

John Middleton Clayton Papers, Library of Congress

Washington and New-Orleans Magnetic Telegraph Company.

Dated New Orleans May 29th 1850

To Hon Jno M Clayton

Genl Lopez has not arrived yet in this City if he comes here I will cause him to be arrested according to your instructions there is much excitement here against him

Logan Hunton

1/2 past 4 P.M.

June 9 / 50

My dear Sir,

I have nabbed Lopez. The enclosed telegraphic despatch just recvd from Hunton with whom I have been in constant communication renders it unnecessary to send any agent to New Orleans I think. Rely on it Hunton will now do his duty. To send C. to assist him would after all I have written to him, only serve to irritate him.

I have furnished the instructions as you directed. But I now beg that the Attorney may be trusted.

I shall attend at 8 this Evng the [...].

Ever faithfully Yours  
J. M. Clayton

The President

P.S. It has just occurred to me since we have caught Lopez while it would not be better to *stop* the Cabinet meeting tonight which being now not necessary will only create alarm & false rumours.

Private & Confidential

Havana June 13" 1850

Hon John M Clayton

Washington City

My dear Sir,

If the views expressed in my letter to the Captain General of the captures made by the General of Marines at Contoy be correct, and are sustained by the President, the settlement of the question will probably be one of great difficulty, perhaps war. The Government here, are proceeding with the trial, this viewed in connection with the language held by the Capt General to Captain Randolph & myself evidences a determination to justify the capture, and to claim exclusive cognizance of the subject. If the right to try be conceded, the right to decide, and enforce the decision must follow.

Strange as it may appear, it is not improbable that war is desired, it has leaked out from an Employee as the opinion of this Government, that the Government of the United States is either unwilling, or incompetent to retrain expeditions against the Island, if the first, that it must be held responsible, if the last, that it should be required so to modify their institutions as to give them full power to secure other nations from dangers similar to those from which the Island has just escaped. They say moreover that the Island will probably be lost in a few years unless obviated by a war, and if it be lost it will be better for the officers of this Government, the Ministry, and perhaps for Spain to lose it by war than otherwise. The last event is thought doubtful (they say) for they have a childish confidence in themselves, and rely upon a secret treaty with England for the aid of that power. The

employee has represented the foregoing not only as the feeling of this Government, but also of Genl Narvaez as expressed to them.

I view the purchase of the Island by the United States as next an impossibility. No Ministry whatever false showing they may make would dare to carry it out. The open attempt would not only drive the ministry from power, but from the array of interests against the alienation endanger the safety of the throne. These interests are as follows, All offices here are filled from Specie -- All prominent officers of the Household of her Majesty, of the Army & Navy, Lawyers & Doctors look to this Island as the place to obtain station & wealth -- here their Agricultural interests find their market-- their Manufacturing interests of Barcelona partially the same -- from discriminating duties in favor of Spanish vessels almost all European cargoes are imported under the Spanish flag, and the Island in this way sustains more than three fourths of the whole mercantile marine of Spain-- large capitals in Spain, in the hands of unprincipled men are invested in the Slave trade, earning an annual sale of slaves in this Island of from three to four million of dollars. You readily discover that such a union of interests, and among people unaccustomed to civil war would be too strong for a Ministry if not fatal to a dynasty. That Cristina and a Ministry could be bought I have no doubt from my knowledge of Spanish character, if the thing could be done in secrecy, but the action of the Cortes, and the result would make that impossible. Those different interests would be firmly united, and arrayed against any measure the tendency of which would be to their injury.

Although this Government as above stated relies so strongly upon English aid, it is too wilful to conciliate. I will relate the following as one of many evidences. Some time since a Slaver with a large cargo of slaves arrived, the slaves were landed, the mate a British subject called on his Consul, gave information of the landing &c The Consul in notifying the Captain General indiscreetly gave the name of his informer, the man was arrested, tried, and sentenced to the chain gang, while the Captain and crew by design or negligence were permitted to escape. The Consul not being able to effect the release of his unfortunate informer acquainted his Government with the circumstances Lord Palmerston has written two letters at different times to the Consul to be used with the Capt. General. They were used, and without effect thus placing the English ministry in the awkward predicament of fruitlessly attempting to screen an individual from the penalties imposed by law for being engaged in a traffic they have made such strenuous efforts to abolish.

Whether the relations made by the employee be entirely reliable I cannot say, and give you the information individually for what it may be worth, only adding that similar sentiments have been expressed by a personal friend of the General of Marines.

I am Dear Sir  
Your Truly  
Robert B Campbell

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Department of State  
Washington June 18, 1850

My dear Sir

I hereby resign the office of Secretary of State -- the resignation to take effect, when my successor shall be appointed.

During the last sixteen months, I have been able to devote not a single day, scarcely a single hour, to my own private affairs, the derangement of which resulting from this neglect, now absolutely requires my attention. This is the reason, and the true reason for my resignation; and I state it because

I do not wish to leave room for any possible inference, that I am dissatisfied with the measures of your administration. I desire to add that the uniform kindness and confidence, which you have exhibited towards me, while engaged in the arduous duties of my laborious office, have merited and now receive my most grateful acknowledgements.

On taking leave, I think it my duty, to say, that the Administration of the State Department requires a considerable accession to its clerical force. Such was the opinion of my predecessor, four years ago; and since that period, the necessity of an additional force then strongly demonstrated by him, in a report to a committee of the House of Representatives, which met with no response from Congress, has been greatly increased. It has been only by the devotion of all my time, denying to myself any period for amusement or recreation and endeavoring to perform the duties of a clerk as well as Secretary of State, that I have succeeded in keeping up the business of the Department. I have made this statement in the hope that it may aid in procuring for my successor, whoever he may be, clerical assistance sufficient to enable him to discharge his duties without making himself a slave. The number of clerks in the Department of State is believed to be less than that employed in some respectable counting houses in our cities and they are by no means so well paid. The creation of the Department of the Interior did not relieve this of a tithe of the labor devolve upon it by the increase of its foreign correspondence.

On retiring from the public service I wish also to tender, through you, to my colleagues in the administration, my thanks for the friendship & courtesy which have marked their intercourse with me; and to conclude this letter, already perhaps too long, with the expression of a sincere wish for the happiness of yourself and them individually and for the honor and success of your administration.

I am, my dear Sir, with the highest respect and esteem

Faithfully yours,  
J. M. Clayton

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Frankfort, June 22nd 1850

My Dear Sir

It is so long since I have received a line from you, that I feel almost as if I was addressing a stranger, to whom some apology was due for such a liberty.

A letter of our friend Burnley's, of the 5th June: from Washington, informs me of your conversation with him, concerning my friend Barbour, on whose behalf I had written to you on several previous occasions. Burnby tells me that you were both at a loss, for his Christian name, & requests me to give it to you. His name is "George W. Barbour" -- his residence Princeton, Caldwell County, Kentucky.

Burnby informs me that you declare he (Barbour) shall have the judgeship in Calafornia [*sic*], when it becomes disposeable. [*sic*] I thank you cordially for this. And if circumstances should arise to prevent his getting that office, I hope I may consider what you have said as an assurance that he shall have some other office equivalent, as near as may be.

You have had an arduous [*sic*] time, indeed, in the number & importance of the foreign difficulties & questions that have been thrown upon you. But you have no cause to regret these labors. You have performed them with a signal success & ability, that can not fail to be rewarded with the public applause.

The attitude you have taken in respect to the Cuba Affair is exactly the right one -- popular, proud & National -- brandishing the laws of the land over the heads of Lopes [*sic*] & his lawless

followers, and at the same time giving Spain to be warned that she is to shed no drop of American blood, *unjustly* or in revenge.

I should be gratified to hear from you occasionally, & as your convenience will permit.

Yr Friend &c

J J Crittenden

Hon: J. M. Clayton

Secty: of State

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*Confidential*

New Orleans June 22 1850

Sir

Some of the adventurers in the late Cuban expedition smarting under the developments that have been made in the investigation recently had in relation to that affair are concocting a silly story affecting you. I have hesitated whether I should impart to it sufficient importance to make it the subject of communication to you; but on the whole considering the desperation of those persons who have engaged in circulating the story, I have concluded that it would be proper to inform you of it.

It is this -- A gentleman known to you, I suppose, was summoned to appear and give evidence before the Grand Jury, he did not attend. I caused an attachment to be issued to enforce his attendance -- whilst he was in custody of the Marshal I met him on the Street, he informed me that he was about leaving the City the same day, and [...] that he was detained without cause and requested to be discharged; I replied that I deemed his testimony important and would not consent that he should be discharged without appearing before the Grand Jury; he then requested to say a word to me in private. I stepped aside with him and he said "If I am force to testify in this Case I warn you that I will implicate Mr. Clayton" I replied "you cannot escape in that way: you will be forced to testify whoever you may implicate, even if it was one higher than Mr. Clayton." I told him the next day that his threat made it absolutely necessary that he should testify -- he was therefore called to appear before the Grand Jury -- was sworn, and did not speak of a solitary fact implicating any one except Mr J L Sigur -- he was called twice before the Jury. I of course did not inquire of him as to the silly rumor which has been I presume for political purposes circulated here against you.

Whilst I am writing this an Evening paper has been placed on my hands which is the organ of these Cuban Patriots, edited by Mr Sigur one of the parties indicted promising tomorrow to make "astounding developments" showing that high Federal functionaries are inculpated in this affair.

As the same Mail which will bear this note also take the "Delta" the part referred to; I forbear for the comment. I will only add that Mr J L O'Sullivan is the gentleman who was summoned and who made to me the Communication.

I am very respectfully  
Your most obt servt  
Logan Hunton

Hon Jno M Clayton  
Washington