

# THE CUBAN BOND SCANDAL.

## Some Interesting Revelations from Colonel Pickett.

His Connection with Taylor—An Offer to Obtain the Recognition of Cuban Belligerency—Ben Butler to Do the Job for \$300,000—Taylor's Character Ventilated—Letter of Pickett to the Committee on the Judiciary.

WASHINGTON, June 20, 1870.

As I explained in my despatches the day after the Cuban bond lobby canard got into print that the whole thing was a fraud and invention of the enemy, I am only repeating the same thing now when I state that each day proves more and more clearly the soundness of my views at that time. Taylor, the great chief lobbyist, turns out to be worse than a myth—a first class Munchausen, if not a fellow under Spanish pay. The following letter from General Pickett, whom Taylor declared he employed as his attorney in the business, will be found a complete clincher:—

WASHINGTON, June 20, 1870.

Once upon a time a lexicographer or a natural historian, no matter which, defined the crab to be "a small fish, of red color, which runs backward," whereupon a malicious wretch said that the definition was an excellent one except in three small particulars, namely:—First, the crab isn't a fish; second, it is not of red color, and third, it does not run backward.

Now, it is a very unamiable thing to spoil a good story, whether a fish story or a crab story; but the painful duty devolves upon me to say that Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Taylor's wonderful developments with regard to Cuban affairs have scarcely more foundation in fact than the philosopher's description of the aforesaid crustacean. There are some grains of truth in it, mingled with a vast amount of fiction, besides matters which I now hear of for the first time, and with regard to which I cannot express an opinion. I say, therefore, first, that I never made a contract with Mr. Ruiz on behalf of Mr. Taylor, nor on behalf of any one else; second, that I never authorized or instructed Mr. Taylor to offer Cuban bonds or money to any member of Congress, nor to any other official, and third, that all he says about the \$300,000 cash is a fabrication pure and simple. Thus I dispose of his crab story.

My acquaintance with Mr. Taylor is not particularly interesting or germane to this subject, but it came about in a regular business way. He had a claim in the Treasury upon which a speedy decision was expected. A friend of twenty years' standing introduced him to me and I was employed by him to settle some business with his attorneys of record and to negotiate a loan for him; I did both. He paid my fees and there those relations ended. I never knew anything as to the merits of his claim; had nothing to do with it.

When I returned from the mountains in the autumn he besieged and surrounded me about Cuban affairs. I told him finally to get rid of him (as the girl got rid of her importunate lover when she married him) that if he could bring about the accomplishment of that which he said he could do for the cause of Cuba he should be munificently rewarded, if I was put in condition to reward him. I forbade his telling me how and through whom he was to bring about the recognition of belligerent rights, and though of rather a glib disposition, he never did, that I can now recall, mention the names of more than two officials in connection with the subject. Neither did he introduce the name of more than one member of Congress—a distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, the initials of whose name are Benjamin Franklin Butler. He said this gentleman had offered to put the Cuban business through Congress for \$300,000 cash, and that if we didn't employ him the other side would. I replied that my opinion of General Butler's lofty and unspotted character and unimpeachable integrity was such that I was sure he (Taylor) was mistaken, and so declined to negotiate. Besides, the Cubans had no money.

I ought not to omit saying that, hearing of Senator Morton's noble efforts in behalf of Cuba, I asked Taylor if it was possible he, too, expected to be paid? To which I must give Taylor the credit of saying he gave a most emphatic negative, and I record the fact as an act of justice to that Senator, whom I never saw, and between whom and myself there is no accord politically.

Now I am not a man to rush into print without provocation. Having had poverty, obscurity, insignificance, results of the "late obsequies" imposed upon me, I have accepted my destiny and sought to lead a retired life. That I still struggle for the cause of Cuba should not surprise the few who may know that I was her earliest friend in this country. I gave my services to Narciso Lopez twenty-two years ago; went on a mission for him to the ever faithful island; assisted in organizing three expeditions from this country in '49, '50 and '51; accompanied that of '51 and commanded at the battle of Cardenas, where we defeated the Spaniards under General Lemery, May 13. I am not proposing to write my own biography, but mention the foregoing so as to be able to add that in all this time I have never received a cent of Cuban money; nor am I now prepared to accept of Spanish gold. The appended affidavit of Colonel Ferry disposes of the late Mr. N. B. Taylor as a credible witness. I call attention to my correspondence with the Hon. John A. Bingham, and would add that being absolved by my Cuban clients from any obligations as counsellor, I am ready to testify:—

With regard to members of Congress my acquaintance with them can be counted on my fingers, including those whom I knew in ancient days. I am ashamed to say that I am unacquainted with half of the delegation from my own State—Kentucky—yet I am stigmatized as a lobbyist. As to the newspaper gentlemen, I do not know a half-dozen of them even by sight. I never spoke to any of them that I can recollect about Cuban bonds. I never was in the "row" on Fourteenth street but twice in my life, and then on purely private business. And as to Dr. Bliss and others mentioned by Taylor I never knew them by sight even until learning who they were when waiting on the committee.

Now, what are we to think of those who suborn the testimony of such men as Taylor and the expelled peddler of cadetships in order to aid them in crushing out the lives and liberties of the people of Cuba?

JOHN T. PICKETT.

**FERRY'S AFFIDAVIT.**  
City and County of Washington, District of Columbia, s. s.—Be. orome, N. Callan, a notary public to the city and county of Washington, D. C., duly authorized to administer oaths, personally came and appeared John H. Ferry, to me known as he represents himself to be, who, being duly sworn according to law, did depose and say that he was captain and lieutenant quartermaster United States volunteers, in charge of railroad and steamboat transportation at Louisville, Ky., during part of the year 1862; that he knows one N. B. Taylor, who has lately been figuring in Cuba affairs; that in the year 1863 the said Taylor entered into a conspiracy with Captain Samuel Black, assistant quartermaster United States Volunteers, and one Benson, to defraud the government of the United States in a forage contract, Taylor and Benson being the contractors. Black and Benson were arrested by United States authorities. Black was cashiered and imprisoned by sentence of court martial. Benson was also imprisoned. Taylor fled to Canada, thus eluding arrest by the United States officers and civil authorities, an indictment having been found against him in the United States District Court for the State of Kentucky. Taylor was considered the chief conspirator and concoctor of the entire scheme of fraud. He remained in Canada during the remainder of the war. Taylor's character where he is well known is that of a man in whom no confidence whatever can be placed. I would not believe his statements under oath.

JOHN H. FERRY,

formerly captain and A. Q. M. Vol., U. S. A. Subscribed and sworn to before me this 20th day of June, A. D. 1870.

N. CALLAN,

Notary Public.

MR. PICKETT TO HON. JOHN A. BINGHAM.  
WASHINGTON, 1,422 F Street, April 27, 1870.

Hon. JOHN A. BINGHAM, Chairman Judiciary Committee House of Representatives:—

SIR—An entire month has elapsed since I was first summoned before the committee of the House of Representatives appointed on the judiciary, of which the Hon. Benjamin F. Butler is acting chairman, to testify touching matters committed to said committee and not to depart without leave of said committee. The summons was obeyed and I have been before the committee not less than six times, namely, March 28 and 30, April 1, 4, 16 and 19, with the unfavorable result of a declension on my part to testify as to matters entrusted to me in the exercise of my legitimate functions as attorney and counsellor at law, which has been my profession for twenty-six years.

I have not been authoritatively informed of the precise object of the inquiry engaging the attention of the committee; but if correct in the conjecture that it has reference to an alleged attempt to influence by the use of Cuban bonds the votes of members of Congress, with regard to the desired recognition of the belligerent rights of the patriots of that island, I beg leave here to repeat what I assured the committee of—namely, that I know absolutely nothing of any such scheme, and that I never heard even the name of more than one member of Congress mentioned in connection with any such alleged corrupt transactions; nor had I, up to the time of the raising of the committee, ever spoken to him or had him spoken to on that or upon any other subject whatsoever. That I have been employed by a Cuban agent in this country as counsellor is undeniable; but, surely, his being here in a quasi diplomatic character does not deprive him of the right to take counsel of the friends of his honorable cause. My employment by him being strictly within the limits of professional business, I have persistently and respectfully refused to disgrace the profession and dishonor myself by revealing his confidences, howsoever those desired revelations might be supposed to be calculated to advance Spanish interests in this country or in the oppressed island of Cuba. I am sure that, if the gentlemen of the committee were in my position, they would take this view of the subject. Indeed, I am far from alleging any insensibility on their part to the considerations which are here presented.

The oath of an attorney and counsellor-at law is as follows:—"I do swear that I will truly and honestly demean myself in the practice of an attorney and counsellor-at-law according to the best of my knowledge and ability, to keep me God." It is a cardinal

principle of the profession to "maintain inviolate the secrets entrusted to you in your professional capacity. You must not betray them on any pretence on any provocation whatever. To be thought capable of doing so would quickly end in your ruin. The ingratitude, however cruel, of a client is, I repeat, no justification whatever of such unfaithfulness on your part to your sworn trust." [Lectures of Samuel Warren, of the Inner Temple, on the Moral, Social and Professional Duties of Attorneys and Solicitors.]

Having invited the attention of the committee to Lord Chancellor Brougham's famous judgment in Greenough against Gaskell it seems the question of privilege was referred to the full committee on the judiciary, and I am confident General Butler was under a misapprehension as to the fact when he stated to me that it had been decided by your committee I should not be permitted to plead privilege, but should be compelled to testify. My object in addressing you sir, is to request that I may be released from the position of suspense in which this affair has placed me. My business requires my presence elsewhere, but the subpoena forbids my departure without leave of the committee. I have no complaint to make of treatment received from the committee. The threat of imprisonment was, surely, only a bit of pleasantry. Even the many hours spent in listening to the debates of Congress, while waiting upon the committee, were not wholly unprofitable. Neither do I take exception to General Butler's having elicited the fact that I had been Confederate Commissioner to Mexico, and afterwards a military officer of that government, though it is not perfectly clear to me what those facts have to do with the alleged attempt to bribe members of Congress with Cuban bonds. I have the honor to be sir, very respectfully,

JOHN T. PICKETT.

HON. JOHN A. BINGHAM TO MR. PICKETT.  
FORTY-FIRST CONGRESS UNITED STATES,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., April 29, 1870.  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Colonel JOHN T. PICKETT:—  
SIR—The Committee on the Judiciary having considered your memorial have directed me to notify you that you are not required to attend further as a witness before the committee until you are further notified to do so, and that you are at liberty to leave. Very respectfully,  
JOHN A. BINGHAM,  
Chairman Judiciary Committee of House Representatives.