United States imported into the ports of Mexico in the possession of our arms, and those of foreign countries imported in Foreign bottoms. He said that he would not.

His decision was positive that he would not accept the office of Maj'r Gen'l, & that he would not postpone a decision of that question to await further developments as I had requested him to do. I then asked him who he would recommend to me as his successor. He replied that he was not prepared to answer the enquiry. He retired after a long conversation.

[1] The yellow fever; vomiting is one of the characteristics of this disease.

Shortly after he retired Mr. Buchanan came in & I repeated to him what had occurred. In the course of the conversation Col. Benton intimated very distinctly that some of my Cabinet had not been in favour of the recommendation which I had made at the late Session of Congress to create a General officer who should have the chief command of the army. He said that I was sincere, he knew, and so were the body of the Cabinet, but there was a part of the Cabinet, as his friends informed him, who were not so. I told him he must be mistaken; and that I was sure they had all been in favour of the measure. He insisted that he was not mistaken. I replied that I was still sure he was mistaken.

Mr. Buchanan informed me that he would leave the City on to-morrow on a short visit to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

THURSDAY, *11th March, 1847.*— I gave orders to my porter not to admit company to-day until 1 O'Clock P. M. except officers of the Government on business or members of Congress who might still be in the City. The Vice President, Senator Bagby, and several others called, and I had scarcely a moment of time to attend to any other business until the hour of 1 O'Clock. At that hour my doors were opened, when a crowd of office seekers rushed in. I was very stern & absolute with them. I gave them no encouragement. I am heartily disgusted as well as greatly fatigued with such importunities. All those who were seeking military & small civil offices I turned over to the Heads of the several Depart-

ments to which their respective applications related. My office was not clear of them until near 3 O'Clock.

I requested my Private Secretary to call on Gen'l Benton & say to him that I left it to him whether the correspondence which had passed between us on the subject of his accepting his appointment as Maj'r Gen'l should be published or not. My Private Secretary returned bringing with him a printed letter from Gen'l Benton embracing the correspondence. This printed letter was addressed as a circular to the Senators of the U. S. About dark I received a friendly note from Gen'l Benton accompanied with one of the printed circulars. He informed me that he had published it in order to vindicate himself from the aspersions of Washington letter-writers.

After night the Hon. Mr. Fries of the Ho. Repts. from Ohio called.

Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, left this morning on a visit to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I appointed Mr. N. P. Trist, chf. clerk, to be acting Secretary of State in his absence. The Secretary of War, of the Navy, & the P. M. Gen'l & the Atto. Gen'l severally called on business in the course of the day.

FRIDAY, *12th March, 1847.*— I directed my porter to admit no company until 1 O'Clock P. M. to-day, unless members of Congress or officers of the Government called, whom I would see. Gen'l Benton called & held a conversation with me about the military operations now in progress of execution

in Mexico. He gave me his views at some length. He was still much excited at the Statements made by letter-writers from Washington to the Baltimore *Sun* and other newspapers, in relation to his appointment as Maj'r Gen'l of the army. He said these letters bore upon their face the evidence that they proceeded indirectly from some of the Executive Departments, and were regarded by the public as semi-official. He expressed his opinion that the Secretary of State and Secretary of War had been opposed to the recommendation which I made to Congress at its late Session in favour of the appointment of a Gen'l in-chief, or Lieut. Gen'l of the army. He spoke in terms of some excitement of the course of Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Marcy on this subject. I replied to him that these gentlemen, as well as the other members of my Cabinet, had uniformly expressed themselves to me in Cabinet council and individually in favour of the measure. He seemed to be fixed, however, in the opinion which he had expressed. He spoke also of some numbers which Mr. Buchanan had written for the *Pennsylvanian* newspaper last fall on the Oregon question, to which he took exception. I thought he was more excited towards Mr. Buchanan than towards Mr. Marcy. He remarked in the course of his conversation that he and all his friends were fully satisfied that I had been sincere & had done all in my power to induce Congress to confer the authority on the Executive to appoint a Gen'l-in-Chief of the army, but repeated that some of my Cabinet (alluding to Mr.

Buchanan & Mr. Marcy) had not coöperated with me. I still expressed to him my belief that he was mistaken, but I could not satisfy him.

I informed Gen'l Benton that I was seriously considering of the policy of raising the blockade of all the ports of Mexico which were or might [be] in our military possession, and opening them to the commerce of the world, levying such a tariff of duties as would be reasonable as a condition of admitting commerce in a conquered town in possession of our arms. I expressed to him the opinion that a large amt. of revenue might in this way be collected & applied to defray the expenses of the War. I asked his opinion as to my power to adopt such a measure & as to its policy & propriety. He concurred with me in opinion that I possessed the power under the laws of nations defining the rights of a conquer[or] over a town or province in his military occupation, and that it would be wise to do so. I afterwards saw the Hon. Mr. Douglass of Illinois, who was of the same opinion & gave the same advice. I sent for the Atto. Gen'l after I had consulted these gentlemen & requested him to collect the authorities on the subject & give me his opinion informally. I requested Mr. Trist, the acting Secretary of State, also to examine the authorities, which he did & sent me the books in the course of the afternoon. In the course of the evening I examined them with some care, and was perfectly satisfied that I possessed the power & that it would be wise to exercise it. I saw the Secretary of War, who concurred in this opinion. I informed him that I would bring the subject be-

fore the Cabinet on to-morrow. I called the attention of the Secretary of War to the propriety of instructing Genl Scott not to keep his forces on the coasts of Mexico after the season of the black-vomit commenced. He concurred in opinion with me & I directed him to prepare a despatch accordingly. He said he would do so, and would have it ready to submit at the Cabinet meeting on to-morrow.

This was reception evening. But few persons called, almost all the members of Congress and strangers having left the City. I was in the parlour during the evening.

SATURDAY, *13th March, 1847.*— This being Cabinet day I directed my porter to admit no company. A few persons were introduced by officers of the Government who called. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of State, who is absent from the City on a visit to Pennsylvania. The Secretary of War read the rough draft of a despatch to Gen'l Scott, which he had prepared in pursuance of my instructions on yesterday, in relation to the removal of the troops under his command from the region of the vomito or yellow fever, during the unhealthy season. It embraced also other matter relating to military and naval operations, and particularly in regard to an attack on the Castle at Vera Cruz. The Secretary of the Navy suggested some modifications of the paper, and after some discussion, being satisfied that the modifications suggested were proper, I requested the Secretaries of War & of the Navy to confer to-

gether this evening and prepare a modified paper, and requested them to submit it to me before it was sent off.

I submitted to the Cabinet the propriety of raising the blockade of such of the ports of Mexico as may be in the military possession of our arms, & of levying a tax or tariff of duties on commerce to such ports, to be applied to defray the expenses of the War (see this diary of yesterday). The Atto. Gen'l, whom I had requested on yesterday to examine the authorities as to the executive power, brought with him the books containing the doctrine on the subject, and gave his opinion that I possessed the undoubted power, and advised that it should be exercised. All the Cabinet concurred with the Atto. Gen'l, & I myself was clear in my opinion that the power existed, and that it would be wise to exercise it. Some discussion upon the details of the measure took place. My impression had been that a duty of 25 per cent upon all imports from our own and all other countries, to be collected by officers of the army and navy, would be proper. The Secretary of the Treasury was of opinion that we should adopt the Mexican tariff in such ports as were in our military possession. He said he had a copy of that tariff in the Spanish language. I requested him to have it translated & to prepare the order which would be necessary to carry out our views, at his earliest convenience, so that the subject in its details might be submitted to the Cabinet.

I learn this afternoon that Mrs. Allen, the wife

of Senator Allen of Ohio, died to-day at Brown's Hotel in this City.

SUNDAY, *14th March, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church this forenoon in company with Mrs. Polk, her niece, Miss Rucker, and Henrietta Rachel Armstrong. In the afternoon I attended the methodist church called the Foundary church, in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

The Secretaries of War and of the Navy called to-day, and submitted to me the revised draft of the despatch to Gen'l Scott which I requested them to prepare on yesterday. They called to-day because it was deemed important to send off the despatch by the mail of to-night.

MONDAY, *15th March, 1847.*— I saw a few officers of the Government this morning on official business but did not open my doors for the reception of visitors generally. At 12 O'Clock accompanied by Mrs. Polk & Miss Rucker, I rode to Brown's Hotel and attended the funeral of Mrs. Allen, the wife of Senator Allen of Ohio. Mrs. Allen died in this City on saturday last. We attended the funeral ceremony at the Hotel, & joined the procession & accompanied the body to the Congressional burying ground, where it was placed in a vault. I returned to my office about 2½ O'Clock P. M. and devoted the balance of the afternoon in disposing of the business on my table.

Brigadier General Franklin Pierce of N. H. & Col. Caleb Cushing[1] of Massachusetts called on me to-day and again after night, with both of whom I had much conversation in relation to the War. Gen'l Pierce expressed deep regret that Gen'l Benton had declined to accept the office of Maj'r Gen'l, and said he had utterly ruined himself with the masses of the people of the country, at least such he thought was the public sentiment at the north. Col. Cushing concurred in this opinion. I think myself that Gen'l Benton will have reason to regret his course.

TUESDAY, *16th March, 1847.*—This being Cabinet day I saw no company. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present, Mr. Buchanan, who had been absent for a few days on a visit to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, having returned this morning. I informed Mr. Buchanan of the decision of the Cabinet at its last meeting to raise the blockade of the Mexican coasts at such ports as were in the actual possession of our arms, to permit commerce with all nations, to levy and collect a duty to be applied to defray the expenses of the War. I told him that I had understood from him that he concurred in these views. He replied that he did so. The Secretary of the Treasury then stated that the Mexican tariff was being translated into the English language, and that it would require several days to adjust the details of the system and the instructions

[1] Caleb Cushing, 1800–1879, statesman and lawyer, Attorney General during Pierce's administration.

which should be given to our naval and military commanders. I told him that I wished as little delay as possible in preparing & issuing the orders. He said he would make every effort in his power to facilitate them.

Our relations with Yucatan was the next subject of consideration. The instructions to be prepared by the Secretary of the Navy to our squadron in the Gulf were agreed upon.

This being reception evening, a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. I received them in the parlour.

I suggested to Mr. Buchanan to-day the propriety of sending a copy of the Three Million Act to Mr. Black, late U. S. Consul at Mexico. He thought it unnecessary, but agreed to do so.

WEDNESDAY, *17th March, 1847.*— Kept my doors closed until 1 O'Clock to-day, at which hour they were opened for the reception of visitors. All who called were office seekers. I treated them with the courtesy which I always observe in my office, but firmly & very unceremoniously informed them that there were no vacancies, and that I had no offices for them. Whilst the room was crowded with them, my messenger announced that the Rev'd gentlemen of the methodist conference, now sitting in this City, had called in a body and were in the parlour below stairs. I made my apology to the company present & left my office to receive them. Mrs. Polk accompanied me. In the red Parlour I found Mr. Buchanan and Mrs. Walker & Miss Rucker. On en-

tering the Circular parlour I found about 150 Ministers of the Gospel standing in a circle around the room. The Rev'd Mr. Slicer introduced me & also Mrs. Polk to them generally. Immediately afterwards a Rev'd gentleman made an address to me, to which I responded. Mr. Slicer then gave a general introduction to Mr. Buchanan & Mrs. Walker & Miss Rucker. The whole body then came up & shook hands with me. I accompanied them to the East Room and to other parts of the building. On leaving they all shook hands with me. I was pleased to meet them, and they seemed to be gratified with their visit.

The Secretary of the Navy called & read to me his despatch to the commodore of our squadron in the Gulf in relation to Yucatan, which I approved. Mr. Buchanan sent to me to-night a draft of a letter to Mr. Black, late U. S. consul at Mexico, which was agreed upon on yesterday, which I approved.

After night Senator Breese called. He has always an axe to grind. He is perhaps the most troublesome and inveterate seeker for office for his friends in either House of Congress. He has caused me to make some bad appointments. He has no sooner procured an appointment than he sets to work to procure another. I am compelled to conclude that he is governed more by his personal and political interests than by the public good, in his recommendations, and I have now much less confidence in the correctness of his recommendations than I had some months ago.

THURSDAY, *18th March, 1847.*— My office was kept closed to-day until 1 O'Clock P. M. During the morning I disposed of much business relating to applications for pardons & other business, which had accumulated on my table. At 1 O'Clock when my doors were opened a crowd of loafers rushing [rushed] in seeking office. I felt great disgust at their importunity, and the reflection was on my mind, how much better it would be for them if they were at their respective homes pursuing some honest business for a livelihood [rather] than to be hanging on at Washington as mere place seekers, in order that they might be supported at the public expense. The Secretary of War fortunately came in half an hour after my doors were opened, and relieved me from their importunity. I had a fair apology to say, as was really the case, that I had official business with the Secretary of War. Upon this announcement they all, of course, left my office. I felt that I had been fortunately relieved of them, and that I was enabled to attend to the more important business of the country.

Mr. Buchanan called to know if I approved the draft of his letter sent to me on yesterday, addressed to Mr. Black, late U. S. consul at Mexico. I told him that I did approve it, and returned it to him. He said that he would send it off this evening.

To-night at 8 O'Clock I accompanied Mrs. Polk and the other ladies of the family to the residence of Gen'l Thos. H. Benton in this City, & witnessed the marriage of his eldest daughter, Miss Eliza Benton,

with Mr. Jones [1] of New Orleans. I waited on the bride to the supper table and shortly after supper I retired & returned to the President's mansion, leaving Mrs. Polk & Mr. & Mrs. Walker and Miss Rucker enjoying themselves with the bridal company.

FRIDAY, *19th March, 1847.*— I opened my doors at 1 O'Clock to-day. Several officers of the Government and a few other persons were, however, admitted before that hour. I had an interview with the Secretary of War and the adjutant Gen'l in relation to military operations in Mexico. Among other things I directed that the several companies authorized to be raised by the 10 Regiment act, as soon as there should be 64 men rank & file inlisted, should be moved to the seat of War. I ordered also that Brigadier General Cadwallader [2] should be ordered to proceed at once to the Brazos Santiago to be in readiness to receive and command the troops as they arrived at that point. The organization of these companies into Regiments & Brigades will be made after they arrive at the theater of War. A lieutenant of each of these companies, which do not consist of the full compliment of 100 men, will be left behind to recruit the balance & take them on. The old officers of the army have insisted that the 10 Regiments should each be filled and organized

[1] William Carey Jones.

[2] George Cadwalader of Pennsylvania, 1804–1879, brevetted Major General in 1848 for distinguished services in the Mexican War.

& drilled for some time in the U. States before they are moved to the seat of war. If this were done they would not be on [the] theater of action until mid-summer. Col. Andrews[1] of the Voltigeurs Regiment is disposed to move at a snail's gait, and requires to have a coal of fire put on his back to rouse him to a proper sense of his duty.

Col. John C. Hays of Texas, the Hon. A. O. P. Nicholson of Tennessee, the P. M. Gen'l, & Mr. Lee of Texas took a family dinner with me to-day.

I requested the Secretary of War to call at 10 O'Clock to-morrow morning and bring with him Col. Stanton, the acting Quarter Master Gen'l, as I wished to enquire into the operations of that branch of the public service, and to correct some errors which, I had understood, existed in its management.

The Rev. Mr. Slicer called [and] introduced to me this afternoon thirty or forty ministers of the Gospel of the methodist church, who had not called before, and who were in attendance upon their Conference in this City. The body of their number had called a few days ago.

SATURDAY, *20th March, 1847.*—This was Cabinet day and I closed my doors against all visitors except officers of the Government on official business. The Secretary of War accompanied by Col. Stanton, acting head of the Quarter-master's Department at

[1] Timothy Patrick Andrews, 1794–1868. He resigned his position as paymaster in the army to accept the command of the Voltigeur regiment, serving until the close of the war.

Washington, called. I held [a] conversation with Col. Stanton in relation to the operations of the Quarter-masters Department. I condemned the purchase & employment of the thousands of wagons for which I learned requisitions had been made by the commander of the army in Mexico. I told him that I would issu[e] no positive order on the subject, but expressed the opinion that long trains of miles of wagons in such a country as Mexico, in which, in all the wars which had ever occurred in that country, they had never been used, could only have the effect of retarding the movements of the army and rendering it inefficient in its operations. I expressed the opinion that pack-mules should be chiefly employed for the transportation of the army, instead of the cumbrous appendage of a long wagon-train, which would require an army for a guard. I learned from Col. Stanton that contracts had been recently made for the purchase of 1000 horses in Ohio, to be transported to Mexico upon which to mount the 3rd Regiment of Dragoons, and that mules were being purchased in the U. S. for the use of the army. I expressed the opinion strongly that this was great folly, as well as involving the country in a vast expense. I asked them why horses & mules in Mexico, which were to be had in great numbers & which were accustomed to the climate & which could be had at one-fourth the price which must be paid in the U. S., were not procured. To this he could give no satisfactory answer, except that he thought the horses & mules in the U. S. larger & better than those in Mexico. I was much

vexed at the extravagance & stupidity of purchasing these animals in the U. S. and transporting them at vast expense to Mexico. He left with my direction to look into the subject more fully than he had done. The truth is that the old army officers have become so in the habit of enjoying their ease, sitting in parlours and on carpeted floors, that most of them have no energy, and are content to jog on in a regular routine without knowing whether they are taking care of the public interest or not. I shall find it to be necessary to give more of my attention to these matters of detail than I have heretofore had it in my power to do.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of State, who did not come in until about 1 O'Clock P. M. The Secretary of the Navy read despatches which he had received from Commodore Conner in the gulf of Mexico, and from Commodore Stockton in the Pacific. They contained intelligence of considerable interest. The Secretary of the Treasury stated that he was preparing, but had not yet completed, [the] proposed orders with a view to the collection of duties on all commerce at such of the ports of Mexico as were or might be in our military possession. This he was doing in pursuance of the decision of the Cabinet and my order made a few days ago (see this diary). He stated that he would be ready to report the result of his investigation of the subject at the meeting of the Cabinet on Tuesday next.

About 1 O'Clock the Secretary of State came in, & stated that he had been detained until that hour

in consequence of the arrival from Mexico of Mr. Atocha, who had been sent to Mexico as bearer of despatches about the 20th of January last. The answer of the Mexican Government to the renewed overture of the U. S. to re-open nego[tia]tions, which Mr. Atocha had borne to them, was presented by Mr. Buchanan. It was in the Spanish language. Mr. Buchanan stated its substance & also the conversation which he had held with Mr. Atocha. As none of the Cabinet read the Spanish language with perfect accuracy, I sent for Mr. Trist, chief clerk in the Department of State, who translated the answer into English & read it to the Cabinet. It was in substance that the Mexican Government refused to re-open negotiations, except upon the condition that the squadron of the U. S. should be withdrawn from the coasts, and the army from the territories of Mexico which are now in the possession of our arms. I at once declared to the Cabinet that the preliminary conditions required were wholly inadmissible, and that no alternative was now left but the most energetic crushing movement of our arms upon Mexico. Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that our army should not attempt to march to the City of Mexico. I replied that I differed with him in opinion, & that I would not only march to the City of Mexico, but that I would pursue Santa Anna's army wherever it was, and capture or destroy it. I expressed the opinion that if I had a proper commander of the army, who would lay aside the technical rules of war to be found in books, which required a long train of baggage wagons; one who

would go light & move rapidly, I had no doubt Santa Anna & his whole army could be destroyed or captured in a short time. Much other conversation occurred which it is not important to note.

The mail of to-night brought many vague rumours in the New Orleans papers, to the effect that a battle[1] with great loss on both sides had been fought between Santa Anna's army and Gen'l Taylor's forces near Saltillo. These rumours want confirmation.

Mr. A. O. P. Nicholson called to-night & spent two or three hours with me.

Rumours reached [here] to-night of a battle between Santa Anna's & Gen'l Taylor's armies, but it is not authenticated.

SUNDAY, *21st March, 1847.*— I attended church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk & her niece, Miss Rucker, at the McKendree Chapel[2] (methodist church) in this City. Bishop Hamlin[e] preached a most impressive sermon from the text "The carnal mind is enmity against God," &c.

The mail of to-night from New Orleans brought more detailed rumours of the critical situation of Gen'l Taylor's army and of our forces on the Rio Grande, which cause painful apprehensions for their safety. Gen'l Taylor has acted imprudently and against his own expressed opinion & the opinion of the War Department in taking a position at Agua Nueva, so far in advance of Monterey. Gen'l Scott,

[1] The battle of Buena Vista, fought February 22 and 23, 1847.

[2] On Massachusetts Ave., between Ninth and Tenth Streets.

too, may have reduced his force too much, but being on the theater of action, Gen'l Scott, who was, as Gen'l in chief, vested with full discretionary powers as to the disposition of the whole forces, and ought to have formed a correct judgement on the subject. It is impossible for the Government at Washington to form a proper judgment of the disposition and location of the troops in the field. This we are compelled to leave to the discretion of the commanding General in the field.

MONDAY, *22nd March, 1847*.— The Secretary of War called this morning. Upon a full examination of all the newspaper accounts from New Orleans containing all the information from Gen'l Taylor's army which had reached that City in the shape of rumours, our conviction was that our forces on the Rio Grande, and especially Gen'l Taylor's advanced position, were in a very critical position. If Gen'l Taylor's army be in that condition it has grown out of his own imprudence in advancing without orders beyond Monterey & too far into the interior. Gen'l Scott seems to have assumed the command with the single idea in his head of taking Vera Cruz, & with this view has probably reduced Gen'l Taylor's forces to too small a number. We must, however, wait in painful suspense for more reliable & authentic intelligence. It was, upon consultation with the Secretary of War, resolved to hasten with all possible expedition to the seat of War such of the 10 Regiments as were already recruited, which is estimated [to be] from 1500 to 2000 men, in companies &

fractions of companies. It was resolved also to authorize Gen'l Brooke at New Orleans to call upon the Governors of Louisiana & Alabama for such numbers of volunteers as he might deem necessary, and as could be speedily moved to the Rio Grande. It was also determined to write to Gen'l Scott to afford to Gen'l Taylor all the succour in his power. These letters to Gen'l Brooke & Scott had been prepared by the Secretary of War and were read to me and approved by me. The mail of to-night brought a printed slip from a New Orleans paper containing a Proclamation or requisition for a very large force of volunteers from Louisiana & Alabama from Col. Curtis of the Ohio Volunteers commanding at Camargo, & stating that all communication between that place & Monterey & Gen'l Taylor's army had been completely cut off by an overpowering force of the enemy. I directed the Secretary of War to address another letter to-night to Gen'l Brooke, commanding at New Orleans, to send forward with all possible despatch as many volunteers as could be brought speedily to the field from Louisiana, Alabama, & Mississippi. I have great fears for the safety of Gen'l Taylor's army, and for the whole line of our military operations in his rear & on the Rio Grande. Surely Gen'l Scott upon hearing of their critical situation will rush to their relief. All will be done here that it is in human power to do to re-inforce and rescue them from their danger, but I have great apprehensions that any succour from here will arrive too late. This subject engrossed my whole attention to-day. It is true [that] at 1

O'Clock P. M. my doors were opened, and a crowd of officeseekers came in. No apprehensions of disasters to the army, it seems, could prevent this. I was almost abrupt to them, and got rid of them in a very short time. I had no offices for them & I told them promptly and discharged them.

It is deeply to be regretted that Congress delayed to so late a period of the Session to authorize the raising the additional military force which I recommended in my annual message. It was not until the 11th of Feb'y that the first law passed, and not until the night of the 3rd of March that the 2nd law was passed, to authorize the raising, organizing, & officering ten thousand Regular troops to serve during the War with Mexico. Had these laws, as well as the loan & revenue bills recommended, been passed within the first fortnight of the Session as they ought to have been, the troops would probably by this time have been on the theater of War ready to render active & important service.

TUESDAY, *23d March, 1847.*— This being Cabinet day, I gave orders to my porter that I would see no company. Having occasion, however, about 10 O'Clock to go into my Private Secretary's office, I found there an officeseeker by whom I was caught, and could not well avoid admitting him into my office. I was quite summary with him. His visit was short, and he retired not having profited by it and I judged much dissatisfied. All he wanted was to be a Brigadier Gen'l of the army. Gen'l Benton called in, but when some members of the Cabinet

came in he retired, having remained but a few minutes. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present except the Post Master General, who wrote me a note that he was prevented by official business from leaving his office.

The military operations in Mexico were the first subject of consideration. All agreed that if Gen'l Taylor had not violated his instructions by advancing beyond Monterey and the passes of the mountain beyond it, he would have been in no peril. I urged the Secretary of War to despatch with all possible expedition such portion of the 10 Regiments authorized to be raised by Congress [as was ready] with the least practicable delay. At my suggestion the Secretary of War sent for the Adjutant Gen'l, and I saw him with the Secretary in my Private Secretary's office. He was directed to issue orders to all the companies now ready to move with all possible expedition to the seat of War.

The Secretary of the Treasury reported that he had completed the examination of the Mexican tariff which he had been requested to make some days ago, and had prepared a tariff of duties to be levied on all articles to be admitted into such of the ports of Mexico as were in the actual possession of our arms. The subject was further discussed, and it was unanimously agreed by the Cabinet that such duties should be collected, as a condition upon which foreign commerce as well as commerce from our own country should be admitted at such ports as were in our military possession. The imposition of such duties results as one of the incidents of war belonging to the

conqueror of a town or province. They are not to be imposed under our constitution and laws, but under the power which belongs to a belligerent over a conquered town or place. The necessary orders to carry the measure into effect had not been prepared, and final action on the subject was postponed until they could be prepared.

Other public subjects engaged attention and the Cabinet adjourned about 5 O'Clock. After night Dr. Jarvis [1] of the army, accompanied by an officer whose name I do not remember, called. Dr. J. was direct from the army in Mexico, and was the bearer of despatches from Col. Curtis of the Ohio Volunteers, commanding at Camargo, dated on the 2nd Instant, and also a letter from the Governor of Louisiana. Col. Curtis must have been greatly and unnecessarily alarmed, for he called for a reinforcement of fifty thousand men. The Governor of Louisiana had ordered out a Regiment to be sent forward speedily to the Brazos Santiago. I had a long conversation with Dr. Jarvis, and became fully satisfied that the rumours of the perilous condition of the army on the line of the Rio Grande were greatly exaggerated. If Gen'l Taylor has met with any disaster, it is certain that it has proceeded from his own imprudence & want of military forecast & skill, in advancing beyond Monterey where it was expected he would have taken his position. Had he taken that position, his rear could not have been occupied

[1] Nathan S. Jarvis of New York, became surgeon in the army in 1838.

by the enemy & his supplies cut off, as they have been.

This was reception evening. A few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *24th March, 1847.*— I had an interview this morning with the Secretary of War, and delivered to him the despatches brought to me from the army [by] Dr. Jarvis last night. I conferred with the Secretary of War about many details relating to the sending forth [of] re-inforcements to Mexico, and the operations of the army. I find it to be indispensible to give my personal attention to many of these details. The old officers of the army pursue a beaten routine in their respective Bureau, which may be well enough for a state of peace, but will not answer for a state of War. Their movements are entirely too slow, & many of them conducted without judgment.

The Secretary of State called & I had an interview with him relating to public affairs connected with his office. At 1 O'Clock I opened my office & endured a siege from the officeseekers for about an hour. I gave them no countenance or encouragement. In the course of the day I disposed of a mass of business which had accumulated on my table.

After night half a dozen members of the Virginia Legislature called. They informed me that the Legislature of that State adjourned on yesterday. They were on their way to their homes.

THURSDAY, *25th March, 1847.*— Much of my time was occupied with company to-day. Several members of Congress still linger in the City, and I cannot, without giving them offense, refuse to see them at any hour they call. They have no more business with me than other people have, and I heartily wish they had left the City. They generally come in company with some loafing gentleman who wants an office, and who has interested them in his behalf, or to seek an office for some constituent or friend. I transacted official business to-day with the Secretaries of State and the Navy & with the attorney General. In the course of the day I disposed of all the current & small business on my table, and my table is more completely cleared than it has been at any time since the meeting of the late Session of Congress. Among others who called to-day was Senator Lewis of Alabama. I had a long conversation with him. I informed [him] of my policy to collect a revenue from commerce at the ports of Mexico in our military possession. He fully approved it. He expressed his disapprobation of the Resolution of the Senate expelling Mr. Ritchie from the privileged seats in the Senate. He took occasion to refer to the statement made by a Washington letter-writer to some of the Northern papers, during the late Session, in which the writer affirmed that he (Mr. Lewis) had stated in substance (I have not the paper before me) that the President had informed him that he would secure the support of the North to his administration by his patro[na]ge, & rely upon his principles to secure the South. Mr. Lewis said

that he had never made any such declaration. He said Mr. Ritchie had called his attention to this statement, and that he would have contradicted it in the newspapers, if he had not been taken sick about that time. I told him my attention had been called to the statement at the time, and that I knew it was false, but that it would be an endless task to attempt to contradict all the falsehoods which appeared in the letters written for the press by hired employees at Washington.

FRIDAY, *26th March, 1847.*— I was occupied as usual to-day, having given orders to admit no company until 1 O'Clock P. M. except officers of the Government who might call. Brigadier General Cadwallader called at an early hour. I had an interview with him. He was on his way to the seat of War in Mexico, where he was under [orders] to go without delay. Maj'r General Wm. O. Butler of the army called. I found him on his crutches, in consequence of the wound which he received at the battle of Monterey. His general health was good. The Secretary of War called & I transacted official business with him.

Gen'l Butler, Gen'l Cadwallader, Maj'r Thomas of The army, the Secretary of War, and Col. Gadsden of S. C. took a family Dinner with me to-day. I had much general conversation with Gen'l Butler, in relation to the War and the operations of the army in Mexico. I found that he had but little information but what I possessed before. I made an appointment to meet him at my office at 7 O'Clock

on to-morrow evening. This was reception evening, but it was a rainy evening and but two or three persons called. I was in the parlour.

SATURDAY, *27th March, 1847.*— This being Cabinet day my doors were not opened for the reception of company generally. I saw some of the officers of the Government on official business. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. The Secretary of the Treasury read a long paper which he had prepared to accompany his Report to me in relation to the rates of duty which he proposed should be levied in the ports of Mexico in our military possession. It was rather a popular appeal than a practicable business paper. I was not pleased with it, but did not in terms say so, not wishing to wound the Secretary's feelings, but suggested to him that the paper might be much condensed. The Secretary of the Treasury seems to [have] laboured under a mistake as to his powers and duties in drawing the power. [paper]. I informed him that the proposed duties were proposed to be levied, not by virtue of authority derived from the Constitution and laws of the U. States, but from the laws of Nations, which warranted the conqueror to levy contributions upon the inhabitants of a conquered town or province. In drawing the paper he seemed to have acted as though it was a part of his duty as Secretary of the Treasury to regulate a tariff of duties in Mexican ports in our military possession, and to see that the same was executed, whereas, being a right of War, it can only be done by the Military power. I disapproved the pa-

per. The members of the Cabinet were backward in expressing their opinions, though it was manifest they disapproved it also. I told the Secretary of the Treasury that I would address an order to him in the form of an order, and would request him to respond in his report simply to the enquiries I might make, and repeated the opinion that the paper he had prepared might be much condensed. I did not say so, but the truth is if the paper he had prepared had been received by me & published, it would have subjected him to severe attacks if not ridicule, for having wholly overstepped his authority and duty. In drawing it he seems totally to have mistaken the scope of his power and authority. In disapproving it I endeavoured & I think succeeded in avoiding to wound his feelings or self-esteem.

Mr. Buchanan presented several matters relating to our Foreign affairs, which were disposed of. Some other public subjects of no great importance were considered & disposed of.

At 9 O'Clock P. M. Maj'r General Butler called and remained until after 11 O'Clock. We had a full conversation in relation to the war and the proper manner of prosecuting it. He gave me but little information that was valuable.

SUNDAY, *28th March, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. The pastor (Mr. Sprole) preached his farewell sermon to the Congregation. He had been appointed Chaplain at

West Point, and this was the last sabbath he would have charge of his congregation in Washington.

Exciting rumours arrived this morning from Gen'l Taylor's army. Similar rumours had been received by the Southern Mails for the last two or three days. If Gen'l Taylor is in any danger, as I greatly fear he is, it is in consequence of his having, in violation of his orders, advanced beyond Monterey. The truth is that from the beginning of the War he has been constantly blundering into difficulties, but has fought out of them, but at the cost of many lives. I hope in this instance he may be safe, though I greatly fear he may have had hard fighting and may have lost many of his brave men.

MONDAY, *29th March, 1847.*— Two members of Congress called at different times this morning. They occupied an hour or two of my time, which might have been much more profitably employed, about offices for their constituents, which I had not to give them. I shall be rejoiced when all the members get out of the City, for the few who still linger here annoy me exceedingly about offices. Maj'r Gen'l Butler called about 11 O'Clock. I sent for the Secretary of War, and we had a full conversation about the manner of prosecuting the war in Mexico. The Secretaries of the Navy, Treasury, of State, and the P. M. Gen'l called at different periods of the day, with each of whom I transacted public business. Gen'l Benton called and read me a letter which he had addressed to the people of Oregon, stating to them that the agitation of the slavery ques-

tion had caused the rejection of the Bill to organize a territorial Government over them at the last Session of Congress. I disapproved the letter, but knowing his domineering disposition and utter impatience of contradiction or difference of opinion, and knowing that I could not change his opinions, I contented myself with simply stating very briefly my objections to the letter and expressing my doubts of sending such a letter. I feared it might deceive the people of Oregon as to the real state of public opinion in the States in regard to them, and might incline them to set up an independent Government of their own. Gen'l Benton then asked me to appoint his son-in-law, Mr. Jones, who married his daughter a few days ago, a Chargé d' Affaires abroad. I told him there was no vacancy, and gave him no encouragement. I told him that there was a place of the kind which might be vacant soon, but that there were some commitments in regard to it; and added that I did not see that it would be in my power to gratify his wishes. He said he merely wished to present the application, & leave the disposition of it with me. Mr. Jones had made a similar application in person a few days ago (the day before he was married) and I gave him the same answer. I note this case, out of the thousands of applications which are made to me for office, because I predict if I do not appoint Mr. Jones that it will be the cause of a violent outbreak of opposition to me by Gen'l Benton. Mr. Jones has no claims upon me for this or any other office. He was but a short time ago the editor of a Federal paper in New Orleans.

TUESDAY, *30th March, 1847.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present. The Atto. Gen'l being indisposed remained but a few minutes. The Secretary of the Treasury read his revised Report to me, made in pursuance of my directions given verbally to him some time ago, on the subject of the duties proposed to be levied on commerce at the ports or places in Mexico in possession of our arms as a contribution on the enemy. This Report omitted much of what had been contained in the first draft (see this Diary of Saturday last) and as now presented was a practical business paper. This Report having been prepared in pursuance of verbal orders given some time ago, and deeming it proper to give these orders a more solemn and durable form, I had prepared a written communication directed to the Secretary of the Treasury embodying the substance of my verbal orders to him, which I read to the Cabinet and it was approved. I dated it on the 23rd Instant, being a day of the Cabinet meeting, & being the day on which the Secretary of the Treasury had presented the first draft of his Report, which as stated in this Diary of that day I disapproved. On yesterday I sent for the Secretary of the Treasury and read it to him, and informed him that in my opinion his Report should be a business paper & simply respond to the call for information made upon him. In this I was happy to find he concurred, after I had assigned to him my reasons for my opinion. I delivered this written communication to him, and he promised to have the rough draft of his revised rough draft copied and

sent to me to-night or early on to-morrow. I told him that I was anxious to have it at his earliest convenience, that I might give the necessary orders to the Secretary of War and of the Navy to carry into effect the policy adopted by my order to him. I then prepared at my table, while the Cabinet were conversing about indifferent matters, a hasty draft of the order which I proposed to issue to the Secretaries of War and the Navy. Before I had concluded it the Secretaries of State and of War had retired. I read this hasty draft to the members of the Cabinet who remained. As, however, it could not be issued until I had received the revised copy of the Report of the Secretary of the Treasury, it was not copied. I will revise it on to-morrow.

I addressed a letter to Gen'l Benton after the Cabinet adjournment requesting him to call on me this afternoon. At 7 O'Clock he called. I informed him that I had reflected much on the letter which he had read to me on yesterday, and which he proposed to address to the people of Oregon, and that I had strong apprehensions that it would be misunderstood by them, and might have the effect to dissatisfy them and alienate them from the U. S. & possibly induce them, under the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company, to set up an Independent Government for themselves. I told him that in his letter which he read to me on yesterday, he had informed them in substance that it was Mr. Calhoun's attempt in the Senate by his resolutions [1] to assert

[1] The resolutions of February 19, 1847. For Benton's opinion of them see *Thirty Years' View*, II, 711–713.

the principle that there should be no restriction prohibiting slavery in any territory of the U. S. that had caused the rejection of the Bill (or rather to have it laid on the table in the Senate) to establish a territorial Government over them. I told him that Oregon was a Northern territory & that slavery never could exist there, that I condemned Mr. Calhoun's course, but this, I feared, would not be understood by the inhabitants in Oregon, who were far removed from newspapers and other sources of information. I told him that I had great fears, if he wrote such a letter, it would produce a mischievous excitement among the inhabitants. Gen'l Benton said they would understand it at all events. I told him that all they would have would be common rumour; but that he (Gen'l B.) was well known in Oregon, and if he wrote such a letter it would be authentic and would alarm them on the subject, when we here knew there would be no cause of alarm. I told him frankly that I saw no good it could possibly produce, but that it might do much harm. Gen'l B. thought otherwise. He had told me on yesterday that he intended to retain a copy of the letter & publish it here, and, it was manifest to me from his conversation yesterday and to-day, to attack Mr. Calhoun. I told him if that was his object, such a publication in the U. S., if he wished to make it, would not produce the excitement and alarm in Oregon that a letter addressed by him to the people of that territory would. I told him further, as he knew, that the Secretary of State had a day or two ago addressed an official letter to the people of

Oregon, giving them assurances that they would be under the protection of our laws, and expressing the opinion that a Territorial Government would be established over them early in the next Session of Congress, but that he had made no allusion in it to slavery. I had a conversation of some length with him, assigning other grounds of objection to his letter. He still inclined to send it, but finally said that he would consider of it to-night, and if he concluded to with-hold it he would see Mr. Shively, by whom he was to send it, and to whom he had delivered it, on to-morrow morning before he started, and would get it back from him.

A newspaper account reached [here] to-night of a battle having been fought at Nueva Vista between the Mexican & American armies, showing great loss on both sides.

WEDNESDAY, *31st March, 1847.*— Senators Dix of N. Y. & Allen of Ohio [and] Mr. Sykes of the Ho. Repts. of N. Jersey severally called this morning, and occupied much of my time. I was glad to see these gentlemen but was much pressed with business. They desired to obtain offices for their friends. The Kansas Indians called and I had an interview with them in the presence of Col. Medill, the commissioner of Indian affairs. At 1 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of visitors generally. A crowd of persons, male and female, came in and occupied me an hour or more very unprofitably. Most of them wanted offices.

I had a conference with the Secretary of the

Treasury & Secretary of War in relation to the levy of contributions on the enemy by imposing a duty on tonnage & imports in the ports of Mexico in the possession of our military forces by conquest. The Secretary of the Treasury brought over his Report in answer to my letter to him of the 23rd Instant. (See my letter Book for copy). I examined the report, and the Secretary of the Treasury took it back to make some modifications which were suggested. He returned with [it] again after night. I prepared a letter to the Secretary of War & of the Navy on the subject (see my letter Book for copy).

Mr. Buchanan, Sec. of State, left this morning on a visit to his residence at Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

THURSDAY, *1st April, 1847.*—I gave a positive order this morning that I would see no company today, except officers of the Government on official business, and my messenger faithfully obeyed the order. Mr. Young, the commissioner of the General Land office, called, and I examined and signed two Proclamations for the sale of the public Lands in Iowa and Wisconsin. I have ordered that all the public lands shall be brought into market as fast as they are surveyed and ready for sale. I do this in order to raise as much revenue as possible from that source, and thus avoid to that extent the creation of a Public Debt. At 11 O'Clock the Secretaries of the Treasury, War, & the Navy called by appointment, for the purpose of examining more particularly than had been before done, the orders issued by me and the Report to me of the Secretary of the

Treasury in relation to levying contribution upon the enemy in the ports of Mexico in our military possession. The scale of duties & the regulations proposed by the Secretary of the Treasury in his Report to me of the 30th ultimo were carefully revised, and some modifications of the regulations were made. While engaged in this examination Maj'r Gen'l Butler of the army called. I invited him into my office and he was present during a part of the conference. I asked his opinion upon some of the points, and he made some valuable suggestions. He expressed his entire approbation of the policy adopted to levy contributions by the proposed tariff of duties on the enemy. Mr. Ritchie was also present a part of the time. I handed to him for publication in his paper my communication to the Secretary of the Treasury of the 23rd ultimo, and his Report to me of the same month. My orders to the Secretaries of War and the Navy of the 31st ultimo, and their orders based thereon will be published in his paper of to-morrow. The intended policy has become known by public rumour, and I deem it best to publish the official documents at once.

By the Southern mail of this evening official despatches were received from Gen'l Taylor giving a detailed account of the battle of the 22nd and 23rd ultimo.[1] It was a severe battle. Many valuable officers & men fell, and among them my old esteemed friend, Col. Archibald Yell, of the Arkansas mounted Regiment. I deeply deplore his loss. He was a brave and a good man, and among the best

[1] The battle of Buena Vista.

friends I had on earth, and had been so for 25 years. His eldest, and perhaps his only son, is now at College at Georgetown, and as my impression is that Col. Yell died poor, I will in that event educate the boy, and shall take great interest in him.

A despatch from Commodore Conner was received to-night, communicating the information that Gen'l Scott's forces had landed near Vera Cruz on the 7th Instant without serious resistance.

Had Gen'l Taylor obeyed his orders & occupied Monterey and the passes beyond it, the severe loss of our army, including many valuable officers, would have been avoided. It was great rashness to take the position he did in advance of Saltillo. Having done so he [is] indebted not to his own good generalship, but to the indomitable & intrepid bravery of the officers and men under his command for his success. He exposed them to an opposing army of three or four times their number. The Mexican army were suffering for want of food, and took up their retreat shortly after the battle. Gen'l Taylor is a hard fighter, but has none other of the qualities of a great General. From the beginning of the existing War with Mexico he has been constantly blundering into difficulties, but has fought out of them, but with very severe loss. His first blunder was in seperating his army from his supplies, which caused the battle of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. His second was in moving upon Monterey with an inadequate force, leaving more than two thirds of his whole army behind him with [the] battering [?] trains, & this caused the hard battle &

some loss at Monterey; & the last is in taking his position so far in advance of Monterey, which caused the late sanguinary battle. I rejoice that our brave army have been successful in this battle, but deeply lament the severe loss they have sustained.

FRIDAY, *2nd April, 1847.*— I was busily engaged in transacting public business with several of my Secretaries, and in disposing of the business on my table. At 1 O'Clock P. M. I directed my doors to be opened, and spent an hour in receiving company. The persons who called had but little other business but to apply to me for offices, which I did not have to give. I disposed of them very summarily. At 2 O'Clock P. M. Maj'r Gen'l Wm. O. Butler and the Secretary of War called, that being the hour which I had appointed to receive them. I had an unreserved and full conversation with them in relation to the future operations of the army in Mexico, and the proper manner of prosecuting the War. Gen'l Butler expressed the opinion that Gen'l Taylor's column, to which he was attached, would require 10,000 men, and that these should hold and garrison the frontier of the Rio Grande as far as Monterey or Saltillo, now in our possession, and that we should occupy a line South of Monterey to the coast, and have garrisons at Linares, Victoria, and Tampico. 10,000 men he estimated would be sufficient for this purpose. For the advancing column under Gen'l Scott from Vera Cruz, he estimated that 20,000 men would be required to advance upon and take the capitol. Many other matters con-

nected with the war were fully discussed and considered. In the midst of the consultation dinner was announced, and Gen'l Butler & the Secretary of War took a family Dinner with me. We returned to the office after Dinner and continued the discussion until near sunset, when they retired. I am gratified that the conference took place, though I do not know that I obtained by it much if any information more than I possessed before. Gen'l Butler gave me some information about details in the operations of the army, derived from his personal observation, which may be useful.

This was reception evening. I met a number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, in the parlour.

SATURDAY, *3rd April, 1847.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. At the usual hour of assembling the Secretaries of War and the Navy and the Post Master General attended. The other members of the Cabinet were absent. The Secretary of State is on a visit to Pennsylvania, the Atto. Gen'l is confined to his house by indisposition. The Secretary of the Treasury I presume was detained by indisposition, as he was quite unwell a day or two ago, when I last saw him.

The Secretary of the Navy read his order to the commanders of our squadrons in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Pacific carrying out my order to him of the 31st Instant directing the tariff of duties, which had been prepared in pursuance of my orders by the Secretary of the Treasury, in the ports of Mexico in our military possession to be enforced. Some modi-

fications were suggested and made. It was agreed that my order to him, & this his order based upon it, should be published at once in the *Union*. Some other public matters were the subject of conversation. The members of the Cabinet who attended retired about 2 O'Clock P. M.

I dined to-day with the Secretary of the Navy. Mrs. Polk, Miss Rucker, my Private Secretary, Col. Walker, and Mrs. Walker also dined with him. The Company consisted of the Secretary of War & the P. Master Gen'l and his wife, Maj'r General Butler & Mr. Ritchie. The Secretary of the Treasury & the Atto. Gen'l were sick, and the Secretary of State was absent from the City on a visit to Pennsylvania. It is the second time I have dined out since I have been President. I dined onc[e] with Mr. Bancroft, while he was Secretary of the Navy.

SUNDAY, *4th April, 1847*.— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. Service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hamner of Baltimore. The Rev. Mr. Sprole, the late pastor of the church, having been recently appointed chaplain at West point, had relinquished his pastoral charge and was absent. I wish the church may select as good a Pastor as Mr. Sprole was.

Maj'r Gen'l Butler of the army called at 7 O'Clock P. M. and remained until near 10 O'Clock. I had a full conversation with him in relation to the War with Mexico, and the proper manner of conducting

it. He will leave for his residence in Kentucky on to-morrow morning, & will proceed to the seat of War as soon as the condition of his wound will permit him to do so.

MONDAY, *5th April, 1847.*—I was busily engaged this morning in disposing of the business on my table. Several petitions for pardon, and Indian Deeds for my approval, among other matters, had accumulated on my table. I disposed of most of these cases. The Secretary of War called and submitted to me his order to the army in pursuance of my order to him of the 31st ultimo directing contribution to be levied on the enemy in such of the ports of Mexico as are or may be in the actual military possession of our arms. I suggested some modifications, to which he agreed. The Hon. David Tod, who was appointed U. S. Minister to Brazil at the close of the last Session of Congress, called to-day. He stated that his acceptance of the mission would depend on the health of his wife, which was precarious. At 1 O'Clock I opened my doors for the reception of company. Several persons called. The pressure of office seekers was not so great as it has been heretofore. This afternoon I took a ride on horseback. It is the first time I have mounted a horse for over six months. I have an excellent saddle-horse, and have been much in the habit of taking exercise on horseback all my life, but have been so incessantly engaged in the onerous and responsible duties of my office for many months past that I have had no time to take such exercise.

TUESDAY, *6th April, 1847.*— This was Cabinet day and I saw no company, except officers of Government on official business, several of whom called. At the usual hour (11 O'Clock A. M.) the Cabinet assembled. Mr. Buchanan is still absent in Pennsylvania and Mr. Clifford, the Atto. Gen'l, is confined to his house by a severe attack of illness. No general subject of much importance was considered. Several matters of detail & minor importance were brought up and disposed of. The Secretary of War and myself considered the question of the rank to be assigned to the several officers of the same grade composing the 10 Regiments recently authorized to be raised by Congress. The other members of the Cabinet present made suggestions. I finally determined to assign to the Field officers their relative rank, according to my own judgement of their relative merit; and to determine the relative rank of the company or subaltern officers by lot, and directed the Secretary of War to cause lots to be drawn accordingly.

Mr. Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, mentioned to me that he had been informed by the Hon. John S. Barbour of Virginia that he had recently received a letter from Senator Calhoun of S. C., the object of which was to obtain his signature to [an] address to the people of the U. S. on the subject of slavery, thus making and endeavouring to make that question a test in the next Presidential election. Mr. Barbour informed Mr. Mason, as Mr. Mason told me, that he had refused to sign the address; but that he learned that Mr. Calhoun desired that it should

be signed by leading men in all the Southern States, and the Hon. Mr. Seddon among others was named by Mr. Barbour as one of those who was expected to sign it. I remarked to Mr. Mason that Mr. Calhoun had become perfectly desperate in his aspirations to the Presidency, and had seized upon this sectional question as the only means of sustaining himself in his present fallen condition, and that such an agitation of the slavery question was not only unpatriotic and mischievous, but wicked. I told him further, that I had learned from a reliable source that the New York politicians who were favourable to the election of Gov. Wright to the Presidency would be rejoiced at the opportunity to take issue with Mr. Calhoun on such a question. I did not tell Mr. Mason my authority for this opinion, but I think it proper to record the fact. I derived this information from Gen'l Benton in a conversation with him a few days ago (see this diary of tuesday last) in which I had protested against his addressing a letter to the people of Oregon informing them that the Bill to establish a territorial Government over them had been rejected at the last session of Congress on account of the attempt made by Mr. Calhoun to leave the question of the existence of slavery in that territory an open one. In the course of the conversation Gen'l Benton dropped the idea distinctly that the New York gentlemen had gone home from Congress with a full record of all the facts & intended to make an issue on that question. I find I omitted to state this in tuesday's diary. The truth is there is no patriotism in either faction of the party. Both

desire to mount slavery as a hobby, and hope to secure the election of their favourite upon it. They will both fail and ought to fail. The people of the U. States, I hope, will cast off all such intriguers, and make their own selection for the Presidency, and this if they are wise they will do. I now entertain a worse opinion of Mr. Calhoun than I have ever done before. He is wholly selfish, & I am satisfied has no patriotism. A few years ago he was the author of Nullification & threatened to dissolve the Union on account of the tariff. During my administration the reduction of duties which he desired has been obtained, and he can no longer complain. No sooner is this done than he selects slavery upon which to agitate the country, and blindly mounts that topic as a hobby. Gov. Wright's friends in Congress as unpatriotically have shown by their course that they desire to mount the same hobby in the North and hope to be successful by their opposition to slavery. They both forget that the Constitution settles [these] questions which were the subjects of mutual concession between the North and the South. I am utterly disgusted at such intriguing of men in high place, & hope they will be rebuked by the people. This was reception evening. A number of persons called. I met them in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *7th April, 1847.*— I ordered that my doors should not be opened for the reception of visitors until 1 O'Clock P. M. Before that hour, however, my messenger announced that Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll of Phila. had called and desired to see

me. I was surprised at this especially after the strange and extraordinary letter which he addressed to me on the 25th ultimo, and which was delivered to me by Mr. Buchanan. From this letter it would seem that Mr. Ingersoll was in a great passion, because after he was rejected by the Senate as Minister to France on the last night of the last Session of Congress, I had nominated Mr. Richard Rush for that Mission. The letter is not only an extraordinary one, but does me gross injustice. I thought at first of answering it, and may do so yet. I will preserve it on my files, for future reference if necessary, if Mr. Ingersoll should make an attack on me, as he distinctly intimates he may do. The letter alluded to is a gross one, and proves one of two things, *viz.*, either that Mr. Ingersoll is a man of no sense or principle, or both, or [that he] intended when he wrote it, not only to do me injustice but to insult me. My only offense was that I nominated him to the Senate as minister to France in good faith & in the hope that he might be confirmed, but when he was rejected by the Senate, within the last hour of the last night of the Session, I considered it a public duty not to permit the French mission to remain vacant, and nominated a successor. The letter of Mr. Ingersoll to me proves beyond doubt, that he was wholly unworthy of the confidence which by his nomination I proposed to place in him. When he entered my office his manner was embarrassed. I received him courteously, but very formally, much more so than is my habit. He said he had come from Phila. expressly to see me, and to request me as he did, at the

instance of a number of his constituents, to confer a brevet on Col. Stanton of the Quarter master's Department. This struck me as a strange errand, and I considered it, as I have no doubt it was, the mere pretext of his visit. I answered the questions or enquiries which he propounded to me on the subject. I introduced no other topic. He did, but I confined myself to laconic responses. He did not allude to the French Mission, or to his letter to me on the subject. Had he done so, I was ready to have given him my mind freely and without reserve. He left, and on parting I did not shake hands with him, but bowed to him in a cold and formal manner. Between 1 & 2 O'Clock P. M. he returned with a person with him whom he introduced to me and whose name I do not remember. They took seats. There was company in my office. I addressed no conversation to him, and after sitting for a few minutes he & the person he had introduced retired. I think Mr. Ingersoll has acted not only an ungrateful part in the letter he addressed to me, but has shown that he is selfish & without principle. I have profound contempt for him, and shall never have any further intercourse with him, unless he withdraws his letter and makes suitable explanations, and then only in the most guarded manner. On official business I must of course see him, but it will be in the most formal manner. At 1 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of company. Several persons called, chiefly office seekers, and I did not get clear of them until near 3 O'Clock P. M. The Secretary of War called on official business. The Adj't Gen'l (Jones)

called and submitted to me a General order which he had prepared, in substance directing the different corps of the army to fire a salute in honour of Gen'l Taylor for the battle of Buena Vista. I declined to sanction the order because, as far as I was informed by him, no similar order had ever been given before, and if given in this case it would be embarrassing, because if a similar order was not given in any future battle in which our arms were successful, the inferrence would be that the Government did not properly appreciate their success. I told him it would be embarrassing. I told him also that I was rejoiced that the battle of Buena Vista had resulted as well as it had, and as a citizen I cheerfully awarded to our brave army the merit that was due them, but as President I could not depart from the usual course pursued on such occasions. I told him no such thing had been done on the occasion of the battle of New Orleans, on the 8th of January, 1815, or on the occasion of the battle of Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, or any other that had been fought during the last War with Great Brittain. The truth is the indomitable bravery of our army saved Gen'l Taylor, and not his good Generalship, at the battle of Buena Vista. Had that battle been lost, he would have been condemned by the whole country for his rashness in violation of his orders in taking the advanced position he did. Gen'l Jones retired, having expressed his approbation of the reasons I assigned for declining to authorize the author [order].

Dr. Green, who married my niece, Miss Walker,

and his wife, arrived this evening from Virginia, where they had been on a visit to Dr. Green's father. They took rooms in the Presidential mansion.

I took a ride on horse-back this evening in company with Mr. Johnson, the Post Master Gen'l.

To-day Senator Yulee of Florida called in company with my old friend, Walker Anderson of Florida. Mr. Yulee expressed his approbation of the measure recently adopted to levy contributions on the enemy by the collection of duties in the ports of Mexico in our military possession. He said the only doubt he had was as to the power to disburse the money by the Executive order after it was collected. He had no doubt of the power & the expediency of levying the contribution in the manner proposed.

Senator Dix called, and in conversation with him I understood from him that he approved the measure. Some of the Federal papers, I see, are attacking it, & among them the New York *Courier & Enquirer*. Col. Webb,[1] the Editor of that paper, is a disappointed office seeker. He wished to be Brigadier General & I did not think him fit for it, & he has been recklessly bitter ever since. His partisan ravings give me no concern.

THURSDAY, *8th April, 1847*.— The day passed without the occurrence of any incident of much interest. Vice President Dallas called in the course of

[1] James Watson Webb, 1802–1884, editor and proprietor of the New York *Courier and Enquirer*. He wielded a strong influence in public affairs.

the morning. I spent an hour or two with the Secretary of War. At 1 O'Clock I opened my office and a number of persons called, some to pay their respects & others to seek office. The latter class I dispatched without much ceremony, as I had no offices for them. Mr. Buchanan returned to-day from his visit to Pennsylvania. He had been absent about a week. The balance of the day I spent in disposing of the business on my table. In the afternoon I took a ride with Mrs. Polk to the Heights of Georgetown.

FRIDAY, *9th April, 1847.*— This morning I directed that my office should not be opened for the reception of visitors until the usual hour, *viz.,* 1 O'Clock P. M. Cards were, however, sent in to me before that hour and I was compelled to see several persons who called. Among them was the Hon. David Tod, U. S. Minister to Brazil. He informed me that he had concluded to accept the Mission; that he would return to his residence in Ohio, and expected to be ready to sail about the last of May. At 1 O'Clock P. M. [my] office was opened for the reception of visitors generally. A number of persons called, ladies and gentlemen. The visits to-day were chiefly those of ceremony. The pressure for office, I am happy to say, has abated considerably within the last few days. I took a ride on horseback this evening in company with the Post Master General. I disposed of several matters of business to-day, which had accumulated on my table.

This was reception evening. A number of per-

sons called, ladies and gentlemen. I met them in the parlour.

SATURDAY, *10th April, 1847.*— I received a Telegraphic despatch from the office of the Baltimore *Sun* stating that by a special Express who had come from Pensacola, beating the mail one day, information had been received that the City of Vera Cruz and the castle of San juan de Ulloa had surrendered on the 27th ultimo to the combined operation of our land and naval forces, with the loss of only 36 men on our part. This was joyful news. In about two hours afterwards a more detailed account of the capitulation was received, published in the *Sun* and taken from a Pensacola paper. I[t] comes so well vouched [for] as to leave no doubt of its authenticity.

The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all of the members present. The Secretary of the Treasury returned to his office after remaining but a few minutes. This was the last day for receiving proposals for the loan for which he had advertised; many capitalists were in Washington wishing to see him, & to afford them that opportunity he asked to be excused from attending the Cabinet to-day. The subject of consideration to-day was the Mexican War. I had several times mentioned to Mr. Buchanan the importance of having a commissioner vested with Plenipotentiary powers, who should attend the head-quarters of the army ready to take advantage of circumstances as they might arise to negotiate for peace. I stated to the Cabinet to-day that such was my opinion, and that I thought it the

more important since the news of the recent victories, and especially since the information received this morning of the fall of Vera Cruz & the Castle of San juan D'Ulloa. All the members of the Cabinet present concurred in this opinion. The embarrassment in carrying it out consisted in the selection of a suitable commissioner or commissioners who would be satisfactory to the country. This was a great difficulty. Such is the jealousy of the different factions of the Democratic party in reference to the next Presidential Election towards each other that it is impossible to appoint any prominent man or men without giving extensive dissatisfaction to others, and thus jeopardizing the ratification of any Treaty they might make. In this also the Cabinet were agreed. I stated that I preferred that the Secretary of State should be the sole commissioner to negotiate the Treaty, & that I would have no hesitation in deputing him on that special service if the Mexican authorities had agreed to appoint commissioners on their part, but as they had refused to do this he could not attend the head-quarters of the army for an indefinite period of time and with no assurance whether the Mexican authorities would agree to negotiate. Mr. Buchanan expressed his entire concurrence in this view. He said he would be willing to go in person if there was any assurance that negotiations would be speedily opened, but under existing circumstances & with our present information he could not, of course, think of going. Mr. Buchanan then suggested that Mr. N. P. Trist, the chief clerk of the Department of State, might be

deputed secretly with Plenipotentiary powers to the head-quarters of the army, and that it might be made known that such a person was with the army ready to negotiate. Mr. Trist, he said, was an able man, perfectly familiar with the Spanish character and language, & might go with special and well defined instructions. The suggestions struck me favourably. After much conversation on the subject it was unanimously agreed by the Cabinet that it would be proper to send Mr. Trist, and that he should take with him a Treaty drawn up by the Secretary of State & approved by the Cabinet, which he should be authorized to tender to the Mexican Government, and to conclude [a treaty] with them if they would accept it; but that if they would not accept it, but would agree to appoint commissioners to negotiate, that Mr. Trist should in that event report the fact to his Government, when Mr. Buchanan could go out as the commissioner. This being agreed upon by the members of the Cabinet present, & it being desirable, as it was a very important matter, that every member of the Cabinet should be consulted, I sent for the Secretary of the Treasury, who had retired. He came, & I laid the whole matter fully before him. He fully concurred in opinion with the other members of the Cabinet.

After the consideration of some other matters all the members of the Cabinet retired except Mr. Buchanan, whom I requested to remain. I sent to the Department of State for Mr. Trist & in the presence of Mr. Buchanan I opened the matter fully to him. He gave his assent to go on the mission. I then

charged him to keep the matter a profound secret. I requested Mr. Buchanan to go to work immediately & with the least practicable delay to prepare the project of a Treaty and the necessary instructions, and in order that it might be kept a profound secret, I impressed it upon him that no clerk or other person in his Department should have any knowledge of it. Both Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Trist said that Mr. Derrick,[1] one of the clerks in the Dept. of State, could render important aid in preparing & copying the necessary papers. After some hesitation I agreed that he might be so employed, but that he should be placed under the strictest injunctions of Secrecy. That he might be so, I requested Mr. Buchanan to send him over to me. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Trist retired & in a short time Mr. Derrick called. I communicated the matter to him & charged him with secrecy. To give publicity to such a movement before it was commenced, and to have the federal papers giving their own version of it, and, as their habit is, to have them by every means in their power thwarting the objects of the Government by discouraging the enemy to accede to the measure, would in all human probability be to defeat it, & hence the necessity of secrecy.

Col. Totten of the army arrived by the Southern Boat this evening direct from Vera Cruz, where he had been during the bombardment of the City and the Castle. He was the bearer of dispatches from Gen'l Scott, fully confirming the information re-

[1] William S. Derrick, acting Chief Clerk of the Department of State in 1847.

ceived this morning through the Baltimore *Sun* of the surrender of the City and Castle. The Secretaries of War & the Navy called & examined the despatches. It was agreed that they should be handed to the Editor of the *Union* for publication.

SUNDAY, *11th April, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. Divine Service was performed by the Rev'd Mr. Bacon of the Baptist Church. He preached an excellent sermon. Mr. Bacon is the President of Columbia College in this City and is a man of letters. Being much fatigued by my constant public engagements during the past week, I enjoyed the rest from my labours which the sabbath enabled me to have. It has become so generally known that I receive no company on the sabbath that no one now calls on that day.

MONDAY, *12th April, 1847.*— I sent for Col. Totten, who was the bearer of despatches from Vera Cruz, and who arrived in this City on Saturday last. I held a conversation of some length with him, the object of which was to obtain information from him from the army. He gave me some valuable information which I had not before possessed, in regard to the localities about Vera Cruz and Gen'l Scott's probable movements. He gave it as his opinion that Gen'l Scott would require 15,000 effective men to enable him to move with safety upon the City of Vera Cruz [Mexico]. He stated to me that Brigadier Generals Pillow & Quitman had both made

much character with the army by their conduct. I had an interview with the Secretary of State in relation to his reply to the Mexican Government [to the despatch] in which they had refused to open negotiations, a rough copy of which he had sent to me last night. I suggested one or two modifications to which he agreed. I had an interview also with the Secretary of War & the Navy in relation to the conduct of the war. I sent for the Atto. Gen'l & consulted him upon a legal question relating to the construction of the two acts of Congress of the last session of Congress, of the 11th Feb'y & 3rd of March. The question was whether the volunteers now in Mexico, who shall re-volunteer for the war, will be entitled to a second or double land-bounty. He thought they would be, but preferred to examine the subject more fully before he gave a definitive opinion. I took a ride with Judge Mason in his buggy this evening. He told me that he had understood that Mr. Calhoun had come out for Gen'l Taylor for President. I had heard the same rumour this morning but could not believe it. If it be true, I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Calhoun is wholly destitute of political principle. Gen'l Taylor is a Whig *alias* Federalist of the most decided character. He is a Kentuckian and a devotee of Mr. Clay, and holds no one of the strict construction opinions which Mr. Calhoun has heretofore professed. If the rumour be true then all Mr. Calhoun's loud professions in favour of a strict construction of the Constitution & of State rights are false. It was but a few years ago that Mr. Calhoun was

ready to nullify & dissolve the Union about the tariff. Now that the tariff has been reduced under my administration & all has been effected on that subject which he desired, he is obliged to mount some other political hobby to keep himself before the public, and for that purpose some weeks ago selected the slavery question. Finding now that he cannot gratify his ambition by the agitation of that question, he now abandons every leading political principle he has ever professed, and, if the rumour be true, avows himself for Gen'l Taylor for the Presidency, when Gen'l Taylor is known to be the devotee of Mr. Clay & to entertain opinions directly the reverse of those heretofore professed by Mr. Calhoun. I cannot express the contempt I feel for Mr. Calhoun for such profligate political [in]consistency. If I had retained him in my Cabinet & consented to yield myself up to his control, I might have secured his support, but not by the support of principle.

I omitted to state that at 1 O'Clock to-day when I opened my doors an unusual crowd, male & female, attended. They occupied my time about an hour.

TUESDAY, *13th April, 1847.*— At the request of Mr. Buchanan I summoned the Cabinet to meet at 10 O'Clock this morning. All the members attended shortly after that hour. Mr. Buchanan submitted for consideration the project of a Treaty with Mexico, which he had prepared in pursuance of the decision of the Cabinet on saturday last, to be borne by Mr. Trist to the Head Quarters of the army in Mexico and to be concluded and signed by him if

the Mexican government acceded to it. The boundary proposed in the project was the Rio Grande from its mouth to the point where it intersects the Southern boundary of New Mexico, the whole of the Provinces of New Mexico & Upper and Lower California to be ceded to the U. States. There was a stipulation in a seperate article securing to the U. S. the right of passage and transit from the Gulf of Mexico & the Pacific Ocean across the istmus of Tehuantepec. The consideration which Mr. Buchanan in his draft of a Treaty proposed to pay, in addition to the assumption of the claims of our citizens against Mexico, was $15,000,000, in installments of $3,000,000 per annum. I expressed the hope that this boundary and concession might be obtained for this or even a less sum, but that I was willing to pay a larger sum for it if it could not be had for that sum, and that I thought Mr. Trist should be authorized to give more, if he found that to be the only obstacle in concluding a treaty. I was willing to make the consideration double that sum ($30,000,000) if the cession could not be obtained for a less sum, rather than fail to make a Treaty. Mr. Buchanan earnestly resisted this & was in favour of restricting the offer to the $15,000,000. This point gave rise to much conversation & discussion. I stated my reasons at some length for being willing to enlarge the sum to $30,000,000, if the Treaty could not be had for that sum. Among these reasons were, first, that the continuance of the War for less than twelve months would cost more than that sum; and secondly, that the country ceded to the U. S. would

be worth, in the public lands acquired & commercial advantages, more than four fold the $30,000,000. The members of the Cabinet expressed their opinions freely. Mr. Walker attached greater importance to the free passage across the Istmus of Tehuantepec than to the cession of New Mexico & the Californias, and if that object could be obtained he was willing to pay $30,000,000, but without it he was not. Mr. Buchanan still opposed the enlargement of the consideration. Finally all the Cabinet except Mr. Buchanan yielded to my views, and it was agreed that Mr. Trist should be furnished with confidential instructions authorizing him in his discretion, if the Treaty could not be obtained for a less sum, to stipulate to pay $30,000,000. It was further agreed that if the passage across the istmus of Tehuantepec could not be obtained, the maximum sum to be paid for the other cessions of the proposed Treaty should not exceed $25,000,000. It was agreed, also, that if Lower California could not be obtained, that then the maximum sum to be paid for the Rio Grande as a boundary & the cession of New Mexico & Upper California should not exceed $20,000,000. To these several propositions all the Cabinet except Mr. Buchanan agreed, and he being over ruled yielded and said he would modify the project of the Treaty & prepare the instructions accordingly. I stated, & it was understood by all, that the several sums mentioned were maximums to which Mr. Trist might go in the last resort, but that he would procure the Treaty for as much less a sum as possible. In the course of the discussion Mr.

Walker insisted that the free passage across the istmus of Tehuantepec should be a *sine qua non* to the making of any Treaty. To this I objected & stated that it constituted no part of the object for which we had engaged in the War. The balance of the Cabinet, though agreeing that it was important, yet concurred with me in opinion that it should not be a *sine qua non* to the making of a Treaty. Other provisions of the project of the Treaty were considered. It was then agreed that the Cabinet would meet again at 7½ O'Clock this evening, and that in the mean-time Mr. Buchanan should prepare the modified draft of the Treaty as agreed upon. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock P. M. About 2 O'Clock P. M. it was announced to me that Gen'l Tom Thumb, a dwarf, who is being exhibited in this City & who has become quite celebrated by having been exhibited at all the principal Courts of Europe, was in the parlour below stairs & desired to see me. I invited the Cabinet to take a short recess & to walk down with me, & they did so. We found a number of ladies & gentlemen in the parlour. Tom Thumb is a most remarkable person. After spending 20 or 30 minutes in the parlour I returned with the Cabinet to my office. At 7½ O'Clock P. M. the Cabinet re-assembled. Mr. Buchanan read the article which he proposed relating to the passage across the istmus of Tehuantepec. It proposed that $5,000,000 of the sum proposed to be paid to Mexico should be retained in our Treasury, and not paid to Mexico until that Government should have constructed a canal or a railroad over the istmus. I objected to

this, because it would be in effect to appropriate from our Treasury this sum for external improvements, or improvements in a foreign country, and my opinion was that such a provision would be, or might be, a serious objection to the ratification of the Treaty by the Senate. After a full discussion it was agreed to omit this provision for the application of the $5,000,000, and to make a simple provision securing to the citizens of the U. S. a free passage across the istmus for ever. Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Walker dissented, but yielded to the majority. The Cabinet adjourned about 11 O'Clock P. M.

This was reception evening, but I did not go into the parlour until after the Cabinet adjourned. I learn from Mrs. Polk that a large number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, had attended. They had all retired but three or four when I entered the parlour. The Secretary of War & the Navy & the Atto. Gen'l accompanied me to the parlour & remained a few minutes.

WEDNESDAY, *14th April, 1847.*— I was slightly indisposed to-day. I kept my doors closed until 1 O'Clock. Before that hour I had interviews with the Secretaries of War and the Navy on official business. It was agreed by the Secretary of War and myself that it would be necessary to call out 6 or 8 Regiments of Volunteers for the War to supply the place of the 12 months volunteers now serving in Mexico, whose term of service would expire in May and June next. The Secretary of State called two or three times to consult me in relation to the project

of a Treaty with Mexico & the instructions to Mr. Trist, which he was preparing agreeably to the modifications which were settled upon in Cabinet on yesterday. At 1 O'Clock I opened my doors. A number of persons called & occupied my time for an hour very unprofitably. After night Mr. Buchanan called and read to me a letter which he had received this evening from Moses Beech of the New York *Sun,* written in the City of Mexico & dated on the 17th of March last. In his letter Mr. Beech describes the revolutionary condition of Mexico, but expresses the opinion that a Treaty may be made which would be satisfactory to the U. S., & leaves the inference that he may make such a Treaty. Mr. Beech was in Washington in November last & had several interviews with Mr. Buchanan & one with me. He was then on the eve of leaving for Mexico on private business, but from his intimacy with General Almonte expressed the opinion that he could [exert] a favourable influence on him and other leading men in Mexico, with a view to the restoration of peace. He induced Mr. Buchanan and myself to believe that he could do so. Mr. Buchanan informed him confidentially of the terms on which we would treat, and it was deemed advisable to constitute him a secret agent to Mexico. He was so constituted [1] accordingly, but was not clothed with any Diplomatic powers. The object of constituting him a secret agent was that he might collect & furnish useful information to his Government. He may

[1] The appointment and commission is printed in Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 119.

misconstrue his authority & it may be possible that he may induce the Mexican rulers, if they are reduced to great straits by the pressure of the war, upon the production to them of the letter of the Secretary of State making him an agent of the Government, to make a Treaty with him. It is clearly to be inferred from his letter that he will make a Treaty with them if he can. Should he do so, and it is a good one, I will waive his authority to make it, and submit it to the Senate for ratification. It will be a good joke if he should assume the authority and take the whole country by surprise & make a Treaty. Mr. Buchanan's strong impression is that he may do so. So little impression did the conversation which I held with him in November make on my mind, that I believe I made no note of it in this diary. It seems to have made a deeper impression on Mr. Buchanan, for he read to me to-night the substance of the conversation which he held with him in November, & which he had reduced to writing at the time. There is nothing in the conversation, as thus reduced to writing, which contemplated that Diplomatic powers were to be conferred on Mr. Beech.

THURSDAY, *15th April, 1847.*— About 11½ O'Clock Mr. Buchanan called and informed me that the instructions for Mr. Trist, the project of a Treaty with Mexico, the full power to conclude the same, and all the papers [1] according to the decision of the Cabinet were now ready, and that as Mr. Trist would leave Washington on his Mission on to-mor-

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VII, 271–279.

row morning, he thought it prudent to have a meeting of the Cabinet that they might be all read over again. I immediately summoned the Cabinet, all of whom (except the Attorney Gen'l, who is absent from the City on a visit to Maine, having left on yesterday) attended in less than an hour. Mr. Buchanan read over all the papers, including the draft of the Treaty to be offered to the acceptance of Mexico. Some immaterial modifications were made in the instructions. The Secretaries of War and the Navy read drafts of orders which they had respectively prepared to the commanders of the land & Naval forces in Mexico, informing them of Mr. Trist's mission and requiring them to afford him all the facilities in their power in accomplishing its object. They were also instructed, if a Treaty should be concluded and ratified by the Mexican Government and they were notified of that fact by Mr. Trist, to suspend hostilities until they received further orders from their Government. I signed Mr. Trists's letter of appointment as a commissioner, & also his full powers to conclude a Treaty. The Cabinet adjourned about 2½ O'Clock. After night Mr. Trist called and I had a full conversation with him.

FRIDAY, *16th April, 1847.*— Mr. Trist set out on his mission to the Head Quarters of the army this morning, with full powers to Treat with the authorities of Mexico for peace. His mission has, as far as I have learned, been kept a profound secret, and is known only to the Cabinet. I deemed it important that it should be so. Had his mission and the

object of it been proclaimed in advance at Washington I have no doubt there are persons in Washington, and among them the Editors of the *National Intelligencer,* who would have been ready and willing to have despatched a courier to Mexico to discourage the Government of that weak and distracted country from entering upon negotiations for peace. This they would do rather than suffer my administration to have the credit of concluding a just and honourable peace. The articles in the *National Intelligencer* and other federal papers against their own Government and in favour of the enemy, have done more to prevent a peace than all the armies of the enemy. The Mexican papers republish these treasonable articles & make the ignorant population of Mexico believe that the Democratic party will shortly be expelled from power in the U. States, and that their friends (the Federal *alias* Whig party) will come into power. If the war is protracted it is to be attributed to the treasonable course of the federal editors & leading men. These Editors and political leaders are guilty of " moral treason " to their country, and yet they have recently attempted to steal the war, which they have opposed and denounced, and appropriate the success of our arms to themselves. They already boldly claim all the credit of the success of our battles to Gen'l Taylor and are proclaiming him to be their candidate for the Presidency, when the truth is that Gen'l Taylor has from the beginning to the end of the War displayed no generalship. In violation of all prudence & of orders he placed himself at Buena Vista instead of

occupying Monterey as he was expected to do, and had he been defeated in that battle he would have been universally execrated. As it is his imprudence cost the lives of our brave officers & men who fell in that battle. He is, however, a Whig and the Federal party will make a hero of him if they can, and will make a candidate for the Presidency of him if they shall think him their most available candidate. They care nothing for political principle. The Spoils of office are all that they care for.

I communicated to Mr. Ritchie this afternoon the fact of Mr. Trist's mission & the object of it. I did this in the strictest confidence, because it was necessary that he should know it in order to shape the course of his paper in reference to it.

SATURDAY, *17th April, 1847.*— The Cabinet met at 11 O'Clock to-day; all the members present except the Attorney Gen'l, who is absent from the Seat of Government on a visit to his residence in the State of Maine. I brought before the Cabinet the propriety of calling out about 6,000 more volunteers for the Mexican War, to take the place of the 12 months volunteers whose term of service will shortly expire. The Secretary of War & myself had previously conferred upon the subject. The Cabinet agreed that it was necessary & proper to do so. The Cabinet adjourned about 2 O'Clock P. M. The Secretary of War remained & in consultation with him I apportioned the volunteers to be called for among the States, and directed him to make the requisition accordingly. I communicated to Mr. Ritchie in strict

confidence to-night the fact of Mr. Trist's mission to the Head Quarters of army.

SUNDAY, *18th April, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker.

MONDAY, *19th April, 1847.*— Nothing of much interest occurred to-day. The Secretary of the Navy and several of the subordinate officers called on official business. At 1 O'Clock I opened my doors and a number of persons called, some of them to pay visits of ceremony and others seeking offices. The pressure for office I am happy to say has not been so great for a few days past as has been usual. I disposed of much business that was on my table to-day. Indeed I believe that I have less business on my table remaining to be acted on than I have had at any time for the last year.

TUESDAY, *20th April, 1847.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present except the Attorney General, who is absent from the seat of Government on a visit to his residence in Maine. Several subjects were considered & disposed of, but none of sufficient importance to be noted. On yesterday official dispatches were received from Col. Price, commanding at Sante Fe, announcing that a battle had been fought and a signal victory won by the troops under his command over the enemy. The number of troops engaged was comparatively small, but I consider this victory one

of the most signal which has been gained during the War. Accounts through the newspapers were received on yesterday, containing the Mexican account of a Victory obtained by Col. Donophan,[1] commanding [the] Missouri Volunteers, over the enemy, and that he had taken the City of Chihuahua. The truth is our troops, regulars & volunteers, will obtain victories wherever they meet the enemy. This [they] would do if they were without officers to command them higher in rank than Lieutenants. It is injustice, therefore, to award to the Generals all the credit. They are entitled to their full share of credit for their courage and skill, but the subaltern officers & privates are entitled to their share of the credit also. The Cabinet adjourned about 2 O'Clock P. M.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. I met them with the family in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *21st April, 1847.*— My attention was called this morning to two letters[2] purporting to have been written at this City and published in the New York *Herald,* in which the writer discloses with remarkable accuracy & particularity the fact of the departure of Mr. N. P. Trist, chief clerk in the Department of State, on a mission to Mexico.

[1] Alexander William Doniphan, Colonel of the First Missouri regiment.

[2] New York *Herald,* April 20, 1847; one letter, signed "Maheeko," is dated Washington, April 17; the other, copied from the Boston *Post,* is dated April 15, 1847.

The statement is so accurate and minute that the writer must have obtained information on the subject from some one who was entrusted with the Secret. It was a profound Cabinet secret, and was so expressly declared to be by me, and was communicated to no one else but to Mr. Trist himself & to Mr. Derrick, a clerk in the Department of State. For a full statement of the importance of keeping it a secret, see this diary of Saturday the 10th Instant. In disclosing the fact of the mission of Mr. Trist and its objects, contrary to my solemn injunction, there has been treachery somewhere. I cannot believe that any of my Cabinet have betrayed my confidence, and conclude, in the absence of further information on the subject, that the disclosure must have been made by Mr. Derrick, the clerk in the State Department recommended By Mr. Buchanan as worthy of all confidence, and who was employed in preparing the writing. I have not been more vexed or excited since I have been President than at this occurrence. The Success of Mr. Trist's mission I knew in the beginning must depend mainly on keeping it a secret from that portion of the Federal press & leading men in the country who, since the commencement of the war with Mexico, have been giving " aid & comfort " to the enemy by their course. I do not doubt that there are men among them who would incur the expense of sending a courrier to Mexico, & incur any other expense, to discourage Mexico from making a peace, for the purpose of having the war continued, in the hope that the Democratic administration might be brought into disrepute by

continuing it to a protracted length, and that they might gain some political advantage in the next Presidential election by it. I do not doubt that Mexico has been & will be discouraged from making peace, in the hope that their friends in the U. S. will come into power at the next Presidential [election]. That this has been the effect of the unpatriotic & anti-American course of the *National Intelligencer* & other federal papers, all know. Their articles against their own Government & country are translated & re-published in the Mexican papers. It was my knowledge of this that induced my great desire to keep the mission of Mr. Trist a secret. In the course of an hour after I read the published letters in the *Herald,* Mr. Buchanan called on business. After it was transacted I called his attention to these letters. He had no knowledge how or through whom the matter disclosed in these letters had gained their way to the public. I told him that I strongly suspected Mr. Derrick, his Whig clerk in the State Dept., who he had insisted should be entrusted to aid in preparing the papers. Mr. Buchanan insisted that Mr. Derrick was perfectly trustworthy and that the disclosure could not have been made by him. I told him it must have gone from him or Mr. Trist, as it was impossible that any member of the Cabinet, after the solemn injunction of secrecy I had imposed when the matter was resolved upon, could have disclosed it. I told Mr. Buchanan that its disclosure was a great outrage upon me, and that Mr. Derrick must explain it & clear himself of it, or I would turn him out of his office. I told him further

that I had found that almost everything that transpired in the Cabinet got into the newspapers, that I had been annoyed no little by it, & that I intended to put an end to it. Mr. Buchanan left, & I sent for the Secretary of War & the Secretary of the Navy, as Mr. Trist had been entrusted as bearer of despatches from their Departments to the army and Navy. I enquired of them if it was possible that any of the clerks in their Departments could have arrived at any knowledge of the matter, in preparing the papers to be sent off by Mr. Trist. They both said that no clerk in either Department could have had any knowledge upon the subject. They were both indignant at the disclosure of the facts. I have no doubt myself that it obtained publicity through the State Department. I intend to probe it to the bottom & ascertain the guilty person if possible.

I opened my doors at 1 O'Clock P. M. A number of persons called. Nothing of interest occurred during the remainder of the day. My Private Secretary, with his wife & Miss Rucker, left this morning on an excursion for a day or two to Baltimore.

THURSDAY, *22nd April, 1847.*— I spent this day quietly, attending to various matters of official business. The Secretary of State called, & I had a further conversation with him in relation to the disclosure by letter writers from Washington of Mr. Trist's mission to Mexico. The manner in which & the agency through whom his mission had become a matter of publicity was still a mystery. Mr. Bu-

chanan still insisted that his clerk, Mr. Derrick, with whom, he said, he had conversed on the subject, was an innocent man. (See this Diary of yesterday.) I repeated to him that there had been bad faith somewhere. Mr. Buchanan, in my conversation with him on yesterday, remarked that he had his own suspicions how the Cabinet secrets obtained publicity. I did not call upon him at the time for an explanation of the remark, but to-day I did. He declined to make any explanation, saying that he might involve others. I told him that it was due to me that he should make known to me any one whom he suspected. He still declined. I then said to him, my Private Secretary is often in the room when the Cabinet is in Session and he is the only person except the Cabinet who is so, and asked him if he suspected him. He promptly and with some excitement said he did not. I remarked to him that Col. Walker was an honourable man, and as close in keeping anything which ought not to be made public as any man I ever knew. I told Mr. Buchanan that it was proper I should inform him that on saturday night last I had, in the profoundest confidence, communicated to Mr. Ritchie the fact that Mr. Trist had gone to the Head Quarters of the army, that I had seen Mr. Ritchie on yesterday & again to-day, & he assured me solemnly that he had not as much as alluded to or hinted the matter to any human being. I expressed to him the opinion also that the fact must have gotten out through the State Department. When he was retiring I requested him

to send his Clerk, Mr. Derrick, over, as I wished to see him. In a few minutes Mr. Derrick called, & I expressed to him the indignation I felt at the disclosure which had been made. He solemnly declared that he had mentioned it to no human being, and I became satisfied that he had not, or rather I had no proof that he had done so. I could not, therefore, upon mere suspicion dismiss him from his office. I still think as I had told Mr. Buchanan that the disclosure emanated from some one in the State Department. I think the alarm is now so great in that Department that future state secrets connected with it will hereafter be kept.

I opened my doors at 1 O'Clock P. M. A number of Visitors called, most of them seeking office. I had no offices to confer and disposed of them in a very summary manner. I took a ride on horseback this afternoon accompanied by the Secretary of War and the Post Master General. I disposed to-day of much business of minor importance which had accumulated on my table.

FRIDAY, *23rd April, 1847.*— Nothing of interest occurred to-day. I transacted business with some of the public officers, and disposed of several matters of minor importance on my table. I saw company at 1 O'Clock. But few persons called. The horde of office-seekers who have infested Washington almost ever since I have been President, seem to have learned at last that their importunities [are] of no avail.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. I met them in the parlour.

My Private Secretary, his wife, and Miss Rucker, returned to-day from an excursion of a day or two which they had made to Baltimore.

SATURDAY, *24th April, 1847.*—Vice President Dallas called on me this morning. I showed him an answer which I had prepared to a most extraordinary letter which I received from Charles J. Ingersoll bearing date on the 25th ultimo. He approved the answer. I had previously shown him Mr. Ingersoll's letter. I have delayed for near a month [answering] Mr. I's strange letter, not desiring to get into any controversy with him, and supposing that his own sense of justice and self respect must ultimately satisfy him of the gross injustice he had done me. I do not now know that I shall send him the answer which I have prepared. It might possibly lead me into a personal controversy with him, such as the President of the U. S. should not engage in with any citizen. Whether I send it or not, I will preserve it, as also the original letter, for future reference, if there should be any occasion for it. I nominated Mr. Ingersoll as Minister to France at the last Session of the Senate. The Senate rejected him on the last night of their Session, and now he censures me because I did not re-nominate him, or keep the mission open that he might have another chance, by a re-nomination at the next Session of

the Senate. I thought it to be my duty to fill the mission, and upon Mr. I's rejection I nominated Mr. Richard Rush of Phila., who was confirmed by the Senate.

The Cabinet met to-day at the usual hour, all the members present except the Attorney General, who is absent on a visit to his residence in Maine. Several matters of public business were considered and disposed of. After all the members of the Cabinet had retired except Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Mason, I read to them Mr. Ingersoll's letter to me and the answer which I had prepared to it. They both thought it a matter [to be] doubted whether the President of the U. States should give any answer to such a letter as he had written to me. Mr. Buchanan said if I would permit it he would take the letter & the answer I had prepared and after examining them more carefully would see me again. He thought if any answer was given it should be a very short one, simply repelling the statements and charges made by Mr. Ingersoll. I handed to Mr. Buchanan the letter & the answer I had prepared, as he had requested me to do.

SUNDAY, *25th April, 1847.*— I attended the first Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk and her niece, Miss Rucker. This was a day of rest quietly spent as it should be.

Mr. Buchanan sent over this evening his draft of an answer to Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll's letter of the 25th of March ultimo. (See yesterday's Diary).

It was much more intemperate and violent than my own draft. I merely read it without attempting to give my attention to it to-night.

MONDAY, *26th April, 1847.*— I was occupied to-day in disposing of the business which daily accumulates on my table. At 1 O'Clock P. M. I opened my doors for the reception of company. An unusual crowd of persons, male & female, called. Some were begging money for charitable, or what they represented to be charitable objects, while the mass of those who called were seeking office. I am utterly disgusted with the constant and unceasing press for office with which I have been annoyed for more than two years. I had no offices to give and despatched the crowd one by one with but little ceremony.

TUESDAY, *27th April, 1847.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members attended at the usual hour, except the Attorney General, who is absent on a visit to his family in Maine. Mr. Clifford has not removed his family to Washington since his appointment as Attorney General. There was nothing of importance before the Cabinet, and after being together about an hour the members retired. I devoted the balance of the day to the details of business on my table. Several of the public officers called on business, which I transacted with them. This being reception evening a number of persons called, ladies & gentlemen. I met them in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *28th April, 1847.*—At an early hour to-day the Secretary of War accompanied by the Adjutant Gen'l of the army called. They had done so at my request. After much consultation with them I directed the organization into Brigades & Divisions of the 10 Regiments of troops authorized by Congress to be raised to serve during the War. I also directed the organization into Brigades & Divisions [of] the Volunteer forces called out in November last and during the present month, which had not heretofore been done. I directed also the apportionment of these forces to the two columns commanded by Gen'ls Scott and Taylor. According to this apportionment Gen'l Scott will have with him something over 20,000 men, and Gen'l Taylor will have with him something over 12[000] men. The Sante Fe column will be about 2,500 strong. The 12 months volunteers will return home in the months of June & July, when their term of service will expire. I gave directions, also, in regard to many other details connected with the military service. I spent several hours with the Secretary of War and the Adjutant General. After they left I revised and copied the answer which I had prepared to the most extraordinary letter of Charles J. Ingersoll addressed to me on the 25th of March last and sent it to the Post Office. Senator Bagby, who still remains with his family in the City, called to-day.

THURSDAY, *29th April, 1847.*—I gave more attention to my correspondence on yesterday and to-day

and wrote more letters than I usually have time to write in a fortnight. I saw company at 1 O'Clock. For an hour my time was very unprofitably occupied by office-seekers. I am really so much annoyed in this way that I loathe an office-seeker, and those who have been here repeatedly on the same business. How much better and more respectable it would be if many of this class who call and who appear to be in good health & constitution, would apply themselves to some trade or honest occupation, instead of spending their time in attempts to get petty offices whereby they may live off the public without labour. Nothing worthy of note occurred to-day.

FRIDAY, *30th April, 1847.*—I received a Telegraphic dispatch from Baltimore before breakfast this morning, brought to that City by an overland express, announcing several days later news from Vera Cruz. The Baltimore *Sun* which arrived about 11 O'Clock contained the detailed information as late as the 14th Instant inclusive. It is probably [probable] that a general battle may have taken place between the two armies two or three days after that time. Santa Anna was reported to be in front of the American Army with 15,000 troops to resist their passage from Vera Cruz to Jalapa. I shall await the result with much anxiety, but have no fears of it. Our forces are the best troops in the world & will [would] gain victories over superior forces of the enemy, if there was not an officer among them. This proves the injustice of giving all the credit of our victories to the commanding General and none

to his inferior officers and men. I sent for the Secretary of War and had a consultation with him. He read to me a despatch which he had prepared to Gen'l Scott. He brought with him despatches which had been received at the War Dept. from Brigadier [General] Kearney in California. They are duplicates of despatches transmitted by Lieut. Emory,[1] who has not yet arrived at Washington. An unfortunate collision [2] has occurred in California between Gen'l Kearney & Commodore Stockton, in regard to precedence in rank. I think Gen'l Kearney was right. It appears that Lieut. Col. Fremont refused to obey Gen'l Kearney & obeyed Commodore Stockton & in this he was wrong. I saw Mr. Buchanan & several other officers to-day on official business.

This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called. Among them was Miss Adams, the Granddaughter of Mr. John Quincy Adams, and daughter of his son & Private Secretary during his Presidency, John Adams, jr. I note the call of this young lady because it is the first that has been made by any of the family of Mr. John Quincy Adams during my Presidency except, as I understand, a card left by the female members of the family some months ago. Mr. John Quincy

[1] William Helmsley Emory, of the Topographical Engineers; made Major General of Volunteers in 1865 for gallant service in the Shenandoah Valley campaign; died 1887.

[2] The trouble between Kearny and Stockton was primarily due to the indefiniteness of their respective instructions issued from Washington. For an account of the controversy together with the documents in the case see Harper, *Encyclopædia of United States History*, V, 221-227.

Adams has a house in this City, and resides here during many months of the year. He with his family are now residing in this City. I met the company in the parlour this evening and treated Miss Adams with marked respect, as it was her first visit. Mrs. Polk had a slight chill to-day, but attended in the parlour this evening.