

Diplomatic Correspondence.

1861.

FROM MR. TOOMBS, SECRETARY OF STATE.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, MONTGOMERY, March 16, 1861.

William L. Yancey, Pierre A. Rost, A. Dudley Mann, Esquires.

GENTLEMEN: You have been appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of Congress, Special Commissioners to Europe. Herewith you will receive your commissions as such to Great Britain, France, Russia, and Belgium, together with the usual letters of credence and introduction, accrediting and empowering you to represent the Confederate States near the Governments of those countries. In view of the importance of the mission with which you are charged, it is desirable that you should proceed to London with all dispatch consistent with your convenience, and enter upon the discharge of your duties. As shortly after your arrival at that city as you may deem judicious, you will seek an interview with Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs and communicate to him the object which you are deputed to accomplish.

You will inform him that the several Commonwealths comprising the Confederate States of America have, by act of their people in convention assembled, severed their connection with the United States; have reassumed the powers which they delegated to the Federal Government for certain specified purposes, under the compact known as the Constitution of the United States; and have formed an independent Government, perfect in all its branches, and endowed with every attribute of sovereignty and power necessary to entitle them to assume a place among the nations of the world. Although it will not be necessary to enter into a detailed statement of the reasons which impelled the people of the Confederate States to dissolve their union with the United States, it may be well to allude to some of the more prominent of the causes which produced that result, in order to show that the step was not taken hastily or passionately, but after long, patient, and mature

deliberation, when the people became convinced that their honor, and social and material welfare, demanded separation as the best means by which those vital interests could be preserved. You can point with force to the efforts which have been persistently made by the manufacturing States of the North to compel the agricultural interests of the South, out of the proceeds of their industry, to pay bounties to Northern manufacturers in the shape of high protective duties on foreign imports. Since the year 1828, whenever they had the power, the manufacturing Northern States, disregarding the obligations of our compact, in violation of the principles of justice and fair dealing, and in contempt of all remonstrance and entreaty, have carried this policy to great extremes, to the serious detriment of the industry and enterprise of the South. This policy, the injustice of which is strikingly illustrated by the high protective tariff just adopted by the Government at Washington, furnishes a strong additional vindication of the wisdom of the action of the Confederate States, especially in the estimation of those countries whose commercial interests, like those of Great Britain, are diametrically opposed to protective tariffs. When, however, in addition to this system, by which millions were annually extorted from our people to foster Northern monopolies, the attempt was made to overthrow the constitutional barriers by which our prosperity, our social system, and our right to control our own institutions were protected, separation from associates who recognized no law but self-interest and the power of numerical superiority became a necessity dictated by the instincts of self-preservation. You will not fail to explain that in withdrawing from the United States the Confederate States have not violated any obligations of allegiance. They have merely exercised the sovereignty, which they have possessed since their separation from Great Britain and jealously guarded, by revoking the authority which, for defined purposes and within defined limits, they had voluntarily delegated to the General Government, and by reassuming themselves the exercise of the authority so delegated. In consummating this act of separation, no public or private interest has suffered the least shock or detriment. No right has been impaired, no obligation has been forfeited. Everywhere in the Confederate States order and respect for individual and collective rights have been scrupulously observed.

The Confederate States, therefore, present themselves for admission into the family of independent nations, and ask for that acknowledgment and friendly recognition which are due to every people capable of self-government and possessed of the power to maintain their independence.

The Confederate States have a well-organized Government instituted by the free will of their citizens, in the active exercise of all the functions of sovereignty, and are capable of defending themselves. The Constitution* which their Congress has just unanimously adopted (a copy of which, duly authenticated by this Department, you will hand to Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of Foreign Affairs) is the best proof which you can afford of the wisdom, moderation, and justice which have guided their counsels.

One of the Confederate States (Alabama) has, already, by an almost unanimous vote of her convention, ratified that instrument; and, doubtless, long before you reach your destination all the other States of the Confederacy will have accepted it with equal unanimity as their fundamental law. It is the confident expectation of the President and people of the Confederate States that the enlightened Government of Great Britain will speedily acknowledge our independence and welcome us among the nations of the world. The recent course which the British Government pursued in relation to the recognition of the right of the Italian people to change their form of government and choose their own rulers encourages this Government to hope that they will pursue a similar policy in regard to the Confederate States. Reasons no less grave and valid than those which actuated the people of Sicily and Naples to cast off a government not of their choice and detrimental to their interests have impelled the people of the Confederate States to dissolve the compact with the United States, which, diverted from the just and beneficent purposes of its founders, had become dangerous to their peace, prosperity, and interest. Representations may, however, be made to the British Government by the Government at Washington, that our existence as an independent country will be of but temporary duration, and that we can be induced by certain concessions to reënter the Union, from which we recently severed our

*See Vol. I., p. 37.

connection. If an impression of this kind has been or shall be made upon the British Ministry, you will leave no exertions unemployed for its definite removal. I need not assure you that neither the Government nor the citizens of the Confederate States of America regard such an occurrence as within the range of possibility.

Our experience of the past, our hopes of the future, unite us cordially in a resolute purpose not again to identify our political fortunes with the Northern States. If we were not secure in our rights and property under such an instrument as the Constitution of the United States, we see no reasonable prospect of securing them by additional guarantees. You will therefore steadily maintain, in your intercourse with foreign functionaries and otherwise, that in every contingency the Confederate States are resolute in their purpose to preserve and perpetuate their national independence. The Confederate States assume the position in the firm conviction that thus alone can they secure their future happiness and tranquillity, and that they have the moral and physical strength to hold and cause their position to be respected. Against the only power which is at all likely to question our independence and disturb our peace, the United States, we possess abundant means for successful defense. In the first place, we are in a condition now to bring into the field 100,000 well-armed troops, and, should they be required, this number could be increased almost to the extent of our arms-bearing population. Secondly, should the United States, actuated by lust of dominion, numerical superiority, or the fancied possession of a right to compel our allegiance to them, determine to invade our soil or otherwise assail us, they would have to contend not only against the 5,000,000 of people of the Confederate States, but against the 8,000,000 also who inhabit the eight other States allied to us by community of institutions and interest, and by geographical position, and who, although they have not as yet resolved to sever their connection with the United States, would do so immediately, and join us in arms, the moment the first gun was fired against us by order of the Government of the United States. The resolutions of the popular conventions of those States amply attest the accuracy of this calculation. Thirdly, you are aware that in most, if not all, of the Northern States large

and influential portions of the population have manifested the most determined opposition to any attempt to force us to reunite ourselves to our late confederates. Fourthly, you will remember that the Government of the United States is at this time wholly destitute of the power and the means to commence an aggressive war.

The legislative branch of the Government has refused, by omitting to make the necessary provisions for that purpose, to arm the Executive with any authority to make war.

It is needless also to point out in what condition the United States would be placed were they to be entirely cut off from our custom for their manufactures, and our \$250,000,000 of produce for their commerce and exchange. This combination of powerful inducements to preserve peace on the part of the United States, together with the large material strength and resources which we possess, renders it apparent to every observer that we have no unusual reasons to fear war. As soon as you shall be received officially by Great Britain you will propose to negotiate a treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation, and you are accordingly furnished herewith with full powers for that purpose. The principal aim of the Confederate States in their policy with foreign Governments is peace and commerce.

It will be their constant care to employ every means consistent with honor to maintain the one and extend the other. In their traffic with foreign countries, they intend to act upon that wise maxim of political economy: "Buy where you can buy cheapest, and sell where you can sell dearest."

Import duties for mere revenue purposes, so moderate as to closely approximate free trade, will render their markets peculiarly accessible to the manufactories of Europe, while their liberal navigation system will present valuable attraction to countries largely engaged in that enterprising pursuit. It must be borne in mind that nearly one-half of all the Atlantic coast and the whole of the Mexican Gulf coast lately within the boundaries of the United States are at present within the boundaries of the Confederate States. The Confederate States produce nearly nineteen-twentieths of all the cotton grown in the States which recently constituted the United States. There is no extravagance in the assertion that the gross amount of the annual yield of the manufacto-

ries of Great Britain from the cotton of the Confederate States reaches \$600,000,000. The British Ministry will comprehend fully the condition to which the British realm would be reduced if the supply of our staple should suddenly fail or even be considerably diminished. A delicate allusion to the probability of such an occurrence might not be unkindly received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, an occurrence, I will add, that is inevitable if this country shall be involved in protracted hostilities with the North. The President feels no hesitation in authorizing you to enter into such stipulations as in your judgment will be most advantageous to this country, subject, of course, to his approval and that of the coördinate branch of the treaty-making power. You are further to express to the British Minister the willingness of this Government to assume the obligations of the treaties concluded between the United States and Great Britain now in force.

The only exception is in reference to the clause of the treaty of Washington (known as the Ashburton treaty) which obliges the United States to maintain a naval force on the coast of Africa for the suppression of the African slave trade. It is not in our power to comply with this obligation. We have prohibited the African slave trade, and intend in good faith to prevent it in our country. But we are not prepared at this time to aid the rest of the world in promoting that object. When the object of your mission to London is accomplished, you will proceed to Paris and thence to Brussels, St. Petersburg, and such other places as the President may hereafter direct.

The arguments which you will use with Great Britain to induce her to establish relations with the Confederate States may be employed with France and the other countries to which you are accredited. With each of these countries you will propose to negotiate treaties of friendship, commerce, and navigation similar to that which you will propose to Great Britain, subject to the same reservations as to ratification here. You will correspond, as frequently as occasion may require, with this Department, transmitting your dispatches by such conveyances as you may deem the most safe and expeditious.

I remain, gentlemen, very respectfully yours, R. TOOMBS.