

No. 11.

Mr. Slidell to Mr. Buchanan.

[Extracts.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Jalapa, February 6, 1846.

I reached this place on the 20th ultimo. Since my despatch of the 14th ultimo, nothing has occurred to indicate the course likely to be taken by the existing government as to my reception; but I think that it will mainly be controlled by the aspect of the Oregon question. Should our difficulties with Great Britain continue to present a prospect of war with that power, there will be but a very faint hope of a change of policy here.

I send you a copy of a communication of Mr. Peña y Peña to the council of government, made on the 11th December, inviting an expression of the opinion of the council on the subject of my recognition, and suggesting his reasons why it should be refused. This document presents, in the most glaring light, the bad faith of the late government; and, in connexion with the statement of Consul Black, accompanying my despatch of 17th December, shows in the most conclusive manner that, from the moment my arrival was announced, it had determined to avail itself of any pretence, however frivolous, to refuse a reception, in the hope that, by thus depriving its opponents of their chief theme of reproach and agitation, the impending blow would be averted. Mr. Peña y Peña, after stating to the council substantially the same objections to my credentials as are embodied in his note to me of 20th December, gives, as an additional and conclusive reason for their insufficiency, the fact of my appointment not having been confirmed by the Senate.

The anxiously expected convocatoria, or edict, of Paredes, calling together the constituent congress, and establishing the mode of its election, was promulgated on the 27th ultimo. It is, perhaps, the most singular instrument of the kind that has ever appeared; but its tendency could easily have been anticipated, as it was known that its preparation was allotted to Lucas Alaman, who has long been the avowed advocate of monarchical principles. The electoral machinery is extremely complicated, and has evidently been framed that its complexity might, to a certain extent, conceal the purpose which it is intended to effect. Different classes are to be represented, each class having a distinct constituency, with widely varying qualifications for the right of suffrage. The assembly has unlimited powers to form a constitution, which is to take effect without any appeal to the people or the departments. It is to consist of one hundred and sixty members, one hundred of whom are to be chosen by land owners, merchants, manufacturers, proprietors of mines, and members of certain pro-

fessions. The remaining sixty members are to be chosen by the judiciary, administrative officers, the clergy, and the military. The constituent body will be extremely limited; the payment of a very high rate of direct contribution being required for the exercise of the right of suffrage, and still higher rates are established for the qualifications of the members of the assembly. It will give to Parades the power of returning a very large majority of members, prepared to do anything which he may dictate. The congress is to meet four months from the date of the convocatoria; nine months are allowed to form the new constitution. During this interval of thirteen months, he will, of course, continue to exercise uncontrolled power; unless, in the meantime, some discontented generals succeed in making a counter-revolution. This can only be avoided by punctual payment of the army, and by carefully abstaining from the concentration of any large force out of the capital.

Since the accession of Parades, no payments have been made, excepting to the troops; none of the civil employées have received any part of their salaries; and, as I mentioned in a previous despatch, the expenses of the army, alone, greatly exceed the entire revenue of the country. How this financial difficulty can be overcome, is a problem not easily solved. It is generally understood that the current disbursements have been met by the voluntary contributions of the clergy; but this is a resource which must soon be exhausted. Loans from domestic or foreign capitalists, in the present state of affairs, are out of the question. The only expedient yet resorted to for the increase of the revenue, has been the permission to introduce raw cotton at the rate of ten dollars per quintal, payable in advance at the moment of receiving the permit. Much reliance has been placed upon this measure; but, by late letters from Mexico, I learn that permits had been taken out only for two thousand quintals.

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By the plan of provisional government of the 3d of January, it was solemnly declared, that it should be administered in conformity with existing laws; but an exception was made in favor of such measures as might be necessary "to preserve the integrity of the territory;" and, by the decree for the admission of cotton, all moneys received for the cotton licenses are to be devoted to this object. This clause (allowing the exercise of extraordinary powers for the preservation of the integrity of the territory) will be appealed to in justification of any proceedings, however despotic, which Parades may find it expedient to adopt. The mask of liberal principles has, indeed, been already thrown off. An arbitrary edict, issued by Santa Anna in 1839, abolishing the liberty of the press, was revived simultaneously with the promulgation of the convocatoria, and is evidently intended to silence all criticism of its provisions. Offending editors are to be sent, without trial, to the fortresses of San Juan de Ulloa and Acapulco. The feeling of the small portion of the population who have any opinions on political subjects, is almost universally opposed to the convocatoria; but, as few are disposed to incur any risk in announcing or sustaining

their principles, and there are no means of producing anything like concert of action, there is little chance of any resistance to the usurpation of Paredes, unless some of the troops should "*pronounce*" against him. This may well happen; for although the disaffection to Herrera was very general in the army, many of the officers were not well disposed towards Paredes. Some of the regiments where this feeling was supposed to exist have been removed from the capital, and great dissatisfaction is said to have been manifested by them.

For some time past rumors have been rife of the establishment of a monarchy, in the person of a foreign prince. Such an idea is undoubtedly entertained by some of the clergy, and a few other persons of note in the city of Mexico; but it receives little countenance in the army, where almost every general indulges aspirations for the presidency, and is universally repudiated in the departments. Paredes unquestionably wishes to establish a despotic government; but it is equally certain that he intends to place himself at its head. His power is now established (for the time at least) throughout the country, Arista having surrendered his command; but the submission of the civil authorities generally is sullen and unwilling, and can only be maintained by military force. Yucatan is of course excepted from this remark. She has declared her absolute separation; and, as she has heretofore successfully resisted all the force that Santa Anna could direct against her, with resources infinitely superior to any which the existing government can command, she cannot now fail to maintain her independence.

The minister of foreign affairs has acknowledged the reception of Mr. Black's communication, notifying the revocation of the powers of Mr. Emilio Voss. I send a copy of his note, No. 3.

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P. S.—The mail which has just arrived brings intelligence that the department of Sinaloa has declared its independence, and that the garrison of Mazatlan has pronounced against Paredes. This is an important movement, as Mazatlan is one of the ports that contribute most largely to the revenue, its receipts being inferior only to those of Vera Cruz.