

HUNT TO HENDERSON.^a

No. 1.

U. S.

No. 1

VICKSBURG MISSI, *April 15, 1837*

DEAR SIR

I have been ill at this place more than two weeks, but am now restored. I wrote to you when I was on the eve of leaving Washington. I now seize an opportunity to do so again. I repeat the propriety of sending a secret agent to Great Britain to ask the recognition of our Independence. That Government will naturally ask wherefore, as it is the expressed wish of the Texian nation to become annexed to the United States by an almost unanimous vote that to make a treaty with Texas to be annulled at her pleasure could not be listened to for a moment, and that unless higher and more advantageous terms could be offered to Great Britain, she would not enter into diplomatic relations with Texas; and it will in my opinion be the policy of our government to promise to G. Britain (in event of our sending an agent there, and failing to become annexed to these States, *after all efforts have failed*) to give to her by treaty such commercial advantages as it will be our interest to do, in which event she will be induced to recognize us; the success in attaining which, will I believe guarantee our annexation to this country, for so ardent are the Southern States to procure the annexation of Texas to the Union that I believe the consequence of a failure to accomplish it, will produce a dissolution of the Union. That an exercise of such determination will be withheld however, as a dernier resort I likewise believe, and for us to be recognized as Independent by Great Britain with the expectation and belief on the part of these States that such relations would be entered into as to prevent forever our annexation to the latter would at once make up the issue and our success or failure in accomplishing the desirable end of annexation be determined upon by this Government, and even the Northern politicians sooner than see the consequences, to which I have adverted, would perhaps advocate our connexion. The North cannot prosper without the existance of a confederacy of the South, on the other hand, the South cannot only exist without the north but prosper to a much higher degree seperated and with Texas annexed and the power to overrun all Mexico and make such a disposition of that country as it may be her interest to do until it could be

^a L. S.; endorsed "rec'd Houston Aug. 26, 1837 Despatch No. 20." Below the address on the back, to the left, is written "Mr S. B. W. Rudder," the name of the bearer. The "No. 1" marking the serial place of the letter was entered at the time of writing, but the letter was recorded on the books of the legation at Washington as "No. 20." See Hunt to Secretary of State of Republic of Texas, July 11, 1837.

peopled throughout with Anglo Americans would make a Southern confederacy with such consequences, decidedly in time to come, as to make it the greatest nation upon earth. The calculating northern politician foreseeing these results should not hesitate to accede to the annexation of Texas. The South would be less excited upon this subject but for the action of the late congress upon a resolution relating to a proposition of J Q Adams asking the Speaker of the House of Representatives whether it would be in order to present a petition from slaves, the action upon which you have seen, doubtless in the public journals. I know of no circumstance which has so much increased the zeal of Southern politicians for us as this, and we may justly set down an act of one of our worst enemies as being more advantageous to us than the most studied movements of our best friends. If we send a minister to England publicly it would set all the abolition papers in that country instantly upon us and such an effect might be produced as to present a result contrary to that which would otherwise accrue. The same consequences might exist here too, for so soon as it is known that we have opened diplomatic relations with G Britain, and it is probable that this result will be such as to prevent annexation, a paper issue with the abolitionists and the friends of annexation will be the consequence and Mr Webster himself has been heard to say that no politician in New England can maintain himself who opposes the abolition of slavery, he is an honest man and I have no doubt spoke advisedly and truly. The conviction induces me to think it best for our success that such action should occur on our part as to produce as little excitement in the north as practicable until we succeed or fail in the attainment of the end we desire, for fanaticism, at least for a time, will overrule the wisest and most salutary disposition of the most learned and influential politicians. On the other hand if we can be recognized as Independent by G. Britain and bring the question of annexation suddenly upon this government, whilst Congress is in session, our difficulties will be contended for with uninstructed legislators which will not be the case should the north become excited upon the subject. The Northerners are a law abiding people and if we could once get a treaty of annexation through, I believe all difficulties would be over. One of the greatest difficulties which seems to influence a hesitation on the part of the politicians who are favourable to annexation, residing in non-slave holding states, is that it would be a premature act without the consent of Mexico, or a cessation on her part of all hostilities against Texas. Unless Santa Anna succeeds as I wrote you in my last, we cannot expect this without conquering Mexico, and I know of nothing else

which would be a remedy, save the recognition of our Independence by G. Britain for I believe that no scruples would exist on the part of the U States in making a treaty of annexation with Texas provided a power so respectable as G. Britain were to recognize our Independence. But unless Mexico relinquishes all claim to Texas or some respectable nation recognizes us, we may not anticipate even an action upon the subject by the U States. I received, from Mr Catlett, secretary of legation, since my arrival here a letter mentioning that he had received a communication from the Secretary of State of the United States saying that such a disposition of the U States troops should be made near the borders of Texas as to prevent (if practicable[]) the recurrence of Indian hostilities, by any tribes belonging to the Jurisdiction of this government. The communication has reached you, doubtless, as Mr C. informed me that he had forwarded a copy of it to you. I shall visit the seat of government of this state when I shall find the Legislature convened on the 17th inst. I shall endeavour to produce as much feeling in favour of annexation as I can. There is nothing now so near my heart as the wish for the accomplishment of that end, and rest assured Sir of my full and uncompromising convictions that our interests and happiness could in no way be so much benefited as by its accomplishment, unless it be the annexation of the slave holding states in event of a dissolution of the Union, which we should receive incalculable benefits from. Should a commission not have been forwarded to me, directed to the President of the U States in place of the informal one directed to the Secretary of State, please attend to it without delay; and it had best be worded in such a manner as to authorize me to act with full power in the absence of Col Wharton, for should there be a specification as existed in my other commission, that I am to act in concert, I should be unable to do any thing officially in his absence. Every thing of importance having been accomplished, contained in the instructions of his Excellency the President, with the exception of annexation, and there being no prospect of any action on this important subject by the Executive of the U. States at the present, I have thought it most judicious in me to give my time and presence such direction as may be best calculated in my judgment to accomplish the very desirable object, and among other movements I have concluded to visit the Hon. Thos. H. Benton, at St Louis, on my return to Washington, who is already friendly to the accomplishment of annexation, and can do us more essential service in that respect perhaps, than any one in the U States. I will continue to keep you advised of my movements and actions and should they not entirely accord with the wishes of his Excellency the President, a

cheerful acquiescence on my part will be the result of any instructions which it may be his pleasure to suggest, of a different character.

I have the honor to be,
your obedient servant

MEMUCAN HUNT

To,

Hon: J. P. HENDERSON
Secretary of State
of the Republic of Texas

CATLETT TO HENDERSON.^a

Despatch No. 15.

TEXIAN LEGATION, WASHINGTON CITY

April 29th. 1837

SIR,

I write in haste, because the information I have to communicate to you is of an important nature and I wish to despatch it by the Express mail of to day.

I received a message this morning from the Chief Clerk of the Department of State, expressing a desire to see me as he had an important communication to make to me under the instructions of the Secretary of State. I accordingly called upon him without delay and he read to me, confidentially, some parts of a letter addressed to the State Department by the American Consul at Mexico, dated 28th. March;—stating that on the Saturday previous, a resolution was offered in the Mexican Congress by Genl. Michelina to dispose of Texas and as far South as might be deemed expedient, to the British Government for 25 cents an acre; the boundry line between Texas and the United States to be settled agreeably to former treaty stipulation. The Consul gave it as his opinion that the project would certainly meet with the concurrence of the Chambers.

I enquired whether any thing was said in the letter of any overtures having been made on the part of the British Government to Mexico for the purchase of Texas, and whether any thing was said of the probability of the British Government acceding to such a proposal. He replied in the negative. I thanked Mr. Dayton for his kindness in giving me the above information and requested him to let me have a copy of those parts of the letter which he had read to me, in order that I might transmit it to my government in proper form. He said that he would not do so without the permission of the Secretary of State; that he would speak to the Secretary, and if

^a A. L. S.

no objection was made that he would send it to me. I took occasion to remark that if such an offer were made by Mexico and accepted by Great Britain it would inevitably involve the United States in a war with that power. I did not call upon the Secretary of State because there was not sufficient time to see him upon the subject this morning and communicate any conversation which might pass between us in this despatch.

I have the honor to be
Your Obedient Servant,

FAIRFAX CATLETT
Sec'y Texian Legation

Honble J. PINCKNEY HENDERSON,
*Secretary of State
of the Republic of Texas.*

CATLETT TO FORSYTH.^a

CATLETT TO HENDERSON.^b

Despatch No. 16.

TEXIAN LEGATION
WASHINGTON CITY
May 7th. 1837

SIR,

I had the honor, on the 29th. ultimo, to communicate the substance of certain important intelligence, which was confidentially imparted to me on that day by the Secretary of State of the United States. At my request, an extract from the letter of Mr. Jones, the American Consul at the City of Mexico, was transcribed and sent to me, and I now transmit you a copy of it, together with the letter I addressed to Mr. Forsyth on the subject of the information referred to, and a brief account of the conversation which ensued.

Extract.

CONSULATE OF THE U. S. A.
Mexico 28th. March 1837.

SIR,

General Michelesia^c presented a project to Congress, in Secret Session, on Saturday night last, to dispose of Texas, and as far South as necessary, to the British Government, at the rate of twenty five

^a May 2, 1837. See Catlett to Henderson, May 7, 1837.

^b A. L. S.

^c Michellina (?). See Jones to Forsyth, March 28, 1837.

cents per acre, in order to pay off the British debt, which is about Sixty Eight Millions dollars, first establishing, the boundary line between the United States and Mexico, in conformity to Treaty stipulations, and it is not doubted, under the present state of feeling, of the concurrence of the Chambers, in the project proposed, the matter is kept quite a secret.

General Bustamante has received the votes of the Departments for the Presidency, as far as heard from. If elected, it is said, that Santa Maria now in Spain, or Canedo, in Peru, will be Minister of foreign Relations, Lobja of Finance, War Department, no good man found yet, Interior not fixed upon but insignificant.

Government have been in Treaty with Rubio and others for a loan of 480,000\$ monthly, for which the entire control of the Marine Customs in the Republic were to be given, notwithstanding there are several millions of custom house paper still afloat, issued for previous loans. The negotiation, I am this afternoon informed, has failed.

M D JONES.

Honorable JOHN FORSYTH,
Secretary of State,
Washington.

On receipt of this extract I wrote to Mr. Forsyth in the following terms.

TEXIAN LEGATION, WASHINGTON
May 2nd. 1837.

SIR,

Through the politeness of Mr. Dayton and at your instance, I was *confidentially* informed, on Saturday morning last that there was a project on foot in the Mexican Congress (which, it was expected, would certainly meet with the concurrence of the Chambers) to "dispose of Texas, and as far South as necessary, to the British Government, at the rate of twenty five cents per acre, in order to pay off the British debt, which is about Sixty eight millions dollars."

I would beg leave to acknowledge a proper sense of your kindness in so promptly communicating that important intelligence, which was immediately transmitted to my Government, and, from the regard thus evinced for its welfare, will doubtless strengthen the filial feeling which it has always cherished for its parent commonwealth.

I am induced to trouble you with this letter by the anxiety I feel to apprise my Government of the views of the Government of the United States in relation to the probability of such an offer being accepted by Great Britain, and also, if any preventive steps will be

taken by this Government to preclude all danger of an event, certainly as much to be deprecated by the United States as by Texas.

There is some room for serious apprehension that the British may be tempted to embrace so inviting an offer, if not indeed for a suspicion, that secret overtures have already been made to Mexico, as one would suppose that the Characteristic pride of the latter would hardly permit her to stoop so low as to tender a fragment of her empire to a foreign power without having previously received some intimation that such a tender would be kindly entertained if not promptly acceded to.

Be this as it may, there are many powerful reasons, however counter-balanced by opposing considerations, which render it, to say the least, a question of some doubt, whether Great Britain would not gladly seize a good occasion to possess herself of the fertile domain of Texas;—the sacred rights of an infant Republic; the compromised dignity of the United States, and the law of nations to the contrary notwithstanding. Admitting that there is the least probability of such a compact being entered into, permit me to ask if it would not point to the expediency of an immediate resort to such preventive measures as will be calculated to remove a danger, which trivial as it may now appear, may yet grow in intensity until not only the liberties of Texas but the interests of the United States and the peace and harmony of all North America are jeopardised.

The deep solicitude, which the Government of Texas will feel upon this subject, the difficulty of obtaining such information as would enable it to come to accurate conclusions, the community of interest and feeling and the importance of a full understanding between the two Governments will sufficiently excuse me, I trust, for soliciting your views upon this important subject, and requesting that you will oblige me with any information, which you may have received, calculated to show the probability or improbability of the British Government acceding to the project proposed in the Congress of Mexico.

I have the honor to remain with sentiments of distinguished consideration

Your obedient Servant.

FAIRFAX CATLETT.

Hon'ble
JOHN FORSYTH
*Secretary of State
of the United States.*

My principal objects in addressing the above letter to the Secretary of State were first, to draw his attention to the subject in a particular

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manner, being well persuaded that it was a subject of just as much importance to the United States as to Texas, and that however unwilling this Government might be to commit itself by any expression of opinion or avowal of intention that the identity of interest was too real and apparent to leave any doubt as to the course of policy it would be compelled to pursue in case of any serious negotiations being opened between Great Britain and Mexico for the purchase of Texas, and that therefore it was only necessary to draw the attention of this Govt. particularly to the matter to ensure its keeping a watchful eye upon the movements of those two powers, and secondly, I was anxious to obtain such information as would enable me to enlighten the Govt. of Texas respecting the probability of a sale of Texas to great Britain and relieve you from any solicitude or suspense which may have arisen upon this subject.

The next day, I received a note from the Chief Clerk of the Department of State expressing a wish to see me at the Department whenever it might suit my convenience to call, and I accordingly made him a visit in the course of the same morning. On entering the room, I observed Mr. Forsyth in the act of retiring. He saw me and, after the usual exchange of salutations, invited me into his own room, saying that he wished to have a word with me. I am thus minute in detailing these trivial incidents, because it may be as well for you to know that it was not his intention to give me an opportunity of seeing him that morning and my falling in with him was entirely fortuitous.

He said, that he thought I had better take back my letter; that there were some expressions in it, which, although I was justified in using them, might be a source of future misunderstanding. "Parent Commonwealth" for one. I replied that that expression was not intended to convey the idea that the Republic of Texas owed its origin to the Government of the United States, but that it was simply meant in compliment to this Republic, the inhabitants of Texas being nearly all natives of the United States and having adopted the same form of Government and the same institutions which belonged to their parent country. He said that it was an expression which would still be made use of by the enemies of the administration and by all such as were inimical to the United States and to Texas;—that all correspondence in relation to Texas would probably be called for, next winter by Congress, and that, while the best feelings and wishes for the prosperity of Texas were cherished, it behoved him to be careful to make no admissions, which might be interpreted as showing an undue interest in the success of our revolutionary struggle. I replied that I was well aware that the situation of the United States was a delicate and embarrassing one, and that it was by no means my desire to render it more so, but that the identity of

interest between the two countries was so striking and apparent, and pointed so clearly to the expediency of the United States preventing Great Britain from negotiating for the purchase of Texas that I could not but encourage the hope, that some assurance would be given to my Government that if any negotiations were opened between Great Britain and Mexico, that the United States would immediately interfere. "In what way could we interfere?" "By distinctly intimating to the British Govt. that the United States could never consent to Great Britain's obtaining possession of Texas." "Great Britain in return might say the same to us." "If she did, it would be easy to reply that the United States would make no such attempt, that she had already acknowledged the separate existence of Texas as an Independent Republic, but that if it were the unequivocal desire of the people of Texas to be admitted into this Union, that their wishes would be properly respected and listened to." He said that the subject was certainly one of common interest, but that, for himself, he had not the least idea that Great Britain, would accede to the offer, though he doubted not that such an offer had been made:—that the Mexican debt was due not to the British Government, but to the British subjects:—that he had received no information on the subject in addition to what he had already communicated, nor did he believe that any overtures had been made to Mexico by Great Britain for the purchase of Texas. That as far as facts were concerned, he would cheerfully communicate any information in his power that would be interesting to Texas, but that it was impossible for him to express any opinion in relation to the course of policy that the Government of the United States would pursue;—it would be time enough to think of that, when it was beyond a doubt that negotiations had actually been opened between Great Britain and Mexico;—that notwithstanding the numerous ties by which the people of the two countries were virtually bound together, it was necessary that the intercourse between their Governments should be carried on as if there was no peculiar relationship between them;—that some of the expressions in my letter might be referred to on some future occasion as showing that an undue interest had been taken by the Government of the United States in the affairs of Texas and that he would prefer returning it to me;—at the same time offering the letter, which I no longer hesitated to receive, not only because I was disposed to admit the force of his objections, but because the letter had answered its purpose and I did not regard it as of material consequence that it should be retained, and more particularly, because I was apprehensive that if I evinced any backwardness in complying with his request, that he might be disposed to withhold from me any further information on the subject. I assured him that the expressions, excepted to, were attribu-

table to my inexperience alone, and not to any desire or intention to embarrass the Government of the United States.

It is proper for me to mention that in this sketch of my conversation with Mr. Forsyth, I have adhered rather to the substance of his remarks than to his literal expressions. He was very guarded in his expressions, but his meaning and tone of feeling as distinctly implied, I have endeavoured to give you with as much brevity and exactness as possible.

I was informed by Mr. Crallé, the Editor of the Reformer, a paper published in this City, that Great Britain was applied to some time since by Mexico for the purpose of ascertaining whether she had any desire to obtain possession of Texas and that she gave a decisive reply in the negative. This information I of course obtained without reference to any thing I had learned from the Department of State, and I think it may be relied upon as correct.

I received intelligence this morning from New Orleans that seven or eight brigades of Mexicans were in full march to Texas under Bravo. Should this intelligence be confirmed, I shall be anxious to return to Texas to take part in the ensuing campaign, as I was debarred an opportunity of proving my patriotism in the last, and permit me to hope that some part will be reserved for me which will enable me to show how sincere and disinterested my zeal for the cause of liberty and Texas.

Ross, the Cherokee Chief, was here a few days since. I regretted that I was not aware of it until it was too late to see him. He has great control over his tribe and they talk of moving westward shortly. They number about 5000 warriors and would be a useful ally, should we be so hard pushed as to need foreign assistance, or in event of an offensive course being determined on, or should the Government hereafter feel an appetite for the Californias.

Mexico had half a mind to declare war against the United States, when she heard of the recognition of our independence, but the prevailing opinion here is that she will remain contented with the protest she has already uttered by the mouth of her Secretary at War against the duplicity, injustice and false dealing of this Government towards her.

I have the honor to inform you that an Exequatur has been issued to Nathaniel Townsend as Consul of the Republic of Texas for the Port of New Orleans and made public in the usual manner.

With great consideration,
I am Your Obedient Servant

FAIRFAX CATLETT
Secy Texian Legation

Honorable J. PINCKNEY HENDERSON
Secretary of State.