THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

DURING HIS PRESIDENCY, 1845 TO 1849

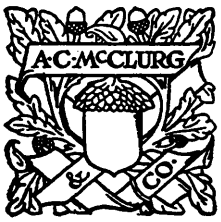
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IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. IV.



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THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

1845—1849

VOL. IV.



THE LAST RESIDENCE OF PRESIDENT POLK

Occupied by him, as a home, from the expiration of his Presidential term until his death, June 15, 1849, and by Mrs. Polk until her death in 1892. The house was torn down in 1901, and its site is now occupied by a seven story apartment house.

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THE DIARY OF JAMES K. POLK

1845—1849

DIARY OF
JAMES K. POLK

IV

TUESDAY, *4th July, 1848.*— This being the day appointed for laying the co[r]ner Stone of the Washington monument in Washington, and having been invited by the committee of arrangements to attend the ceremonies of the occasion, and having determined, though in feeble health, to do so, I had invited my Cabinet to meet & accompany me at 10 O'Clock this morning. Before that hour the Rev. Mr. Smith of the Presbyterian church called with the children composing the sunday school of his church. There were between two and three Hundred children, who were invited into the East Room where I met them. It was [an] interesting interview. Mr. Smith made a short address in which he reminded me that three years ago, being the first 4th of July after my election to the Presidency, he had visited me with his sunday school, and now that I had voluntarily determined to retire to private life on the 4th of March next, they had called again to pay their respects. I responded in a few words of

reply, in which I stated that I remembered their visit three years ago; that I was then gratified but not more than I was upon this occasion. There were a number of persons present who witnessed the ceremony. At 10 O'Clock, the Cabinet assembled; all the members present. Accompanied by the Cabinet and escorted by Gen'l Walton, the U. S. marshall of the D. C., and his Deputies, and by a troop of horse commanded by Col. May of the U. S. Army, we were conducted in carriages to the City Hall where the procession was formed and moved to the site of the Washington monument on the Banks of the Potomac and South of the President's mansion. I witnessed the ceremony of laying the corner stone, and heard an address delivered by Mr. Speaker Winthrop of the Ho. Repts. I returned to the President's House and in about an hour, at the request of Gen'l Quitman, I received the military on horseback. They were drawn up to receive me in Pennsylvania Avenue. This afternoon Dr. Rayburn arrived, bearing despatches & the ratified Treaty with Mexico. He stated that Mr. Sevier was sick at New Orleans & had requested him to bring on the Treaty. Mr. Sevier would ascend the Mississippi River. I immediately saw the Secretary of State and caused a proclamation [1] to be prepared announcing officially the definitive conclusion of peace with Mexico. At about 11 O'Clock at night I signed the Proclamation. I desired to sign it on the anniversary of Independance. My Private Secretary & Mr. H. C. Williams were engaged until a late hour to-night copying a

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 627.

message which I had prepared to Congress on laying the Treaty before them for Legislative action.

This being a regular evening for receiving company a large crowd attended. There were many strangers in the City who had come to witness the laying the corner stone of the Washington Monument. The East room and all the parlours were lighted up. The marine band attended and played south of the mansion. I retired at a late hour exceedingly fatigued.

WEDNESDAY, *5th July, 1848.*— I convened the Cabinet at 10½ O'Clock this morning, all the members attended. I read to them the message which I had prepared to send to Congress, on laying the ratified Treaty with Mexico before that body. It was carefully examined and its various parts freely discussed. Some modifications, not affecting its substance, were made at the suggestion of different members of the Cabinet. It was my intention to have it sent to Congress to-day, but about 2 O'Clock P. M. I learned from Mr. Buchanan that the do[c]uments to accompany it could not be prepared in time to be transmitted to-day. After the Cabinet adjourned I read the message to Mr. Ritchie, who approved it in all its parts. I transacted some other business to-day. The Marine Band played on the grounds this afternoon. Many persons attended. I was too much fatigued to go out.

THURSDAY, *6th July, 1848.*— I saw company this morning. A number of persons, and among them

several members of Congress, called. I transmitted a message [1] to both Houses of Congress to-day laying before them the ratified Treaty with Mexico and recommending that legislative provision be made to carry its stipulations into effect. It was near 3 O'Clock P. M. before the Documents to accompany the Treaty were prepared at the State Department. Among the documents transmitted were the instructions to Mr. Slidell upon his appointment as minister to Mexico, in November, 1845. These Instructions were called for by Resolution of the Ho. Repts. at an early period of the present Session, and in a message to that House I declined to furnish the instructions, deeming their publication in the then state of our relations with Mexico to be incompatable with the public interests. Upon the conclusion of a definitive Treaty of peace with Mexico, the reasons for with-holding them at that time no longer exist.

Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, called this morning [and said] that he had been informed by Vice President Dallas that he had been applied to by a person now in this City (but whose name I do not remember) and informed that he was authorized by the Queen of Spain & her husband to ascertain whether, if a channel was opened affording an opportunity, the U. S. would make an overture to purchase the Island of Cuba. After conversing with Mr. Walker upon the subject I requested him to

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 587–593. For message and accompanying documents, see *H. Ex. Doc.* 69, 30 Cong. 1 Sess. VIII.

ask Mr. Dallas to call and see me. He left & in less than two hours returned in company with Mr. Dallas. Mr. Dallas repeated the statement which Mr. W. had made to me. Mr. Dallas added that the gentleman referred to was a lawyer of Philadelphia of good standing. He said he was a native of Spain and was the agent of [the] Queen of Spain in the investment of a large sum of her private fortune in this country and in Cuba, and that he had great confidence in his representations. I then informed Mr. Dallas confidentially of the despatch which had been sent to Mr. Saunders, our minister at Madrid, authorizing him, if circumstances were favourable, to make an offer to purchase the Island of Cuba. I informed Mr. Dallas if he would call at the State Department he could read the despatch. I then authorized Mr. Dallas to say to the person to whom he referred that as soon as he produced the evidence of his authority to act in the matter the U. S. would make the offer to purchase the Island, but that he must do this upon his own authority & not in the name of the Government. I asked Mr. Dallas if the U. S. could afford to pay one hundred millions of Dollars for Cuba, to which he at once answered in the affirmative, and thought it would be a good bargain at that.

Gen'l Pillow & Gen'l Cadwallader called. Gen'l Pillow informed me that he had learned that much conversation was being had in the City to the effect that the reason I had not heretofore sent in to the Senate the nomination of the Gen'l officers of the army appointed during the last recess was to favour

him, & the fear on my part that his (Gen'l P.'s) nomination might be rejected by the Senate. Gen'l P. remarked that he desired that I should be relieved from so false an imputation, & that he himself should be relieved from any imputation of a desire that I should withhold the nomination of the other officers, and therefore he desired that I would send in the nominations and his with them. He said he would prefer to be himself rejected, rather than rest under the imputation that he stood in the way of my sending in the nominations of the other officers. Gen'l Cadwallader confirmed Gen'l P.'s statement as to the conversations going on in the Hotels on the subject, and advised me to nominate all the officers appointed in the recess including Gen'l Pillow's [Pillow]. I stated that the officers alluded to, including Gen'l Pillow, appointed in the last recess of the Senate, would be in commission, under the Constitution, until the close of the Session of the Senate, and that as the war was now over and these officers would probably be discharged before the adjournment of the Senate, it would seem to be useless to send in their nominations. Both Gen'l Pillow & Gen'l Cadwallader repeated the opinion that I should send in the nominations. I finally told them I would consult the Secretary of War on the subject, & would be disposed to defer to his judgement. After they left I sent for the Secretary of War, who thought under all the circumstances I had better send in the nominations. I attribute the conversations & complaints out of doors on the subject to Gen'l Quitman, who has importuned me

personally & through his friends to send his nomination to the Senate. Indeed, I was informed several days ago that he had remarked that if I did not send in his nomination he would make an issue with me. I informed Mr. Jacob Thompson of Miss., of what I had heard of Gen'l Quitman's remarks, on the evening of the 4th Instant. Mr. Thompson called to see me again on yesterday morning, and informed me that he had seen Gen'l Quitman, who denied that he had made such a remark, though he was very desirous to have his nomination sent in. I am still of opinion that the complaints about the Hotels have proceeded from remarks made by Gen'l Quitman. I told Gen'l Cadwallader to-day that if I was certain of this I would not send in Gen'l Quitman's nomination. I told Gen'l C., also, that Gen'l Pillow had never intimated a wish upon the subject until the present conversation, and that the nominations had not been held back at his instance or desire. Upon a conferrence with the Secretary of War to-day it was determined to issue an order for disbanding all the officers who engaged to serve during the war with Mexico, who were now in the U. S. & detached from their respective commands, on the 15th Instant.

To-day I prepared my decision on the proceedings of the Court of Enquiry in the case of Maj'r Gen'l Pillow. Concurring with the Court in their conclusion that no further military proceedings in the case were required by the public interests, I approved their conclusion & acquitted Gen'l Pillow of any censure. I did not concur with the Court in

all their findings and inferences from them, but I did not deem it necessary to say anything in relation to the findings, but confined myself to an approval of the conclusion at which the Court had arrived.

FRIDAY, *7th July, 1848.*— Several persons called this morning and among them some most importunate office seekers. Of the latter was John D. McCrate, esqr., a member of the last Congress, from Maine. He applied to me to be appointed one of the commissioners to adjudicate claims under the Mexican Treaty, and informed me that he had obtained the signatures of all the Democratic Senators except three and a majority of the Democratic members of the Ho. Repts. recommending him for the office. It has become very customary for office-seekers to importune members of Congress recommending them [to recommend them] and it is to be regretted that members of Congress generally sign papers of this sort as a matter of accommodation to those who apply to them, and without knowing or caring whether the person recommended is fit for the office or not. In this case one member told me on yesterday that he had signed the recommendation, and expressed his doubts whether Mr. McC. ought to be appointed. Very little reliance is to be placed in such recommendations. I gave Mr. McCrate no promise. In truth no law has yet been passed authorizing the appointment of such commissioners. After 12 O'Clock I saw Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Marcy, and Mr. Mason, all of whom advised me to send [to the Senate] the nominations of Maj'r

Gen'ls Pillow & Quitman & Brig. Gen'ls Cushing & Price. My own judgment was against it, as being unnecessary now that the war with Mexico is over (see this Diary of yesterday) but I yielded to their advice and that of others, and sent the nominations to the Senate. I saw several public officers & transacted much public business to-day. In the evening several members of Congress called to see and consult me about public affairs. The slavery question as connected with the establishment of Territorial Governments in Oregon, New Mexico, & Upper California, was the chief subject of Conversation. Among the members who called were Messrs. Cobb of Georgia, Houston of Al., Bowden [1] of Al., McLane of Maryland, & Senator Sebastian of Arkansas. Mr. Birdsall of N. York called & urged me to remove from office Ben'j F. Butler and other Barnburners in New York who held office, upon the ground that they had bolted from the regular nominations of the Democratic party for President & Vice President, & were attempting to organize a northern or geographical party on the slavery question; that they were disorganizers, and that [the] effect of their movements was to defeat the Democratic candidates. Mr. Birdsall was exceedingly excited in his manner & conversation. His tone was dictatorial & affirmative, so much so that I was constrained to rebuke him by telling him that I was not in the habit of being addressed in such a manner. Before he left he became sensible of the impropriety

[1] Franklin W. Bowdon, Representative from Alabama 1846–1851.

of his conduct, & apologized. I told him that I condemned the conduct of Mr. Butler & other disorganizers in New York who had pres[e]nted Mr. Van Buren for the Presidency, and that those of them who hold office under the Federal Government deserved to be removed, but that I doubted the propriety of removing them at this time. I told him that several Northern Senators who concurred with me as to their inexcusable conduct had expressed to me the opinion that it would be unwise to remove them. If removed they would probably represent themselves as victims; and would appeal to the people by representing that they were removed by a President from a slave-state because they were opposed to permitting slavery in the territories recently acquired in which it did not now exist. This, I told him, would not be the reason of my action, if I removed them, but their secession from the Democratic party & their efforts to defeat the regular nominations of the Democratic party. I told him that their removal would place in the hands of demagogues a weapon in the Northern States by which Gen'l Cass's election might be placed in jeopardy. I found I could not satisfy him. So great was his excitement & so irrational was he, that my conversation with him was a very unpleasant one.

SATURDAY, *8th July, 1848.*— I saw several persons before the meeting of the Cabinet this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. After transacting several matters

of business I informed the Cabinet of the conversation which Mr. Birdsall of N. York held with me last evening, urging the removal of Benj. F. Butler and other office-holders in N. York. I also read to them a letter of this date from Senator Dickinson of N. York, urging their removal. I asked the Cabinet for their opinion on the subject. They all agreed that the Barnburners who had bolted from the regular Democratic nominations in N. Y. & held office under the Federal Government deserved to be removed, but Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Toucey advised against it at this time for fear of its bad effect on the pending Presidential election. Mr. Buchanan said he would remove them the moment the election was over. Mr. Mason, Mr. Walker, & Mr. Marcy were in favour of their removal. Mr. Johnson expressed no opinion. I told the Cabinet that I had sent for Senator Felch & Mr. McClelland of the Ho. Repts., who are understood to be the confidential friends of Gen'l Cass, for the purpose of consulting them on the subject. The Cabinet all concurred in the propriety of this step. At 6 O'Clock Mr. Felch & Mr. McClelland called, & I had a full conversation with them on the subject. They both thought that the removals would operate prejudicially to Gen'l Cass'[s] election. They informed me that they had within a day or two consulted with Democratic members of Congress in both Houses from the free States other than New York, & that the opinion was general [that] though the Barnburners who held office in N. Y. deserved to be removed,

it would be highly inexpedient to make the removals at this time. Mr. Felch & Mr. McClelland advised me not to make the removals.

My nephew, James H. Walker, who is a Captain in the Regiment of Voltigeurs, arrived in Washington on yesterday, direct from Mexico. He has been in service since the commencement of the Mexican War, first as an assistant Quarter-master (in which capacity he accompanied Col. Yell's Regiment from Arkansas) and afterwards as Captain in the Regiment of Voltigeurs. Upon my invitation he took apartments in the President's House.

SUNDAY, *9th July, 1848.*—The weather to-day was cloudy and damp and unusually cool for the season. I am still somewhat feeble from my late indisposition and did not attend church to-day. Mrs. Polk remained at home also, and did not attend church.

MONDAY, *10th July, 1848.*—I saw many persons this morning. After 12 O'Clock I saw the Secretary of War and several other public officers, and transacted business in my office as usual. I had a long interview with Senator Bright of Indiana in relation to the adjustment of the Missouri compromise line as respects slavery, in the organization of Territorial Governments in Oregon, New Mexico, & California. I urged the public importance of the settlement of the question, in [order] to allay excitement, prevent the organization of geographical parties, & preserve the harmony of the Union. Mr.

Bright thought it would be settled by the adoption of the phraseology employed in the Resolutions for the annexation of Texas. In the evening I saw Mr. Venable of N. C. & Mr. Haralson of Georgia on the same subject, both of whom agreed to vote for the Texas compromise. Whilst these gentlemen were in my office Gen'l Pillow called, and desiring to see me alone they retired to my Private Secretary's office. Gen'l P. was excited, & after holding some conversation with him on other subjects he informed me of what I had before heard, that Mr. Stevens [1] of Georgia in debate in the House to-day had gone out of his way to abuse Gen'l P. personally, by applying to him the epithet "infamous," & other like terms. Gen'l P. informed me that he had been in search of Mr. Stevens all the afternoon, that he had been twice at his boarding house, but could not find him, and that he was determined to flog him on sight. I advised him against it, for although Mr. Stevens might deserve a castigation, that the Whig Party would endeavour to make political capital out of it by representing that an officer of the army was attempting to browbeat Congress and restrain the liberty of debate. I advised him at all events to postpone it. Mr. Venable & Gen'l Haralson returned when Gen'l Pillow retired. Without knowing what conversation had passed between Gen'l Pillow and myself, Mr. Venable, when he rose to retire, requested me to see Gen'l P. and advise him not to interrupt Stevens. Mr. V. had heard Mr. S.'s speech

[1] Alexander H. Stephens, afterwards Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy.

in the House. I requested Mr. V. to call and see Gen'l Pillow himself, on his return to his lodgings. He said he would do so. Mr. Bowden of Alabama called after night. He is taking a deep interest to have the slavery question settled on the Texas or Missouri compromise line. He called to see me on that subject.

TUESDAY, *11th July, 1848.*— I saw a number of persons this morning on business. My brother, Maj'r Wm. H. Polk of the 3rd Dragoons, U. S. army, arrived from Mexico this morning. He is thin in flesh and is far from being as athletic and vigorous as he was when he entered the service. He took apartments in the President's House. The Secretary of the Treasury called before the hour of meeting of the Cabinet, but, having business at the Capitol, left and returned about 1 O'Clock P. M. The other members of the Cabinet assembled at the usual hour. Several matters of business were considered and disposed of. Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. calling for information on several points connected with the manner of prosecuting the war with Mexico, & particularly the establishment of temporary civil Governments in the conquered provinces, were delivered to me by Mr. Campbell, the Clerk of the Ho. Repts., this morning. They were passed on yesterday on the motion of Mr. Stevens of Georgia, who, I learn, made a violent, vindictative [vindictive] speech,[1] & one personally abusive of me. It

[1] *Globe,* 30 Cong. 1 Sess. 910–913. The resolutions are in *H. Journal,* 30 Cong. 1 Sess. 1010–1012.

was in the same speech that he took occasion to calumniate Gen'l Pillow (see this Diary of yesterday). The Resolutions are readily answered, though it will take some time to collect the information called for. The Secretary of War presented various details connected with the destination of the army, and particularly the corps which should be ordered to Oregon, California, & New Mexico. These were disposed of, & being indisposed, the Cabinet dispersed & I retired to my chamber about 2 O'Clock P. M. This being reception evening a number of persons called.

WEDNESDAY, *12th July, 1848.*— I spent the morning as usual until 12 O'Clock in receiving company. I saw the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the attorney General on official business. I was somewhat indisposed to-day, but remained in my office & transacted business until dinner, & then retired to my chamber. The Marine band played on the President's grounds this afternoon, but I did not attend. I learn that after much discussion to-day, the Senate agreed to a Resolution[1] referring the Oregon-bill and my message in relation to the organization of Territorial Government in California & New Mexico to a select committee of 8 members, four from the North & four from the South, and an equal number of each political [party]. The object was to see if a proposition of compromise upon the subject of slavery in these territories could be agreed upon. I learn that Ambrose H. Sevier of

[1] *S. Journal,* 30 Cong. 1 Sess. 465. The committee created is usually known as the "Clayton Compromise committee."

Arkansas, one of the commissioners sent to Mexico with the ratified Treaty with Mexico, reached this City this evening.

Maj'r Wm. H. Polk of the 3rd Dragoons, U. S. Army, left this morning to visit his wife in New York. He will return in a few days. After night Mr. Geo. S. Houston of Al. called with a friend.

THURSDAY, *13th July, 1848.*— A number of persons called this morning. A Delegation of the Iowa tribe of Indians called. Col. Sevier of Arkansas, late commissioner to Mexico, called. He reached this city last evening. I saw and transacted business with Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Marcy, & Mr. Toucey. I was engaged a part of the day in preparing my message in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. of the 10th Instant, calling for information in relation to New Mexico & Upper California. The Secretary of War informed me that the Military Court of Enquiry in Gen'l Pillow's case had taken the record of their findings back, & after having had it for some time had returned it to him this morning. On examining it I found that they had made no change in it, except to substitute the word " arguments " for " inducements " in that part of their finding which relates to Gen'l Pillow's correspondence with Gen'l Scott. In the paper as it first stood they say they condemn the " inducements," and in the paper as amended they say they condemn the " arguments " offered by Gen'l Pillow to Gen'l Scott for not altering his official Report of the battles of Contreras & Cherubusco. Upon an inspection of the correspond-

ence it is apparent that both findings are unjust to Gen'l Pillow. The change of this single word in the finding did not make it necessary for me to change or alter my decision on the case, which was made in writing and delivered to the Secretary of War on the 7th Instant. Gen'l Pillow is a gallant and highly meritorious officer, and has been greatly persecuted by Gen'l Scott, for no other known reason than that he is a Democrat in his politics and was supposed to be my personal & political friend. He has come out of the late investigation with honour, having fully vindicated himself against the false charges preferred against him by Gen'l Scott. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day.

FRIDAY, *14th July, 1848.*— I saw company as usual this morning. The number of the office seekers continues to be quite as great as at any former period of my term. I have no offices to confer, and I am greatly annoyed by them. Col. Franklin H. Elmore of Charleston, S. C., called this morning & I expressed to him freely my anxiety that in the organization of Territorial Governments in Oregon & in the recently acquired territories of New Mexico & Upper California, the slavery question might be settled upon the principles of the Missouri or Texas compromise on that subject. He agreed with me in opinion. I discussed the subject fully with him, and then remarked that as Mr. Calhoun had agreed to serve on the select committee of the Senate which had been raised on the subject, I hoped he would not be disposed to adhere to extreme views, but to com-

promise. In this Mr. Elmore agreed with me, and then asked me why I should not send for Mr. Calhoun and converse freely with him on the subject. I told him I could not invite Mr. Calhoun to call, 1st, because he was an older man than myself, had been longer in public life, and 2nd, because he might suppose that I desired to exercise some official influence over him. He intimated that Mr. Calhoun might call on me; to which I replied that if he did so I would freely express to him my anxiety, for the sake of the country and the harmony of the Union, to have the question settled, and my opinion that it could only be done by a compromise between the North & the South. I devoted a part of the day in preparing a message in answer to Resolutions of the House of the 10th Instant calling for information in relation to New Mexico & California. I saw some of my Secretaries & other public officers & transacted business in my office as usual to-day. After night several members of Congress called.

SATURDAY, *15th July, 1848.*— Several members of Congress and others called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Several matters of business were considered and disposed of. Among them was considered the Treaty of Extradition with Prussia & several of the German states, which was transmitted to the Senate in December, 1846, with my objections stated to the 3rd article, and which was ratified a few days ago, including that article. Mr. Buchanan had submitted to me a Report containing his views &

recommending that I should not ratify the Treaty, notwithstanding the advice of the Senate. I have decided objections to the 3rd article, and moreover the changed condition of the States of Germany produced by the recent Revolutions and liberal movements in that and other countries of Europe, renders [it] doubtful whether it would be our policy to desire this particular Treaty. Its ratification by the Senate was unexpected, as more than two years had elapsed after the period fixed by its terms for the exchange of ratifications had expired. This was brought about by the personal influence of the Baron Gerolt, the Prussian Minister, with Senators. Under the circumstances, however, I informed Mr. Buchanan that I thought it due, in courtesy to the Senate to address to that body a message informing them of my objections to consummate the ratification of the Treaty according to their advice, and resubmitting the Treaty for their reconsideration, & requested him to prepare a message for me to this effect.

Mr. A. H. Sevier, late commissioner to Arkansas [Mexico], who arrived [in the City] two or three days ago, called to-day. He had previously called, immediately on his arrival in this City.

SUNDAY, *16th July, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day in company with Mrs. Polk, Miss Armstrong of Tennessee, & Miss Johnson of Arkansas, who came over from their school in Georgetown & were spending the day with us.

About Sunset Senator Calhoun & Mr. Franklin

H. Elmore of S. C. called. They took tea with my family, after which I invited them to my office. Mr. Calhoun desired to converse with me upon the difficulties attending the organization of Territorial Governments in Oregon, California, & New Mexico on account of the slavery question (see this diary of the 14th Instant). I had a full conversation with him in the presence of Mr. Elmore, in which I expressed my decided opinion that the question ought to be settled upon the Missouri or Texas compromise line. He informed me that the select committee of 8 of the Senate, which had been raised on the subject, had held two or three meetings, one of them of several hours duration to-day, and that they had been unable to agree either upon the Missouri or Texas compromise. He stated that a proposition of Non-interference with the subject in California & New Mexico had been suggested by Senator Dickinson of New York, which might be agreed upon by the committee. He said that after much discussion in the committee that proposition had assumed a form substantially as follows, *viz.*, that in Oregon the existing land laws, which prohibited slavery, should be left in force until altered, changed, or amended by the Territorial Legislature; and that in California and New Mexico the Legislative power should be vested in the Governor, Secretary, & three Judges each, and that they should be restrained by Congress from Legislating on the subject of slavery, leaving that question, if it should arise, to be decided by the judiciary. He said he

would support this proposition, and I told him I approved it, though I would prefer the Missouri or Texas compromise. He said that much would depend on me, in the appointments to be made of Governor, Secretary, & Judges; that they might be Northern men in Oregon, but that they ought to be Southern men in California & New Mexico, who would maintain the southern views on the subject of slavery. The tone of his conversation on this point seemed to be designed to elicit a pledge from me to this effect. I at once felt the delicacy of my situation & promptly replied that that was a subject upon which I could not speak, that if the laws passed in the form suggested I would do my duty, and jocousely added that my friends, as Gen'l Harrison's Cincinnati committee in 1844 [1840?] said for him, must have a " generous confidence " that I would do so.

MONDAY, *17th July, 1848.*— This was a busy day. Many persons called and I was much engaged with public officers and in attending to the business on my table.

About 7 O'Clock P. M. Senator Calhoun and Mr. Elmore of S. C. called (see this Diary of the 14th & 16th Instant). Mr. Calhoun informed me that the select committee of the Senate on the slavery question in the territories of Oregon, California, & New Mexico had been in session several hours to-day and had not been able to agree. He stated that they had agreed upon the plan suggested on yesterday, but the Northern members of the committee insisted

upon inserting a provision in the Bill allowing an appeal from the decision of the local Court, to be established in California & New Mexico, on the slavery question to the Supreme Court of the U. S., and to this Mr. Calhoun said he and two other members of the committee objected. He suggested that the settlement of the question might be postponed until the next Session of Congress. I urged upon him the great necessity of settling it now, and in this Mr. Elmore agreed with me. Mr. C. informed me that the Committee were to meet again on to-morrow, and requested me to see Mr. Bright of Indiana, who is a member of the committee, and see if he would not agree to yield the provision in the Bill granting an appeal to the Supreme Court of the U. S. My brother, Maj'r Wm. H. Polk, returned from New York and brought his wife with him to-day. They took lodgings as a part of my family in the President's mansion.

The Senate to-day confirmed the nomination of Gen'l Gideon J. Pillow as a Maj'r Gen'l of the army of the U. States. I learn that the Whig Senators opposed his confirmation violently on party grounds. He was warmly sustained by the Democratic Senators, and was confirmed by a majority of nine votes. The Senate had before them all the evidence taken before the Court of Enquiry in Gen'l Pillow's case; and also the evidence in a former case about two Howitzers; the finding of the Courts and my decisions & final orders in the case. These had been sent to the Senate upon their call. Gen'l Pillow has now been fully vindicated & his triumph is complete.

TUESDAY, *18th July, 1848.*— A number of persons called this morning. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present. The Post Master Gen'l, after remaining a few minutes, retired to attend to necessary business. Several subjects of minor importance were considered and disposed of, but nothing worthy of special attention. After the Cabinet retired I devoted some time to the preparation of the message in answer to the call of the Ho. Repts. in relation to New Mexico & California. I disposed of business on my table as usual.

This being reception evening, a considerable number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *19th July, 1848.*— I was more annoyed this morning than is usual by persons seeking office & bringing before me petty matters. I almost lost my temper. I was engaged in business in my office during the day. I had a conferrence with Judge Mason about my message in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. in relation to Oregon, California, & New Mexico. I read the message to him. After night he called again & some slight modifications were made, not affecting the substance or sentiment of the paper. The Select committee of the Senate on the slavery question involved in the establishment of Territorial Governments in California & New Mexico, Reported a Bill upon which they had agreed, Mr. Calhoun, I learn, having yielded his objection as stated to me on monday last (see this Diary of that day) in relation to the provision granting the right of appeal from the Terri-

torial Court to the Supreme Court of the U. States. There is now some prospect that the question may be settled at the present session of Congress, and I sincerely hope it may be.

There was music by the marine band on the President's grounds this afternoon. I did not go out.

THURSDAY, *20th July, 1848.*— Company called as usual this morning. At 12 O'Clock I closed my doors. I read my message in answer to the Resolution of the Ho. Repts. in relation to California & New Mexico to Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Marcy, both of whom approved it. Some slight verbal changes were made. I placed it in the hands of a clerk to be copied. Mr. Loving, a clerk in the 4th Auditor's office, & formerly of Nashville, Tennessee, copied it. I was occupied with business in my office as usual during the day.

FRIDAY, *21st July, 1848.*— The morning was spent as usual in seeing company and hearing applications for office. Mr. Loving (the clerk who copied it) finished the copy of my message in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. in relation to California & New Mexico, about 1 O'Clock P. M. I sent for Mr. Toucey, the Atto. General, and read it to him. He approved it. It was too late an hour to send it to the House to-day. I transacted much business in my office to-day. Nothing of importance occurred.

SATURDAY, *22nd July, 1848.*— Several persons called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual

hour, all the members present. I read to the Cabinet my message in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. of the 10th Instant. It was fully discussed & approved by the Cabinet. The phraseology of some of the paragraphs of it were modified. As it treated of some legal and political principles of some intricacy as well as importance, I determined not to send it in to-day but to read it, before I did so, to some of my friends in the House, that they might be prepared before-hand to sustain it, if attacked by the Whigs. Some other matters were considered and disposed of, but they were of no special importance. But though of no great general importance, they occupied the attention of the Cabinet until 4 O'Clock P. M. After night, by my request, Mr. J. H. Thomas of Tenn., Mr. Kaufman of Texas, and Mr. Cobb of Georgia, all of the Ho. Repts., called, and I read to them my message in relation to California & New Mexico, & informed them fully of my views in relation to the matters embraced in it. They approved it, and expressed themselves fully ready to sustain it if it should be attacked by the Whigs of the House, as it probably will be, as it is known that the call was prompted and made from political party motives. I sent also for the Hon. James Thompson of Penn. of the Ho. Repts., to whom I desired to read it, with the other gentlemen, but he was engaged and did not come.

SUNDAY, *23rd July, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs.

Polk and the wife of my brother, Wm. H. Polk. Mr. James H. Thomas of Tennessee called in & took a family dinner with me to-day. After dinner Mr. Geo. S. Houston of Al. and Mr. McKay of N. C. of the Ho. Repts. called. I saw Mr. Houston last evening & intimated to him that I would be pleased to submit my message in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. to himself and Mr. McKay. I read it and discussed it fully with them. Mr. McKay said he thought it a very good paper, a compliment which is rare from him, as all who know him will testify. It is said that he has seldom been known to pay a compliment to any one. He is an excellent & a sensible man, as well as a man of good feeling, but his habit is to find fault with everybody & everything. Even in this case he was unwilling to concede to Texas that part of New Mexico on the East side of the Rio Grande, which I had conceded to her in my message.

MONDAY, *24th July, 1848.*— Many persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. At 11 O'Clock my Private Secretary went to the Capitol with my message [1] in answer to the Resolutions of the Ho. Repts. calling for information in relation to New Mexico & California. I saw the Secretaries of State, war, & Navy at different periods of the day and transacted business. I attended to business in my office as usual to-day. In the afternoon I was informed that my message to the House was violently assailed by several Whig speakers.

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 594–600.

TUESDAY, *25th July, 1848.*— Several members of Congress & others called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. The Ho. Repts. passed a Resolution some days ago calling for the instructions given to Mr. Sevier & Mr. Clifford as commissioners to Mexico. I requested Mr. Buchanan to read the Instructions to the Cabinet, and then submitted the question to the Cabinet whether they should be sent to the House in answer to their call. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Toucy were decidedly of opinion that I should decline to send them in. No formal question was propounded, but the other members of the Cabinet, as far as they expressed themselves, concurred with them. My own opinion was that they could not be made public without prejudice to the public interests. The Instructions to Mr. Clifford & Mr. Sevier were to procure the ratification of the Treaty by Mexico as it had been amended by the Senate, but if this was found to be impossible, then they were authorized to submit to certain modifications which did not affect the material stipulations. No contingency arose to make it necessary to suggest these modifications in order to secure its ratification by Mexico. To publish the instructions at this time would, I apprehend, dissatisfy the Mexican people with their present Government which ratified it, and might lead to revolution and thereby disturb the amicable relations which have just been restored between the two countries. The knowledge of the instructions can be of no possible aid to the Ho. Repts. in enabling [them] to perform understandingly any legislative

duty before them. Unlike the Resolution which passed the House in the early part of the present Session, this Resolution contains the usual reservation and leaves it to the President to decide whether their publication would be prejudicial to the public interests or not. Upon full consideration of the subject I decided not to send in the instructions.

Mr. Buchanan read a message to the Senate, which I had requested him some days ago to prepare, informing that body of the reasons which induced me not to ratify the Treaty of Extradition with Prussia and several of the German States. I made some changes in the paper & suggested others, and at my request Mr. Buchanan took it to prepare another draft. Various subjects of detail connected with the War and Navy Departments were considered & disposed of. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock. In the evening I disposed of business on my table as usual.

WEDNESDAY, *26th July, 1848.*— Many persons called this morning. The importunities for office were quite as great as they have been at any former period of my administration. Among others who called were Mr. McClelland and Mr. Stuart [1] of the Ho. Repts. from Michigan. They presented to me a written paper of complaint, signed by themselves & by Senator Felch of Michigan & Mr. Bingham [2]

[1] Charles E. Stuart, 1810–1887, Representative from Michigan 1847–1853, Senator 1853–1859.

[2] Kinsley S. Bingham, 1808–1861, Representative from Michigan 1847–1851, Senator 1859–1861.

of the House, also of Michigan, against the Secretary of War, because he had not consented to the appointment of one of their constituents, named Wilkins, to a 2nd Lieutenancy in the regular army, & had caused Mr. Larned, a Whig, of Michigan to be appointed. The paper was addressed to me as President, and was violent in its charges & complaints against Mr. Marcy. It is one of the many instances which have occurred in my administration to show the importance which is attached by members of Congress to petty offices. Indeed many members of Congress assume that they have the right to make appointments, particularly in their own states, and they often, as in this case, fly into a passion when their wishes are not gratified. I spoke mildly to the two gentlemen & enquired of them if they really desired to make a grave issue with the Secretary of War about so paltry a matter. Mr. Stuart became very much moderated in the expression of his feelings after I had given them my opinion on the subject; while Mr. McClelland seemed to continue to be excited, & said he had done his duty in making the representation to me and that I could take such action as I chose on the subject. The paper which they presented I am sure does injustice to Mr. Marcy, & if shown to him must lead to an unpleasant & perhaps angry correspondence between him and them. These members profess to be Democrats & the supporters of my administration, and yet they are ready to engage in a controversy with the secretary of War about a contemptible, petty, little office. It is not the first time that members of Congress have forgot-

ten that they were sent to Washington by their constituents to legislate, & not to usurp the functions of the Executive or to dictate to him in matters of appointment to office. I was indignant when I read their paper (which I will preserve) but I suppressed my feelings. Mr. Buchanan called a few minutes after they left & I read their paper to him, & expressed the opinion to him that it was not necessary to harrass the Secretary of War, engaged as he was in other more important duties, by showing him their paper containing their complaints against him. The Secretary of War happening to call on business in the after part of the day I informed him of the visit of Mr. McClelland & Mr. Stuart, & that they were much dissatisfied with him because Mr. Wilkins of Michigan had not been appointed a Lieutenant in the army. The Secretary seemed to remember little of their application to have him appointed, & said, what I know to be true, that it was impossible to gratify the hundreds who have made similar applications through members of Congress and others. The Secretary called to see me on much more important business, and I did not deem it necessary to show him their paper or to trouble him further on the subject. I transacted business with several public officers and disposed of much business on my table to-day. There was music on the President's grounds this afternoon. I attended, & took a walk through the grounds with a friend.

At 9 O'Clock P. M. I learned that the Senate were still in session, & that the vote on the compromise

Bill establishing Territorial Governments in Oregon, California, & New Mexico would probably be taken to-night.

THURSDAY, *27th July, 1848.*— At breakfast this morning I learned from Col. Walker, my Private Secretary, that he had just returned from the Senate chamber where he had been all night. He informed me that the Senate had remained in Session until 8 O'Clock this morning, when the vote was taken on the compromise Bill to establish Territorial Governments in Oregon, California, and New Mexico, and that the Bill had passed by ayes 33 to noes 22. Immediately after the vote the Senate adjourned to meet on to-morrow. The debate, I learn, was an exciting one throughout the night. It was the question of Slavery which produced the difficulty. It was an unprecedented Session for the Senate. I remember no previous occasion upon which the Senate has remained in Session during the whole night. It often occurred in the Ho. Repts. when I was a member of that body, but never in the Senate. Maj'r Gen'l Wm. O. Butler, lately commanding the army in Mexico, arrived in this City last night and called on me in company with the Secretary of War to-day. I transacted business With the Secretaries of State & the Navy, and disposed of business on my table as usual. Senator Metcalfe [1] of Ky., the successor of Mr. Crittendon, and the Hon. Rich. M. Johnson of Ky. called

[1] Thomas Metcalfe, Governor of Kentucky 1829–1833, Senator from Kentucky 1848–1849.

at different hours to-day. It was the first time Mr, Metcalfe had called since he took his seat in the Senate.

Col. James Duncan of the army and Maj'r Caldwell of Ky., late of the Voltigeur Regiment, dined with me to-day. They were invited to dine by my brother, Maj'r Polk, who was also late of the army. I regret to learn this evening that a general impression prevails that the compromise Territorial Bill, which has occupied the attention of the Senate so many days and finally passed that body at 8 O'Clock this morning, will probably be defeated in the Ho. Repts. It is said that the Southern Whigs will unite almost in a body with the Northern Whigs to reject it. Mr. C. J. Ingersoll & Mr. McClelland of Michigan, the committee of Foreign affairs of the Ho. Repts., called this afternoon at my invitation. My object was to inform them that on to-morrow I would send a message to the House in answer to their Resolution of the [17th] Instant, calling for the Instructions given Mr. Sevier and Mr. Clifford, commissioners to Mexico, and to explain to them the reasons which made it proper that I should decline communicating them. Their publication at this time, it is believed, would operate prejuducially in Mexico to our interests in that country.

FRIDAY, *28th July, 1848.*— I had many calls this morning as usual and among them many office seekers. The number of this class of persons does not diminish as my administration approaches its close. They are the most annoying as well as disgusting

part of my visitors. I sent a message [1] to the House of Repts. to-day declining to communicate the Instructions given to Mr. Sevier and Mr. Clifford as commissioners to Mexico, which were called for by their Resolution of the 17th Instant. I sent also a message [2] to the Senate in Executive Session, assigning the reasons for declining to ratify the Treaty of Extradition with Prussia & other German States, which I had submitted to the Senate in December, 1845, and which that body had not advised & consented to ratify until the 21st of June, 1848. For these reasons I refer to my message. I saw & transacted business with the Secretaries of State, War, & Navy to-day. I learned in the afternoon that the Ho. Repts. had, by a majority of 15 votes, laid on the table the Bill, passed by the Senate on yesterday morning, to compromise the slavery question as it relates to the organization of Territorial Governments in Oregon, California, & New Mexico. I regard this vote of the House as most unfortunate. The majority, I learn, was made up of every Northern Whig, of about half the Northern Democrats, & of 8 Southern Whigs. Those of the Democratic party whose sympathies are with the Barnburners of New York, or who are timid & afraid to risk their popularity at home, united with the Whigs to defeat the Bill. The result of leaving the slavery question an open one, to be agitated by ambitious political aspirants & gamblers and their friends, [will be] to produce an organization of parties upon

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 602.

[2] *Ibid,* IV, 600.

geographical lines, which must prove dangerous to the harmony if not the existence of the Union itself. The political factions in Congress are all at work, and they seem to be governed by no patriotic motives, but by the effect which they suppose may be produced upon the public mind in the pending Presidential election. A heavy responsibility rests upon these, and especially the 8 Southern Whigs, who have united to defeat this measure of compromise of this most delicate & vexatious question. If no Presidential election had been pending I cannot doubt the compromise Bill would have passed the House. If it had done so the agitation would have ceased & the question would have been at rest. It is difficult to foresee what the effect of the defeat of this Bill may be. The political agitation is very great, & the result of the next Presidential election is becoming every day more and more doubtful. The probabilities are that a Northern candidate will be more distinctly on anti-slavery ground, that the electoral colleges may fail to make a choice, & that the election may devolve on the House of Repts. The Senate, I learn, to-day passed a Resolution to adjourn the Session on the 14th of August. The Whig majority in the House, who have heretofore passed two Resolutions fixing upon an earlier day, will, of course, agree to it. The body of the Whig party desire to adjourn without adjusting the slavery question by compromise, & to leave the Territories of Oregon, California, & New Mexico without Territorial Governments, doubtless in the expectation that in the chapter of accidents growing out of the excitement

& agitation which must follow, that they may stand some chance to elect a Whig President. I deplore as a national calamity the want of patriotism which seems to actuate the conduct of the leaders of the Whig party in Congress; and I exceedingly regret that any portion of the Northern Democrats from timidity or other causes have been induced to act with them. Whilst I deplore this state of things, all I can do during the remainder of my term is to adhere undeviatingly to my principles & to perform my whole duty. This I will do at any hazard. I disposed of business on my table to-day as usual. After night Senator Turney of Tennessee & Mr. Thomas of Tennessee called. They were depressed in spirits & deplored, as I did, the existing state of things.

Anticipating that an Internal Improvement Bill may pass at the present session, which I cannot approve, I devoted an hour or two to-day in reducing to writing my views, so as to be ready with a veto message if such a bill should pass and be presented to me. The House have passed and sent to the Senate the Civil & Diplomatic Bill, with an item of appropriation in it for the Improvement of the Savanah River in Georgia. The object is to force me to give up my constitutional objections and sign the Bill, or to compel me to reject the whole Bill. My mind is made up. I will veto the Bill, if it comes to me with this item in it, whatever may be the consequences. I will do so, if it comes on the last night of the session, and if I am not over-ruled by two thirds, & Congress should adjourn without

passing the Civil & Diplomatic [Bill], I will issue my Proclamation conv[en]ing an extra session of Congress for the next day. To-day at 1 O'Clock P. M. the Secretary of State presented to me Mr. —— the charge d'affaires of Sardinia to this Government, who arrived in this country a few days ago. I received him in the parlour. He presented to me a letter from his Government, and after a formal interview such as is usual on such occasions, he retired. Maj'r Gen'l Patterson of the U. S. army called and paid his respects to-day.

SATURDAY, *29th July, 1848.*— There were calls as usual this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Many matters of detail connected with the several Executive Departments were considered and disposed of. Other subjects were also considered and disposed of, which, though of some importance, are not worthy of special remark. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock P. M. I addressed a note to Maj'r Gen'l Wm. O. Butler, requesting him to call. He called after night & remained with me two hours or more. As he was the Democratic Candidate for Vice President I asked his opinion as to the propriety of removing from office Benjamin F. Butler & other Federal office holders in New York who have bolted from the Democratic party and refused to support the Cass & Butler [ticket], the Regular nominees of the Baltimore Convention. I read to him a memorial I had received from a number of leading Democrats of the City of New York requesting their removal.

He expressed the opinion that they ought to be removed, but said he would think further on the subject & see me on monday. Mr. Butler & others whom I appointed at the commencement of my administration, and the papers in New York under their control, are now not only opposing the regularly nominated candidates of the Democratic party, but are as violent in their opposition to my administration as the Whigs are. They have factiously taken up Mr. Van Buren as their candidate for President and have united with the Northern Whigs in agitating the slavery question & endeavouring by union with the Northern Whigs to form a Northern Geographical party, and this is the basis of their organization. All this is clear enough, and Gen'l Butler agreed with me that they deserved to be removed from office, but doubted, with me, whether their removal now might not aid them in their unpatriotic & wicked agitation. Senator Turney of Tenn. informed me this afternoon that he had conversed to day with Senators Dickinson of N. Y., Sturgeon of Penn., Allen of Ohio, Breese & Douglass of Illinois, & Hannegan & Bright of Indiana, & that they were all of opinion that Mr. Butler & other Barnburners of N. Y. who held office & who are actively opposed to the Democratic nominees, ought to be removed.

SUNDAY, *30th July, 1848.*— This was a damp & uncomfortable day and I did not attend church. Mrs. Polk also remained at home. In the afternoon the late Senator Bagby of Al., now minister to

Russia, who will sail on his mission in a few days, joined me in my walk on the President's grounds. He came in & spent an hour with me.

MONDAY, *31st July, 1848.*— I had a throng of visitors this morning. Among them Maj'r Gen'l Worth of the U. S. army, & his staff, called. Maj'r Gen'l Butler and his wife called also, & I met them, with other ladies & gentlemen who accompanied them, in the parlour. It gave me pleasure to see these gallant officers who called to pay their respects. I cannot say as much for the herd of persons who called to importune and annoy me about offices in the course of the morning. I have a great contempt for professional office seekers, and there are many such, persons who have no merit, but desire to live on the public instead of relying upon their own exertions and some honest calling to make a living. I attended to much business in my office to-day. I saw several public officers and transacted business with them.

My Private Secretary called my attention on yesterday to the New York *Evening Post* of the 28th Instant, containing two letters over the signature of Benjamin Tappan, formerly a U. S. Senator from Ohio, & Francis P. Blair, formerly Editor of the *Globe.* They purport to give a statement of facts of the manner in which the Resolutions for the annexation of Texas were passed by Congress, on the 1st of March, 1845, and profess to give conversations held with me by different persons on the subject. Mr. Blair gives a conversation which he states he held

with me on the subject whilst these Resolutions were pending before Congress. I remark first, that I have not the slightest recollection of ever having held a conversation with Mr. Blair on the subject. If I did it has wholly escaped me: and secondly, that the misunderstanding, not to say total perversion, of me or my meaning, if any such conversations were held, proves the danger of detailing from recollection conversations which are alleged to have been held more than three years ago. Mr. Tappan has been in Washington several times since I have been President, and at the present Session of Congress, and professed to be friendly to me. I remember well that during the first year after I was inaugurated as President of the U. S., and after my course in executing the Texas annexation Resolutions, by selecting the alternative of the first & second sections to be presented for the acceptance of Texas, or rather after that election had been made by President Tyler & been confirmed by me, was known to the public, Mr. Tappan expressed the desire to me that I would not adhere to my declaration that I would not be a candidate for re-election, remarking that it might be necessary for the safety of the Democratic party that I should stand as their candidate for a second term. During the present Session he appeared to be as friendly as he had ever been, and conversed with me freely on public affairs, but at no time did he ever so much as allude to my course on the Texas annexation Resolutions, or give any intimation that he was dissatisfied with it. Mr. Blair resides a few miles from this City & is in

town almost every day. He had never, to my knowledge, expressed any dissatisfaction with my course. He deliberately writes his letter, and without having the fairness or manliness to call & frankly inform me of it, or to make any inquiry of me of my recollection of the matters stated in it, sends it off to Mr. Tappan, and the first knowledge which I get of either of the letters is their publication in the New York *Evening Post.* The conduct of both is highly disreputable and dishonorable. Tappan in his conversations & intercourse with me, always professing friendship & the support of my administration, has acted hypocritically and most dishonorably. Both Blair & Tappan reserve their n[a]rrations[?] to the public until the Barnburners in New York have bolted from the support of the Democratic nominees of the Baltimore Convention (Cass & Butler) and have set up Van Buren as the Northern Abolition, or as they term it Free soil candidate for the Presidency. The object of their letters was manifestly to aid Mr. Van Buren & the Barnburners in the election. Tappan does not pretend that he ever held a conversation on the subject of his letter with me personally, but details conversations with others. The conduct of both is despicable. I cannot, whilst President of the U. S., des[c]end to enter into a newspaper controversy with them. The time may come when I may deem it proper to notice their errors & to correct their misrepresentations of me. I deem it proper at present to record in this diary a brief statement of facts, so that they may not be unknown if I shall be called

hence before the proper occasion arises to make the statement over my own signature. I arrived in Washington on the evening of the 13th of February, 1845. I stopped at Coleman's Hotel and had much company every day from that time until the day of my inauguration as President. The question of the annexation of Texas to the U. S. was pending before Congress. I had been elected as the known advocate of the annexation of Texas and was very anxious that some measure with that object should pass Congress. I expressed myself to this effect to many persons with whom I conversed. I believed that if no measure proposing annexation was passed at that session that Texas would be lost to the Union. I had no time or opportunity to examine minutely, or indeed at all, the particular provisions of any of the propositions on the subject which were before Congress or had been suggested. I repeatedly expressed the opinion that any measure was better than none, and that Congress ought not to adjourn without passing a measure in some form on the subject. I had no opportunity to compare the different plans which had been proposed or suggested with each other, or to decide between them. My great anxiety was to secure the annexation in any form before it was too late. I remember that Senator Haywood had several conversations with me on the subject, and to him as well as to others I expressed my opinion without reserve. I remember to have understood from him and others near the close of the session, that the form in which the Resolutions had passed the House were [was] not acceptable to a few of the Democratic

Senators, who preferred another form. I remember to have said that if the measure cannot pass in one form, it was better to pass it in any form than not at all. The proposition to appoint commissioners to negotiate, as one of the forms which some preferred, was mentioned in these conversations, and I may have said, & probably did, that if this form was adopted I would endeavour to affect [effect] annexation under it, and that for that purpose the first men of the country should be appointed on the commission. But I certainly never understood myself as pledged to select that mode, if the Resolutions passed in the alternative form. I never authorized Mr. Haywood or anyone else to make such pledges to Senators, and if any such pledges were made it was in a total misconception of what I had said or meant. I could not have made such a pledge understandingly, for I had never compared the two propositions with each other, or given them such examination as would enable me to form a judgment between them. I may have said, & doubtless did, that if the plan of appointing commissioners was adopted, I would appoint able men & men of experience. My great object was to secure annexation, and I was more anxious that that should be effected than I was as to the particular manner in which it should be accomplished. The Resolutions passed in the alternative form & were approved by President Tyler on the 1st of March, 1845. Judge Mason, the present Secretary of the Navy, & who at that time was a member of President Tyler's Cabinet, makes to me the following statement of facts, which

prove conclusively that I had not at that time made up my judgment between the alternate plans embraced in the Resolutions. He states that President Tyler called a meeting of his Cabinet to take action under the Resolutions on the 2nd of March, 1845. He states that Mr. Calhoun, who was then Secretary of State, had at the request of the President waited on me at Coleman's Hotel to ascertain my opinion upon the two propositions embraced in the Resolutions, and that Mr. Calhoun reported to Mr. Tyler in the Cabinet meeting that he had called on me and that I had declined giving any opinion, and had informed him that until I was installed as President and could consult with my own Cabinet I could not give an opinion on the subject, and that Mr. Tyler would, of course, if he desired or deemed it important to act, be governed by his own judgment. So little importance had I attached to Mr. Calhoun's calling on me that I had not thought of it since until I was reminded of it by Judge Mason. Mr. Tyler did act on the subject and elected the alternative of the House Resolutions, on the 3rd of March, 1845, and despatched an express messenger to Mr. Donelson, the charge d'affaires of the U. S. to Texas, with his instructions on the subject. This was the state of the question when I came into office. I nominated my Cabinet to the Senate on the 5th of March, 1845. It was some days before the nomination of Mr. Bancroft as Secretary of the Navy was confirmed, & several days before Mr. Buchanan qualified and took charge of the State Department, Mr. Calhoun desiring to remain in the office a few days

to close some business which he had on hands. The subject was deliberately considered by myself and my Cabinet and decided on the 10th of March, 1845. In my annual message of December, 1845, my decision and action on the subject were communicated to Congress. My Cabinet were unanimously of the opinion that the election of the alternative proposition made by Mr. Tyler ought not to be reversed, and that it was to be preferred to the other alternative of appointing commissioners. In these views I concurred and Mr. Buchanan's despatch of the 10th of March, 1845, to Mr. Donelson to this effect was unanimously approved by myself and my Cabinet. In that Cabinet meeting, and at no other time, did I ever intimate to the Cabinet that I had made any pledges to Mr. Haywood or to any other Senators that I would select the alternative of appointing commissioners to negotiate, & for the best of all reasons, that I had made no such pledge. Had such a pledge been made it would then have been fresh in my recollection and it is inconceivable that I should not have communicated such a commitment to my Cabinet, & yet I made no such communication. I remember that in my Cabinet meeting referred to, Mr. Walker expressed the opinion that Mr. Tyler, having made the election of the alternatives & sent off his express messenger with his instructions, I had no power to reverse it, if I desired to do so. My impression is that some other members of the Cabinet entertained the same opinion. This point and every other connected with the subject was deliberately considered. The Senate were in Executive

Session at the time, and on the 12th of March, on Mr. Haywood's motion, a Resolution [1] was adopted calling on me to communicate to the Senate what action, if any, Mr. Tyler had taken on the subject, and what action, if any, I had taken. In a message [2] of the 15th of March I declined to answer the Resolution (see Executive Journal of the Senate) as being incompatible with the public interest. I knew, if I did answer, the action which had been taken could not be kept a secret by more than 50 Senators, and if it became public it would enable the French & English legations at Washington to take measures to embarrass & perhaps defeat annexation. When this answer went into the Senate, not a complaint was made by Mr. Haywood or any other Senator. Neither Mr. Haywood or any other ever made any enquiry of me personally on the subject. The Senate remained in session until the 19th of March, and as no nominations of commissioners was made to them, they must have known that the alternative of appointing commissioners to negotiate had not been adopted. No complaint was made and yet is it conceivable that complaint would not have been made by those Senators, if there were any, who had understood that I stood pledged to adopt the alternative of appointing commissioners? Furthermore, when, nine months afterwards, in my annual message I laid before Congress my whole action on the subject, no complaint of violated faith was made from any

[1] Haywood's resolution was introduced March 11, 1845.—*S. Ex. Journal,* special Sess. 1845, VI, 431.

[2] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 382.

quarter. Now, for the first time, after the lapse of nearly three & an half years, complaint is made by Messrs. Tappan and Blair. I cannot with any propriety whilst I am President enter into a controversy in the newspapers with these persons, or vindicate myself by a statement of these and other facts confirmatory of my true position, which are in my possession. I saw and conversed with Mr. Robert J. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, to-day, who remembers what occurred in the Cabinet meeting when the question of annexation was under deliberation precisely as I do, and he adds other statements within his own knowledge to confirm this whole statement.

If any of the Senators named by Messrs. Tappan & Blair were deceived by my alleged pledges to them, upon what principle of human action is it that they have not long since exposed me by making known their complaints to the public? So far from this, these very Senators supported the annexation of Texas in the mode in which it was accomplished, & none of them have, to this hour, made known to me that they objected to what I had done on the subject. All of them have supported my administration, not only upon Texas & the Mexican War, which, it is now alleged, was the consequence of the failure to select the alternative of appointing commissioners to negotiate for annexation. The whole story is an afterthought, and is designed to effect a political purpose, by advancing Mr. Van Buren's prospects for the Presidency. If any such pledge had been given, how can the Senators named justify themselves

in concealing their knowledge of it at the time from their fellow Senators? If it were true, they perpetrated a fraud by concealing it from their fellow Senators. Mr. R. J. Walker, who offered the amendment embracing the alternative for the appointment of commissioners, informs me to-day that he never heard anything of such a pledge at the time, and never from any quarter until he read the letters of Messrs. Tappan & Blair to day in the New York *Evening Post.* He declares, furthermore, that part of Mr. Blair's statement which relates to the authorship of the amendment which he as a Senator offered, to be untrue within his own knowledge. He states that he drew the amendment himself and offered it in the Senate.

TUESDAY, *1st August, 1848.*— I saw company this morning as usual. Several members of Congress and others called. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. After discussion, & having the opinions of the Cabinet, I decided it to be proper to appoint an Envoy Extraordinary & minister Plenipotentiary to the German Confederation[1] at Frankfort. Mr. Buchanan recommended it, and suggested that Mr. Donelson should be transferred from Berlin, but without breaking up or dis-

[1] The Revolution of 1848 took the form in Germany of a national parliament called to meet at Frankfort for the purpose of creating a supreme federal government and effecting the unification of Germany. In its early stage the movement gave great promise but the obstacles to its success proved too great to be overcome and the attainment of German unity was deferred until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871.

continuing the latter mission. He suggested that Mr. Donelson should perform the duties of Minister at both Courts for the time being. In this I concurred. I sent a message to the House of Repts. to-day in answer to a Resolution of that body calling for information in relation to the military peace establishment. I am decidedly opposed to an increase of the army during the period of peace. There is a great disposition with many members of Congress, particularly of the Whig party, to increase it. The officers of the old army are in favour of an increase. This is natural because their profession is arms, and the larger the army the greater the prospects of promotion. Many of the officers who have been in service in Mexico, and who go out of service at the close of the war, are now in Washington & are anxious to have an increased peace establishment in the hope that they may secure for themselves appointments. Many of these officers are exerting their influence with members of Congress with a view to secure appointments for themselves. Some Whig members of Congress favour the measure because it is in harmony with their general policy. They favour, as a party, large expenditures, high tariffs, & Banks, and in addition to this they would be pleased to have a large increase of the standing army fastened on the country, which they would for political effect charge to be a consequence of the Mexican War. The message which I sent to the House to-day is the second in which I have expressed the opinion that the proposed increase is unnecessary. If Congress shall increase the number of

Regiments it will be against my opinion & recommendation.

Several matters of detail and minor importance were considered in the Cabinet and disposed of. I saw Judge Mason, who called in the evening, & held a conversation with him in relation to the late publications made by Mr. Benjamin Tappan of Ohio and by Mr. Francis P. Blair upon the subject of the annexation of Texas, so far as he has been associated with me in my administration as stated in this Diary of yesterday (which see) and [he] repeated to me Mr. Calhoun's Report made to Mr. Tyler in Cabinet on the 2nd of March, 1845, of the conversation which Mr. C. had held with me (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. Mason informed me that he proposed to write to Mr. Tyler and obtain his permission to make this statement to me in writing, if it should be deemed important to do so. I told him I thought it would be well to obtain this permission. Mr. Mason condemns the publications made by Messrs. Tappan & Blair, and mentioned several facts within his knowledge proving, as far as circumstances can prove, that their statement cannot be true, because it is wholly inconsistent with my whole course on the subject of Texas at the commencement of my administration. After the adjournment of the Cabinet I disposed of business on my table as usual.

WEDNESDAY, *2nd August, 1848.*— Many persons called this morning. Indeed I was in a state of siege from the time I came to my office until 1 O'Clock P. M. by the office seekers. I was seated

at my table and received their assaults. I had no offices to bestow but there is a Bill before Congress to create a board of Commissioners to decide upon claims of our citizens against Mexico, the payment of which has been assumed by the U. S. by the late Treaty. These places are much sought. Among others who besieged me for one of these places for her husband this morning [was a woman who] shed tears freely while she was telling her story of her husband's poverty and great need of an office. The longer I remain in office the more I am disgusted with such importunities. Several other females called to apply for offices for their husbands or other relations this morning. When I got clear of the office seekers I attended to my public duties during the balance of the day. I devoted an hour or two in reducing to writing my views on the subject of River and harbour improvements. I did this because I think it probable that Congress will pass some bill on the subject which I cannot approve, and I desire to be prepared to assign my reasons for withholding my approval. If I should have no occasion to use the manuscript, I will preserve it; and it may not be labour intirely lost.

THURSDAY, *3rd August, 1848.*— My office was Crowded with visitors this morning, most of them office-seekers, and I passed through a similar scene to that which I had to endure on yesterday (see yesterday's Diary). There have been no two days since my administration commenced when I have been more importuned and annoyed by applications

for office. It is most painful to me to be compelled to sit, as I often am, and listen to the personal application of persons for offices for themselves. I had a case of this kind to-day. An individual with whom I formerly served in Congress occupied more than an hour of my time in begging me to appoint him a commissioner to decide on Mexican claims, if the Bill before Congress should pass. I had no idea of appointing him, and yet I could not avoid hearing him without acting rudely towards him. Mr. Buchanan called & after transacting some business with him I introduced the letters of Mr. Benjamin Tappan of Ohio and Mr. Francis P. Blair, lately published in the New York *Evening Post,* on the subject of the Texas Resolutions (see this Diary of the 31st ult. & the 1st Inst.). Mr. Buchanan had read these letters & strongly condemned Mr. Tappan and Mr. Blair. He remembered distinctly, as I did, what occurred in my Cabinet immediately after I was inaugurated as President, as stated in this Diary of the 31st ultimo. I had a full conversation with him on the subject. He advised me to take no public notice of them at present. He stated many circumstances to shew that they must be in error in the statement of facts which they profess to detail, and the impossibility of my having made the pledges attributed to me, because my whole conduct had been wholly inconsistent and irreconcilable with such pledges. He stated that he was a member of the Senate when the Texas annexation Resolutions passed, that he had heard nothing of such pledges until he saw the published letters of Messrs. Tappan

& Blair a day or two ago. He stated that if any such pledge had been made the concealment of the knowledge of it by any Senator from himself and other Senators was a fraud practiced upon them. I told him that I had been informed this morning that a second letter had been published by Mr. Blair in the New York *Evening Post,* repudiating the Baltimore nominations & giving in his adhesion to Mr. Van Buren as a candidate for the Presidency. I searched for the paper containing it, but could not find it. After Mr. Buchanan left I found the letter in the New York *Evening Post* of yesterday, the 2nd Inst. It is a disgraceful letter, and upon its face explains the motive which induced Blair to write his first letter upon the subject of the annexation of Texas. I will preserve this letter. Though Blair was a member of the Baltimore convention & concurred in the nomination of Gen'l Cass, he says in this letter that his heart was with Mr. Van Buren, that he was inveigled into the support of Gen'l Cass in the Convention, and will be bound upon a point of *punctilio* to vote for him.

My nephew, Capt. James H. Walker, of the Regiment of Voltigeurs, who has been spending some days in my family, left this afternoon for Baltimore to meet his company, where they are to be mustered out of the service of the U. States. I saw & transacted business with the Secretary of War and disposed of much other business on my table to-day. I devoted some time to reducing to writing my views on the subject of harbour & river improvements, so as to be ready with my objections if any Bill (as is

probable) upon that subject should be presented to me for my approval at the present session. I understand that the Senate have struck out of the civil & Diplomatic appropriation Bill the item for the Improvement of the Savannah River. I should certainly have vetoed the whole Bill if it had come to me with that item in it.

FRIDAY, *4th August, 1848.*— I was doomed to endure again this morning the pressure of the office-seekers as [I] had been for the last three days (see this Diary for those days). My patience is almost exhausted by them, and I gave them very short and emphatic answers. I saw and transacted business with Mr. Buchanan and disposed of much business on my table to-day. I devoted two hours to the further preparation of my views on the subject of Internal Improvements (see this Diary of yesterday and the day preceding).

SATURDAY, *5th August, 1848.*— Several persons called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Some [business] was transacted before the hour of 1 O'Clock P. M., that being the hour, by an arrangement made by the Secretary of State, at which Mr. Poussin, the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary [from France], was to be presented to me. It was announced by my porter precisely at that hour that the Minister had arrived, when I accompanied Mr. Buchanan to the circular parlour below stairs. On delivering to me his credentials he made a short

address in English. He also delivered to me a Decree of the National assembly of France in response to the Resolutions of the Congress of the U. S. passed in April last, tendering the congratulations of the American Government and people to the French people, "upon the success of their recent efforts to consolidate the principles of liberty in a Republican form of Government." On delivering this Decree the Minister delivered another address in English. I responded briefly to both addresses. I will preserve a copy of what I said. It was an interesting ceremony. Mr. Poussin came to the U. S. about twenty five years ago in company with General Bernard,[1] and was for several years employed with the General as an officer of Engineers in the service of the U. S. He alluded felicitously to this fact in his address, and I responded by informing him that I remembered him at that time, and that the first time I had seen him was at Lexington, Va., in November, 1825, when I met him on my [way to] Washington to take my seat in the Ho. Repts. in the first Congress in which I served. He was then employed by Mr. Adams's administration in making the reconnoissance of a Road. He appeared much gratified that I remembered him, and said he remembered me also. He left apparently much pleased with the cordial manner in which I had received him. Mr. Buchanan and myself returned to my office, and the Cabinet resumed the consideration of

[1] Simon Bernard, French military engineer, invited to the United States to advise the board of army engineers engaged in coast defence work; remained here 1819–1831.

the business before it. Mr. Buchanan read despatches which he had received from the Secretary for Foreign affairs of Venezuela, complaining of the interference of Mr. Shields, the U. S. charge d'affaires, in the domestic contest between the political parties of that country. He also read a despatch from Mr. Crampton, the British charge d'affaires at Washington, transmitting despatches from his Government, complaining of Mr. Shields, the U. S. charge d'affaires to Venezuela, in consequence of remarks charged to have been made by Mr. Shields to the Minister of Foreign affairs of Venezuela reflecting upon the Brittish Government, and attributing to that Government improper designs upon Mexico before the late war between the U. S. and Mexico, and also attributing improper designs upon the other Spanish American States. Mr. Buchanan read drafts of two letters which he had prepared to be prepared [sent] to Mr. Shields in relation to these complaints. They had been prepared by a subordinate (Mr. Hunter) in the State Department, and one of them, as Mr. Buchanan agreed, was couched in terms too harsh, and [he] said he would modify it. Assumed that the facts stated were true, & in the absence of any explanations from Mr. Shields, he is informed in these despatches that his conduct is not approved, and he is admonished of the importance of taking no part in the domestic strifes or civil wars of the contesting parties in the country to which he is accredited as the Diplomatic Representative of the U. S. Mr. Buchanan read a despatch received from Mr. Clifford,

U. S. minister to Mexico, making known that civil war is raging in Mexico, that Gen'l Paredes is at the head of [an] armed force endeavoring to overthrow the Government, on the ground that it had sacrificed the interests of Mexico in making the late Treaty of peace with the U. S., and making known that the Government had despatched a secret Envoy to Washington to ask the aid of 4,000 troops from the U. S., for whose services they proposed to pay out of the installments to be paid to Mexico under the late Treaty of peace. Mr. Buchanan read the answer which he had prepared, which was to the effect that the President possessed no power to grant the aid which was asked, and the opinion that Congress, if applied to, would not grant the proposed aid, especially at the present late period of their session. Some other business of minor importance was disposed of. I nominated to the Senate to-day, with the unanimous concurrence of the Senate [Cabinet], Andrew J. Donelson, now U. S. Minister at Berlin, to be En. Ex. & Min. Plen. to the German Confederation at Frankfort. He will perform the duties of both missions for the time being, and until it is ascertained that the Archduke John of Austria, recently elected to be the chief Executive [1] officer of the German confederation, is invested with exclusive powers to conduct diplomatic relations for all the states of Germany with Foreign Powers, and upon as-

[1] The Frankfort Parliament elected Archduke John of Austria "Imperial Administrator," whereupon the Diet of the old Bund transmitted its powers to him and was dissolved.

certaining this the mission to Prussia will, of course, be discontinued. I submitted again to the Cabinet the propriety of removing from office Benjamin F. Butler and others in New York, who are opposing the Democratic nominations for President and Vice President of the U. S. I informed the Cabinet that since I had brought this subject to their notice a few days ago I had received a strong memorial from several of the leading men of N. Y. appealing to me to make the removals. I read this memorial to the Cabinet. I informed the Cabinet of what they all knew, the violence of Mr. Butler & other Federal officers in opposition to my administration and to the Democratic party, and of the fact that Mr. Butler & others were now in open alliance with Whigs and abolitionists to get up seperate organization at a Convention to be held at Buffalo, in N. Y., on the 9th Inst., to oppose the regularly nominated candidates of the Democratic party. I expressed the opinion that I ought no longer to retain them in office, and by retaining them thus give to them the apparent countenance of my administration in their treason to the principles they formerly professed to the party to which they formerly belonged. The Cabinet were unanimous in the opinion that their conduct was such as to give them no claims upon my administration, and that they deserved to be removed. Mr. Buchanan thought, however, that the removal of Mr. Butler at this time would tend to strengthen the bolting Barnburners in the North, by the use they could make of it upon the slave or free-soil ques-

tion, and therefore he advised against it at present. Mr. Toucey, who had formerly advised against the removals, acquiesced in the propriety of the measure, but thought it ought to be postponed until after the Whig-abolition & Barnburning Convention had met and acted at Buffalo on the 9th Instant. The other members of the Cabinet were clearly in favour of their removal and so advised. Mr. Walker was of opinion that I ought to defer action until after the Buffalo convention on the 9th Inst. I then stated to the Cabinet that I would postpone action until after the 9th Instant, but that I would then, and before the Senate adjourned, remove Mr. Butler.

I had a Dinner party to-day. Among the guests were Gen'l Wm. O. Butler & wife, Gen'l Worth & wife & two daughters, Capt. Sprague of the army, atto. Gen'l Toucey, Senator Fitzgerald [1] of Michigan, Mr. Wallace [2] of S. C., Mr. Lynde [3] & Mr. Darling [4] of Wisconsin, all members of the Ho. Repts., Lieut. Butler & wife & Col. George W. Caldwell [5] of Ky., late of the army.

The Senate continued in Session until a late hour at night, and several Senators who were invited did not attend.

[1] Thomas Fitzgerald, 1796–1855, Senator from Michigan 1848–1849.

[2] Daniel Wallace, Representative from South Carolina 1848–1853.

[3] William P. Lynde, Representative from Wisconsin 1847–1849, and 1875–1879.

[4] Mason C. Darling, 1801–1849, Representative from Wisconsin 1848–1849.

[5] George A. Caldwell of the Voltigeur regiment.

SUNDAY, *6th August, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk & the wife of my brother, Wm. H. Polk.

About 8 O'Clock P. M. my nephew, Samuel P. Walker, my sister, Ophelia C. Hays, and her daughter, Virginia Hays, and Sarah Polk Rucker, the niece of Mrs. Polk, arrived from Tennessee and, of course, took up their residence during their visit in the President's House and as guests of my family.

MONDAY, *7th August, 1848.*— Company called as usual this morning. I transacted business as usual with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War. I disposed of much business on my table during the day. After night Senator Hannegan called and informed me that the Senate adjourned for the day at 8 O'Clock P. M. and that the Ho. Repts. were still in Session. He informed me that the Senate had been, during the whole day, in Executive Session, listening to a most impassioned & violent speech [1] of Senator Benton against confirming the nomination of Brig. Gen'l Kearney, U. S. army, as a Brevet Major General, for gallant & meritorious services in New Mexico and California. Mr. Hannegan informed me that Senator Benton was violent beyond what is usual even for him, and that he had avowed his intention to speak out the balance of the Session, and defeat all the public measures before Congress, rather than suffer the vote on Gen'l Kearney's nomination to be taken. I appointed Gen'l Kearney a Brigadier Gen'l mainly upon Senator

[1] *Globe,* 30 Cong. 1 Sess. *App.* 977–1040.

Benton's recommendation, and his hostility to him now arises from the fact that he preferred charges against Lieut. Col. Fremont, his (Senator Benton's) son-in-law, upon which he was convicted by a Court Martial. The Ho. Repts. I learn, have been engaged during the whole day in making violent party speeches on the Presidential election & the merits & demerits of the Presidential candidates. They seem wholly to have forgotten that they have any public business to transact, and have converted the Ho. Repts. into an arena for making violent party speeches. This is a great outrage and they should be held to a strict account by their constituents for their wanton waste of the public time and disregard of the public interests. The remainder of the Session of Congress is probably to give rise to scenes of unusual violence and party excitement.

TUESDAY, *8th August, 1848.*— Many persons called this morning, most [of] them seeking office as usual. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. After transacting business and disposing of several matters of minor importance, I invited the attention of the Cabinet to several subjects which I deemed important. I informed them that I thought it probable that Congress would, between this and the close of their session (the 14th Instant) [pass several bills], some of which I could not approve, and in relation to others I desired to have the advice of the Cabinet so that I might be prepared to meet them. Bills for the improvement of harbours & rivers were of the former, and these,

if any such should be presented to me for my approval, I should certainly veto. I informed them that I had for some time past been preparing additional views to those presented in my veto message of the River and Harbour Bill of the 15th of December last, and hoped to have them so far completed as to be able to send in a veto message before the adjournment of the session, should such a Bill come to me. Upon that subject my mind was made up, & [I] wished no advice. I then informed them that from present appearances in Congress no Bills would be passed establishing Territorial Governments in New Mexico and Upper California, but that it was probable that a Bill would be passed establishing a Territorial Government in Oregon, with a restriction in it against the existence of slavery in that Territory, and I asked the advice of the Cabinet whether I should approve and sign such a Bill. I took their opinions severally and seperately, & they were unanimously of opinion that as the whole territory of Oregon lay North [of] 36° 30′, that being the Missouri compromise line, I ought to sign it. I then propounded the question whether I ought to accompany the notification that I had approved and signed such a Bill with a message distinctly stating that I had so approved and signed it because the territory lay North of the Missouri compromise line, remarking that if this was deemed proper the message ought to be prepared in advance. In propounding this question I intimated an opinion that I ought to send such a message, as necessary to explain my own views, and to prevent the inference that I would approve & sign

a Bill with the slavery restriction in it establishing territorial Governments over territory lying South of the Missouri compromise line. Mr. Buchanan expressed his opinion first. He would have no doubt that I ought to send such a message, if it were not for the effect it might have upon Gen'l Cass's position on the slavery question as contained in his published letter to Mr. Nicholson, and the fear he entertained that it might operate prejudicially to his election. He said if I determined to send such a message he would be delighted to have the opportunity to assist me in preparing it. I told him he should have the opportunity if I so determined. Mr. Walker thought I ought at the time of signing such a Bill to explain in some way my position and views, but suggested that this might be done by an authorized article carefully prepared in the *Union* newspaper. The subject was very fully discussed and finally the Cabinet unanimously, with the exception of Judge Mason, inclined to favour Mr. Walker's suggestion, that the explanation had better appear in an article in the *Union* than in a formal message to Congress. Judge Mason finally acquiesced in these views. They all agreed that if this course was taken I ought in my next annual message fully to state my opinions and views on the subject. I then stated that my own inclination had been to send a message to Congress, but without deciding that question I requested Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Walker to prepare a paper, to be used either as a message or an article in the newspaper as I might hereafter decide to be proper. They agreed to do so. I then stated that a Bill had passed

the Senate, & might pass the House, to create a Board of Commissioners to decide on claims of the people of California against the U. S., and that this Bill had designated by discription the three persons who were to be the commissioners, and this I considered to be a violation of the constitution. The Constitution confers upon the President the power to make all appointments to office by and with the advice & consent of the Senate, except the appointment of inferior officers which might be vested by law in the President alone, in the Heads of Departments, or in the Judicial tribunals. By the Bill referred to Congress undertake to make the appointments by law. The Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that such a law would be unconstitutional, and that if it passed I ought to veto it. I told the Cabinet I would certainly veto it if it passed. Knowing that my whole time would be occupied until the close of the session of Congress in performing other important and necessary duties, I stated my views on the subject and requested Mr. Toucey & Mr. Johnson to prepare the draft of a veto message so that I might be prepared if such a Bill should pass. I informed the Cabinet that if the Bill pending before Congress for the payment of the French Spoilation claims prior to 1800 should pass, I would not approve it, but would detain it & assign my objections to it in a message to Congress at its next Session. Congress has delayed to act upon almost all the important measures before them until the last days of the Session, when I will have no time to prepare my objections to any Bill which I cannot approve, unless I prepare my mes-

sage in anticipation that certain messages [measures] may pass.

This was reception evening. Many persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *9th August, 1848.*— A crowd of company called this morning. At 12 O'Clock I closed my office. I devoted several hours in the preperation of a veto message in anticipation that some of the numerous Internal Improvement Bills now before Congress may pass and be presented to me for my approval & signature. I understand that a River & Harbour Bill embracing many objects & appropriating a large sum was under discussion in the Ho. Repts. to-day, and has been ordered to be engrossed. If it comes to me I shall certainly veto it. I disposed of much business on my table to-day and saw several of the Heads of Departments & other public officers & transacted business with them.

THURSDAY, *10th August, 1848.*— Saw a large number of persons this morning. In the midst of pressing and important public duties I continue to be greatly annoyed by office-seekers. Whenever my doors are opened to receive members of Congress and others on business, the office seekers press in. Being exceedingly engaged to-day I had [to] be almost rude and to ask them to leave my office at 12 O'Clock that I might be enabled to attend to the business before me. I did close my office at that hour. I saw the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy & transacted business with them. I disposed of business on

my table. Mr. Buchanan read to me a part of the draft of [a] message on the Missouri compromise line, as applicable to the Territories of Oregon, California, & New Mexico, which I had requested Mr. Walker & himself to prepare in the Cabinet meeting of Tuesday last (see this Diary of that day). I devoted three or four hours to-day to the preperation of a veto message in anticipation that a River & Harbour Bill would be presented to me for my approval before the adjournment of Congress. After Dinner I read what I had written to J. Knox Walker, my Private Secretary. He advised me if any such Bill came to me to retain it and assign my objections to it at the next Session. I find myself greatly fatigued & worn down by my labours and fear I will have to take this course for want of time to do justice to the subject. The Senate tonight passed the Oregon Territorial Bill, with the Missouri compromise provision in it, by a majority of eleven votes. I hope it may receive the sanction of the House but fear it will not. Congress is in great excitement and confusion on the subject and the importance of settling the question at this Session becomes every day more important.

I learn to-night that Mr. Van Buren has been nominated for the Presidency by the Buffalo Convention composed of Whigs, abolitionists, and Barnburners.

I retired tonight exceedingly fatigued & exhausted, caused from my great labours and anxiety concerning public affairs, and especially the uncertain action of Congress upon any subject whatever. The members

are so much engaged in President making that they attend to little else. It is a Congress as reckless of the public interests as any I have ever known. They are enlarging the appropriations to an enormous and unnecessary amount, and if all their internal Improvement schemes could prevail a further loan would be indispensible.

FRIDAY, *11th August, 1848.*— Up to 12 O'Clock to-day, when I closed my office, I was besieged by office seekers and others who called on business. I was so much fatigued that I concluded to abandon the attempt to finish my veto Internal Improvement message, should a Bill on that subject come to me. Subject to be interrupted every hour to attend to necessary public duties, I have not the time or the health & strength to do justice to myself or the subject before the adjournment of Congress on the 14th Instant; and must therefore, if an Internal Improvement Bill comes to me, retain it until the next session of Congress (see this Diary of yesterday).

I prepared a short message to meet the case of the insertion of any Internal Improvement item in any of the General appropriation Bills, and it was copied by my Private Secretary. Mr. Toucey called and read to me the draft of a message which he had prepared on the California claims Bill, should it pass Congress. I had requested him to prepare it (see this Diary of tuesday last). I attended to much business with public officers & on my table to-day. I learn that the Ho. Repts. rejected the missouri compromise amendment of the Senate to the Oregon Ter-

ritorial Bill. This I deeply deplore. I fear that nothing will be done at this Session and that the slavery agitation will be kept up in the country.

I learn to-night that the Buffalo convention of Whigs, Abolitionists, and Barnburners have nominated Charles F. Adams, the son of the late John Quincy Adams, who is an avowed Abolitionist, for the Vice Presidency on Mr. Van Buren's ticket, the latter having been nominated for the Presidency. Mr. Van Buren is the most fallen man I have ever known.

SATURDAY, *12th August, 1848.*— Many persons called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour this morning; all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, who, I learn, is confined to his house by indisposition. Several matters of business were disposed of. The subject of the propriety of sending a message to Congress, if the Oregon Bill should pass with the restriction as respects slavery, was further discussed (see this Diary of tuesday, the 8th Instant). The draft which Mr. Buchanan prepared at my request was read by him. I expressed the opinion, in which the Cabinet all concurred, that if the Oregon Territorial Bill with the slavery restriction in it passed and was presented to me for my approval and signature, I ought not to with-hold from it my signature, and that I could not do so without arraying the country into geographical parties on the slavery question and greatly increasing the excitement, already great, which existed in and out of Congress upon that question. The

Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that I ought to sign the Bill. They had expressed the same opinion in the Cabinet meeting of the 8th Instant. I expressed the opinion that if I approved and signed the Bill in the usual form without assigning my reasons, my opinion in regard to California & New Mexico would not be understood, and that it might be inferred that I had yielded the question in regard to the Territory South as well as North of the Missouri compromise line, which would not be true. I stated that I thought that I ought to accompany the notification [to] Congress with a message explanatory of my position and of the reasons which had induced me to sign the Oregon Territorial Bill, should such a Bill pass. The draft prepared by Mr. Buchanan will require some modifications in order to conform precisely to my views. I put it into the hands of Mr. H. C. Williams, a confidential clerk, to be copied in a fair hand for my examination. Mr. Toucy, the atto. General, then read the draft of a message which he had prepared as applicable to the California claims Bill now before Congress, & which I had requested him in the Cabinet meeting on the 8th Instant to prepare. By that Bill Congress creates an office and assumes to appoint the officers, or rather to designate & direct who they shall [be], which, in my judgment is an infringement of the right of the Executive to make appointments, and is therefore unconstitutional. If the Bill shall pass it will be at a very late period of the Session, and I have requested the attorney General to prepare this veto message, that I might be prepared to meet it. It

was a well drawn paper, and I placed it in the hands of Mr. H. C. Williams & Mr. Samuel H. Laughlin to be copied. Late in the afternoon I learned that the Senate had been engaged all day in a violent discussion on the Oregon Territorial Bill. About dark, accompanied by all the members of my Cabinet, I repaired to the Capitol, as it is usual for the President to do near the close of a Session of Congress, so as to enable the committee of Enrolled Bills to present to him such Bills as may be passed for his approval and signature, without the necessity of waiting on him at his mansion. The President attends at the Capitol and occupies the Vice President's room on such occasions, for the convenience of Congress. On reaching the Capitol I found the Senate still engaged in the discussion of the Oregon Territorial Bill. The House of Representatives, I learn, were in great confusion & disorder, and about 9 O'Clock I learned that the House had adjourned. It was near 10 O'Clock P. M. before any Bill was presented for my approval. I approved and signed several Bills and among them the Civil and Diplomatic appropriation Bill. About 11½ O'Clock, learning that in consequence of the adjournment of the House no other Bills could be presented to me to-night, I returned to the President's mansion, leaving the Senate still engaged in discussing the Oregon Territorial Bill.

SUNDAY, *13th August, 1848.*— At breakfast this morning I learned that the flag was flying over the Senate chamber, which indicated that the Senate was

still in Session. The Senate continued in Session all night & until near 10 O'Clock this morning, when they passed the Oregon Territorial Bill with the restriction of slavery in it, and adjourned to meet at 9 O'Clock to-morrow morning. It was now certain that this Bill would be presented to me for my approval & signature; and I was engaged during most of the day, and until 12 O'Clock at night, in revising and modifying Mr. Buchanan's draft, & had Mr. H. C. Williams employed as a clerk in copying [it] for me. Mr. Mason was with me, assisting me most of the time, Mr. Buchanan a part of the time, and about 10 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Marcy came in. Mr. Buchanan was still of opinion that I ought not to send in such a message, for the reasons assigned by him in the Cabinet meeting of the 8th Instant. I thought otherwise and determined to do so. Mr. Buchanan was opposed, if I did send it in, to my making any distinct declaration that I would veto a Bill with the slavery restriction in it which embraced territory South of 36° 30′, the Missouri compromise line. I had prepared a paragraph in the message. Mr. Mason thought such a paragraph should be inserted. Late at night, say between 10 & 11 O'Clock, Mr. Ritchie came in, and on hearing the message expressed the opinion that such a paragraph should be inserted, and thought the message as it stood was not strong enough and distinct enough on that point. I requested him to reduce to writing what he thought ought to be inserted. He did so, but on examining it I was not pleased with it and did not adopt it. The point was discussed at some length, in which

Mr. Mason and Mr. Marcy took part. I observed that Mr. Buchanan, after Mr. Ritchie came in, remained silent. I referred to him two or three times for his opinion upon different forms of phraseology which were proposed, but he gave none. He retired between 11 and 12 O'Clock. A paragraph was finally prepared with which I was satisfied, and which was approved by Mr. Marcy & Mr. Mason. Mr. Ritchie left the paragraph which he had prepared, & which I did not adopt, lying on my table. I will preserve it, as possibly something may arise hereafter to make it necessary to refer to the facts. I am induced to do this from Mr. Buchanan's entire silence after Mr. Ritchie came. Mr. Mason and Mr. Marcy approved the paper as I had modified [it], and thought I ought to send in such a message when I announced that I had approved & signed the Bill. Mr. Ritchie was of the same opinion. In the course of the afternoon Senator Turney of Tennessee called, and was excited upon the subject and insisted that I should veto the Bill. I told him I differed with him in opinion, informed him of the course I proposed to take, and read to him the draft of my message to accompany the announcement to the Ho. Repts. in which the Bill had originated, that I had given to it my official sanction. While Mr. Turney was with me, Senators Cameron and Hannegan called. Senator Hannegan aside, and not in a tone so audible as to be heard by the others, told me that if I vetoed the Bill, though he had voted for it, he would sustain me. He told me if his vote could have changed the result he would have voted against

it. About sunset Senator Calhoun and Mr. Burt of S. C. called. Mr. Calhoun expressed the opinion strongly that I should veto the Bill. I told him I had made up my mind to sign it, though I would do so reluctantly, and that I proposed to send a message to the House stating the considerations which had induced me to do so. He still insisted that I ought to veto it on constitutional grounds. I told him that if the question of imposing the restriction was an original one arising for the first time, I would have serious doubts of its constitutionality. I remarked that there might be questions arise effecting [affecting] the very existence of the Union, upon which we ought to yield individual opinions, in deference to what our predecessors had done, and I considered this one of them. I reminded him that I had in conversation with him some days ago, when he had called to see me on the subject (pending the deliberations of the committee of 8 of the Senate) [told him] that I was willing to accept the Missouri compromise line. I told him that I was willing to accept the compromise reported by that committee. Both having now failed, I did not see that I could veto the naked Oregon Bill, inasmuch as all the territory of Oregon lay North of the missouri compromise line. I reminded him that in 1844 a Bill to establish a Territorial Government over Oregon had passed the Ho. Repts. with the same restriction in it, with only 20 or 30 negative votes; that in 1846 a similar Bill had passed the Ho. Repts., and that many of the Southern Democrats had voted for it; that when the latter Bill was pending Mr. Burt (who was present and to

whom I appealed) had moved to insert an amendment [1] declaring that as the *whole territory lay North of the missouri compromise line* as a reason for inserting the restriction in the Bill, that with that amendment the South would have been satisfied to pass the Bill with that restriction. I then reminded him that at the present Session of Congress every Senator, North & South and of all parties, had upon one or other of the propositions which had been before the Senate voted for Bills with the restriction in them. I told him that the compromise Bill [2] reported by the committee of 8, of which he was a member and for which he voted, contained the restriction; that the Bill containing the missouri compromise also contained it so far as Oregon was concerned. He replied that these Bills contained provisions of compromise also; to which I responded, that fact did not change a constitutional principle. I then told him [if] the Bill which had passed the Senate this morning should be presented to me I would reluctantly sign it, and that I proposed to accompany the notification to the House in which it had originated with a message assigning my reasons for having done so. I told him that the first reason would be the urgent necessity for a Government in Oregon, and the second that the whole territory of Oregon lay north of the missouri compromise line,

[1] *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. 170.

[2] The Clayton compromise; the bill passed the Senate July 27, 1848, but was tabled by the House in favor of a bill of its own. For an account of the measure, see Garrison, *Westward Extension,* 303–305.

& was, therefore, not inconsistent with the compromise. I told him I had prepared such a message and that it was then being copied, that my impression was that I would send it in, though I would reserve that question until to-morrow and would take until the Bill came to me to reflect on it. He then said if I sent such a message I ought to rest my action on the great necessity for a Government over Oregon, & intimated distinctly that if I committed myself to the missouri compromise line and claimed nothing north of it, that the south would not get so much in the final adjustment. I understood his meaning to be that it should be treated as a Diplomatic question by claiming more than I was willing to take. In the close of the conversation he again insisted that I should veto the Bill. I repeated that I would sign it, and told him that if I were to veto it after all that had occurred, and in the present excited state of Congress & of the public mind, I should do more to inflame that excitement & to array the country into geographical parties and to rend the Union, than any act which had ever been done by any President or any man in the country. He left me fully understanding my opinions & what I would do. It was after 12 O'Clock at night when I retired.

MONDAY, *14th August, 1848.*— I rose early this morning, went to my office, & with my Private Secretary carefully revised the message which I propose to send to the Ho. Repts. to-day, if the Oregon Territorial Bill should be presented to me, assigning my reasons for having signed it. I modified &

changed several paragraphs, and caused some of the sheets, those on which the modifications were contained, to be recopied by Mr. H. C. Williams. At 9 O'Clock Mr. Toucey and Mr. Marcy came in, that being the hour appointed for my Cabinet to assemble to accompany me to the Capitol. Shortly afterwards Mr. Buchanan came in, and [I] was struck with a remark which he addressed to Mr. Marcy to the effect: Well, did you and Mr. Ritchie fix that paragraph in the message after I left last night? I had the message in my hand and replied to him by saying that the passage written by Mr. Ritchie had not been inserted (see this Diary of yesterday). I then read the paragraph as it had been prepared and inserted. Mr. Buchanan was still opposed to my sending in the message. I told him I had made up my mind to send it in. Mr. Marcy and Mr. Mason thought I ought to send it in under all the circumstances. About 9½ O'Clock I proceeded to the Capitol, accompanied by the members of my Cabinet except Mr. Walker, who was confined to his House by indisposition. Shortly after reaching the Vice President's room I learned that a debate was going on in the Senate, and shortly afterwards that a similar debate was going on in the Ho. Repts., against suspending the joint rule of the two Houses which prevents any Bill from being presented to the President for his approval or signature on the last day of the Session. The two Houses had agreed to adjourn the session at 12 O'Clock this day, and the object of the debate in both Houses was to prevent the question on suspending the rules from being taken until that

hour, when the adjournment would take place & the Oregon Bill be, of course, lost. Many other Bills were in the same condition with the Oregon Bill, & among others the army appropriation Bill, without which it was impossible for the Government to get on until the meeting of the next Session. This fact was made known to several Senators, to whom I also communicated the fact that if Congress adjourned without passing the army appropriation Bill, I would feel it to be my duty forthwith to issue my Proclamation conv[en]ing an extra Session of Congress to meet on to-morrow. About 10¾ O'Clock the discussion ended, the Joint Rule was suspended, & all the Bills which had been matured were presented to me for my approval & signature. While I was very busy hastily examining the Army & Oregon Bills, Senator Calhoun came in [and] held a short conversation [with] Mr. Mason in a different part of the room from that which I occupied. Mr. Mason stepped to me & said Mr. Calhoun wished to see me. I stepped hastily to him with one of the Bills in my hand. He urged me, if I would sign the Oregon Bill, to announce the fact to the Ho. Repts., in which it originated, in the usual form & not to send any written message with the notification, as I had informed him last evening I would probably do. I told him promptly that I had made up my mind, and would send in the written message. I returned to my table, signed the Oregon Bill and my message, and sent my Private Secretary with the message to the House of Repts., who delivered it about ¾ths of an hour before 12 O'Clock. I immediately made

the nominations for the officers in Oregon to the Senate, & in a few minutes they were confirmed. I signed all the other Bills which were presented to me, & the two Houses adjourned precisely at 12 O'Clock. A very few minutes before the adjournment I learned that my message to the Ho. Repts. had not been read, & that the Speaker had intimated that it would not go on the Journal, but be locked up until the next Session. The House, I learned, was in great confusion & finally adjourned, when the hour of 12 O'Clock arrived, in the midst of a call of the ayes & noes. I sent my Private Secretary to the Speaker to request a copy of my message, as the draft which I had retained has, in making a fair copy from it for the House, been in some slight respects changed, so that it was not a literal & exact copy. The answer which my Private Secretary brought from the Speaker left some doubt whether he would permit me to have a copy of the message and I sent him back to repeat to the man, and to say to him that it was a public message intended for publication as other public proceedings. My Private Secretary returned & informed me that the Speaker had directed the clerk to furnish me a copy, but expressed doubts whether the message could go on the Journal. I then sent for the clerk (Mr. Campbell) and requested him to furnish [me] a copy. He enquired of me if I wished the printers to have a copy for publication, and I answered him that I did, and that I had requested a copy for myself with a view to its publication. The intimation which led to my request for a copy, that its publication might be sup-

pressed by the Speaker until the next Session of Congress, struck me with great surprise. Not exceeding two minutes before the adjournment of the two Houses, which took place precisely at 12 O'Clock in pursuance of a Joint Resolution previously adopted, a committee of the Senate consisting of Mr. Hannegan, chairman, & Mr. Green [1] of R. Island & Mr. Turney of Tennessee waited on me to inform me that unless I had some further communication to make they were ready to adjourn. I answered that I had no further communications to make. The confusion and disorder in the Ho. Repts. was such that they adjourned abruptly upon the arrival of the hour of 12 O'Clock, and no committee waited on me from that House. I returned to the Presidential mansion, and during the remainder of the day saw many members of both Houses of Congress, who called to take leave of me. I am heartily rejoiced that the Session of Congress is over. My long confinement and great labour has exceedingly exhausted me, and I feel the absolute necessity of having some rest. I have not been three miles from the President's mansion since my return from my tour through the Eastern States in June & July, 1847, a period of more than thirteen months. Judge Mason left with his wife to-night to visit a sick child in Virginia.

TUESDAY, *15th August, 1848.*— Many members of Congress called to take leave of me this morning. With them many office seekers made their way into

[1] Albert Collins Greene, 1791–1863, Senator from Rhode Island 1845–1851.

my office. The professed office-seekers are certainly the most contemptible race on earth. They will never cease to annoy me. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, who is confined to his house by indisposition, and the Sec. of the Navy, who left the City on yesterday. Many matters preparatory to the execution [of] the laws passed by Congress at the late Session were attended to. I informed the Cabinet that I was so much fatigued and worn down that I proposed to leave on friday next on a visit to the Bedford Springs in Pennsylvania for the benefit of my health, and that I expected to be absent for ten days, and that I desired the members of the Cabinet to remain at Washington during my absence. Mr. Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, said he had contemplated a short visit to the North with his family, to which I made no objection. During the day members of Congress called to take leave of me. This was reception evening. A few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *16th August, 1848.*— Many persons called this morning. At 12 O'Clock I closed my office & devoted most of the day to clearing my table of the mass of papers relating to many matters of detail which had accumulated on my table. I saw public officers also and attended to business with them. There was music on the grounds this afternoon. I did not attend. I was much fatigued & was not well, having had symptoms of the return of chills during the day.

THURSDAY, *17th August, 1848.*— It being known that I intended to leave on to-morrow on a short visit to the Bedford Springs [1] in Pennsylvania for the purpose of having some relaxation from my long continued confinement and labour, and for the benefit of my health, a great number of persons called to-day. Among others were a herd of office-seekers, who seemed to act as though they thought it was the last opportunity they would ever have to obtain [a] place. I had no offices for them and am greatly disgusted with them. I was constantly and laboriously occupied throughout the day and until a late hour at night in clearing my table of the business upon [it], and giving to the members of my Cabinet instructions concerning the public business during my absence. Among other things I was called on to make compensation to J. Quinn Thornton for making a journey from Oregon to Washington. Hon Robt. Smith of the Ho. Repts. from Illinois called on me early in the day on the subject. Congress had inserted in the general appropriation Bill an item to defray the expenses and for the compensation of bearers of despatches from the Temporary Government in Oregon to the Government of the U. States. Mr. Thornton had brought to me in May last a private letter from Mr. Abernathy,[2] the Governor of

[1] Near the town of Bedford, about 100 miles southwest of Harrisburg.

[2] George Abernathy, 1807–1877, went to Oregon as a missionary in 1840; was elected Governor upon the organization of the provisional government in 1845 and continued in office until superseded by Joseph Lane, in 1849.

the temporary Governor [government] of Oregon and on comparing this letter with the terms of the law I had doubts whether Mr. Thornton's claim was embraced by the law. Mr. Smith [said] it was the intention of Congress to provide for his payment. He said he & Senator Douglass of Illinois knew Mr. Thornton well. I told him if Mr. Thornton would make a statement of his claim on oath and that he came at the instance and request of the Government or Governor of Oregon, and he (Mr. Smith) and Senator Douglass would address me a communication vouching for the good character and veracity of Mr. Thornton, and that it was the intention of Congress in the appropriation they had made to pay him, that I would direct his payment. Mr. Smith left and at a subsequent part of the day Senator Douglass called upon the subject, & I held in substance the same conversation with him that I had with Mr. Smith. The Secretary of the Treasury (Mr. Walker) was in my office during my conversation with Mr. Douglass. I read to him the law of Congress & the letter from Governor Abernathy, and discussed with him the legal question whether, upon that letter as the only evidence that Mr. Thornton had come from Oregon as the bearer of communications to the Government of the U. S., his claim fell within the law. Mr. Douglass thought it did. Upon a minute examination I thought otherwise, & so expressed myself. I then told Mr. Douglass what I had told Mr. Smith, and when I said to him if Mr. Thornton would state his claim on oath and he and Mr. Smith would vouch for his character and veracity and that it was the in-

tention of Congress in the appropriation they had made to pay him that I would, upon this evidence, in connection with Gov. Abernathy's letter, direct him to be paid; Mr. Douglass said in an excited and offensive manner, that could be done but he would feel humiliated or degraded (I am not positive which of these terms he used) to do it. I was indignant at his manner and the terms he used, and said to him promptly in a stern manner that I did not ask him to humiliate or degrade himself; that I asked him to do nothing in the matter. I told him he had called on me to urge the payment of the claim; that I desired to pay it if I could do so legally; that my opinion was that I would not be justified in paying it upon the naked letter of Gov. Abernathy alone, and that I would not direct its payment upon that evidence. I told him that if the statement he & Mr. Smith had made to me verbally was not put in writing & the evidence I required furnished, I would not direct its payment. He intimated that some enemies of Thornton who were intimate friends [of mine] had prejudiced me against him. He was still excited. I told him the fact was not so and that I repelled the insinuation. I demanded of him to give me the names of the persons by whom he supposed I had been prejudiced against Thornton, which he declined to do. The interview was painful & most unexpected to me. Mr. Douglass appeared to become calmer & to talk more rationally before he left. His arrogant tone and manner, as well as his language, was very offensive. I was myself somewhat excited & after he left the room I asked Mr. Walker, the

Sec. of the Treasury, if I had been betrayed into any impudent expression in my conversation with Mr. Douglass. He said I had not, and that Mr. Douglass was clearly in the wrong. Late in the afternoon Mr. Smith of Ill. called and presented to me the evidence which I had required in support of Thornton's claim, *to wit:* Thornton's own statement, accompanied with statements from Senator Douglass and himself, such as I had required in the mo[rn]ing. These papers I directed to be placed on file in the War Department, and upon this evidence I directed Mr. Thornton to be paid, in the same way that I had directed Mr. Joseph L. Meek, who had borne communications from the Government of Oregon to the U. S., to be paid. Mr. Smith expressed his gratification that Thornton would be paid. I regret exceedingly the excited conversation with Mr. Douglass. There was no occasion for it, and it was his own fault that it occurred. His conduct was not respectful to my public station; was assuming and arrogant, and upon reflection he must regret it.

The Hon. John McKeon called today in company with Mr. Marcy, the Secretary of War. I informed him in Mr. Marcy's presence that I had determined to remove Benjamin F. Butler from the office of Attorney of the U. S. for the Southern District of New York; that I desired to make the removal to-day, & that I was willing to appoint him (Mr. McKeon) in his place, and offered to do so. Mr. McKeon promptly said he could not accept it; that he held a good office in the City of New York which would not expire for two & an half years, which he would

not give up. I remarked that I regretted now that I had not appointed him when I appointed Mr. Butler, shortly after I came into the Presidential office. He declined positively to accept the office. I then asked him to name a suitable person to be appointed, repeating that I had resolved to remove Mr. Butler and desired to do it before I left, as I intended to do, for the Bedford Springs on to-morrow. He and Gov. Marcy canvassed the claims of several of the lawyers in New York, but came to no satisfactory opinion. Mr. McKeon requested me to postpone making the removal & appointment until my return from the Springs, and that in the mean-time he would return to New York & consult confidentially some of his political friends and would write Gov. Marcy on the subject. After much conversation with him and Gov. Marcy I agreed to his suggestion. I authorized him to consult with Mr. Charles O'Conner[1] and Mr. Cutting, either of whom I was willing to appoint, but neither of whom he thought would accept, and after consulting with these two gentlemen confidentially to request them to unite with himself in recommending a proper person to be appointed. With the understanding that he would do so, and that I would act upon the subject as soon as I returned from the Springs, Mr. McKeon left. After night Gov. Marcy called on other business, & when he was leaving I told him that when he heard

[1] Charles O'Conor, 1804–1884, a noted lawyer of New York. He was the senior counsel for Jefferson Davis and one of the signers of his bail bond. He changed the spelling of his name, the original form being O'Connor.

from Mr. McKeon, O'Conner, & Cutting, I would leave it to him to select the person proper to be appointed. This I did because he was better able to judge of the fitness of the men (lawyers) in New York for the office than I could be.

As I shall leave to-morrow for the Bedford Springs, I will continue this Diary in another volume,[1] not desiring to run the risk of any casuality by which this volume might be lost & fall into other hands.

I retired late at night, exceedingly fatigued from a most oppressive day's labour. The weather is very warm, and I greatly need rest & relaxation from business. This I hope I shall have for the next few days.

FRIDAY, *18th August, 1848.*—This morning I set out from Washington on a visit to the Bedford Springs in Pennsylvania. I took the morning train of cars & proceeded to Cumberland, Maryland, where I arrived at 6 O'Clock P. M. I was accompanied by my nephew, Samuel P. Walker, of Tennessee, and by Dr. Foltz,[2] a surgeon in the Navy. It had been known a day or two before that I intended to make the visit, though no public notice of it had been announced. My object was to have some repose and relaxation after my long and severe confinement and labour. Since my return early in

[1] The volume of the Diary in use at this time is discontinued with this day's entry, leaving some fifty pages blank. The entry for August 18 begins a new volume.

[2] Jonathan M. Foltz, Surgeon in the navy 1838, Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery from 1871 until his retirement in 1872.

July, 1847, from my Northern tour, I have not been more than two or three miles from my office, and during that whole period (13 months) my labours, responsibilities, and anxieties have been very great. Indeed I was exceedingly wearied and almost prostrated by fatigue. I regret that Mrs. Polk could not accompany me. Some friends who were on a visit to us made it proper, in her opinion, that she should remain. My brother, Wm. H. Polk, and his wife, my sister, Mrs. Hays, and her daughter, and Mrs. Polk's niece, Miss Sarah P. Rucker, were inmates of our family and they constituted too numerous a company to be of my party. At Harper's Ferry and Charlestown a number of persons who had heard that I was expected to pass had assembled to see me. Senator Underwood of Ky. and his family, Mr. Thompson of the Ho. Repts. from Virginia and his family, and Mr. Gaines of Natchez, Miss., were among the passengers in the cars as far as Cumberland. They all spent the night at the same Hotel with me in Cumberland. A number of the citizens of Cumberland called to pay their respects in the course of the evening. I should not omit to mention that my faithful servant, Wm. Day, a free man of colour, accompanies me and is very useful to me. I have had him in my employment as a messenger during the whole of my Presidential term. Col. James Polk[1] of Baltimore came up in

[1] Colonel James Polk of Somerset, Maryland, appointed Naval Officer at Baltimore December 29, 1845. He was a descendant of that branch of the Polk family which remained in Maryland when the President's ancestors removed to North Carolina.

the cars with me from the relay House. He is distantly related to me, having descended from the same original stock. He will join my party in the morning & will accompany me to the Bedford Springs.

SATURDAY, *19th August, 1848.*— After breakfast this morning I left Cumberland, Md., for the Bedford Springs, Penn., in a special coach furnished for my accommodation by Mr. Johnson, the very obliging stage contractor on the line. Mr. Johnson accompanied me to see that I was properly accommodated. My company in the coach consisted of my nephew, Samuel P. Walker, Dr. Foltz, Surgeon of the U. S. Navy, and Col. James Polk of Maryland. The latter gentleman fills the office of Naval officer at Baltimore. He descended from the same family with myself, and is distantly related. At the half-way House between Cumberland and the Bedford Springs (Anderson's) the teams in the coach were changed & we procured fresh horses. A number of farmers of the neighbourhood were there. They had heard the day before that I was expected to pass the road to-day. I shook hands and conversed with them. I soon found that they were democrats. One of them, named Cisney, was a sensible man, and talked more than any of the rest. He told me that the valley between the mountains in which we were was called Cumberland Valley, and that in politics it was a *little Berks* of a place. Berks is the great Democratic county of Pennsylvania, using [usually] giving between four and five thou-

sand of a Democratic majority. He pointed to [a] House in view, which he informed me was the place of voting in that District, and informed me that at the Presidential election in 1844 out of 208 votes polled 192 of them were given to Polk & Dallas, and that they intended to give as good a vote to Cass & Butler this fall. I took leave of these honest farmers & we proceeded on our journey. I was requested by Mr. Cisney to call at a house which he described a mile on the way and shake hands with his elder brother, who was now 88 years old, and, as he said, always opened the election at their precinct by giving the first Democratic vote. I called at the House and found the old gentleman absent from home. I got out of the coach and shook hands with the old lady. She expressed her grief that the old gentleman was absent and said he would be almost beside himself when he heard I had been there. She said he had rode off down to Esquire ——'s. I do not remember the name of the "Squire," as she called it. I promised her to call and see him on my return, which seemed greatly to delight her. We proceeded on our way to the Springs, where we arrived about 1 O'Clock P. M. It was known at the Springs that I was expected to-day, but I was not looked for until about 4 O'Clock, the usual hour for the arrival of the stage. It was not known that I would come over in a special coach and, arriving two or three hours earlier than the usual hour for the arrival of the Stage, the proprietor and company at the Springs were taken by surprise. I was informed after I arrived that the Citizens of the Vil-

lage of Bedford, situated about 2 miles from the Springs, and the company at the Springs had made arrangements to give me a formal reception, and had provided a band of music for the purpose. I prefer to have arrived quietly as I did than to have had a public reception. I found about 50 visitors at the springs, and among them was my old friend, the Hon. John Laporte,[1] with whom I served in Congress many years ago. Col. Black,[2] lately commanding the U. S. Volunteers in Mexico, and his wife, Mr. Magraw of Pittsburg, Mr. McKinley, Editor of the leading Democratic paper at Harrisburg, were also of the number. In the course of the evening Gen'l Bowman and a number of other citizens of the village of Bedford came out to see me. In the evening I was requested to walk into the Ballroom, where there was music and a number of young persons dancing. I remained but a short time and then retired for the night. I find the buildings large & the accommodations good. The Springs are situated in a valley between two mountains. The valley is not more than two hundreds yards wide. One of the head streams of the Juniata runs between the mountains, and the Springs flow out of the sides of the mountain. The Spring of greatest medicinal virtue and chiefly used is a bold, strong fountain. I have not been furnished with an analysis of its properties. The water, however, contains portions of magnesia & iron; & when used operates chiefly on

[1] John Laporte, Representative from Tennessee 1833–1837.

[2] Samuel Black, Lieutenant Colonel of the 1st regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers in the Mexican War.

the kidneys & bowels. There are also a white sulpher springs; a Slate Spring; a very large limestone Spring, and three or four other springs, all within a circumference of less than three hundred yards in diameter. The walks and grounds are neat & well shaded, and everything about the establishment has the appearance of comfort. I used but little of the water this evening. There is a great difference between the hot & sultry atmosphere of Washington & this place. I slept under a blanket to-night and would have been uncomfortable without it.

SUNDAY, *20th August, 1848.*— I rose early this morning and walked to the main spring, drank some of the water, and then ascended the mountain by a winding path to its Summit, where a summer-house or shed had been erected. The fog rose and prevented the view over the valley below, which is said to be very fine. I returned and drank more of the water before breakfast. This being the sabbath was a quiet day, and I remained chiefly in my chamber. I wrote letters to Mrs. Polk & to J. Knox Walker. In the afternoon I ascended to the top of the mountain again & had a fine view of the valley below and of the surrounding country. At dinner & in the afternoon I shook hands with a number of people from the village & the neighbourhood, who from curiosity had come to see the President of the United States. The day became cloudy and the atmosphere cold, so much so that about 2 O'Clock I had a fire made in my room. Towards sunset a cold rain com-

menced falling. At 8 O'Clock P. M. the company assembled in one of the large parlours and an excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Purviance [1] of the Presbyterian church. Mr. Purviance resides in Baltimore. After the service was over I retired for the night. The rain continued to fall when I retired, and I slept very comfortably under two blankets.

MONDAY, *21st August, 1848.*— The weather was cloudy and cool this morning, and I fear will be unpleasant during the short stay I propose to make at the Springs. I walked to the Spring and drank freely of the water before breakfast this morning. It begins to produce its effect on my system. Several of the visitors left this morning, and others speak of leaving soon in consequence of the unfavourable character of the weather. I find the company pleasant. Several persons from the village of Bedford & the surrounding country visited me to-day. In the evening Mr. Meek, the Marshall of the Oregon Territory, arrived from Washington bearing despatches to me from Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, & a communication from Mr. Cave Johnson, the Post master Gen'l. By them I learned that Gen'l Shields of Illinois, whom I had appointed Governor of Oregon, had, by a Telegraphic despatch, declined to accept. Before I left Washington I had made known my intention, in the event Gen'l Shields should not accept, to appoint Gen'l

[1] Rev. G. D. Purviance, pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Baltimore.

Joseph Lane of Indiana to be Governor of Oregon. This being known, Mr. Buchanan forwarded to me by Mr. Meek a commission for Gen'l Lane, all complete except my signature. I signed it and wrote a letter to Gen'l Lane. I delivered the commission and letter to Mr. Meek, with directions to proceed immediately to Gen'l Lane's residence on the Ohio River, near Evansville, Indiana, and deliver them to him. I prepared a Telegraphic despatch for Gen'l Lane, informing him of his appointment, and forwarded it to Thos. J. Reed,[1] P. M. at Louisville, with a request that he would send it to him by the first boat descending the River. This Telegraphic despatch I delivered to Gen'l Bowman, the editor of the Bedford *Gazette,* who took it to the Telegraph office in the village of Bedford & sent it off to-night. Mr. Meek left in the Western Stage and proceeded on his journey. My orders are that the Governor, Marshall, and other officers of Oregon should, if practicable, proceed to Oregon this fall, & for this purpose a military escort has been ordered to be in readiness at Fort Leavenworth, Mo., to accompany them. If Gov. Lane and the other officers can leave Fort Leavenworth by the 15th of September, they can cross the Rocky Mountains before the snows of winter will obstruct their passage.

TUESDAY, *22nd August, 1848.*—This morning was cool & fires were comfortable. It is almost too late in the season to visit this watering place. In the hot weather it must be a delightful spot. I rode

[1] Thomas J. Read.

two miles & visited Maj'r Watson at his house this morning. Major W. had invited me to do so. I was accompanied by a party of Gentlemen. When we arrived we met Judge Black,[1] who is a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Governor of Pennsylvania. There was a cold collation and other refreshments. I returned to the Springs & after dinner rode to the village of Bedford at the invitation of several of the citizens. A party of gentlemen accompanied me. We stopped at a Hotel where many citizens of the village called and were introduced to me. We took supper and returned to the Springs. I spend my time very comfortably. Judge Laporte, Judge Black, Col. Black of Pittsburg, lately returned from Mexico, Mr. Magraw, & other Democratic friends are of the company at the Springs. The Hon. Job Mann, the Representative of the District in Congress, Gen'l Bowman, & others who reside in the village, spend a part of every day with me at the Springs. I use the water freely, & think the rest, mountain air, & water has invigorated and improved me. On returning from the village this evening I found the Hon. John McKeon of the City of New York, with whom I once served in Congress, had arrived. He very soon asked me to walk, and informed me that he had come especially to see me and to say that he would accept the office of Attorney of the U. S. for the Southern District of New York, if I removed Benjamin F. Butler, who now holds that office. The day before I left Wash-

[1] Jeremiah Sullivan Black, 1810–1883, U. S. Attorney General 1857–1860, Secretary of State 1860–1861.

ington Mr. McKeon called on me, and I informed him that I intended to remove Mr. Butler and that I had thought of tendering the office to him. He at that time declined accepting it, and in consequence of doubts on his mind who should be appointed, he requested me to postpone making the removal & appointment until after my return from my contemplated visit to Bedford Springs, & until he could go to N. York & consult two friends, Mr. Cutting and Mr. Charles O'Connor, as to the proper person to be appointed. I agreed to postpone action as he had requested. The Secretary of War was present during that conversation with him. He was to write to Mr. Marcy after his return to N. York. After he left I saw Mr. Marcy in the evening & told him that I would rely upon his opinion as to the person I would appoint. Now Mr. McKeon desires the appointment himself. I informed him of what I had said to Mr. Marcy on thursday, after he left my office, & that I would not act until I saw Mr. Marcy, and that I would probably, after what I had said to him, appoint the person whom he might recommend.

WEDNESDAY, *23rd August, 1848.*— Mr. John McKeon of New York, who arrived here on last evening, left here early this morning (see this Diary of yesterday). About 11 O'Clock to-day accompanied by 8 or 10 gentlemen in carriages & in pursuance of a previous arrangement, I set out to ride to the village of Schellsburg, about 9 miles on the turnpike road in the direction towards Pittseburg. In passing through the village of Bedford I called a

few minutes at the House of my friend, the Hon. Job. Mann, the Representative in Congress from this District, & paid my respects to his family. Mr. Mann accompanied the party to Schellsburg. At Schellsburg the people from the village & many from the country called and shook hands with me at the tavern at which we stopped. Several ladies called. The people seemed to be much gratified. They said, and the people of the village of Bedford, that I was the first President of the U. S. who had ever visited them since the Whisky insurrection in 1794, when troops had been collected there to suppress it, and when Gen'l Washington was there. The people seemed to be much gratified at my visit. We took dinner at Schellsburg and returned to the Springs, having had a pleasant ride & spent the day pleasantly. On my return I found Judge Longstreth who, as well as Judge Black who accompanied me to Schellsburg, is a candidate for the Democratic nomination as a candidate for Governor. He had arrived in the afternoon. The State convention to make the nomination will meet at Harrisburg on wednesday next, the 30th Instant. I was informed that during my absence to [at] Schellsburg a fellow named Nugent, the correspondent of the New York *Herald* over the signature of *Galvienses,* and who has been calumniating me for the last two years in his letters to that paper, had arrived. He is the same fellow who was arraigned before the Senate for contempt at its last Session. He was pointed out to me, for I had never seen his person before to know him. He has, no doubt, fol-

lowed me to the Springs to see what new slander he can invent for his employers to be published in the *Herald.* I informed Judge Laporte who he was, & took especial care not to speak to him & not to permit myself to converse in his presence. Though a writer of some smoothness I consider him an unprincipled scoundrel. I may expect to see some falsehood or other propagated by him in the *Herald.*

THURSDAY, *24th August, 1848.*— Intending to leave on to-morrow I spent a considerable portion of the day in writing in my room. Quite a number of persons from the surrounding country called to see me to-day. Judge Black and Judge Longstreth both left to-day. The weather is so damp and cool that most of the company speak of leaving in two or three days. In the evening a number of young persons, male & female, came out from the village of Bedford, and there was dancing in the Ball-Room. I was requested to walk into the Ball room. I did so, & after remaining a few minutes I retired. My nephew, Samuel P. Walker, did some copying for me to-day.

FRIDAY, *25th August, 1848.*— After Breakfast this morning I set out in the Stage for Cumberland, Md., on my return to Washington. I was accompanied by my nephew, Sam'l P. Walker; Dr. Foltz, surgeon of the U. S. Navy; Col. James Polk of Maryland, who has been one of my party during my visit to Bedford; and by Col. Samuel Black of Pittsburg, and his wife. When the stage had proceeded about

four miles, I was overtaken by a messenger with a Telegraphic despatch from Gen'l Lane of Indiana, dated at Louisville, Kentucky, this morning, informing me that he had received the Telegraphic despatch which I had sent through Thos. J. Reed, P. M. of Louisville, Ky., to him on the night of the 21st Instant (see this Diary of that day) and that he accepted the appointment of Governor of Oregon and would be ready to proceed to Oregon with Mr. Meek, the Marshall, this fall. This telegraphic despatch is dated at Louisville, Ky., this morning, and reached me before 10 O'Clock A. M. The stage to Cumberland stopped at the half-way House between the Bedford Springs and Cumberland (Anderson's) where I found about 20 persons of the neighbourhood assembled to see me. I conversed familiarly with them. I stopped on the wayside an aged man named Cisney, who was and had been for many years a leading man of the neighbourhood. He told me he was 88 years old, that he had always been a Democratic [Democrat], & had voted at every election since he was entitled to vote. He is a remarkable person. We arrived at Cumberland about 5 O'Clock P. M. and remained there all night. During the evening many persons called to see me. I determined to-night to stop at the Berkeley Springs on tomorrow. They are situated about 50 miles from Cumberland and two or three miles from the Rail Road from Cumberland to Baltimore.

SATURDAY, *26th August, 1848.*— I left Cumberland in the cars at 8 O'Clock this morning, and

about 10 O'Clock A. M. stopped at the depot near the Berkeley Springs. I left the cars and proceeded to the Springs. I was accompanied by my Nephew, Samuel P. Walker, Dr. Foltz, and Col. James Polk of Baltimore, who constituted my party. We arrived at the springs between 11 & 12 O'Clock and stopped at Strother's Hotel. We found a company of fashionable people, ladies and gentlemen, numbering, it was said, between 150 and 200 persons. There were two Hotels at the place. Most of the visitors were at the Hotel at which I stopped. There was some competition, as I learned, as to the Hotel at which I should [stop], but in this I took no part but left it to Dr. Foltz, who had written from Cumberland last evening by the night train of cars to Capt. Bowie, a friend of his, who is a visitor at the Springs, to engage rooms. Capt. Bowie had engaged the rooms accordingly, and met us at the Depot to accompany us. I found at the Springs Senator Johnson of Louisiana and his wife; Judge Daniel [1] of the Supreme Court of the U. S. and his two daughters; Judge Pendleton & his family; The Rev. Dr. Laurie of Washington & his wife; Mrs. Key & her daughters, & many others, chiefly from Virginia & Maryland. The town of Berkeley is the County seat of Morgan County, Virginia, and is situated in a valley with mountains or hills around it. It was formerly called the bath springs. It has been resorted to as a bathing place for more than half a century. Gen'l Washington occasionally attended

[1] Peter Vivian Daniel, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court 1840–1860.

them, and a small log house is still standing and is pointed out as the one he occupied. There is no mineral or medicinal water. There is a clear boiling spring of water which is warmer that [than] the water of other springs usually is, being of a temperature of about 75 degrees. This water is used for bathing, & this is the only inducement which I could discover for visiting the place. The grounds and walks are handsomely laid off, and the Hotel is well kept. The dining hour was 2½ O'Clock P. M. A good deal of form and ceremony were observed at Dinner. In the afternoon I took a bath, but could not discover that it was in any respects superior to a bath taken any where else, where there was puring [pure] running spring water. I presume the chief reason why this has been a place of resort in summer must be that it is situated among hills and is in a healthy part of the country. I was introduced in the course of the afternoon to many of the visitors, ladies & gentlemen; and to several persons living in the village & adjacent country who called to see me. In the evening there was dancing in the large dining room, which was used also as a ball room. I was invited to go into the Ball-Room & did so. I remained about an hour, when I retired for the night.

SUNDAY, *27th August, 1848.*— Nothing worthy of notice occurred this morning. At 11 O'Clock accompanied by Senator Johnson of Louisiana, Judge Daniel, Dr. Foltz, S. P. Walker, and Col. Harmonson, I attended Divine service in a small methodist church. The Rev. Dr. Lourie of the Presbyterian

church preached a good sermon. Col. Harmonson is a leading citizen of the village, is a Democrat, and has been very attentive to me since my arrival. He expressed his regret that I had stopped at the Hotel I did, as he informed me that the proprietor (Strother) was a violent Federalist & very vindictive. He introduced to me a number of the people of the village & adjacent country, who had come in to see me. Among those whom he introduced were two methodist preachers, named Whitmore & Tyson, who had come in from the country to see me. Col. James Polk of Maryland, who had been one of my party to Bedford & here, left this morning. I will leave for Washington on to-morrow. Having determined to leave on to-morrow morning for Washington, I learned after night that the carriages which run from the House (Strother's) at which I stop to convey passengers to & from the Rail Road depot were filled, & that I could get no passage on to-morrow. The distance is about 2 ½ miles. I inquired how this was. Dr. Foltz and Dr. [Mr.] S. P. Walker had engaged seats at the bar on yesterday and were told that they would be furnished. Now it appeared that they would not be furnished. I felt that this was bad treatment, and so expressed myself to Dr. Foltz and Mr. Walker. Before bed-time two or three young men, having heard of the difficulty, called at my room to tender to me and my party seats which they had engaged. I declined to accept them, stating that I had been badly treated by the land-lord, but that I would not put them to any inconvenience; that during my absence from Washington I had no other

or greater privileges than any other citizen, and that I would take care of myself. I learned afterwards that I was to [be] put into a Stage running to Hancock, on the Rail Road, a distance of six miles. This I did not like. The young men who politely tendered me their seats were Mr. Davis of Baltimore (son of the former mayor) Capt. Boyle of Annapolis, late of [the] U. S. Army in Mexico, [and] Capt. Bowie of W [?] I was now satisfied that Col. Harmonson was right in his regret that I had not stopped at the other House (O'Farrell's) in the village. I had received an invitation at Cumberland on friday evening from O'Farrell & Co. to stop at their House, but Dr. Foltz wrote to Capt. Bowie, who was at the Springs, to engage rooms for me, & he had done so & met me at the depot on the railroad on saturday morning & informed me that he had done so. In this way it happened that I had stopped at Strother's. Strother pretends to belong to the mock aristocracy, but must be a low-bred man, and I attribute the bad treatment I have received to his vindictiveness in politics.

MONDAY, *28th August, 1848.*— Learning of the difficulty which had been interposed to my getting a passage in the regular conveyances this morning to the Rail Road Depot, Col. Harmonson, who was very indignant at, it had procured a fine new coach to convey me & my party to Hancock. An early breakfast was ordered by S. P. Walker & Dr. Foltz, in order to enable me to reach Hancock before the cars passed. (See this Diary of yesterday.) While

walking in the porch, waiting for breakfast & the coach, Mr. Strother, the land-lord (who had no doubt become uneasy at the dissatisfaction expressed by all the visitors who had heard of his treatment of me) approached me and introduced the subject by inquiring which route I preferred to the Depot. I had but little to say to him, as I felt indignant at his conduct & did not care to converse with him. I gave him no satisfaction, but said to him that I had taken it for granted that as a matter of course the visitors at his house would be furnished with a conveyance to the Rail Road when they wished to leave, & like all other visitors I had expected it until, to my surprise, I was informed last night that he had provided no such conveyance for me. One or two persons stepped up, and desiring to have no conversation with him I continued my walk in the porch. Dr. Foltz, S. P. Walker, and myself took an early breakfast; I paid a short visit to Col. Harmonson's family, and left in a new coach which Col. H. had provided for Hancock. I was accompanied by S. P. Walker, Dr. Foltz, my servant, and two gentlemen from Pennsylvania. We arrived at Hancock half an hour before the cars passed. At Hancock, or rather at the Depot on the opposite side of the Potomac River from the town, I saw & shook hands with a number of persons who were there. I took the cars & proceeded on my return. At the relay House I met Andrew J. Polk of Tennessee, who was on his way to Raleigh, N. C. At the Depot midway between Washington & Baltimore I met Mr. Buchanan, Sec. of State, who returned with me to Wash-

ington. He informed me that he had that evening come that far with his sister on her return from a visit to Washington. On arriving at the President's mansion I found the family well, except my two nieces, Virginia Hays & Sarah P. Rucker, both of whom, I was informed, had chills and fevers on yesterday. My sister, Ophelia C. Hays, & my brother, W. H. Polk, & his wife, were still inmates of my family. J. Knox Walker, my Private Secretary, left to-night to visit his wife and children at Lynchburg, Virginia. I learn that Rob't J. Walker, Secretary of the Treasury, left the day after I did for Rockaway, N. Y., for the benefit of his health & was still absent; that Isaac Toucey, the Atto. Gen'l, had been called home suddenly in consequence of the illness of a member of his family; and that Cave Johnson & his wife had left on yesterday morning on a visit to the North. I learn that Judge Mason, who was absent in Va. when I left, returned three or four days ago. His sick child whom he had gone to Virginia to visit, I learn, died.

TUESDAY, *29th August, 1848.*— I found on my table a large number of letters & communications which had been received in my absence and been opened & endorsed by my Private Secretary; none of which were very important, but most of which required attention. A number of persons called and among them were a number of office-seekers. At the usual hour of the meeting of the Cabinet, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Marcy, & Mr. Mason attended, being all who were in the City (see

this Diary of yesterday). Many matters, chiefly of detail, which had been awaiting my return were considered & disposed of. The Secretary of War presented a plan of distribution of the regular army among the various posts & stations deemed necessary to be occupied in a period of peace. This plan, running as it did into much detail, I could only approve generally. The larger portion of the force were to be stationed on the frontier, in Oregon & the newly acquired territories of New Mexico & California. The Secretary of State brought to my notice the numerous statements and rumours in public newspapers of a contemplated movement or expedition of citizens of the U. S. of hostile character towards Mexico, the object of which was said to be to revolutionize the Northern provinces of Mexico and to establish the Republic of Sierra Madra. If such a movement is on foot, or such an expedition contemplated, any attempt to exercise [execute] it would be a clear violation of our international obligations under the late Treaty with Mexico, & a violation of our neutrality laws as applied to all nations with which the U. S. are at peace, and it would be the imperative duty of the President of the U. S. to take all legal measures in his power to arrest and prevent it. The persons supposed to be engaged in the contemplated expedition against Mexico are called in the newspapers Buffalo Hunters, meaning that they are to organize & invade Mexico, under the pretense that they are engaging simply in a Buffalo Hunt. After discussing the subject it was the unanimous opinion of the members of the cabinet present

& myself that precautionary measures should be adopted to repress & prevent as [any] such contemplated expedition. With that view it was agreed that the Secretary of State should immediately address instructions to the Attorneys of the U. S. in Louisiana, Texas, & other Western States to be vigilent in ascertaining if such a design was on foot, & if so and he could obtain the requisite proof, to institute prosecutions against all persons concerned in it. It was agreed also that the Secretary of War should address without delay instructions to Gen'l Taylor, commanding the Western Division of the army, including Texas & the Rio Grande frontier, to use military force if necessary to check & repress such a movement, if one were attempted. Both the U. S. Attorneys and Gen'l Taylor were to be instructed to Report all the information on the subject which they possessed or could obtain, to the Government. Mr. Buchanan informed me that during my absence at the Bedford Springs Mr. Crampton, Brittish charge d'affaires, had called at the Department of State and informed him that he had a despatch from his Government instructing him to call on the Government of the U. S. to perform their Treaty obligations to Great Brittain and to enforce our neutrality laws, by preventing our citizens from taking part with the people of Ireland in their present attempt to resist the authority of the Brittish Government. Mr. Buchanan informed me that at his suggestion Mr. Crampton agreed to postpone executing his instructions by making the demand upon this Government, until after the arrival of the next Steamer from Eng-

land, which was then daily expected, as the intelligence which that Steamer might bring might render such a step unnecessary. The Steamer had since arrived bringing intelligence unfavourable to the success of the Irish patriots and rendering it probable that they had been overpowered by the Brittish army in Ireland, and since this news was received he had heard nothing from Mr. Crampton. All my sympathies are with the oppressed and suffering people of Ireland, and I hope no occasion will occur to render it necessary for the Executive to act in enforcing our neutrality laws. I sincerely wish the Irish patriots success, but though this is the case, it would be my imperative duty to see our neutrality laws faithfully executed. No action is at present required in the matter.

I stated to the members of the Cabinet who were present that I wished now to execute the purpose which I had for some weeks resolved upon, by removing Benjamin F. Butler of New York from the office of United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. The subject had been previously submitted to the Cabinet, & I now called their attention to the very exceptionable speech, recently published, which he made at the Buffalo Convention, assembled on the 9th Instant, and to paragraphs in the New York *Evening Post* almost challenging his removal. I stated I had resolved to remove him, & that they might consider that as settled. I informed them that I had difficulties in determining who should be appointed in his stead, and it was upon that

point I wished their advice. On thursday, the 17th Inst., the day before I left Washington on my visit to the Bedford Springs, the Hon. John McKeon called, & the Secretary of War and myself held a conversation with him on the subject (see this Diary of that day). At that time Mr. McKeon did not desire the appointment. He requested me to postpone acting on the subject until my return from the Springs, for the reason that he was not satisfied who ought to be appointed. I acceded to his wishes, with [and] the understanding was that he was to return to New York & after consulting Mr. Charles O'Conner & Mr. Cutting, he was to write to the Secretary of War recommending the person whom he thought it proper to be appointed. To my surprise Mr. McKeon visited me at the Bedford Springs on the 22nd Inst., & made known to me that he had changed his mind & was then willing to accept the appointment himself (see this Diary of that day). On the morning of the 23rd Inst., Mr. McKeon [left] the Springs without my seeing him. After he left I observed an article in the *Pennsylvanian,* signed by himself & others styling themselves a directory to take measures to aid the Irish people in their resistance to the Brittish Government. As soon as I read this article I had apprehensions that Mr. McKeon may have subjected himself to the penal provisions of our neutrality laws, which as President of the U. S. I would be bound to see faithfully executed. If any occasion should arise making [it] my duty to enforce these laws it must be done through the agency of the District attorneys

of the U. S., and in such case it would be very embarrassing that Mr. McKeon himself should hold that office in New York. I accordingly immediately addressed a letter to the Secretary of War, enclosing the newspaper article and expressing my doubts of the propriety of appointing him. I kept a copy of this letter. The subject was discussed and all the members of the Cabinet present concurred with me in the opinion that Mr. McKeon ought not to be appointed; but after all that had ocurred with Mr. McKeon, and in view of the interview stated in this day's diary held by Mr. Crampton, the Brittish charge d'affaires, on the subject of the enforcement of our neutrality laws as respects the Irish question, Mr. Marcy suggested that it would be important to satisfy Mr. McKeon that he ought not to desire or insist upon being appointed; and with a view to have an opportunity to confer with him & to satisfy him upon this point, Mr. Marcy proposed that he would send a Telegraphic despatch to Mr. McKeon & request him to come to Washington, & that for that purpose I should postpone making the appointment for two or three days. To this I agreed, & Mr. Marcy prepared a Telegraphic despatch & sent it off. I despatched much business which had accumulated on my table to-day. This being reception evening a number of persons called.

WEDNESDAY, *30th August, 1848.*— I was surprised to learn, as soon as I rose this morning, from the servants that an old servant named Smith, a colored man whom I have hired & had in my employment as a fire-maker during my whole term, died in

his room in the President's House about 1 O'Clock this morning. He has been confined to his room by a chronic disease for some weeks past, but his immediate dissolution was not anticipated. He was a free man & a faithful old servant. During his illness he was waited on & all his wants supplied by the other servants. I directed my stewart [steward] to procure a coffin & see that he was decently & properly interred. He was interred late in the evening. The expenses, as the stewart [steward] reported, were twenty dollars, which I directed him to pay & he did so. In the course of the day Mr. Buchanan called and read to me the instructions [1] which he had prepared, in pursuance of the understanding in Cabinet on yesterday, to the U. S. District attorneys to take measures to prevent the "Buffalo Hunters," as they were styled in the newspapers, from making any hostile movement upon Mexico, or fitting out an expedition with a view to invade the Northern Provinces of Mexico (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. Marcy also called & read instructions which he had prepared to Gen'l Taylor on the same subject. I approved the instructions which they had prepared, and directed them to be sent off by mail without delay. I was occupied with business and visitors in my office to-day. The Hon. Mr. Bowden, one of the Representatives in Congress from Alabama, who still remains in the City, called to-day. The Hon. Isaac Toucey, Attorney General of the U. S., returned to-day from a visit to his family in Connecticut, one of whom had been seriously ill. He called

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VIII, 192

to see me as soon as he reached the City. My nephew, Samuel P. Walker, left for his residence in Tennessee this morning.

THURSDAY, *31st August, 1848.*— Desiring to have time to attend to business in my office to-day & to be free from the annoyance of office-seekers, I directed my porter not to admit company until 2 O'Clock P. M., except officers of the Government on public business. Several public officers called & I transacted public business with them. The Secretary of War called, accompanied by Mr. John McKeon of New York, to whom he had addressed a Telegraphic despatch on tuesday, the 29th Inst. (see this Diary of that day) The object which the Secretary of War had in desiring Mr. McKeon to come to Washington, was to confer with him in relation to the person proper to be appointed U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, in place of Benjamin F. Butler whom I designed to remove. A full consversation took place between Mr. McKeon, Mr. Marcy, and myself on the subject. Though Mr. McKeon had positively declined to accept the office on the 17th Instant (see this Diary of that day) he was now anxious to be appointed. Mr. Marcy had this morning shown to Mr. McKeon the letter which I had addressed to him from the Bedford Springs on the 23rd Inst. Mr. Marcy and myself both thought that in view of the developments which had taken place since our interview with Mr. McKeon on the 17th Instant, it would be improper to appoint him, & so informed him. Since that interview Mr.

Crampton, the Brittish charge d'affaires, had called on the Secretary of State to enforce our Treaty obligations & to enforce our neutrality laws with Great Brittain, in suppressing the movements in favour of the oppressed and suffering people of Ireland (see this Diary of the 29th Instant) but had been induced by Mr. Buchanan to postpone making the formal application for the present. He will, however, certainly renew the demand should there be an occasion for it. Mr. McKeon admitted that he was a member of the Irish directory in New York who had been actively engaged for some time past in raising money to aid the Irish people against the oppressions of the Brittish Government, but he said he had done nothing which would subject himself to a criminal prosecution under our neutrality laws. I read these laws to him, and their stringent provisions seemed to strike him with surprise. He admitted that in his conference with Mr. Charles O'Conner of New York, the reason assigned by him why he would be unwilling to accept the office was that he might be subject to the penalties of our neutrality laws. Mr. O'Conner is a member with Mr. O'Conner [McKeon] of the Irish Directory of New York. Both Mr. Marcy and myself told Mr. McKeon that in case it became my duty to enforce our neutrality laws it must be done, as he knew, through the agency of the attorneys of the U. S., and that if he were appointed and were called upon to prosecute Mr. O'Conner or any other of his associates of the Irish directory, he would be in a very embarrassing condition. I told him and repeated it to him (because

I was determined that he should not misunderstand me or my motives in not appointing him) that all my sympathies were enlisted on behalf of the Irish Patriots in their struggle to relieve themselves from the oppressions of their Government, and that I heartily wished them success, but at the same time that these were my individual feelings, I would be imperatively bound by my oath of office, if called on, to see that our neutrality laws were inforced. I told him that when I entered upon my duties of President of the U. S. I had taken a solemn oath to see that the laws were faithfully executed, and this duty I must perform in the case of our neutrality laws if required to do so. I submitted to him whether, under all the circumstances of the case, it was not better for himself, better for the Democratic party, and better for my administration that he should not be appointed. I told him in the course of the conversation that I had within a day or two past issued orders to the attorneys of the U. S. and to our military commanders in the Western States, and particularly on the Mexican frontier, to enforce our neutrality laws, and to arrest and prosecute any persons who under the name of "Buffalo Hunters" might attempt to invade Mexico, or to fit out an expedition to revolutionize the Northern states of Mexico, or to establish the Republic of the Sierra Madra, as it was reported in [the] newspapers there was a design to do. I told him I had felt bound to do this in execution of our neutrality laws & treaty stipulations towards Mexico. I told him I would be bound to do the same thing in reference to those of

our citizens engaged in the Irish cause who might violate these laws. I expressed the hope to him that neither he nor any other citizen in New York would violate these laws so as to make it my duty to proceed against them. Nothing would give me more pain, but still it would be my duty & I must perform it. Mr. Marcy enforced all these views & presented others, but still Mr. McKeon was not satisfied, but desired the appointment. He had changed his opinion since the 17th Inst., when he was unwilling to accept it, and though the circumstances which had since transpired made it manifestly improper now to appoint him, he had set his mind upon it. He, however, became reasonable on the subject. It being decided that Mr. McKeon would not be appointed, I asked his advice whom I should appoint. Mr. Marcy and Mr. McKeon canvassed the qualifications and fitness of several members of the New York bar, and after hearing them I determined to appoint the Hon. Charles McVean, whom I knew personally and with whom I had once served in Congress. They both agreed that his appointment would be a good [one], & they thought would be agreeable to the people of New York. In answer to an enquiry made by me, Mr. McKeon said that Mr. McVean was not unfriendly to the Irish cause in New York, and would not be unacceptable to the Irish people in New York. He thought he had taken no part in the recent movements upon that subject. I finally said that I would appoint Mr. McVean, & would make the appointment either today or to-morrow as might be preferred. Mr. McKeon requested that I

would postpone making the appointment until to-morrow, as he would prefer that it should be made after he left the City. I told him I would postpone it until to-morrow. I disposed of much business on my table to-day & saw several public officers & transacted business with them.

FRIDAY, *1st September, 1848.*— I did not open my office for the reception of company until 2 O'Clock P. M. to-day. A few persons were admitted before that hour, and among them the Hon. Mr. Henley of the Ho. Repts from Indiana. To-day I appointed Charles McVean of New York to be attorney of the U. S., vice Benjamin F. Butler removed. Shortly after I became President I removed a Whig from this office & appointed Mr. Butler. I did so upon the general principle that the important subordinate public offices should be filled by persons who agreed in opinion with the President as to the policy to be pursued by the Government, and who would co-operate with the President in carrying out that policy. Mr. Butler at the time he was appointed was a democrat. He has since abandoned the Democratic party; has bolted from and does not support the regularly nominated candidates of the Democratic party for President & Vice President of the U. S.; has united himself with Federalists and abolitionists; and is endeavoring to divide the country into geographical parties. He does not now pretend to support the measures or principles of my administration. He has made several public speeches recently at New York, Albany,

& Buffalo and other places, in some of which he has been offensive and highly disrespectful to my administration. He is now one of the worst enemies to the Democratic party and its principles in the Union. The *Post, Globe,* and *Atlas* newspapers in New York which are his organs, are more abusive of me personally and of my administration than any Whig papers in the Union. Indeed the whole party of Barn-burners in New York, of which Mr. Butler is a leading & controlling member, are not only abusive of me & my administration, but they seem to challenge and defy me to remove Mr. Butler, in the hope, no doubt, that they may enlist the public sympathy over him as a martyr for opinion's sake. By his removal to-day I have gratified [them], & they may make the most of it. I should not have removed Mr. Butler for his mere opinions upon any abstract question, nor for his free expression of them, but when he becomes a leading champion of a faction in assailing me personally and politically, in throwing every obstacle in his power in the way [of] the successful administration of the Government upon the publicly declared principles upon which I conduct [it], I do not hesitate to remove him from the honorable and profitable office which he has heretofore held under my administration. My nephew, Capt. James H. Walker of the regiment of Voltigeurs, returned from Baltimore and stopped at the President's mansion as guest in my family. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I saw company and during the day transacted much business in my office & with public officers.

SATURDAY, *2nd September, 1848.*— Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, left the City this morning on a visit to the Saratoga Springs & other places at the North. I appointed Mr. Toucey, the Atto. Gen'l of the U. S., to act as Secretary of State during Mr. Buchanan's absence. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, present Mr. Marcy, sec. of War, Mr. Mason, sec. of the Navy, and Mr. Toucey, Atto. Gen'l. The other three members of the Cabinet are absent from the City. Several matters of business, but of no general importance, were considered and disposed of. Mr. Marcy informed me that he would leave this afternoon on a visit to his family in New York. I appointed Mr. Mason, the Sec. of the Navy, to act as Secretary of War during Mr. Marcy's absence. I disposed of business in my office as usual to-day, and was occupied until a late hour at night. This afternoon my sister, Mrs. Hays, left on a visit to New York accompanied by her husband's nephew, Brevet major Wm. Hays of the U. S. army.

SUNDAY, *3rd September, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day and was accompanied by Mrs. Polk, my nephew, Capt. James H. Walker, late of the Regiment of Voltigeurs, and by Mrs. Daniel Graham.

MONDAY, *4th September, 1848.*— This was a busy day. All of my Cabinet are absent from the City except the Secretary of the Navy and the Attorney General. The former is also acting Secretary of

War, and the latter acting Secretary of State. They both called to see me on public business in the course of the day. My attention was called to several matters of detail in relation [to which] I gave directions, which would not have been brought to me if all the members of the Cabinet had been in [their] place. I disposed of much business on my table. Mr. Rhett of S. C. and Mr. Bowden of Alabama, both members of the Ho. Repts., called. I disposed of much business on my table. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of visitors. Several persons called. All of them were either seeking office or begging money. The herd of office seekers who annoy me unceasingly are with rare exceptions worthless and contemptible people. It would be much better for them if they would go to their respective homes and engage in some honest calling by which they could make a living. To witness, as I constantly do, healthy young men acting the part of gentlemen-loafers, and hanging on at Washington from month to month begging for offices, is most disgusting to me. Nine-tenths of this class are wholly unworthy of any public place.

TUESDAY, *5th September, 1848.*— This was Cabinet day. Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, and Mr. Toucey, the Attorney General, are all the members of the Cabinet who are in the City. They called at the usual hour of the meeting of the Cabinet, and I transacted some business with them. On yesterday I had requested Mr. Toucey, as acting Secretary of State, to prepare a despatch to Mr. Ban-

croft, U. S. Minister at London, to interpose his good offices with the Brittish Government in behalf of any American citizens who might be under arrest for participating in the late disturbances in Ireland. We have no authentic information that any such American citizens have been arrested, but the newspapers state the fact to be so, and there is reason to believe the statement. I had directed Mr. Toucey to instruct Mr. Bancroft, if such was the fact, to see that they had a fair trial, and, if convicted, to procure their pardon if practicable. I had also directed him to instruct Mr. B. to interpose in a delicate way, & intimate to the Brittish Government that it would be very gratifying to the Gov[ern]ment & people of the U. S. if that Government could, consistently with its own sense of duty, extend a general amnesty or pardon to English subjects in Ireland, who had recently attempted by a revolution to free themselves of the oppressions of their Government. We have no right to make such a demand, but simply to request it and to appeal to the magnanimity of Great Brittain not [to] execute Mr. Smith O'Bryan and other Irish Patriots who are understood to be under arrest for Treason. Mr. Toucey read the despatch which he had prepared in pursuance of my instructions. Some modifications were suggested by Judge Mason and myself, which he agreed to make, and exhibit the modified despatch to me before it was sent off. The whole American people with rare exceptions deeply sympathise with the oppressed and suffering people of Ireland, and if by interposing our good offices the lives of O'Bryan and other lead-

ing patriots can be saved, I am sure we will do an act of humanity, and discharge a duty which will be acceptable to our own country and, indeed, to the civilized world, wherever liberal principles are cherished. I despatched a large amount of business to-day, chiefly of a character of no general importance. I saw some of the public officers, and conferred with them concerning business pertaining to their respective offices. In the afternoon I took a ride on horseback with my brother, Maj'r Wm. H. Polk. This was reception evening. The weather was very warm for the season and but few persons called. My nephew, Capt. James H. Walker, late of the Regiment of Voltigeurs, left tonight by the Southern Boat on his return to Tennessee.

WEDNESDAY, *6th September, 1848.*— I directed my porter this morning not to admit visitors, except public officers on business, until 2 O'Clock P. M. My object was to clear [my] table if possible of the business upon it. I was, however, frequently interrupted before that hour by the calls of public officers on business. The Secretary of the Navy and the Atto. General, who are the only members of the Cabinet in the City, called on business. At 2 O'Clock P. M. my office was opened. A number of persons called, most of whom were office seekers. I continued in my office until a later hour than usual, disposing of the business on my table. The Hon. Robert Smith, a member of Congress from Illinois, called to-day.

THURSDAY, *7th September, 1848.*— Several persons called this morning, and among others Col. Persifer F. Smith of the mounted Rifle Regiment. Col. Smith is now Maj'r General by Brevet. Although I appointed him originally and conferred upon [him] his Brevet promotion, I had never before met him personally. He was accompanied by Senator Johnson [1] of Louisiana. I was engaged in my office until 2 O'Clock, when my doors were opened for the reception of company. A number of persons called and among them, as is always the case, were some office seekers. In the course of the day The Secretary of the Navy, the Atto. Gen'l, and some other public officers called on business.

FRIDAY, *8th September, 1848.*— I was much occupied in my office to-day. Many persons called. I find in the absence of four members of my Cabinet from the City (Messrs. Buchanan, Walker, Marcy, & Johnson) that very much of my time is taken up in the details of the executive duties. The Secretary of the Navy and the Attorney General called and spent an hour on business with me to-day. I had an interview with Gen'l Persifer F. Smith & Judge Mason, who is acting Secretary of War in Mr. Marcy's absence. Mr. Toucey read to me the despatch which, as acting Secretary of State, he had prepared to Mr. Bancroft (see this Diary of the 5th Instant). At my suggestion a single modification was made, & I approved it. Though occupied

[1] Henry Johnson, 1783–1864, Senator from Louisiana 1818–1824, and 1845–1849.

through the day nothing of much importance transpired.

SATURDAY, *9th September, 1848.*— This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. The Secretary of the Navy and [the] Atto. General were the only members of the Cabinet in the City. They attended at the regular hour. Some matters of minor importance were considered and disposed of. They retired about 2 O'Clock P. M. I attended to business on my table as usual. Nothing of special interest occurred to-day.

SUNDAY, *10th September, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk, Miss Rucker, and Miss Hays accompanied me. The Rev. Dr. McGuffy,[1] a Professor at the university of Virginia, preached.

MONDAY, *11th September, 1848.*— I was much occupied with business this morning. I kept my office closed until 2 O'Clock P. M. The Attorney General called & I transacted business with him. When I opened my office a number of persons called, almost all of whom were seeking office. I have become so disgusted by the importunities of this class of persons that I can scarcely be patient with them. I despatched them very summarily to-day. After night the Secretary of the Navy called and spent an hour with me on business. Nothing of special interest occurred to-day.

[1] William Holmes McGuffey, 1800–1873, prominent educator, editor of the "Eclectic" series of readers and spellers.

TUESDAY, *12th September, 1848.*— I was engaged as usual in my office this morning. Mr. Rhett of S. C. and Mr. Robert Smith of Illinois, both of the Ho. Repts., called. At the usual hour for the meeting of the Cabinet Judge Mason and Gov. Toucey, the only members of my Cabinet in the City, called. Several matters of no general importance were considered and disposed of. They retired about 2 O'Clock P. M. I was occupied during the remainder of the afternoon in disposing of the business on my table. This was reception evening. A few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *13th September, 1848.*— Mr. C. Johnson, the Postmaster General, returned to the City last evening, and called on me this morning. He has been absent with his wife two or three weeks on a tour to the North. I was engaged as usual in my office until 2 O'Clock P. M., when I opened my doors for the reception of company. A number of persons, some of them strangers who called to pay their respects, and others anxiously seeking office [called]. The purpose of the herd of office-seekers is as constant and unceasing as the current of the Mississippi. Professional office-seekers, I must say, have become in my estimation the most contemptible of our race. After night the Postmaster General, Mr. Bowden of Alabama, & two or three other persons called.

THURSDAY, *14th September, 1848.*— I saw & transacted business with the Secretary of the Navy

and some of the subordinate public officers to-day. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office, and had to endure the customary annoyance of applications for offices which I had not to bestow. A number of persons of this class called. I disposed of business on my table as usual. Nothing of importance occurred to-day.

FRIDAY, *15th September, 1848.*— I was engaged in my office during the forenoon. The Secretary of the Navy and the Attorney General called on business. The latter, who is acting as Secretary of State, brought with him important despatches from Mr. Saunders, U. S. minister at Madrid. I saw other public officers in the course of the day. I disposed of much business on my table. My correspondence is very heavy. On yesterday I received more than forty letters, and to-day nearly as many. In the absence of my Private Secretary my labours in matters of detail are much increased. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of company. A number of persons called, some to pay their respects and others on business and seeking office.

SATURDAY, *16th September, 1848.*— My brother, Maj'r William H. Polk, and his wife left this morning for Tennessee. They intend to make a visit to Columbia, Tenn., and go then[c]e to Memphis, Tennessee, where it is the intention of my brother to settle and engage in his profession, the practice of law. They have been inmates of my family for near two months. At the usual hour for the meeting of

the Cabinet, the Secretary of the Navy, the Postmaster General, and the Attorney General called. They were all the members of the Cabinet who were in the City. The despatch received on yesterday from Mr. Saunders, U. S. minister to Spain, was presented and read by Mr. Toucey, the acting Secretary of State. Despatches received from Commodore Jones, commanding the Naval forces in the Pacific, were presented and read by Judge Mason. Several subjects of no general importance were considered and disposed of. About 3 O'Clock P. M. the members of the Cabinet who were present retired. I was engaged in my office during the remainder of the day, and, what is very remarkable, I received no visitors during the day.

SUNDAY, *17th September, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk, Miss Rucker, & Miss Hays accompanied me.

MONDAY, *18th September, 1848.*— I saw no company to-day, except public officers on business, until 2 O'Clock P. M. The Secretary of the Navy and several other public officers called. When I opened my doors I was subjected to the usual penance, which I have to endure every day, of listening to the importunities of office-seekers. To-day a set of lazy-looking loafers made their appearance upon that business. Some of them were old customers, having called repeatedly before. I know [no] way to avoid this annoyance and consumption of my time. I cannot insult or be rude to my fellow citizens who call,

however undeserving or worthless I may believe them to be. I attended to business and wrote some letters to-day. Nothing of importance occurred.

TUESDAY, *19th September, 1848.*— I was engaged in my office as usual to-day. At the usual hour of meeting of the Cabinet Judge Mason, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Toucey, being all the members of the Cabinet in the City, called. Several public matters were considered and disposed of. While the Cabinet were in Session Mr. Mayor Seaton and several members of the City authorities called, and in presence of the Cabinet represented to me the inconvenience & injury to the City which would arise if the improvement of certain streets & avenues, authorized by an appropriation at the last Session of Congress, was delayed by the commissioner of public buildings, if he proceeded to execute the work by contract instead of going on at once with the work & having it executed under his own inspection by labour employed by himself. The latter mode was the one which the commissioner had at first resolved to adopt and had actually commenced the work, but had been induced to abandon his purpose in consequence of complaints by some citizens that the job had not been let out to contract. Mr. Seaton and the gentlemen with him insisted that the work could be more economically done by the commissioner than by contract, and that it could be done this season, whereas if he advertised for bidders to do it by contract the execution of the work must be postponed until next year. They said the commissioner was of this opinion &

that he would still go on and have the work done himself if I would authorize him to do so. The matter, including the proper construction of the law was discussed by these gentlemen and Mr. Mason and Mr. Toucey. I told Mr. Seaton and the gentlemen with him that I would look into the matter and let them know the result. They retired. Upon consultation with Judge Mason and Mr. Toucey I determined to send after Mr. Seaton & request him to return. When he returned I informed him that if the City authorities chose to make a communication to me in writing, such as they had verbally communicated, I would refer it to the commissioner and leave it to his discretion to have the work done in either mode, as he might determine was for the public interest. This was entirely satisfactory to Mr. Seaton and he said he would do so. The Cabinet resumed its business and about 3 O'Clock P. M. adjourned. During its sitting the Hon. Robert M. McLane of Baltimore called and spent half an hour. I disposed of the business on my table. Nothing of much importance occurred to-day.

WEDNESDAY, *20th September, 1848.*— Mr. Cave Johnson and Mr. Mason called at different hours this morning, & I delivered to each of them a letter which I had addressed to them respectfully [respectively], requesting full statements of all they may know of my opinions & action on the subject of the annexation of Texas in February, 1845, and immediately after the commencement of my administration. These letters were written & dated on the 18th

Instant. I have preserved copies of them in my letter book. A few days ago I addressed letters on the same subject to Gov. A. V. Brown of Tennessee and Hon. George Bancroft, U. S. Minister at London. Copies of these letters are also preserved in my letter book. I will address similar letters to the other members of my Cabinet as soon as they return to Washington. I have been induced to adopt this mode of vindicating my own course and the truth of history in consequence of two publications which made their appearance in the New York *Evening Post* of the 28th of July, and were re-published in the *Daily National Intelligencer* of the 1st of August last. My letters to Mr. Brown and Mr. Bancroft will explain the subject and my object more fully. I addressed a letter to-day to Mr. William H. Winder of Phila., in answer to several communications received from him in relation to the genealogy of the Polk family, from one branch of which Mr. Winder is descended. Mr. Winder being in Washington, I sent for him and delivered my letter to him in person. A copy of my letter I have preserved in my letter book. Mr. Toucey called with despatches received from Mr. Clifford, U. S. minister in Mexico. I addressed a letter to-day to the Hon. Rob't J. Walker, Sec. of the Treasury, who is in New York (see letter Book). At 2 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of company. But few persons called. One of these was seeking an office and begging money. He was a stout-looking young man, in good health, and I gave him neither. I attended to business in my office as usual to-day.

THURSDAY, *21st September, 1848.*— This morning my sister, Mrs. Hays, returned from a visit to New York. She left Washington to visit her husband's relations in New York on the 2nd Instant. Her husband's nephew, Lieut. Campbell Hays, late of the volunteer army in Mexico, returned with her. Mrs. Polk invited him to take a room in the President's House and be a part of our family during his stay in Washington and he did so. The Secretary of the Navy called on business this morning. When I opened my doors at 2 O'Clock P. M. to-day, fewer persons called than is usual. I disposed of the business on my table, and devoted a part of the day to the reading of a Report[1] made at the late Session of Congress by the committee of commerce of the Ho. Repts. on the subject of improving Harbours and Rivers. This report undertakes to review and to answer my veto message of the 15th of December, 1847, on that subject. I had never before had leisure to read it. It is a weak document and in my judgment utterly fails to answer my message. It indulges in a good deal of partizan bitterness, better suited to an irresponsible newspaper than to an official document, and contains but little argument. As it is probable that a Harbour & River Improvement Bill, and probably other Bills for Internal Improvements, will pass at the next Session of Congress, which I cannot approve, I will devote a portion of my time during the present recess to a thorough investigation of that subject, so as to be prepared with the less labour to meet them with a veto. If the occasion occurs I am

[1] *H. Rep.* 741, 30 Cong. 1 Sess. IV.

resolved to leave on record another message on that subject, and as I have more leisure to prepare my views now than I can have during the next Session, I will devote a part of my time to that subject.

FRIDAY, *22nd September, 1848.*— This was a remarkably quiet day, but few persons having called. I disposed of the current business on my table and devoted some time to the investigation of the Report of the committee of Commerce of the Ho. Repts., and of the report of the Chicago Convention on the subject of Harbour and River Improvements. I make this investigation now, when I have leisure to do so, that I may be prepared with my views drawn up if Congress at its next Session should pass any Bill on that subject. To-day Mr. Roseborough of Columbia, Tennessee, took dinner with the family. He has been for many years the Editor of the *Observer,* a bitter Whig paper at Columbia. I have been often assailed in his paper and have scarcely ever spoken to him before I was elected President. The circumstances under which he happened to dine with me to-day are these. My sister, Mrs. Hays, on her arrival here from New York on yesterday, informed me that she had met with Mr. Roseborough at the North; and as she desired to return home Mr. R. had agreed to accompany her, as he was returning also, and that he had agreed to call for her in a day or two. Accordingly he called last night. I saw him and of course treated him courteously. On his retiring, considering he had called to wait on Mrs. Hays to Tennessee, I invited him to return and take

dinner. He did so. Nothing of any interest occurred to-day.

SATURDAY, *23rd September, 1848.*— This morning my sister (Mrs. Ophelia C. Hays) left for her residence in Tennessee. She was accompanied by Mr. Roseborough of Columbia, Tennessee, who was the former Editor of the Columbia *Observer.* At the usual hour Mr. Mason, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Toucey, who are the only members of the Cabinet in Washington, assembled. Various matters of detail of no great importance were considered and disposed of. At 3 O'Clock the Cabinet dispersed. Hon. Rob't Smith of Illinois of the Ho. Repts. called to-day. He has not been to Illinois since the adjournment of Congress. He informed me that he would leave this evening. My sister (Mrs. Hays) left with us her daughter (Virginia Hays) who will spend the remainder of my Presidential term with us and will return with us to Tennessee in March next. Miss Sarah Polk Rucker, Mrs. Polk's niece, will also remain with us and return to Tennessee at the same time. The Hon. James Buchanan, Secretary of State, who has been absent from Washington on an excursion to the North for the last three weeks, returned this afternoon, and about 9 O'Clock P. M. called to see me. Mr. Walker & Mr. Marcy are still absent, but I hope will return next week. I have not had my full Cabinet together in council since the adjournment of Congress on the 14th of August last. I have conducted the Government without their aid. Indeed, I have become so familiar with

the duties and workings of the Government, not only upon general principles, but in most of its minute details, that I find but little difficulty in doing this. I have made myself acquainted with the duties of the subordinate officers, and have probably given more attention to details than any of my predecessors. It is only occasi[on]ally that a great measure or a new question arises, upon which I desire the aid and advice of my Cabinet. At each meeting of the Cabinet I learn from each member what is being done in his particular Department, and especially if any question of doubt or difficulty has arisen. I have never called for any written opinions from my Cabinet, preferring to take their opinions, after discussion, in Cabinet & in the presence of each other. In this way harmony of opinion is more likely to exist.

SUNDAY, *24th September, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk and my niece, Miss Hays, accompanied me.

MONDAY, *25th September, 1848.*— The Secretary of the Navy called on business this morning. I was occupied as usual in my office until 2 O'Clock P. M., when I opened my doors for the reception of company. Many persons called and among them several ladies to pay their respects. None of them had any special business, except to seek office. The atto. General called about 2½ O'Clock on business. Dr. Richard W. Gardner of Tennessee, who was an assistant surgeon with the army in Mexico, called,

and being in my office when Dinner was announced I invited him to dine with me and he did so.

TUESDAY, *26th September, 1848.*—The Hon. Ralph I. Ingersoll, late U. S. minister to Russia, called this morning. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, present Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Mason, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Toucy. The Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War being [are] still absent from Washington. Mr. Buchanan read despatches received to-day from Mr. Bancroft, U. S. minister to Great Brittain, and also an interesting despatch from Mr. J. L. Martin, U. S. charge d'affaires to the Papal States, dated at Rome on the 20th of August last. The same steamer which brought this despatch from Mr. Martin brought also the melancholy intelligence that he died after a short illness on the 28th of August. At the date of his despatch Mr. Martin makes no mention of his illness, and, I learn, was seized of the disease from which he died only two days before his death. I deeply regret his premature death. He was an able and learned man and eminently qualified for his mission. He was, moreover, my personal as well as my political friend. During the period I was Speaker of the House of Representatives, he wrote a biographical sketch of myself, which was published in the *Democratic Review.*[1] Several subjects of no general importance were considered and disposed of to-day. During the sitting of the Cabinet Mr. W. W. Seaton, Mayor of the City of Washington,

[1] *Democratic Review,* May, 1838, II, 197–208.

called and handed to me certain Resolves which had been passed by the corporate authorities of Washington in relation to the manner of improving certain streets and avenues in the City of Washington, for which purpose Congress at its last session made appropriations (see this Diary of the 19th Inst.). I sent for the commissioner of Public Buildings and referred the Resolutions to him, with instructions to execute the law in such manner as in his judgment would promote the public interests, having regard to economy and the speedy completion of the work. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day.

This was reception evening. But few persons, ladies & gentlemen, called.

WEDNESDAY, *27th September, 1848.*— I was in my office at the usual hour this morning. Mr. Buchanan called with despatches received from abroad by the last steamer. None of them were very important. In the course of the day Mr. Mason & Mr. Johnson called on business. I transacted business with some other public officers. When I opened my office quite a number of persons came in, some to pay their respects and none of them upon business of any importance. The Hon. Ralph I. Ingersoll of Connecticut, late U. S. minister to Russia, and Mr. Toucey, the Atto. General, took a family Dinner with me to-day.

THURSDAY, *28th September, 1848.*— I was in my office as is usual to-day. Mr. Buchanan called and I transacted business with him. I disposed of the

business on my table and devoted part of the day to the preperation of further views on the subject of Internal Improvements, anticipating that I may have occasion to communicate them to Congress at its next session. Many persons called to-day, and among them an unusual number of military officers who had served in Mexico. Among them were Gen'l Persifer F. Smith & Col. Randolph [1] of the Virginia Regiment. Many of the junior officers desire to be continued in the service. I[t] having become known two days ago that Dr. J. L. Martin, the U. S. charge d'affaires to Rome, was dead, the applications for the place begin to pour in upon me. I received several letters upon the subject this morning. Lewis Cass, jr., of Michigan called and was exceedingly importunate that I should appoint him. I told him frankly that whilst his father was a candidate for the Presidency, if I were to gratify his wishes it would do his father great injury in his election, because it would dissatisfy every other applicant. They would be apt to think that the son of a candidate for the Presidency whom they were supporting should have given way to them. He then insisted that I should promise him the office as soon as the election was over. This I declined to do. Mr. Cass manifested great anxiety and was scarcely rational on the subject. There is nothing that is more unpleasant or that I dislike more than these personal importunities for office. My interview with Mr. Cass was a painful one. I am the friend of his father and anxiously

[1] Thomas Beverly Randolph, Lieutenant Colonel of the 1st Virginia Volunteers.

desire his election, and I am sure I should have seriously injured him if I had gratified the wishes of his son.

FRIDAY, *29th September, 1848.*— The Hon. William L. Marcy, Secretary of War, returned from his visit to New York this morning. He has been absent from Washington since the 2nd Instant. He called to see me as soon as he returned. Mr. Buchanan called and I transacted business with him. I was engaged in my office as usual until 2 O'Clock P. M., when I opened my doors for the reception of company. A number of persons called and among them the Hon. Mr. Bowden of the Ho. Repts. from Alabama. Nothing of special interest occurred to-day.

SATURDAY, *30th September, 1848.*— The Hon. Robert J. Walker returned this morning after an absence of more than a month from the Seat of Government. He required relaxation for the benefit of his health and had been to the North for that purpose. At 11 O'Clock the Cabinet assembled, all the members being present. It is the first time there has been a full meeting of the Cabinet since the adjournment of Congress on the 14th of August last. Several subjects in relation to matters of detail were considered and disposed of. After which I brought to the notice of the Cabinet the condition of New Mexico and California, and particularly of the latter. These territories, acquired by the Treaty with Mexico, have been left by Congress without any pro-

vision for their Government. The temporary military Governments, which had been established under the authority of our Military and Naval commanders by virtue of the rights of conquest, during the war, had ceased to exist upon the ratification of the Treaty of peace. The Mexican authority over the country had ceased. Our squadron is on the coast of California and we have a small military force in the country. An additional Regiment under the command of Brevet Brig. Gen'l Riley, is about to embark. These forces will hold the country and protect the inhabitants against Mexican, Indian, or other enemies who might disturb them, but the Executive has no authority to organize a civil Government over them. In this state of things I brought to the notice of the Cabinet an extraordinary letter [from] Mr. Thomas H. Benton, Senator from Missouri, addressed " To the people of California," and closing as follows, *viz.,* " written at Washington City, this 27th day of August, 1848, and sent by Col. Fremont." This letter is published in the New York *Herald* of the 26th Inst. I am told it first appeared in a western paper. It assumes to speak as from one in authority, and is in an arrogant tone and calculated to do much mischief. Among other things it advises the people " to meet in convention " and form an Independant Government of their own until Congress shall act, and instructs them what kind of Government they should form. It is sent by Col. Fremont, the son-in-law of the writer, and the inference is plain enough that he means they shall make Col. Fremont the Governor of the Independant Govern-

ment they shall form. Indeed I think it pretty clear that this was the main object. The arrogance & whole tone of the letter are offensive and must do harm, unless the people of California have assurances from the Government that they will be taken care of by the Government. I expressed the opinion that the Secretary of State should address a letter to them, similar to the one he addressed by my direction to the people of Oregon on the 29th of March, 1847, when Congress had failed to establish a Territorial Government over that Territory. I thought that the assurance should be given to them that I would, at the next Session of Congress, earnestly recommend the establishment of a Territorial Government & the extension of our laws over them. This would probably satisfy them until Congress can act, and prevent any revolutionary movement among them. It would satisfy them, too, that the Government was attending to their interests and that they need not be deceived by the semi-official and officious proclamation of Senator Benton, by which they might be led to believe that he spoke by the authority of the Government here. I expressed my indignation in strong terms at Mr. Benton's course. Mr. Buchanan expressed some doubts of the propriety of writing such a letter. I did not press the subject, but will, at the next Cabinet meeting, bring the subject up again and direct the letter, such as I suggested to-day, to be written. Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, stated that he had been called upon by the collector of Boston to decide whether goods, being the productions of California, imported into the U. S., were

subject to duty. I decided promptly that as California was a part of our own country by the T[r]eaty with Mexico, that such importations were not subject to duty. In this he and all the other members of the Cabinet concurred. They concurred also in the opinion that goods, the products of the U. S., shipped to California were subject to no duties. The Secretary of the Treasury had doubts whether foreign cargoes shipped to California could be permitted to land and be vended duty free, or whether they should not be required to pay duties in Oregon or some other collection district of the U. S., and then be landed in California. This question was not decided but was reserved for further consideration. The Revenue laws of the U. S. have not been extended over California, and we have no collection districts in that country. Some other matters were considered, and about 3 O'Clock P. M. the Cabinet adjourned. I spent the balance of the afternoon in my office as is my usual habit.

SUNDAY, *1st October, 1848.*— By special invitation I attended to-day the dedication of a new church in this city, denominated "The English Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Pauls." Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied me.

After night the Hon. Rob't J. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, called at my request and spent an hour with me. He had [been] absent until yesterday for more than a month.

MONDAY, *2nd October, 1848.*— This was a wet day and but few persons called. No member of my Cabinet called during the day, which is a remarkable circumstance. I was occupied in my office as usual, and devoted a part of the day to the preparation of some passages which I may introduce into my next annual message. Nothing worthy of special notice occurred to-day.

TUESDAY, *3rd October, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day; all the members present. After disposing of some matters of minor importance, Mr. Buchanan stated that there was a subject which he considered of some importance. It was this. By the late Treaty [1] between the Republic of New Granada and the U. States, the latter had secured for her citizens the right of passage through the New Granadian territory across the istmus of Panama. Mr. Buchanan stated that it was of great importance to our interests on both oceans that a Rail Road or canal should be constructed across that istmus, and that a number of American[s] were speaking of embarking in the enterprise, and that it was very desirable that a scientific survey of the route should be made. For this purpose Mr. Buchanan recommended that some of our Topographical corps of Engineers should be ordered to make the survey, and Report upon the subject, and he added that Mr. Herron, the Minister to the U. S. from New Granada, was desirous that this should be done.

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 881–903.

I promptly informed Mr. Buchanan that I had objections to the proposition, and stated them at some length. They were in substance 1st, that the Treaty stipulation giving to citizens of the U. S. the right of way, imposed no obligation on the Government to make the survey, 2nd, That there was no appropriation out of which the expense could be paid, 3rd, that we had no power to expend money for such a purpose, and that if we could make the survey then upon the same principle we could construct the works, & 4th, that I was of opinion that there was no constitutional authority to do either. I told him that he was aware that I denied the power to make internal improvements, & that I could not see upon what principle we possessed the power to make external improvements in a foreign country. I told him furthermore that if any improvement Bill should during my time be presented to me, I should certainly veto it, and that if I were to yield my sanction to his proposition it would be argued by my opponents in Congress that while I denied the power to make internal improvements, I was exercising the power, and that too without an act of Congress, to make foreign surveys with a view to make foreign improvements. The discussion, which lasted some time, was exclusively between Mr. Buchanan and myself. My mind was clear on the subject and I did not call upon any other member of the Cabinet and none of them gave an opinion. I brought again before the Cabinet the subject of New Mexico & California and Senator Benton's extraordinary letter to the people of California (see this Diary of

saturday last, the 30th of Sept.). I stated that I still thought a letter should be addressed to the people of California by the Secretary of State, such as I suggested on Saturday, and that I thought also that the instructions to be given to Gen'l Riley, who would command our land forces in California, should be now considered and settled. An earnest and protracted discussion, or rather comparison of views, upon these points took place, in which all the members of the Cabinet took part. Congress had left California without a Territorial Government. That territory is now a part of the U. S., and by an act of Congress our Post office laws have been extended over it. In my message to Congress announcing the peace with Mexico, I expressed the opinion that at the termination of the war the Military Government, established over it during the war & when it was a conquered province, ceased, & that the authority of Mexico over it had ceased also when the Treaty ceding it to the U. S. was ratified. The question of difficulty was what Government existed over the country until Congress should act, and what power to govern it the Executive possessed. That the late military Government was a Government *de facto* in existence, was probable, but could the Executive enforce obedience to it. Senator Benton in his letter had recommended that the people should meet in Convention and form a Government for themselves. Mr Toucey thought that the sovereignty of the territory rested in the people, and that they could, in the absence of the action of Congress, Govern themselves as they chose, and that the exist-

ing Government *de facto* was presumed to be in force by their consent. Mr. Mason was of a different opinion. He thought that the Sovereignty rested in the people of the U. S. and not in the people of the Territory. Mr Walker concurred in opinion with Mr. Mason. He thought that if the right to form such a Government as they chose was conceded to the people of California, there was nothing to prevent them from establishing a Monarchy, or from disposing of the public lands. Mr. Johnson thought that the existing Government *de facto* was the only one which could exist until Congress acted. Mr. Marcy was also of this opinion. Mr. Buchanan thought that the people might form a temporary Government not inconsistent with the constitution of the U. S., but that it would be very unwise for them to do so, and that they should be advised to submit by consent to the existing Government. He concurred with me in the opinion that it was important to write the instructions I had proposed, and to send them to California before Senator Benton's letter reached California. After an anxious and very patient discussion, I stated that it was a subject which from its novelty was surrounded with many difficulties, but I thought instructions could be prepared which would avoid the decision of any abstract, doubtful question. I proposed for consideration that Mr. Buchanan should prepare instructions for Mr. Voorhies, the Post office agent who is about to proceed to California, which instructions he should make known, on his arrival in the country, to the following effect, *viz.*, That the inhabitants should

be informed that California was now a part of the U. S., that the constitution of the U. S. extended over them & was in force, that Congress had failed to establish a Territorial Government over them, that the President would strongly recommend the establishment of such a Government at the next Session, and that there was every reason to believe that it would be done, and that in the mean-time they were advised to consent to the existing Government *de facto,* so far at least as the rights of person & property were concerned. To this all agreed. I proposed further that he should inform them that they had no right, under the Constitution, to meet in Convention and abrogate the present Government *de facto* and form a new one, that if this was done it would not be by virtue of any authority derived from the constitution, and could only be justified by the extreme necessity of their condition. Upon this latter point no distinct question was taken, but it seemed to be acquiesced in. I proposed that Mr. Marcy should give Gen'l Riley similar instructions. It was agreed that Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Marcy should prepare instructions accordingly, & submit them for consideration at the next meeting of the Cabinet. I requested Mr. Walker to prepare and report at the next meeting of the Cabinet what regulations he possessed the power to make in relation to Foreign commerce with that territory. In regard to our own commerce it was agreed that this was regulated by our laws relating to the coasting trade. After a sitting of 5 hours the Cabinet adjourned about 4 O'Clock P. M.

This was reception evening. It was a wet night and but half a dozen people called.

This morning I made a present of $50 in gold to each of my nieces, Miss Sarah P. Rucker & Miss Virginia Hays.

WEDNESDAY, *4th October, 1848.*— The Secretary of the Navy called and transacted business with me this morning. He was the only member of the Cabinet who called to-day. At 2 O'Clock I opened my doors and a number of persons called, chiefly seeking petty offices. I had none to bestow and disposed of their applications very summarily. I disposed of business on my table as usual, and devoted a considerable portion of the day in preparing an exposé of the "American system," as it was falsely called by its authors. This I designed to insert either in my next annual message or reserve it for the next veto message I may have to send to Congress on the subject of Internal Improvement. I consider it almost certain that at the next session of Congress I may have occasion to send such a message. With this view I occasionally [devote] a leisure hour to the examination of the subject, and in reducing to writing such views as may occur to me.

This evening my Private Secretary, J. Knox Walker, with his wife and four children and his wife's brother, Blutcher Tabb, returned to Washington. His family have been spending several months with their relations at Lynchburg, Virginia. My Private Secretary has been absent with them since the 28th of August last. During that period

I have had the occasional assistance of Mr. H. C. Williams, who has acted as Private Secretary.

THURSDAY, *5th October, 1848.*— Since it has become generally understood that I do not open my doors for the reception of company until 2 O'Clock P. M. each day, I am but little interrupted until that hour. Public officers who call on business are an exception to this rule. These I see at any hour they may call. To-day the Secretary of State & the Secretary of War called on business. I disposed of the current business on my table as usual. After night the Post Master General called and spent an hour with me. I read to him the exposé which I had prepared on the " American system " (see this Diary of yesterday) and which I may make a part of my next annual message. He approved of it & was pleased with it.

FRIDAY, *6th October, 1848.*— I spent this morning in my office as usual. I saw the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War on business. The Secretary of the Treasury called about one O'Clock P. M. I read to him the exposé of the " American system " which I had prepared (see this Diary of the 4th, Instant). He approved it and was much pleased with it. About 2 O'Clock P. M., in pursuance of a previous arrangement, the Secretary of the Navy called. Accompanied by the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Treasury, Commodore Warrington, & Mrs. Polk I visited the Navy yard [Yard]. We were received by Commodore

McCauley,[1] the officers, and marines in an appropriate manner. Accompanied by the officers we visited various parts of the yard and witnessed the operations of the mechanics who were imployed in the different branches of business. We witnessed also the firing of a 32 pounder at a target at the distance of 600 years [yards]. The shots were made with great precision. We spent a few minutes at Commodore McCauley's house, took a glass of Wine, and returned about 4 O'Clock. I spent the evening in my office and disposed of the current business on my table.

SATURDAY, *7th October, 1848.*— Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, left the City this morning on a visit to the North, for the purpose of inspecting the Navy Yards at New York, Boston, & Kittera [Kittery]. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Buchanan submitted the draft of instructions[2] which he had prepared to the people of California, in the form of a letter to be addressed to Mr. Wm. Voorhies, who was about to proceed to California as an agent of the Post Office Department. These instructions were prepared in pursuance of my directions at the last Cabinet meeting (see this Diary of the 3rd Instant). They were read and after full discussion were modified in some respects. Besides other modifications it was agreed

[1] Charles S. McCauley of Pennsylvania, commander of the Washington navy yard.

[2] Moore, *Buchanan,* VIII, 211–216.

to insert a clause in relation to the revenue laws and regulations established by the temporary military Government during the late war with Mexico, this being regarded as a Government *de facto,* still existing by the presumed consent of the people of California. It was agreed that the duties levied on importations into California by this *de facto* Government could not continue to be collected by it conformably to the constitution of the U. S. The Secretary of the Treasury presented his views, which were that California being now a part of the U. S., all the productions of California were entitled to be imported into any of our ports on the Atlantic free of du[t]y; that all the products of foreign countries which had paid duties at any custom house in the U. S., and all foreign articles which by our tariff were duty free, were entitled to be imported into California duty free. In other words, California being now a part of the territory of the U. S., our laws regulating the coasting trade were applicable to that country. The Secretary of the Treasury also expressed the opinion that foreign cargoes subject by our laws to pay duty would also be subject to such duties in California, but that as Congress had established no collection districts & authorized the appointment of no officers to collect such duties, he possessed no power to do so. He said further that if foreign goods were taken into California without paying duties and should afterwards be shipped to any of our Atlantic ports, or collection Districts, they would be subject to pay duties. These views were approved by the Cabinet. Mr. Buchanan had ex-

pressed an unwillingness to insert in his letter of instructions anything which would break up the foreign trade of California with the Sandwich Islands, the South American States, & any other countries, fearing that if done it might dissatisfy the people and incline them to pursue Senator Benton's advice, & attempt to hold a convention & establish an Independent Government for themselves. He wished to avoid this and thought it better to say nothing about the foreign trade with California, & leave it as it was for the short time which would intervene until Congress could meet and act on the subject. He however concurred & asquiesced in the views upon the subject presented by Mr. Walker. Mr. Buchanan retired to the adjoining room to prepare a paragraph embodying Mr. Walker's suggestions. While he was gone from my office Mr. Walker also prepared the draft of a paragraph at my table. When Mr. Buchanan returned both paragraphs were read. The substance of both was the same though the phraseology of neither was satisfactory, and it was agreed that they should prepare the draft after the Cabinet adjourned. The Secretary of the Treasury stated that he had been called on from Boston and other places for his opinion both in regard to the coasting & foreign trade with California. It was agreed that he should prepare an answer in conformity to the suggestions upon the subject which he had made to-day, & which it had been determined should be inserted in Mr. Buchanan's instructions, & that Mr. Buchanan should accompany his instructions with a copy of this answer. It was agreed that

the Secretary of War should furnish the military officer in command in California with a copy of Mr. Buchanan's instructions & also a copy of Mr. Walker's answer to the communications from Boston & other places, and should incorporate them into his instructions to that officer. The Secretary of War read the draft of instructions on the subject which he had prepared in pursuance of my directions at the last Cabinet meeting. They required modification, and after considering his paper he said he would make another draft & submit it to me before it was sent off. I submitted to the Cabinet the propriety of uniting the two military departments or districts in Oregon & California into one, and of putting it under the command of Gen'l Persifer F. Smith, putting him upon his Brevet rank as a Brigadier General. This had been suggested to me by Mr. Buchanan on yesterday. On reflecting upon the subject I approved it, and so did the whole Cabinet when I presented it to them. Gen'l Smith had been previously ordered with his Regiment of Mounted Riflemen to Oregon, and Gen'l Riley with his Regiment of Infantry to California, both to be in command as Colonels of the line & not to be put on their Brevet Rank. Gen'l Smith is a man of education & intelligence & possessed of much knowledge of civil government as well as military command, and it was desirable to have such an officer in chief command in California in the present anomylous state of that country. These were the reasons for making the change of the original arrangement. The Cabinet all approving the suggestion, I determined to

carry it out. General Smith being in the City, I addressed a note to him requesting him to call. He did so & I communicated to him, in the room adjoining my office, what my wish was, and that I desired to know whether such a change of the orders which had been previously given would be agreeable to him. He said it would be entirely so, and added that he was ready to perform any service he might be ordered to perform, and that he was very grateful to me for the advancement I had heretofore conferred upon him. He left and I informed the Cabinet of my interview with him.

I called the attention of the Secretary of War to the fact that The State of Texas had organized a County & laid off a Judicial Circuit & extended her laws over that part of New Mexico lying East of the Rio Grande & within her limits, and suggested the importance of his giving instructions to the Military officer in command at Sante Fe to respect the officers and authorities of the State of Texas in that Territory, and to sustain them & avoid coming in collision with them. This I deemed necessary fearing that the military officers in command at Santa Fe, in the absence of instructions, might come in collision with the authorities of Texas. The Secretary of War concurred with me in my suggestions, & said he would prepare such instructions. In a message to Congress at the last session, or rather to the Ho. Repts., in answer to a Resolution of that body, I had expressed the opinion that the Western Boundary of Texas extended to the Rio Grande, and that all that part of New Mexico on the East of that River was within

the state of Texas. Such is still my opinion. Congress with a full knowledge of my opinion before them has done nothing to indicate a different opinion, and therefore I have no hesitation in giving the orders which I have directed the Secretary of War to prepare. The Cabinet adjourned about 4 O'Clock P. M.

SUNDAY, *8th October, 1848.*— Mrs. Polk and myself attended the first Presbyterian church to-day. Our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied Col. Walker and attended the Episcopal church.

MONDAY, *9th October, 1848.*— I was occupied as usual in my office this morning. I saw the Secretaries of State, of the Treasury, and of War at different periods of the day on business, & at one time they were all in my Office together. I saw also the commissioner of Public Lands and other subordinate officers on business. The Secretary of War read to me his instructions to the officers in command of the military forces in California, prepared in pursuance of my directions at the Cabinet meeting on the 7th Instant (see this Diary of that day). With one or two Modifications, which he made at my suggestion, I approved them. He read to me also a copy of the Circular letter to collectors of the customs on the subject of duties in California, &C., prepared by him in pursuance of the decision made in the Cabinet on the 7th Instant. The Secretary of War transmitted a copy of this Circular and a copy of Mr. Buchanan's

letter of Instructions to Mr. Voorhies, with his instructions. When I opened my office for the reception of company at 2 O'Clock P. M. a number of persons called, and among others, Bishop Janes [1] of N. York, of the Methodist Episcopal church, accompanied by the Rev'd Mr. Slicer & the Rev'd Mr. Hamilton.

Brevet Maj'r Gen'l Persifer F. Smith, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Marcy took a family Dinner with me to-day. I disposed of the business on my table as usual.

My private Secretary, Col. Walker, went to Annapolis this morning with his wife's brother, Midshipman Blutcher Tabb, who is about to enter the naval school at that place.

TUESDAY, *10th October, 1848.*— I saw a few persons on business before the meeting of the Cabinet this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is absent on a visit to the Navy yards at New York, Boston, & Kittera. Mr. Buchanan brought to my notice the subject of the Sound duties levied & collected by Denmark on the vessels of all other nations trading to the Baltic. He showed from statistics which he had collected that the amount of these duties or tolls collected from American vessels had amounted for several years past to more than one hundred thousand dollars annually. This is a heavy tax upon our commerce and ought, if prac-

[1] Edmund Storer Janes, 1807–1876, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844–1876.

ticable, to be removed. Mr. Buchanan had previously brought the subject to my notice, and to-day he read the draft of part of a despatch [1] which he had prepared to Mr. Flenegan,[2] the U. S. charge d'affaires to Denmark, the object of which was to authorize him to make a Treaty by which our commerce in that quarter might be relieved from these tolls. It would seem clear from the laws of Nations that these duties or tolls were not warranted, but the Nations of Europe having submitted to their imposition for centuries, and the U. S. having by a Treaty with Denmark acquiesced in her right to do so, it is perhaps too late now to controvert that right. Although this be so, we have an undoubted right, upon giving a year's notice, to abrogate our Treaty with Denmark, which is a very beneficial one to that country. Mr. Buchanan proposed in his despatch to instruct Mr. Flennigan to bring the subject to the Notice of the Danish Government with a distinct intimation that unless a satisfactory arrangement was made as respects the Sound duties or tolls, the U. S. would give the notice and abrogate the Treaty. He proposed to authorize him to agree to pay one or two hundred thousand dollars in consideration of the relinquishment by Denmark of these tolls or duties on American Vessels, that sum not being greater than that we would have to pay during the year's notice for the abrogation of the Treaty. The subject was discussed and I approved the suggestions of Mr. Buchanan, and requested him to complete his despatch

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VIII, 220–225.

[2] Robert P. Flenniken.

and send it to Mr. Flannegan. Mr. Buchanan again brought up the subject of the survey of the Istmus of Panama (see this Diary of the 3rd Instant), and urged the importance of detailing some officers of our corps of Engineers to make the survey, stating that Gen'l Herron, the Granadian Minister, was very anxious on the subject. I repeated my former objections. He then enquired of me if the Minister of New Granada should request the services of one of our officers of Topographical Engineers to make the survey for his Government & at their expense, [whether] I would agree to detail such an officer. I replied that the time and services of such an officer belonged to his own Government, which paid his salary, and that I must in such case decline giving my sanction to such an application. I added that if we had no employment for our officers they had better be disbanded. A suggestion was made that such officers might be relieved from duty for a few months, and be employed in this work. I thought it best not to give my sanction to the proposition even in this modified form, because it would be susceptible of misconstruction. Some other matters of no general importance were considered and disposed of. I read to the Cabinet a communication which I received this morning from George Abernathy, the Governor of the Temporary Government in Oregon, dated April 3rd, 1848, in which he states that an Indian war is raging in Oregon, presents their destitution of arms and the means of defense, and earnestly calls upon the Government of the U. States for assistance and protection. We have no means of

affording timely aid other than that which has been already ordered. It is most unfortunate that Congress had not granted the force for which I called to protect the people of Oregon in my message of May last communicating to that body the information brought by Mr. Meek. Congress not only refused to do this, but after the orders had been issued, upon the conclusion of the Mexican War, to have the mounted Rifle Regt. march to Oregon the last summer for their protection, that body, without the recommendation of the Executive & against our wishes, authorized every man of that Regiment who would ask it to be discharged. The effect [of] this was, in effect, to disband the Regiment & to recruit it again, and in the mean-time the season was too far advanced to enable the Regiment to be marched across the Rocky mountains before the impassable snows of winter would set in. The present defenseless condition of the people of Oregon is wholly to be attributed to the neglect and inattention of Congress to their condition, and their refusal to legislate in accordance with the Executive recommendation at the last Session. The truth is that Congress were more occupied at the last session in President making than in attending to the public business. After reading the papers just received the subject was discussed, but no order upon it was made to-day. This was reception evening, but few persons called. Col. Walker returned from Annapolis to-night.

WEDNESDAY, *11th October, 1848.*— I saw the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War on business

in the course of the morning. I sent for Gen'l P. F. Smith, who has been assigned to command our forces in Oregon & California, & submitted to his perusal the communication which I received from the Governor of the Temporary Government of Oregon on yesterday (see this Diary of yesterday). I directed Mr. Marcy, who is the acting Secretary of the Navy in Mr. Mason's absence, to prepare a despatch to the commander of our Squadron in the Pacific, directing him to proceed at once with a part of his force to Oregon to furnish the inhabitants of that territory with arms & munitions of War, and such disposible force as he could spare for their protection and defense against the Indians who are making war upon them. This is all that it is in the power of the Government to do. The responsibility of Congress for its culpable neglect at the last session & their refusal to grant the means of protecting the people of Oregon, as recommended by me, is very great (see this Diary of yesterday). The despatch which I directed the acting Secretary of the Navy to prepare can be sent out by Mr. John Parrot, a special bearer of dispatches, who will sail from New York in two or three days for Vera Cruz, & who designs crossing through Mexico to the Pacific. I disposed of business on my table to-day as usual.

THURSDAY, *12th October, 1848.*— Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Marcy called on business this morning. Mr. Marcy read to me the despatch to the commander of our naval forces in the Pacific, which he had prepared as acting Secretary of the Navy, direct-

ing him to furnish arms, &C. to the people of Oregon, and to afford to them such assistance as might be in his power (see this Diary of yesterday & the day preceding). I saw and conferred with Gen'l P. F. Smith to-day in relation to the existing state of things in Oregon & California & the means of affording speedy protection & defense to the people of these territories. Gen'l Smith was present when Mr. Marcy read his despatch to Commodore Jones commanding our Squadron in the Pacific. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I opened my office for the reception of visitors. A larger number of persons than usual called. Several of them were strangers who called to pay their respects. The larger number were of a different claims [class]. They were seeking office. I had applications to-day for offices of all grades from ministers abroad down to messengers' places. I had applications also from persons begging money. I made a donation to the English Lutheran church of this City. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day.

FRIDAY, *13th October, 1848.*— I was closely engaged in my office to-day. I disposed of the current business on my table. I devoted the greater part of the day in preparing an elaborate draft of my views on the subject of Internal Improvements, and especially Harbour and River improvements, by the Federal Government. Denying, as I do, the power of the General Government to make such improvements, and deeming it probable, if not certain, that such a Bill will be presented to me for my approval

at the next Session of Congress, I desire to be prepared to meet it with a veto. Should another veto become necessary I desire to make it a strong paper, so that if I should be over-ruled, as I may be, by a united Whig vote and a part of the Democratic members, making a vote of two thirds, I may leave my full views on record to be judged of by my countrymen & by posterity. I can add to the strength of my veto message on the same subject of the 15th of December last. If I should not have occasion to use it, it will be left among my papers at my death. I am thoroughly convinced that I am right upon the subject, and therefore I have bestowed much labour in preparing a paper which may contribute to convince others that I am so. I opened my office for the reception of company at 2 O'Clock P. M. Many persons called, some, of course, seeking office, but none of them having any business of importance.

SATURDAY, *14th October, 1848.*— I was occupied in my office during the morning as usual. The Cabinet met at 11 O'Clock; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who has been absent for the last week visiting the Navy Yards at New York, Boston, and Kittera. Several matters of detail and of no general importance were considered and disposed of. The Cabinet adjourned about 2 O'Clock P. M. I disposed of the business on my table. Nothing of interest occurred during the day. Senator Cameron of Penn. called after night. He informed me that he was on a visit of business to this City, and would remain two or three days.

SUNDAY, *15th October, 1848.*— Mrs. Polk & myself attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Our two nieces, Miss Rucker & Miss Hays, attended one of the Catholic churches. They had never before attended the Catholic worship.

MONDAY, *16th October, 1848.*— I attended to business in my office as usual to-day. The Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the Attorney General called on business at different hours of the day. At 2 O'Clock I received company. A number of persons called. Nothing of importance occurred to-day. After night Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania called & spent an hour with me.

TUESDAY, *17th October, 1848.*— I was engaged in attending to business in my office as usual this morning. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is still absent on a visit to the Navy Yards at New York, Boston, and Kittera. No subject of importance was submitted to the Cabinet to-day. Some minor subjects of detail were disposed of and about 1 O'Clock P. M. they dispersed. I walked out with the Secretary of the Treasury for exercise and accompanying [accompanied] him to the Treasury buildings, and went in and sat a few minutes in his office with him. It was the first time I had ever been in his office. After sitting with him a short time I continued my walk. Mr. Bowden of the Ho. Repts. from Alabama took a family dinner with me to-day. This being reception evening a number of persons

called. I received them as is usual on such occasions in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *18th October, 1848.*— I saw a number of persons and others who called in the course of the day. When I opened my office at 2 O'Clock P. M. for the reception of company generally a number of persons [called], all of whom, with two or three exceptions, were office-seekers. The day was spent in attending to various matters of duty, none of them of any general importance. It happens to occur to me and I therefore record it, that thirty years ago this day I arrived at my father's house in Tennessee on my return from the University of North Carolina, where I had graduated in the month of June preceding. I closed my education at a later period of life than is usual, in consequence of having been very much afflicted and enjoyed very bad health in my youth. I did not commence the Latin Grammer until the 13th of July, 1813. My instructor was the Rev. Dr. Robert Henderson of the Presbyterian church, who taught an Academy two or three miles South of Columbia, Tennessee.

THURSDAY, *19th October, 1848.*— I was busily engaged during the day in my office. I transacted business on my table and at 2 O'Clock opened my office for the reception of company. Quite a number of persons came in, several of whom were begging money and others, who from their appearance were to[o] lazy to work, were asking for office. The office of President is generally esteemed a very high

& dignified position, but really I think the public would not so regard it if they could look in occasionally and observe the kind of people by whom I am often annoyed. I cannot seclude myself but must be accessible to my fellow-citizens, and this gives an opportunity to all classes and descriptions of people to obtrude themselves upon me about matters in which the public has not the slightest interest. There is no class of our population by whom I am annoyed so much, or for whom I entertain a more sovereign contempt, than for the professed office-seekers who have beseiged me ever since I have been in the Presidential office.

FRIDAY, *20th October, 1848.*— Nothing of any importance occurred to-day. I was engaged as usual in my office. At 2 O'Clock when my office was opened for the reception of company a few persons called. All of those who did call wanted to serve the Government in some office, except one hale, stout looking man of middle age who was begging money. His story was that he had faithfully served the Democratic party & had made some sacrifices, & he thought now that he needed money they should furnish it to him. Of course I gave him nothing. He had health and strength and I told him he had better engage in some honest calling for a livelihood than to degrade himself by begging.

SATURDAY, *21st October, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour this morning; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is still

absent on a visit to the Navy yards at the North. He has been absent for the last two weeks. Several matters of no general importance were considered and disposed of to-day. I made enquiries of the Secretary of the Treasury in regard to the State of the revenue and the demands upon the Treasury. He informed me that the amount received from customs since the end of the last fiscal year was quite as large as had been anticipated, and he expressed the confident opinion that the amount received for the year would be equal to the estimates which had been made. On the 27th of the present month the liquidated claims of our citizens against Mexico, amounting to something more than two millions of Dollars, is to be paid. These claims were assumed by the United States by the late Treaty with Mexico. There will be money enough in the Treasury to meet this demand and all others authorized by appropriations of Congress. I informed the Secretary of the Treasury that I was desirous during my term to commence the payment of the public debt by the purchasing of U. S. Stock as authorized by law, however small the sum paid might be, if the means of the Treasury would permit it. I informed him that I desired to do this supposing it might exert some influence over the policy of my successor. I deem the speedy payment of the public debt of great national importance. If I commence its payment my successor may dislike to take the responsibility of reversing my policy in this respect. The Secretary of the Treasury concurred with me in these views, but said until the estimates of expenditures which would be required for the next

year were received by him from the Heads of the several Executive Departments, he could not be prepared to say whether there would [be] money sufficient in the Treasury to justify the application of a portion of it to the payment of the debt. He said as soon as he received the estimates of the amounts to be expended for other objects he would give me an answer. The Cabinet retired between 1 & 2 O'Clock.

At 5½ O'Clock P. M. between twenty and thirty Presbyterian clergymen who are now attending a meeting of the Synod of their church in this City called to pay their respects. They called in a body in pursuance of a previous arrangement which had been made through the Rev. Mr. Smith of this City that I would receive them at that hour. Mrs. Polk and myself received them in the parlour and were introduced to them. The Rev. Mr. Smith proposed that [there] be prayers if it was agreeable. It was, of course, agreeable & a very impressive and appropriate prayer was made by the Rev. Dr. Roland Hill, of Winchester, Virginia. Mr. Hill is a man of eighty years of age & is a very interesting man. He informed me that he had been a minister of the Gospel since 1789, and that he had kept a Diary since that period until a few years past, when he had neglected it to some extent. He said he had been reading it over lately and that it brought up fresh to his memory so many events of years gone bye that it was almost like living his life over again. I regret very much that I had not commenced keeping a Diary at the beginning of my political life. All public men

should do so. After remaining about half an hour the Rev. gentlemen retired. There were three or four ladies with them. They belong to what are called the New School Presbyterians.

SUNDAY, *22nd October, 1848.*— Accompanied by Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays, I attended Divine Service to-day at the Fourth Presbyterian church in this City (The Rev. Mr. Smith). The Synod now assembled in this City hold their sessions in that church. The Congregation was large and a good sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Boyd of Winchester, Virginia.

MONDAY, *23rd October, 1848.*— Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, called this morning. He informed me that he returned on Saturday evening from his visit to inspect the Navy yards in the Northern Cities. Mr. Buchanan called and informed me that he had received numerous despatches from our ministers and consuls abroad by the last Steamer, that he had not yet had time to read some of them, & none of them with care, but would do so and bring such of them as were of any importance to my notice. I was occupied & transacted business in my office as usual to-day. At 2 O'Clock I received company. A number of persons called. Nothing of importance occurred.

TUESDAY, *24th October, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour this morning; all the members present. Mr. Buchanan read despatches which he had

received from Mr. Bancroft, relating to two American citizens, one of them a naturalized citizen, who had been arrested under the charge of Treasonable conduct against the Brittish Government for having given aid & excited the Irish population in the late disturbances in that country. It was agreed that not being Brittish subjects they could not be punished for Treason against the Brittish crown. Mr. Buchanan said he had so written to Mr. Bancroft. Mr. Bancroft has been heretofore instructed to see that they have a fair trial, and to protect & defend them as far as may be practicable, compatably with our Treaty obligations. I held a conversation with the Cabinet about the estimates to be submitted to Congress of expenditures for the next fiscal year. I expressed my great desire to commence the reduction of the public debt, if the means of the Treasury would permit it, during my term, because I desired to establish that policy before I went out, in the hope that it would be followed by my successor and that the whole debt would be speedily paid off. With this view I expressed the desire that the estimates of expenditure for the next fiscal year should be as small as was compatable with the absolute necessities of the public service. I called the attention of the Heads of Departments to this point to-day, that they might give it their personal attention. It has heretofore, I learn, been the habit of the Heads of Bureaus of the Diffe[re]nt Departments who have been charged with the duty of preparing these estimates to make them larger than is necessary, calculating that they will be cut down and reduced by Congress. This is

wrong and I directed my Cabinet to look to it this year that no larger sums were estimated for than would be actually needed. Some other matters of no general interest were considered and disposed of. The Cabinet adjourned about 2½ O'Clock. Col. Jno. A. Thomas of New York called about 3 O'Clock. I held a conversation with him about the prospects and probable result of the Presidential election. He agreed with me that if Gen'l Cass carried Pennsylvania he would be elected. He agreed with me also that the vote of that State would probably depend upon the course of Mr. Wilmot and the Free Soil faction. He suggested the importance of seeing Mr. McClelland, a member of Congress from Michigan, who was understood to have influence with Wilmot and might induce him to abandon the Free Soil ticket and vote for Gen'l Cass. After a conversation of some length with him he determined to visit Mr. McClelland and I gave him an introductory note to Gen'l Cass. This was reception evening. Not more than half a dozen persons called, all gentlemen. Mrs. Polk & the ladies of my household did not appear in the parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *25th October, 1848.*— I was engaged in my office as usual to-day. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of War called on business. I disposed of the business on my table. Nothing important occurred. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I saw company. Several persons called. None of them had any more important business than to seek office and to beg for money. One woman told me she lived in

Baltimore, and had come down to ask me to give her some money. She brought no letters, & from her appearance she was not an object of charity & [I] declined to give her any money. I am much annoyed by such people.

THURSDAY, *26th October, 1848.*— Judge Mason, the Secretary of the Navy, called this morning at my request. I read to [him] a paper of some length which I had prepared on the subject of the system which was called by its authors and advocates the "American system." The object of this paper was to show that the "American system" consisted of Several branches, *viz.,* A Bank, Protective Tariff, Distribution of the land fund, & Internal Improvements; that it had been overthrown in all its branches except the internal improvement branch, and that if this was revived the others would necessarily be revived also. I read to him also a paper which I had prepared on the "Executive Veto." Both these papers were written with a view to make them a part of a Veto Message, if any River & Harbour appropriation Bill should pass and be presented to me for my approval at the next Session of Congress, which I think is probable. I read the former of these papers to Mr. Marcy on yesterday, who thought it might appropriately form a part of my next annual message. Mr. Mason concurred with Mr. Marcy & thought that both papers might form a part of the annual message with propriety. The Attorney Gen'l, Mr. Toucy, called, and I took his opinion. He thought that both papers belonged appropriately

to the annual message. They all approved the views presented in these papers. Though neither of the papers were written with any such view, I am inclined to insert them in the annual message. I spent some time in revising them to-day. I was informed to-day that the Hon. Dixon H. Lewis, one of the Senators in Congress from the State of Alabama, died at the City of New York on yesterday. Mr. Lewis had remained in Washington after the adjournment of the last session of Congress. I learn that he went to New York on a visit a few days ago. I was occupied in my office as usual during the day. I saw company at 2 O'Clock P. M. Nothing important occurred.

FRIDAY, *27th October, 1848.*— I was occupied in my office as usual today. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury called on business in the forenoon. I read to the latter the views which I had prepared on the Executive Veto, which I had intended to reserve for a veto message on Internal Improvements, if any Bill of that kind should pass and be presented to me at the next Session of Congress. He advised that it be made a part of my annual message, and my present impression is that I will modify it and insert it in that message. At 2 O'Clock I saw the office seekers as usual. Some other persons called to pay their respects.

SATURDAY, *28th October, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day; all the members present. Mr. Buchanan stated that in a despatch to Mr.

Bancroft a few days ago, in relation to two American citizens who had been arrested in England under a charge of having participated in the late outbreak or attempted rebellion in Ireland, he had mistaken the law of Treason. In that despatch he had laid down the public law to be that an American citizen could not be arrested & tried for Treason by the Brittish authorities. He said on examination of the laws of England he found that in this he had been mistaken. He read a second despatch which he had prepared correcting the error, in which he cited authorities to show that there were two descriptions of allegiance, the one perpetual and the other temporary, and that persons belonging to other nations, who were temporarily domiciled in England and under the protection of Brittish laws, might commit Treason. The Attorney Gen'l thought Mr. B. was right in this latter exposition of the law. Mr. Buchanan next presented an application from the Government of the German confederation at Frankfort to the Government of the U. S., made through Mr. Donelson, for the services of an experienced Naval officer of rank to take command of the German Navy. Their object was to have the benefit of the scientific knowledge and experience of such an officer to instruct them in the organization of their Navy. Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Mason, Mr. Walker, & Mr. Toucey expressed themselves decidedly in favour of granting the request. Mr. Marcy & Mr. Johnson did not enter into the conversation. There were objections to it in my mind, which I stated. In the first place an officer of the U. S. Navy would be in an anomy-

lous condition if he held also a commission as commander (Admiral was the title which it was stated he was to hold) in the German Navy. In the second place he would continue to receive his pay as an officer of the U. S. whilst he was in a foreign service & was performing no service for the U. S. It was then urged by Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Toucey that he might have leave of absence to go abroad, relinquishing his pay during his absence, that no order need be given to him to go into the German service, but leave it to him to do so if he chose. This did not satisfy me. It was then said the President of the U. S. as commander in chief of the army and Navy might order an officer to perform any duty he pleased. To this I replied that he might give an order to perform any duty in the service of the U. S., but not in that of a Foreign country. I then stated that the extent to which I could consent to go would be to say that the Secretary of the Navy might give leave of absence for six months to any officer of the Navy if there were no services for such officer to perform at home; but that if such officer should take a command in the German service he must either resign & [or] Congress must pass a law authorizing the President to permit him [to] perform such Foreign service. I stated that I was unwilling, without the previous authority of Congress, to give the order or permission proposed. I gave other reasons which it is unnecessary to state. Mr. Buchanan then read despatches from Mr. Donelson requesting to be empowered to negotiate a commercial Treaty with the German confederation. After some discussion, in

which Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Walker, and myself chiefly participated, I accorded with Mr. Buchanan's views that it was prudent to postpone giving such instructions until the German confederation was more firmly established, & until that Government had appointed a minister to represent it in the U. States. Some other subjects, of no general importance, were considered and disposed of. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock P. M. In the evening I disposed of business on my table as usual.

SUNDAY, *29th October, 1848.*— Mrs. Polk & myself attended Divine service at the First Presbyterian church to-day. Our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied Col. Walker's family to the Episcopal Church.

Miss Henrietta Rachel Armstrong, the daughter of Gen'l R. Armstrong, U. S. consul at Liverpool, Miss Ihrine Johnson, the daughter of Judge Johnson of Arkansas, and Miss Matilda Sevier, the daughter of Senator Sevier of Arkansas, came over last evening from their school in Georgetown and spent the night & to-day with my family. They come occasionally & spend from saturday evening until monday morning with us. They did not attend church to-day.

MONDAY, *30th October, 1848.*— I resolved this morning to devote a considerable portion of the day to the preperation of such portions of my annual message upon such points as I could foresee it would be proper to bring to the notice of Congress. I was

so constantly interrupted, however, by persons calling on special business, as they said, and by public officers calling on official business, that I had but little time to give to it. The Special business upon which several persons gained admittance before my regular hour for receiving company, turned out to be the usual and very important business of importuning me for offices which I had not to bestow without turning better men out of office to make room for them. When I opened my doors at 2 O'Clock P. M. for the reception of company generally quite a number of persons came in, most of them seeking office, and one of them begging money. A more hungry set of office seekers I have not seen for several days. The annoyance of this class of persons is a penance which I suppose I will have to endure until the last day of my term of office. Two or three gentlemen of very genteel appearance and manners called simply to pay their respects & wanted no office; and this was some relief to me.

Mr. Buchanan called and read to me the despatch which he had prepared to Mr. Donelson, in answer to the request of the Government of the German confederation to be furnished with an officer of the U. S. Navy to command the German Navy (see this Diary of the 28th Instant). At my suggestion he modified the despatch so as make it conform more exactly to my views. The commissioner of the General Land office called, and while engaged in official business with him about 3 O'Clock P. M., my messenger informed me that about 30 journeymen painters who were employed in painting the Capitol, had called in

a body & wished to see me. They were shown in, & in the presence of the commissioner of the Land office & my Private Secretary they made known to me a misunderstanding that had taken place between the commissioner of the Public buildings, who had employed them to paint the Capitol, and themselves. The point of their complaint as well as I could understand it, was whether they should be paid for wet days, when they did not work. It appeared that they had been employed to work by the day. I told them that Congress had made an appropriation to paint the Capitol, that it was the duty of the commissioner to execute the law, that the President could not go to the Capitol & superintend the work in person, and that whatever their contract with the commissioner was they were entitled to. I told them what their contract was I did not know, and that I was not a judge of such work and did not know what ought to be paid for it, or whether it was usual to pay for wet days, when they did not work, or not. I told them that the public wished no man to work without being fully paid for it, and that I would send for the commissioner of Public Buildings & tell him to do them justice. It is very annoying to me to be troubled with such trifling matters. They left, and in the evening I sent for the commissioner and told him what I had informed them I would. He had one of the Superintendents of the work with him. The Commissioner said they had no earthly cause of complaint, but were disposed to be factious and troublesome. I told him to pay them full wages and if he thought it right or it was usual to pay

for wet days, when they did not work, of which I knew nothing, to do so. He said he was perfectly willing to do this. I have a suspicion that these workmen are Whigs and desire to get up a petty excitement on the eve of the Presidential election, with a view to control votes in Baltimore and Alexandria where some of them reside. The Commissioner left, saying that he would do them full justice and do everything in his power to satisfy them. After night Mr. Lawrenson, the correspondent of the Baltimore *Sun,* called, accompanied with another of the superintendants of the work, and informed me that the workmen were getting up some excitement on the subject. I told them what I had told the workmen and the commissioner, and what the commissioner had said. My suspicion is confirmed that the complaint of the workmen is groundless, and that they have probably been prompted to it for political effect.

TUESDAY, *31st October, 1848.*— I gave orders to admit no one into my office this morning. Until the hour of meeting of the Cabinet I was occupied in writing some paragraphs for my next annual message. All the members of the Cabinet attended at the usual hour. I enquired of the members of the Cabinet how soon the estimates for appropriations for the next fiscal year would be prepared. All of them except those of the War and Navy Departments, I was told, were ready, or would be in a day or two. I gave directions that all the estimates should be critically examined and that no appropria-

tion which could be dispensed with consistently with the interests of the public service, should be asked for. The manner of preparing the estimates in the War and Navy Departments is for the Secretary of each of these Departments to require a Report from the heads of the several Bureau[s] connected with his Department, of the expenditures which will be required for the year. These Heads of Bureau are [in] the habit of estimating for very large and sometimes extravagant sums. They do this for two reasons, first, because they suppose their own consequence depends somewhat on the sums they may [have] to disburse in their respective branches of the service during the year; and secondly, because they say their estimates may be cut down by Congress. These Bureau officers are, moreover, generally Federalists, and in favour of large expenditures. They are not responsible to the public, and I charged the Secretaries of War and the Navy to examine their Reported estimates themselves. I stated to the Cabinet that as the estimates for the next year were for a period of peace, and that I desired to set an example of economy which might have its influence on the policy of my successor. I informed them that I desired, if possible, to commence the payment of the public debt before the close of my term, by buying in a small portion of the outstanding public stocks. I informed them that I would strongly recommend the early payment of the public debt in my next annual message, and that this recommendation would come with the more force if I was at the same time enabled to state that I had paid off a small portion

of it. The payment of the public debt, I thought, should be regarded as a vital principle of the future policy of the Government. The Secretaries of War and the Navy informed me that before they delivered the estimates from their respective Departments to the Secretary of the Treasury, they would submit them to me for my revision. I told them that I desired that they would do so. The Secretary of the Treasury stated that as soon as he received the estimates from the several Departments, he would be enabled to tell whether the means in the Treasury would be sufficient to enable him to purchase in a small amount of the public debt. No other general subject was considered to-day. After attending to some matters of detail the Cabinet dispersed about 3 O'Clock P. M.

WEDNESDAY, *1st November, 1848.*— I directed my messenger to admit no company to-day until 2 O'Clock P. M. I had business on my table requiring my attention and did not wish to be interrupted. Before that hour, however, my Private Secretary introduced into my office Col. John D. Hawkins of N. C., who was about to leave the City and desired to see me. At 2 O'Clock quite a number of persons called. Some of them were strangers who called to pay their respects. Most of them were seeking office and one woman was begging money. She only wanted $80. She thought that sum was very moderate & that it would answer her purpose. The Secretary of the Navy called about 3 O'Clock & the P. M. General after night. I [was] busily occupied

in my office all day. Nothing of importance occurred.

THURSDAY, *2nd November, 1848.*—This is my birthday. According to the record in my father's family Bible I was born on the 2nd of November, 1795. I am, therefore, Fifty three years old. It will be 21 years on to-morrow since my father died. My mother is still living. Upon each recurrence of my birthday I am solemnly impressed with the vanity & emptiness of worldly honors and worldly enjoyments, and of [the wisdom of] preparing for a future estate. In four months I shall retire from public life forever. I have lived three fourths of the period ordinarily allotted to man on earth. I have been highly honoured by my fellow-men and have filled the highest station on earth, but I will soon go the way of all the earth. I pray God to prepare me to meet the great event.

I was busily occupied in my office during the whole day. A part of the day I spent in preparing my annual Message. I desire to have it in a state of forwardness, as far as I can anticipate the topics upon which I should treat, before the members of Congress begin to assemble in Washington, which may be expected shortly after the Presidential election, which will take place on the 7th of the present month. When they begin to assemble they will occupy much of my time, and I have more leisure to devote to the message now than I will have then.

None of my secretaries called to-day. I saw two or three subordinate officers on business. I disposed

of business on my table and saw company as usual at 2 O'Clock P. M. It was [a] quiet day with me and nothing of importance occurred.

FRIDAY, *3rd November, 1848.*— Nothing of interest occurred to-day. The Secretary of the Navy called and submitted to me the estimates of appropriations for his Department for the next fiscal year. They were considerably reduced in amount below those of last year, and I thought them reasonable (see this Diary of the 31st ultimo). The Secretary of War called and informed me that estimates for his Department would be ready by to-morrow. He informed me that he had much difficulty with the Heads of Bureaus in his Department in having them [their estimates] reduced to reasonable amounts.

I saw company at 2 O'Clock, & was occupied as usual in my office During the day. When the Secretary of War called I read to him the rough draft of a part of my message which I had prepared. He approved it.

SATURDAY, *4th November, 1848.*— The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour this morning; all the members present. Mr. Buchanan read a despatch which he had prepared to Mr. Donelson in relation to the negotiation of a commercial Treaty with the German confederation, in the event it should be finally established and invested with the power to conduct the Foreign relations of all the German States. They contained Mr. Buchanan's views of what the Treaty should be in that, but postpone [to]

confer powers on Mr. Donelson to Treat, but informed him that such powers would be conferred as soon as the German confederation was firmly established. Mr. Walker objected to the doctrine of a part of the despatch, and quite an animated discussion took place between Mr. Buchanan & himself. It was upon that part of the despatch which declared that one object of the Treaty, as in the Treaty with Hanover,[1] would be designed to protect American Navigation against unequal foreign competition. It was the protective principle to which Mr. Walker objected, or rather to the argument which asserted it, and not to the terms of the Treaty which were proposed. Mr. Buchanan objected to the 4th article of the Treaty of 1827 with the Hansa towns as being unequal and unjust to the U. S., or to American Navigation. Mr. Toucey agreed with Mr. Buchanan. The subject was presented unexpectedly and I was not at first prepared to decide between them. After a protracted discussion, however, in which many collateral matters were introduced, I suggested some modifications of one or two paragraphs of the dispatch. The despatch was finally modified so as to have the assent of both Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Walker and the concurrence of the other members of the Cabinet. No other business of importance was brought before the Cabinet and they dispersed about 3 O'Clock P. M.

I had a small dinner party to-day, consisting of Baron Gerolt, the Prussian minister, & his wife, Mr.

[1] Concluded June 10, 1846. Printed in *U. S. Stat. at Large*, IX, 857–868.

R. J. Walker, & Judge Mason. I invited Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Ritchie, but they did not attend. Baron Gerolt has been recalled by his Government and is about to leave the U. S., and I desired to signify the respect which I had for him, by inviting him to dinner. He has conducted himself in a manner highly satisfactory to this Government. He is, I believe, the only Foreign Minister at Washington, unless the Minister of the French Republic may be, whose feelings and opinions are with the Democratic party of the U. S. I took pleasure in paying him the compliment of a Dinner on the eve of his departure on his return to his own country.

SUNDAY, *5th November, 1848.*— The forenoon of to-day was rainy and unpleasant and Mrs. Polk declined attending church. It was a very quiet day. It being known that my rule is to receive no company on Sunday no one called.

MONDAY, *6th November, 1848.*— I had several calls by official persons on business this morning. Among others the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy called at different hours. The Secretary of War submitted to me the estimates of appropriations for his Department for the next fiscal year, as prepared by the Heads of the several Bureau[s] in the War Department. On comparing them with the appropriations for similar objects for previous years, and before the Mexican war, they were found in some branches to exceed these appropriations. The Secretary informed me that as origi-

nally prepared they had been much higher and that he had much difficulty with his Bureau officers in having them reduced to what they now were. I directed further reductions of some of the items to be made, and directed some of the items to be struck out altogether. After spending one or two hours with the Secretary in examining them I requested him to see his Bureau officers again, and to reduce still further, whenever the public service will permit. The Bureau officers, whose duty it is to prepare the estimates, are always in favour of large appropriations. They are not responsible to the public but to the Executive, & must be watched and controlled in this respect (see this diary of tuesday last). I disposed of the business on my table and devoted a part of the day to the preperation of my annual message. I desire to have it in a state of forwardness before the members of Congress begin to arrive, when I may expect to be much interrupted & have my time taken up by their calls. I saw company at 2 O'Clock. Several persons called.

TUESDAY, *7th November, 1848.*— This is the day appointed by law [1] for the election of President and Vice President of the U. S. Heretofore the people of the several states have by state laws fixed the period of holding the election in each state. Since the last Presidential election Congress for the first time exercised the power vested in them by the constitution, and fixed the same day for holding the election in all the states. There will be probably not

[1] Act of January 23, 1845. *U. S. Stat. at Large,* V, 721.

less than three millions[1] of votes polled in this election.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. There being no other pressing business, I read to the Cabinet the portions of my next annual message which I had prepared, and invited the freest suggestions or criticism which any member of the Cabinet might think proper to make. The subjects mainly treated of in the paper which I read, were the veto power, a review of the system established shortly after the close of the war with Great Brittain in 1815, called the "American system," the physical strength of our country in war, the vast territorial acquisitions we had made, their great importance and value, and the urgent necessity of establishing Territorial Governments over them. In connection with the latter subject the slavery question was considered, and concession and compromise recommended. Mr. Buchanan expressed his approbation of the paper. He said in that part of the paper which treated of the "American system" he did not go as far as I did in relation to Internal Improvements. He thought the Government had power to make improvements for purely military or Naval purposes, and if in making such as were strictly of this character incidental advantages accrued to commerce, it was well. He avowed himself opposed to a system of Internal Improvements as such. As to that part of the paper which treated of the protective tariff as a branch of the

[1] The total popular vote for President in 1848 was approximately 2,875,000.

American system he said he approved the doctrines of my Inaugural Address. He was opposed to the tariff of 1842, & thought there should be increased protection by specific duties on coal and Iron, & that the tariff of 1846 should be modified in this respect. With the expression of these general views, he approved that part of the paper as I had written it, and thought it should go into the message. Mr. Toucey called my attention and made a suggestion of modification to that part of the paper which related to the Wilmot Proviso & the subject of Slavery. The paper as read by me had been prepared at different times within the last few weeks as I had leisure. The other members of the Cabinet expressed their approbation of the views which it contained. Mr. Marcy said when it came to be carefully revised there might be two or three changes of phraseology which he would suggest, but these were merely verbal and would not affect its substance. The paper read was most of it the first draft and had many interlineations & erasures. I told the Cabinet I would cause it to be copied in a fair hand writing & submit it again for a more critical & minute examination. I was gratified that the paper met so much favour from the Cabinet. Judge Mason thought it would be the ablest & most interesting message I had ever sent to Congress. I have other parts of the message yet to prepare, some of which, relating to the operations of the several Executive departments, I cannot prepare until I receive the Reports of the Heads of these Departments, which will be near the time of the meeting of Congress. No other subject of

any importance was considered to-day. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock P. M. I saw no company to-day. After the Cabinet adjourned I attended to business on my table.

WEDNESDAY, *8th November, 1848.*— Information received by the telegraph and published in the morning papers of this City and Baltimore indicate the election of Gen'l Taylor as President of the U. S. Should this be so, it is deeply to be regretted. Without political information and without experience in civil life, he is wholly unqualified for the station, and being elected by the Federal party and the various factions of dissatisfied persons who have from time to time broken off from the Democratic party, he must be in their hands and be under their absolute control. Having no opinions or judgment of his own upon any one public subject, foreign or domestic, he will be compelled to rely upon the designing men of the Federal party who will cluster around him, and will be made to reverse, so far as the Executive can reverse, the whole policy of my administration, and to substitute the Federal policy in its stead. The country will be the loose [loser] by his election, and on this account it is an event which I should deeply regret. In view of the probabilities of his election it is fortunate that I read to the Cabinet on yesterday the portions of my annual message which I had previously prepared. The Federal party will doubtless consider parts of it as having been prepared after I had known that Gen'l Taylor was elected, and as being intended for him, especially

those portions of it which relate to the Veto power & the "American system." In the course of the day the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Navy, and the attorney General called and I transacted business with them. I was occupied as usual in my office during the remainder of the day.

I placed a portion of the draft of my annual message, which I read to the Cabinet on yesterday, in the hands of a confidential clerk (Wm. V. Voorhies) to be copied. Mr. Voorhies occupied the room adjoining my office. The original draft was much interlined and erased & I desired a fair copy that I might revise it with the greater facility.

Mr. Buchanan handed to me to-day his answer to my letter to him of the 30th of September last, in relation to the publications of Benjamin Tappan of Ohio & Francis P. Blair respecting the annexation of Texas. A copy of my letter to Mr. Buchanan and also copies of similar letters addressed to each member of my Cabinet, of different dates (for I had not time to write them all on the same day) will be found in my letter-book. I had previously received answers from Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Cave Johnson which were full & satisfactory, stating facts within their knowledge as they were. Mr. Buchanan's answer is short, is couched in general terms, fails to answer my special enquiries with the directness & precision which I had expected, and as has been done by Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Johnson. Mr. Buchanan has stated to me in conversation facts as fully as they have done, but he has failed to put the same statements in his letter. His letter seems to

have been made general in its terms, and to have been made so probably with a view of avoiding the displeasure of Mr. Blair and Mr. Tappan. What he states is true, but he has not stated all he knows, as he has done in conversation with me. His answer is, in this respect, unsatisfactory, but the delicacy of my position must prevent me from intimating this to him. His answer can do no harm & will be of but little service to me in bringing out the truth.

THURSDAY, *9th November, 1848.*— At 6 O'Clock this morning Mrs. Polk left in the Eastern cars for New York. She was accompanied by my Private Secretary (Col. Walker) and our two nieces (Miss Rucker & Miss Hays) a man-servant (Bowman) and a maid servant (Teresa). Her object in visiting New York was first to afford the young ladies an opportunity of seeing that City, but mainly to select some articles of furniture for our house, which is building at Nashville, Tennessee, and to have them shipped home *via* New Orleans. She will probably be absent 10 days, as she contemplates visiting my nephew, Cadet Marshall T. Polk, at West Point.

Mr. Buchanan called this forenoon and, without the slightest allusion to the subject on my part, asked to withdraw his answer, handed to me on yesterday (see this Diary of yesterday) in relation to the publications of Messrs. Tappan & Blair respecting the annexation of Texas. He said his object was to make some modifications of his answer. He no doubt felt conscious that his letter was not as full as he had stated to me in conversation, and that he

had not done me justice. I handed him his answer as he requested. He left and returned about 3 O'Clock P. M. with a re-draft of his answer which he read to me. It was fuller than the former draft, and more satisfactory, but was still not so full upon some points as he had repeated to me in conversation. I did not manifest to him that I had any feeling on the subject, but received his modified answer as he had prepared it & handed it to me. Before Mr. Buchanan left Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, came in, and shortly afterwards Mr. Buchanan retired. Without any preconcert or understanding, it so happened that Mr. Walker had called to read to me, as he did, the draft of his answer to my letter to him on the subject of the Blair & Tappan publications respecting the annexation of Texas. His draft of his answer was a full, frank, and honest statement of all the facts in his knowledge in reply to the enquiries of my letter. I expressed myself to him that it was so. He said he would copy it and hand it to me in a day or two. I have not yet received an answer from Gov. A. V. Brown of Tennessee upon the same subject (see my letter Book for my letter to him and also a letter to him of yesterday's date). I read the letter to him of yesterday to Mr. Cave Johnson, who called to-day. Mr. Buchanan advised me to-day to make no publication on the subject until after I retired from office, and then, if I did so, to leave it as a historical correction of the errors of the statements of Messrs. Tappan & Blair. He repeated to me that he had no doubt they were mistaken and had misappre-

hended me in the material statements of their publications.

The Attorney General called on business to-day. Mr. Voorhies, assisted by Mr. H. C. Williams, both confidential clerks, continued the copying the rough draft of my annual message today (see this Diary of yesterday). They occupied the private room adjoining my office. I disposed of business on my table and devoted a part of the day to writing other portions of my annual message.

FRIDAY, *10th November, 1848.*— I transacted business in my office as usual to-day. The Attorney Gen'l, the commissioner of the General Land office, & other public officers called on business. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I received company as usual. Many persons came in, and it appears that the rage for office has not been abated by the probable election of Gen'l Taylor, the Whig candidate. To-day among others Lewis Cass, jr., called again [and] importuned me for the mission to Rome. Though I may hereafter appoint him I thought his visit out of time and gave him no satisfaction. I have great respect for his father & on his account I may hereafter appoint him. On yesterday I had an application from New York (Mr. John A. Thomas [1]) for the same office, and to-day a similar application by Thos. F. Marshall [1] of Kentucky. These gentlemen simply suggested their willingness to accept if the mission was still open, and acted very properly on

[1] These names have been written in the original manuscript and then crossed out.

the subject. Either of them are worthy and I regret that I cannot give it to either, and especially to the latter. Other applications for other places were made to-day. After night Mr. Buchanan [called] and I held a conversation with him in relation to the Notice of our Foreign Relations which it would be proper for me to take in my next annual Message. After he retired Thomas F. Marshall, Esqr., of Kentucky called and spent an hour or more with me. He is a talented & very interesting man.

Mr. Wm. V. Voorhies & Mr. H. C. Williams were occupied a part of to-day in copying the parts of my annual message which I had prepared.

SATURDAY, *11th November, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour this morning; all the members present. The Secretary of the Treasury stated that he had received the estimates from the several Departments of expenditures for the next fiscal year. He stated that before he could be prepared to state with precision the State of the finances, and what the condition of the Treasury would be at the end of the present fiscal year (30th June, 1849) he desired to obtain from the Secretary of War, as he had done from the Secretary of the Navy, an estimate of the balances of appropriation for the present fiscal year which would remain unexpended on the 30th of June, 1849. He had brought with him a statement of these balances under each specific head of appropriation up to the present time which remained undrawn from the Treasury. After examining some of these heads of appropriation with the Secretary

of War they retired together to the War Department to complete the examination. Mr. Walker returned about 3 O'Clock P. M. and informed me that they had not completed the examination and that after they had done so he would see me on the subject. I requested him to call on Monday morning. My secretaries have a constant struggle with the Heads of Bureau[s], who are charged with preparing the detailed estimates, to keep down the expenditures to a reasonable point. These Bureau officers are in favour of the largest and most extravagant expenditures and it becomes necessary to be vigilant to keep them in check. With my views upon the subject of River & Harbour Improvements, I have directed that no estimates for these objects should be submitted for the next fiscal year, and none were submitted, but to my surprise I learned from Mr. Walker to-day that estimates had been sent to him for the reappropriation of large sums which had been formerly appropriated for such objects and, remaining unexpended, had gone to the surplus fund. They amounted to several hundred thousand dollars. I at once directed them to be struck out. I was indignant that they had been smuggled into the estimates. The Secretary of War had not observed them or had [not] known that they had gone to the surplus fund. There would be no distinction in principle in reappropriating these sums after, by the operation of law, they had gone back to the surplus fund, & making new appropriations for the same objects, and I would feel it to be my duty to veto a Bill in the one case as soon as in the other. To have these estimates

for re-appropriations & then to be compelled to veto a Bill making the re-appropriations, would have placed me in an awkward and indefensible position.

SUNDAY, *12th November, 1848.*— This was a damp and unpleasant day and I did not go to church. Mrs. Polk is absent on a visit to New York, and Mrs. J. Knox Walker informed me at breakfast that in consequence of the weather she would not attend church. Mr. Ritchie called about 12 O'Clock and I read to him the portions of my message which I had prepared. He made no suggestions, except one or two verbal ones which were not material. He approved the paper and expressed the opinion that its doctrines were sound, and he thought it would make a profound impression on the country. Mr. Ritchie took dinner with me and left about 3 O'Clock P. M.

MONDAY, *13th November, 1848.*— I was in my office at the usual hour this morning. I was desirous to know the result of the examination of the estimates of appropriations for the next year which the Secretaries of the Treasury and War retired from the Cabinet on saturday to make (see this diary of that day) and I sent for the Secretary of War. He called and stated that the examination was not yet completed by his Heads of Bureau[s] under the orders he had given to them on Saturday, but that they had progressed so far as to enable him to say that more [than] two millions of the unexpended balances of former appropriations for former years had, by operation of law, gone to the surplus fund, which would of

course increase the means in the Treasury for the next fiscal year by that amount. I wrote a note to the Secretary of the Treasury requesting him to call on the same subject, and received an answer stating that he would not be prepared to give me the information I wanted before to-morrow. The Secretary of State called on business. I saw the commissioner of the General Land office and other public officers on business. Senator Douglass of Illinois called. He informed me that he had spent the time since the adjournment of Congress with his wife's relatives in N. Carolina. It was the first time I had seen him since the unpleasant interview I had with him two or three days after the adjournment of Congress in August last, a note of which I recorded in this diary at that time (see this diary of that day[?]). I received him with my usual cordiality. He was very pleasant in his manner and conversation. After some time I alluded to our unpleasant interview and told him I was glad he had called, for that after my former intimacy with him I felt deep regret that anything should have occurred to have produced a different relation between us. He interrupted me by saying that he had felt unpleasant about it, that the remarks he had made at the time were hasty and imprudent and about a man (J. Quin Thornton) that he cared nothing about, & owed me an apology for them & had called to make it. I told him that our regret was mutual at the occurrence, and that in reflecting upon it I ought to have known that his remark (as he now stated) was hastily made, and that he could not have meant what it imported. I told

him that I had intended, as soon as I heard of his arrival at the meeting of Congress, to have addressed him a note requesting him to call, and would have frankly held this conversation with him. He said he was glad he had called without receiving such a note, and had voluntarily made the apology, which he felt he ought to make. The explanations were cordial and mutually satisfactory, and it was agreed to suffer the matter to sleep in oblivion. Senator Douglass has been one of my most ardent and active political supporters & friends, and I am much gratified that our former relations are restored. I transacted much business which had accumulated on my table to-day. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I received company generally as usual. Several persons called, and among them as is always the case were several office-hunters, and one woman and one man begging money. The herd of office-seekers are the most unprincipled persons in the country. As a mass they are governed by no principle. As an illustration of this I received to-day a slanderous & abusive letter from a man named Henry Simpson of Philadelphia. This man annoyed me by his letters for an office for more than two years of my time. He was disappointed, and now that I am about retiring he vents his bitter feelings. Such persons as he contributed largely to swell the vote of Taylor, the Whig candidate for the Presidency at the late election. This man Simpson professed to be an ardent Democrat whilst he was seeking office from me. He will now, I have little doubt, profess to be a Whig and be among the crowd of office seekers to Gen'l Taylor. There are thousands

of unprincipled men like him who vote in elections according to their calculation of chances to get an office. The party in power will always be weakened by the votes of this class of persons. I am confirmed in the truth of the remark which I have long since made, that the patronage of the Government will, from the day any President enters upon his duties, weaken his administration. For every important appointment he makes there are many applicants. All cannot be gratified, and those who are disappointed are soured and disappointed, and if they do not go over openly to the opposite party many of them secretly wish it success and throw their influence into their scale. It has happened in consequence of the war with Mexico that during my administration I have had to dispense an unusually large patronage, and the number of disappointed applicants for place have been unusually great.

After night Senator Douglass of Illinois [called], and I read to him confidentially the portions of my annual message which related to my view of the "American system," the Veto power, and the establishment of Territorial Governments over California and New Mexico, & the slave question. He approved it &, indeed, expressed himself as delighted with it.

TUESDAY, *14th November, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour to-day, all the members present. The subject of the estimates of appropriations for the next fiscal year, which was under consideration at the last Cabinet meeting, and concerning

which I saw the Secretary of War on yesterday, was resumed to-day. From the investigations which had been made by the Secretaries of War, Navy, and Treasury into the balances of appropriations heretofore made and remaining unexpended, and their condition, the Secretary of the Treasury stated that the estimates for the next fiscal year would be between 25 & 26 millions of Dollars, exclusive of interest on the public debt & the three millions to be paid to Mexico under the Treaty of Peace. Including the payment of this interest and the next installment due to Mexico, the estimates would be a fraction over 33 millions. He stated that the amount of the estimates being thus ascertained, he was now enabled to say that the means in the Treasury were sufficient to justify the payment at this time of half a million, and perhaps a million of the Public Debt. The law was then examined which authorized the purchase of the public stock of the U. S. at its market value, in anticipation of the period of its re-imbursement. Authority exists to purchase in the market a portion of the Stocks but not of others. I then directed the purchase of half a Million to be made. The agency through whom the purchase was to be made was then considered. The Collectors of Boston, N. York, Philadelphia, & Baltimore were suggested. After discussion it was concluded to entrust the agency to make the purchase exclusively to Mr. C. W. Lawrence, the collector of New York. It is important that the intention of the Government to make the purchase should not be known until it was effected, for otherwise the holders of the Stocks would raise the

price of it, and to avoid the danger of its becoming known it was deemed best to employ but one person to make the purchase. I am much gratified that during my administration I am enabled to commence the payment of the Public Debt. I will thus set an example to my successor of the policy which in my judgment should be pursued. There was unanimity of opinion in the Cabinet on the subject. The Secretary of War laid before me a remarkable account of expenditures made by Gen'l Scott in Mexico, amounting to between two and three Hundred Thousand Dollars, and for which no vouchers were submitted. This account, the Secretary stated, had been sent to him by Gen'l Scott. I told him he had no authority to pay any such account. Gen'l Scott it is understood alleges that the expenditures were made for secret service while he commanded the army in Mexico, and accompanying the account he offers to make verbal explanations. The Secretary of War concurred with me in opinion that he was not authorized by law to settle any such account. It was agreed that he should so inform Gen'l Scott, and leave it to Congress to make provision for the case, if they thought it proper to do so.

Mr. Thomas G. Clemson, U. S. chargè des affaires to Belgium, who recently returned to the United States on leave of absence, called about 2 O'Clock to pay his respects. He was introduced into my office, where the Cabinet were in Session, by Mr. Buchanan, and was introduced to me and to the members of the Cabinet. He remained a few minutes & retired. Mr. Clemson married the daughter of Mr. John C.

Calhoun of S. C. After the Cabinet adjourned I attended to business in my office as usual.

This was reception evening. Mrs. Polk being absent on a visit to New York, Mrs. Walker was in the parlour. Not more than half a dozen persons called, all gentlemen.

WEDNESDAY, *15th November, 1848.*— I spent the day in attending to the current business on my table and in preparing some passages and revising others which I had previously written for my annual message. No member of the Cabinet called. Two or three public officers called and I transacted public business with them. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I received company. Quite a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called, most of them to pay their respects, but some of them on the business which so much annoys me of seeking office.

THURSDAY, *16th November, 1848.*— I was occupied as usual in my office to-day. I attended to business on my table, and devoted a part of the day to writing passages for my annual message. Mr. H. C. Williams & Mr. Loving, two confidential clerks, were engaged during the day in the room adjoining my office in copying parts of my message which I had previously prepared. They finished the copy after night and I compared it with the original. At my request Judge Mason called about 8 O'Clock and read over with me a part of my message. He made some suggestions of verbal alteration. I read to him my introductory and concluding paragraphs. He

approved the latter & made some suggestions of modifications of the former. The part of the body of the message which he examined was that relating to the veto power. He approved it and made no suggestion of m[o]dification of it. Before my hour for receiving company, my door happening to be a little [open] a fat, well-fed-looking man pushed it open and walked in. He was a man whom I had removed from office and his business was to be reinstated. He occupied half an hour of my time much to my annoyance, when finally I lost all patience & told him that it was not my hour to receive company and that I was much occupied with other business. I took up my pen & commenced writing & he left. At 2 O'Clock when I received company generally I was besieged by office-seekers. This is a penance which I have to pay daily. As my term of office approaches its close the passion for office seems to increase, and the very scum of society seem to have been let loose upon me. From missions abroad down to clerkships and messengers' places, I am troubled daily. Scarcely a day passes, too, that [some] stout-looking fellow does not call to beg money. It is some relief that sometimes persons call simply to pay their respects.

Mr. Buchanan called on business in the fore-part of the day. I retired late at night considerably indisposed from the effects of severe cold.

FRIDAY, *17th November, 1848.*— In taking my usual walk about 8 O'Clock this morning I was stopped near the Treasury Building by Mr. McCul-

loch, the First comptroller of the Treasury, who said that he had not yet prepared a Report which I had required him to make to me some time ago. The Secretary of State had made a written Report to me stating that the First comptroller had improperly passed an account in favour of John H. Eaton [1] for a month's salary when he was minister to Spain; stating also that Mr. Eaton's account had long since been settled; that he had subsequently presented this claim for an additional month's salary and that it had been rejected by Messrs. Forsyth,[2] Webster, Upsher,[3] & himself severally as Secretaries of State. He stated that notwithstanding all this the first comptroller had taken up the case, overruled the whole of them and ordered the money to be paid to Mr. Eaton, & that it had been paid. Upon receiving this communication from Mr. Buchanan, I referred it to the First comptroller with a written endorsement ther[e]on, requiring him to make a Report of any explanation he had to make on the subject. It was this Report which Mr. McCulloch stopped me in my walk this morning to inform me he had not yet prepared. I told him I had intended on yesterday, but had omitted it, to address him a note enquiring the cause of the delay, and that I had intended as soon as I returned to my office

[1] John H. Eaton of Tennessee, 1790–1856, Secretary of War 1829–1831, minister to Spain 1836–1840.

[2] John Forsyth of Georgia, Secretary of State under Jackson and Van Buren, 1834–1841.

[3] Abel Parker Upshur of Virginia, 1790–1844, Secretary of the Navy 1841–1843, Secretary of State 1843–1844; killed by the bursting of a gun which was being tested on the U. S. war ship *Princeton* in 1844.

this morning to address him such a note. He said he would make it in a day or two; that he had been busy and had been examining the subject. I replied that it was a very simple affair and could not require much time, and that it had been more than six weeks since it had been referred to him. He was about to make some other remarks, when, feeling indignant at his conduct, I told him that I thought it probable, as I was to retire from office shortly, he regarded me as a *setting sun,* and did not deem it necessary to obey my orders. This he disavowed & said he had too much respect for my office. Not wishing to hold further conversation with him, I told him I should expect his Report in a day or two & left him. He is a Whig whom I have permitted to remain against much importunity to have him removed, particularly in the early part of my administration. There have been many complaints against his delay in transacting business, and I have several times spoke[n] of removing him and would have done so, but the Secretary of the Treasury always objected to it because he considered him a man of ability, and found his experience and knowledge useful to him in transacting the business of the Treasury Department.

Mr. Chase, a member of the Ho. Repts. from Tennessee, called this morning. He has spent his time since the adjournment of Congress in the Eastern States. Brigadier General Sterling Price of Missouri, who commanded the U. S. army in New Mexico in the latter part of the War with Mexico, called to-day. Brt. Maj'r Gen'l Persifer F. Smith of the U. S. army also called. He is about to leave for

Oregon & California. Mr. Bodisco, the Russian minister, called and delivered to me an official letter from the Emperor, his master, announcing the marriage of one of his sons. I received him in the parlour. Such ceremonies seem very ridiculous to an American.

Mr. Buchanan called early in the day and spent three or four hours in the private room adjoining my office in examining the portions of my annual message which I had prepared & had copied. After he had done so he returned to my office and expressed his dissent from some of my views on the slavery question, as connected with the establishment of Territorial Governments in California & New Mexico. After some conversation on the points of difference I requested him to take my draft & prepare one of his own embodying his views, and I would then compare them and consider his suggestions. I told him that my desire was to have the question settled at the next Session of Congress, and with that view I desired at the same time that I expressed my own views in the message to conciliate, as far as was practicable, the North and the South. I told him I was willing to omit a portion of the argument with this view, if it was deemed proper. He took my draft with him to his lodgings & will submit his to me for my consideration as soon as it is prepared.

I transacted business & saw company at 2 O'Clock as usual to-day.

SATURDAY, *18th November, 1848.*— The Cabinet met to-day at the usual hour. The attorney General

submitted to me an able opinion in writing upon the case of Lieut. Goff [1] of the Pennsylvania volunteers, who was murdered at P[e]rote in Mexico by Capt. Foster of the Georgia volunteers. Capt. Foster was arrested and put upon his trial in Mexico before a military Court, but broke custody and made his escape to Georgia before the trial was concluded. The case was brought to my notice by the Governor of Pennsylvania, who transmitted to me a communication addressed to him upon the subject by Maj'r Gen'l Patterson. I referred the question to the attorney General for his opinion, whether Capt. Foster could be now arrested & tried in the Courts of the U. S. The Attorney General decides that he cannot be so arrested and tried, upon the ground that Congress has passed no law making provision for such a case. The opinion was a very satisfactory [one]. I hand it [handed] the papers to the Sec. of State, upon which I made an endorsement directing that he should write to the Gov. of Penn. and transmit to him a copy of the opinion of the Atto. Gen'l.

Not having anything of special interest to submit to the Cabinet to-day, the sitting was a short one. Messrs. Buchanan, Marcy, & Mason retired early. I requested Messrs. Walker, Johnson, and Toucey to remain. They did so, and I read to them a portion of my message which I had revised, and which I had submitted to Mr. Buchanan on yesterday and to Mr. Marcy and Mason last night. The parts read were those relating to the Veto power, The "American system," the Foreign Relations, and the Introductory

[1] Marvin H. Goff, stabbed at Perote, April 10, 1848.

and concluding passages. They approved it all, and only suggested two or three additional paragraphs to amplify the views I had taken. The additions suggested were not material.

Mr. Buchanan returned whilst the reading was going on, and laid on my table the sheets of my message relating to the slavery question as connected with the establishment of Territorial Government in California & New Mexico, which he had taken with him to his lodgings on yesterday (see this diary of yesterday). Mr. Buchanan retired as soon as he stepped in, only remaining long enough to lay the papers on my table. On examining what he had written in the afternoon, I found he had not prepared a draft of his own as I expected, but had written a single paragraph not covering a page of letter paper, and had made a few interlineations in pencil on my draft. I had not time to-day to examine his suggestions, and simply looked into the papers to see what he had written.

Mrs. Polk returned at 8 O'Clock this evening from her visit to New York. She left here on the morning of the 9th Instant. She was accompanied on her return by Col. Walker and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, and the two servants whom she took with her.

SUNDAY, *19th November, 1848.*— I was indisposed to-day from the effects of a severe cold. Mrs. Polk was fatigued from her journey to New York and we did not attend church. The day was cold & I remained quietly in my chamber.

MONDAY, *20th November, 1848.*— Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, left Washington last evening on a visit to his residence in Pennsylvania. This morning I appointed Mr. Toucey, the Attorney General, to be acting Secretary of State during Mr. Buchanan's absence. Mr. Marcy, the Sec. of War, called this morning and spent three hours or more in the private room adjoining my office examining a portion of my message. He made in pencil some brief suggestions of change of phraseology, none of them affecting any sentiment of the paper. I was occupied in revising other parts of the message and in disposing of the business on my table. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I saw company. A number of persons called &, as never fails to be the case, some of them were seeking office. After [night] Mr. R. J. Walker & Judge Mason called at my request, and assisted me in examining & carefully revising a part of my annual message.

TUESDAY, *21st November, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except Mr. Buchanan, who is absent on a visit to Pennsylvania. The whole time was occupied to-day in reading and examining my annual message. Verbal alterations, not affecting any doctrine or sentiment, were suggested and made. It is a very lengthy paper and requires if possible to be condensed. The Cabinet retired between 3 & 4 O'Clock. I saw two or three public officers on business before the meeting of the Cabinet. After night I spent two or three hours alone in examining my message with a view to

condense it and reduce its length. I succeeded to some extent, but it will still be an unusually long message. This was reception evening but I did not go to the parlour. Mrs. Polk attended to the company who called.

WEDNESDAY, *22nd November, 1848.*— I was occupied in my office as usual to-day. I devoted a part of the day to my annual message, endeavouring to condense it. It will be very long in spite of any condensation which I can make. Mr. Marcy and Mr. Toucy called at my request and spent three or four hours in the private room adjoining my office, in examining my message with a view chiefly to suggest any parts of it which might be omitted, so as to reduce its length without impairing its strength. They called again after night and spent some time on the same business. They found this a difficult work. The subjects embraced in the paper are very important, requiring not a casual notice but a full examination. To make it as full as I desire the danger is that it will be so long that it will not be read by the mass of people, and by none but the politicians. I sent for the Secretary of the Treasury and saw him on business to-day. The Hon. Mr. McLane of Maryland and the Hon. Mr. Henley of Indiana, both members of Congress, called at different hours to-day. The members of Congress may be expected to arrive daily until the meeting of Congress on the 4th proximo.

THURSDAY, *23rd November, 1848.*— By a Proclamation issued by the Mayor of Washington this day

was set apart as a day of thanksgiving. To afford the public officers an opportunity to observe it as such, I directed that the several Executive Departments should be closed. I was much occupied in revising my annual message and in preparing some additional paragraphs during the whole day. It is very remarkable that not a single public officer or visitor called to-day. I do not remember that this has ever happened since I have been President. A few individuals, I believe, visited my Private Secretary in his office. On examining the pencil notes on the sheets of my message made by Mr. Marcy and Mr. Toucey on yesterday, I found that they had suggested verbal changes and modifications of paragraphs, but had not changed its purport or meaning in any respect; nor had they effected much by way of condensation. A few passages which were not material they proposed to omit. (See this Diary of yesterday.) After night Mr. Walker and Mr. Mason called at my request and assisted me in revising a part of the sheets of my message. No material changes were made. They promised to call on tomorrow morning & assist me in revising the remaining sheets.

This morning I had made a material change in that part of the message which relates to the slave-question, as connected with the establishment of Territorial Governments in California & New Mexico. I read the modification to Mr. Walker & Mr. Mason, who highly approved it and thought it a valuable change of my original draft. The substance of the modified draft was, 1st, non-interference by Congress,

which I thought the true course; 2nd, the Missouri compromise line, to which I was willing to accede as a compromise; & 3rd, to leave the subject to the decision of the Judiciary.

FRIDAY, *24th November, 1848.*— Mr. Walker & Mr. Mason called at 9 O'Clock this morning and assisted me in revising the remaining sheets of my annual message (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. H. C. Williams & Mr. Loving, two confidential clerks, commenced this morning to make fair copies of my message for the two Houses of Congress. They occupied the private room adjacent to my office. Several passages of the Message relating to the operations of the several Executive Departments remain to be written. They will be short and it will require but little time to prepare them. They cannot be written until I receive detailed information from my Secretaries. Mr. Young, the Commissioner of the General Land office, made a Report to me to-day in pursuance of previous instructions, showing the area of the recently acquired territories of the U. S.; and also that possessed by the U. S. before their acquisition; & showing also the addition of sea coast which we had acquired. This Report was accompanied by a map. The information contained in this Report I will present to Congress in my message. Mr. Broadhead,[1] a member of Congress from Pennsylvania, called to-day. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I received company. Many persons called;

[1] Richard Broadhead, Representative from Pennsylvania 1843–1849, Senator 1851–1857.

and I was besieged for an hour by importunate applicants for office.

In the afternoon I sent for Mr. Toucy, the Atto. Gen'l, & Mr. Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, and read to them the modifications I had made in the first draft of my message on the subject of slavery (see this Diary of yesterday). They highly approved the modifications. After night Mr. Stanton, a member of Congress from Tennessee, called; and whilst he was in my office the Hon. Nathan Clifford, U. S. minister to Mexico, accompanied by Mr. Toucy, the Atto. Gen'l, called. Mr. Clifford had obtained leave of absence for a short time, & arrived in Washington by the Southern Boat this afternoon. Mr. De La Rosa, he informed me, had accompanied him as Envoy Extraordinary & minister Plenipotentiary from Mexico to the U. States. Mr. Clifford remained for two hours and more, and gave me an interesting account of the Condition of things in Mexico. Mr. H. C. Williams & Mr. W. W. Loving, two confidential clerks, were engaged to-day in copying my message. They occupied the room adjoining my office.

SATURDAY, *25th November, 1848.*— The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except Mr. Buchanan, who is absent from Washington on a visit to Pennsylvania. I read to the Cabinet the modified draft which I had prepared of the passage of my Message which relates to slavery (see this Diary of yesterday & the day preceding). I had previously submitted it to the members of the Cab-

inet individually, except to Mr. Marcy, & they had approved it. Upon hearing it read Mr. Marcy approved it also. Two or three verbal alterations were suggested & were made. I informed the Cabinet that I would substitute it for the passage on the same subject which I had first prepared. Mr. Clifford, formerly atto. Gen'l of the U. S. and now Minister to Mexico, called. There being no special business to lay before the Cabinet to-day, Mr. Clifford remained & was engaged in free conversation about Mexican affairs until the Cabinet adjourned.

Judge Bryant [1] of Indiana, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Oregon, & Mr. Adair, the Collector of the Customs for that Territory, called. They were on their way to Oregon, & expect to take passage [on] a vessel which will leave New York for Chagres on the 1st of December. Mr. Walker & Mr. Mason each handed to me to-day passages which they had prepared for my message, relating to their respective Departments. After night I revised & modified them and made paragraphs of my own. Mr. Williams, Mr. Loving, & Mr. Dibrell of Nashville were engaged to-day making copies of my message. Mr. Williams was taken with a violent chill & remained all night.

SUNDAY, *26th November, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied me.

[1] William Perkins Bryant.

MONDAY, *27th November, 1848.*— I was in my office as usual early this morning and was busily engaged during the day. Mr. Buchanan, who has been absent for some days on a visit to Pennsylvania, called this morning. I delivered to him some Foreign despatches which had been received in his absence. I delivered to him also a Report made to me by the 1st comptroller of the Treasury on a communication made to me by Mr. Buchanan some weeks ago, in relation to a payment which had been made to John H. Eaton, late minister to Spain, by the comptroller. (See this Diary a few weeks ago.) I had not had time to read the Report, but as the Report had been made by Mr. Buchanan I handed it to him for his examination first. If it shall not be satisfactory to him I will then examine it. I read to Mr. Buchanan, in the presence of Mr. Marcy who had called in, the modification which I had made during his absence of that part of my message which related to the subject of slavery in the establishment of Territorial Governments in California and New Mexico. He approved the modification which had been made. I requested Mr. Marcy to furnish me with a brief statement of the general operations of the army, with a view to enable me to take the proper notice of these operations in my message. In the evening Mr. Marcy sent to me the information I had requested. Mr. Walker called and handed to me a rough statement of the finances, imports & exports, public debt, &C. Mr. Mason called and informed me confidentially that his friends in Virginia desired, on his return to the state at the close of my term, he should

either go on the Bench of the State or be a candidate for Congress in his District; or be elected Governor of the State by the Legislature next winter. He stated that he would be unwilling to accept either of the two former positions; and that if he were to be chosen Governor it would be necessary for him to enter [on] the duties of the office on the 1st of January next, and in that event [he] would have to leave the Navy Department at that time. It was in relation to this that he wished to consult me. I told him I should regret to loose his services as Secretary of the Navy, but that if he regarded it for his interest I would interpose no objection to his leaving the Department. I told him I would not be in the way of his advancement in his own State, and that I thought if he could be elected Governor of Virginia it would be a dignified & highly honorable position, and that he ought to accept it. Mr. Toucey, the Atto. Gen'l, called at my request, and I consulted him upon the legal question whether under the Mexican Treaty it would be competent for the President to nominate to the Senate a commissioner & surveyor to run & mark the Boundary line between the two countries, without a previous act of Congress. He thought the President had the power to do so under the Treaty, without an act of Congress. I concurred with him in opinion & prepared a paragraph for my message relating to the subject accordingly. Mr. Calderon, the Spanish minister, called & delivered to me a letter from the Queen of Spain announcing that her sister, who was married to the Duke Montpensier, the son of Louis Phillipe, late king of France, had given

birth to a daughter. I received Mr. Calderon in the parlour below & received the important announcement which was delivered with due form & ceremony. Such ceremonies are supremely ridiculous to an American. At 2 O'Clock I received company, and was annoyed as usual for more than an hour by office-seekers. Mr. Williams & Mr. Loving and Mr. Dibrell, confidential clerks, were employed today in making copies of my message. Mr. Williams, who was taken ill on saturday, remained but a short time. After night Senator Dix of New York and his son called. Senator Dix has been in the City some days, but had [not] before called. He was the candidate of the Barnburners for Governor of New York and was defeated at the late election. He was the Free-Soil candidate and run [ran] on the same [ticket] with the Abolitionist, Seth M. Gales, who was a candidate for Lieutenant Governor. He had contributed with Mr. Van Buren, therefore, to defeat the Democratic candidate for President at the late election. I received him courteously but no allusion was made during his visit to the late election or to any party political subject.

TUESDAY, *28th November, 1848.*— I was busily engaged in my office until the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members of the Cabinet attended. I conferred with them in relation to several passages for my message, relating to the finances, the Constitutional Treasury, & the public debt. These several paragraphs were read & some modification of phraseology suggested. Mr. Walker had furnished

me at my request a rough draft setting forth the operations of the tariff of 1846. Not being satisfied with it I told him to leave it with me and that I would make a draft of my own, which I did after night. Mr. Walker had not furnished me with the statistics for the financial statement of my message. I urged him to do so as early on to-morrow as possible. The Secretary of War had given to me a short paragraph relating to the War Department & Indian affairs. The Post master General left with me a statement of the operations of the Post Office Department. The Secretary of the Navy has as yet furnished no statement of the operations of his Department. I saw the Hon. Mr. Cummins,[1] a member of the Ho. Repts., and some others in the course of the day. Messrs. Williams, Dibrell, and Loving, the three confidential clerks who have been employed for several days making three fair copies of my message for Congress and the printer, continued their work to-day in the room adjoining my office. This was reception evening. A larger number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called than have done so for some weeks past. Among them were several members of Congress.

WEDNESDAY, *29th November, 1848.*— I was busily employed in revising and correcting my message and adding new paragraphs to it to-day. The Secretary of the Navy furnished the paragraph relating to the Navy. I revised [it] with him, and made several changes, omitting some sentences &

[1] John D. Cummins, Representative from Ohio 1845–1849.

modifying others. He took the revised draft and had a copy made. I revised the draft of the passage relating to the War Department, which the Secretary of War had left with me. The Secretary of the Navy have [having] furnished a copy of his paragraph as it had been altered by me, I sent for the Secretary of War and went over with him and the Secretary of the Navy both their drafts. The Secretary of the Treasury called and furnished me with the statistics required for the financial statement in the message. I submitted to him my draft of passages relating to the payment of the public debt and the operations of the tariff act of 1846 and the Constitutional Treasury. He approved them. I sent for the Post master Gen'l and submitted to him the changes I had made in the paragraph which he had furnished me in relation to his Dept. It was after night when he called. He approved of the modifications which I had suggested by interlineations & additions & omissions. I took the paper and at my table made a fair copy of it as modified. I put all these paragraphs into the hands of the three clerks (Messrs. Williams, Dibrell, & Loving) who were copying for me.

A number of members of Congress called to-day and among them were Senator Turney from Tennessee, Senator Felch & Mr. McClelland of Michigan; Mr. Wick of Indiana, & Mr. Morse of La.

I was quite as busy to-day as I have been any day during my term. My message will be very long.

The *Union* of this morning contains an article undertaking to state what my message will contain. I was much vexed when I saw it. It is an infirmity of

Mr. Ritchie that he cannot keep a secret. I had read to him some days ago a considerable portion of my message, but I informed him expressly that it was communicated to him confidentially. Without meaning to do wrong, such is his propensity to give news to the public, and to appear to the public to be the Executive organ, that in this morning's paper he shadows forth what I may say in it. Mr. Ames, the assistant Editor of the *Union* called, and I expressed my dissatisfaction at Mr. Ritchie's course in strong terms. He informed Mr. Ritchie, and in the course of the day I received a note from him explaining the appearance of the article in his paper, but it was not satisfactory.

THURSDAY, *30th November, 1848.*— In the course of the day I saw at different times the Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, and Navy and transacted business with them. My three confidential clerks, Messrs. Williams, Loving, & Debrell, continued to occupy the room adjoining my office and were employed in finishing their respective copies of my message. I made some verbal changes and modifications, which made it necessary to recopy portions of it. Mr. Buchanan informed me that he had appointed Saturday next, the 2nd Dec'r, for Mr. De La Rosa, the Mexican Minister, to present his credentials. He furnished me with a translation of an address which Mr. De La Rosa proposed to deliver on the occasion of his presentation.

Several members of Congress called; among them the Hon. Geo. W. Jones of Tennessee and the Hon. A.

G. Brown of Mississippi. I saw company for a few minutes at 2 O'Clock P. M. when I closed my office & resumed my business. I was constantly occupied through the day with my message and other matters requiring my attention. Mr. Dibrell and Mr. Loving finished complete copies of my message to-night. Mr. Williams will finish his copy on to-morrow.

Mr. Ritchie called this morning and appeared to be very much mortified at the indiscreet publication of the article in his paper on yesterday. He meant no harm I am satisfied. It is a constitutional infirmity with him, I believe, that he cannot keep a secret: all he knows, though given him in confidence, he is almost certain to put into his newspaper. My sympathies were excited at seeing his mortification, and I relieved him by telling him to let it all pass (see this Diary of yesterday). I sent for Mr. Ames, who is Mr. Ritchie's co-editor of the *Union,* and told him that I was vexed when I saw him on yesterday, and spoke perhaps too strongly; that I was satisfied Mr. Ritchie meant no harm by the publication of the article, and requested him not to repeat what I had said to him on yesterday. After night Mr. Ritchie called and read a part of my message.

FRIDAY, *1st December, 1848.*— I called a meeting of the Cabinet at 11 O'Clock to-day. All the members were present. Having had my message copied into a fair hand writing I read it to the Cabinet. It is now complete except the detailed statements of sums, &C, to be obtained from the respec-

tive Executive Departments. When I had finished reading it Mr. Buchanan said that he thought it would be a complete paper if I left out those parts of it which related to the "American system" and the "Veto" power. Though he considered the views presented upon these points able, he thought they would produce excitement in Congress and that they might be considered out of place in the annual message. He thought the Whigs would consider them as an attack on Gen'l Taylor; and that they might be used in a veto message of an Internal Improvement Bill, if one should be presented to me, as he thought it probable there would be at the approaching session of Congress. I told him that I had read these parts of the message to the Cabinet on the day of the Presidential election (the 7th Instant) and they had advised me to put these passages in the message. I stated that I had informed the Cabinet at that time that they had been prepared during the summer, with a view originally to be used in a veto message, and that I had so informed the Cabinet when I first read them to them on the 7th Inst., and had at that time informed them that I then thought of transferring them to the annual message, and that the Cabinet had approved the suggestion. I stated to him that I had on that day, after consulting the Cabinet, made up my own mind to make them a part of the annual message, that I had accordingly revised them, and on the 9th of November put them into the hands of a confidential clerk (H. C. Williams) to be copied in an open hand writing for further revision and examination. I stated that with this open copy I had

further revised and perfected them, and that it would greatly embarrass me in making up my message if at this late day, and just on the eve of the meeting of Congress, they were now left out of it. Mr. Walker thought they would do better for a Veto message than for the annual message, and he would advise that they be omitted in the latter if he were certain an internal improvement Bill would be presented to me at the next session. Other members of the Cabinet engaged in the conversation. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Walker made the only objections, such as are here stated. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Mason thought they were proper for the annual message. Mr. Toucey thought there might be a paragraph prepared to show more distinctly the reason why they were inserted in the annual message. Mr. Buchanan thought they would not fall under the clause of the constitution which authorized the President to give to Congress, "information of the state of the Union." I was somewhat troubled at the objections to their insertion, and said that if the objection had been made when they were first read to the Cabinet I would then have had time to shape my message without them, but it was now almost too late. The Cabinet adjourned near 4 O'Clock P. M. No other subject was considered but the message.

The three clerks (Dibrell, Williams, & Loving) continued to occupy the room adjoining my office making out fair copies of the message for Congress. I made, on a review of it, frequent alterations by interlineations, erasures, & insertions, which caused the

necessity of re-copying many portions of it. I retired late at night much fatigued.

SATURDAY, *2nd December, 1848.*—No meeting of the Cabinet was held to-day, though at different hours I saw every member of it in relation to business connected with his particular Department. The Secretary of the Navy called in the forenoon & read to me his annual Report. At 2 O'Clock P. M. I received Mr. De La Rosa, the Envoy Extraordinary & minister Plenipotentiary from the Republic of Mexico. He was presented to me by the Secretary of State in the parlour. He was attended by his Secretary of Legation & Interpreter. My Private Secretary accompanied me to the parlour. Mr. De La Rosa did not speak English, but addressed me in Spanish, to which I responded in English. He had previously furnished to the Secretary of State a copy of his address and a copy of my response had been furnished to him. The address and response will be published in the *Union* on to-morrow. It was an interesting ceremony. I saw several members of Congress to-day. I was busily occupied with my message. The three clerks (Loving, Dibrell, & Williams) continued the copying in the room adjoining my office. My Private Secretary assisted them in comparing their copies. I was frequently in the room with them, giving directions. Mr. Ritchie called in the evening, and I read to him the portion of the message which related to the "Veto." After night the Post Master Gen'l called

and read to me his annual Report. After he retired I was occupied until near 12 O'Clock comparing the copies of my message and making critical corrections of it, so as to have the copies precisely alike. We did not finish more than half of it. It is a very long paper; I fear too long, but I do not see any part of it which I can omit. The Secretary of War sent to me his annual Report this evening, but I had not time to read it to-day.

SUNDAY, *3rd December, 1848.*— From the necessity of the case I continued the examination of the copies of my message with my clerks, which had been left unfinished on yesterday (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. Daniel Graham, the Register of the Treasury, assisted us. Mr. Graham, Mr. Dibrell, & Mr. Loving took dinner with me. Mrs. Polk attended church. I continued to be occupied with the message until night. After night I read it confidentially to Messrs. Cobb of Georgia, Thompson of Pennsylvania, & Jones of Tennessee, all members of the Ho. Repts. I had directed my Private Secretary to request them to call. I thought it prudent to do this that some of my friends in Congress might be apprised of what it contained before it was sent in. Mr. Ames, the assistant Editor of the *Union,* had requested to see it. He called and I submitted one of the copies of it to him & Mr. Edmund Burke, the commissioner of Patents. They read it in my Private Secretary's office. They both expressed themselves as highly pleased with it. The three members of Congress, to whom I also read it, ex-

pressed themselves as pleased with it. Mr. Thompson of Penn. seemed to be a little tender-footed about slavery and the tariff. Upon the whole he thought well of it. It was about 12 O'Clock before I retired from my office. I was much fatigued. I regret the necessity of having to spend the sabbath as this day was spent. This, however, is my last annual message. It is very long and I shall be so occupied with company to-morrow as not probably to be able to give attention to it.

MONDAY, *4th December, 1848.*— My three confidential clerks (Messrs. Williams, Loving, & Dibrell) were engaged with my Private Secretary in correcting and comparing the three copies of my message during the whole day. I was frequently in the room with them. During the day many members of Congress called. The Judges of the Supreme Court of the U. S., the Atto. Gen'l, the Clerk, & Marshall called in a body to pay their respects. All the Judges were present except Chief Justice Taney,[1] who is detained at home by indisposition. Justice Wayne[2] was not with the other members of the Court, but called a few minutes after they retired. A Joint committee of the two Houses of Congress called to notify me that Congress was organized and ready to receive any communication I might have to make. I return[ed] for answer that I would make a communication in writing to the two Houses to-

[1] Roger Brooks Taney, 1777–1864.

[2] James Moore Wayne, 1790–1867, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court 1835–1867.

morrow at 12 O'Clock. The committee consisted of Senators King of Alabama and Davis of Massachusetts, and of Messrs. Wentworth of Illinois, Rockwell of Connecticut, & Shepherd[1] of N. Carolina. At 1 O'Clock I gave the copy of my message which had been prepared by Mr. Dibrell, to the foreman (Mr. Teenum) of the *Union* office, for the purpose of having it printed for the use of Congress by the time it was sent in on to-morrow. I entrusted it to him confidentially. After night I examined the proof sheets of my message as it had been printed at the *Union* office. I invited Mr. Dickins, the Secretary of the Senate, and Mr. Thos. J. Campbell, the Clerk of the Ho. Repts., to call and read the message that they might become familiar with the handwriting and be enabled to read to their respective Houses on to-morrow with the more facility. They called accordingly, and read the copies as I examined the proof with the printer. The printed and manuscript copies were literally copies of each other. Judge Mason, my Private Secretary, the three clerks who had copied the message, and the Hon. James H. Thomas, the latter the Representative in Congress from my immediate District in Tennessee, were present during the reading and comparison. I finished between 12 and 1 O'Clock at night, and retired to rest, being exceedingly fatigued.

TUESDAY, *5th December, 1848.*— Being much engaged this morning in arranging the Reports and Documents from the several Executive Departments,

[1] Augustine H. Shepperd.

which were to accompany my message to Congress, I gave orders to my porter to admit no company. He afterwards informed me that many members of Congress and others called. At a quarter before 12 O'Clock [my Private Secretary] left with my message[1] for the Capitol, and delivered it to the two Houses a few minutes after 12 O'Clock. The Secretaries of State, War, Navy, & Treasury and the Post master Gen'l called, and were present when I sent off my message. The Attorney General was engaged in the Supreme Court & was not present. This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet; but I informed my Secretaries that I was too much fatigued to transact any further business, and they dispersed before 1 O'Clock P. M. I arranged the original manuscripts and passages which had been written during the preparation & revision of my message and put them under envelopes with a view to preserve them. It may be interesting to refer to them in after years.

This was the regular evening for receiving company. A large number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called. Among those present were the Vice President of the U. S., the Speaker of the Ho. Repts., and a number of Senators & Representatives. The French minister and several other members of the Diplomatic corps were also present. Many persons expressed to me their approval of my message. I learn that it is generally received well by the Democratic party in Congress.

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 629–670.

WEDNESDAY, *6th December, 1848.*— A large number of members of Congress called to-day. They were all of the Democratic party, except four Senators of the Whig party who called together about 2 o'clock, *viz.,* Senators Berrien of Georgia, Dayton & Miller [1] of New Jersey, and Baldwin [2] of Connecticut. The Democratic members all expressed their satisfaction with my message. I received the Whig Senators with courtesy & endeavoured to make their visit agreeable. No political topic was introduced. I learn that no business of importance was transacted in either House of Congress to-day. I disposed of some of the business which had accumulated on my table. I feel much wearied by my great confinement and labour for the last few days.

THURSDAY, *7th December, 1848.*— Many members of Congress called to-day. I directed my porter to admit them at any hour of the day. Mr. Walker called and read to me that part of his annual Report which relates to the tariff. It is one of his ablest papers. The Secretary of War called and exhibited to me specimens of California Gold, which had been sent him by Col. Mason commanding the U. S. troops in California. A portion of these specimens he will retain in the War Dept. and the balance he will send to the mint of the U. S. at Philadelphia to be coined. So numerous were the visits of mem-

[1] Jacob W. Miller, Senator from New Jersey 1841–1853.

[2] Roger Sherman Baldwin, Governor of Connecticut 1844–1846, Senator 1847–1851.

bers of Congress to-day that I had but little opportunity to attend to business on my table. I learn that the death of the Hon. Dixon H. Lewis, late Senator from Alabama, was announced in the Senate to-day & both Houses adjourned without transacting any business.

FRIDAY, *8th December, 1848.*— Neither house of Congress set [sat] to-day, both having adjourned over on yesterday until monday next. Many members of Congress called at different periods of the day. The Democratic members all express their satisfaction at my message. The subject is not introduced by the Whig members who call, & I, of course, do not allude to it. The Whig newspapers, so far as I have seen them, are very abusive of it, but none of them attempt by argument to answer it. Any low fellow can use hard words, and this is usually the resort of those who cannot answer an argument, or successfully gainsay the truth of arguments used. Democratic papers generally speak favourably of it.

SATURDAY, *9th December, 1848.*— Before the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet this morning I saw a number of members of Congress. Henry A. Wise, Esqr., of Virginia, called. It was the second time Mr. Wise had called since he returned from his mission to Brazil. He appreciated my forbearance in not recalling him from his mission, and, as I have heretofore learned from Judge Mason, is very grateful for what he regards as my magnanimity towards

him. When I was Speaker of the Ho. Repts. he assailed me with great bitterness, but has long since, as I learn, become satisfied that he had done me great injustice. He was one of the Democratic Electors of President and Vice President in Virginia in the late election, & in that contest has behaved well. I received and treated him with politeness & courtesy. He entered into conversation on public affairs, and I conversed freely with him. Whilst he was with me Judge Mason, Mr. Toucey, & Mr. Johnson came in. He remained a few minutes and retired. The other members of the Cabinet came in shortly afterwards, except Mr. Walker, who did not attend to-day, being engaged, as I presume, in revising his annual Report, which, as I understand, he intends to send to Congress on Monday next. Mr. Buchanan brought to my notice several matters connected with our Foreign affairs and obtained my views in relation to them. They were none of them of general importance. Several other matters of no great importance were considered and disposed of. Judge Catron & his wife, Mrs. Benson, Mr. Daniel Graham & his wife, Hon. James H. Thomas of the Ho. Repts., and Mr. John C. McLemore of Tennessee took a family dinner with me to-day. After night I disposed of some of the business which had accumulated on my table.

SUNDAY, *10th December, 1848.*— Mrs. Polk and myself, accompanied by our two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays, attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. After night Judge Mason called

and sat an hour with me in conversation in relation to the public events of my administration. His name is being used by his friends of the Virginia Legislature, now in session, for the office of Governor of that State. He is not a candidate for the office, but would accept it if elected. In the course of conversation he asked me if I had ever written any letter to Col. Benton which could do me any injury if published. I told him I had not. I told him I had held no correspondence with Col. Benton, unless it might be to address him a note during the earlier period of my administration, when he professed to support it and be my friend; that any such notes, if published, could do me no harm. I stated to him that Col. Benton had occasionally addressed notes to me during the same period. Judge Mason then said that his reason for asking the question was that he had learned from a lady, whose name he did not give, that she had learned from the Blair family that Col. Benton would probably publish some letter of mine which would do me an injury. I told Judge Mason that he had no such letter. I do not know what this means. I am, however, at the defiance of both Blair & Benton. The former has proved himself to be unprincipled and the latter, I fear, is no better. From the day I approved the sentence of the Court martial in Col. Fremont's case, Col. Benton, for no other cause than that I dared to do my duty, has been exceedingly hostile to me. He has not called on me, nor have I spoken to him for more than twelve months. He was at the same church which I attended to-day.

MONDAY, *11th December, 1848.*— Many members of Congress called this morning. The Secretary of War & the Secretary of the Navy called on business. I was engaged during the greater part of the day after 12 O'Clock in disposing of a mass of business which had accumulated on my table. Nothing worthy of special notice occurred during the day. After night the Post master General, Senator Turney, & Mr. James H. Thomas called & spent an hour in conversation with me in relation to public affairs. After they retired Senator Douglass of Illinois called and held a long conversation with me on the subject of A Bill which he had introduced into the Senate to admit California & New Mexico into the Union as a State, instead of establishing Territorial Governments in the first instance over them. I was surprised to learn to-day from Senator Dickinson of New York and the Secretary of War that Mr. Buchanan had selected a newspaper in Rochester, New York, as the publisher of the laws of the United States for the next year, which is a free-soil paper, & opposed the election of the regular Democratic candidates for the President & the Vice President of the U. States. I highly disapprove of the selection. I think no paper should have been selected but one which was sound and had supported my administration, & if I had known Mr. Buchanan's intention before he acted I would have prevented it. He is undoubtedly endeavoring to conciliate the barnburners of New York.

TUESDAY, *12th December, 1848.*— Several members of Congress called to see me this morning. Among others Senator Breese of Illinois, accompanied by a Mr. Cooper, who is, as I understood him, a member of the legislature of Illinois. Mr. Breese read to me a passage from a New York paper; I think it was a part of [a] letter from Washington to the New York *Herald,* to the effect that the administration desired Mr. Breese's defeat in the election of U. S. Senator from that State. Mr. Cooper said that Gen'l Shields was a candidate for the Senate and had informed him (Cooper) at his house some time ago that he had a letter from Buchanan expressing the wish that Gen'l Shields might be elected and that Mr. Breese might be defeated. I told Mr. Breese that I had never heard of the matter which he brought to my notice before, and that I had never uttered a syllable upon the subject. I told him that the President's situation was a very delicate one between political friends, and that I had never interfered in any way in the elections in the States. Mr. Breese said that he had given to the administration a faithful support and that it was unjust to him & calculated to do him great injury if the story was not contradicted. I told him I did not desire to be connected with the matter in any way. I repeated to him that I had never heard of it before, and that I desired to have nothing to say in relation to it. I was on my guard to say nothing which could be used so as to mix my name up with the Senatorial

election in Illinois. I suspected that Mr. Breese had called and brought Mr. Cooper with him that the latter might repeat what I might say. The whole story, I have no doubt, has originated in the imprudence of Mr. Buchanan, who dislikes Mr. Breese and is the friend of Gen'l Shields.

Senator Borland of Arkansas called and made application to me to appoint his son a cadet at West Point. I made him no promise but told him the 10 cadets at large would not be appointed until February, that the applications were very numerous, but that I would consider his application with others when the time came to make the appointments. Though Mr. Borland has just been elected to the Senate of the U. S. from Arkansas I have no confidence in him as a politician. He professes to be a Democrat, but I have a strong conviction that he will continue to do so only so long as he may consider it his interest.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except Mr. Walker, who wrote me a note informing me that he was much engaged in his office and asking to be excused from attending to-day unless something important was before the Cabinet in relation to which I might deem his presence necessary. The Atto. Gen'l was also absent attending the Supreme Court. I sent to the Senate to-day nominations for all the appointments I made during the last recess, and some other nominations. I sent to the Senate also two Indian Treaties[1] for their consideration with a view to their ratification. One of them (the Treaty with the Menomonees)

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 949–955.

was an important one. Several matters of detail were considered and disposed of, none of them of much importance. I then stated to the Cabinet that I feared no action would be had at the present session of Congress for the Government of California & New Mexico; that I feared this would be the case from the want of concert of action or any common views among the members of Congress with whom I had conversed. I stated further that I apprehended if these territories were left without a Government for another year, and especially California, they might be lost to the Union. I gave my views at some length for this apprehension. They were, in substance, that in the course of the next year a large population would be attracted to California by its mineral wealth and other advantages, that among the emigrants would be men of enterprise and adventure, men of talents and Capital; and that finding themselves without a Government or the protection of law, they would probably organize an independant Government, calling it California or Pacific Republic, and might endeavour to induce Oregon to join them. I stated that if this state of things existed when Congress came together twelve months hence, that the leading Federalists (alias Whigs) would be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity to give up the country for the purpose of relieving Gen'l Taylor of his embarrassments upon the Wilmot Proviso. I added that the Federal party had from the commencement of our history been opposed to the extension of our limits; that they opposed the acquisition of Louisiana as they had recently done that of our new possessions.

To guard against the loss of California I deemed it very important that the question of its Government should be settled at the present Session of Congress. I then stated that I thought [it] indispensible that we should agree upon a plan of settlement (for Congress seemed to have no plan) and exercise what influence we might possess to carry it through at the present Session. All present agreed that this would be proper and, indeed, our duty. It is a question rising above ordinary party considerations. We have a country to serve as well as a party to obey. On comparing information, as far as we had been able to collect it from conversations with members of Congress, we were satisfied that neither of the propositions for the settlement of the Slavery question presented at the last Session of Congress could prevail; and that either of them would be embarrassed by the Wilmot Proviso in the Ho. Repts. What then was to be done, was the question. Senator Douglass of Illinois had introduced a Bill into the Senate to admit both California and New Mexico into the Union as one State. The territory, we were all of opinion, was too large, and the settlements in it too detached & distant from each other to form one State. After full consideration it was agreed that I should see Senator Douglass and advise him to modify his Bill so as to admit California alone into the Union as a State, and to bring in a seperate Bill for the Government of New Mexico. All were agreed that this was the most feasible plan of settling the slavery question, by leaving it to the inhabitants of the new state to decide the question for

themselves, and at the same time avoid the danger of loosing California, of which there was very great danger if the present session of Congress adjourned without acting on the subject.

This being reception evening an unusually large number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, members of Congress, citizens, & strangers attended.

WEDNESDAY, *13th December, 1848.*— Senator Douglass of Illinois called this morning at my request, and I communicated to him fully my views in relation to the slavery question and the admission of California into the Union as a state, and the propriety of bringing in a seperate Bill for the Government of New Mexico (see this Diary of yesterday). He thought well of my suggestions of modification of the Bill he had introduced into the Senate, and said he would consider them and confer with Senators on the subject. At my suggestion he said he would call & see Mr. Buchanan on the subject. Many members of Congress called this morning & among them Mr. Calhoun of S. Carolina, who had reached Washington only a day or two ago. I had some conversation with him, in which I expressed my opinions on the subject of the slavery question and the government of California & New Mexico. They were, in substance, the views entertained in the Cabinet on yesterday (see this Diary of that day). He expressed no decided opinion, said he had not read Mr. Douglass's Bill or my message, but expressed himself as anxious to settle the question at the present session. It was after 1 O'Clock before

members of Congress ceased to occupy my attention, and up to that hour I had not time to read a single letter or transact any business. Among others Senator Dickinson of New York called, much excited, & showed me a letter from a citizen of Rochester, N. York (Mr. H. Gay) denou[nc]ing in strong terms the selection by Mr. Buchanan of a Barnburning paper in that town in which to publish the laws of the U. States, because that paper had opposed the Democratic nominees for President at the last election and was opposed to my administration. I told him Mr. Buchanan had certainly committed an error. He had previously spoken to me on the subject (see this Diary of the 11th Inst.). Mr. Buchanan called on business at a subsequent part of the day & [I] showed him Mr. Gay's letter. He said that he had made the selection of that paper without consulting me & that he took the whole responsibility. I told him that although the law authorized him to make the selection I would be held responsible for it. He said he had obtained the best information he could, and understanding that it was a moderate Barnbu[rn]ing paper, & not desiring to take part between the Hunkers & Barnburners he had selected on[e] Hunker and one Barnburner paper, & he desired me to say to Senator Dickinson that he had not consulted me on the subject and was alone responsible. I told him I disapproved the selection & feared it would do mischief. His future personal aspirations for the Presidency undoubtedly induced Mr. Buchanan to commit this great mistake. I desire to avoid a rupture with him at this late

period of my administration or I would order the paper to be discontinued. I learn from my Private Secretary this afternoon that a vote was taken in the Ho. Repts. to-day approving the Wilmot Proviso by a considerable majority. Some of the Northern Democrats are giving way and reversing their votes of the last session, and I am the more satisfied that unless Senator Douglass's Bill is accepted, no adjustment of the territorial questions can be affected [effected] at the present session. After night Senator Foote of Miss. called, & I had a full conversation with him on the subject and gave him my views as entertained and expressed in Cabinet on yesterday (see this Diary of that day). After my company retired to-day I disposed of much business on my table. I am daily applied to for office. The passion for place is quite as great and the applications quite as numerous as at any former period of my administration. Senator Foote informed me that it was believed in the City that Gen'l Cass would be returned to the Senate of the U. S., & that some of the Whigs predicted that he would be instructed to vote for the Wilmot Proviso.

THURSDAY, *14th December, 1848.*— I had many visitors this morning, members of Congress and others. Among them Senator Dickinson of New York called again to see me on the subject of the selection made by Mr. Buchanan of a Barnbu[rn]ing Abolition paper in Rochester, New York, in which to publish the laws of the U. S. This selection was a great mistake on the part of Mr. Buchanan. Mr.

Dickinson delivered to me several letters which he had received, strongly condemning the selection. I strongly disapprove the selection, but dislike to have a rupture or any difficulty with my Secretary of State so near the close of my administration. At 12 O'Clock I received in the parlour Don Rafael Anvida, the first charge d'affaires from Venezuela, who had ever been accredited to the U. States. He was presented to me by Mr. Buchanan. He did not speak English, but was accompanied by an interpreter. My Private Secretary was with me. Mr. Anvida made an address to me, with a translation of which I had been previously furnished, to which I responded in a short address.

I gave a Cabinet Dinner to-day at which were present all the members of the Cabinet and some of the ladies of their respective families: Senators Atchison of Mo., Sturgeon of Penn., Douglass & Breese of Illinois, Butler, S. C., Atherton of N. Hampshire, Hunter of Va., King of Al., Bright of Indiana, & Houston of Texas were of the company. Mr. Venable of N. C., Ho. Repts., Mr. Ritchie & daughter, Walker Anderson of Florida, Dr. Foltz of the Navy, Mr. Aspenwall [1] and Stevens of N. York, the latter the traveller, were also of the party. Senator Douglass remained after dinner & [after] the company had retired and I held a long conversation with him on the subject of the Bill he had in-

[1] William H. Aspinwall, merchant, of New York. In 1850 he started a steamship line to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama; he was the builder of the railroad across the Isthmus opened in 1855.

troduced into the Senate, to admit New Mexico & California into the Union as one State, in which I strongly advised him to modify the Bill so as to admit California alone as a state, as more likely to succeed. I told him this would secure the acquired territory to the Union, and that he could bring in a seperate Bill for the Government of New Mexico. He was favourably inclined to adopt my suggestions, but did not decide positively to do so. My time was so constantly occupied with company to-day that I had but little time to dispose of business on my table.

FRIDAY, *15th December, 1848.*— Many members of Congress called this morning. Among them Senator Dickinson called to know whether Mr. Buchanan's order, selecting a Barnburning abolition paper at Rochester, N. York, in which to publish the laws of the U. S., had been or would be revoked. He said if it was not revoked he would make a publication exposing the Secretary for the act (see this Diary for several days past). Finding that he was still much excited and resolved to make a publication in the newspapers, and desiring to prevent a newspaper quarrel between him and the Secretary of State, I availed myself, at a subsequent period of the day when Mr. Buchanan [called, of the opportunity] to inform him of Mr. Dickinson's intention, and to submit to him whether it would not be better for him to revoke the order and select some other paper, which was friendly to my administration. I told him I thought he had made a mistake in the paper

he had selected, but that I would not, if it was disagreeable to him, order the change, though I would be gratified if he consented to make the change. He said he cared nothing for Dickinson's threatened publication, for that he could answer. He said if I chose to take the responsibility of requesting that the change be made, he would make it, and state to the Editor that it was done at my request, and that he would have no unpleasant feeling toward me on the subject. I told him I thought, on his own account as well as that of the administration, it was very unfortunate the selection had been made, & that I was ready to take the responsibility. I told him that I would see Mr. Marcy on the subject & let him know on to-morrow what [I] determined to do.

Senator Hunter called by previous appointment at 1 O'Clock, and I had a full conversation with him on the territorial & slavery question, as connected with New Mexico & California. I repeated to him the views which I had expressed in Cabinet on tuesday last, and which I have since expressed to Senator Douglass and others. He expressed himself as very desirous to settle the question in any way to avoid the degradation of the South, by getting clear of the Wilmot Proviso, but expressed his fears that this was impracticable. After night Mr. Venable of the Ho. Repts. called, and I held a similar conversation with him. He concurred with me in my views and will co-operate in carrying them out. I addressed a letter to Gen'l Cass to-day, giving him a statement of the difficulties which were encountered on this subject. I took the occasion also to inform

him of what I had learned from Senator Foote on the 13th Inst. (see this Diary of that day) that he might be returned to the Senate from Michigan, and that, in that event, some of the Whigs were predicting that he would be instructed to vote for the Wilmot Proviso, and that if he obeyed he would have to abandon the ground he had taken in his Nicholson letter, & I gave him my opinion on the subject. I refer to my letter to him, a copy of which will be found in my letter book.

After night Senators Atchison of Missouri & Cameron of Penn., called & enquired of me if I had nominated Lewis Cass, jr., to the Senate as charge d'affaires to Rome (his nomination is now before the Senate) at the request of his father (Gen'l Cass). I replied that it was a question of some delicacy, but, as they were both the friends of Gen'l Cass, I would say to them confidentially that it was done at the request of Gen'l Cass, who was anxious he should receive the appointment and thought him well qualified for it. I told them I knew very little of the young man personally, and had nominated him from the belief that he was qualified & from the great respect I had for his father. They expressed deep regret at it, and expressed the opinion [that he] had no claims & that he would be rejected by the Senate. Mr. Atchison declared his intention to vote against his nomination. They desired to know if I would withdraw his nomination. I told them I could not unless his father voluntarily requested it. They enquired of me, if he was rejected, if I would then appoint Senator Hannegan in his place (information

having been received here to-day that Mr. Hannegan had been defeated in the Senatorial election for the next term) as they were very anxious to see him provided for. I told them I deemed it improper to say anything on that point. In the course of the day I disposed of much business on my table.

SATURDAY, *16th December, 1848.*— I had scarcely reached my office this morning before members of Congress and others commenced calling. I received, as is usual, a large mail this morning, but had no opportunity to open or read a single [letter] before the hour of meeting of the Cabinet. I have omitted to note for some time past the annoyance to which I am daily subjected by importunate office seekers. There has been no period of my administration when the applicants for office have been more numerous or pressing, unless it may have been the first two months of my Presidential term. I regard office seekers as a class, I mean such (and there are many of them) and [as] make it their study [to] devise means to live off the public without relying upon their own resources and exertions, as the most useless and least deserving portion of society. The impression seems to have obtained to some extent that Gen'l Taylor will make but few if any removals from office, and to this I attribute the press for place at the close of my term. Since the commencement of the present session of Congress members of Congress, who are doubtless urged to it by their constituents, call on me daily to procure places for their friends. There is a class of gentlemen loafers who congregate

at Washington during every session of Congress, who are standing applicants for every vacancy. This class is more numerous at the present session than I have known it to be during my term.

The Cabinet assembled to-day at the usual hour; all the members present. Some subjects of minor importance were considered and disposed of. I informed the Cabinet that I proposed on monday next to nominate the Hon. Ambrose H. Sevier of Arkansas to the Senate as the commissioner on the part of the U. S. to run the boundary line between Mexico and the U. S. in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace. All the members of the Cabinet approved the selection of Mr. Sevier. About the time the Cabinet were retiring I walked into the room adjoining my office with Mr. Buchanan and informed him that I would take the whole responsibility of revoking the appointment of an Editor of a barnburning abolition paper at Rochester in N. York, as one of the publishers of the laws of the U. S. (see this Diary of yesterday). I told him that he could select any other paper he chose provided it was a Democratic paper, friendly to my administration, and which had supported the election of the Democratic candidates for President & Vice President at the last election. I read to him a paragraph from the paper at Rochester which he had selected, & which was published since he selected it, vaunting his appointment, of an exceptionable character. Mr. Buchanan said it was an exceptionable article and that he would yield to my request & revoke the appointment. About an hour afterwards Mr. Buchanan sent by his messenger the draft

of a letter in his own hand-writing to be addressed "to the publisher of the Rochester *daily advertiser,* New York." The draft of the letter was not signed, but there was a note at the bottom in pencil "is this right." I took a copy of the draft which I will preserve. I did not like it, but determined, if Mr. Buchanan desired it, to let it go. I sent for Mr. Marcy and showed it to him. He thought as I did that it was exceptionable. It would undoubtedly be published by the dismissed Editor and would show that Mr. B. had not yielded to my suggestions cheerfully or willingly, but under constraint. He thought it was enough to say that the arrangement had been changed at my request or on my suggestion, instead of saying as he had done "I have deemed it to be my duty to [accede to] the special request of the President, & C." At my request Mr. Marcy wrote a draft of a letter somewhat modifying Mr. Buchanan's draft. After Mr. Marcy retired I sent for Mr. B., and while the messenger was gone after him I prepared two drafts of my own, copies of which I will preserve with the copy of his. When Mr. Buchan[an] came I submitted my drafts to him & said to him that if he preferred [?] his own to either of them he could send it if he chose, but that I thought it unnecessary, as I had taken the whole responsibility, for him to say that he had acted at my special request, for this would indicate that I had some motive towards the particular paper he had selected, which I had not, but had objections to giving the patronage of my administration to an aboli-

tion paper which opposed it, that I desired some paper to be employed to publish the laws which was Republican in its character, and not one which agitated a sectional issue which might endanger the Union, and which in the last election had contributed to defeat the Democratic party. He took one of my drafts and his own, and as he left my office he said he would omit the word "special" in his at all events. What precise form of letter he will send off I do not know. I note this small affair thus particularly because when his letter, whatever it may be, is published, it may produce some excitement, and I desire to preserve all the facts. It is a weakness of Mr. Buchanan that he is too much inclined to court his political opponents, and especially the barnburners of N. York, in the vain hope, as it seems to me, that he may win them over & make them his friends. He does not reflect that in attempting this he is driving off the true Democrats of New York who remained faithful in the last Presidential election and continued firm in the support of my administration. Such occurrences with any member of my Cabinet are exceedingly unpleasant to me. Though Mr. Buchanan said to me on yesterday (see this Diary) that he would yield to my wishes in this matter without any feeling on his part, his whole manner & conduct to-day indicates that he has feeling upon the subject.

In the afternoon I disposed of some of the business on my table. After night Hon. R. W. Johnson of Ar. of the Ho. Repts. called, & I informed him of

my intention to appoint Mr. Sevier commissioner to run the Mexican boundary line. Mr. J. is Mr. Sevier's brother-in-law.

SUNDAY, *17th December, 1848.*— Accompanied by Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays, I attended the First Presbyterian Church to-day.

MONDAY, *18th December, 1848.*— As soon as I was in my office this morning members of Congress and others commenced calling, and my time was occupied with company until after 12 O'Clock. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of War called at different hours on business. I disposed of several applications for pardon & of other business which had accumulated on my table. I was very busy during the day, but nothing of special interest occurred. After night Hon. George S. Houston of Alabama & Senator Turney of Tennessee called. Mr. Houston arrived in the City a day or two ago and I had not before seen him. I had a long conversation with them about public affairs and particularly urged upon them the importance of providing a Government for California at the present Session [of] Congress.

TUESDAY, *19th December, 1848.*— A large number of members of Congress called this morning, some of them bringing with them some office-seeker to introduce to me. Almost every member who called was seeking an office for some constituent or

friend. The number of applications and the pressure for office has not been greater at any period of my administration than it has been since the meeting of the present session of Congress, with the exception of the first two or three months of my term. Many persons have taken up the impression that Gen'l Taylor will make but few removals from office, and to this I attribute the anxiety of so many [to] get places. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. Mr. Walker, having important business to attend to at his office, retired before all the other members came in. There was no business of importance before the Cabinet to-day and after a short sitting they retired. I attended to business on my table as usual.

This was the regular weekly evening for receiving company. An unusually large number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, members of Congress and of the Judiciary, Foreign Ministers, strangers, and citizens called. The Circular parlour and one or two of the adjoining parlours were filled. Among others who were present I noticed Mr. John Van Buren. Though he had been several times in Washington & had called on me this was the first time he had called on Mrs. Polk. Upon two or three occasions I had decided that he should be invited to dinner, and in each case Mrs. Polk had countermanded the order. This she did upon the ground that if he so far neglected the courtesies of life as not to call and pay his respects to her that he should not be honoured with an invitation to dinner at [by] the President. Upon one of these occasions I was amused when she

told me she had burned John Van Buren's dinner ticket, which I had requested my Private Secretary to send to him. During the past year he has been traversing the country making violent political speeches against my administration, and advocating the "free-soil" doctrine and his father's claims to the Presidency. I, of course, treated him courteously in my own parlour.

WEDNESDAY, *20th December, 1848.*—I was scarcely in my office this morning when my messenger informed me that some gentlemen had called. When they were shown in I found their business to be to annoy me about clerkships and other petty offices. My time was occupied until near 1 O'Clock by members of Congress and others who called. The business of most of them was to seek offices for themselves or their friends. After I got clear of the office hunters I told my Private Secretary, jestingly, that I required to have one of Colt's revolving pistols to clear my office of the office seekers and to enable me to attend to my public duties. The Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, Navy, & the atto. Gen'l called at different periods of the day on official business. Mr. Clifford, U. S. Minister to Mexico, called. He is on his return to Mexico to resume the duties of his Mission. He takes his wife and two of his children with him. I invited him to the Diplomatic Dinner which I will give on to-morrow. The Clerk of the Ho. Repts. called to-day and delivered to me a Resolution of that House calling for information and the constitutional

or legal authority under which I had ordered military contributions to be collected & disbursed for the support of the army during the late war with Mexico. I have heretofore given information on this subject to Congress which appeared to be satisfactory. I will, however, now prepare and send to the House a more full and elaborate message on the subject. I attended to much business on my table to-day.

THURSDAY, *21st December, 1848.*— I was in my office at the usual hour this morning. The first person who entered was a young man seeking office. He was a stout looking fellow who was able to pursue any honest calling for a livelihood. He had no particular office in view, but was ready to accept any that was going. I have great contempt for such persons and I made short work of him. My time was taken up until after 12 O'Clock by members of Congress seeking offices for their constituents and for loafers about this City, who by their importunities had induced them to call to see me in their behalf. At different hours of the day I saw the Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, & Navy and the atto. Gen'l on official business. I saw also, Mr. Clifford, U. S. Minister to Mexico. He came to the United States on leave of absence a few weeks ago and is now on his return to Mexico, taking with him his wife and two children. He leaves in the Southern boat on to-morrow morning. I invited him and his wife to dine with me to-day, and they did so. This was the day on which I gave a dinner to the Diplomatic

corps. All the Foreign ministers, their wives & daughters, & their Secretaries of Legation dined with me. In addition to the Foreign corps & Mr. & Mrs. Clifford, Miss White of this City and Messrs. Vinton [1] of Ohio, C. J. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, McClelland of Michigan, Iverson [2] of Georgia, all of the Ho. Repts., and Mr. Buchanan, the Secretary of State, dined with me. Tht whole dinner party consisted of 37 persons. As it was a Diplomatic Dinner there was more form and ceremony than I am accustomed to observe. Among the Foreigners present I was gratified to have Mr. De La Rosa, the Mexican Minister, his wife & daughter, and his Secretary of Legation. The party passed off very pleasantly.

I learn that a Resolution was passed in the Ho. Repts. to-day instructing the Committee on the District of Columbia to bring in a Bill to abolish the slave-trade in said District. I learned this from the Hon. Mr. Iverson of Georgia, who was one of my Dinner party to-day. He informed me that the adoption of the Resolution had produced considerable excitement among the Southern Members.

FRIDAY, *22nd December, 1848.*— I was in my office at the usual hour this morning. A number of persons called. After 12 O'Clock I transacted business with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Navy. About 2 O'Clock the Hon. Mr. Inge of

[1] Samuel Finley Vinton, Representative from Ohio 1843–1851.

[2] Alfred Iverson, Representative from Georgia 1847–1849, Senator 1855–1861.

Alabama called to see me about the appointment of a Land officer at Tuscaloosa, Ala., to fill a vacancy which had occurred in consequence of the death of the former incumbent. After conversing on that subject Mr. Inge informed me that considerable excitement existed in the Ho. Repts. to-day in consequence of the Resolution passed on yesterday directing the Committee on the District of Columbia to bring in a Bill to abolish the slave-trade in the said District. He informed me that before he left the House a paper was being handed round for the Southern members to sign calling a meeting of all the Senators & Representatives from the slave-holding states, to take place this evening. He said that the movement had been set on foot by Southern Senators, and that Senator Foote of Mississippi had been in the Hall of the House and was active in promoting it. He informed me that the Southern Whig members disapproved the vote of yesterday and were as much excited at it as Southern Democrats, but that some of them had declined to sign the paper, and among these he named Mr. Stephens of Georgia. This was the first intimation I had that such a movement was contemplated. I felt the delicacy as well as the responsibility of my station and gave no expression of opinion further that [than] my disapproval of the Resolution passed on yesterday and my hope that the Northern members would not press so mischievous a proposition. About dark Mr. James H. Thomas of the Ho. Repts. from Tennessee called to consult with me on the same subject. He stated to me in substance what Mr. Inge had told me. He

said the paper calling a meeting of Southern members of both Houses for to-night had been presented to him for his signature and that he had declined to sign it, but had stated he was willing to attend the meeting, reserving to himself the right to approve or not of its proceedings after he saw what they were. He said he was informed that the object was to agree upon an address to the people of the slave-holding states on the subject of the proceedings of the Ho. Repts. on yesterday. He asked me what I would advise him to do. This it was natural he should do, as he represents the District in Tennessee in which I reside, and is a citizen of the same village. He is a prudent man and desires to do what is right. I told him that as President of the U. S. it would be my duty to allay any sectional excitement which might arise, and to do all in my power to prevent any violent proceedings which might endanger the harmony of the Union. I told him that considering the delicacy & responsibility of my position I deemed it improper to advise him as to his course. I remarked further that if I was a member of either House I should not deem it improper to meet & consult with others, but that I would judge for myself how far I would give my assent to any proposition which might be made. He said such was his view of the subject, and that he thought he would attend the meeting and see what was proposed. I stated to him that I approved his course in declining to sign any paper for the call of the meeting. He informed me that he knew several members who had refused to sign the paper, who said they would attend the meeting.

The agitation of the slavery question is mischievous & wicked, and proceeds from no patriotic motive by its authors. It is a mere political question on which demagogues & ambitious politicians hope to promote their own prospects for political promotion. And this they seem willing to do even at the hazard of disturbing the harmony if not dissolving the Union itself. Such agitation with such objects deserves the reprobation of all the lovers of the Union & of their country. I disposed of much business on my table to-day.

SATURDAY, *23rd December, 1848.*— Several members of Congress and others called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. After disposing of some business of minor importance, Mr. Buchanan [stated] that he had brought over copies of the correspondence called for by a Resolution of the Ho. Repts., passed some days ago, requesting the President to communicate any information in his possession relating to the imprisonment of American citizens in Ireland suspected of being guilty of treasonable purposes against the Brittish Government. At my request he read over the whole correspondence upon the subject which had taken place between the Secretary of State and Mr. Bancroft, and between the latter and the Brittish Government. All the correspondence[1] deemed important, omitting such portions of it as consisted in speculations and opinions of the Secretary of State and Mr. Bancroft, it was

[1] *H. Ex. Doc.* 19, 30 Cong. 2 Sess. IV.

decided should be sent to the House in answer to their call. Mr. Bancroft deserves high praise for the vigilant & able manner in which he conducted the affair and finally succeeded in procuring the release from imprisonment of Mr. Bergen & Mr. Ryan, two American citizens who had been arrested on suspicion that they had visited Ireland with treasonable designs. After considering some other matters of minor importance the Cabinet at about 3 O'Clock adjourned.

Between sunset & dark, Senator Foote of Mississippi called and enquired of me if I had heard what had occurred at the meeting of the Southern members of Congress held at the Senate-chamber last night on the subject of the slavery question and the agitation of it by Congress, and particularly by the Ho. Repts. (see this Diary of yesterday). I told [him] that I had heard generally that such a meeting had been held, but that I had not been informed minutely or particularly what had been done. He then informed me that Senator Metcalfe of Kentucky had been placed in the chair; that Senator Atchison of Mo. & Mr. Gayle of Al. of the Ho. Repts. were Vice Presidents, & that Mr. Venable of N. C. had been appointed Secretary. He informed me that about 70 members of both political parties from the slave-holding states were present, and that Mr. Bayley of Va. had offered Resolutions,[1] which on motion of Mr. Stephens of Georgia had been referred to a committee of one from each of the slave-

[1] For an account of the entire proceedings see Washington *Union,* January 28, 1849.

holding states, who were to report to an adjourned meeting on or before the 15th of January next. He informed me that this was done by the unanimous voice of those present. He said there was no violence, but a calm and firm purpose on the part of those present to assert & maintain the constitutional rights of the Southern States if the majority in Congress should attempt to carry out the purpose indicated by the late votes in the House of Representatives on the subject of slavery in this District. He said that the Committee appointed would prepare an address to the State Governments of the slaveholding states on the subject, if the measures threatened in Congress assailing the constitutional rights of the South were pressed. I said but little in reply, but said Generally that my position as President of the U. S. made [it] my duty to represent all the States & to preserve the harmony of the Union as far as I possessed the power to do so. I expressed the hope to him that the threatened interference from the North with the delicate subject of slavery would not be pressed to extremities. I expressed also the belief that the North would not so press it if they ascertained that the South of both political parties were firm and united in resisting encroachments on their rights. I expressed my satisfaction at learning from him that no violent measures, or such as look to the possibility of disunion had been adopted at the meeting of the Southern members of Congress last night, and I expressed the hope that none such would be hereafter adopted. After Foote retired Senator Butler of S. C., to whom I had sent a request

to do so by my Private Secretary this morning, called. He is Chairman of the Judiciary committee of the Senate, to which is referred a Bill brought in by Senator Douglass of Illinois proposing to admit California & new Mexico into the Union as a State. It was upon that subject that I desired to converse with him. I accordingly held a long conversation with him, heard his views, and gave him mine. I found him well disposed to settle the question of providing Governments for these Territories at the present Session. He had decided objections to Mr. Douglass's Bill, and in its present form he said he could not vote for it. I stated to him that I was informed by several members of Congress that no Bill establishing a Territorial Government over these Territories could be passed through the Ho. Repts. without having the Wilmot Proviso attached to it; and that if that Proviso should pass both Houses and be applied to the acquired country lying South of the Missouri compromise line of 36° 30′ I could not approve it, and that if [in] the discharge of my constitutional duty I should be compelled to veto such a Bill, involving as it would a geographical question, it would produce vast excitement in the country, which should if possible be avoided. I stated further to him that I had been informed that a Bill to admit a State instead of creating a Territorial Government might, & probably could, be passed without being embarrassed by the Proviso. I gave him my opinion that the only mode of avoiding the Proviso would be to amend Mr. Douglass's Bill and confine the State to

be admitted to the country West of [the] Range of Mountains which seperated the Pacific portion of California from New Mexico; & provide for New Mexico and the country East of these mountains in a seperate Bill. I urged him to adopt this course & expressed to him the opinion that if this Session of Congress adjourned without providing any Government for California, there was danger of its being lost to the Union. I gave him my reasons at some length for this opinion (they are already recorded in a previous part of this Diary). After a long conversation he left me in doubt what course he would pursue. New Mexíco being an interior country, the same danger of losing it by the establishment of an Independent [government] does not exist in its limits that does in California. Mr. Butler said nothing to me about the meeting of the Southern members of Congress last night to consider the slavery question, & I was glad he did not. I do not know whether he was at the meeting or not. It is a delicate subject upon which, in view of my responsibilities & duties, I do not desire to converse with members of Congress, & shall not do so unless they introduce the subject. My opinions as [to] the wickedness of agitating the subject in Congress are well settled, & events may occur which will make it my duty to incur high & vast responsibilities. I will meet them, but am resolved to give no favour to violent or disunion movements, but on the contrary to do everything, consistently with my sense of constitutional duty, to preserve the Union & its harmony.

SUNDAY, *24th December, 1848.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk & our two nieces, Miss Rucker & Miss Hays, accompanied me. Shortly after returning from church a servant informed Mrs. Polk and myself that the French minister had called to pay his respects. As it is contrary to our fixed rule to receive company on the sabbath the servant was directed to ask him to be pleased to excuse us. He did so, and the minister sent up his card.

After night the Secretary of War & the Secretary of the Navy called & remained with me half an hour in my office. Mr. Mason informed me that he would leave to-night in the Southern Boat on a visit to his residence in Va., & that he expected to be absent a week or ten days.

MONDAY, *25th December, 1848.*— This being Christmas Day neither House of Congress was in Session; the Executive offices were all closed, and I spent perhaps the most quiet day of my Presidential term. I saw not a single visitor during the day, except two persons who called to see me about a pardon for a convict now in prison in this District. The day was damp and gloomy. Mrs. Polk & the family attended church. Being relieved from company I was busily engaged during the whole day in writing a message to the Ho. Repts. in answer to [a] Resolution calling for information as to the legal authority to levy contributions on the enemy by means of duties collected on imports into the mexican ports in our military possessions during the war with Mexico.

I have heretofore communicated to Congress the general ground on which the power to levy contributions in this mode was exercised. The Ho. Repts. have, however, made another call, and I deem it to be proper to go fully into the subject in answer to their Resolution. I sent for the atto. Gen'l in the afternoon and requested him to turn me to a legal authority on the subject, and especially upon the point that the Supreme Court of the U. S. had recognized the public law of nations as being binding on the U. S. He promised to do so, and to furnish me the authority on to-morrow.

TUESDAY, *26th December, 1848.*— Several members of Congress called this morning. I sent for Senator Douglass of Illinois and had a long conversation with him in relation to the Bill he had introduced into the Senate & which had been referred to the Judiciary committee, providing for the admission of California & New Mexico into the Union as a State. I urged him to consent to seperate the two territories and to confine the State proposed to be admitted to California; and to provide for the Government of New Mexico in a seperate Bill. I urged this course as the only one by which he could probably succeed. He finally agreed to do so and expressed the opinion that if the Judiciary committee would Report the Bill back to the Senate in a reasonable time it could be passed by that body. I informed him of my conversation with Senator Butler of S. C., who is chairman of the Judiciary committee (see this Diary of Saturday last). I ex-

pressed to him my great anxiety that the Bill should pass in some form.

This was Cabinet day. All the members attended except the Secretary of the Navy, who left on yesterday morning on a visit to his residence in Virginia. The Secretary of the Treasury & the atto. General remained but a few minutes, the former having pressing business in his Department & the latter having business in the Supreme Court of the U. S. I read to the remaining three members of the Cabinet the rough draft of my message prepared on yesterday in answer to the Resolution of the Ho. Repts. calling for the legal authority by virtue of which contributions in the form of a tariff of duties had been levied and expended in Mexico during the late war with that Republic (see this Diary of yesterday). There was no business of importance before the Cabinet and about 1 O'Clock they adjourned. I had not finished my message, a part of which I read to them, and devoted a part of the day to that subject. I attended to the business on my table as usual. This was reception evening. A large number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, members of Congress, Foreign ministers, citizens, and strangers called.

WEDNESDAY, *27th December, 1848.*— The morning until after 12 O'Clock was spent as usual in receiving visitors. Many persons, members of Congress and others, called. I was occupied during the day in attending to the business which had accumulated on my table. There was a fall of snow to-day,

the first that has occurred during the winter. Nothing worthy of special notice occurred. Mark Pillow of Tennessee, now a temporary clerk in one of the Departments, took dinner with my family to-day. After night the Secretary of War called at my request & examined with me the draft of the message to the Ho. Repts. which I had prepared in answer to a Resolution upon the subject of contributions levied in Mexico during the late war with that country. Whilst making the examination Judge John K. Kane of Philadelphia called & spent half an hour. His object was to have his son, who is a surgeon in the Navy, ordered to accompany the Joint commission of officers of the army & Navy who are about to proceed to the coast of California and Oregon with a view to select suitable points for naval stations and for military defense. After Judge K. retired my porter reported that a young man had called twice to-night and insisted that I would see him, as [he] must leave the City in the morning. I directed him to be shown up. He came in. He had but one arm. He said he wished to see me privately. The Secretary of War proposed to retire. The young man seemed to be embarrassed, & without giving me his name or making known his business retired.

THURSDAY, *28th December, 1848.*— Saw members of Congress, office-seekers, and others as usual this morning. Among others Hon. A. C. Dodge [1]

[1] Augustus Cæsar Dodge, Senator from Iowa 1848–1855, minister to Spain 1855–1859.

& Geo. W. Jones,[1] the two U. S. Senators from the State of Iowa, who took their seats in the Senate two or three days ago, called. They are the first Senators in Congress from that State. After 12 O'Clock I put a part of my message to the Ho. Repts. in answer to their Resolution on the subject of contributions collected in Mexico, in the hands of Mr. Loving, a confidential clerk, to be copied. He occupied a room adjoining my office. I finished the message in the course of the day. After it is copied in a fair hand and without interlineations & [I] will carefully revise it. After night Senator Hannegan of Indiana called. He reached Washington to-day, having been defeated in his election for another Senatorial term. Senator Atchison of Mo. called with him. Nothing important occurred to-day.

FRIDAY, *29th December, 1848.*— This morning was occupied as usual in receiving company. Many members of Congress & others called. Among them, of course, were some office-seekers. After 12 O'Clock I devoted some time & [to] revising my message in answer to the Resolution of the House in relation to military contributions levied in Mexico. Mr. Loving, a confidential clerk, finished the copy of the message which he was making. The Secretaries of State and the Treasury called and I read the message to them. The latter suggested an additional view which I had not presented in the paper. It was that by the Treaty of peace with

[1] George Wallace Jones, Senator from Iowa 1848–1859.

Mexico, ratified by the Senate of the U. S., the power which I had exercised of levying & collecting contributions on the enemy in the form of duties on merchandise imported into the Mexican ports in the military occupancy of our army had been recognized and affirmed. After they retired I prepared a paragraph on this point. I attended to some of the business on my table to-day. Many matters of minor importance and of detail remain on my table to be attended to. The public have no idea of the constant accumulation of business requiring the President's attention. No President who performs his duty faithfully and conscientiously can have any leisure. If he entrusts the details and smaller matters to subordinates constant errors will occur. I prefer to supervise the whole operations of the Government myself rather than entrust the public business to subordinates, and this makes my duties very great.

SATURDAY, *30th December, 1848.*— A few members of the Cabinet called this morning before the hour of meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is absent on a visit to his residence in Virginia. I read my message to the Cabinet in answer to a Resolution of the Ho. Repts., on the subject of military contributions levied and expended in Mexico for the support of our army. The paper was fully discussed and was approved by the Cabinet. Some slight modifications of it were suggested and made. I had pre-

pared a paragraph & Mr. Buchanan one at my request on the point suggested by the Secretary of the Treasury on yesterday, in relation to the affirmance made by the Senate of the U. S. in the ratification of the Mexican Treaty of the power of the President to levy military contributions by means of duties on imports (see this Diary of yesterday). Both paragraphs were read, when I observed to the Cabinet that I would prepare a new paragraph embodying a part of both drafts. Some other unimportant matters were considered & disposed of, and the Cabinet adjourned near 4 O'Clock P. M. At my request Hon. James H. Thomas, of Tennessee, Hon. Mr. Iverson of Geo., and Hon. Mr. McClernand of Illinois called and I read to them my message in answer to the Resolution of the House on the subject of military contributions and explained to [them] the principles on which I had acted. I did this that they might be prepared to defend my course if it should be assailed on the going in of the message. To-day Senator Allen of Ohio called in company with Ex. Gov. Bartley of Ohio and another person whom he introduced to me. I note the fact of Senator Allen's call because it is the first time he has visited me since the latter part of the winter or early last Spring. I could not but observe that he had not called, & supposed that he had taken offense at something, or was dissatisfied with some measure of my administration, but I knew not the cause. I received him as though nothing had occurred, and no explanation took place.

SUNDAY, *31st December, 1848.*— Mrs. Polk and myself, accompanied by our niece, Miss Rucker, attended the First Presbyterian church to-day and listened to a very solemn and impressive sermon by the Pastor (Mr. Ballentine) addressed chiefly to those who had passed the meridian of life. Our niece, Miss Hays, accompanied Col. Walker's family & attended the Episcopal church.

MONDAY, *1st January, 1849.*— This being the first day of a new year the President's mansion was thrown open for the reception of visitors. Between 11 and 12 O'Clock company commenced arriving. A very large crowd called, larger than is usual on such occasions. Every parlour, the East room, & outer hall were crowded. All the foreign ministers and the persons attached to their respective Legations appeared in their Court Dresses. Many officers of the army & Navy were present in their full uniform. The Cabinet and their families, Judges of the Supreme & District Courts, Senators and Representatives in Congress, citizens and strangers, were of the immense crowd. I received the crowd in the Circular parlour and for three hours shook hands with a dense column of human beings of all ages and sexes. The Marshall of the D. C. and his Deputies and the commissioner of Public Buildings stood near me and preserved order and caused the crowd, after shaking hands, to pass on into the other parlours and the East Room. So dense was the crowd & so great the jam that many persons, I learn, left

early. During the period of reception the fine marine band of music played in the outer Hall. I must have shook hands with several thousand persons. Toward the close of the day some gentlemen asked me if my arm was not sore, and if I would not suffer from the day's labour. I answered them that judging from my experience on similar occasions I thought not. I told them that I had found that there was great art in shaking hands, and that I could shake hands during the whole day without suffering any bad effects from it. They were curious to know what this art was. I told them that if a man surrendered his arm to be shaken, by some horizontally, by others perpendicularly, and by others again with a strong grip, he could not fail to suffer severely from it, but that if he would shake and not be shaken, grip and not be gripped, taking care always to squeeze the hand of his adversary as hard as he squeezed him, that he suffered no inconvenience from it. I told them also that I could generally anticipate when I was to have a strong grip, and that when I observed a strong man approaching I generally took advantage of him by being a little quicker than he was and seizing him by the tip of his fingers, giving him a hearty shake, and thus preventing him from getting a full grip upon me. They were much amused at my account of the operation, which I give [gave] to them playfully, but admitted that there was much philosophy in it. But though I gave my account of the operation playfully, it is all true. About 3 O'Clock the company dispersed.

After night I sent for the Secretary of War, and carefully read over and revised my message to the Ho. Repts. in answer to their Resolution on the subject of military contributions levied in Mexico, with him (see this Diary of Saturday last). Some paragraphs which had been suggested on Saturday by some members of the Cabinet, I determined, on revising them with Mr. Marcy, to omit. Mr. Marcy thought the message as I finally agreed it should be would be unanswerable. Mr. Loving, a confidential clerk, who had copied the original draft of the message, called to-night and corrected the copy according to the revised draft. I regard it as among the most important messages I have made to either House of Congress during my Presidential term, and therefore I have given to it more than ordinary attention.

Among the visitors whom I observed in the crowd to-day was Hon. Andrew Johnson of the Ho. Repts. Though he represents a Democratic District in Tennessee (my own State) this is the first time I have seen him during the present Session of Congress. Professing to be a Democrat, he has been politically if not personally hostile to me during my whole term. He is very vindictive and perverse in his temper and conduct. If he had the manliness or independence to manifest his opposition openly, he knows he could not be again elected by his constituents. I am not aware that I have ever given him cause of offense.

TUESDAY, *2nd January, 1849.*— A few members of Congress called before the hour of meeting of the Cabinet this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except Mr. Mason, who is absent on a visit to his residence in Virginia. Mr. Marcy did not come in until about 1 O'Clock. I read to the other members of the Cabinet my message [1] to the Ho. Repts. on the subject of Military contributions as I had revised it, and about 12 O'Clock my Private Secretary took it to deliver it to the House. Nothing of much importance was before the Cabinet to-day. The Secretary of War handed to me a letter to his Department from Gen'l Taylor tendering his resignation as Major General of the Army of the U. States to take effect on the 31st of January, 1849. He seems resolved to hold on to the office as long as possible, and therefore fixes the period when his resignation is to take effect about the period when he will probably leave his residence in Louisiana to enter on his duties as President of the U. S. Mr. Marcy also presented a letter from Capt. Hughes of the Topographical Engineers, asking leave of absence for six Months with liberty to leave the U. S. Mr. Marcy stated that he learned from him that his object was to go to the Istmus of Panama in the employment of a company to survey the route for a Rail Road between the two oceans. I declined to grant the leave asked. I had some weeks ago declined to detail or give leave of absence to any of our officers when I was earnestly urged to grant similar leave by Mr. Buchanan (see

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 678.

this Diary). I issued to-day a Proclamation or summons convening an Extra Session of the Senate for Monday, the 5th day of March next. This is usual when one administration is about retiring and another is coming into Power. The object is to enable the new President to make such nominations and changes of the Cabinet and other public officers at the commencement of his administration as he may desire. Mr. Buchanan presented a Postal Treaty [1] which had been concluded by Mr. Bancroft with the Brittish Government at London on the 15th of December last. Mr. Buchanan had received the printed copy of the Treaty which he presented from Mr. Crampton, the Brittish Charge d'affaires. The mail of this evening will probably bring despatches on the subject from Mr. Bancroft. I am gratified that the differences between the two Governments on the subject of postages on letters and other mailable matters transported in their respective packets and Steamers has been settled during my administration. My successor will be relieved of all existing questions of difficulty with Foreign Nations and will have a plain duty before [him]. His situation in this respect will be very different from mine when I assumed the administration of the Government on the 4th of March, 1845.

This was reception evening. It was a very cold night, and the company was not large. A few ladies & gentlemen called. Among others Judge Mason, Sec. of the Navy, called, having returned from his visit to Va. this morning.

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 965–975.

WEDNESDAY, *3rd January, 1849.*— I was engaged in my office as usual this morning. At 1 O'Clock, in pursuance of a request made on yesterday by the Hon. Mr. Duncan of Ky. of the Ho. Repts., I received Mr. Duncan, Senators Foote & Davis of Miss[iss]ippi, Hannegan of In[d]., & Atchison of Missouri. According to Mr. Duncan's request the Secretary of War was present. Mr. Duncan presented to me a letter from Maj'r Crittendon, late of the Mounted Rifle Regiment, requesting me to revise & reverse my approval of the proceedings of a Court Martial [held] in Mexico before which he was tried and dismissed from the service. The proceedings of the Court were approved in the recess of Congress. Maj'r Crittendon was dismissed the service and the next in rank promoted in his place. The officer thus promoted has been nominated to the Senate, but his nomination has not been acted on. Their application was that I should reconsider and reverse my approval of the proceedings of the Court and restore Maj'r Crittendon to the service. Much discussion upon his case took place between these gentlemen & the Secretary of War and myself. They did [not] question his guilt of the charge for which he had been tried, but insisted that the proceedings of the Court were illegal. I told them I would reëxamine the case, but that if I should come to the conclusion that the proceedings had been illegal (about which I expressed no opinion) then the only remedy would be to withdraw the nomination of the officer promoted and re-nom-

inate Maj'r Crittendon. This was my opinion because Maj'r Crittendon was now out of the army and could only be restored by a nomination and confirmation by the Senate. Maj'r Crittendon's offense was being drunk on duty & there is no doubt of his guilt. It was the third time he had been arraigned for the same offense. All this they admitted, but insisted that he had been dismissed illegally, that is, that there was a technical legal error in the proceedings of the Court. The Secretary of War concurred with me in the views which I expressed, & enforced them in the course of the discussion. The interview occupied more than an hour.

Mr. Buchanan called about 2 O'Clock & informed me that he had received from Mr. Bancroft, U. S. Minister to Great Brittain, the Postal Treaty which he had concluded with the Government of that country. He left the Treaty and also a despatch from Mr. Bancroft with me.

My Private Secretary on his return from the Capitol this morning informed me that my Message sent to the Ho. Repts. on yesterday in answer to their Resolution on the subject of contributions levied in Mexico, had been read to-day and [had] given rise to a fierce debate, the Whig leaders attacking it, and that it had been finally referred to a select Committee of nine members, to be appointed by the Speaker. Of [course] the committee will be composed [of] a Majority of Whigs, who will bring in a party Report. I am confident I am right and did nothing but my duty, and have no fears of the public verdict what-

ever Report a partisan committee may make. It is unfortunate so far as the first impression on the public mind is concerned; the debate to-day, I learn, was altogether or chiefly on the Whig side. Neither of the gentlemen to whom I had read the Message on Saturday evening last (see this Diary of that day) obtained the floor. I disposed of much business in my office to-day, and among other things signed my name to official papers several hundred times. These signatures were chiefly to certificates of merit to private soldiers for distinguished conduct in battle during the War with Mexico.

THURSDAY, *4th January, 1849.*— I saw company as usual this morning. Several members of Congress and others called. I was busily engaged in my office during the day. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy called on business at different hours. Nothing of importance occurred to-day.

I had a Dinner company to-day consisting of the Judges of the Supreme Court of the U. S., the atto. Gen'l, Clerk, & Marshall and their families who are in Washington; of Judge Crawford & Dunlop of this District; & of the members of the Judiciary committees of the two Houses of Congress, making in the whole near forty persons. All the Judges of the Supreme Court were present except Chief Justice Taney & Justice McKinley,[1] the former being absent at Baltimore and the latter being indisposed.

[1] John McKinley of Alabama, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court 1837–1852.

FRIDAY, *5th January, 1849.*— Many persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. Almost every member who called applied for offices for their friends, and those who were not members applied for offices for themselves. I have been too busy for several days past to note in this Diary the unceasing importunities by which I am annoyed by the office-seekers. I spent the day in disposing of many matters of detail which had accumulated on my table. The Secretary of the Navy called on business. He was the only member of the Cabinet whom I saw to-day. The Secretary of the Senate delivered to me this evening the Postal Treaty with Great Brittain which I sent to the Senate on yesterday, with a Resolution giving the advice & consent of that body to its ratification.

SATURDAY, *6th January, 1849.*— A number of members of Congress called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is detained at his house, as I learn, by indisposition. Several matters of no general importance were considered and disposed of, and the Cabinet dispersed about 2 O'Clock P. M. I signed the Ratification of the Postal Treaty with Great Brittain this afternoon. This is an important Treaty, and Mr. Bancroft deserves high credit for the zealous ability with which he conducted the Negotiation. It places our own Steamers and Packets upon an equal footing with the Brittish and relieves our merchants, naturalized citizens, and others from a heavy discriminating

charge of postage on letters and other mailable matter conveyed in American vessels. This change has been effected by the policy of the administration. Had it occurred under other circumstances & when so many other great events had not been crowded into a single Presidential term it would have attracted more public attention and been regarded as an important achievement. After the Cabinet adjourned to-day I disposed of much business on my table.

SUNDAY, *7th January, 1849.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied me. We met at church the Hon. Abram Rencher [1] of N. C. and his wife. Mr. Rencher was charge d'affaires to Portugal at the commencement of my administration, and was recalled at his own request. He has spent some time in travelling in Europe since he relinquished his mission, and returned to the U. States a few days ago. On coming out of church I met him unexpectedly. He served in Congress with me several years ago.

MONDAY, *8th January, 1849.*— This morning my office was crowded with an unusual number of visitors. Among them were many members of Congress. The office-seekers were very importunate. It reminded me of the first month of my term, when as a matter of course I expected them to be numer-

[1] Abraham Rencher, Representative from North Carolina 1829–1839, and 1841–1843, *chargé d'affaires* at Lisbon 1843–1847.

ous. In addition to office seekers there were men and women wanting money. I was glad to get clear of them. I had no offices to bestow and no money to spare. I directed my porter to close my doors punctually at 12 O'Clock, and it was not until that hour that I had an opportunity to attend to any business. The Atto. General was the only member of the Cabinet whom I saw to-day. I was busily engaged in my office during the day, but nothing worthy of notice transpired. After night several members of Congress called.

TUESDAY, *9th January, 1849.*— Several members of Congress called this morning, most of them seeking offices for their constituents. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Navy, who is, I learn, confined to his house by indisposition. There being nothing important to bring before the Cabinet to-day, the Secretary of the Treasury left before all the other members [had] assembled. Several matters of minor importance were considered and disposed of, and the Cabinet dispersed about 2 O'Clock. I was engaged the remainder of the day in attending to the business on my table. After my doors were closed & I had directed no one to be admitted a man who had evaded the vigilance of my porter opened my office door & stepped in. He wished, he said, to sell me wine to take home with me, and to get an office for a friend. I was at the moment very much engaged writing at my table and was vexed at his unceremonious intrusion. As I wanted no wine

& had no offices to confer, and was, moreover, much engaged in my official duties I made short work of it with him. His name was Lawrence. It is not the first time that the same person has annoyed me about matters in which neither the public nor myself could have any interest. A Telegraphic despatch was received in the City to-day to the effect that Paymaster Dix[1] of [the] U. S. Army had died of cholera. The rumour thus brought requires confirmation. In less [than] an hour I had application for his place as Paymaster. In the course of the evening several other applications were made for it.

WEDNESDAY, *10th January, 1849.*— My office was crowded with visitors this morning. The rumour of Paymaster Dix's death which reached this City on yesterday brought on me a crowd of applicants for his vacancy. Many members of Congress called to press the claims of their friends, while others called and urged their own claims. One entire Delegation in Congress, Senators and Representatives, from one of the States, called to urge the claims of one of their constituents for the place. One Lady (Mrs. B.) a widow, called and importuned me to appoint a gentleman whom she named who is now a clerk in one of the Departments. She appealed to me to appoint him upon the ground that she desired to marry him provided he could get an office that would support a family. She was a gay person of good character, accustomed to good so-

[1] Roger Sherman Dix of the 1st Infantry, died January 7, 1849.

ciety, and was rather a pretty woman. She said she could not marry her lover while he was a Clerk, but that if I would appoint him a Paymaster in the army she would do so and would be very happy. The dispensation of the patronage of the Government will weaken if not break down any administration. I closed my doors at 12 O'Clock and attended for an hour to business on my table, when Senators Allen of Ohio & Bright of Indiana called & gave me the distressing intelligence that a Telegraphic Despatch had announced the death of the late Senator Sevier of Arkansas. Mr. Sevier's nomination is now before the Senate for commissioner to run the Boundary between the U. S. and Mexico, and Messrs. Allen & Bright, immediately on hearing of Mr. Sevier's death, had left the Senate in Session and called to urge me to appoint The Hon. John B. Weller[1] of Ohio in Mr. Sevier's place. The moment an office-holder dies his place is sought, without waiting for the funeral ceremonious [ceremonies] to be over. The Hon. Rob't Johnson of Arkansas called about 3 O'Clock. He is the brother-in-law of Mr. Sevier, and seemed much affected by the intelligence of his death. Mr. Sevier's little daughter is at school at Georgetown. Mr. Johnson saw Mrs. Polk and informed her that he was on his way to Georgetown to communicate the dreadful intelligence to Mr. Sevier's daughter. Mrs. Polk insisted on him to bring the poor little

[1] John B. Weller, Representative from Ohio 1839–1845; afterward removed to California where he was elected to the U. S. Senate and later Governor.

girl (who has often visited us) to the President's House and let her remain with us for a few days. He agreed to do so, and in the evening brought her over & left her with Mrs. Polk. Miss Johnson, the aunt of the little girl, who is also at school at Georgetown, accompanied her, and they are both with us.

It having been announced that the President's Mansion would be open for company this evening, many hundreds of persons, ladies and gentlemen, attended. All the parlours, including the spacious East Room, were lighted up and were filled with people. The marine band played in the outer Hall. Among the visitors were Foreign Ministers, Officers of the army and Navy, members of both Houses of Congress, citizens, & strangers. In the course of the evening, and as soon as I could be released from receiving & shaking hands with company, I walked through the parlours with Mrs. Madison on my arm.

THURSDAY, *11th January, 1849.*— I was besieged by the office-seekers this morning. It was after 1 O'Clock P. M. before I could devote a moment to business. Men and women annoyed me for office for themselves, their relatives, and friends. The people of the U. S. have no adequate conception of the number of persons who seek to live upon the Government, instead of applying themselves to some honest calling to make a living. Several of those who called to-day have importuned me half a dozen times for office. They have no claims upon the country and no individual merit. I cannot exclude them from my office, though I hold them in very

low repute, and indeed I almost loath them when I see them entering my door. The Secretary of State was the only member of the Cabinet who called to-day. I spent the after part of the day in attending to the business on my table.

FRIDAY, *12th January, 1849.*— I was in my office at the usual hour this morning. I was exceedingly annoyed by a number of persons seeking office & begging money. Some of them were persons who have repeatedly called on the same business before, others I had never seen & knew nothing of them. Some of them were females. They wanted money for themselves or offices for their husbands, brothers, sons, or other relations. Several members of Congress called also, and bored me for offices for their constituents and others. The number of applicants for office has greatly increased and is increasing, and as a general rule those who are most importunate are least deserving. If I had the treasury of the Government to bestow in charities I could readily do so to worthless people. After 1 O'Clock P. M. I attended to business on my table.

SATURDAY, *13th January, 1849.*— I was occupied this morning by members of Congress and others about offices until the hour of meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. Several matters of business, chiefly of detail and of no general importance, were considered and disposed of. The members of the Cabinet entered into a general conversation among

themselves whether it would be proper for them to resign to me on the 3rd of March, or to Gen'l Taylor after he was qualified. They agreed that their resignations should be made to me, but there was some diversity of opinion whether they should take effect immediately, or when a successor was appointed. If they resigned to me on the 3rd of March there would be no Cabinet on sunday, the 4th, & Monday, the 5th of March, and on the latter day there might be official business to transact requiring their signatures. Mr. Walker objected to resigning to take effect when a successor was appointed, because he was unwilling to serve under Gen'l Taylor. Mr. Buchanan was willing to continue a few days if Gen'l Taylor should request it, until his successor could be appointed. Finally, upon the suggestion of Mr. Toucy, they agreed to resign to me on the 3rd of March, to take effect on monday, the 5th of March, and suggested that I should accept them and enclose them to Gen'l Taylor on the 3rd, so as to enable him to appoint persons *ad interim* to take charge of the several Departments and conduct the business until permanent appointments could be made. Some members of the Cabinet enquired whether it was my intention to attend the Inauguration of Gen'l Taylor, to which I answered that if Gen'l Taylor called on me on his arrival in the City, and a place was assigned me on the occasion of the Inauguration, I should certainly attend. I informed them also that if Gen'l Taylor called, as I presumed he would do, I would invite him to dinner & treat him with all proper respect

as the President elect of the U. S. I informed them that I would remain in the President's mansion in performance of my public duties until the evening of the 3rd of March, that on the night of that day I would attend at the Capitol as is usual, for the convenience of Congress for the purpose of receiving & signing Bills, and at 12 O'Clock of that night, my official term would expire, I would retire to a Hotel where my family would be. The family will leave the President's mansion on the morning of the 3rd of March and go to a Hotel. I will remain & attend the Inauguration ceremonies on monday, the 5th, and on tuesday, the 6th, will set out with my family for my residence in Tennessee. One of the Cabinet enquired whether I would invite Gen'l Taylor to take quarters in the President's House on his arrival in Washington, to which I replied that I had not thought upon that point. Some of the Cabinet thought it would be proper to do so. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock, and in the afternoon I attended to business on my table.

After night Senators Douglass of Illinois & Downs of La. called to consult me about a bill which the latter had prepared to admit California as a State into the Union. I had a long conversation with them on the subject, & think the plan proposed is feasible & hope it may succeed.

SUNDAY, *14th January, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk is suffering from the effects of [a] severe cold & did not attend church to-day. Accompanied by our two nieces (Miss Hays & Miss Rucker) I attended Di-

vine service in the Hall of the Ho. Repts. The Rev. Mr. Dascomb of the methodist church (of Ky.) preached. There was a very large audience, the floor & galleries of the Hall being filled. The subject of the discourse was the Cross of Christ, a noble theme. The minister laboured very much and seemed to be making a very great effort. There was nothing solemn or impressive in the manner or matter of the sermon; and the idea was constantly in my mind that the minister was endeavouring to make a display of eloquence & learning, in which I think he failed.

After night Hon. Mr. Houston of Alabama & Hon. Messrs. Cobb & Lumpkin of Georgia called to consult me about an adjourned meeting of the Southern members of Congress on the subject of slavery which was to take place on to-morrow night. I have heretofore carefully avoided having anything to do with this movement. I[t] was gotten up originally without consulting me. I have feared from the time I first heard of the first meeting of the Southern members of Congress on the slavery question that there might be a design on the part of one or two leading men to agitate the slavery question for selfish purposes, & that it might end in no good. These gentlemen informed me to-night that Mr. Calhoun had drawn up an address to the Southern States to be signed by all the Senators and Representatives from the slave-holding states, and that from what they had heard of its import they could not sign it. They informed me further that from what they had heard, the Whig Senators

& Repts. from the South would decline in a body to sign it. They asked my opinion on the subject. I replied that if there was anything in the proceedings or the address that looked like or might tend to disunion I was opposed to it. I told them if when the rights of the south were threatened with invasion by the late votes in the Ho. Repts. in relation to slavery in the D. C. the Southern members had chosen to assemble to consult temperately and calmly for the purpose of acting in concert & making an appeal to the Northern section of the Union to abstain from making the threatened aggression on their rights, that I did not see that such an assemblage for such a purpose would have been improper. I told them that as they had suspicions that other objects were in view by some, and that as the Whig members would not unite, I could see no good that could result from an address to be addressed to the Southern states to be signed by a part only of the Southern members. They were all of this opinion. I told them that the slavery question was a very delicate & dangerous one, and advised them that in the present state of things as they communicated them to me to abstain at present from signing an address by a fraction of the Southern members & leave it to future developments to determine what it might be proper to do. They concurred in my views, or rather they were their own views in which I concurred. I think the movement of the Southern members was originally ill advised. The Whigs, I learn, at first went zealously into it, but upon consultation have concluded to leave the consummation

of the proceedings exclusively to the Democratic members, alledging that they have confidence in Gen'l Taylor, who is a large slave-holder, that he will protect the rights of the South. If they take this course it will produce a division in the South upon the slave question and encourage, rather than discourage, the aggression of the Northern Abolitionists and Whigs upon the rights of the South. Should this be the result great mischief will be produced by the proceeding of the portion of the Southern members who may attend the meeting & send forth an address. My advice to the gentlemen who called this evening was to attend the meeting to-morrow night & endeavour to prevent anything from being done; but not themselves to sign any address.

MONDAY, *15th January, 1849.*— A large number of persons called this morning, of whom a considerable proportion as is usual were office seekers. It was not until about 1 O'Clock P. M. that I was enabled to attend to any business. I sent for Hon. James H. Thomas of the Ho. Repts. (of Tenn.) and for Mr. Cave Johnson, the P. M. Gen'l, this morning. Mr. Thomas arrived first and while he was with me Mr. Johnson came in. I communicated to them the information given to me last night by Messrs. Houston of Al. & Cobb and Lumpkin of Georgia in relation to the meeting of Southern members of Congress proposed to be held on to-morrow night on the Slavery question. I expressed to [them] my opinion that such a meeting could result

in no good, and advised Mr. Thomas not to unite in signing any address, as I had advised the three referred to who called on me last night (see this Diary of yesterday). Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Thomas concurred with me in my views. Mr. Johnson thought that any member who attended the meeting would have to explain his object in doing so to his constituents, and that it would be a point of attack upon him as long as he remained in public life. I remarked that as the Southern members generally, both Whigs & Democrats, had attended the first meeting in December last, that I thought the sober-minded democrats, such as the gentlemen who called on me last night and Mr. Thomas, might attend to-night in order to prevent mischief from being done. I advised that no address of any kind be signed. In these views, after I had presented them, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Thomas concurred. They left me, Mr. Johnson saying that he would visit the Capitol to-day for the purpose of seeing some of our prudent Southern Democratic friends with a view to induce them to take the course I had advised. Shortly after they retired the Hon. Mr. McLane of [the] Ho. Repts. (of Maryland) called to see me on the same subject. Before he asked my opinion he expressed his own. He declared his resolution to sign no address, & said he had written to his father, who had advised him to sign no address, but had advised him at the same time to see me. I repeated to him the views I had expressed to Messrs. Houston, Cobb, & Lumpkin last night & to Mr. Thomas & Mr. Johnson to-day. He announced his inten-

tion to attend the meeting to-night for the purpose of making known his views & giving his reasons for declining to sign any address. I fear that mischief will come out of this ill-advised proceeding. Mr. McLane avowed his intention not to act upon the subject of slavery in a caucus, but that he was willing to consult with other Southern members as to what action in Congress they would deem proper to be had if the rights of the South were threatened or attempted to be invaded by the North. In the course of the day I disposed of business on my table as usual. Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Marcy called at different hours of the day to see me on business. After night Col. Weller of Ohio called. I tendered to him the appointment of commissioner under the Mexican Treaty to run the boundary line between the two countries. He accepted, & I will nominate him to the Senate on to-morrow. I had some weeks ago nominated the late Senator Sevier of Arkansas for this office, and his nomination was pending before the Senate when information of his death was received. After night Senators Dodge & Jones of Iowa called in company with Mr. Petrikin of Penn., who is the son of the late Dr. Petrikin,[1] with whom I served several years in Congress.

TUESDAY, *16th January, 1849.*— I learned from my Private Secretary this morning that a meeting of the Southern members of Congress was held at the Senate chamber last night. It was an adjourned meeting to deliberate on the course proper to be

[1] David Petrikin, Representative from Pennsylvania 1837–1841.

taken by the South on the slave question (see this Diary of yesterday & the preceeding day). I learn that an address [1] to the Southern States was reported by Senator Calhoun of S. C., and that great division of opinion prevailed in the meeting upon the propriety of adopting it. Almost all of the Whig members & a number of leading Democratic members, as Col. Walker informed me, refused to sign it; and finally it was, on motion of Senator Berrien of Georgia, recommitted to the committee to report to an adjourned meeting to be held on next monday night. Col. Walker's impression is that nothing will be finally done, unless it be by a portion of the Democratic party and perhaps two or three Whigs with Mr. Calhoun at their head. I have feared from the time I heard of the ill-advised movement of holding a meeting of Southern members of Congress that it would end in no good and might do mischief. I am now satisfied that my apprehensions were well founded. Col. Walker gave me the foregoing information immediately after I came into my office this morning. A few persons called seeking office and on like unprofitable errands. Between 10 & 11 O'Clock Senator Calhoun of S. C. called. He has not been to see me since his arrival in Washington shortly after the meeting of Congress, when he called to pay his respects. I anticipated his business the moment he entered my office, & I was not mistaken. He very soon introduced the subject of the slavery question and the meeting of the Southern members of Congress at the Capitol last night. He

[1] Washington *Union,* January 28, 1849.

was very earnest in the expression of his opinion that the South should no longer delay resisting the aggressions of the North upon their rights. As soon as I had an opportunity I expressed my strong attachment to the Union of the States, the great importance of preserving it, and my hope that Governments might be provided for California & New Mexico, and especially the former, by admitting it into the Union as a State without having the Bill for that purpose embarrassed by the Wilmot Proviso. I found he was opposed to an adjustment in this mode. I urged the importance of the measure, and expressed the opinion that the admission of California into the Union as a state was the only practical mode of settling the slave question. In this form the question of slavery would be left to the people of the new states when they came to form a State constitution for themselves. I told him that I deemed it of the greatest importance that the agitation of the delicate and dangerous question of slavery should be arrested, as I thought it would be by the organization of Governments for the territories acquired by the Treaty with Mexico. I told him that Senator Douglass of Illinois had suggested to me that the question as to New Mexico might be settled with the assent of the State of Texas, by making the Northern boundary of that State the parallel of 36° 30′ North Latitude & extending that parallel West of the Rio Grande, leaving all of New Mexico on both sides of that River and South of that parallel to be a part of the State of Texas, and that that State should cede to the U. S. all the territory within her

limits lying North of that line. I told him that the area acquired by Texas by such an arrangement would be about equal to the area which would be ceded by Texas to the U. S. I told him also, that all the inhabited portion of New Mexico lay south of 36° 30′, & would fall under the Government of the State of Texas, while the country North of that line to be ceded by Texas to the U. S. was a wilderness country. I told him that the proposition struck me favourably, that I presumed it would be satisfactory to the members of Congress from Texas & to that State, and that coming as it did from a Northern Senator there was a fair prospect, if the South, as I thought they should do, supported a Bill of this kind, that it would pass. I told him this would provide a Government for all the inhabited portion of New Mexico; and that if California, bounded by the California mountains was admitted as a State, the whole difficulty would be settled, and that the Free-soil agitators or abolitionists of the North would be prostrate and powerless, that the country would be quieted, and the Union preserved. He was opposed to all this; spoke in excited terms of the Texas members & said that they had betrayed the South; that he had heard of this proposition about New Mexico ten days ago, and that it was a bid for the Texas men. I told him I had never heard of it until last saturday night, when it was suggested by Senator Douglass of Ill. in the presence of Senator Downs of La. He was opposed to the admission of California as a State, because slave-holders had been prevented from emigrating with their property to it and it would be

a free state. I replied that whether admitted now or hereafter the people inhabiting the country would have a right when they came to form a state constitution to regulate their own domestic institutions, and that Congress could not prevent this. He proposed no plan of adjusting the difficulty, but insisted that the aggressions of the North upon the South should be resisted and that the time had come for action. I became perfectly satisfied that he did not desire that Congress should settle the question at the present Session, and that he desired to influence the South upon the subject, whether from personal or patriotic views it is not difficult to determine. I was firm and decided in my conversation with him, intending to let him understand distinctly that I gave no countenance to any movement which tended to violence or the disunion of the States. The conversation was inter[r]upted by the arrival of a member of the Cabinet, this being the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members of the Cabinet were present except the Secretary of the Treasury. Several matters of no general importance were considered and disposed of. After the other members of the Cabinet had retired I gave a relation of my interview with Mr. Calhoun to Mr. Mason and Mr. Johnson, who remained. I disposed of business on my table as usual.

This being reception evening, a number of persons (not a large crowd) ladies & gentlemen, called.

I omitted to state that between 11 and 12 O'Clock to-day the Secretary of War informed me that a fine volunteer uniformed company from New York were

in the City, & he desired that I would review them. I accompanied him to the front porch & the company marched past in review. I afterwards received the officers & men of the company in the parlour & shook hands with them.

WEDNESDAY, *17th January, 1849.*— A number of members of Congress and others called this morning. They were on the usual business of seeking office for themselves and their friends. Among others who called was Mr. Stanton of Tennessee of the Ho. Repts., and I had a conversation with him on the subject of the meeting of the Southern members of Congress on last Monday night, and on the importance of settling the slavery agitation by providing Governments for New Mexico and California at the present Session. I stated to him the plan on which I thought this might be done. It was the same which I had stated to Mr. Calhoun (see this Diary of yesterday). I told him that I was for preserving the Union & its harmony, & opposed to any movement, in Congress or out of it, which might tend to disturb it; and that I thought members of Congress had better exert their energies to settle it *in Congress,* than to agitate the slavery question *in caucus out of Congress.* I expressed to him the opinion that if Southern members would unite, it might be settled at the present session upon the plan suggested by Senator Douglass, as stated to Mr. Calhoun as recorded in this Diary on yesterday (which see). I found Mr. Stanton in favour of the Southern members making an address to the Southern

States. I told him I had not been consulted about the meetings of Southern members of Congress which had taken place. I told him that I understood the immediate cause of the movement had been the adoption of a Resolution by the Ho. Repts. instructing a committee to bring in a Bill in relation to slavery in the District of Columbia, but that since that time I had been informed that the House had receded by reconsidering that obnoxious Resolution, and that it was not probable that any attempt would be made to revive it. I told him that I saw nothing improper in Southern or any other gentlemen consulting together when their common rights were seriously menaced, if the object of such consultation was to ensure concert of action to avert the danger, but that I was opposed to any movement which looked to or tended to the possible dissolution of the Union. I told him that I had been informed that the whole of the Whig members of Congress, and several of the leading Democratic members, would under existing circumstances refuse to sign any address; and that it would probably not be signed by more than one-third of the Southern Delegations in Congress. I told him the effect of this, instead of preventing aggression from the North, would be to encourage it; while it could not fail to produce a conflict among Southern members & their constituents themselves. In this state of things I gave my opinion against signing the address, and especially such an one as I understood had been presented to the meeting on Monday night last. I told him that I could not avoid the suspicion that there were two

or three individuals, perhaps not more than *one* (but I named no one) who desired to have no set[t]lement of the question, but who preferred a sectional excitement in the South & a dissolution. I told him I set my face against all such designs, and warned him against being involved in any such movement. I urged the necessity and importance of going to work in earnest *in Congress,* and not *in caucus,* to settle the question. I told him it was time enough to think of extreme measures when they became inevitable, and that that period had not come. I told him that the people every where were devoted to the Union, and that it would be a heavy responsibility if Southern members of Congress should prevent an adjustment of the slavery question by meeting *in caucus* & publishing addresses, instead of meeting *in Congress,* where their constituents had deputed them to act. He seemed to be surprised at these views. I told him I was a Southern man, and as much attached to Southern rights as any man in Congress, but I was in favour of vindicating and maintaining these rights by constitutional means; and that no such an extreme case had arisen as would justify a resort to any other means; that when such a case should arise (if ever) it would be time enough to consider what should be done. Company came in & Mr. Stanton retired. I held a conversation upon the same subject with Senators King and Fitzpatrick of Al., in which I stated the plan of Senator Douglass of settling the slave question (see this Diary of yesterday) and stated to them my opinions. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day. I read to Mr.

Ritchie to-night a letter which I had received from the late Senator Wm. H. Haywood of N. C., dated 18th of December last, and the answer which I had prepared (see my letter Book). Some of the facts stated in my answer related to Mr. Ritchie, and I read the letter & answer to him to ascertain whether his recollection corresponded with my own. Mr. Ritchie said the facts were all correctly stated in my answer.

THURSDAY, *18th January, 1849.*— Many persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. The importunity for office is unabating. I am so annoyed by office seekers, and so much of my time is consumed by them, that I sometimes almost loose my patience and can hardly control my indignation. About 11 O'Clock to-day a company of Firemen from Baltimore, 30 or 40 in number, called and desired to see me. I directed them to be shown into the parlour below stairs, where I met and shook hands with them. I returned to my office and attended to business throughout the day. The Secretary of the Treasury called on business.

I had a large dinner party to-day. Of the party were the Vice President of the U. S.; the Speaker of the Ho. Repts.; the Secretary & Clerk of the two Houses; Maj'r General Jesup, of the U. S. army & daughter; Hon. Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio & wife, & Mr. Forney,[1] Editor of the *Pennsylvanian.* The balance of the company consisted of Senators and

[1] John Weiss Forney, 1817–1881, journalist; editor of the *Pennsylvanian* 1845–1853, of the Washington *Union* 1853–1856,

Representatives in Congress and the wives of several of them; of whom I rem[em]ber the following, *viz.*, Senators Metcalf of Ky.; Clark of R. I.; Allen, Ohio; Hannegan, In[d].; Johnson, La.; Johnson, Geo.; Foote, Miss.; Bradbury, Maine; & Representatives McDowell, Va.; Houston, Al.; Thompson, Miss.; Inge, Al.; Houston, Del. The whole number, ladies & gentlemen, made 36 or 37 persons.

I conversed with several members of Congress of both Houses who called to-day, and urged upon them the great importance of passing a law to admit California into the Union as a State as proposed by Bills introduced into the Senate by Senators Downs and Douglass, and providing a Government for New Mexico (see this Diary of the 16th and 17th Instant). All with whom I conversed listened favourably to the plan suggested, except Mr. Robertson[1] of the Ho. Repts. from Indiana. He wished to throw the responsibility of settling the slavery question on General Taylor's administration, and thought that nothing should be done at the present Session. I told him we had a country to save as well as a party to obey, and that it was the solemn duty of the present Congress to settle the question. Senator Rusk of Texas was present when I held the conversation with Mr. Robertson. At Dinner to-day I had a casual conversation with Senator Clarke of R. I. on the subject, in which I remarked that there was danger that California would be lost to the Union unless a

and 1861–1868; established the Philadelphia *Press* 1857, and the Washington *Chronicle* 1861.

[1] John L. Robinson, Representative from Indiana 1847–1853.

Government was provided for the inhabitants of that Territory at the present Session of Congress. To which he replied, let her go. I said to him that if California set up an independant Government and seperated from the Union, the Eastern States would be much injured by it. He thought not, and said their ships & commerce would derive as much advantage if she was independant as if she was connected with the Union. The sentiments he expressed confirmed the opinion I have heretofore expressed that the old Federal Party will avail themselves of any pretext to prevent the extension of our territorial limits (see my opinions on this point recorded in this Diary some days ago).

FRIDAY, *19th January, 1849.*— My time was occupied as usual this morning with calls from members of Congress and others. It was near 1 O'Clock P. M. before I could attend to any business in my office. I conversed with several members of Congress as I had done for the last three days (see this Diary) and urged upon them to provide Governments for California and New Mexico at the present Session. I begin to have hopes that it may be done. Among others who called this morning was rather an elderly woman who said she lived in Alexandria. She wanted money to pay her rents & for other purposes. She brought no letters. I did not learn her name. She said she had lived in Alexandria many years. She had a genteel appearance. I endeavoured to waive her application by treating her civ-

illy and telling her she should apply to her neighbours & friends, who knew her. She became more & more importunate & I was forced at last to give her a positive denial. This did not satisfy her, and she named a sum which would satisfy her. I declined to give it to her and was compelled at last to tell her plainly that I did not know her or that she was worthy. I informed her that I contributed to objects of real charity, as far as my means permitted, and asked her again why she had not applied for aid to her neighbours in Alexandria, to which she replied that she did not wish to expose her necessities. I note this case to show some of the annoyances to which a President of the U. S. is subjected.

The Secretary of State called in the course of the day & transacted business with me. After night Vice President Dallas called and introduced his friend, Dr. Griffin of Pennsylvania. He spent an hour with me.

SATURDAY, *20th January, 1849.*— Several members of Congress called this morning. The loafers and hangers on about the City importune members of Congress to call with them and present them for offices. They are generally persons without merit; and I must say that some of the worst appointments I have made during my administration have been made upon the recommendation of members of Congress. Indeed, many members sign all papers & recommend all persons who apply to them, without seeming to reflect that they as [are] misleading the

President, and without considering that they have any responsibility for such appointments as they recommend.

A delegation of Chickasaw Indians were presented to me this morning by the commissioner of Indian affairs. They delivered to me letters from their Tribe relating to their interests. I held some conversation with them and directed them to call on the commissioner of Indian affairs on Monday next.

The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. The Secretary of the Navy read a despatch received last night from Commodore Jones, commander of the Pacific squadron; the Secretary of War read a letter to the Paymaster General from Paymaster Rich serving in California; and the Secretary of State read a letter from Mr. Larkin, formerly U. S. consul at Monterey in California. These several communications represent the increased richness of the gold region recently discovered in California, the rage which prevails among all classes to go in pursuit of it. Commodore Jones & Paymaster Rich represent the desertions from the squadron & the army to go in pursuit of gold to be such as to destroy all efficient service in both arms of the service. They represent also the state of anarchy and confusion existing in California, where, without any regularly organized Government, there is no security for life, liberty, or property, and they represent the urgent necessity for the establishment of the authority of the U. S. by the organization of a Government of some kind in that Territory. It occurred to me at once that it would be proper for me

to transmit these communications to Congress with a message urging the establishment of civil Government for the inhabitants of California at the present Session, and I submitted two questions to the Cabinet, 1st, Whether these communications should be sent to Congress, and if so what the recommendations of my message should be. The views of all the members of the Cabinet were freely given. Mr. Marcy & Mr. Walker advised that the communications be sent to Congress with a message. Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Mason, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Toucey advised against it. The latter gentlemen thought they should be published without delay in the *Union* newspaper, and that if called for by Congress, as they probably would be, they should then be transmitted. They assigned their reasons for this opinion. Among other reasons they said that I had already in my annual message said all that could be said to induce Congress to act, and that exception might be taken by the Whig members, and perhaps some Democrats, if I repeated my views. After their views were expressed Mr. Marcy expressed his willingness to acquiesce in them, though he rather preferred that the papers should be sent to Congress with a message. Finding that Mr. Walker alone concurred fully with me in my first impressions, I stated that I would for the present yield to the views of the majority of the Cabinet. I then directed that copies of the communications, or of the material parts of them, should be furnished to the Editor of the *Union* for publication. I then stated to the Cabinet that I had become perfectly satisfied that no Bill to establish a Territorial

Government could be passed through the Ho. Repts. without having the Wilmot Proviso attached to it as a condition, that with this provision the Bill would probably be rejected by the Senate, and that if it was not, and the Provision was made to apply to territory South of 36° 30′ I must veto it, and in either event the people of California would be left without a Government. I expressed to them the opinion that the only hope of providing a Government for California at the present session was to admit her as one of the states of the Union, as had been proposed in the Senate by Senators Downs of La. & Douglass of Ill. In this opinion all the members of the Cabinet concurred, and expressed their desire that such a proposition might pass. I expressed my fears that the extremes of the South headed by Mr. Calhoun and the extremes of the North headed by Hale & Giddings might unite to prevent such a measure from passing, and thus keep the subject of slavery open for political agitation. I expressed my strong desire that California might be admitted as a state, because I believed if this was not done at the present session the danger was imminent that the inhabitants of this fine country would, before the next session of Congress, set up an independant Government for themselves, and that the Whig party, who would then be in power, would suffer the country to be lost to the Union. I gave my reasons at some length for this opinion. I expressed my disapprobation of any further proceedings of the southern members of Congress on the slave question in caucus. I thought they had much better direct their energies in Con-

gress instead of in caucus for the purpose of allaying excitement upon the subject, by authorizing the people of California to form a state Government, leaving it to themselves to determine whether slavery should exist or not. I stated that a proposition was now made by a Northern Senator (Mr. Douglass) to admit California as a state upon these terms, and that no Southern man ought to object to it. I thought it was wholly unjustifyable for Southern members of Congress, when a fair prospect was presented of settling the whole question, to withhold their co-operation, and instead of aiding in affecting [effecting] such an adjustment, to be meeting in a sectional caucus and publishing an address to influence the country. I added that I feared there were a few Southern men who had become so excited that they were indifferent to the preservation of the Union. I stated that I put my face alike against southern agitators and Northern fanatics, & should do everything in my power to allay excitement by adjusting the question of slavery & preserving the Union. Seeing that the only hope of an adjustment was to admit California as a State, I expressed the opinion that it was our solemn duty to exert all our influence with members of Congress to induce them to pass the Bill of Mr. Douglass or Mr. Downs. In this the Cabinet unanimously concurred, and it was agreed that each member of the Cabinet should be active in seeing members of Congress & urging them to support the Bill to admit California at once as a State. Each member of the Cabinet agreed to do this. At my suggestion each member of the Cabinet

agreed to visit and converse with the members of Congress from particular states, and was to report at the next meeting of the Cabinet. Messrs. Buchanan, Marcy, & Toucey were to see the members from the Northern states, and Messrs. Walker, Mason, & Johnson were to see the members from the southern or the Slave-holding states. I stated that I would myself be active, and converse with such members of Congress as called, & that I would send special[ly] for some of them, and endeavour to convince them that it was their duty to support such a Bill. This is an unusual step for the Executive to take, but the emergency demands it. It may be the only means of allaying a fearful sectional excitement & of preserving the Union, and therefore I think upon high public considerations it is justified. In the course of the discussion Mr. Buchanan stated the fact that he had called on Mr. Stephens, a Whig member of the Ho. Repts. from Georgia, who is a member of the committee of Ways & Means of the Ho. Repts., and had requested him to aid in passing the Bill at any [an] early day making an appropriation for the payment of the installment under the Treaty with Mexico, and that he was much surprised to learn from Mr. Stephens that he was opposed to making any appropriation for that purpose. Mr. Buchanan stated that he expressed to him his surprise that he should be willing to violate the public faith by with-holding the appropriation stipulated by the Treaty to be paid to Mexico, & that Mr. Stephens had replied that he was opposed to retaining California & New Mexico, acquired by the

Treaty, as a part of the Union. This is in accordance with the opinion expressed to me by Senator Clark of Rhode Island on the 18th Instant (see this Diary of that day) and still further satisfies me that the Federal party only want a pretext to surrender up the valuable territories acquired by the late Treaty with Mexico. This makes the step resolved on by the Cabinet to-day still more important.

Within the last three days I have been called upon, first by Senator Hannegan of In., & next by Senator Breese of Ill., to know, if the Senate would pass a Resolution requesting [it, whether] I would enter into or negotiate a purchase from the Hudson's Bay Company in Oregon of their possessory rights in that Territory and of their right to navigate the Columbia River. I stated that Mr. Hannegan had brought to me the copy of a despatch from Mr. Addington, Under Secretary of Foreign affairs in Great Brittain, addressed to the President of the Hudson's Bay company, which he stated to me he had obtained from Mr. Buchanan for the purpose of bringing it to me. Mr. Hannegan is chairman of the committee of Foreign affairs of the Senate, and Mr. Buchanan stated that at his request he had let him have the paper to bring to me. I read the paper to the Cabinet & stated to them as I had done to Mr. Hannegan and Mr. Breese, that I was unwilling to make such a nego[tia]tion without more knowledge of what we were purchasing & of its value. Mr. Buchanan said he would not do so unless the Senate previously advised it. I replied that I would not do so if they did advise it, without more knowledge

of what we were purchasing than we possessed. The same proposition was brought before me, and a Resolution on the subject introduced in the Senate in Executive session at the last session of Congress. At that time the proposition was that the U. S. should pay a round sum of a million of dollars to extinguish all the rights of the Hudson's Bay company in Oregon. I refused to do so, as I will now refuse, as I told Mr. Hannegan and Mr. Breese, and now repeated to the Cabinet. I stated that I suspected it was a project of speculators who hung about the lobbies of Congress at the last and present Session of Congress, and whose only object was to make a handsome sum for themselves as the agents of the Hudson's Bay company. A man named George Saunders of Ky., I understood at the last session, was in Washington on this business, & represented himself to be the agent of the Hudson's Bay company. The same individual, I understand, is again in Washington on the same business. From what I have heard of him he is unscrupulous and unprincipled. By his importunity, by with-holding from them his real object, probably some Senators have been induced to move in the matter.

After night I sent for Senator Douglass & held a long conversation with him in relation to his Bill to admit California into the Union as a state, & the prospect of passing it. I told him confidentially that I and every member of my Cabinet were in favour of his Bill, as the only thing that could probably be done at the present session so as to provide a Government for California, & thus secure that valuable

country to the Union & put an end to the slavery excitement. He expressed himself as much gratified, and thought there was a fair prospect for passing the Bill.

SUNDAY, *21st January, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk & Miss Rucker attended the First Presbyterian church today. I was somewhat indisposed & did not go out. Senator Turney & Mr. Thomas of Tenn. took a family dinner with me to-day. I urged them to support the Bill of Senator Douglass of Ill. to admit California into the Union as a state, as the only means of saving the country to the Union & allaying the slavery excitement. Mr. Thomas will support the Bill. Mr. Turney had some objections to its details, but I think he will yield them. I expressed my apprehensions that the proceedings of the Southern members of Congress in caucus on the slavery question might interfere with & possibly defeat the passage of the Bill, and advised them to act in Congress instead of in caucus. I gave them my views fully, as they have already been recorded in this Diary, in relation to the proceedings of the Southern members of Congress (see this diary for the last two or three weeks) and the importance of providing Governments for California & New Mexico at the present session of Congress.

MONDAY, *22nd January, 1849.*— An unusually large number of persons called this morning, most of them seeking office. Among them were several members of Congress, upon whom I urged the great

necessity of admitting California into the Union as a State, as proposed in the Bill brought into the Senate by Senator Douglass. At different periods of the day, the attorney General, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Treasury called on business. Some subordinate officers also called on business. I was busy in my office throughout the day, though nothing worthy of special notice occurred.

After night the Hon. Rob't M. McLane of [the] Ho. Repts. called and informed me the Southern members of Congress were to have another meeting on the slavery question to-night, and that as he had resolved to sign no address to the people under existing circumstances he doubted whether he ought to attend, and he asked my advice. I told him that I feared mischief instead of good would grow out of the proceedings, but that as he had attended the previous meetings it might be well for him to attend that to be held to-night, for the purpose of preventing mischief. I advised him if he did attend to use his influence to have any definite action postponed, either indefinitely or at all events until near the close of the session of Congress, for that by that time I hoped Governments might be organized for California & New Mexico, and in that event the slavery agitation would cease and there would be no necessity or pretext for the Southern members of Congress as such to take any step on the subject. I told him that I feared that the proceedings of the Southern caucus might produce such excitement as to prevent the admission of California into the Union as a State or any other settlement of the slavery question,

and that I approved his determination not to sign any address. I told him that the immediate cause of the first meeting of the Southern members was the passage by the Ho. Repts. of an obnoxious Resolution which they regarded as invading Southern institutions and Southern rights, but that since that time the House had reconsidered their vote on the Resolution & had thereby receded, & that since that time there was a fair prospect of settling the slavery question in the Territories acquired by the Mexican Treaty, if the Southern members [would give] their support to admit California as a state, as I thought they ought to do, and that for these reasons I thought no further proceedings ought to be had in caucus, but that action should rather be had in Congress.

TUESDAY, *23rd January, 1849.*— A number of persons called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. Mr. Buchanan stated that Mr. Eames, recently appointed Commissioner to the Sandwich Islands, desired to draw an advance of half a year's salary, *viz.,* one quarter's salary now (to-day) and one quarter's salary when he was ready to sail, & Mr. Buchanan recommended that he be allowed to do so. Mr. Buchanan read two opinions of the Attorney General, the one by Mr. Wert [1] in Mr. Monroe's administration & the other by Mr. Berrien in Gen'l Jackson's administration, to show that the President had the legal authority to make the advance. These opin-

[1] William Wirt.

ions settled the law of the case, though I think they were wrong originally. I decided that Mr. Eames might be allowed to draw four months of his salary when he was ready to sail on his mission, but declined to allow him to do so now. No formal question was taken in the Cabinet on the question. Mr. Toucey and Mr. Mason expressed themselves in conversation in favour of allowing him an advance of salary. The other members of the Cabinet expressed no opinion. Mr. Buchanan then read preliminary instructions which he had prepared to Mr. Weller, the commissioner appointed to run the boundary line between the U. S. and Mexico. Several questions of detail were submitted & discussed & the instructions finally agreed on. Some other matters of minor importance were considered. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock P. M. I disposed of business on my table as usual in the afternoon. I learn that the Southern members of Congress met in caucus on the slavery question last night & that they were nearly equally divided between the draft of an address prepared by Mr. Calhoun of S. C. & [one by] Mr. Berrien of Georgia, & that by a majority of them Mr. Calhoun's draft was adopted. I learn also that not more than half the members who were present will sign the address, and I fear great mischief & an increased excitement on the slavery question will be the result of their proceedings.

WEDNESDAY, *24th January, 1849.*— This morning an unusual number of persons called, and I was literally besieged by them for offices, from high

places down to clerkships & messengers' places. The impression seems to prevail among certain classes that Gen'l Taylor will make few removals, & there is therefore a general rush to get into office before he succeeds me. I gave the herd who beset me this morning but little comfort, and disposed of them as summarily as it was possible without being rude in my own office. In the course of the morning I held conversations with Senator Cameron of Penn. & Mr. Bayley of Va. & Mr. Ive[r]son of Geo. of the Ho. Repts., and urged them severally by all the arguments at [my] command to support the Bill to admit California into the Union as a state. The two latter were decidedly favourable to the measure, while Mr. Cameron said he was inclined to support it, but that he would examine the subject further. In the course of the day I sent for the Secretaries of State, Treasury, & War, and saw each of them on business. I disposed of business on my table as usual.

THURSDAY, *25th January, 1849.*— Saw company as usual this morning. A number of persons, members of Congress and others, called, most of them on the old business which annoys me so much, that of seeking offices which I have not to bestow without turning out better men than the applicants. At 12 O'Clock the Hon. Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio and Mr. Smith (son of the late Harrison Smith of this City) called in pursuance of a previous arrangement; and Mrs. Polk and myself accompanied them in my carriage to see the foundation of the Washington Monument and the progress of the work. At

the monument we met several of the managers of the Washington monument society.[1] After viewing it we drove [to see] the buildings now in process of erection for the Smithsonian Institute. I returned about 2 O'Clock P. M. Mr. Whittlesey, with whom I served many years in Congress and whom I have always regarded as an honest man, in speaking of the importance of providing Governments over the territories recently acquired from Mexico expressed the hope that California might be admitted as a State at the present Session, and leave it to the people to decide for themselves whether they would permit slavery to exist or not. Mr. Whittlesey is a Whig, and I remarked in reply that I was glad to hear such a sentiment from him. This lead [led] to a conversation in which I gave him my views fully on the subject, as I had done to many members of Congress during the present Session of Congress (see them recorded in this Diary). Mr. Whittlesey said he fully concurred with me in my views, and that he had felt so deeply interested on the subject that he had called on Senator Clayton of Delaware and conversed with him last evening. He informed me that Senator Clayton (who is a Whig) took the same view of the subject and concurred with me in my views. I told him that I was glad to hear it, because I regarded

[1] The Washington Monument Society was organized in 1841 and collected $87,000.00 in contributions of $1.00 each, each contributor being enrolled as a member of the society. The corner stone of the monument was laid July 4, 1848, and construction proceeded slowly until 1855 when it stopped. In 1876 Congress took up the work and carried it to completion in 1885.

the subject as rising above *mere party* considerations, and wished it settled, I cared not by whose votes. He intimated a wish that I would see Mr. Clayton. I replied that my political relations with Mr. Clayton were not such as to justify me in inviting him to see me; but that if he chose to call I would confer with him on the subject with pleasure. I expressed my views on the same subject to Mr. Rhett of S. C. this morning. Mr. Rhett said he had understood that I was exerting my influence to prevent the Southern members from signing an address on the subject of slavery, as a part of them had resolved to do in caucus. I gave him my views fully on the whole subject as they are recorded in this Diary. I expressed to him the apprehension that such a proceeding would increase the excitement and prevent a settlement of the slavery & territorial questions at the present session of Congress. He thought otherwise, &, to use his own language, he said the meeting of the Southern members had already made some of the Northern members begin *to back*. He said he was absent from the City when the first meeting had been called & that if he had been present he would have advised against it, but that as it had been called it would never do not to act, by making an address to the Southern states. I told him I differed with him in opinion. I disposed of business on my table as usual in the after part of the day. After night Senator Bright of Indiana called & held a long conversation with me. I was happy to hear from him that he would vote to admit California as a state without the restriction of the Wilmot Proviso. About 9 O'-

Clock P. M. my Private Secretary informed me that the Hon. James H. Thomas of Tennessee had received a Telegraphic Despatch informing him that his wife was dangerously ill, and that he would leave for home to-night.

FRIDAY, *26th January, 1849.*— I spent the morning as usual in receiving company. Several members of Congress and many other persons called. I omitted no favourable opportunity which occurred to urge upon such members of Congress as I saw the importance of passing a law at the present Session of Congress to admit California into the Union as a State. In pursuance of a previous arrangement made through the Secretary of State, at the hour of 1 O'Clock P. M., accompanied by the Secretary of State, I repaired to the parlour below stairs & there received & recognized the Baron Roenne, the Envoy Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary of the German Empire. He was the first Diplomatic Representative accredited from the Provisional Central Power of Germany to the U. S. The Minister made an address to me to which I responded. The Baron Roenne was formerly for many years the Envoy of his Majesty, the King of Prussia, to the U. S., & I remember him, having made his acquaintance and seen him during the period I was a Representative in Congress. Shortly after I returned from the parlour to my office the Hon. Mr. Tallmadge of the Ho. Repts. from the City of New York, accompanied by a dozen or more of the members of the City Council of New York, called. I received them

in my office. What the object of the visit of so many members of the City Council of N. Y. to Washington in a body may be I do not know. In the course of the day the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War called on business. I disposed of business on my table as usual. After night the Hon. Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio called to see me again in relation to the conversation he held with me on yesterday, on the subject of admitting California into the Union as a State (see this Diary of yesterday). He informed me that he had seen and conversed with Senator Clayton of Delaware on the subject and that he was very anxious to pass such a Bill. He informed me that Senator Clayton was desirous to call and confer with me on the subject if I would designate a time when I could see him. I replied that I would see Mr. Clayton at any time he might call, but suggested that I would be more likely to be at leisure in the evening than during the earlier part of the day.

SATURDAY, *27th January, 1849.*— A number of persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. Among them was Senator Sturgeon of Pennsylvania, with whom I held a conversation on the importance of admitting California into the Union as a State. I expressed to him the same views which [I] have communicated to others within the last few days (see this Diary). The Cabinet assembled at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of State, who was detained at his house by indisposition. No subject of general

importance was considered. Several matters of detail were disposed of. I attended to business on my table after the Cabinet adjourned.

SUNDAY, *28th January, 1849.*— I attended Divine Service at the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, accompanied us.

It is four years ago this day since I left my residence at Columbia, Tennessee, for Washington. I arrived in Washington on the 13th of February following.

MONDAY, *29th January, 1849.*— This was an exceedingly busy day with me. My office was thronged with visitors from the time I entered it until near 1 O'Clock. A few of them called to pay their respects, but most of them were seeking offices for themselves or their friends. I sent messages to each House of Congress to-day in answer to Resolutions calling for information. The message [1] to the House contained a detailed Statement of the amt. of military contributions collected and disbursed in Mexico. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy called in the course of the day on business. I disposed of business on my table as usual. I learn to-night that the select committee of the Senate reported a Bill to-day providing for the admission of California and New Mexico into the Union as two States. Senator Douglass called and informed me that 5 out of the 7 members of the committee, two from the non-

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 678.

Slave-holding and three from the Slave-holding States, concurred in the Bill. Mr. Douglass [said] it was favourably received by the Senate, and has strong hope that it may pass. I am myself anxious, from what I learn of its provisions, that it may pass. Mr. Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio called shortly after Mr. Douglass retired (see this Diary of the 25th & 26th Instant) and informed me that Senator Clayton of Delaware would call to see me to-morrow evening. At a still later hour the Hon. James Bouldin [1] of Va., with whom I served several years in Congress, called. He is a sound Republican. I had not met him since I seperated with [from] him in Congress, & was glad to see him.

TUESDAY, *30th January, 1849.*— A number of persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Atto. Gen'l, who was engaged officially in the Supreme Court of the U. States. Several matters of minor importance were considered and disposed of. The Secretary of War read a letter which he had received from Gen'l Persifer F. Smith, U. S. army, dated at Panama on the 7th Instant. Gen'l Smith was waiting at that point for a passage to California and Oregon to assume the command of the army in these territories. Among other things he gives a description of the bad condition of the road across the Istmus & the difficulty of obtaining transportation. Some of the Cabinet engaged in a conversation, in which Mr. Buchanan

[1] James W. Bouldin, Representative from Virginia 1833–1839.

led, about the practicability of making a road across the Istmus or at some other point, and seemed to treat the subject as though it was within the constitutional competency of the Government of the U. S. to apply the public money in the form of a contract with a company to make the road. I listened to the conversation for some time, when I arrested it by expressing a decided opinion that no such power existed. And in relation to the Bill[1] now before Congress, which proposed to pay to Aspinwall, Stephens, and others $250,000 per annum for 20 years, to enable them to construct a road & for transporting the mails & public property across the Istmus, I informed the Cabinet that if it passed I should veto it. I consider that the Government possesses no constitutional power to apply the public money either within or without the U. S. for any such purpose. I stated that I considered the proposition of that Bill as but little better than a proposition to plunder the Treasury, & that it should never pass with my approval. I then stated that this bill was but one of many measures proposing enormous expenditures of public money, which I understood was pressed on Congress by a lobby influence, consisting of leading men out of Congress whose special business it was to induce members of Congress to vote for and support them. It is said that there are persons now in Washington, ex-members of Congress and others, who make this their special business. Some member of the Cabinet intimated, indeed expressed, the conviction that some members of Congress were feed

[1] *Globe*, 30 Cong. 2 Sess. 382.

attornies to get some of these large claims through Congress. It is hoped for the honour of the country that this may not be so. Such a thing as an organized lobby influence, such as there is every reason to believe now exists, was wholly unknown while I was in Congress. The Cabinet adjourned between 2 and 3 O'Clock, and shortly afterwards the atto. Gen'l came in. He informed me that he had just finished the argument of a cause in the Supreme Court of the U. S.

I disposed of business on my table as usual after the Cabinet adjourned.

This being the regular evening for receiving company, the parlour was filled with visitors, ladies and gentlemen, members of Congress, citizens, and strangers.

WEDNESDAY, *31st January, 1849.*— A large number of persons called this morning. Among them were several strangers who wished to pay their respects, but the large majority were on the business of seeking office. The passion for office remains unabated. The importunities for office which I have to endure daily is [are] exceedingly annoying to me. I was heartily glad when the hour for closing my office arrived to-day. I attended to much business on my table. The Secretary of State called on business. Nothing of special interest occurred during the day. After night Senators Atchison and Cameron called & urged me to appoint Senator Hannegan of Indiana an Envoy abroad. I had no such place to fill. Senator Hannegan has been defeated

in his election to the Senate & is said to be very poor. These were the reasons assigned in his behalf.

THURSDAY, *1st February, 1849.*— I saw company as usual this morning. Among others I saw the Hon. Mr. Venable of N. C., and after he retired Senator Johnson of Georgia, to each of whom I assigned my reasons for desiring to see the Bill introduced into the Senate to admit California & New Mexico as two States into the Union. This Bill I consider the only practicable means of providing Governments for these Territories at the present session of Congress, and of thereby allaying the geographical excitement on the subject of slavery. I had invited these two gentlemen to call because I had been informed they were among the most impracticable of the Democratic members of Congress from the South. I have ascertained that a number of Northern Democrats will vote against attaching the Wilmot Proviso to a Bill to provide for admitting [them] as States, who would feel constrained by public sentiment among their constituents to vote for it as a condition on any Bill to establish a Territorial Government. Neither of the gentlemen gave a decided opinion as to their votes, but both after hearing my reasons promised me to examine the subject more fully than they had done.

The Secretary of State & the Secretary of War called at different periods of the day & transacted business with me. I disposed of business on my table as usual.

FRIDAY, *2nd February, 1849.*— Saw company as usual this morning. Many persons, members of Congress and others, called. At 12 O'Clock the Secretary of War & the commissioner of Indian Affairs, in pursuance of a previous arrangement, called and presented a Delegation from the Menomonee Tribe of Indians. There were 14 of them of whom 2 were young females. Three of them made speeches setting forth their grievances and the object of their visit. A half-breed Indian who accompanied them interpreted what they said. Their speeches occupied about an hour & a half. They had previously presented to the Secretary of War a statement in writing of their grievances & wishes. They handed to me a pipe with a long stem curiously wrought & with a long strand of beads. They professed great friendship for their "Great Father." I responded to them through their Interpreter, and informed them that I would examine the paper they had given to the Secretary of War, and that the Secretary would let them know in a day or two what could be done for them. A number of persons came into my office during the interview, and among others the Hon. Ely Moon of the City of N. York. After they retired the Secretary of the Navy called on business. I addressed a letter to-day to the Governor of N. Carolina and transmitted to him a bound volume of manuscript copies of Documents found in the Brittish archives, illustrative of the Revolutionary history of N. C., which had been sent to me by Mr. Bancroft (see my letter Book). I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day.

SATURDAY, *3rd February, 1849.*— Saw company as usual this morning. Among those who called were the usual proportion of office-seekers. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present. Mr. Buchanan presented a difficulty which had arisen, and which he had before brought to my notice. It was to what Power of Government Mr. Cass, lately appointed charge d'affaires to the Papal States, should be accredited. A Revolution[1] has broken out at Rome and Pope Pius IX. has fled from that Capitol, & when last heard of was at Goeta in the Dominions of the King of the Two Cicilies. On the other hand the Revolutionary Government which has succeeded him at Rome has not been so firmly established as to justify its recognition. If, therefore, Mr. Cass be accredited to the Pope, he will be accredited to a sovereign who has fled from his temporal Dominions; and if to the Revolutionary Government, there is no sufficient evidence that it has stability or can maintain itself. Mr. Buchanan proposed to send Mr. Cass to Rome without accrediting him to either, with instructions to Report to his Government the exact condition of things on

[1] Pope Pius IX sympathized in the beginning with the liberal Italian movement of the year 1848. When it became evident, however, that the result of the movement would be to involve the Italians in a war with Austria, the Pope took counsel of his interests as the head of Catholicism and withdrew from it. The consequence of this withdrawal was the revolution referred to, in his own temporal dominion (the States of the Church). The Pope fled to the King of Naples for refuge on November 24, 1848, whereupon the Revolutionists, under the lead of Mazzini, proclaimed the establishment of a republic.

his arrival there, and that his credentials could be sent to him on receiving this information. After some discussion the Cabinet concurred in this view, and Mr. Buchanan's proposition was adopted accordingly. Mr. Buchanan read a despatch of the 12th of January last from Mr. Bancroft in which among other things Mr. Bancroft assigns the reasons which had induced him not to execute his instructions to protest against the order of the Brittish Government to the officers of the Crown in Ireland to arrest American citizens found there, on mere suspicion during the period of the late troubles in Ireland. Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that the protest of this Government ought still to be made, to guard against a similar exercise of despotic power for the future. He thought Mr. Bancroft's reasons were not sufficient. I intimated the opinion that the protest ought to be made, when Mr. Buchanan remarked that he would like to hear the opinions of the Cabinet. I then took their opinions individually. Mr. Marcy at first doubted. All the other members of the Cabinet concurred with Mr. Buchanan that Mr. Bancroft should be again instructed to make the protest, so that it might be on record in both Governments; and this course was resolved on. Some other matters of minor importance were considered and disposed of. I attended to business on my table in the morning as usual.

While the Cabinet were in Session my Private Secretary came in and informed me that some of the Whig members of Congress had found in a newspaper a Protocol signed by Messrs. Clifford & Sevier,

Commissioners, &C., in relation to the meaning and construction of the amendments of the Senate to the Mexican Treaty, and that they intended to call for it by a Resolution. Mr. Buchanan immediately went to the State Dept. & brought the Protocol & instructions, &C., on the subject & read them in the Cabinet. The Whigs may make the call if they choose. They can make nothing out of the information when they get it.

SUNDAY, *4th February, 1849.*— I attended Divine worship to-day at the First Presbyterian church. Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays, accompanied me. I spent the day quietly in my chamber until about sunset, when a servant informed me that the P. M. Gen'l and two or three other gentlemen were in my office. On repairing to my office I found the P. M. Gen'l, Mr. Houston of Alabama, Mr. Boyd of Ky., and Mr. McKay of N. Carolina. Mr. Houston said they had called to know something about the Protocol between our Commissioners, Messrs. Sevier and Clifford, and the Mexican minister, in relation to the interpretation of the amendments of our Senate, to the Mexican Treaty which the Whigs had found in a newspaper, and in relation to which they had moved a Resolution calling for information in the House on yesterday. I proceeded in a strain of familiar conversation with them to give the explanations of it, telling them that there was nothing in it and that the Whigs could make no political capital out of it. Whilst I was doing this Judge Catron of

the Supreme Court of the U. S. came in. I proceeded with my explanation and remarked to Mr. Houston that I desired the Resolution which had been offered on the subject by Mr. Stephens of Georgia to pass, but that I wished it enlarged in its terms, as I had seen it published in the *Union* this morning, so as to embrace a call for all the correspondence and for the instructions to our commissioners, and jocosely and in a pleasant mood remarked to him, you will, of course, embrace in the call the usual reservation " if not incompatable with the public interests," for, I said, you know if the House shall make an absolute call, that involves a principle, and I may refuse to send you the information you ask, when you command it, though I would voluntarily do it the next day; alluding to my refusal at the last session of Congress to respond to an unqualified call of the House for the Instructions to Mr. Slidell. Mr. Houston remarked jocosely that he had an unfinished speech on the subject of the Resolution last year, that he believed he would make on this call. The conversation was in perfect good humour and very pleasant; when Mr. McKay in a grave and stern and, as I thought, an offensive manner, spoke and said, I will vote for an unqualified call on you, Sir; and rose to his feet and said to the other gentlemen, come, let us go. I knew he was a man of peculiar temperament and manner, and said to him in a pleasant manner, don't be in a hurry, General, come take your seat, I have not done my explanation. He moved out of my office, and as he left it said, " I have heard enough."

I was vexed and remarked to Mr. Houston that I considered Gen'l McKay's conduct very rude, and that, unexplained, I would never speak to him again, & that I desired him to tell him that I said so. Mr. Houston said it was only his manner & habit, that he treated everybody so. I replied that I did not choose to be treated so. Judge Catron remarked that it was very rude conduct certainly. The P. M. Gen'l, Mr. Houston, and Mr. Boyd left & I retired to the parlour with Judge Catron.

MONDAY, *5th February, 1849.*— A number of persons called this morning. I wrote a note to Mr. Houston of Al. & Mr. Boyd of Ky. requesting them to call this morning. I had a conversation with them seperately about the strange and very rude conduct of Gen'l McKay of N. C. yesterday. They both agreed it was rude (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. Houston said he had seen Gen'l McKay last night & told him it was so, and that he ought to be ashamed of it, and that Mr. McKay had assured him he did not mean to be rude, that he was in a good humour, & that he thought my explanation about the Mexican Protocol was satisfactory. I wrote a note to Senator Turney of Tennessee, who called & I explained to him the facts in relation to the protocol, as I did to Senator Breese and several other members of Congress who happened to call, and requested all of them to suffer any Resolutions calling for information on the subject which the Whigs might offer in either House to pass, as the information when communicated would be entirely

satisfactory and they could make nothing prejudicial to the administration out of it. After 12 O'Clock in anticipation that a call would be made I reduced to writing a part of an answer which, in that event, I would give in a message. In the evening my Private Secretary informed me that such a Resolution had passed the House, & that it had given rise to a violent party debate. Mr. Buchanan called and saw me on the subject in the course of the day. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day.

TUESDAY, *6th February, 1849.*— Saw company as usual this morning. About 10 O'Clock Mr. Campbell, the clerk of the Ho. Repts., called and delivered to me the Resolutions passed by the Ho. Repts. on yesterday, calling for information in relation to the Protocol signed by Messrs. Sevier & Clifford with the Mexican Minister for Foreign affairs in relation to their understanding of the intent and meaning of certain articles of the Treaty of peace with Mexico. (See this Diary for the last three days.) The Cabinet met at the usual hour. I laid before them the Resolution of enquiry which I had received from the House, and it was the subject of full conversation. I read the paragraphs which I had written on yesterday. Mr. Mason at my table wrote a paragraph in pencil. Mr. Buchanan stepped into the adjoining room & made some notes of the points which in conversation it had been agreed should be discussed in the message. I requested Mr. Buchanan to compare the Protocol with the original and the amended articles of the Treaty and prepare that

part of the message which will show that the Protocol is not inconsistent with the amended Treaty, but that the construction it places on the amended articles is the true construction. The atto. Gen'l, Mr. Toucy, gave it as his opinion that this is true. The main body of the message I will write myself. The Cabinet adjourned about 3 O'Clock, no other subject of interest having been considered. After night Mr. Mason called at my request, and with his assistance I proceeded to prepare my message. I was suffering from cold & was not well. Mr. Mason did the writing, while I lay on the sofa and conferred with him as he proceeded. It was near 12 O'Clock at night before he retired.

WEDNESDAY, *7th February, 1849.*— I gave orders to my porter to admit no visitors to-day. Mr. Mason called about 10 O'Clock & proceeded with me in the further preparation of my message, he doing the writing (see this Diary of yesterday). Mr. Buchanan called and handed to me the part of the message which he had agreed on yesterday to prepare. About 1 O'Clock Mr. Walker and Mr. Marcy, as I had previously requested them to do, called. Having with the assistance of Mr. Mason finished the main body of the paper and made some slight modifications of the passages prepared by Mr. Buchanan, the whole was read over in presence of the four Secretaries, Messrs. Buchanan, Walker, Marcy, & Mason. It was modified in some immaterial respects, and was approved by them. About 3 O'Clock P. M. my Private Secretary took [it] to

have a fair copy of it made. He was assisted by two confidential clerks (Williams and Loving). Mr. Ritchie, desiring to have a copy of it for publication, sent his assistant editor (Mr. Overton) to make a copy. He occupied the room with my Private Secretary and clerks. Late in the afternoon Mr. Buchanan called and brought with him a translated copy of the Mexican ratification of the Treaty, which I deemed important. At my request he prepared a paragraph embodying it, which with a slight modification I determined to make a part of the message. About dark Senator Rusk of Texas called at my request, and I read to him parts of the message & explained the whole subject to him. He was not only satisfied, but thought the message was not only conclusive but overwhelming. I remained in my office, occasionally passing into the room where the clerks were making the copy & modifying and revising parts of it, until after 8 O'Clock P. M., when I repaired to the parlour, leaving the clerks at work. General notice had been given in the City papers that the President's mansion would be open for the reception of visitors this evening. All the parlours including the East Room were lighted up. The Marine band of musicians occupied the outer Hall. Many hundreds of persons, ladies & gentlemen, attended. It was what would be called in the Society of Washington a very fashionable levee. Foreign Ministers, their families & suites, Judges, members of both Houses of Congress, and many citizens and strangers were of the company present. I stood and shook hands with them for over three

hours. Towards the close of the evening I passed through the crowded rooms with the venerable Mrs. Madison on my arm. It was near 12 O'Clock when the company retired. I was much fatigued with my labours in my office during the day, and in the parlour during the evening. I omitted to state in yesterday's Diary that the Senate passed a Resolution, which I received late in the evening, making a similar call to that of the House for information in relation to the Protocol connected with the Mexican Treaty. The Whigs seem to be resolved to make some party capital out of it if possible. I am greatly mistaken if, when they receive my answer, they are not disappointed.

THURSDAY, *8th February, 1849.*— I rose early, as is usual with me, this morning, and being very desirous to send my message [1] in relation to the Mexican Treaty to the Ho. Repts. to-day, in answer to their Resolutions, I omitted my usual morning walk & went to my office. The Clerks had finished making the copy. I read, revised, and corrected it, making some slight modifications in it, before breakfast. Messrs. Meade and Bayley of Va., Mr. Chase of Tennessee, Mr. Kaufman of Texas, Mr. Johnson of Arkansas, and Mr. Rhett of S. C., all of the Ho. Repts., called, all of them at my request, except Mr. Rhett, and I read to them my message to the House and explained the facts & principles involved to

[1] Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* IV, 679–687. For both message and accompanying documents, see *H. Ex. Doc.* 50, 30 Cong. 2 Sess. V.

them. They were not all present at the same time. They expressed a united opinion that the exposé was satisfactory and conclusive. I deemed it proper that a few of my political friends in the House should understand the subject and be prepared for any sudden discussion which might arise on sending it to the House. Although I had not requested him to do so, I was glad that Mr. Rhett happened to call. Mr. Mason called & read the whole paper, as revised, early in the day. Mr. Buchanan & Mr. Walker called and read over the whole paper carefully. It was after 12 O'Clock when I received the Documents which were to accompany it, and near 1 O'Clock before my Private Secretary left to take the Message to the House. I was occupied during the balance of the day in disposing of the business on my table. My Private Secretary informed me in the evening that my message was read in the House and ordered to be printed without discussion. He informed me that the Democratic members as far as he discerned were well pleased, while the Whigs were silent.

FRIDAY, *9th February, 1849.*— I saw company this morning. I had kept my office closed for two or three days while preparing my message to the Ho. Repts., and this morning the number of office-seekers was unusually great and their importunities for place exceedingly annoying to me. I gave them audience for about an hour, and considering it time uselessly spent I directed [my porter] to admit none others. I prepared a short message to the Senate in answer to

a Resolution of that body on the subject of the Protocol connected with the Treaty of peace with Mexico. I consulted Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Marcy, and Mr. Mason in drawing it. I received the documents to accompany the Message from the State Dept. about 1½ O'Clock, and my Private Secretary took them with the message to the senate. I disposed of much business on my table to-day.

SATURDAY, *10th February, 1849*.—A few members of Congress and others called this morning. I disposed of two or three applications for pardon and some other business before the hour of the meeting of the Cabinet. All the members of the Cabinet attended at the usual hour. Nothing of importance was considered to-day. Several minor subjects were disposed of, and the Cabinet dispersed between 1 and 2 O'Clock P. M. Since my messages of the 8th Inst. to the Ho. Repts., and of the 9th Inst. to the Senate, on the subject of the Protocol to the Mexican Treaty, no debate upon the subject has taken place in either House. My message to the House, I learn from several members of Congress, is considered by all as not only satisfactory, but overwhelming to the Whig leaders who raised the false clamour about the Protocol and the effect which they falsely assumed it had of abrogating the Mexican Treaty. The calls upon me on the subject must have been caused by mere partisan rancour, & the hope on the part of the movers that some political capital could be made of it. When the matter was first moved

on saturday last in the House, and for three or four days afterwards, some of the Whig leaders in Congress were bold in the [their] assumptions and publicly threatened me with impeachment. The *National Intelligencer* came out with a silly article, it is difficult to say whether it is to be attributed to ignorance or to unprincipled party malignity. Since my message communicating a plain statement of facts has gone in, they are all quit [quiet] and seem to have dropped the subject. This has several times happened during my administration. Party assaults have been made by Resolutions calling for information, accompanied by violent speeches, and when my answer was received that was the last that was heard of them. In this case Mr. Stephens of Georgia was put forward to make the call. From what I have since heard I have reason to believe that others, who have some character to loose, were his prompters behind the scene, but were unwilling to risk a public exposure by moving in the matter publicly themselves. From what I learn there can be little doubt the [that] Senators Benton of Mo. and Clayton of Delaware were of this number. I have not seen either Senators Foote of Miss. or King of Alabama, but I am informed that they have information which leaves but little doubt of the fact that Mr. Benton & Mr. Clayton, and perhaps Mr. Berrien of Georgia, were active in agitating the matter in the first instance, and I have no doubt Mr. Stephens made his movement at the instance of Mr. Clayton. Mr. Benton has been malignantly hostile to me ever since

Col. Fremont's trial, and this wholly without cause. He has not visited me & I have had no communication with him for more than a year. There is every indication now that he will join the Whigs in the support of Gen'l Taylor, at all events until he can get offices for his three sons-in-law. If I had failed to do my duty in Col. Fremont's case, and given an office which he sought for his Whig son-in-law (Jones) he would never have quarrelled with me. His course towards me and my administration for more than a year past has been selfish and wholly unprincipled. Fortunately I fear nothing he can do & am at his defiance. I should have added that I learned from Senator Hannegan of Indiana some days ago that Senators Benton & Clayton were the first to agitate in relation to the Protocol. The facts communicated in my message will render impotent their unprincipled malignity.

SUNDAY, *11th February, 1849.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day. Mrs. Polk and Miss Hays and Miss Rucker accompanied me. On yesterday an exciting debate took place in the Senate on a motion to print my message to that body in answer to their resolution calling for the Protocol and other papers connected with the Treaty of peace with Mexico. In this debate Senator Foote of Miss. and others participated. A sketch of the debate is published in the *Union* of this morning. From Mr. Foote's remarks as published the origin of the agitation on the subject is pretty distinctly traced to its true authors (see this Diary of yesterday).

MONDAY, *12th February, 1849.*— Many persons, members of Congress and others, called this morning. Most of them were seeking office. Mr. Buchanan, who had handed to me last night a despatch from the Mexican Minister of the 10th Inst. on the subject of the Protocol to the Mexican Treaty of peace, called and held a conversation with me on the subject to-day. He is to prepare an answer and submit it to the Cabinet on to-morrow. The Secretary of War called on business. Brev't Col. Bliss,[1] U. S. army, and son-in-law of Gen'l Taylor, the President-elect of the U. S., called to pay his respects today. Maj'r R. B. Reynolds, Paymaster of [the] U. S. army, and Col. Frank Cheatham,[2] late of the army, both of Tennessee, dined with me to-day. I disposed of much business on my table in the course of the day. After night Messrs. Cobb & Lumpkin of Georgia called.

TUESDAY, *13th February, 1849.*— It is four years ago this day since I arrived in Washington, preparatory to entering on my duties as President of the U. S. on the 4th of March following. They have been four years of incessant labour and anxiety and of great responsibility. I am heartily rejoiced that my term is so near its close. I will soon cease to be a servant and will become a sovereign. As a

[1] William Wallace Smith Bliss, Chief of Staff of General Taylor.

[2] Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, 1820–1866, Colonel of 3rd Tennessee regiment in Mexican War, became Major General in Confederate army.

private citizen I will have no one but myself to serve, and will exercise a part of the sovereign power of my country. I am sure I will be happier in this condition than in the exalted station I now hold. A few persons, members of Congress and others, called before the meeting of the Cabinet this morning. All the members of the Cabinet except the Secretary of the Treasury attended at the usual [hour]. Despatches received last night from Commodore Jones, commanding the Pacific squadron on the California coast, were read by Judge Mason. Letters received from Mr. Parrot, consul at Mazatlan and bearer of despatches to the army and Naval officers on the Pacific, and from an officer of the Quarter Masters Dept., were read by Mr. Marcy. They show a deplorable state of things in California, where the inhabitants are left without law or Government, but notwithstanding this I fear that Congress will provide no Government for them at the present Session.

Mr. Buchanan read a despatch [1] which he had prepared to Mr. Bancroft in answer to one received from the latter, re-iterating the instructions which had been previously given to Mr. B. to protest in the name of his Government against the arbitrary order given by the Brittish Government in August last for the arrest upon mere suspicion [of] all American citizens found in or visiting Ireland. Thou[gh] the American citizens who were arrested have all been released, it was deemed proper to place on record in the most solemn form the protest of the U. S., so that the order of August last may not here-

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VIII, 319–321.

after be drawn in question as a precedent in which we had acquiesced to justify a similar exercise of power. Mr. Buchanan read also instructions which he had prepared to Lewis Cass, Jr., charge d'affaires to the Papal states. Mr. Cass will proceed at once to Rome, but will not be accredited either to the Pope or to the Revolutionary Government now existing in the Papal states. Mr. Cass is instructed to Report to his Government the exact condition of the Government as he may find it after his arrival at Rome. When he shall do this, this government will be better able to determine to whom he shall be accredited. Mr. Buchanan read a despatch which he received on the night of the 10th Inst. from the Mexican Minister (Rosa) on the subject of the Protocol connected with the Mexican Treaty, lately called for by Congress. The proper answer to be given was the subject of conversation and was agreed upon. Several other subject[s], chiefly of detail and of minor importance, were considered and disposed of. This was reception evening. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, members of Congress, & others called.

WEDNESDAY, *14th February, 1849.*— The number of persons, male and female, who called this morning was unusually great, and the importunate applications for office were exceedingly annoying. The impression has obtained that Gen'l Taylor may possibly not be proscriptive, and the herd of persons who are without political principle and who are willing to profess to belong to either party to obtain or

hold office, are anxious to get in before I retire, in the hope that they will not be turned out after I retire. I have great contempt for such persons, and dispose of their applications very summarily. They take up much of my time every day. I yielded to the request of an artist named Brady, of N. Y., by sitting for my Degueryotype likeness to-day. I sat in the large dining room. I disposed of business on my table as usual. Mr. Buchanan called & read to me the draft of his answer to the note of the Mexican Minister on the subject of the Protocol to the Mexican Treaty (see this Diary of yesterday). I approved its general tenor, but thought it a subject of sufficient importance to consult the Cabinet about, and appointed to-morrow at 1 O'Clock P. M. for a meeting of the Cabinet. Mr. Josylin of Holley Springs & Mr. Duncan of Grenada, Mississippi took a family Dinner with me to-day. In pursuance of law, this being the 2nd Wednesday in February, the electoral votes for President & Vice President of the U. S. were counted in Congress to-day.

THURSDAY, *15th February, 1849.*— Many persons called this morning, a majority of whom were annoying me by their importunities for office. As I am making no removals, and, as Mr. Jefferson once said "few die and none resign," I have no offices to fill, and I promptly answered all who applied sternly, "no." I convened a special meeting of the Cabinet at 1 O'Clock to-day. All the members attended. Mr. Buchanan read the answer [1] which he had pre-

[1] Moore, *Buchanan,* VIII, 328–332.

pared to the note of the Mexican Minister on the subject of the Protocol to the Mexican Treaty (see this Diary of the 13th Inst.). The answer as drawn was slightly modified and unanimously agreed to. Some other minor matters were considered and disposed of, and the Cabinet adjourned after being together about an hour. I disposed of business in my office in the afternoon as usual.

FRIDAY, *16th February, 1849.*— A great number of persons called this morning, most of them seeking office as usual. Others, female as well as male, were begging money. I am thankful that I am so soon to be relieved from such annoyances. Among the beggars was a sturdy, impudent fellow, upon whose face and nose the effects of brandy were visible. He professed to want money to aid him in building an academy or school house. From his appearance I think it likely that he wished to get it to spend for drink. I gave him a prompt and stern refusal. Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Mason called in the course of the day on business. Mr. Brady, an artist, took several of my deguerrotype likenesses to-day, and also the likenesses of Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Mason. We set [sat] for him in the large dining room below stairs. I transacted business in my office as usual. After night Mr. Thomas of the Ho. Repts. of Tennessee called. He returned last evening from a visit to his sick family at Columbia, Tennessee. After he retired Mr. Cobb and Mr. Lumpkin of Georgia called and spent two hours or more with me. In the course of the evening the Oregon ques-

tion and my course in relation to it became the subject of conversation. Mr. Lumpkin detailed a conversation between Senator Allen of Ohio & himself which he stated took place when that subject was pending before Congress, which I deem worthy to be noted in this Diary. Mr. Lumpkin stated that in conversation with Mr. Allen at that time he enquired of Mr. Allen what the President should do if the Brittish Government should offer the parallel of 49° as the boundary, which the President had offered and subsequently withdrawn. Mr. Allen, he stated, replied that that was all understood, that if such offer was made the President should submit it to the Senate, and that two thirds of that body would never advise its acceptance. Mr. Lumpkin said that when the contingency happened & I took the very course indicated he was surprised to find that Mr. Allen disapproved it, and, in consequence of it, resigned his post as chairman of the committee of Foreign Relations of the Senate. My notes in this Diary in relation to Senator Allen's course were very full at the time, and although I have not referred to them since, they will be found to accord fully with Mr. Lumpkin's statement. Before my annual message of December, 1845, was sent to Congress I submitted it to Mr. Allen, and he advised me in the event [Great Britain] returned my offer of 49° upon me to take the very course I did, and with which, when I did it, he found fault. By referring to this Diary a few days before the meeting of Congress in Decr., 1845, and in the early part of June, 1846, what occurred between Mr. Allen and myself

will be found recorded. I note Mr. Lumpkin's statement to-night for reference if the subject should ever be brought before the public by Mr. Allen. Mr. Buchanan sent to me this evening a despatch received from Mr. Bancroft transmitting one to Lord Palmerston on the subject of ex-patriation.

SATURDAY, *17th February, 1849.*— A number of members of Congress and others called this morning. Their business was to importune me about appointments to office. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of War, who was detained at his house, as I learned, in consequence of indisposition. Before entering on any business the members of the Cabinet at my request accompanied me to the large dining room below stairs & set [sat] for their Deguerrotype likenesses. Mr. Brady, the artist, desired to take the Cabinet & myself in a group, and did so. Returning to my office the business before the Cabinet was considered and disposed of. The despatch received from Mr. Bancroft, sent to me by Mr. Buchanan last evening, was considered. I had read it carefully and stated its substance and purport. It was not read, but Mr. Buchanan gave his views in relation to it. The Cabinet were unanimous in adhering to their opinion that Mr. Bancroft should make a formal protest to the Brittish Government, as he had been instructed to do, against the arbitrary & despotic order of that Government issued in August last for the arrest of all American citizens, whether native-born or adopted, who were found in Ireland,

and under which Mr. Bergen and Mr. Ryan, two American citizens, had actually been arrested and imprisoned. True, they were afterwards released, but the protest which Mr. Bancroft had been instructed to make was designed to guard against a similar arbitrary exercise of power for the future. Mr. Bancroft in his despatch to Lord Palmerston has ably discussed the question of the right of British subjects to ex-patriate themselves & to become American citizens, but this question did not necessarily arise. The order of the Brittish Government complained of applied alike to Native-born and to Naturalized citizens. The Cabinet were of opinion that Mr. Bancroft should still make the Protest, as he had been heretofore instructed to do, and I directed Mr. Buchanan so to inform him.

Mr. Buchanan read a despatch recd. from Mr. Donelson, U. S. Minister to the German Empire, in which he repeats his desire to be empowered to negotiate a commercial Treaty. The successful establishment of the German confederacy is as yet deemed to be too uncertain to justify instructions to negotiate such a Treaty. I disposed of business on my table as usual after the adjournment of the Cabinet.

After night the Hon. Hugh J. Anderson of Maine, with whom I served several years in Congress, and who has since been Governor of Maine, called and spent about an hour with me. He is a sound Democrat and an excellent man. He agreed with me fully in my views in regard to the importance of Congress providing at the present session for the admission of California and New Mexico into the Union

as states, and thus settling the agitating question of the Wilmot Proviso or slavery restriction which would be insisted on in [a] Territorial Bill. I have omitted to state in the proper place in this day's Diary that Mr. Mason and Mr. Johnson remained a few minutes after the other members of the Cabinet retired. Mr. Mason said he felt it to be his duty to inform me of a matter of some delicacy which had come to his knowledge, which I ought to know, but not desiring to stand in the attitude of an informer, he desired that I would not use his name. He then informed me that he had learned from Mr. Collins, the 1st Auditor, that Mr. Fletcher Webster, who was ch. clerk in the State Dept. during the period his father (Hon. Daniel Webster) was Secretary of State, had presented an account for eighteen or nineteen hundred dollars for salary as acting Secretary of State during his father's temporary absence from the seat of Government. He informed me that Mr. Collins, the auditor, had refused to allow the account, and that Mr. Collins informed [him] that he had been overruled by Mr. McCulloch, the 1st Comptroller. Mr. Mason expressed the apprehension that Mr. McCulloch was making this and similar payments very loosely if not illegally. I immediately sent for the Secretary of the Treasury and gave him the information, but without giving the source from which I had obtained [it]. I expressed to him my astonishment. He expressed the opinion that such payments were legal, and that similar payments had been made. I replied this could not be, for Congress had appropriated but

one salary for a Secretary of State, & that having been drawn by Daniel Webster, it could not be again legally paid to his son. I told him I must have the opinion of the atto. Gen'l on the legal question, as I was strongly impressed that such payments were illegal, and was very sure that they were improper. Mr. Walker said he would take the opinion of the atto. Gen'l and enquire further into the matter.

SUNDAY, *18th February, 1849.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk and Maria Polk Walker, the little daughter of my Private Secretary, J. Knox Walker. Mrs. Walker and our two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays, attended service at one of the Catholic churches. I spent the day quietly in my chamber. After night, reflecting on the near approach of the termination of my Presidential term and on the uncertainty of life, I executed a purpose which I have some time contemplated by writing and signing my last Will and Testament. I left a written Will with my valuable papers in Tennessee, but as the situation of my property has been materially changed since it was written I deemed it proper to make another. There are no persons present to attest it as witnesses, but I will hereafter cause this to be done. Mrs. Polk knew nothing of my intention to write it. It was made chiefly for her benefit, if she should survive me, and I will read it to her. I took it with me from my office to my chamber and read it to her. It was unexpected to her and she expressed some

surprise, but was entirely satisfied with its provisions.

Mr. Buchanan called in after night and informed me that he had been informed at a party last evening that Mr. Stephens of Georgia and Mr. Wilmot of Penn. had made a violent assault upon me in the Ho. Repts. the day before, in which the effort was made to prove that I had at one time been in favour of the Wilmot Proviso. Such an allegation is false, come from what quarter it may.

MONDAY, *19th February, 1849.*— My office was crowded with visitors this morning. Among them were some genteel looking strangers who called to pay their respects, but a majority of them were seeking office. One man of good appearance was begging money for a church for sailors in Norfolk. My Private Secretary by my direction contributed to him. He may be an imposter, but his appearance would indicate otherwise. These are annoyances which a President must endure.

I was surprised on opening the *National Intelligencer* of this morning to discover that the Ho. Repts. had continued its session on Saturday until after 10 O'Clock at night. My Private Secretary had not been at the House, and had made no Report of its proceedings to me. I learned from several members of the House, who called this morning on other business, the character of the attack [1] made on me in the House by Mr. Stephens and Mr. Wilmot

[1] *Globe,* 30 Cong. 2 Sess. *App.* 139, and 145–150.

on saturday (see this Diary of yesterday). Its substance is that Mr. Stephens charged that in conversation [1] with Mr. Wilmot, at what time I could not learn, that I had urged him not [to] urge his Proviso on the Three Million appropriation Bill, but to offer it in a distinct form, and that I would have no objection to it. Wilmot had given the information to Stephens. Stephens makes the charge, and Wilmot is a willing witness on the floor of the House to prove it. It is wickedly and basely false. Among the members who detailed the debate to me was Gen'l Bayley of Va. Mr. Buchanan was present, who at once said that he knew that the President & every member of the Cabinet had been opposed to the Wilmot Proviso from the time it was first offered, and that I had uniformly so expressed myself. Mr. McLane of M. called, and said to me that he knew that in conversation with him I had expressed my opposition to the Proviso in strong terms, and had expressed the opinion that if any territory was acquired by Treaty from Mexico the slavery question should be adjusted by the Missouri compromise line. I told these gentlemen, as the truth is, that I had recommended to Congress to make an appropriation to enable me to make a Treaty of peace with Mexico. The appropriation was not made at the first session it was recommended. When the Bill for that purpose was before the House, at a night sitting near the close of the session of 1846, Mr. Wilmot had offered his Proviso. I was at the Capi-

[1] For Polk's account of the conversation referred to, see Diary entry for December 23, 1846.

tol in the Vice President's Room, as is usual at the close of a session, receiving & signing Bills, when I heard of it. My Private Secretary remembers distinctly that I expressed my strong disapprobation of it, & requested Mr. Buchanan to go to the House and see if he could arrest it. The Bill failed to pass at that session, & I repeated the recommendation at the next session. In many conversations with many members I remember that I urged them not to embarrass the appropriation by the Proviso. I remember to have urged upon some who were disposed to vote for it not [to] embarrass a foreign negotiation for Peace by it, that such a privision [provision] could not be inserted in any Treaty, and if it was it could not be ratified by two thirds of the Senate or by me, and I may have said, to[o], that if they must insist upon it, why not do it in a seperate or distinct form and not on the three million appropriation Bill. I may have said also, that if we should acquire territory by a Treaty of peace with Mexico they would have an opportunity to offer it when Congress came to establish a Territorial Government over the acquired territory. These were arguments addressed to the advocates of the Proviso to induce them not to embarrass an appropriation which was deemed an important means of obtaining peace by it. But that I ever expressed to any human being, Mr. Wilmot or any one else, that I would favour the Proviso in any shape, or any thing from which such an inference could be drawn, is, I repeat, false. The baseness of Wilmott in this matter cannot be adequately discribed. He remains

silent for two years and more, then goes to Stephens, a bitter & unscrupulous partisan Whig, induces him to make the charge, & then meanly seeks to place himself in the attitude of a witness to sustain it. The debate has not yet been published in the newspapers. As soon as it is I [shall] cause an authorized contradiction of it to be made. The Whigs & abolitionists in Congress pursue me with a malignity and a bitterness which can only be accounted for because of their chagrin at the success of Democratic measures during my administration. Contributions levied in Mexico & the ridiculous farce of the Protocol have constituted their latest subjects of attack. These have failed them and now this story of Wilmot's is gotten up.

I visited to-day the model of the statue of Gen'l Jackson on horseback now being prepared in this City. I disposed of much business on my table. After night Mr. Venable of N. C. and Mr. Stanton of Tennessee, members of the Select committee of the Ho. Repts. to which [my] message on the subject of military contributions levied in Mexico was referred, called at my request, and I had a conversation with them on that subject.

TUESDAY, *20th February, 1849.*— I was excessively annoyed by a crowd of persons this morning, most of whom were seeking office. The Cabinet met at the usual hour; the members all present except the Secretary of War and the Atto. Gen'l. The former was detained at his house by indisposition and the latter was attending the Supreme Court of

the U. S. The Secretary of the Treasury read a Report to Congress on the Ware-Housing system established by the act of 1846. It had been printed and he read from a proof-sheet copy. It is an interesting and able Report, & demonstrates clearly the advantages of the system. Some other subjects of minor importance were considered and disposed of. A conversation took place on the subject of the attack made on me in the Ho. Repts. on Saturday last by Stephens & Wilmot (see this Diary of yesterday). The members present were indignant at the charge and remembered distinctly my repeated expressions of hostility to the Wilmot Proviso, and my determination to veto it if it extended beyond the Missouri compromise. Mr. Walker stated a conversation he had held with Wilmot, which may hereafter become important, in which he had argued with Wilmot to prove that without the Proviso slavery could never exist in California, and that Wilmot had declared to him that if the views he presented had occurred to him before he offered the Proviso he never would have offered it. I disposed of business on my table as usual to-day. This was reception evening. The usual number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, called. My nephew, Capt. James H. Walker of Tennessee, arrived to-night.

WEDNESDAY, *21st February, 1849.*— As soon as my office was opened this morning persons began to call. For three hours and more I was importuned by office seekers. At no period since I have been President has the pressure for place been greater than

to-day. The large majority of those who apply I have reason to believe are worthless, without character & too lazy to pursue an honest calling for a livelihood. I am stern & almost abrupt with them, and yet I cannot drive them from my office, but am compelled daily to endure them. I would exclude them altogether but am compelled to keep my office open to receive members of Congress in the morning, and can make no distinction. Until they come in I never can tell who is without. It is in this way that they gain admittance. The Secretary of War being indisposed, I sent for Mr. Campbell, the ch. clerk, and gave him direction about several matters of business connected with the War Department. The Secretary of the Navy called on business. I disposed of the other business on my table as usual. The Hon. T. Butler King of Georgia and a Captain of the army in his military dress, whose name I did not hear, called to-day and informed me that they were deputed as a committee by the managers to invite myself and the ladies of my household to attend the Inauguration Ball to be given in honor of the President elect on monday evening, the 5th of March next.

THURSDAY, *22nd February, 1849.*— There was a snow-storm this morning and fewer persons than usual called. All who did call, with one or two exceptions, were seeking office. Hon. Mr. Venable of the Ho. Repts. of N. C. called, as he informed me, to let me know of an effort that was making to place me in a false position. He stated that Senator

Walker of Wisconsin had offered an amendment to the civil and Diplomatic appropriation Bill to authorize the President to provide a temporary civil Government for California and New Mexico, and that it was a proposition which he (Mr. Venable) was willing to vote for; but he said that if it was voted on in the Senate the plan of the free-soil men & Whigs was to attach the Wilmot Proviso to it in the House, and that if the Senate should give way (as there was reason to apprehend they might) the civil and Diplomatic appropriation Bill would be sent to me for my approval with the Wilmot Proviso on it, and that the Free-soilers and Whigs hoped to force me to sign it rather than loose the appropriation Bill. He said he could not inform me of the source from which he had traced this because he had received it confidentially, but he was satisfied this was their plan. I told Mr. Venable that I had not read Senator Walker's amendment, but of one thing he might rest assured, and that was that if the Wilmot Proviso was engrafted on the appropriation or any other Bill and was made to apply to any portion of the acquired territory lying South of 36° 30′, the Missouri compromise line, I would certainly veto it, be the consequences what they might. I told him I would not be forced to abandon a principle by any such maneuvre. I told him I had signed the Oregon Bill only because all the territory lay North of that line, and its provisions did not conflict with the Missouri compromise. This being the anniversary of the birth of Washington, two uniformed military companies of this District

called about 1 O'Clock P. M. to pay their respects. I received them in the East Room. Senators Dodge and Jones of Iowa happened to be in my office when they called and accompanied me to the East Room where I received them. I was busily engaged during the day in disposing of the business on my table. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Navy called and I transacted business with them. Mr. Campbell, ch. clerk of the War Department (the Secretary being still indisposed) called & I transacted business with him connected with that Department.

FRIDAY, *23rd February, 1849.*— Saw company as usual this morning. Many persons called, and among them a goodly number of the herd of office-seekers who so constantly annoy me by their importunities. The *Union* of this morning contained an article denying the ridiculous absurd charge made by Stephens and Wilmot in the Ho. Repts. on saturday last in relation to my opinion on the Wilmot Proviso or slavery question (see this Diary of the 19th Inst. and two following days). I was engaged during the day as usual in transacting business. In my evening walk I met Hon. Henry Horn of Phil., who returned with me to my office and remained with me an hour or two. While he was with me Senator Turney and Mr. Thomas of Tennessee called. Senator Hannegan also called. I fear after all my efforts to induce Congress to provide some Government for California and New Mexico they will adjourn without doing so. Should this be the

result *theirs* and not *mine* will be the responsibility of doing so. Senator Soulé was among the number who called this morning.

About 8 O'Clock at night Gen'l Taylor, the President elect of the United States, arrived in this City and took lodgings at Willard's Hotel.

SATURDAY, *24th February, 1849.*— Several persons called this morning. Among them was Gen'l Shields, U. S. Senator Elect from Illinois. The Cabinet met at the usual hour, all the members present. There being no business of much importance to be presented the members engaged in a conversation among themselves as to the proper time to tender their resignations. They all agreed that they should be tendered to me and be accepted on the last day of my term, and not be withheld and tendered to my successor. Some of them expressed their willingness to hold over a day or two to prevent embarrassment to the public business, provided it should be desired by my successor. After this conversation Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Marcy engaged in conversation between themselves while the other members of the Cabinet conversed with me. One of them enquired of me at what time it would be proper for them to call and pay their respects to Gen'l Taylor, the President Elect. I answered to that that was a matter for their own decision, but that it occurred to me that until the President elect had called on the President in office, as it was his duty to do under the established etiquette (if he desired to have any intercourse with him) a proper self-respect should

prevent the Cabinet of the latter from calling on him. As soon as this suggestion was made they assented to its correctness. Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Marcy being still engaged in their conversation and not attending to the conversation with me, I requested Mr. Toucy to mention it to them, and he replied he would do so. Before he had time to do so, my porter came in and informed Mr. Buchanan that his messenger from the State Department had brought a message to him that Gen'l Shields was waiting for him at the Department to meet him on an appointment he had made with him. Mr. Buchanan on receiving this message immediately enquired if the members of the Cabinet should not call on the President elect in a body, addressing himself to me. I then informed him of the conversation which I had just had while he and Mr. Marcy were engaged, & which they had not heard, and added that if my Cabinet called on Gen'l Taylor before he called on me, I should feel that I had been deserted by my own political family. I stated that it might be that Gen'l Taylor would not call at all, and in that event if my Cabinet called on him it would place me in a position which it would be unpleasant to occupy. Mr. Marcy at once said it would not be proper for them to call on Gen'l Taylor until he had called on me. Mr. Buchanan made no reply, and soon after left. Mr. Mason, after the Cabinet had dispersed, remarked in the presence of Mr. Marcy that he had no doubt Gen'l Shields' appointment with Mr. Buchanan was to accompany him to wait on Gen'l Taylor. I have not heard whether Mr. Buchanan called on him or

not. Before the foregoing conversations with Mr. Buchanan occurred, Mr. B. read a despatch which he had received from the Mexican Minister on the subject of the Protocol to the Mexican Treaty. There was not much in it and I doubt whether it requires an answer. I disposed of business on my table as usual, & retired from my office at a late hour at night.

My Private Secretary informed me to-night that he had received a note from Senator Davis of Mississippi, informing him that Gen'l Taylor was too much indisposed to call to-day, but that it was his intention, if his health permitted, to call on me on monday next. Senator Davis married a daughter[1] of Gen'l Taylor. His wife is dead and he is married a second time.

SUNDAY, *25th February, 1849.*— I attended the First Presbyterian church to-day accompanied by Mrs. Polk, my niece Miss Hays, and Miss Josephine Davis of Baltimore, who is spending a few days in my family. Miss Davis was for some time a student at the Female Institute at Columbia, Tennessee, where she made the acquaintance of my niece, Miss Hays. She came from Baltimore during the past week to visit Miss Hays. After night Judge and Mrs. Catron called. A heavy rain storm came on. My coachman was absent, and it being Sunday night

[1] Jefferson Davis was married to Sarah Knox, daughter of Zachary Taylor, at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1835. Mrs. Davis died within three months; in 1845 Mr. Davis married Varina Howell, daughter of William B. Howell of Natchez, Mississippi.

no hack or carriage could be procured, and Mrs. Catron remained with us all night. Judge Catron returned to his lodgings.

MONDAY, *26th February, 1849.*— Many persons called this morning and among them several Whig members of Congress with whom I had served. They are doubtless congregating at Washington to importune Gen'l Taylor for offices. Several Democratic members of Congress and others called, and it was gratifying to receive from them expressions of their warm approbation of my public conduct and of the policy of my administration. I received to-day a letter from the Mayor of Charleston, S. C., inviting me on behalf of the City Council to visit Charleston on my way home as the "guest of the City." I answered the letter & accepted the invitation (see my letter Book). I had previously received similar invitations from Augusta, Georgia, and Wilmington, N. C. The former I declined and the latter I accepted (see my letter Book). Between 12 and 1 O'Clock my messenger announced to me that Gen'l Taylor, the President elect of the U. S., had called to pay his respects, and that he was in the parlour below. I immediately repaired to the parlour and was introduced to him, for I had never before seen him. He was accompanied by a number of friends, among whom were Senator Clayton of Delaware, who, it is understood, is to be his Secretary of State, Senator Davis of Mississippi, Mr. Hall of N. Y., and Mr. Barrow of Tenn. of the Ho. Repts., Cols. Bliss and Garnett of the U. S. army. Shortly

after I entered the parlour, Mrs. Polk, my two nieces, Miss Davis of Baltimore, and Mrs. Judge Catron came into the parlour. I received Gen'l Taylor with courtesy and cordiality. He remained some 20 or 30 minutes. I invited him to dine with me on thursday next. He replied that he would do so if his health would permit it. After he retired I requested my Private Secretary to issue tickets of invitation to my Cabinet, Vice President Dallas, and others to meet him at Dinner on thursday next. During his visit Mr. Ward of Boston and Mr. W. W. Corchoran (the Banker of Washington) came into the parlour. I was engaged during the remainder of the day in transacting business in my office. The Secretary of War called and I transacted business with him.

TUESDAY, *27th February, 1849.*— I saw visitors this morning as usual. Members of Congress and others called. On reaching my office immediately after breakfast my porter informed me that a man was in waiting (who had called on yesterday and was unable to see me) who said he had important business with me. I directed him to be shown in. His important business was to importune me for an office before I retired. He was willing to accept a chaplaincy in the Navy, or any other office I had to give before I retired. I gave him a very short answer by telling him that I had but four days more of my Presidential term remaining and that all the places under the Government were filled. I am thoroughly disgusted with the herd of hunters after places who infest the seat of Government. The Cabinet met at

the usual hour; all the members present except the Secretary of the Treasury, the cause of whose absence I did not learn. Several despatches from Mr. Bancroft, Mr. Donelson, and others of our ministers abroad, received by the last steamer from Europe, were read. Though interesting, none of them were of such importance as to require an immediate answer, and it was thought best to leave them for the action of my successor. Many other matters of some importance but of no general interest were considered and disposed of. Mr. Buchanán stated that he had been informed by Mr. Clayton, who is to be Gen'l Taylor's Secretary of State, that it was Gen'l Taylor's request that the present members of the Cabinet should continue in their respective positions until their successors were appointed. Mr. Buchanan said he had informed him that he was willing to hold on until a day certain [certain day], say wednesday next, by which time a successor could be ready to take his place, but he was unwilling to remain indefinitely until his successor was appointed. I took occasion to remark that the period of the resignation of the Cabinet was with themselves; but that I desired to say that I hoped no suggestion which had been made about their accompanying me a short distance on my departure from Washington would be permitted to interfere with their sense of duty or propriety. I desired to relieve them from all embarrassment on my account. I had learned this morning that Mr. Buchanan had taken exception to my remark on saturday last (see this Diary of that day) that I should

feel that I was deserted by my political family if the members of my Cabinet should call on the President elect before he called on me. The remark was made because it might have happened that if my Cabinet called on Gen'l Taylor he might not afterwards have chosen to call on me at all. As Gen'l Taylor belongs to a different political party from myself, & as it was his duty to call on me, if he desired to exchange civilities, I thought it was due to their own self-respect as well as to me that my Cabinet should wait until Gen'l Taylor paid his respects to me before they paid their respects to him. In this view all the members of the Cabinet expressed their concurrence on saturday, except Mr. Buchanan. I learned this morning that Mr. Buchanan had said to a member of the Cabinet that notwithstanding my remark on saturday he had left the Cabinet room resolved to call on Gen'l Taylor on that day, as Gen'l Shields by appointment had called at the State Department to accompany him. He did not, however, do so; but called on Gen'l Taylor on yesterday, immediately after Gen'l Taylor had called on me. Mr. Buchanan is an able man, but is in small matters without judgment and sometimes acts like an old maid. When the Cabinet adjourned to-day the other members of the Cabinet left with the intention, as they said, to call on Gen'l Taylor. He having called on me on yesterday, this was proper. Commodore Parker of the U. S. Navy, who has just returned from a visit to the authorities of the German Empire on a leave of absence for that purpose, called with the Secretary

of the Navy this morning. After he retired the Secretary of the Navy read his official Report. I disposed of much business in my office to-day.

Wednesday, *28th February, 1849.*— At this point of my administration, and until its close, I found my time so constantly occupied by business and the numerous calls made upon me by the crowd of persons who had congregated at Washington to witness the Inauguration of my successor, that I found it impossible to record in this Diary the daily events as they occurred. After I reached Tennessee on this 13th of April, 1849, I resumed the record from my general recollection. The record of this day (the 28th of Feb'y) and the succeeding days of my term must necessarily, therefore, be very general & many incidents must be omitted. I was busy in my office during the day (the 28th of Feb'y) saw many members of Congress and many strangers, and transacted much business. At different periods of the day most of the members of my Cabinet called on business.

This evening in pursuance of previous Notice the parlours of the President's Mansion[1] were thrown [open] and the last drawing room or levee of my administration was held. It was the most brilliant and crowded room of my term. The House was brilliantly lighted up [and] the fine Marine band of music was stationed in the entrance Hall. About 8

[1] In the manuscript the words "in pursuance of public notice previously given" follow after "Mansion."

O'Clock P. M. the company commenced assembling. Among those who attended early in the evening, were many officers of the army and Navy, who called in a body in full uniform. The Foreign Ministers and their families & legations resident at Washington were present in their Court dresses. The members of my Cabinet and their families, members of Congress, citizens, and a vast number of strangers made up the large number of visitors. I received them in the Circular parlour, standing with my back against the Marble centre table and Mrs. Polk standing a few feet to my right. The Marble centre table proved to be an important protection to me. All the parlours and outer halls soon became crowded with human beings, ladies & gentlemen, so that it became very difficult for them to make their way to the place where Mrs. Polk and myself stood. I remained stationary and shook hands with several thousand persons of both sexes. I learned afterwards that many persons came to the door & the jam was so great that they could not make their way to me, and retired without entering. The line of carriages approaching the President's House, I was afterwards informed, extended several hundred yards. About 12 O'Clock at night the last of the company retired. I had remained on my feet continuously for several hours and was exceedingly fatigued.

THURSDAY, *1st March, 1849.*— (See commencement of this Diary of yesterday.) Many persons called to-day and I transacted business with the mem-

bers of my Cabinet and other public officers. Several persons annoyed me about offices, but I gave them very summary and short answers.

Gen'l Taylor, the President of the U. S. elect, having called and paid his respects to me on the 26th ultimo, I have invited him to dine with me to-day. I invited a large party of both political parties to meet him at Dinner. He attended the Dinner accordingly. Among others who composed the Dinner party were Gen'l Cass, who was the Democratic candidate for the Presidency at the last election, Mr. Fillmore, the Vice President elect, Col. Bliss and his wife (Mrs. Bliss is the daughter of Gen'l Taylor) Gen'l Taylor's suite who called on me, consisting of Mr. Benjamin,[1] Judge Winchester, Col. Hodge of New Orleans, Dr. McCormick, U. S. army, and Brevet Col. Garnett, U. S. army. Senator Davis of Miss. & Pierce[2] of Maryland, Senator Bell of Tennessee & his wife, Gen'l Barrow of Tennessee & his wife, Mr. Seaton, the Mayor of Washington, and his wife, and Mr. Ritchie, Editor of the *Union,* were of the party. All the members of my Cabinet and the wives of Secretaries Walker, Marcy, & Toucey attended the dinner. Vice President Dallas was invited but was prevented from attending by a night sitting of the Senate; Mrs. Dallas was present. Judge Catron of the Supreme Court

[1] Judah Philip Benjamin, 1811–1884, Senator from Louisiana 1852–1861, Attorney General and (successively) Secretary of War and Secretary of State of the Southern Confederacy.

[2] James Alfred Pearce, Senator from Maryland 1841–1862.

of the U. S. and his wife were of the party. The whole number consisted of about 40 persons, including my Private Secretary, Col. Walker, & his wife, and my two nieces, Miss Rucker & Miss Hays. Gen'l Taylor, the President elect, waited on Mrs. Polk to the table. He sat on one side of Mrs. Polk and Gen'l Cass on the other. I waited on Mrs. Dallas to the table. The Dinner was finely gotten up in Julian's (the French cook) best style. It passed off well. Not the slightest allusion was made to any political subject. The whole company seemed to enjoy themselves. After Dinner & between 9 & 10 O'Clock P. M. the company dispersed.

I have omitted to note that this morning Mr. Seaton, the Mayor, and the Aldermen & the City council called in a body to pay their respects to me before my retirement from the Presidential office. I received them in the Circular Parlour below stairs. The Mayor made a very gratifying & complimentary address to me on behalf of the authorities & citizens of Washington, in which he expressed their great satisfaction at the interest I had taken during my Presidency for the City of Washington & the District of Columbia. It was an address conceived in the kindest spirit. I responded in a short address. Such a manifestation of respect voluntarily tendered on the eve of my retirement from the Presidency is most gratifying to me. It in some degree compensates for the violence of party assault of which I have been the subject during my term. The Mayor

& a large majority of the City authorities who paid me this mark of their respect are Whigs, who differ with me widely in politics.

FRIDAY, *2nd March, 1849.*—(See commencement of this Diary of the 28th ultimo.) This was a very busy day with me. Many members of Congress and an unusual number of strangers called. The City was much crowded with strangers, chiefly of the Whig party, who have come to witness the Inauguration of Gen'l Taylor. A large number of them have called on me during the last week, & to-day a greater number than on any one day previously. Many officers of the Government, civil & military, who have been stationed in Washington during my Presidential term called at different periods of the day to pay their respects & take leave of me before I left. Many citizens of the City also called for the same purpose. Many Whigs whom I had retained in office were among those who called. Though many removals & new appointments to fill vacancies have been made by me, my administration has not been proscriptive, and the Whigs who were faithful & good officers, whom I have retained in their places, seemed to appreciate my liberality towards them and many of them have called to express their gratitude & to take leave of me. In the course of the day I saw and transacted business with different members of my Cabinet & with many subordinate officers.

An interesting ceremony took place in the Circular Parlour about 11 O'Clock this morning. It was the

presentation of the fine swords voted by Congress to Maj'r Generals Worth, Butler, Twiggs, & Quitman, and to the eldest male representative of the late gallant and lamented Brigadier Gen'l Hamer, who fell a victim to the diseases of the climate of Mexico. He had escaped unhurt, though in the thickest of the fight at Monter[e]y, and shortly afterwards sickened and died. I was accompanied by the Secretary of War. A large number of officers of the army were present, as were also Mrs. Marcy and a large number of ladies of the families of the officers of the army. Gen'l Tomson, as the friend & early companion in arms of Gen'l Worth, made an address to me and I presented to Gen'l Tomson the sword of Gen'l Worth, accompanied by a letter to Gen'l W., & made a short address. I presented the sword of Gen'l Butler accompanied with a letter to that officer of the Hon. Lynn Boyd of the Ho. Repts., to be conveyed by him to Gen'l Butler. Mr. Boyd made a short response. I read my letter to Gen'l Twiggs & Gen'l Quitman & delivered them with the swords of these officers to the Secretary of War with instructions to have them conveyed to them through some officer of the army. I delivered the sword designed for the representative of the late Gen'l Hamer (his eldest son) accompanied with a letter, to the Hon. Mr. Morris of the Ho. Repts. from Ohio, to be conveyed by him to the son. Mr. Morris made a short response. On presenting each of the swords I made a short address. The whole ceremony was an interesting & impressive one. I retired to rest late at night, worn down by the ex-

cessive fatigue of the day. Many incidents which occurred during the day are necessarily omitted.

SATURDAY, *3rd March, 1849.*—(See this Diary of the 28th ultimo.) I was in my office at an earlier hour than usual this morning, and was constantly and incessantly occupied throughout the day. A large number of persons, members of Congress & strangers, called in the course of the forenoon. This was the regular day for the meeting of the Cabinet, but no formal meeting was held. All the members of the Cabinet tendered to me their respective resignations, which I accepted. The resignations of the Secretary of the Treasury & the Post Master Gen'l were to take effect from and after this day. The resignations of the other members of the Cabinet were to take effect from and after the 6th or 7th Inst. They were made to take effect at that time at the special request of Gen'l Taylor, made through Mr. Clayton, whom he had designated as his Secretary of State. He made this request in order to avoid any public inconvenience until the new Cabinet could be appointed. I am not certain whether the resignation of the attorney Gen'l was to take effect from & after this day, or whether he held on until the 6th or 7th Inst. The Cabinet dispersed and I disposed of all the business on my table down to the minutest detail and at the close of the day left a clean table for my successor. I signed my name to the several hundred commissions for military, naval, and civil officers, and to other official papers. The Senate had within the last few days confirmed

numerous nominations which I had made in the course of the session of Congress, commissions for whom I signed. Many of these nominations were for Brevet promotions of officers of the army. Others were for regular promotions in the army and navy. I resolved to leave nothing undone, & therefore spent several hours in signing them. I saw in the course of the day many public officers & transacted business with them. About sunset, having cleared my table of all the business upon it, I left the President's mansion with my family, and went to the Quarters previously engaged for me at Willard's Hotel. We were accompanied by the members of my Cabinet. My Private Secretary had gone with his family to Willard's and taken lodgings on yesterday evening. I left Mrs. Polk & our two nieces, Miss Rucker & Miss Hays, with our servants at the Hotel, and proceeded, accompanied by my Cabinet, to the Capitol, as is usual on the last night of the Session of Congress so that the President may be convenient to Congress to receive such Bills as may be passed and presented to him for his signature. I reached the Capitol about dark and occupied the Vice President's room. I took with me to the Capitol a long and elaborate veto message which I had prepared in the last recess of Congress, which I intended to use in the event any Bill appropriating money or land for Internal Improvements (roads, rivers, & harbours) should be presented to me for my approval and signature. There were many Bills of this character before Congress, some of which had passed one House & were

pending in the other. In the last recess of Congress I had caused an estimate to be made by the Commissioner of the General Land Office of the quantity of public lands proposed to be appropriated for such objects by Bills Reported to the two Houses at the First Session of the last Congress. The Report of the Commissioner, estimating the lands at $1.25 per acre (the minimum price of the Government) showed the amount to be upwards of one hundred and sixty three millions of dollars ($163,000,000). In addition [to] this vast sum, many Bills making further appropriations of like character had been reported at the last session. My mind was fully made up to arrest them by a veto, had any one of the Bills been presented. This determination was communicated to my Cabinet and to many members of Congress. No Bill of the kind, however, passed, and the veto message which I had prepared was not used. I will preserve it with my other valuable papers. I regard it as one of the ablest papers I have ever prepared. I took with me also to the Capitol a veto message of the Wilmot Proviso, should any Bill containing it be presented to me for my approval and signature. The Civil & Diplomatic appropriation Bill had been amended in the Senate, on Motion of Senator Walker of Wisconsin, by inserting in it a provision for the temporary Government of California & New Mexico. This amendment was pending in the Ho. Repts., and it was threatened that the Wilmot Proviso would be attached to it by that House, and it was uncertain whether a majority of the Senate might not give way

& yield to the Proviso. In that event the alternative would be presented to me of defeating the whole appropriation Bill by a veto, or of yielding my assent to the Wilmot Proviso. I did not hesitate for a moment in my course. I was prepared to veto the Bill though the consequence would have been to convoke an extra session of Congress. My Cabinet concurred with me in my determination. At a late hour of the night I learned that the Ho. Repts. had by a vote adopted an amendment to Walker's provision for the Government of California and New Mexico, the substance of which was to declare all the laws of Mexico in force in these territories before their acquisition by the U. S. to continue in force until altered or changed by Congress. I did not see the amendment, but this was its substance as reported to me. Many of the Southern members of Congress of both Houses came into my room in great excitement about it. The effect of the amendment was to sanction the law of Mexico abolishing slavery in that Republic and to sanction other very obnoxious laws. I caused my room to be cleared of all but my Cabinet that I might consult them. Messrs. Buchanan, Walker, Marcy, & Toucey advised me to sign the Bill if it came in this form. They drew a distinction, which I did not perceive, between the amendment in this form and the Wilmot Proviso. Mr. Mason advised me to veto it. Mr. Johnson thought I ought not to sign it, because, among other reasons, it was now past 12 O'Clock at night, and he was of opinion that my Presidential term had expired. I opened the doors

without announcing to my Cabinet what I would do. As soon as the doors were opened many members came in & urged me to veto the Bill if it came to me. Among others Gen'l Bayley of Va. & Gen'l George S. Houston of Alabama, Lynn Boyd of Ky., [and] Cobb of Georgia came in & earnestly urged me to veto the Bill. My mind was made up, but I did not communicate my decision to them. Some minutes after they retired Mr. Houston returned and informed me that the excitement among the Southern men of the Ho. Repts. was intense, and that they were signing a paper addressed to me requesting me to veto the Bill. I at once told him to return to the House and stop the signatures to the paper, for the President could not perform a high Constitutional duty of this kind upon a petition. I then told him he might rest easy, that I was prepared with a veto message in my pocket, and that I should veto the Bill if it came to me. He was greatly rejoiced, immediately left my room, & I heard nothing more of the petition. I informed the members of my Cabinet of my determination. It was fixed & settled, although four members of the Cabinet had advised against it. I sat down at my table and wrote a paragraph modifying the introductory part of the prepared message on the Wilmot Proviso which I had in my pocket, so as to meet the new form in which the amendment of the House had presented the question. Mr. Stanton of Tennessee was present when I wrote this paragraph, though I did not inform him what I was writing. It was a moment of high responsibility, perhaps the highest of my offi-

cial term. I felt its weight most sensibly, but resolved to pursue the dictates of my own best judgement and to do my duty. I had gone to the Capitol this evening under the impression that, without a critical examination of the subject, my official term as President of the U. S. would expire at midnight on the night of this the 3rd day of March. The correctness of this impression was shaken by the views presented by some members of my Cabinet and by many members of Congress, Whigs & Democrats, who called on me as the hour of 12 O'Clock at night approached and insisted that as by the Constitution the President shall hold his office for the term of four years, and as I had not taken the oath of office until between the hours of 12 & 1 O'Clock on the 4th of March, 1845, my term of office would not expire until the same hour on the 4th of March, 1849. It was certain, too, that if my term as President had expired that of the Ho. Repts. and of one third of the Senators had also expired. The two Houses of Congress were still in Session, the general appropriation Bill without which the Government could not get on remained to be passed. On the other hand several Senators and Representatives, and among them Senators Cass, Allen, & others, I learned, were of opinion that the term of the Congress and of the President had expired, and declined to vote. In the state of doubt upon the question which had been produced in my mind by the conflicting views which were presented I had remained at the Capitol until between 1 & 2 O'Clock by the timepiece in the Vice President's Room. Great con-

fusion, I learned, prevailed in the two Houses, as well as great excitement upon the slave-question. After 2 O'Clock I proposed to retire from the Capitol to my lodgings. This was strongly opposed by Messrs. Buchanan, Walker, Marcy, & Toucy. Mr. Mason and Mr. Johnson thought I ought to retire. Mr. Charles A. Wickliffe of Kentucky, formerly Post Master Gen'l, came into the room and I asked his opinion confidentially, & he advised me not to retire. I remained until between 3 & 4 O'Clock A. M. of the 4th of March, when I informed the Cabinet of my determination to retire to my lodgings. Messrs. Buchanan, Walker, Marcy, & Toucy still opposed it. I informed them that I would retire to my quarters at Willard's Hotel, where I could be found if Congress should have any communication to make to me, but informed them at the same time that I would hold myself uncommitted as to my course if Congress should send me any Bill for my action. I said the same thing to some members of Congress. I retired accordingly, accompanied by Mr. Mason & Mr. Johnson. The other members of the Cabinet remained at the Capitol. My Private Secretary also remained at my request. When Mr. Johnson, Mr. Mason, & myself reached Willard's Hotel we had some refreshments, for I was exceedingly fatigued and exhausted. Mr. Johnson went to his House, Mr. Mason lay on a sofa in my parlour, & I retired to an adjoining chamber where Mrs. Polk was. About 6 O'Clock A. M. I was called and informed that a committee of Congress were in my parlour waiting to see me. I repaired immediately

to the parlour, for I had not undressed. The Joint committee on enrolled Bills of the two Houses of Congress presented to me for my approval and signature two Bills, one being the Civil & Diplomatic appropriation Bill & the other a Bill to extend the Revenue laws of the U. S. over California. The Civil & Diplomatic Bill did not contain the obnoxious amendment of the Ho. Repts. which I had resolved to veto. The Bill had been amended so as to strike out not only the House amendment in relation to slavery, but to strike out also Senator Walker's provision for the Government of California and New Mexico, so as to leave the Bill the ordinary annual appropriation Bill for the support of [the] Government. I approved & signed the two Bills, being unwilling to defeat so indispensible a measure as the Civil & Diplomatic Bill, the failure to pass which would have produced vast public inconvenience. I had been brought to the opinion that my first impression as to the duration of my term might be erroneous. Having signed the two Bills, one of which made provision for an Independent Diplomatic Mission to Prussia and the other for the appointment of a collector of the Customs at the Bay of San Francisco in California, I directed my Private Secretary to prepare a message to the Senate nominating Senator Hannegan of Indiana as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Prussia, & Daniel Turner of N. Carolina as collector at San Francisco. I signed this message and directed my Private Secretary to deliver it to the Senate at the same time that he announced to Congress my ap-

proval and signature of the two Bills. Another Committee of Congress announced to me that the two Houses of Congress were ready to adjourn unless I had some further communication to make to them. I replied that I had no further communication to make except the Message which my Private Secretary would deliver to the Senate and the Message anouncing my approval & signature of the two Bills just presented to me. Thus closed my official duties as President of the U. States. The Senate confirmed the nomination of Mr. Hannegan, and there being objection made by a Senator to act upon the nomination of Mr. Turner, it was not confirmed. I declined to make many nominations for offices created by acts of Congress passed during the last night, deeming it proper to leave these offices to be filled by my successor. Mr. Hannegan's and Mr. Turner's cases were exceptions to this rule. In anticipation that Congress would make an appropriation for seperate Missions to Berlin and another to the German Empire, both of which were filled by Mr. Donelson, I had been urged by many Senators, Whigs & Democrats, some days ago to nominate Mr. Hannegan. During the last night's session several Senators called on me in the Vice President's room and requested me to nominate him. Among the Whig Senators who did so were Messrs. Mangum of N. C., Johnson of Md., and Greene & Clark of R. Island. I made the nomination as soon as the Bill authorizing a seperate Mission to Berlin was approved & signed. I nominated Mr. Turner because I knew him to be an exceedingly worthy & competent

man, and because I supposed his nomination would not be opposed by the Whig Senators, as Mr. Mason, the Sec. of the Navy, informed me that the Whig Senator Badger of N. C. was anxious that I should nominate Mr. Turner. Mr. Badger, I learn, is the brother-in-law of Mr. Turner, but was unfortunately not in his seat when the nomination went to the Senate. By the rules of the Senate no nomination can be acted on on the same day it is received, if any one Senator objects. In Mr. Hannegan's case no Senator objected, but in Mr. Turner's case a Senator did object.

Note 1. The Diary of this day's proceedings I reduced to writing from my recollection of the events recorded, on this 23rd day of April, 1849. I reduced it to writing at Murfreesborough, while on a visit with Mrs. Polk to her relatives at that place.

Note 2. On reading over the foregoing I find that I have omitted to notice the passage by Congress, after night of this day's proceedings, of a Bill [1] to establish the Department of the Interior, or home Department. It was presented to me for my approval late at night and [I] was much occupied with other duties. It was a long Bill containing many sections, and I had but little time to examine it. I had serious objections to it, but they were not of a constitutional character and I signed it with reluctance. I fear its consolidating tendency. I apprehend its practical operation will be to draw power from the states, where the Constitution has reserved it, & to extend the jurisdiction and power

[1] *U. S. Stat. at Large,* IX, 395.

of the U. S. by construction to an unwarrantable extent. Had I been a member of Congress I would have voted against it. Many Bills pass Congress every year against which the President would vote were he a member of that body, and which he yet approves & signs. This he cannot do in cases in which he entertains constitutional objections. Though my objections to this Bill were very strong on the ground of expediency, there were no constitutional objections to it. Had I refused to sign it there was no time to prepare my objections. Had it been presented to me at an earlier period of the session, I would have examined it very deliberately before making up my mind to sign it. I deem it proper to leave this record of my doubts as to the expediency of creating a Department of the Interior or home Department, to the end that my signature of the Bill may not hereafter be regarded as conclusive evidence that I was in favour of the measure.

SUNDAY, *4th March, 1849.*— Having closed my official term as President of the U. S. at 6½ O'Clock this morning, that being about the hour at which Congress adjourned, I attended Divine service with my family, consisting of Mrs. Polk and our two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, at the First Presbyterian church. An excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Ballentine, the Pastor. At the close of the service the minister and elder members of the church, male and female, approached and

shook hands with Mrs. Polk and myself on taking leave of us, accompanied with many expressions of their friendship and affectionate Regard. The scene was an interesting and a gratifying one. We had attended worship regularly and with few exceptions almost every sabbath during the term of my Presidency, and the congregation to-day seemed to realize that they were about to part with us, and that in all probability we would never worship with them again. The affectionate manner in which they took leave [of] us made the scene a very impressive one. We returned to our lodgings at the Irving Hotel and from thence I rode in my carriage to the President's House to collect some letters and manuscripts which I had left in my office on leaving it last evening. In the afternoon I rested at the Hotel, being much fatigued by the very severe duties of the past weeks. A few friends called in the evening and we saw them in our parlour. I feel exceedingly relieved that I am now free from all public cares. I am sure I shall be a happier man in my retirement than I have been during the four years I have filled the highest office in the gift of my countrymen.

About 10 O'Clock at night a military company from Baltimore with a fine band of music appeared before my lodgings at the Hotel & played. I saw the officers, who informed me they had called to pay their respects to me. As it was Sunday evening I did not invite them in, but made my appearance at the window, and bowed to them. I informed the

officers that I would see them on to-morrow. After 12 O'Clock two other companies appeared and played. They had fine bands of music.

MONDAY, *5th March, 1849.*— Soon after breakfast this morning many of my friends called to see me and many strangers called to pay their respects. Among them were all the members of my late Cabinet & the ladies of their families. Between 11 & 12 O'Clock a procession of military companies and citizens, conducted by many marshalls on horseback, moved from Willard's Hotel as an escort to Gen'l Taylor, the President elect of the U. S. On reaching the Irving Hotel, where I had my quarters, the procession halted and the open carriage in which Gen'l Taylor was seated stopped immediately opposite to the Hotel. In pursuance of the arrangements made by the committee of the Senate, I was conducted to the same carriage and seated on the right of Gen'l Taylor. Mr. Seaton, the Mayor of Washington, & Mr. Winthrop, the late Speaker of the Ho. Repts., were seated in the same carriage. The procession moved to the Capitol. On arriving there we were met by the committee of the Senate, consisting of Senators Davis of Miss., Johnson of Maryland, and Davis of Mass., and were conducted to the Senate chamber, where the Senate were in Session. Gen'l Taylor and myself walked in together and were seated, I being on his right. My late Cabinet were seated on the floor of the Senate. After remaining a few minutes the whole body of persons proceeded to the Eastern front of the Cap-

itol, Gen'l Taylor and myself walking out together in the same manner we had entered the Senate chamber. After being there a few minutes Gen'l Taylor read his Inaugural Address. He read it in a very low voice and very badly as to his pronunciation and manner. The oath of office was administered to him by the chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the U. S. As soon as this was over I advanced to him and shook him by the hand, saying to him, "I hope, Sir, the country may be prosperous under your administration." We were then conducted to the carriage in which we had come to the Capitol, and proceeded along Pennsylvania Avenue, Mr. Seaton and Mr. Winthrop being in the carriage with Gen'l, now President, Taylor and myself, towards the President's mansion. On arriving at my lodgings at the Irving Hotel the procession halted and I took leave of the President. He proceeded to the President's mansion. On proceeding to the Capitol and returning I remained covered. Gen'l Taylor occasionally took off his hat & bowed to the people. When not making his respects to the people he was free in conversation. On going up to the Capitol California was alluded to, in conversation between Mr. Seaton & Mr. Winthrop and myself. Something was said which drew from Gen'l Taylor the expression of views & opinions which greatly surprised me. They were to the effect that California and Oregon were too distant to become members of the Union, and that it would be better for them to be an Independant Gov[ern]ment. He said that our people would inhabit them, and repeated

that it would be better for them to form an Independant Gov[ern]ment for themselves. These are alarming opinions to be entertained by the President of the U. S. I made no response, nor did Mr. Seaton or Mr. Winthrop. I have entertained serious apprehensions, and have expressed them in this diary, that if no Gov[ern]ment was provided for California at the late Session of Congress there was danger that that fine territory would be lost to the Union by the establishment of an Independant Government. Gen'l Taylor's opinions as expressed, I hope, have not been well considered. Gen'l Taylor is, I have no doubt, a well meaning old man. He is, however, uneducated, exceedingly ignorant of public affairs, and, I should judge, of very ordinary capacity. He will be in the hands of others, and must rely wholly upon his Cabinet to administer the Government. Upon reaching my quarters at the Irving Hotel, hundreds of persons called, and among others the military company from Baltimore, who called last night, came in and I shook hands with them. I continued to receive company until 10 & 11 O'Clock at night, when I went with Mrs. Polk to the Steam-Boat to take my departure by the Southern route to my residence in Tennessee. All the members of my Cabinet with the females of their families called in the course of the afternoon. The demonstrations of kindness and respect paid to me on the eve of my departure from Washington were highly gratifying, and all that I could have desired. Mr. Buchanan, Mr. & Mrs. Marcy, & Mr. & Mrs. Mason accompanied us to the Boat, though it was a

wet night, where they took leave of us. Mr. & Mrs. Walker came after us. Mrs. Walker took leave of us & returned. Mr. Walker will accompany me as far as New Orleans. My late Private Se[c]retary, J. Knox Walker, and his wife came to the boat about 12 O'Clock & brought with them our two nieces, Miss Rucker & Miss Hays, who had been to the Inauguration Ball. J. Knox Walker and his wife took leave of us & returned. Daniel Graham & his wife accompany us. We found the Boat much crowded with members of Congress and others going South. I was much fatigued, but had but little rest. The Boat left at the usual hour, 3 O'Clock in the morning. I take with me Henry Bowman, my late steward, to pay bills, take care of the baggage, &C. I take with me also my servant (Henry) & Milly, a maid servant belonging to J. Knox Walker.

TUESDAY, *6th March, 1849.*— This morning at 3 O'Clock the Steam-Boat left, and I was on my journey homeward. The Rail Road cars stopped a few minutes at Fredericksburg. A crowd was assembled to see me. I stepped to the end of the cars & bowed to them, shaking hands with some of them. At a place called the Junction, 20 miles from Richmond, I was met by a committee from that City, consisting of Robert G. Scott, James A. Seddon, and Mr. Casker, who insisted that I should spend a day at Richmond, but I declined to do so. They informed me that the General assembly of Virginia, now in Session, had passed a Resolution, without distinction of party and unanimously, to receive me in their

Legislative capacity. On arriving at the Depot at Richmond I found a large crowd of people assembled. I was met at this point by a committee of the Legislature, who informed me officially of the Resolution which the Legislature had passed and invited me to visit that body, then in Session. I did so. On being conducted into the Hall of the House of Delegates, where both Houses were assembled, and where a vast crowd of citizens were collected, I was addressed by the Speaker of the House in a very eloquent & complimentary speech, to which I responded, and after being introduced individually to the members, proceeded on my journey, having spent about an hour in going through the imposing ceremony. The Speaker also addressed Mr. Walker, who responded. During these ceremonies Mrs. Polk & the ladies of my party were entertained at the hospitable mansion of the Hon. James A. Seddon, where, as they informed me, they met many of the ladies of the City and partook of a splendid collation.

On arriving at Petersburg we found a large crowd assembled at the Depot, and on reaching the Hotel where we dined I was addressed, and made a very short response, being much fatigued and suffering from the effects of a severe cold. Mr. Walker was also addressed and responded at some length. After Dinner we were conducted to the Rail Road cars, accompanied by many hundreds of people, and proceeded on our journey. We arrived at Weldon, N. Carolina in the night and found the principal Hotel and other buildings of the place brilliantly illumi-

nated. This is a region of tar & turpentine, and bon-fires (turpentine & tar barrels) were blazing in the streets. I met and shook hands with a crowd of people who had collected from the surrounding country to meet me. We took supper and proceeded on our journey.

WEDNESDAY, *7th March, 1849.*— About 10 O'Clock this morning the Rail Road cars arrived at Wilmington, N. C., at which place I had accepted an invitation to spend a day. I was met at the Rail Road Depot by the authorities of the town & a large number of citizens; and was conducted through the town in an open [carriage] to the Hotel where quarters had been provided for me. On reaching the Hotel and alighting from the carriage I was addressed in a very complimentary manner by Mr. Hill (a young man) in an eloquent manner. In the course of his address he alluded to the fact that I was a native of N. C., and that the people of Wilmington welcomed me not only as a retired public service [servant] but as a son of their own State. I responded at some length to his address; and afterwards received and shook hands with many persons, ladies and gentlemen. In the course of an hour after my arrival a committee of gentlemen from Charleston, S. C., who had been deputed to escort me to that City, were presented to me. I was then conducted to the Masonic Hall, where I received & was presented to many citizens of the town. Among them was an old friend, a class mate at College (Mr. Arthur Hill) whom I had not seen since we grad-

uated at the University of N. C., in June, 1818. Our meeting was mutually gratifying. On retiring from the masonic Hall, Mr. Andre of the charleston committee, addressed me at the Door of the Hall on the street in presence of a large crowd of people, and informed me that the City authorities of Charleston had deputed himself and his associates to wait on me at this place to tender me a cordial welcome to S. Carolina and to accompany me to that City. His address was highly complimentary to my administration. I responded in suitable terms, and then returned to the Hotel. My party dined with the town authorities of Wilmington, the Charleston committee, and several citizens. It was a sumptuous dinner, but not a formal one. There were no toasts or speeches. In the course of the afternoon & evening I received & was presented to many ladies & gentlemen of the town. My reception at Wilmington was all I could have desired & was very gratifying.

THURSDAY, *8th March, 1849.*— I proceeded on my journey from Wilmington between 10 & 11 O'Clock this morning. During the morning we were visited by many persons, male and female. I was escorted by the authorities of Wilmington & many people of both sexes from the Hotel to the Boat in an open carriage. On reaching the Boat the Charleston committee took charge of me and the Boat left her wharf for Charleston in the midst of the firing of a salute from the shore. Arriving at Smithville, near the mouth of the Cape Fear River, in the afternoon, the Boat stopped for a short time.

There is a garrison, occupied by a few soldiers, at Fort Johnson at this point. Fort Johnson was erected before the American Revolution and the remains of the old building are still standing, but are in a dilapidated condition, other buildings having been erected for the accommodation of troops. Fort Johnson was the place in which the Colonial Governor of N. C. took refuge, and where he was when, in June, 1775, he reported to the home Government in England the rebellious proceedings (as he termed them) of his majesty's subjects in the County of Mecklenburg, a fact recently brought to light by the researches of Mr. Bancroft, the eminent historian and now U. S. minister at London. Being a native of the County of Mecklenburg, I took a peculiar interest in viewing the remains of this old Fortress. I was warmly and courteously received by Maj'r Marchant,[1] U. S. army, in command of the post, and his officers, as well as by the citizens, many of whom called and were presented to me, male and female. After spending an hour at this point the Boat proceeded on the voyage and we were very soon in the open sea. This evening was calm and the sea smooth. None of the passengers suffered from seasickness, a thing very unusual at this season of the year. We retired at the usual hour, and had a comfortable night's rest.

FRIDAY, *9th March, 1849.*— Early in the morning the Steamer reached Charleston, but we did not go on shore until between 8 & 9 O'Clock, this being

[1] Charles Spencer Merchant, Major of the 3rd Artillery.

the arrangement of the Committees & City authorities. A large concourse of Citizens were assembled on the wharf, and on being conducted on shore I was received by a committee of citizens, and welcomed to their City by Henry W. Conner, their chairman, in a strong and very complimentary address, to which I responded. Mr. Conner & myself are natives of the same County (Mecklenburg) in North Carolina, and our families for several generations past had been intimate acquaintances and friends. This circumstance gave additional interest to the occasion. The ceremony of reception being over, myself, Mr. Walker, and others of my suite were placed in open carriages and escorted through the principal streets of the City, accompanied by a large number of Citizens on foot. The windows and porches of the buildings on the whole long line of the procession were filled by ladies. I was struck with the large number and magnificent display of the military. I had never before witnessed a military procession of more imposing appearance. South Carolina is remarkable for the attention paid to the discipline of her militia. Arriving at the Hotel to which I was conducted, I was waited on by many of the distinguished citizens of the place. About 12 O'Clock Mr. Walker and myself were conducted by the committee headed by their chairman (Mr. Conner) when I was presented to the Mayor (Mr. Hutchinson) who delivered to me an eloquent address and bid [bade] me a cordial welcome on behalf of the City authorities, to which I responded. I was then presented to the members of the City Coun-

cils individually. I was conducted from the open Hall by the Mayor to the Council chamber, where Mr. Walker and myself were presented to many citizens. From the Council chamber we were conducted to an adjoining apartment, and were presented to the Governor of South Carolina (Seabrook) and his military staff and other officers, all in full military dress. After spending a short time, engaged chiefly in conversation with the Governor, we were conducted back to the Hotel. About 4 O'Clock we were waited on and taken in open carriages to another part of the City to partake of a Public Dinner. The Mayor presided, assisted by many Vice Presidents. It was a spacious Hall, very tastefully arranged. A very large party of gentlemen were in attendance and among others a committee of gentlemen from Savannah, Georgia, who had previously waited on me and informed me that they had been deputed to wait on me and conduct me to that City. I was seated on the right of the Mayor, and on my right was the Governor of the State, in full military dress. After the cloth was removed a number of sentiments were read by the Mayor, one of which was complimentary to myself. After it was read & had been warmly received by the company, I returned my acknowledgments in a short speech, and concluded by a sentiment complimentary to the City of Charleston. Among the sentiments was also one complimentary to Mr. Walker, to which he responded in a speech. The Governor and many others of the company responded in speeches to other sentiments. The Dinner was sumptuous, and the whole affair

passed off harmoniously and pleasantly. We were conducted from the Dinner table back to the Hotel where by the arrangement of the committees & City authorities Mrs. Polk and myself received & were presented to a very large number of ladies & gentlemen. My reception in Charleston was most brilliant and everything connected with it was conducted with order and good taste. It was not only a warm, but an enthusiastic welcome, and every mark of distinction and respect, without regard to political divisions, was paid to me. We retired to rest at a late hour. The weather during the day had been unusually warm for Charleston for this season of the year. I had left snow and ice at Washington not four days ago, and now I found myself in the midst of summer heat. This sudden transition from cold to heat, and the great fatigue I had endured during the day made the rest of the night very acceptable to me.

On arriving at Charleston this morning, Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Graham of Tennessee, who had been of my suite, left me and proceeded by way of the Georgia Railroad on their journey homeward. Hon. Mr. Cobb and Mr. Lumpkin of Georgia and several other friends left me at this point.

I have omitted to mention that on arriving at Charleston this morning a salute was fired from the forts and every demonstration of respect manifested by the shipping in port.

SATURDAY, *10th March, 1849.*— About 7 O'Clock this morning I left the Hotel and went on board the

Steamboat for Savannah, Geo. We were taken to the Boat in open carriages, escorted by the committees, Mayor & City authorities of Charleston, Governor Seabrook, & many citizens. On taking leave of Charleston we passed under a beautiful canopy, erected on cotton bales tastefully arranged and with the inscription "The Old Palmetto State bids thee farewell." I proceeded on my journey in charge of the committee of gentlemen from Savannah, under a fire of a salute from the forts. Gov. Seabrook was on board until we reached Beaufort, where he left. At this place during the few minutes the Boat touched at the mark [wharf?] I made my respects from the Deck to a crowd of citizens on shore. A few of the principal persons of the place came on board and were introduced to me. The weather was calm and the sea smooth during the day and the passage to Savannah was pleasant, no one on board having suffered from sea sickness. It was near 9 O'Clock at night before the Boat reached Savannah. On our approach a salute was fired from the town. On arriving at the wharf the Mayor & Aldermen and a committee of the City came on board & were introduced to me. Myself and suite were conducted on shore and placed in open carriages. Though in the night, the military and a large concourse of citizens were out, and escorted us to the Hotel where our quarters had been provided. After alighting from the carriages & remaining a short time at the Hotel, Mr. Walker and myself were conducted to a spacious Hall in another part of the City. It was brilliantly lighted and was crowded with people, ladies

& gentlemen. We spent an hour in being introduced to them and shaking hands with them. We returned to the Hotel, and after partaking of a supper with the Mayor & City authorities retired to rest.

SUNDAY, *11th March, 1849.*— I did not see the public generally to-day, but received a few friends who called in a quiet way. Mrs. Polk, Mr. Walker, and others of my suite, accompanied by the Mayor, attended a Presbyterian church in the forenoon and an Episcopal church in the afternoon. Mr. Walker, Mr. Duncan of Miss., & myself took a family dinner with the Hon. George W. Owen,[1] who resides here and whom I knew intimately during the period he was in Congress. No person was present at dinner except Mr. Owens's family and three or four of his intimate friends. We returned from dinner to the Hotel, and being fatigued by the journey and considerably prostrated by the unusually warm weather for this season of the year, I retired to rest at an early hour.

MONDAY, *12th March, 1849.*— At an early hour this morning (before 7 O'Clock) after taking a cup of coffee I left the Hotel in Savannah and, under a military escort and [with] a crowd of citizens who had assembled at this early hour of the day, I left the Hotel (being conveyed in an open carriage & accompanied by the Mayor) and proceeded to the Rail Road depot, where we took leave of the Mayor, authorities, & people of Savannah. Every manifesta-

[1] George W. Owens, Representative from Georgia 1835–1839.

tion of public respect was paid to me by all political parties at Savannah. On the departure of the cars a salute was fired. I was accompanied by a committee of gentlemen from Savannah to the 90 mile station on the Rail Road to Macon. At this place we dined and met of [a] committee from Macon, who had been deputed to receive and accompany me to that City. After dinner I took leave of the Savannah committee, who returned, & proceeded on my journey. A large number of persons had collected at the 90 mile station, where we dined, to meet me. I was presented to them and shook hands with many of them, ladies & gentlemen, old persons & little children. At all the depots or stopping places on the route from Savannah to Macon persons were collected from the surrounding country, to all of whom I made my respects, and shook hands with many of them, during the short period the cars stopped at each place. About sun-set we reached Macon, [a] distance of 180 miles from Savannah. I was received at the Depot by the authorities of the town and many hundred persons who had assembled. We were placed in open carriages and proceeded about a mile, under a military escort, to a Hotel where quarters had been provided for me. We had a dusty and fatiguing ride on the Rail-Road, and after retiring to my room for a short time I came to the parlour and was introduced to many persons, ladies & gentlemen. Having taken supper and continued to receive company until about 10 O'Clock, I retired. I had previously accepted an invitation to spend a day in Macon, and to-morrow the authorities & citizens

have made arrangements to give me a public and more formal reception.

TUESDAY, *13th March, 1849.*— In pursuance of arrangements previously made I spent this day at Macon, Georgia. During the morning I received the visits of many of the citizens at the Hotel. About 11 O'Clock Mr. Walker and myself were waited on by the authorities of the town, who conducted us to a balcony or porch on the second floor of the Hotel fronting the open square or street. An immense concourse of people (considering the population of the place and the surrounding country) were assembled in the street below, forming a dense mass, surrounding which were many carriages containing ladies. From a platform erected in the street and surrounded by the crowd, the Hon. Mr. Chappell delivered an address to me and also to Mr. Walker. I responded in a short speech as did Mr. Walker. This ceremony being over we were conducted to a spacious parlour in the Hotel where I received hundreds of the Citizens, ladies & gentlemen, & shook hands with them. We dined at the Hotel with the Mayor and public authorities and many citizens, but the dinner was not a formal one. In the evening there was a public Ball at the Hotel and a tasteful and magnificent supper. My two nieces, Miss Hays and Miss Rucker, and myself attended. Mrs. Polk was so much fatigued by the journey and by receiving visits during the day that she declined attending the Ball. Mr. Walker was taken ill shortly after the ceremony of the public re-

ception to-day was over. He had retired to his chamber, had sent for a physician, & taken medicine, & did not attend the Ball. I have omitted to mention that during the afternoon I took a ride through the town in an open carriage, accompanied by the Mayor, Col. H. G. Lamar,[1] formerly a member of Congress, with whom I was intimately acquainted many years ago, and some other gentlemen. We visited & spent half an hour at a flourishing Female college, which, I believe, is under the management of the methodist Episcopal church. On retiring from the Ball, near 12 O'Clock at night, I visited Mr. Walker at his chamber. He did not consider himself seriously indisposed, & thought he would be able to proceed with me on the journey on to-morrow. I retired much fatigued, but gratified at the warm and cordial manner in which I had been received by the people of Macon.

WEDNESDAY, *14th March, 1849.*—To my great regret I found on visiting Mr. Walker at his chamber this morning that he thought himself too much prostrated from the effects of medicine to proceed with me on the journey to-day. I proposed to remain with him, but he insisted I should not, as, if I did, I would disappoint the people of Columbus, who had made preparations to give me a public reception on to-morrow. He thought there would be no doubt that he would be able to travel on to-morrow, insisted I should go on, and said he would overtake me at Columbus, where I had accepted an

[1] Henry G. Lamar, Representative from Georgia 1829–1833.

invitation to stop a day. I determined to proceed, leaving Mr. Duncan of Mississippi with him. After taking a cup of coffee, we were escorted by a committee and the authoritics of the place to the Rail Road depot. Many citizens were assembled at the depot. We proceeded on the Rail-Road to a village called Barnesville, a distance of 30 miles from Macon. I was accompanied by a committee of gentlemen from Macon. On reaching Barnsville[1] I found several hundred persons, male and female, assembled from the surrounding country. At this point we left the Rail Road. I was introduced to the people and shook hands with many of them. A plain, substantial, and respectable looking planter produced some merriment by stating in an audible voice that he had a son born that morning & had named him James K. Polk and that he had come to Barnsville in some uncertainty, whether James K. Polk, Ex President of the U. S., would be there; and in that event he had determined that his neighbours should not be disappointed, for he had intended to invite them all to his House where they could see James K. Polk. I had some playful conversation with him and thanked him for the compliment he had paid by naming his boy for me. After breakfast I took leave of the Macon committee and proceeded on my journey towards Columbus in an extra coach engaged for the purpose, with no other persons in it but my own family. At Thomaston, about 20 miles from Barnsville, 500 or more persons had assembled. I was received by a committee in

[1] Barnesville.

the edge of the village who conducted the coach, preceded by a band of music, to the Hotel. I was conducted to a portico above stairs in the Hotel and addressed by a member of the committee, to which I responded. After dinner I proceeded on my journey, stopping at several houses on the road side to speak to persons who had collected to see me. In the afternoon there was a violent thunderstorm and heavy rain, which produced some delay and impeded the speed with which we would otherwise have travelled. At dark we had several miles to travel before reaching Gen'l Lowe['s], where, by arrangement of the people of Columbus, I was to lodge that night. There came on another thunder storm, more violent than that of the afternoon, accompanied by hail & heavy rain. The horses became frightened; the driver stopped the coach, and my two men-servants got hold of the horses and held them until the storm was over. The night was dark but the driver thought he could still reach Gen'l Lowe's. He proceeded, driving slowly and cautiously, and arrived at Gen'l Lowe's between 8 & 9 O'Clock. Here we found a committee of 20 gentlemen from Columbus, headed by the Hon. Seaborn Jones,[1] their chairman, and whom I had known many years in Congress, waiting to receive me. Four or five hundred people from the surrounding country were also assembled, and among them a large number of ladies. On approaching Gen'l Lowe's we found his dwelling and other houses brilliantly illuminated. They had a

[1] Seaborn Jones, Representative from Georgia 1833–1835, and 1845–1847.

cannon and fired a salute. I was very warmly & cordially received. All expressed regrets that Mr. Walker was not with me. I was introduced to many of the people and shook hands with them. A fine supper had been prepared of which we partook. After supper there was a Ball. Mrs. Polk and myself were conducted into the Ball room & introduced to all the ladies, and near 2 O'Clock retired to rest. I had become somewhat wet in the storm through which we had passed in the evening, was fatigued, and needed rest. Gen'l Lowe is a wea[l]thy planter, and a Democrat in his politics. Mrs. Lowe and himself treated us most hospitably.

THURSDAY, *15th March, 1849.*— After breakfast this morning we proceeded on our journey towards Columbus, a distance of about 20 miles, accompanied by the committee who had met us at Gen'l Lowe's last evening. On arriving within about a mile of the town we were met by the Mayor (who was a Whig in politics) and aldermen, and a large number of citizens in carriages and on horseback. I alighted from the carriage & was received by the Mayor, who made a short address to me to which I made a short reply. I was then introduced to the aldermen, and proceeded in an open carriage to the town. The procession passed through the principal streets, which were crowded with people, to the Court House, which is situated in a large open square. I was conducted to the upper porch of the Court House, on the 2nd floor, and in full view of several thousand persons who were assembled in the

Court Yard below. I was addressed by the Hon. Seaborn Jones and responded to him. I was then conducted into a large Court room where hundreds of the people, male and female, were presented to me & with whom I shook hands. From this place I was conducted back to the carriage and was taken to the residence of the Hon. Walter T. Colquitt, late a Senator in Congress, who had invited me & my family to take lodgings at his hospitable mansion. About 4 O'Clock, accompanied by Mr. Colquitt [and] the several members of the Committee, I attended a public Dinner prepared at a Hotel, of which a large company partook. After the cloth was removed a sentiment complimentary to me was given to which I replied in a short speech. After Dinner I returned to the House of Judge Colquitt where I was introduced to a number of ladies & gentlemen of the City. About 9 O'Clock I was conducted by a committee to a splendid public Ball, and after partaking of a very fine supper returned to Judge Colquitt's House about 12 O'Clock at night. Mrs. Polk, Miss Hays, & Miss Rucker, accompanied by Mrs. Colquitt, attended the Ball. The rain fell in torrents during the afternoon and night, and in going to and returning from the Ball the ladies & myself in carriages were exposed and became somewhat wet. My reception at Columbus was warm and cordial and every possible mark of respect was paid to me which I could desire. At the close of the labours of the day I was greatly wearied and worn down, and was heartily rejoiced when I had an opportunity to retire to rest.

FRIDAY, *16th March, 1849.*— I had confidently expected that the Hon. Robert J. Walker, whom I left sick at Macon, would have overtaken me at this place, and regretted to learn this morning that the mail coach in which he was expected had not arrived. The heavy rains which have fallen within the last two days have probably been the cause of the detention. My arrangements ahead had been made and it was necessary for me to proceed, though I regretted to leave Mr. Walker still behind. After taking an early cup of coffee at Judge Colquitt's we took leave of him & his interesting family and proceeded about 6 O'Clock in the morning in an extra Coach. It was necessary to leave at this early hour to enable me to reach Opelika at the head of the Alabama Rail Road, a distance of 28 miles from Columbus, by the time the train of Rail Road cars would leave that place for Montgomery, Alabama. The rain continued to fall, but notwithstanding this we set out. I found myself much prostrated by the fatigues of the journey and was somewhat indisposed. On reaching the Rail Road at Opelika I was met by a committee of a dozen or more gentlemen from Montgomery, who had been deputed to meet and conduct me to that City. At this point many people from the surrounding country had assembled, to whom I was introduced and with whom I shook hands. The committee had engaged an extra train of cars for my special accommodation. The regular mail-train proceeded in advance, and about 12 O'Clock we proceeded in the special train provided for the occasion. We dined on the way, and stopped

at several points on the way where numbers of the people had collected to see me. On arriving at the Depot at Montgomery I found a very large number of persons collected. I was conveyed to the town in a splendid open carriage drawn by six fine horses richly caparisoned. On arriving at the Hotel I was addressed & welcomed to Montgomery, to which I made a response. Though much fatigued and suffering from violent cold & cough, the effect of the exposure to which I had been subjected for the last two days, I was presented to several hundred ladies and gentlemen during the evening. The Citizens of Montgomery had had very short notice of the precise day I would probably reach that place, and as I was desirous of proceeding on my journey on which I had been more delayed than I had anticipated, and had on that account declined an invitation to remain with them on to-morrow, the committee had ordered a public supper or collation for to-night. It was near 11 O'Clock before the supper was ready and we sat down to the day [table]. Regular toasts had been prepared and were drank, one of which as a matter of course had reference to myself. It was highly complimentary, and I responded to it in a short speech. All political parties were present on the occasion. Many sentiments were given and speeches made, and among others one by the Hon. Mr. Yancy,[1] late a member of Congress. I retired at a late hour, greatly fatigued and quite unwell.

[1] William Lowndes Yancey, 1814–1863, Representative from Alabama 1843–1846, noted for his radical advocacy of the pro-slavery cause.

SATURDAY, *17th March, 1849.*— I was still unwell this morning but found it was impossible, if I saw company at all, to have any rest. I was not so ill as to make it proper for me to decline receiving company altogether, and from the hour of breakfast until about 11 or 12 O'Clock I had a round of company in the Hotel, ladies & gentlemen. At the hour of 12 O'Clock I left the Hotel in Montgomery, and was conveyed in the same splendid carriage and equipage in which I had been received on yesterday to the Steam Boat landing, attended by a committee and a large number of citizens of the town. I went on Board the Steamer Emperor & proceeding [proceeded] down the Alabama River on my way to Mobile. I was accompanied down the River by a committee from Montgomery. I had consulted a physician at Montgomery and procured some medicine from him, which I took shortly after the Boat left the wharf. My reception at the Capital of Alabama was very cordial, and I hoped during the passage on the Steamer to Mobile to have some rest and to recover from the great fatigue which I have had to undergo thus far on my journey. The boat stopped at several points on the River, at all of which a number of the people came on board to see me. I retired to my state room at [an] early hour.

SUNDAY, *18th March, 1849.*— We spent this day on Board the Steamer descending the Alabama River. Wherever the Boat stopped to take in wood, or for any other purpose, a number of people came on board to see me. I continued to be somewhat in-

disposed, but enjoyed the rest. At 11 O'Clock A. M. the passengers assembled in the Cabin and heard a sermon from a clergyman who happened to be on board. He was represented to be poor, and to be on his way to California. He was not very intelligent, but seemed to be humble and pious. A collection was taken up for his benefit. Mrs. Polk and myself contributed $5.00 each. After night a deck passenger died on board, it was said of cholera, and was buried on the bank of the River. I learned at Montgomery that the cholera had again broken out at New Orleans, and since coming on the Boat that there were some cases at Mobile, but I was too far on my journey to change my route. I retired to my State room at an early hour.

MONDAY, *19th March, 1849.*— About 10 O'Clock this morning we reached Mobile. About 10 or 15 miles before arriving at that City we were met by two steamers crowded with passengers, ladies & gentlemen, who had come to meet me. A committee of citizens and authorities of that City were on board. The two Boats were soon lashed, one on each side of the Emperor, on which I was. The committee came on board of the Emperor and welcomed me on my approach to Mobile. They were soon followed by a large number of ladies & gentlemen from the other Boates, who were introduced to Mrs. Polk and myself. I was then requested by the committee to accompany them on board the two boats which were lashed to the Emperor, and I did so. All three of the Boats were much crowded. After having been

introduced to many ladies & gentlemen I returned to the Emperor, where Mrs. Polk was receiving the ladies. Before arriving in sight of Mobile, another boat (the James L. Day) crowded with passengers, ladies & gentlemen, met us & lashed to the other boats. On approaching Mobile, four large Steamers were abreast, their decks covered with human beings, male and female. Before reaching the landing the Steamer James L. Day cut loose and proceeded in advance of the other three, which were still lashed together & proceeding abreast. The Shipping in port was covered with people and a large concourse of people of both sexes were on shore. As we passed a U. S. Revenue cutter, she fired a salute. A salute was also fired from shore. On landing I was conducted to the platform erected for the occasion, and was addressed by Col. Philips [1] on behalf of the citizens, in an eloquent manner, and was welcomed to the hospitalities of the City. A dense crowd of people filled the open space on the wharf, and every window in the vicinity was filled with ladies. After this reception was over I was placed in an open carriage & conducted by the committee, escorted by the military, through the principal streets to the Hotel where quarters had been provided for me. I was conducted into the Hotel & was there received by the Mayor who [was] stationed in an upper Hall of the Hotel with the City authorities around him. A large number of ladies were also assembled to witness the ceremony. The Mayor, who was a Whig (Childers) addressed me, to which I responded, and

[1] Colonel P. Phillips.

was then presented to the City councils and to the ladies, with whom I shook hands. A few minutes before the Dinner hour I was relieved & retired to my chamber. We dined with the Mayor, City authorities, & a number of citizens. I met here my old college friend, Walker Anderson of Florida, who had come to Mobile with his two daughters expressly to meet me. My friend, James E. Saunders, Esq'r, and his family were constantly with us and were particularly attentive. After dinner there was still a round of visitors. Late in the afternoon we took a ride of three or four miles up the shore of Mobile Bay to the Hospitable mansion of Col. Philips. On returning to the Hotel I found myself still in the midst of a crowd of visitors. After tea, yielding to importunate solicitations, I attended the Theater, to which I had been invited. I was accompanied by Col. Philips & his wife, some members of the committee, and my two nieces, Miss Rucker and Miss Hays. Mrs. Polk did not accompany me. On entering the Theater I found a crowded audience & was received with great applause & every demonstration of respect. I remained at the Theater but half an hour, when I returned to the Hotel exceedingly fatigued and exhausted. My reception at Mobile, & particularly the approach to the City & the landing, was most imposing and magnificent. The hospitality and warm cordiality of the Southern character was displayed in an eminent degree. On reaching the Hotel I was heartily rejoiced at the opportunity of retiring for the night.

TUESDAY, *20th March, 1849.*— I rose this morning much exhausted from my fatigue, and the excessively warm weather for this season of the year, even in this climate. In addition to this I was still somewhat indisposed. From the moment breakfast was over I was occupied in receiving visitors, ladies and gentlemen. The cholera, I learned, was prevailing to some extent at Mobile, but was not epidemic. I consulted Dr. Knott, an eminent physician of the place, who prescribed for me & gave me medicines to be used in case of an attack of cholera with any of my party. He informed me that the disease was prevailing at New Orleans, and advised me in my state of health to spend as little time as possible in that City; and I resolved that when I reached New Orleans I would take the first Boat bound for Nashville. About 1 O'Clock we left the Hotel. I was conveyed in an open carriage to the Boat bound for New Orleans, escorted by the committee & authorities of the City and a crowd of persons in the Streets. The Boat left the wharf between 1 & 2 O'Clock. We had a smooth sea & a pleasant afternoon, though unusually warm for the season. Col. Watson & two or three other members of the Montgomery committee continued to accompany me. Nothing of interest occurred during the afternoon and night. I was relieved by having some opportunity to rest.

WEDNESDAY, *21st March, 1849.*— At daylight this morning the Boat from Mobile reaching [reached] the landing on Lake Ponchartrain, a few miles below New Orleans. I was soon called by a

servant and informed that a committee from New Orleans were on board & desired to see me. I went into the cabin as soon as I could dress, &c. Two or three gentlemen met me & informed me that they had been deputed by the City authorities at New Orleans to receive me on landing at this point, and conduct me to the Hotel on shore where I would be detained until 9 O'Clock, at which time the authorities of the City would be prepared to receive me. I informed them that my purpose was to proceed with the least possible delay up. They said that learning by letters & Telegraphic despatches of my approach, the City authorities & citizens of New Orleans had made extensive preparations to give me a public reception to-day; that the military had been ordered out, and that the Governor of the State would participate in the ceremonies of the occasion. They assured me that the City was healthy, and that there was no danger from cholera. A few cases of the disease, they said, were occurring, but they were confined to indigent & imprudent persons, and no epidemic was prevailing. Perceiving that I could not carry out my resolution to pass immediately through the City without seeming to act rudely, I yielded to their wishes. They conducted us from the Boat to the Hotel, distant about a fourth of a mile. After an hour or two breakfast was announced. It was, I supposed, a sumptuous breakfast. All the dishes were prepared in the French style of cooking, and to one unaccustomed to it it was difficult to tell of what they were composed. Fish of every variety & prepared in various ways constituted a large part

of the repast. The table was covered, too, with every variety of light wines. I could see nothing before me that I had been accustomed [to], or that I should have deemed it safe to eat in my state of health & in a cholera atmosphere. I took a cup of coffee and something on my plate to save appearances, but was careful to eat none of it. As soon as an opportunity offered I asked a servant in a low tone if he could give me a piece of corn-bread & broiled ham. He dashed off in great haste and in an incredibly short time he brought me the bread and ham. Before we sat down to breakfast an additional number of the members of the committee had arrived. About 9 O'Clock we took the cars to the City. On arriving at the depot I found an imposing array of the military drawn up. On alighting from the cars I was met and welcomed to the City by the Mayor (Crossman) in a few words. I was glad he made no formal speech. In a few words of reply I thanked him for the honour done me. A long procession of citizens in carriages and on foot, preceded by an imposing array of the military, moved through the City. Governor Johnson, Maj'r Gen'l Gaines, U. S. army, and many other persons of Official distinction joined in the procession. I was seated in an open carriage with the Mayor & Recorders, Genois & Baldwin. The day was warm, & the streets dusty. Though I had taken the precaution to take my umbrella in my hand I was often exposed to the rays of the sun. The procession moved slowly, frequently halting for a few minutes, through several of the principal streets of the City. I bowed constantly on the right and

left to the ladies in the windows and on the balconies of the Houses. I did not note the precise time, but should guess it was between 3 & 4 hours from the time the procession moved from the Rail Road Depot until I was taken to the quarters provided for me at the St. Louis Hotel. I was covered with dust & perspiration. I retired to my room for an hour and changed my dress. I feared the effects of the exposure to the sun & the excessive fatigue I had endured. I dined with the Mayor & other authorities at the hotel. After night, as well as throughout the afternoon, I was called on by many acquaintances and friends, as well as many strangers, ladies and gentlemen. In the evening I informed the Mayor and some members of the committees of the state of my health, of my great fatigue, and of my wish to proceed up the River in a Boat which was to leave that night. The Mayor and the other gentlemen expressed great solicitude that I should not do so. The Mayor said they had sent out invitations to more than 250 gentlemen to attend a Public Dinner, which they proposed to give me on to-morrow, and that if I left it would be a source of deep regret and mortification to the citizens of New Orleans. He assured me further that if there was the slightest danger from cholera they would at once have informed me of it; for they would not on any account put my life in hazard by causing me to remain. I found myself compelled to yield, and agreed to remain & partake of the Dinner on to-morrow, though I did so reluctantly and against my own wishes and judgment. I retired to rest as soon as I could do so with

propriety, though it was at a late hour. Though more fatigued I do not discover that my health is worse than it was when I left Mobile.

THURSDAY, *22nd March, 1849.*—Early this morning, Mr. Duncan of Mississippi, who was [a member] of [my] suite from Washington and who remained with Mr. Walker who was taken ill at Macon, overtook me. I regretted exceedingly to learn from him that the Hon. Robert J. Walker had, in consequence of his continued indisposition, stopped at Columbus, Georgia, where Mr. D. left him, and that he had determined to return from that place to Washington. I had until Mr. Dun[c]an's arrival hoped that he would overtake me, & proceed on his visit to Mississippi. Breakfast was scarcely over this morning, when my parlour began to be crowded with visitors, ladies & gentlemen, who called on Mrs. Polk and myself. As the day advanced and the number of visitors increased I occupied a large parlour & Mrs. Polk another, both of which were crowded for several successive hours. In the course of the day I was waited on by the Judges, Federal and State, and by the bar of the City in a body. There were a large number of these gentlemen, and I regarded it as a very high honour they paid me. About 4 O'Clock P. M. I took a ride with the Mayor, Mr. Dun[c]an, and Mr. John M. Bell in an open carriage, passed up on the levee, and viewed the shipping and the immense amount of produce and merchandise on the wharf. After a ride of an hour we returned to the Hotel. At 6 O'Clock I was con-

ducted by the Mayor and other authorities to the Dinner table. It was set in the St. Louis Hotel and was a sumptuous and magnificent Dinner. About 300 gentlemen were present. The Mayor presided, assisted by many vice presidents. The Governor of Louisiana (Johnson), Maj'r Gen'l Gaines, U. S. army, the city authorities, and many distinguished citizens & strangers composed the party. After the cloth was removed Regular toasts were proposed and drank. To one of these, having reference to myself, I responded in a short speech. Shortly afterwards I retired from the table accompanied by the Mayor and other gentlemen and proceeded in an open carriage to the wharf of the Steamer Caroline E. Watkins, and took passage on that fine boat for Nashville, Tennessee. Though it was in the night when I left the Hotel, I was accompanied by an immense mass of people in the streets and cheered as I passed to the Boat, and when I took leave of the Mayor and other gentlemen and the boat shoved off, I left an immense mass on the Bank of the River who rent the air with their vociferous cheers. I was most happy that I was now on my way to Nashville and with the prospect of quiet and rest. My return journey homeward after having laid down the cares of office, been divested of power and patronage, and become a private citizen, has been thus far a triumphal march. The warmth of enthusiasm with which I have been received everywhere and the cordial welcome which has been extended to me by thousands of my fellow-citizens, without distinction of political party, far exceeds anything I had antici-

pated, and I regard it as the most distinguished honor ever conferred upon me by men. The demonstrations of the public respect on my way to Washington as the President elect four years [ago], were nothing to be compared to the distinguished consideration I have met after I have laid down power. I am most grateful to my fellow-citizens for it. It will be a consoling reflection to me in my retirement that I have, through the arduous duties I have performed and the high responsibilities I was compelled to assume, retained the respect of my countrymen. Shortly after the Boat left New Orleans I retired to rest for the night.

FRIDAY, *23rd March, 1849.*— I rose this morning without being so much refreshed by a night's sleep as I had hoped to be. I was still indisposed and felt the effects of the severe fatigue which I had endured. Early in the morning an incident of thrilling interest occurred. Four or five persons in a small skiff approached the Boat from the shore, and in endeavouring to come on board the Boat upset & turned bottom upwards, precipitating those unfortunate persons into the angry current of the Mississippi. Great anxiety prevailed to save their lives. The Boat stopped, the small boat was quickly manned & sent to their relief, and luckily they were all saved. One or two of them were white men & [the] others negroes. About 11 O'Clock the Boat reached Baton Rouge, where I was received by the firing of a salute, and by a large number of persons who had assembled on the shore. I was waited on by a committee and

conducted by them to a Hotel in the town where in the presence of a large number of ladies and gentlemen, I was addressed by the chairman of the committee, and to which I responded. I remained on shore about an hour, when I returned on Board. A collation had been prepared in anticipation of my arrival, but I had not time to partake of it; and indeed was glad to avoid the fatigue which I must have undergone to have done so. While I was on shore, many persons, ladies & gentlemen, visited the boat and paid their respects to Mrs. Polk. A man died on board of the Boat of cholera to-day. His body was put into a coarse, rough box, hastily nailed together & was entrusted to some wood choppers at a wood yard to be buried. The Boat proceeded up the River. In the night she stopped several hours in consequence of a dense fog in the River rendering it unsafe for her to run.

SATURDAY, *24th March, 1849.*— About 10 O'-Clock this morning we reached Natchez, Mississippi. Our approach was announced by the firing of Cannon from the shore. The Boat touched at the wharf, w[h]ere a large number of persons were assembled. I was suffering so much from my excessive fatigue in New Orleans and was so much indisposed, that I declined going on shore, though I was urgently pressed by a number of citizens, who came on board, to do so. Extensive preparations, as I learned, had been made to receive me, and I regretted the necessity which the state of my health imposed on me to decline the proffered honor. The Boat, after

remaining a few minutes at the wharf, proceeded on her voyage up the River. The River was very full and the water was in many places over the banks, flooding whole plantations. In the course of the afternoon we learned that [there were] three more cases of cholera on Board, among the deck passengers below, but no panic or alarm was produced. Nothing of interest occurred during the remainder of the day and at the usual hour I retired to my state room, but did not rest well. At Natchez Mr. Duncan of Miss., who had been of my suite, left me. Col. Watson, one of the committee from Montgomery, Al., who had accompanied me to Mobile & New Orleans, continued on board. Maj'r Dashiel,[1] a Paymaster of the U. S. army, was also on board. Maj'r D. subsequently left the Boat at Lake Providence.

SUNDAY, *25th March, 1849.*— My disease (a derangement of stomach & bowels) which had from its commencement assumed a bilious type, was no better this morning. I was quiet during the day, except at a few points where the Boat stopped on the River, at several of which a number of persons came on board to see me. After night a steamer from Vicksburg with a large number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, on Board met our Boat, and rounding to was lashed to our Boat. Two committees, the one from Vicksburg and the other from Jackson, Mississippi, were among the persons who came to meet me. They [were] urgent in their solicitations that I should

[1] Jeremiah Y. Dashiell of Louisiana.

accept the hospitalities of these towns & spend a day at each. The same reasons which compelled me to decline accepting the hospitalities of the people of Natchez compelled me to decline accepting their request. I was introduced to the whole party, ladies & gentlemen, who met me & [I] shook hands with them. Arriving at Vicksburg our boat remained but a few minutes, when we proceeded on our journey. I learned from the persons I met that Senator Houston of Texas had passed down the River, and the Hon. Henry Clay of Ky. had passed up the River this afternoon, each stopping a short time at Memphis. They told me that when the Boat on which Mr. Clay was, approached Vicksburg from below, a salute which had been prepared for my reception was fired, supposing I was on board. Mr. Clay, they told me, on learning the fact humorously observed " I hope, gentlemen, I am not stealing Mr. Polk's thunder." To which the committee replied that they had a plenty of powder for both. A salute was fired when I reached Vicksburg. The Boat remained but a short time and proceeded on her voyage. I retired to rest quite unwell and still more fatigued by the scene through which I had been compelled to pass.

MONDAY, *26th March, 1849.*— I was no better this morning, and though I had no symptoms of cholera I began to be more concerned for my situation. It was manifest that I required rest, if not medical treatment, before I could be restored to health. The Boat touched at Helena and some other

points on the River in the course of the day where I was compelled [to receive] some persons who came on board. I rested chiefly in my state-room during the day & night, but had no refreshing sleep.

TUESDAY, *27th March, 1849.*— The Boat arrived at Memphis about daylight this morning. My two nephews, Samuel P. Walker & Samuel P. Caldwell, who reside at Memphis and who were expecting me, soon came on board. They informed me that anticipating my arrival on yesterday evening a Steamer had been chartered and a large party, ladies & gentlemen, had proceeded many miles down the River, but not meeting me had returned in the night. A committee of citizens soon came on board. I endeavoured to excuse myself for declining to go on shore by pleading my state of health. As, however, I was able to receive my friends in the Cabin of the Boat, they insisted I was able to go on shore, and pressed me very much to do so. They insisted that as Memphis was the first point in my own state which I had touched after an absence of more than four years, and that as extensive preperations had been made to receive me, that I should go on shore if it was even for a short time. In the mean-time many of my old acquaintances and friends came on board, and their importunities were so great that finally against my own judgement I yielded & went on shore with the promise that I would be detained there but a short time. I was seated in an open carriage with Judge Dunlap and Col. Watson, who had

accompanied me from Montgomery, Alabama, to this place, and was conducted in procession into the town, and around & through the Navy yard, occupying more than an hour. I was then conducted to a Hotel where a large crowd of people, ladies and gentlemen, had assembled. Before I alighted from the carriage I was addressed in front of the Hotel by the Hon. Spencer Jarnegan, to which I responded from the carriage. Mr. Jarnegan was lately a Whig Senator in Congress from Tennessee. His address was liberal and kind in its tone and could not fail to be gratifying. The leading men of both political parties were present and participated in the ceremony of bidding me welcome back to my own State. I was conducted from the carriage into the Hotel, where I was most cordially received by hundreds of old acquaintances and friends. I met also many ladies and many of my relations who reside at Memphis. I felt highly honored and gratified at the enthusiastic reception given to me, but felt exhausted and much fatigued, and as soon as I could with propriety I returned to the Boat. I declined to remain and partake of a collation which had been prepared for the occasion. The Boat left, and I very soon felt the ill effects of the exertion through which I had imprudently gone. I found that the indisposition which had afflicted me for several days was increased. Nothing of interest occurred during the remainder of this day and night. Before reaching Memphis three deaths of cholera had occurred on our Boat and there were other cases which had not proved fatal. I rested badly to-night.

WEDNESDAY, *28th March, 1849.*— I found myself no better this morning. Towards noon I was much worse and remained constantly in my State-room. There was no physician on board. The type of my disease continued to be bilious, a circumstance which was perhaps fortunate while I was in a cholera atmosphere. I took medicine prepared for me by Dr. Nott at Mobile, but not being certain that it was the proper prescription for my case, on reaching Paducka [Paducah] on the Ohio River after night, I sent on shore for a physician. A Dr. Jones came on board. He examined my case and said it was not cholera, but that all diseases of the bowels had a tendency to run into cholera when that disease prevailed, and he advised me to leave the boat. He was a man in appearance of more than fifty years of age and appeared to be discreet and sensible. I requested him to accompany me on the boat to Smithland, which was only 12 miles up the River. He agreed to do so, and after going on shore to procure medicines he returned and accompanied me. He gave me some medicine. On arriving at Smithland late at night I left the Boat and went to a Hotel. As soon as I was conducted to a room, I sent for Dr. Saunders, a physician of the place of some eminence. He examined my case and gave me the same opinion of it which Dr. Jones had done, and concurred with him in opinion that it was prudent for me to stop. Dr. Jones and Dr. Saunders, after a consultation, administered more medicine to me. I spent, of course, an uncomfortable night, but my situation was much better than it could have been on the Boat. My

bowels were affected and the shaking of the Boat had become inconvenient to me. When I left the Boat a cabin passenger from Missouri was in a dying condition from cholera. He died in a short time and, I learned, was buried on the bank of the Cumberland that night. Our servant maid (Milly) was taken ill after leaving Memphis on yesterday, but was not considered seriously so by Mrs. Polk. Dr. Jones & Dr. Saunders saw her and administered to her. They informed me that she had all the premonitory symptoms of cholera, and that in a few hours it would, if her illness had not been arrested, have been a confirmed case of cholera. The cholera, I learned from these physicians and from others, is prevailing with great mortality in all the Boats from New Orleans. On one Boat which came up a few hours in advance of ours there had been 14 deaths of cholera before reaching Memphis and 6 deaths between Memphis and Smithland. I felt well satisfied that I had left the Boat.

THURSDAY, *29th March, 1849.*— I was in a comfortable Hotel at Smithland this morning with every attention from the obliging landlord which it was possible for him to bestow. I was confined to my bed throughout the day. Dr. Jones and Dr. Saunders visited me repeatedly during the day. The medicine which I took on yesterday had not produced the desired effect, and in the afternoon they gave me more. Dr. Jones returned to Paduka tonight. I saw no company during the day.

FRIDAY, *30th March, 1849.*— Early this morning Dr. Saunders called and administered more medicine. Shortly afterwards the medicine I had taken on yesterday and the night preceding produced a favourable effect. I was confined to my bed during the day until near night when I sat up a short time. I saw no company during the day. Our servant girl was still ill, but had been saved from an attack of cholera by timely treatment. After night a Boat arrived from Louisville with Senator Turney and the Hon. Cave Johnson on Board. They immediately called to see me. They were on their return from Washington. Mr. Johnson had his family with him. They stopped for the night.

SATURDAY, *31st March, 1849.*— I was better this morning and sat up a part of the day. I saw no company except Mr. Senator Turney and Mr. Cave Johnson. They left in the afternoon on a Boat bound to Nashville. Early in the morning a Boat arrived from Nashville, and to my surprise and great gratification my brother-in-law, Dr. Wm. R. Rucker of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, was on board of her. He had come to Nashville to meet his daughter who had spent the winter at Washington in our family, and hearing that I was ill had come down to meet me. I spent a more comfortable night than I [had] done for several days.

SUNDAY, *1st April, 1849.*— Though not yet well and still very feeble, I determined to take a Boat which was bound for Nashville this morning. A

sofa was taken on board and placed in the Ladies' cabin on which I lay. Dr. Rucker was constantly with me, and in [the] course of the day gave me some medicine. I found myself as comfortable as I could be in my situation on a Boat, and had a tolerably good night's rest.

MONDAY, *2nd April, 1849.*— I was much better this morning, but was quite feeble from the effects of medicine & my indisposition. A few miles below Nashville we met a Steamer having on board a committee of gentlemen and a number of my old acquaintances & friends. Among them was my brother-in-law, Dr. John B. Hays of Columbia, who, hearing of my illness and detention at Smithland, had set out to meet me. He [his] daughter had spent the past winter in my family and was with me on her return home. On arriving in sight of the Boat landing at Nashville, I discovered that the wharf was covered with people. I stood on the deck of the Boat as she approached, and was enthusiastically cheered by the crowd on shore. As soon as the Boat touched the shore many of my old acquaintances and friends came on board. After a few minutes I was conducted on shore and in passing from the Boat to the carriage prepared to receive me I was met by the dense crowd and warmly greeted by many old acquaintances and friends, with whom I shook hands. I was seated in an open carriage with Ex-Governor A. V. Brown and two other persons, and conveyed up Broad & Cherry streets and thence to the public square in front of the Nashville Inn, where I was ad-

dressed by Gov. A. V. Brown, who warmly welcomed me back to my old State and to my home. A very large number of people had turned out on the occasion; and standing in the open carriage, though feeling scarcely able to do so, I responded to his address. When I had done I was exceedingly feeble & exhausted. I was then conducted to the Verandah House where quarters had been prepared for me. Here again I met and shook hands with many of my friends, who were in waiting at the Hotel or called to see me. I was compelled very soon to retire to my room where I remained during the balance of the day. A few old & intimate friends saw me in my room. The meeting of my old friends had produced an excitement which contributed to sustain me during the day and to enable me to bear the fatigue. I rested comfortably during the night.

TUESDAY, *3rd April, 1849.*— I spent this day at Nashville and was most of the time in my room, but walked occasionally to the parlour of the Hotel, which was near my room, to see old friends who called. In the afternoon I rode in a carriage with Mrs. Polk to see our new house and our future residence. It is yet in an unfinished state. I was pleased with its general appearance. Returning to the Hotel I retired to my room where I saw a few intimate friends who called during the evening. I retired to rest at night at an early hour. To-morrow we will proceed to Columbia to visit my mother and other relations. I will leave my faithful steward, Henry Bowman, to take charge of my house and

boxes of furniture, &C. I have directed him to lodge in the House.

WEDNESDAY, *4th April, 1849.*—This morning, though still very feeble, I set out with Mrs. Polk in a private carriage to pay a visit to my mother and other relatives and friends at my old residence at Columbia. We dined at Franklin where a number of people called to see me. They had not been advised that I would pass Franklin that day, and there was no formal reception. After dinner we rode as far as Cartwright's Inn on the road, near the village of Spring Hill, where I stopped for the night. Mr. Kelley and Mr. Gouth, from Columbia, met me at Cartwright's. They informed me that there would be a public reception at Columbia on to-morrow.

THURSDAY, *5th April, 1849.*—I set out after breakfast this morning, three or four of my old friends having met me at Cartwright's before I left. At the village of Spring Hill I stopped for half an hour, where I saw and shook hands with a number of my old neighbours & friends, male and female. On reaching my father's residence where I was a youth, which is on the roadside six miles from Columbia, I stopped a few minutes to see and shake hands with a number of the old neighbours and their descendants, who had collected to see me as I passed. Three or four miles before reaching Columbia I was met by a committee of the place and by several hundred persons, ladies & gentlemen, in carriages & on horseback, who came out to meet me. I had here the inex-

pressible gratification to meet my old neighbours of both political parties, whom I had not seen for more than four years, when I left to proceed to Washington to enter on my duties as President of the U. S. I was here placed, by the request of the [committee], in an open barouche and the procession moved towards the town, increasing in its numbers as we proceeded. On approaching near the town we met a band of music & some military, who wheeled and preceded us. I was conducted through the public square of the town to the Branch of the State Bank, from the steps of which I was addressed in behalf of my old neighbours by Maj'r Gen'l Gideon J. Pillow, to whom I responded from the carriage in which I was. Several hundred persons of both political parties were present, and I was greeted and received by all with a warmth and cordiality which could not be otherwise than highly gratifying. As soon as the reception was over I proceeded to my mother's House and embraced her. Our meeting was most gratifying. I can perceive that time has made its impression on her since I saw her, though I was glad to find her in good health. She is now in the 73rd year of her age. I am the eldest of her children. I was born on the 2nd of November, 1795, and on the 15th of the same month she was 19 years old, so that she wants a few days of being 19 years older than I am. All my relations, old and young, who are residing at Columbia were assembled at her house. A large number of my old friends followed me to her house, with all of whom I shook hands. They continued to call during the remainder of the afternoon and even-

ing. My Jou[r]ney on my return from the seat of Government is now over and I am again at my home, in the midst of the friends of my youth & of my riper years. My political career has been run & is now closed. Henceforth I shall be a private citizen. I cannot now undertake to review the past and to compare my present contented and happy condition with it. I have been much honoured by my countrymen and am deeply grateful to them. I may say that I regard the distinguished marks of respect everywhere shown me by the people, without distinction of political party, on my journey homeward, as the most gratifying and highest honour ever paid me by any portion of my fellow-citizens. Though fatigued & feeble I spent a delightful evening with my relatives & friends.

FRIDAY, *6th April, 1849.*— I felt too feeble to go out to-day and remained during the day at my mother's House, where I saw many of my friends, ladies & gentlemen, who called.

SATURDAY, *7th April, 1849.*— I remained at my mother's house to-day and saw many friends who called. We dined at Mr. James Walker's (my brother-in-law) with many of our relations. It was a family dinner, and though the state of my health was such as to prevent me from partaking of the dinner I was present. In the afternoon I walked into the lawn and remained a few minutes.

SUNDAY, *8th April, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself accompanied by my mother and [——?] at-

tended the Presbyterian church to-day. In the evening I was not so well as I had been, and under the advice of Dr. Hays I took medicine.

MONDAY, *9th April, 1849.*— The medicine I took on yesterday had produced the desired effect. I remained quietly at my mother's House during the day. Several of my old friends called to see me.

TUESDAY, *10th April, 1849.*— I was still in feeble health to-day and remained at my mother's House, where many of my friends called to see me. About 2 O'Clock P. M. the Rector (Smith) of the Female Institute at this place with his assistant teachers and near 200 young ladies & little girls made a formal call in procession, and arranging themselves in form at my mother's door Miss Brown (the daughter of Ex Governor A. V. Brown) made a beautiful complimentary address to Mrs. Polk. Mrs. Polk thanked her and requested me to respond to the address on her behalf, and I did so. The teachers & young ladies were then presented individually to Mrs. Polk and myself and shook hands with us. It was an imposing & interesting ceremony.

WEDNESDAY, *11th April, 1849.*— We had been invited to dine to-day with Mr. Patrick Maguire, one of the oldest inhabitants of Columbia (a Whig in politics but always my personal friend) and though I scarcely felt able to attend I did so, but retired from the dinner table before dinner was over. My friends from the town and the country continued to call on me at my mother's House.

THURSDAY, *12th April, 1849.*— We were invited to dine to-day with Gen'l Gideon J. Pillow, who resides five miles in the country, and did so. It was a large dinner party and a very pleasant one. It was composed chiefly of my family relatives and Gen'l Pillow's. Maj'r Ripley [1] of the U. S. army was one of the guests. We returned to my mother's house late in the evening.

FRIDAY, *13th April, 1849.*— I walked into the town to-day and spent some time with my friends. In the course of the day some of my old friends from the country called to see me at my mother's House. This evening there was company, chiefly young persons, at my brother-in-law's, Dr. Hays's. I was present for a short time.

SATURDAY, *14th April, 1849.*— I spent some time in the village to-day, but remained most of my time at my mother's House where I saw a number of my old friends who called.

SUNDAY, *15th April, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself accompanied by my mother and [——?] attended the Presbyterian church this morning; and in the afternoon we attended divine service at the Episcopal church.

MONDAY, *16th April, 1849.*— The weather had been unusually cool for the season for the last two or three days, and this morning there was a killing frost.

[1] Roswell Sabin Ripley, author of *History of the War with Mexico.*

After breakfast Mrs. Polk and myself left my mother's house on our return to Nashville. We travelled in a private carriage and spent the night, in pursuance of a previous engagement, at the House of Ex Governor A. V. Brown, three miles from Nashville. The Governor was absent from home on a visit to his plantation in Mississippi.

TUESDAY, *17th April, 1849.*— From Governor Brown's we rode to Nashville this morning, stopping a few minutes at my own [home] to see what progress had been made in completing it, and went from thence to the Verandah House where we spent the remainder of the day. I transacted some business and gave some directions to Henry Bowman, my faithful German steward whom I had brought with me from Washington, relative to the fitting up of the House. When we went to Columbia we had left Bowman in charge of our boxes of furniture and other articles which were removed to the House. We will still leave him in charge during a visit to Mrs. Polk's relatives at Murfreesborough which we propose making on to-morrow.

WEDNESDAY, *18th April, 1849.*— We went from Nashville to Murfreesborough to-day. We reached my brother-in-law, Dr. Rucker's, about 3 O'Clock, where we met Mrs. Childress (Mrs. Polk's mother) and her brother, Maj'r Childress, & his wife, and others of her younger relatives. It was a delightful meeting. During the evening a number of my friends called in to see me.

THURSDAY, *19th April, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself remained at my brother-in-law's (Dr. Rucker's) during our stay at Murfreesborough. We dined at his house to-day. In the course of the day a number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called to see us. In the afternoon we rode out to my brother-in-law's (Maj'r Childress) and spent the night with him. Mrs. Childress (Mrs. Polk's mother) also went to Maj'r Childress's & remained with us. There was an unusually severe frost for this season of the year last night. It killed not only vegetables in the gardens but the leaves on most of the forest trees.

FRIDAY, *20th April, 1849.*— I took a ride on horseback with Maj'r Childress and viewed his farm this morning. It was the first time I had been on horseback for many months. I was so constantly occupied with my official duties at Washington that I do not remember to have had time to ride on horseback more than two or three times during the last year. Maj'r Childress had a family dinner to-day at which Mrs. Childress (Mrs. P.'s mother) Dr. & Mrs. Rucker, the Misses Rucker, Mr. Rob't B. Jetton, and several of the children of the family, all the relations of Mrs. Polk, were present. Mr. Elisha Williams (the father-in-law of Maj'r Childress) and his wife were also present.

SATURDAY, *21st April, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself rode to Murfreesborough to-day and spent the day at Dr. Rucker's house. Most of the family relations dined at Dr. Rucker's to-day. In the after-

noon we returned to Maj'r Childress's. A number of persons called to see me at Dr. Rucker's in the course of the day. On reaching Maj'r Childress's I met my old acquaintance and friend, Judge Joseph Philips, his wife and daughter. We took tea at the house of Mr. Elisha Williams, and returned to the house of Maj'r Childress where I spent a pleasant evening in conversation with Judge Philips. He is an intelligent man, a true Democrat, & an old friend of mine, and I was glad to meet him.

SUNDAY, *22nd April, 1849.*— We returned from Maj'r Childress's to Dr. Rucker's House in Murfreesborough this morning and attended divine worship at the methodist church. The methodist clergyman being absent a Baptist minister (the Rev. Mr. Eaton) preached.

MONDAY, *23rd April, 1849.*— We spent this day at Murfreesborough and I saw quite a number of old friends who called on me at Dr. Rucker's House. We took tea with Mrs. Polk['s] mother (Mrs Childress) and afterwards returned to Dr. Rucker's House where I saw a number of friends who called. During my visit to Murfreesborough my health has not been good. I have not yet entirely recovered from my late illness, but have been able to see my friends & to take some exercise.

TUESDAY, *24th April, 1849.*— After breakfast this morning, having made our visit to Mrs. Polk's

relations, we left Murfreesborough and returned to Nashville, where we arrived about 3 O'Clock. We stopped at our own house. The workmen had not finished it, but two or three rooms had been fitted up so that we could occupy them. Numerous boxes of furniture, books, groceries, and other articles, forwarded from New York, New Orleans, and Columbia, Tenn., was piled up in the Halls and rooms, and the whole establishment, except two or three apartments, presented the appearance of great disorder and confusion. Our faithful steward, Henry Bowm[an], had in our absence to Columbia & Murfreesborough caused the carpets to be made and put down in some of the rooms and caused our furniture to be opened. Our servants had arrived from Columbia and were comfortably settled in the servant's House. We thought it best to take possession of the house at once and superintend the arrangements necessary to put it in order. On this day therefore may be dated our first occupation of our new home in Nashville.

WEDNESDAY, *25th April, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself with our servants were quite busy to-day in opening boxes and arranging our house. A number of mechanics and other persons were employed to do particular jobs connected with the establishment. A Gard[e]ner named Whaton [?] was employed with a number of men under him in clearing the rubbish from the yard and putting them [it] in order. He had been employed since we passed Nash-

ville on our way to Murfreesborough, but had done but little. A few citizens called to see us to-day.

THURSDAY, *26th April, 1849.*—We were occupied to-day as we were on yesterday. Mr. Hughes, the builder of my house, promises to complete the work soon. The whole establishment was by the contract to have been completed on the 1st of January last, but it is yet unfinished, and we are subjected to great inconvenience in consequence of it. A number of citizens called to-day. My health continues to improve & the exercise which I take in superintending the work about the house and grounds is favourable to me.

FRIDAY, *27th April, 1849.*—Nothing of importance occurred to-day. We were employed as we have been for the last two days. A number of persons called to-day.

SATURDAY, *28th April, 1849.*—We continued to be employed in arranging our household to-day. Nothing worthy to be noted occurred.

SUNDAY, *29th April, 1849.*—Mrs. Polk and myself attended the Presbyterian church to-day of which the Rev. Dr. Edgar is pastor. The regular building in which his congregation had been in the habit of worshipping was destroyed by fire last year, and he now preaches in the Cumberland Presbyterian

church. Dr. Edgar did not preach to-day. A sermon was delivered by an itinerant clergyman who is an agent of the Foreign Missionary Society connected with the Old Presbyterian church.

MONDAY, *30th April, 1849.*— We were busily occupied to-day as we were during the last week in arranging our new house & preparing it for our permanent residence. We had a number of mechanics and others doing various things necessary to be done to make it convenient & comfortable. A number of persons called, and among others some ladies.

TUESDAY, *1st May, 1849.*— We were occupied today as we were on yesterday. I wrote some letters & attended [to] some of my private business. Nothing of interest oc[c]urred.

WEDNESDAY, *2nd May, 1849.*— This morning my good and faithful steward, Henry Bowman, who had acted in that capacity for more than three years at Washington and who had accompanied me on my return to Tennessee, left for Washington. I had no longer any employment for him. I made him a donation of an extra month's wages and of the additional sum of $50. to bear his expenses back to Washington. I gave a strong paper recommending him for his good character, honesty, and capacity; He is, I believe, the most faithful man I have ever known. We were occupied as usual to-day, and nothing of

special interest occurred. A number of ladies & gentlemen of the City called.

THURSDAY, *3rd May, 1849.*— Nothing worthy of notice occurred to-day. We were engaged as usual. A number of persons called.

FRIDAY, *4th May, 1849.*— We have made considerable progress in arranging our house and it is now in good condition below stairs. The workmen proceed tardily in completing it, which is somewhat annoyed [annoying]. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called as usual.

SATURDAY, *5th May, 1849.*— We were occupied as usual to-day, nothing of special interest having occurred.

SUNDAY, *6th May, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself attended divine service at the Cumberland Presbyterian church to-day. We expected to hear the Rev. Dr. Edgar, but he did not preach. The sermon was delivered by a clergyman whose name I do not rem[em]ber. Mr. Daniel Graham & his wife came with us from church and took a family dinner with us.

MONDAY, *7th May, 1849.*— I was occupied in attending to private [business], and in arranging my papers and books to-day. In the afternoon Mr. V. K. Stevenson and myself rode 7 miles to the residence of Mr. Daniel Graham. My object was two-fold, to pay

a visit to Mr. Graham and to try a pair of carriage horses which I had a thought of purchased [purchasing]. I need a pair of carriage horses, but was not pleased with this pair. Company called as usual to-day.

TUESDAY, *8th May, 1849.*— Company called at different periods of the day. I was engaged for several hours in arranging my books and papers. This evening Mrs. Polk and myself attended the marriage of Mrs. Franklin, a wealthy widow of this City. She was married at her own house to Mr. Acklin of Huntsville, Alabama. The supper and whole entertainment was upon a magnificent scale. I met at the wedding many leading Whigs & democrats, and was courteously and kindly treated by all.

WEDNESDAY, *9th May, 1849.*—I attended to private business as usual to-day; was engaged in arranging my books and papers, and in receiving the visits of several persons who called.

THURSDAY, *10th May, 1849.*— Nothing of interest oc[c]urred to-day. A number of visitors, ladies and gentlemen, called as usual.

FRIDAY, *11th May, 1849.*— Much work has been done on our house and premises since we took possession of it. Our furniture has been arranged, and the establishment is more convenient & comfortable than it was. I am daily engaged with my papers & books. The House is not yet quite completed by the work-

men. A number of persons, ladies & gentlemen, called to-day. In the afternoon Mrs. Polk's two nieces, the Misses Ruckers of Murfreesborough, arrived on a visit. They were the first of our relatives who visited us since we took possession of our new House.

SATURDAY, *12th May, 1849.*— I was occupied as usual to-day. In the afternoon in walking down into the town, as I frequently do, I called in at Macomb's cabinet shop to examine some furniture. His shop stands on the corner of Spring and Cherry Streets. As I stepped out of the Shop and turned down Cherry Street walking towards the Post Office a person on horseback turned the same corner going in the same direction. On casting my eye towards him from the pavement on which I was, I discovered it was Col. M. P. Gentry of the Ho. Repts. in Congress. He spoke to me & I returned the salutation. He turned his horse near the pavement & shook hands with me, and the usual interchange of civilities [took place]. He then remarked in substance & I think very nearly literally as follows: "Now that you are a private citizen I will say what I have intended to say if a suitable opportunity occu[rr]ed, that whatever I may have said of you, Sir, which might seem to be harsh was political and not personal." To which I replied, it was, I suppose, professional, to which he responded, it was altogether so. He bid me good afternoon & rode on. Mr. Gentry made a bitter and abusing [abusive] party speech [1] in Congress a year or two

[1] December 16, 1846; *Globe,* 29 Cong. 2 Sess. *App.* 56–61.

ago, in which I understand he had spoken very harshly of me as President. It was reported to me at the time by some who heard it that he was drunk when he delivered it. He never afterwards called at the President's House, as he had before done: but after the lapse of some weeks his wife did call. I suppose he is ashamed of his speech, and hence his remarks to me this evening. He is a very bitter & unscrupulous Whig in politics.

SUNDAY, *13th May, 1849.*—Mrs. Polk was indisposed to-day and did not attend church. Her niece, Miss Joanna Rucker, remained at home with her. Her niece, Miss Sarah Polk Rucker, and myself attended Divine Service at the methodist Episcopal church. After night my nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell of Memphis, called. He arrived from Memphis today.

MONDAY, *14th May, 1849.*— Nothing worthy of notice occurred to-day. I was engaged as usual. A number of visitors called.

TUESDAY, *15th May, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk's two nieces, the Miss Ruckers, who had paid us a short visit, returned to Murfreesborough today. A number of visitors called as is usual.

WEDNESDAY, *16th May, 1849.*— I have nothing of interest to record to-day.

THURSDAY, *17th May, 1849.*— My house is not yet quite completed. There is but little to do, but

the workmen are very slow. I spent the day as is usual with me. After night my neighbour, John M. Bass, called, and I held a conversation with him about the suit now pending in the Supreme Court of this State between him and myself in relation to the title of an Avenue of 50 feet wide fronting my house, which I claim as a part of the property which I purchased from him as Executor of Felix Grundy dec'd, & which he controverts. We talked the matter over, & I think it probable we may agree upon a compromise and thus avoid a trial of the case.

FRIDAY, *18th May, 1849.*— This day has passed without the occurrence of any incident worthy of notice.

SATURDAY, *19th May, 1849.*— I have nothing of interest to record to-day.

SUNDAY, *20th May, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk & myself attended the Presbyterian church to-day. The Rev. Dr. Edgar preached. Mr. Daniel Graham & his wife and also his brother, who resides near Montgomery, Alabama, and who is here on business, came home with us from church and took a family dinner with us.

MONDAY, *21st May, 1849.*— Though the work on my house and grounds is not yet quite done, I made a settlement to-day with Mr. James M. Hughes, the contractor, and paid the full amount due him, expressing in the receipt that he was to complete the

work according to his contract. Mr. V. K. Stevenson, who acted as my agent in making the contract with Mr. Hughes, was present and assisted in making the settlement. The settlement made was satisfactory to Mr. Hughes, as he expressed himself: and though I might have insisted on more than I did, I agreed to the settlement and told him I also was satisfied.

Mr. John M. Bass called after night and had a further conversation with me in relation to the title to the avenue fronting my House, and the right of way through the same. We agreed upon the terms of a compromise, which was to be reduced to form & recorded in the Supreme Court where the case is now pending.

TUESDAY, *22nd May, 1849.*—Nothing out of the usual course of things transpired to-day. I attended to some private business & saw company as usual.

WEDNESDAY, *23rd May, 1849.*—I rode out with Judge Catron in my Carriage to-day and paid a visit to George W. Martin and Mr. Putman who reside two or three miles in the country. Several deaths from cholera are reported to have occurred in the City last night, and some alarm on the subject prevails among the citizens to-day. My nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell, who has been at my house for a few [days] left to-night & went to a hotel, intending to set [out] in the stage of tomorrow morning for Louisville, Ky. He proposes to make a visit to the Eastern

Cities with a view to secure collecting business at Memphis, and thus to promote his professional prospects. I furnished him with several letters of introduction to my friends in Boston, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, & Baltimore.

THURSDAY, *24th May, 1849.*— Was at home as usual to-day. Nothing of interest occurred. I hear this afternoon that my nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell, was taken with a chill after he left my house last night, & did not proceed in the stage to Louisville, Ky. this morning as he had intended to do. I sent a servant to the Sewannee Hotel, where he is, to see how he was, and to tell him he must return to my house. The servant reported that he was in bed & had a physician with him, but that he was not seriously ill. He thought [it] most prudent not to change his lodgings by coming to my house this evening.

FRIDAY, *25th May, 1849.*— I called to see my nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell, at the Sewannee Hotel this morning. I found him in bed, and though not very ill I insisted on him to return to my house and remain there until he was entirely well. In the afternoon I sent a servant with a carriage & brought him to my house. I met Edwin Ewing, Esqr., on the street this morning. He is one of the attos. of John M. Bass in my suit with him pending in Supreme Court, now in Session, relative to the title to the 50 feet avenue in front of my house. Mr. Ewing introduced the subject by inquiring if Mr. Bass &

myself could not settle the matter by a compromise. I told him I was entirely willing to do so, and with that view had held several conferences with Mr. Bass. Mr. Ewing expressed the opinion that we could settle the dispute, and at his suggestion I agreed to meet Mr. Bass & himself at the law office of Mess[rs]. Nicholson & Houston at 3 O'Clock P. M. to-day. I attended accordingly & found Mr. Bass there. Neither Mr. Ewing nor either of my attorneys were present. Mr. Bass & myself after a long conference agreed upon the terms of a compromise as contained in a paper drawn up by Mr. Nicholson, with certain modifications in its phraseology & terms, upon which we agreed: with the exception of a paragraph which Mr. Bass wished inserted, the object of which was to save his personal honor against the imputation of fraud or unfairness on his part, in the representations at the time of the sale of the Grundy property to my agent, Gov. A. V. Brown. Gov. Brown & Judge Catron, whose testimony had been taken in the case, differed from Mr. Bass in their understanding of the property sold. They both understood that the avenue of 50 feet was purchased, as much as the House and other grounds. Mr. Bass insisted that he intended to sell the right of way only in the Avenue, and not the fee simple title, & this was the point of difference. I understood that I was buying the avenue as a part of the property: otherwise I would not have authorized Gov. Brown to make the purchase for me. The terms of compromise agreed upon were, in substance, that the fee-simple title should be conveyed to me, and that Mr. Bass & other

adjoining property holders should enjoy the right of passage or of way through the same. The only point still open was the personal paragraph which Mr. Bass wished inserted. I objected to it in the form in which he had drawn it, because it left an implied imputation injurious to Gov. Brown & Judge Catron. I told him that the personal honour of these gentlemen as his own must be guarded & protected in any paragraph of the sort which was inserted: & with this view I proposed that his attos. & mine should draw such a paragraph. Towards the close of the interview Mr. West H. Humphreys, one of my attos., came in. Mr. Bass agreed to this suggestion & the paper was handed to Mr. Humphreys, and we agreed to meet again at 8 O'Clock to-morrow morning. A few more cases of cholera occur[re]d today.

SATURDAY, *26th May, 1849.*— I met Mr. Bass at the law office of Messrs. Nicholson & Houston at 8 O'Clock this morning according to appointment (see this Diary of yesterday). The paragraph deferred on yesterday had not been drawn up. Mr. Bass proposed other modifications of the paper containing the terms of compromise upon which we had agreed on yesterday. I became impatient, and remarked that we had agreed upon the terms on yesterday, that I was ready on my part to abide by them: that if Mr. Bass was the matter would be settled, but if he was not the case must be decided by the Court. The lawyers on both sides proposed that we should meet again at 12 O'Clock. We did so, and the lawyers

having agreed upon the personal paragraph desired, saving alike the personal honour of all concerned, the compromise was signed by Mr. Bass & Mr. Jacob McGavock as executors of Felix Grundy & by myself, and so the matter was settled. The Supreme Court entered a decree in the afternoon conformably to the compromise, and a Deed was Executed to me by the Clerk & Master. When the compromise was signed all present were in a pleasant humour. I was so because I had obtained substantially all I had ever claimed, which was the legal title. When it was all settled by the signing of the paper, Mr. Edwin Ewing in a humurous vein remarked that this case reminded him of one which had occurred in the Court here many years ago. In that case, he said, one of the parties had gone to his lawyer & gave him a numerous list of witnesses which he wished to have summoned. Among them were the names of Col. Weakley, Col. Ward, Jessee Wharton, Robt. C. Foster, Gen'l Coffee, & Gen'l Jackson. The lawyer in some surprise asked his client what he expected to prove by this array of distinguished witnesses. The client replied that he did not expect to prove anything by them, but he wished to give dignity to the case. In the present case, Mr. Ewing said, there had certainly been dignity enough. The President of a Bank (Mr. Bass) and the Executors of a very distinguished Senator in Congress (Mr. Grundy) dec'd, were the parties on one side, and an Ex President of the U. S. was the party on the other side; & that the only witnesses in the case were an Ex Governor of Tennessee (A. V. Brown) and a Justice of

the Supreme Court of the U. S. (Judge Catron): and he might have added that one of the lawyers on our side (Mr. Ewing himself) was late a Representative in Congress: and one of the lawyers on the other side (Mr. Nicholson) was late a Senator in Congress. All present were amused at the story and dispersed in good humour. I never entertained a doubt of what the decision of the Supreme [Court] would be, but in consequence of my long & intimate friendship for Mr. Grundy in his life time (having been his law-student in 1819) and for his family after his death, and the fact that Mr. Bass had married his daughter & was my near neighbour, I preferred to settle it by a compromise rather than have a public discussion of the legal points involved in Court. A few more cases of cholera occurred to-day, and the excitement in the City in consequence of it continues. My nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell, is confined to his room at my house, but is better. He is attended by Dr. Buchanan.

SUNDAY, *27th May, 1849.*— Mrs. Polk and myself attended the Presbyterian church to-day. The Rev. Dr. Edgar preached a good sermon.

MONDAY, *28th May, 1849.*— There are still some cases of cholera & a few deaths occurring in the City. I was somewhat indisposed from the effects of cold & did not go down into the City.

TUESDAY, *29th May, 1849.*— I remained at home to-day. Nothing of interest occurred.

WEDNESDAY, *30th May, 1849.*— I remained at home until late in the afternoon to-day, when Mrs. Polk and myself took a walk and paid a visit to a few of our neighbours. Nothing of special interest occurred to-day.

THURSDAY, *31st May, 1849.*— I bought a pair of bay carriage horses to-day from Capt. Thomas A. Leftwich of Maury County. I paid him $400. for them. In the afternoon Mrs. Polk and myself drove them out to Gov. A. V. Brown's three miles in the country. The Governor and his wife were absent from home. I heard at noon today that Mr. V. K. Stevenson had been taken ill suddenly and the symptoms were those of cholera. On returning from Gov. Brown's in the evening we learned that Gen'l Harding, who resides a few miles in the country, had been suddenly seized with cholera, and that he was lying at his father's house on the opposite side of the street from our house. My nephew, Samuel P. Caldwell, who had been several days ill at my house, left tonight, and will take the stage for Louisville & the Eastern Cities on to-morrow morning.

FRIDAY, *1st June, 1849.*— Mr. V. K. Stevenson & Gen'l Harding, who were taken ill of cholera on yesterday, are both better this morning. I was occupied during most of the day among my papers & books at my own house. During the prevalence of cholera I deem it prudent to remain as much as possible at my own house.

SATURDAY, *2nd June, 1849.*— Immediately after breakfast this morning Mrs. Polk & myself took a ride in our carriage, and paid a visit to Mr. Daniel Graham & his family residing eight miles in the country. After our return I remained the balance of the day at my house and was engaged in private business, devoting a part of my time to arranging my library of books in presses which I had caused to be made to hold them.

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