

BY D. W. CRAIG.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives: Our deep and heartfelt gratitude is due to that Almighty Power, which has bestowed upon us such varied and numerous blessings throughout the past year. The general health of the country has been unusually plentiful, and prosperity smiles throughout the land. Indeed, notwithstanding our demerits, we have much reason to believe from the past events of our history, that we have enjoyed the especial protection of Divine Providence, ever since our origin as a nation. We have been exposed to many threatening and alarming difficulties in our progress; but on each successive occasion the impending cloud has been dissipated at the moment it appeared ready to burst upon our head, and the danger to our institutions has passed away. May we ever be under Divine guidance and protection!

THE HARPER'S FERRY AFFAIR—RELATIONS OF NORTH AND SOUTH—INDUCEMENTS TO PATRIOTIC FEELING AND THE UNION.

Whilst it is the duty of the President from time to time to give to Congress information of the state of the Union, I shall not refer in detail to the recent and bloody occurrence at Harper's Ferry. Still, it is proper to observe that these events, however bad and cruel in themselves, derive their chief importance from the apprehension that they are but symptoms of an incurable disease in the public mind, which may break out in still more dangerous outrages, and terminate at last in an open war by the North to abolish slavery in the South. Whilst for myself I entertain no such apprehensions, they ought to afford a solemn warning to us all to beware of the approach of danger. Our Union is a stake of such inestimable value as to demand our constant and watchful vigilance for its preservation. In this view let me implore my countrymen, North and South, to cultivate the ancient feelings of mutual forbearance and good will towards each other, and strive to allay the demon-spirit of sectional hatred and strife now alive in the land. This advice proceeds from the heart of an old public functionary, whose service commenced in the last generation, among the wise and conservative statesmen of that day, now nearly all passed away, and whose first and dearest wish is to leave a country tranquil, prosperous, united and powerful.

We ought to reflect that in this age, and especially in this country, there is an incessant flux and reflux of public opinion. Questions, which in their day assumed a most threatening aspect, have now nearly gone from the memory of man. They are relics of a bygone age, and on the lava and ashes and spatial soil of old eruptions grow the peaceful olive, the cheering vine and sustaining corn. Such, in my opinion, will prove to be the fate of the present sectional excitement, should those who wisely seek to apply the remedy continue always to confine their efforts within the pale of the Constitution. If this course be pursued, the existing agitation on the subject of domestic slavery, like everything human, will have its day, and give place to other and less threatening controversies.

Public opinion in this country is all powerful, and when it reaches a dangerous excess upon any question, the good sense of the people will furnish the correct vein and bring it back within safe limits. Still, to hasten this auspicious result at the present crisis, we ought to remember that every rational creature must be presumed to intend the natural consequences of his own teachings. Those who announce abstract doctrines subversive of the Constitution and the Union, must not be surprised should their heated partisans advance one step further and attempt by violence to carry these doctrines into practical effect. In this view of the subject it ought never to be forgotten that, however great may have been the political advantages resulting from the Union to every portion of our common country, these would all prove to be as nothing should the time ever arrive when they cannot be enjoyed without the serious damage to the personal safety of the people of fifteen members of the confederacy. If the peace of the domestic fireside throughout these States should ever be invaded; if the members of families within this extensive region should not be able to retire to rest at night without suffering dreadful apprehensions of what might be their own fate, and that of their children before the morning, it would be vain to recount to such a people the political benefits which result to them from the Union. Self-preservation is the first instinct of nature; and therefore any state of society in which the sword is all the time suspended over the heads of the people, must at last become intolerable.

Do I indulge in no such gloomy forebodings. On the contrary, I firmly believe that the events at Harper's Ferry, by causing the people to pause and reflect upon the possible peril to their cherished institutions, will be the means, under Providence, of allaying the existing excitement and preventing future outbreaks of a similar character. They will resolve that the Constitution and the Union shall not be endangered by rash counsels, knowing that should the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken at the fountain, human power could never reunite the scattered hostile fragments.

I cordially congratulate you upon the final settlement by the Supreme Court of the United States of the question of slavery in the Territories, which had presented an aspect so truly formidable at the commencement of my administration. The right has been established of every citizen to take his property of any kind, including slaves, into the common Territories belonging equally to all the States of the Confederacy, and here it is protected there under the Federal Constitution. Neither Congress nor a Ter-

ritorial Legislature, nor any human power has any authority to annul or impair this vested right. The Supreme Judicial tribunal of the country, which is a co-ordinate branch of the Government, has sanctioned and affirmed these principles of constitutional law, so manifestly just in themselves, and so well calculated to promote peace and harmony among the States. It is a striking proof of the sense of justice which is inherent in our people, that the property in slaves has never been disturbed, to my knowledge, in any of the Territories. Even throughout the late troubles in Kansas, there has not been any attempt, as I am credibly informed, to interfere in a single instance with the right of the master. Had any such attempts been made, the Judiciary would doubtless have afforded an adequate remedy. Should they fail to do this hereafter, it will then be time enough to strengthen their hands by further legislation. Had it been decided that either Congress or the Territorial Legislature possess the power to annul or impair the right to property in slaves, the evil would be intolerable. In the latter event there would be a struggle for a majority of the members of the Legislature at each successive election, and the sacred rights of property held under the Federal Constitution would depend for the time being on the result. The agitation would thus be rendered incessant—whilst the Territorial condition remained, and its influence would keep alive a dangerous excitement among the people of the several States.

THE PRESIDENT EMPHATICALLY REJECTS DOUGLASS'S "POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY."

Thus has the status of a Territory, during the intermediate period from its first settlement until it shall become a State, been irrevocably fixed by the final decision of the Supreme Court. Fortunate has been for the prosperity of the Territories as well as the tranquility of the States. Now, emigrants from the North and South, the East and the West, will meet in the Territories on a common platform, having brought with them that species of property best adapted to their own opinion to promote their own welfare. From natural causes, the slavery question will, in each case, soon virtually settle itself, and before the Territory is proposed for admission as a State into the Union, this decision, one way or the other, will have been for some months on. Meanwhile the settlement of the Territory will proceed without serious interruption, and its progress and prosperity will not be endangered or retarded by violent political struggles. When, in the progress of events, the inhabitants of any Territory shall have reached the number required to form a State, they will then proceed in a regular manner, and, in the exercise of the rights of Popular Sovereignty, to form a Constitution, preparatory to admission into the Union. After this has been done, to employ the language of the Kansas and Nebraska Act, they shall be received into the Union, with or without slavery, as their Constitution on any prescribed at the time of the admission. This principle has happily been recognized, in some form or other by an almost unanimous vote of both houses of the last Congress.

THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

All lawful means at my command have been employed, and shall continue to be employed, to execute the laws against the African slave trade. After a most careful and vigorous examination of our coasts, and a thorough investigation of the subject, we have not been able to discover that any slaves have been imported into the United States, except the cargo by the Wanderer, numbering between 300 and 400. Those engaged in the unlawful enterprise have been rigorously prosecuted; but not with as much success as their crimes deserved. A number of them are still under prosecution. Our history proves that the fathers of the Republic, in advance of all other nations condemned the African slave trade. It was, notwithstanding, deemed expedient by the framers of the Constitution to deprive Congress of the power to prohibit the migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to adopt prior to the year 1808. It will be seen that this restriction on the power of Congress was confined to such States only as might think proper to admit the importation of slaves. It did not extend to other States or to trade carried on abroad. Accordingly, we find that so early as the 22d of March, 1794, Congress passed an Act imposing severe penalties and punishments upon citizens and residents of the United States who should engage in this trade between foreign nations. The provisions of this Act were extended and enforced by the Act of 10th May, 1800. Again, the States themselves had a clear right to waive the constitutional privilege intended for their benefit—to prohibit, by their own laws, this trade at any time they thought proper, previous to 1808. Several of them exercised this right before that period, and among them some containing the greatest number of slaves. This gave to Congress the immediate power to act in regard to all such States, because they themselves had removed the Constitutional barrier. Congress accordingly, passed an Act on the 28th day of February, 1803, to prevent the importation of certain persons into certain States where, by the laws thereof, the admission is prohibited. In this manner the importation of African slaves into the United States was to a great extent prohibited, some years in advance of 1808.

As the year 1808 approached, Congress determined not to suffer this trade to exist, even for a single day after they had the power to abolish it. On the 2d of March, 1807, they passed an Act to take effect from and after the 1st day of January, 1808, prohibiting the importation of African slaves into the United States. This was followed by subsequent acts of a similar character, to which I need not specially refer. Such were the principles, and such the practice, of our ancestors more than fifty years in regard to the African slave

trade. It did not occur to the revered patriots who had been delegated to the Convention and afterwards become members of Congress, that in passing these laws they had violated the Constitution which they had framed with so much care and deliberation. They supposed that to prohibit Congress, in express terms, from exercising a specific power before an appointed day, necessarily involved the right to exercise this power after that day had arrived. If this were not the case the framers of the Constitution had expended much labor in vain. Had they imagined that Congress would possess no power to prohibit the trade either before or after 1808, they would not have taken so much care to protect the States against the exercise of this power before that period. Nay, more; they would not have attached such vast importance to this provision as to have excluded it from the possibility of future repeal or amendment, to which other portions of the Constitution were exposed. It would then have been wholly unnecessary to engraft on the fifth article of the Constitution, presenting the mode of its own future amendment, the proviso that no amendment which may be made prior to the year 1808, shall in any manner affect the provision in the Constitution securing to the States the right to admit the importation of African slaves, previous to that period.

According to the adverse construction, the clause itself on which so much care and discussion had been employed by the members of the Convention was an absolute nullity from the beginning, and all that has since been done under it a mere usurpation. It was well and wise to confer this power on Congress, because, had it been left to the States, its efficient exercise would have been impossible, in this respect—that any one State could have effectually continued the trade not only for itself but for all the other slave States, though never so much against their will. And why? Because African slaves when once brought within the limits of any one State in accordance with its law, cannot practically be excluded from any other State where slavery exists; and even if all the States separately passed laws prohibiting the importation of slaves, these laws would have failed of effect for want of a naval force to capture the slaves and to guard the coasts. Such a force no State can employ in time of peace without the consent of Congress.

THE PRESIDENT CONSIDERS THE PHILANTHROPY OF OUR SLAVE TRADE LAWS.

These acts of Congress, it is believed, have, with very rare and insignificant exceptions, accomplished their purpose, for a period of more than half a century. There has been no perceptible addition to the number of our domestic slaves during this period. Their advancement in civilization has far surpassed that of any other portion of the African race. The light and blessings of Christianity have been extended to them, and both their moral and physical condition has been greatly improved. Reopen the trade, and it would be difficult to determine whether the effect would be more deleterious to the interests of the master, or to those of the native-born slave. Evils to the master the most to be dreaded, would be the introduction of wild heathen and ignorant barbarians among the sober, quiet and orderly slaves, whose ancestors have been on the soil for several generations. This might tend to barbarize, denationalize and expatriate the whole mass, and produce most deplorable consequences. The effect upon the existing slave would, if possible, be still more deplorable. At present he is treated with kindness and humanity; he is well fed, well clothed, and not overworked; his condition is incomparably better than that of the coolies which modern nations of high civilization have employed as substitutes for African slaves. Both the philanthropy and the self interest of the master have combined to produce this humane result. But let this trade be opened, and what will be the effect? The same, to a considerable extent, as on a neighboring island—the only spot now on earth where the African slave trade is openly tolerated, and this in defiance of solemn treaties with a power abundantly able at any moment to enforce their execution. There, the master, intent upon present gain, exerts from the slave as much labor as his physical powers are capable of enduring, knowing that when death comes to his relief, his place can be supplied at a price reduced to the lowest point by the competition of rival African slave-traders. Should this ever be the case in our country, which I do not deem probable, the present useful character of the domestic institution, wherein those too old and too young to work are provided for with care and humanity, and those capable of labor are not overtasked, would undergo an unfortunate change. The feeling of reciprocal dependence and attachment which now exists between master and slave, would be converted into mutual distrust and hostility.

But we are obliged as a Christian and moral nation to consider what would be the effect upon unhappy Africa itself, if we should reopen the slave trade. This would give the trade an impulse and extension which it has never had, even in its palmy days. The numerous victims required to supply it would convert the whole slave coast into a perfect pandemonium, for which this country would be held responsible in the eyes of both God and man. Its petty tribes would then be constantly engaged in predatory wars against each other, for the purpose of seizing slaves to supply the American market. All hopes of African civilization would thus be smothered. On the other hand, when a market for African slaves shall no longer be furnished in Cuba, and thus all the world be closed against this trade, we may then indulge in a reasonable hope for the gradual improvement of Africa. The chief motive of war among the tribes will cease whenever there is no longer any demand for slaves. The resources of that

fertile but miserable country might then be developed by the hand of industry, and afford subject for legitimate foreign and domestic commerce. In this manner Christianity and civilization may gradually penetrate the existing gloom.

POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD CHINA—THE CHINESE TREATIES.

The wisdom of the course pursued by the Government toward China has been vindicated by the events. Whilst we sustained a neutral position in the war waged by Great Britain and France against the Chinese Empire, our late minister, in obedience to his instructions, judiciously co-operated with the ministers of those powers in all peaceful measures to secure by treaty the just concessions demanded by the interests of foreign commerce. The result is, that satisfactory treaties have been concluded with China by the respective Ministers of the United States, Great Britain, France, and Russia. Our treaty or general convention of peace, amity, and commerce with that Empire, was concluded at Tientsin on the 18th June, 1858, and was ratified by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, on the 21st December following. On the 15th December, 1858, John E. Ward, a distinguished citizen of Georgia, was duly commissioned as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China. He left the United States for the place of his destination on the 5th February, 1859, taking with him the ratified copy of this treaty, and arrived at Shanghai on the 28th May. From thence he proceeded to Peking on the 16th June, but did not arrive in that city until the 27th July. According to the terms of the treaty, the ratifications were to be exchanged on or before the 18th of June, 1859. This was rendered impossible by reasons and events beyond his control, not necessary to detail; but still it is due to the Chinese authorities at Shanghai to state that they always assured him that no advantage should be taken of the delay, and this pledge has been faithfully redeemed.

On the arrival of Mr. Ward at Peking, he requested an audience of the Emperor to present his letter of credence. This he did not obtain, in consequence of his very proper refusal to submit to the humiliating ceremonies required by the etiquette of this strange people in approaching their sovereign. Nevertheless, the interviews on this question were conducted in the most friendly spirit, and with all due regard to his personal feelings, and the honor of his country. When a presentation to His Majesty was found to be impossible, the letter of credence from the President was received with peculiar honors by Kwielang, the Emperor's Prime Minister, and the second man in the Empire to the Emperor himself. The ratifications of the treaty were afterwards, on the 16th August, exchanged in proper form at the Beitang. As the exchange did not take place until after the day prescribed by the treaty, it is deemed proper, before its publication, again to submit it to the Senate. "It is but simple justice to the Chinese authorities to observe that throughout the whole transaction they appear to have acted in good faith, and in a friendly spirit toward the United States. It is true, this has been done after their own peculiar fashion; but we ought to regard with a lenient eye the ancient customs of an empire dating back for thousands of years, so far as this may be consistent with our own national honor. The conduct of our Minister, on the occasion, has received my entire approbation.

In order to carry out the spirit of this treaty, and to give it full effect, it became necessary to conclude two supplemental Conventions—one for the adjustment and satisfaction of the claims of our citizens, and the other to fix the tariff on imports and exports, and to regulate the transit duties and trade of our merchants with China. This duty was satisfactorily performed by our late Minister. These Conventions bear date at Shanghai on the 8th of November, 1858. Having been considered in the light of binding agreements subsidiary to the principal treaty, and to be carried into execution without delay, they do not provide for any formal ratification, or exchange of ratifications, by the contracting parties. This was not deemed necessary by the Chinese, who are already proceeding in good faith to satisfy the claims of our citizens, and it is hoped, to carry out the other provisions of the Convention. Still, I thought it was proper to submit them to the Senate, by which they were ratified on 3d March, 1859. The ratified copies, however, did not reach Shanghai until after the departure of our Minister to Peking, and these conventions could not therefore be exchanged at the same time with the principal treaty. No doubt is entertained that they will be ratified and exchanged by the Chinese Government, should this be thought advisable. But under the circumstances presented, I shall consider them binding engagements from their date, on both parties, and cause them to be published as such, for the information of our merchants trading with the Chinese Empire.

AFFAIRS WITH PARAGUAY—THE EXPEDITION.

It affords me much satisfaction to inform you that all our difficulties with the Republic of Paraguay have been satisfactorily adjusted. It happily did not become necessary to employ the force for this purpose which Congress had placed at my command, under their joint Resolution of 2d June, 1858. On the contrary, the President of that Republic, in a friendly spirit, acceded promptly to the just and reasonable demands of the Government of the United States. Our Commissioner arrived at Assumption, the capital of the Republic, on the 25th of January, 1859, and left it on the 17th February, having, in three weeks, ably and successfully accomplished all the objects of his mission. The treaties which he has concluded will be immediately submitted to the Senate. In the view that the employment of other than peaceful means might become necessary to obtain just satisfaction from Paraguay, a strong naval force was concentrated in the waters

of the La Plata, to await contingencies, whilst our Commissioner ascended the river to Assumption. The Navy Department is entitled to great credit for the promptness, efficiency, and economy with which this expedition was fitted out and conducted. It consisted of 19 vessels, great and small, carrying 200 guns and 2,500 men, all under the command of the veteran and gallant Shubrick. The entire expenses of the expedition have been defrayed out of the ordinary appropriations for the naval service, except the sum of \$289,000 applied to the purchase of seven of the steamers constituting a part of it, under the authority of the Naval Appropriation Act of the 3d March last. It is believed that these steamers are worth more than their cost, and they are all now usefully and actively employed in the naval service. The appearance of so large a force, fitted out in such a prompt manner, in the far distant waters of the La Plata, and the admirable conduct of the officers and men employed in it, have had a happy effect in favor of our country, throughout all that remote portion of the world.

OUR RELATIONS WITH FRANCE, RUSSIA, &c.

Our relations with the great Empires of France and Russia, as well as with other Governments on the continent of Europe, unless we may except that of Spain, happily continue to be of the most friendly character. In my last annual message I presented a statement of the unsatisfactory condition of our relations with Spain, and I regret to say that this has not materially improved. Without special reference to other claims, even the Cuban claims—the payment of which has been ably urged by our Ministers, and in which more than a hundred of our citizens are directly interested—remain unsatisfied, notwithstanding both their justice and their amount (\$128,635 54) had been recognized and ascertained by the Spanish Government itself.

I again recommend that an appropriation be made to be paid to the Spanish Government for the purpose of distribution among the claimants in the Amistad case, in common with two of my predecessors. I entertain no doubt that this is required by our treaty with Spain of the 27th Oct., 1795. The failure to discharge this obligation has been employed by the Cabinet of Madrid as a reason against the settlement of our claims.

THE ACQUISITION OF CUBA.

I need not repeat the arguments which I urged in my last annual message, in favor of the acquisition of Cuba by fair purchase. My opinion on that measure remains unchanged. I therefore again invite the serious attention of Congress to this important subject. Without a recognition of this policy on their part it will be almost impossible to institute negotiations with any reasonable prospect of success.

RELATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN—THE CLAYTON-BULWER TREATY.

Until a recent period, there was good reason to believe that I should be able to announce to you, on the present occasion, that our difficulties with Great Britain, arising out of the Clayton and Bulwer treaty, had been finally adjusted in a manner alike honorable and satisfactory to both parties. From causes, however, which the British Government had not anticipated, they have not yet completed treaty arrangements with the Republics of Honduras and Nicaragua, in pursuance of the understanding between the two Governments. It is nevertheless confidently anticipated that this good work will, ere long, be accomplished.

THE SAN JUAN ISLAND MATTER.

Whilst indulging the hope that no other subject remained which could disturb the good understanding between the two countries, the question arising out of the adverse claims of the parties to the island of San Juan, under the Oregon treaty of the 15th of June, 1846, suddenly assumed a threatening prominence. In order to prevent unfortunate collisions on that remote frontier, the late Secretary of State, on the 17th of July, 1855, addressed a note to Mr. Cramp-ton, then British Minister at Washington, communicating the instructions which he (Mr. Marcy) had given, on the 14th July, to Gov. Stevens of Washington Territory, having a special reference to an apprehended conflict between our citizens and the British subjects on the island of San Juan.

To prevent this, the Governor was instructed that the officers of the Territory should "abstain from all acts on the disputed ground which are calculated to provoke any conflicts, so far as it can be done without implying the concession to the authorities of Great Britain of an exclusive right over the premises. The title ought to be settled before either party should attempt to exclude the other by force, or exercise complete and exclusive sovereign rights within the disputed limits."

In acknowledging the receipt, on the next day, of Mr. Marcy's note, the British Minister expressed his "entire concurrence in the propriety of the course recommended to the Governor of Washington Territory by your (Mr. Marcy's) instructions to that officer," and stating that he had "lost no time in transmitting a copy of that document to the Governor General of British North America," and had "earnestly recommended to his Excellency to take such measures as to him may appear best calculated to secure, on the part of the British local authorities, and the inhabitants in the neighborhood of the line in question, the exercise of the same spirit of forbearance which is inculcated by you (Mr. Marcy) on the authorities and citizens of the United States."

These matters reminded, upon the faith of this arrangement, until the 9th July last, when Gen. Hovey paid a visit to the island. He found upon it twenty American residents with their families, and also an establishment of the Hudson's Bay Co. for the purpose of raising sheep. A short time before his arrival, one of these residents had shot an animal belonging to the Company which trespassing upon his premises, for which, however, he offered to pay the value but that was refused. Soon after, the Chief Factor of the Company at Victoria, Mr. Dallas, set to law of Gov. Douglas

came to the island in the British sloop-of-war *Statist*, and threatened to take this American (Mr. Carter) by force to Victoria, to answer for the trespass he had committed. The American seized his rifle, and told Mr. Dallas that if any such attempt was made he would kill him on the spot. The affair then ended.

Under these circumstances, the American settlers presented a petition to the General through the United States Inspector of Customs, Mr. Hubbs, to place a force upon the island, to protect them from the Indians as well as the oppressive interference of the authorities of the Hudson's Bay Company at Victoria with their rights as American citizens. The General immediately responded to this petition, and ordered Capt. George Pickett, 9th Infantry, to establish his company on Bellevue or San Juan Island, on some suitable position near the harbor at the southeastern extremity. This order was promptly obeyed, and a military post was established at the place designated. The force was afterward increased, so that by the last return the whole number of troops then on the island amounted in the aggregate to 681 men.

Whilst I do not deem it proper on the present occasion to go further into the subject and discuss the weight which ought to be attached to the statements of the British colonial authorities contesting the accuracy of the information on which the gallant General acted, it was due to him that I should thus present his own reasons for issuing the orders to Capt. Pickett. From these, it is quite clear that his object was to prevent the British authorities on Vancouver Island from exercising jurisdiction over American residents on the island of San Juan, as well as to protect them against the incursions of the Indians.

Much excitement prevailed for some time throughout the region, and serious danger of collision between the parties was apprehended. The British had a large naval force in the vicinity, and it is an act of simple justice to the Admiralty on that station to state that he wisely and discreetly forbore to commit any hostile act, but determined to refer the whole affair to his Government and await their instructions.

This aspect of the matter, in my opinion, demanded serious attention. It would have been a great calamity for both nations, had they been precipitated into acts of hostility, not about the question of title to the island, but merely concerning the intervening period whilst the two Governments might be employed in settling the question, in which of them it belongs. For this reason, Lieutenant-General Scott was despatched, on the 17th of September last, to Washington Territory, to take immediate command of the United States forces on the Pacific Coast, should he deem this necessary. The main object of his mission was to carry out the spirit of the precautionary arrangement between the late Secretary of State and the British Minister, and thus to preserve the peace and prevent collision between British and American authorities pending the negotiations between the two Governments. Entertaining no doubt of the validity of our title, I need scarcely add that in any event American citizens were to be placed on a footing at least as favorable as that of British subjects, if being understood that Capt. Pickett's company should remain on the island. It is proper to observe that, considering the distance from the scene of action and ignorance of what might have transpired on the spot before the General's arrival, it was necessary to leave much to his discretion; and I am happy to state the event has proven that this discretion could not have been entrusted to more competent hands. Gen. Scott has recently returned from his mission, having successfully accomplished its object; and there is no longer any good reason to apprehend a collision between the forces of the two countries during the pendency of the existing negotiations.

MEXICAN AFFAIRS.

I regret to inform you that there has been no improvement in the affairs of Mexico since my last Annual Message, and I am again obliged to ask the earnest attention of Congress to the unhappy condition of that Republic. The Constitutional Congress of Mexico, which adjourned on the 17th of February, 1857, adopted a Constitution, and provided for a popular election. This took place in the following July, 1857, and Gen. Comanfort was chosen President almost without opposition. At the same election, a new Congress was chosen, whose first session commenced on the 16th of September, 1857. By the Constitution of 1857, the Presidential term was to begin on the 1st of December, 1857, and continue for four years. On that day, Gen. Comanfort appeared before the assembled Congress in the City of Mexico, took oath to support the new Constitution, and was duly inaugurated as President. Within a month afterward he had been driven from the capital, and a military revolution had assigned the Government to the President of the Supreme Court, and Gen. Comanfort having left the country, this functionary (Gen. Juarez) proceeded to form, at Guajuato, a Constitutional Government. Before this was officially known, however, at the capital, the Government of Zalozaga had been recognized by the entire diplomatic corps, including the Minister of the United States, as the *de facto* Government of Mexico. The Constitutional President, nevertheless, maintained his position with firmness, and was soon established, with his Cabinet, at Vera Cruz.

Meanwhile, the Government of Zalozaga was earnestly resisted, in many parts of the Republic; and, even in the capital, a portion of the army having pronounced against it, its functions were declared terminated, and an assembly of citizens was invited for the choice of a new President. This assembly elected General Miramon, but that officer repudiated the plan under which he was chosen, and Zalozaga was thus restored to his previous position. He assumed it, however, to withdraw from it, and Miramon having become, by his appointment, President Substitute, continues with that title, at the head of the insurgent party.

In my last Annual Message, I communicated to Congress the circumstances under which the late Minister of the United States suspended his official relations with the Central Government and withdrew from the country. It was impossible to maintain friendly intercourse with a Government like that at the capital, under whose usurped authority wrongs were constantly committed, but never redressed. Had this been an established Government, with its power extending, by the consent of the people, over the whole of Mexico, a resort to hostilities against it would have been quite justifiable, and indeed necessary. But the country was a prey to civil war, and it was hoped that the success of the Constitutional President might lead to a condition of things less injurious to the United States. This success became so probable that in January last I employed a reliable agent to visit Mexico and report to me the actual condition and prospects of the contending parties. In consequence of his report, and from information which reached me from other sources, favorable to the prospects of the Constitutional cause, I felt justified in appointing a new Minister to Mexico who might embrace the earliest suitable opportunity of restoring our diplomatic relations with that Republic. For this distinguished citizen of Maryland was selected, who commenced on his mission on the 8th of March last, with discretionary authority to reorganize the Government of President