

Letter from General Taylor

My dear Sir: Your very kind and acceptable letter of the 31st August, received me only a short time since, for which I beg leave to tender you my sincere thanks. [A few confidential remarks on certain public transactions are here omitted.]

After considerable apparent delay on the part of the Qr. Master's Department, in getting steamboats into the Rio Grande adapted to his navigation, I succeeded, towards the latter part of August, in throwing forward to Camargo, (a town situated on the San Juan river, 3 miles from its junction with the Rio Grande, on the west side, nearly 500 miles from Brazos Island by water and 200 by land, and 140 from this place,) a considerable depot of provisions, ordnance, ammunition and forage, and then, having brought together an important portion of my command, I determined on moving on this place. Accordingly, after collecting 1700 pack-mules, with their attendants and conductors, in the enemy's country, (the principal means of transportation for our provisions, baggage, &c.) I left on the 5th of September, to join my advance, which had proceeded me a few days to Serralvo, a small village 75 miles on the route, which I did on the 9th, and, after waiting there a few days for some of the troops to get up, moved on and reached here on the 19th, with 6,250 men—2,700 regulars, the balance volunteers. For what took place afterwards, I must refer you to my several reports—particularly to my detailed one of the 9th ult. I do not believe the authorities at Washington see at all satisfied with my conduct in regard to the terms of the capitulation entered into with the Mexican commander, which you no doubt have seen, as they have been made public through the official organ, and copied into various other newspapers. I have this moment received an answer (to my despatch announcing the surrender of Monterey, and the circumstances attending the same,) from the Secretary of War, stating that "it was regretted by the President, that it was not deemed advisable to insist on the terms I had proposed in my first communication to the Mexican commander, in regard to giving up the city," adding that "the circumstances which dictated no doubt justified the change."

Although the terms of capitulation may be considered too liberal on our part by the President and his advisers, as well as by many others at a distance, particularly by those who do not understand the position which we occupied, (otherwise they might come to a different conclusion in regard to the matter,) yet, on due reflection, I see nothing to induce me to regret the course I pursued. The proposition on the part of Gen. Ampudia, which had much to do in determining my course in the matter, was based on the ground that our government had proposed to him to settle the existing difficulties by negotiation, (which I knew was the case, without knowing the result,) which was then under consideration by the proper authorities, and which he (Gen. Ampudia) had no doubt would result favorably, as the whole of his people were in favor of peace. If so, I considered the effusion of blood not only unnecessary, but impolitic. Their force was also considerably larger than ours; and from the size and position of the place, we could not completely invest it; so that the greater portion of their troops, if not the whole, had they been disposed to do so, could, any night, have abandoned the city, and retreated to the mountain passes, and would have been in a position to do so. Had we been put to the alternative of taking the place by storm, (which there is no doubt we should have succeeded in doing,) we should, in all probability, have lost fifty or a hundred men in killed, besides the wounded, which I wished to avoid, as there appeared to be a prospect of peace, even if a distant one. I also wished to avoid the destruction of women and children, which must have been very great, had the storming process been resorted to.—Besides, they had a very large and strong fortification, a short distance from the city, which if carried with the bayonets, must have been taken at a great sacrifice of life; and with our limited train of heavy or battery artillery, it would have required twenty or twenty-five days to take it by regular approaches. That they should have surrendered a place nearly as strong as Quebec, well fortified under the direction of skillful engineers, garrisoned by 7,000 regulars and 2,000 irregular troops, in addition to some thousand citizens capable of (and no doubt actually) bearing arms, and siding in its defence,—to an opposing force of half their number, scantily supplied with provisions, and with a light train of artillery,—is among the unaccountable occurrences of the times. I am decidedly opposed to carrying the war beyond Saltillo in this direction, which place has been entirely abandoned by the Mexican forces, all of whom have been concentrated at San Luis Potosi; and I shall lose no time in taking possession of the former as soon as the cessation of hostilities referred to expires, which I have notified the Mexican authorities will be the case on the 13th inst., by direction of the President of the United States. If we are (in the language of Mr. Polk and General Scott) under the necessity of "contending a peace,"—and that by taking the capital of the country,—we must go to Vera Cruz, take that place, and then march on to the city of Mexico. To do so in any other direction, I consider out of the question. But, admitting that we conquer a peace by doing so,—say, at the end of the next twelve months,—will the amount of blood and treasure, which must be expended in doing so, be compensated by the same? I think not,—especially, if the country were to be given up; and I imagine there are but few individuals in our country who think of annexing Mexico to the United States. I do not intend to carry on my operations (as previously stated) beyond Saltillo,—deeming it next to impracticable to do so. It then becomes a question as to what is the best to be done. It seems to me, the most judicious course to be pursued on our part, would be to take possession, at once, of the line we would occupy by negotiation, extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific; and occupy the same, or keep what we already have possession of; and that, with Tampico, (which I hope to take in the course of the next month, or as soon as I can get the means of transportation,) will give us all on this side of the Sierra Madre, and as soon as I occupy Saltillo, will include six or seven States of the Republic, from including Tampico, Victoria, Monterey, Saltillo, Monterrey, Chihuahua, (which I presume General Wool has possession of by this time,) Santa Fe, and the California;—and may to Mexico, "Drive us from the country."—I am throwing on her the responsibility and expense of carrying on an offensive war,—at the same time closely block-

ading all her ports on the Pacific and the Gulf. A source of this kind, if persevered in for a short time, would soon bring her to her proper senses, and compel her to sue for peace.—Provided there is a government in the country sufficiently stable for us to treat with, which, I fear, will hardly be the case for many years to come. Without large reinforcements of volunteers from the United States,—say ten or fifteen thousand, (those previously sent out having already been greatly reduced by sickness and other casualties,) I do not believe it would be advisable to march beyond Saltillo, which is more than 200 miles beyond our depots on the Rio Grande,—a very long line on which to keep up supplies (over a land route, in a country like this) for a large force, and certain to be attended with an expense which will be frightful to contemplate, when closely looked into. From Saltillo to San Luis Potosi, the next place of importance on the road to the city of Mexico, is three hundred miles,—one hundred and forty badly watered, where no supplies of any kind could be procured for men or horses. I have informed the War Department that 20,000 efficient men would be necessary to insure success if we moved on that place,—(a city containing a population of 60,000, where the enemy could bring together and sustain, besides the citizens, an army of 50,000, a force which, I apprehend, will hardly be collected by us with the train necessary to feed it, as well as to transport various other supplies, particularly ordnance and munitions of war. In regard to the armistice, which would have expired, by limitation, in a few days, we lost nothing by it, as we could not move even now, had the enemy continued to occupy Saltillo; for, strange to say, the first wagon which has reached me since the declaration of war, was on the 2d inst., the same day on which I received from Washington an acknowledgement of my despatch announcing the taking of Monterey; and then I received only 126, so that I have been, since May last, completely crippled, and am still so, for want of transportation. After taking and scraping the country for miles around Camargo, collecting every pack-mule and other means of transportation, I could bring here only 80,000 rations, (fifteen days supply,) with a moderate supply of ordnance, ammunition, &c., to do which, all the troops had to leave behind a portion of their camp equipage necessary for their comfort, and in some instances among the volunteers, their personal baggage. I moved in such a way, and with such limited means, that, had I not succeeded, should no doubt have been severely reprimanded, if nothing worse. I did so to sustain the Administration. Of the two regiments of mounted men from Tennessee and Kentucky, who left their respective States to join me, in June, the latter has just reached Camargo; the former has got to Matamoros at the latest dates from there. Admitting that they will be as long returning as in getting here, to say nothing of the time necessary to recruit their horses, and were to be discharged in time to reach their homes, they could serve in Mexico but a very short time. The foregoing remarks are not made with the view of finding fault with any one, but to point out the difficulties with which I have had to contend. Monterey, the capital of New Leon, is situated on the San Juan River, where it comes out of the mountains—the city contains a population of about twelve thousand,) being in part surrounded by them, at the head of a large and beautiful valley. The houses are of stone, in the Moorish style, with flat roofs, which, with their strongly-enclosed yards and gardens in high stone walls all looked for masonry, make them each a fortress within itself. It is the most important place in Northern Mexico, (or on the East side of Sierra Madre,) commanding the only pass or road for carriages from this side, between it and the Gulf of Mexico, to the table lands of the Sierra, by it through which the city of Mexico can be reached. I much fear I shall have exhausted your patience, before you get half through this long and uninteresting letter. If so, you can only commit it to the flames, and think no more about it, as I write in great haste, besides being interrupted every five minutes; so that you must make great allowances for blots, interjections and blunders, as well as want of connection in so many parts of the same. Be so good as to present me most kindly to your excellent lady, and accept my sincere wishes for your continued health, prosperity and fame. I remain, truly and sincerely, your friend, Z. TAYLOR.

STEAMBOAT EXPLOSION.—The steamboat Tuscaloosa burst her boilers recently, about ten or twelve miles above Mobile. A number of persons, some reports say fifty, were killed, and a large number injured. The New Orleans Picayune of the 31st says there were some thirty kegs of powder on board, which, when the vessel took fire, exploded. It is supposed there were near one hundred passengers on board at the time of the accident. The Picayune says:—"On the person of Mr. Beasley was said to be \$22,000 in bills, at the time of the accident. His body was afterwards found, but burnt to a crisp, and the money was supposed to have been destroyed. In the safe of the Tuscaloosa, it is said, there were \$47,000 in bills, besides gold and silver, and a great many letters with money in them. The safe was dug from the wreck by the captain of the Winona, and brought down to Mobile, but we could not ascertain whether the paper money was destroyed or not. "A large portion of the cargo, which was valuable, is of course destroyed, while the passengers lost nearly every thing they had. Not a portion of their furniture or baggage was saved. The boat was two years old, of the largest class, and doing a heavy business on the river. "On landing, it was found impracticable to obtain a dry footing, as the banks of the river were overflowed. In this condition, those who were able, climbed trees, &c., where they remained in view of the burning ruins for about three hours, when fortunately the steamboat James Howitt hove in sight, and was shortly alongside the wreck, when assistance was immediately given to all who remained. The Howitt returned to Mobile with the survivors."

A COINCIDENCE.—Mrs. Watson's wife gave birth to a child upon the day he fell at Monterey. The child, which is a girl, has been christened Monterey Watson. The difficulty with Brazil has been amicably adjusted between Mr. Buchanan and the Brazilian minister at Washington, Mr. Lisboa, to the satisfaction of both governments.

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Fifteen Days Later from Europe.

Arrival of the Steamship Sarah Sands. Further advance in Breadstuffs—Deplorable condition of Ireland—Meeting of the English and French Parliaments—Important measures of the Queen's Speech and British Ministry—Opening of the English and French Ports, &c.

Highly Important from Mexico.

Contemplated Attack on Vera Cruz. The southern mail which arrived this evening brings the Picayune extra, of the 2d inst., containing news from Anton Lizardo, to the 20th ult. Letters received state that the Mexican Congress, on the 9th, after a stormy debate, approved the first section of a bill authorizing the Government to raise fifteen millions of dollars by the hypothecation and sale of certain property belonging to the Church. Santa Anna opposed this, and it is rumored that his opposition so exasperated his soldiers that they had shot him.

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documents, and that his friends may know that they come from him by the fact that he shall direct the name of the Post Office in German text. H. M. Steamship Sphinx, 1050 tons and 500 horses power, left New Orleans for Vera Cruz on a reef of rocks near the Isle of Wight. A letter from Mr. Calden, dated Marseilles, Dec. 20th, says: "I find an immense movement in corn, and the port is crowded with ships; upwards of one million, two hundred thousand quarters of wheat have been imported, and nearly all has gone into the interior, chiefly in the direction of Lyons. The roads are so out up by the transport of it, that they resemble rivers of mud. The French Government has suspended the navigation laws, and corn is brought in free duty by shops of all nations, from any port. A large portion of it is brought here from the Black Sea in Greek ships." FRANCE.—The papers contain the speech of the King of the French, at the opening of the Chambers. He speaks in terms of great satisfaction of the marriage of his Son by the Infanta of Spain; has concluded a commercial treaty with Russia; protested against the extinction of Craew; he says the activity and resources of France continue to increase. &c. The Bank of France has been relieved by loan of bullion by the Bank of England. Four steamers laden with corn, had foundered in the Rhone, on their way to Lyons; one of them contained 2000 sacks of wheat, and sunk under the enormous weight of her cargo. SPAIN.—Accounts from Madrid to 11th ult speak of a charge in the ministry as likely to take place. The Spanish Cortes were opened on the 31st of December. The Queen's speech recommends liberal provisions for the clergy and church. PERSIA.—It is stated that the cholera continues to make frightful ravages throughout nearly all Persia. TURKEY.—Several important changes in the ministry have taken place, which may lead to a crisis in the government. The revolutionary movement under Mahmud, in Bosnia, has been put down by the Turkish government. The chiefs were shot. ITALY.—The popularity of the Pope continues unabated. He has recently raised the wages of laborers, and given directions for extensive drainage works. POLAND, by an order of the Imperial Government, has really ceased to exist, and is to be incorporated with the Russian Empire. Warsaw is in a state of consternation. The Russian General Rudiga now occupies the frontiers of the old republic of Craew with 10,000 troops. Austria is alarmed at this movement. SWITZERLAND.—An inspectionary movement took place in the Canton Emmenthal on the 6th ult. The insurgents were put down. PORTUGAL.—Accounts from Lisbon to the 11th January, state that the entire kingdom is now tranquil, with the exception of the province of Minho, a portion of the north of Beira and a small part of Alemtejo. The Queen's authority is fully established. From Lisbon to Coimbra, a distance of 110 miles, and the revolutionary juntas displaced by legitimately constituted bodies, in every town upon the two lines of road, both old and new. COMING IT OVER THE POSTMASTER.—A Mr. Schwarz, "Democratic Senator of Michigan," as he signs himself in the Detroit papers, having been in the habit of transmitting state documents to his constituents, upon the cover of which he endorsed his name, finding that by the nonsensical decree of the Postmaster General that they were subjected to letter postage, announces that he shall hereafter send on the

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