

TWO KENTUCKIANS EVALUATE THE MEXICAN SCENE FROM VERA CRUZ, 1853-1861

INTERESTING insights into the Mexican scene were provided the State Department by two Kentuckians, John T. Pickett and R. B. I. Twyman, who shared the office of United States consul at Vera Cruz from 1853 to 1861. Pickett, the more dramatic of the two, has been described as a "Southern filibuster of the type of William Walker." He had been a "general" in the Hungarian nationalist army of Kosuth, and had engaged in the López expeditions against Cuba. Most readers of United States diplomacy are well aware of Pickett's subsequent exploits in Mexico after having been appointed by Robert Toombs, Confederate Secretary of State, as diplomatic commissioner to the Juárez Government. Pickett had been recommended to Jefferson Davis by John Forsyth, former U.S. Minister to Mexico, who described him as eminently qualified. Pickett believed that he could advance the interests of the Confederacy by revealing to the Juárez Government the true nature of the Yankee Union's Puritan fanaticism; and, if the Juárez Party were to make cause with the Union, then he urged Confederate support of the Conservative Party. Upon arrival in Mexico, in July, 1861, he spoke with the Governor of Vera Cruz, Ignacio de la Llave, who assured him that his government would give equal treatment to the ships of the Union and of the Confederacy. Meantime, Thomas Corwin, Minister of the United States to Mexico, had the support of Liberal President Juárez. As the preference became more marked, Pickett became more indiscreet.¹ Mr. Pickett was forceful, shrewd and widely known in Mexico; and had for a number of years been closely associated with Benito Juárez and a group of Liberals. But he was tactless when angry and sharp-tongued. The telling of his adventures, between May, 1861 and 1864 is found in Frank L. Owsley's *King Cotton Diplomacy*.²

This writing is concerned primarily with the early "diplomacy" of Pick-

¹ Richard B. McCornack, "Los estados confederados y Mexico," in *Historia Mexicana*, 4:3 (Jan.-Mar., 1956). This writing is based on the Pickett Papers in the Library of Congress. It is to be noted that Pickett was received, in an unofficial visit by Mr. Zamacona, Secretary of the Juárez Government.

² Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, Chicago, 1959, 2nd ed., cf. chapter III. It is to be noted that Pickett's diplomacy was not only marred by indiscreet conversations, sarcasm, and disturbance of the peace for which he was jailed by the Mexican Government; but his despatches to Richmond were intercepted by the Juárez Government and handed over to the Government of the Union.

ett, as consul in the port of Vera Cruz, and secondarily with the shorter and less dramatic action of Mr. Twyman who succeeded him. Whatever may be said of the brawling and undiplomatic behavior of the Confederate agent, it must be admitted that his correspondence between 1853 and 1861 is both interesting and probably reflects much truth of the political, religious and commercial aspects of the Mexican scene.

John T. Pickett acknowledged his appointment, as United States consul at Vera Cruz by a letter to Secretary of State, William L. Marcy on June 2, 1853.³ This port was vital for Mexican trade in times of peace and war, since it was the main entrance-depot of supplies for Mexico City and all points of the compass radiating out from it. Whoever controlled Vera Cruz had good chances of producing a successful revolution. Pickett observed in his first despatch that Vera Cruz and Alvarado had originally constituted a single consular post, but that low salaries had deterred good personnel from taking the position: "There are no foreign clerks employed in this office. Were I to divide the fees with one, even of the most moderate appetite, we would both starve." The consular records, he said, were in a disordered state; and "have been read by half the foreign merchants and merchants' clerks in Vera Cruz—the Consulate having been bandied about and shifted from one merchant's counting-house to another a full half-dozen times in less than that number of years." He had found the consular archives "in the corner of the warehouse of Hargous Brothers." In early 1854, he again criticized the post as "an expensive and disagreeable place," and asserted that "the fees of office won't (sic) keep body and soul together." He described his predecessors as a "line of drunkards, thieves and idiots:"

The Department of State must not imagine that I am inhospitably received here . . . I am not contemned as an American and am even endured as a Kentuckian; but the moment the Consulate is mentioned there is an end of it all . . . The office recently enjoyed in rapid succession by three French merchants' clerks, one Dutch Jew, an exiled patriot of Cuba, and a New York Bowery-boy.⁴

Center stage in 1854 was held by James Gadsden, arch-expansionist

³ Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed., *American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 10 vols., N.Y., 1927-29. Cf. vol. VI, 168, 274, 326-350. The Democratic Administrations of Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, 1853-1861, were characterized by adventures in Manifest Destiny. Marcy was a convinced instrument of the expansionist Pierce; Secretary Lewis Cass was the mere expression of Buchanan who plotted in imperialism.

⁴ Pickett to Marcy, Dec. 21, 1853; Feb. 20, Mar. 12, 22, 1854. Cf. State Dept. Record Group No. 59, in National Archives (Wash.), under Micro-copy No. 183, roll 6. All future references will be abbreviated as: NAUS, MC.—, r.—. Mr. Pickett asked for a contingent fund of \$500 per year for "extraordinary expenses," but had no hope of reform in the consular service; twelve years of service had convinced him of this.

and drafter of the Treaty of La Mesilla, and by maverick President Antonio López de Santa Anna who signed the Treaty that yielded the Gadsden Purchase to the United States. This was only a small portion of the ambitious plan of Gadsden who, on April 3, 1855, was to advise Secretary Marcy that:

If property, extension of territory, or other grants or commercial privileges are not acceptable as a means of settlement (of claims), resort must be had to the sword, which will end in the absorption of the whole Republic.

In early 1854 Gadsden asked Pickett to inform William S. Cazneau who had been appointed special agent to the Dominican Republic, on the conditions there. Pickett had visited "all parts of the Island during a series of years;" and part of his advice was to repose no confidence in Mr. Elliot, U.S. consul at Santo Domingo, "who is but the tool of Sir Robert Schomburgk, His Britannic Majesty's Consul."⁵

In matters of commerce the consul at Vera Cruz had little to say at the end of 1853, except to note that the American ship, *Lady Suffolk*, "some-time since seized and condemned as a slaver, is rotting in the harbor." In early 1854 he reported an announcement from *Eco del Comercio*, which stated that no vessel of foreign construction could pass the mouth of the River Coatzacoalcos (in the area of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), for the exporting of cabinet woods or other products, without the express consent of the Company holding the exclusive privilege under the Isthmus of Tehuantepec contract of 1853. Pickett said that several Americans were cutting and exporting mahogany from that area, and that protests had been made by the American company of Allen, Webster, & Maloney who feared that they would have to sacrifice their mahogany at the valuation of the Sloo Company. Pickett was convinced that:

neither Mr. Sloo or his associates in the United States will ratify this act of their agent and attorney Mr. Iturbide . . . Being on confidential terms with Mr. Sloo and the Directory of the Company in New Orleans I will give them my view on the subject very frankly, and have assured the mahogany men that they need have no fear of so unpopular and injudicious a measure being persisted in by the liberal-minded and enterprising projector of so great a scheme as the Tehuantepec road.

The consul provided additional material on shipping, ship-building, timber and duties at the port of Vera Cruz; and finally asked that a United States man-of-war visit the port of Vera Cruz. Domestic politics in Mexico

⁵ Gadsden to Marcy, April 3, 1855, in NAUS, MC. 97, r. 19. Sir Robert Schomburgk was the famous British agent who had been commissioned in 1840 to determine the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana.

were again critical. Santa Anna had declared himself "Perpetual Dictator" at the end of 1853, and the forces of revolt were forming. In mid-summer, 1854 Pickett complained of outrages against United States citizens and lack of justice in the tribunals of Santa Anna. He reported that, when the Government of Santa Anna required foreign and native persons to deliver up any arms, on threat of the death penalty, Pickett let some of them deposit them at the Consulate. This dictatorial government was also opposing the coastal trade in non-Mexican vessels. The consul was advised by experts in Mexican politics that Santa Anna—in the growing political conflict—would be coming to his estate at Vera Cruz, "for the purpose of again retiring into 'voluntary' exile." The year ended with Pickett speaking of the wide corruption in Mexico, and with a lecture for Secretary Marcy:

To understand the Mexicans thoroughly one must reside amongst them, or accept with implicit faith the statements of those who do. To judge this nation by its ever courteous representatives abroad would lead to great error. Courtesy is natural to all Mexicans; but I fear corruption—moral depravity—is not less so.⁶

The year 1855 was a time of Gadsden's dissatisfaction with his treaty, and pressure for more land grants from Mexico; but President Pierce was dissuaded from further expansion upon realizing his failure to get Cuba and Hawaii. It was also a time of invasion of Mexico by Texas Rangers who were in hot pursuit of fugitive slaves and marauding Indians; and, as some historians believe, "possibly also aimed at the occupation of territory needing a government." Meantime Mr. Pickett was giving free rein to his pen, acknowledging the Department of State's vindication of him "in not being an agent of Levy." Mr. Jonas T. Levy had sought to commission Pickett to gather business information; and the consul had not replied. The consul remarked:

I have already answered more letters from dentists, daguerreotypists, pedlers, claim agents, patent medicine men, etc., etc., than it is my expectation to do hereafter. I am now persecuted about guano; and one person wants to know precisely how many tons of old iron can be had in and about this Heroic City. Another wants to know if I can buy him a cargo of nice clean bones! I expect soon to have a Commission from Chatham Street to enter into negotiations for the purchase of a shipload of old clothes.

The biting comments of the consul were then turned against the Mexican Government's Customs Collector. In late 1854 Pickett acknowledged receipt of four boxes addressed to *La Casa Profesa* in Mexico City, and

⁶ Pickett to Marcy, Dec. 22, 1853; Jan. 7, 22; Mar. 22; Aug. 7, 1854.

under special instructions from Secretary Marcy. Since the *Casa Profesa* was the residence of the Professed Fathers of the Society of Jesus, it is interesting to speculate on whether these may have been the archives of the Jesuits, and may in times of expulsion have been entrusted to the American Legation and been forwarded to Washington. We know that Santa Anna had decreed the restoration of the Jesuits in 1853—against the strong opposition of the Masonic dominated Congress. Whatever they may have been, Pickett was annoyed with the Customs Collector who was “withholding them from my grasp as inexorably as though His Excellency the Collector had been Apollo and the cases the nine Muses.” With a bit of whimsy he reported that the new Minister of Finance had released them, “wishing to exercise his new authority on the under-strappers and to reverse the decisions of his predecessors.”⁷

On March 4, 1855 Mr. Pickett took an extended vacation leave, and placed the consulate in the care of Henry Marquandt. Pickett's return and first writing to the Department on August 4 was formal and then piquant. He scored the Mexican treatment of the mails; and to avoid these abuses, he adopted the British custom of boating the mails in from the vessels. “In performing the service,” he said, “I have once narrowly escaped being capsized in the harbor, and have several times been thoroughly drenched with sea-water.” A few days later, according to reports, Santa Anna secretly slipped out of the capital enroute to Vera Cruz, leaving a triumvirate in charge. But on August 13, under the Plan of Ayutla, a revolutionary government was set up under Martin Carrera whose unconstitutional government yielded within a month to another unconstitutional government, that of Juan N. Alvarez. Pickett described the confusion; three armies converging on the Capital: Juan Alvarez from the South, Ignacio Comonfort from the West, Santiago Vidaurri from the North, with a counter-revolution under Antonio de Haro y Tamariz and Antonio Parrodi in San Luis Potosí. The American consul remarked that he was ready to support Ignacio de La Llave whom Pickett described as the *de facto* President of the Republic of Vera Cruz. In the midst of this anarchy, Pickett replied to State Department Circular No. 14 (issued on July 11, 1855) which sought information on the commercial policy of Mexico. He said that this was most difficult, due to the changes under Santa Anna and the subsequent governments, adding: “One might as well attempt a digest of the laws of the Medes and Persians or an

⁷ James M. Callahan, *American Foreign Policy in Mexican Relations*, N.Y., 1932, 230-31. Pickett to Marcy, Nov. 22, 1854; Feb. 21, 1855. For information on the Liberal Party conflict with the Jesuits, consult Manuel Cuevas, *Historia de la nación Mexicana*, México, 1952, vol. III, 39-47. The Jesuits were again expelled by the Congress in 1856, under the influence of Ignacio Comonfort.

abridgement of the Chinese Encyclopaedia as a codification of all the imperious, arbitrary dicta of the absconded Mexican Solon (Santa Anna)". He enclosed a list of tariff regulations, remarking that "merchants are even now continually imposed on and openly robbed under one or the other of them."

The last letter of the year was a long one in which he expatiated on what should be the bases of the United States consular system, and noting the need for "ample salaries." Consuls, he said, should be "a noble class of American gentlemen (who) would not require to be watched like eye servants or galley slaves." At the beginning of 1856 Pickett replied to the Department's remark that "If this office should continue to be disagreeable to you, your retention of it will not be insisted on." He made clear that he was not opposed to the office, but to its limits in pay; and defended his character which "will speak without circumlocution and call things by their right name." He offered to retire as soon as he could release himself from the trammels of the office. One of his trammels was the mails which were being, he said, violated by the Government of Haro y Tamariz; and so he used the British and French porters to carry the mails between Vera Cruz and Mexico City.⁸

With the coming of Spring Mr. Pickett was off on his usual long vacation—this time for six months. The *ad interim* consul, Henry Marquandt, reported that the unconstitutional regime of Ignacio Comonfort was gaining the confidence of the people, and added some brief information on commercial matters. His writing, unfortunately, has none of the spark of Pickett's. By October 8 the consul was back at his post, and wrote to tell of the arrival of the new American Minister, John Forsyth; and of the slight commerce, due in great part to the irremediable state of political anarchy in Mexico. Mr. Forsyth who had instructions from Secretary Marcy to improve commerce, discuss claims, remove obstacles to a route through Tehuantepec, and allay suspicions of "sinister designs on the part of the United States toward Mexico," gave his first impressions of the situation in November, 1856. He explained the reasoning of the "new Party" in Mexico, as a plan for the regeneration of the Mexican nation by control of either the Church or the Army:

As to the Church, it is impossible. As to the Army it is practicable. It (the control) must be done by the infusion of American elements.

The plan proposed that a few thousand Americans be distributed throughout the Mexican Army, a few million dollars be loaned; and ultimately an American Protectorate be set up. In sympathy with this planning, Mr. Forsyth said that they were encouraging American emigration,

⁸ Pickett to Marcy, Aug. 4, 20; Sept. 8; Oct. 10; Nov. 8, 1855; Jan. 10; Mar. 22, 1856.

“to develop the great natural resources of this superb country, build railroads.” He asked: “could we not secure for our countrymen the enjoyment of the rich resources of the Mexican country, without the danger of introducing into our social and political system, the ignorant masses of the Mexican people?” By early 1857 Forsyth had submitted three treaties to the Department of State; these dealt with matters of reciprocal trade, a joint commission for private claims, and postal regulations. He noted that “money is at the bottom of the whole negotiation;” and predicted that “the United States have a deep stake in the Mexican future.” President Pierce had opposed certain sections of the proposed treaty, but did not interfere with his successors considering it.⁹

United States consul Pickett was involved in a much smaller role than Forsyth; but he had his insights and remarked that “nothing but an arrangement similar to that proposed in the rejected treaties of Mr. Forsyth would enable American merchants to compete successfully with such iniquities.” He here adverted to the “immense wholesale smuggling” into Mexico through the Rio Grande frontier, and alleged that the importation, “by connivance of the Supreme Government,” was at a reduction of from 30 to 50 percent on rates of duties under previous tariffs. In September Pickett went off on vacation, leaving Charles Rieken as vice-consul. During this time Mr. Forsyth was busy in Mexico City, trying to implement the instructions of Secretary Cass and adjust his proposed treaties to them. While Cass was concerned primarily with commerce and with a passage-way across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Forsyth was interested in manipulating the Mexican Party in power to make further cessions of territory. In late 1857 he believed that he could get the Comonfort Government (Liberal) to make cessions in its financial desperation; in early 1858, when the Zuloaga Government (Conservative) came to power, the ambitious American minister was convinced that he could, through the influence of the Church (upon which the Conservatives depended), persuade the new Government to cede territory. When General Zuloaga finally rejected the proposition in mid-summer, 1858, Forsyth reflected his bitterness in a letter to Cass, in which he stated that it was a “temporary postponement.” He added:

I cannot say that I have hopes from the present Administration, because I do not believe that it will ever acquire the strength to dare to make the Treaty. But Mexican Administrations are short-lived, and the present one already exhibits unmistakeable marks of decay.

⁹ H. Marquandt to Marcy, Apr. 21, 1856. Marcy to Forsyth, Aug. 16, 1856, NAUS, MC. 77, yr. 1856. Forsyth to Marcy, Nov. 8, 1856, in William R. Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860*, Wash., 1933, vol. IX, 855-880.

In annoyance he suspended relations between the Legation and the Mexican Government. He was convinced that the Radical Liberals (*Puros*) under Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada (who was then in sanctuary in the U.S. Legation) would be amenable to conviction on the sale of territory.¹⁰

Mr. Pickett who was back on the job, gave the Department the benefit of his reflections on the Mexican scene, in a despatch to Cass on February 20, 1858. He saw two possible evils for the United States, "should the Church Militant succeed in fixing itself firmly in power." *First*, the Zuloaga Government will restore the Empire in the person of a native chief, or by a Catholic prince from Europe. He saw this as endangering the Monroe Doctrine. *Secondly*, the democratic party (Liberals) will seek aid from the filibusters of the South—"not that they hate them the less, but their own brethren the more." He remarked that the "independent state of Vera Cruz" was holding its own; and that "the Government of the United States may consider my poor services entirely at its disposal if it wishes to open diplomatic relations with this new *de facto* and *de jure* sovereignty." He wrote that Zuloaga had forbidden the merchants of Vera Cruz, as well as those of other ports not recognizing his government, from paying duties to the Collector of Customs of such ports. In March Mr. R. B. I. Twyman of Kentucky arrived at Vera Cruz in order to replace Pickett as consul there. Pickett reported that Twyman was given an *exequatur* by the Zuloaga Government of Mexico City, but refused one by the Governor of Vera Cruz. It is interesting to observe that Pickett who in February had spoken of the "independent state of Vera Cruz," was now speaking of the "Governor of Vera Cruz;" it is likely that the confusion was not in Pickett's mind, but in the frequent separatism that broke out in all sections of Mexico. Besides, Pickett had his *exequatur* from Vera Cruz; and so was denied one by Zuloaga's Government in Mexico City. The change of consular guard occurred on April 30, when Twyman informed Cass of "the high esteem and confidence he (Pickett) so eminently enjoys among the people of this community."¹¹

¹⁰ Pickett to Cass, July 31, Sept. 7, 1857. Also, in Manning, *Dipl. Corresp., Inter-Amer.*, IX, 223-47, 968-69. Cass to Forsyth, July 17; Nov. 17, 1857. Forsyth to Cass, Nov. 18, 1857; Jan. 30; Feb. 13-15; Mar. 1, 18; Apr. 16; June 17, 19; July 1; Aug. 31, 1858. The very extensive correspondence between Mr. Forsyth and Mr. Luis G. Cuevas, Mexico's Foreign Minister under the Zuloaga Government, is most informative on United States' pressures upon Mexico. It is to be noted that, in July, 1857, Secretary Cass had sent a draft of a treaty to John Forsyth, by the terms of which the United States would purchase Lower California, Sonora, and all of Chihuahua north of the 30th parallel. To worst the British it was urged that the United States be given additional rights in Tehuantepec. Mr. Forsyth worked for these cessions from the Liberal Government of Comonfort, in return for a loan; but the Liberal establishment was overthrown by the Conservative, General Félix Zuloaga in January, 1858.

¹¹ Pickett to Cass, Jan. 4; Feb. 20, 25; Mar. 6; Apr. 6, 30, 1858.

In July, 1858 Mr. Twyman gives us one of the most interesting insights into the conflict between the Church and Liberal parties of Mexico:

It is a contest on the part of a bigoted and superstitious Church, to save its immense property and retain a directing influence in controlling the political affairs of the Country—and on the other, a contest to confiscate this immense property of the Church and to break down the influence of the clergy in directing the political affairs of the Government . . .

The great mass of the people—poor, ignorant, superstitious Indians, scarcely emerged from the thralldom of barbarism—are controlled by the clergy; and, although many of them are forced—as I said at the point of the bayonet—to join the opposite or liberal party, they at heart wish to see the Church party succeed, and it requires the greatest vigilance on the part of their officers to keep them in the ranks. Those who are Liberalists, from principle, are educated and semi-indigent, but the main principle that governs them is the prospect of the spoils they are to enjoy from the confiscation of the Church property and the monopoly of the offices of Government.

His concluding remark is that most people would favor the intervention of the United States, to get relief from plunder and to gain peace.

A serious study of Mexican history reveals that, as Twyman says, the majority of the people did not want the illiberal, and persecuting policy of the Liberal Government which was responsible for the Constitution of 1857. Such radical violation of the Church and the people's backing of it produced a continuing situation of anarchy. In desperation, on October 23, 1858, United States merchants at Vera Cruz wrote to President Buchanan, pointing out that the anarchy would produce danger to both life and property, and asked that a man-of-war be sent to Vera Cruz. While the United States, as we have seen in discussing the diplomacy of John Forsyth, was in favor of the Liberal Government, the European Powers supported the Conservative Party. On December 2, Twyman reported a large French fleet at Vera Cruz; this demonstration "was intended to intimidate and finally overthrow the Liberal Party whose Capitol and stronghold is now in Vera Cruz." Four Spanish war vessels had arrived, and three more were daily expected. The British consul, Mr. Giffard, asserted that he was daily expecting three or more British war vessels, "on a (customs) collecting expedition." Mr. Twyman reported that the universal belief in Vera Cruz was that, if the United States would recognize the Juárez Government and exchange Ministers with it, it would have a moral force that would place the Liberal Party in power, and end the intestine war in sixty days. "With that opinion," he added, "I most heartily concur."¹²

At the end of 1858 Mr. Twyman reported to Secretary Cass that he in

¹² Twyman to Cass, July 28; Oct. 23; Dec. 2, 7, 1858.

the company of Captain Turner, Sergeant Wheelright and Mr. Marquandt had called on President Juárez in order to represent the plea for an indemnity of \$250 "extracted from Mr. Bastein, an American citizen of Tampico, by Governor Garza." Juárez complied with the request by having the sum paid back; and assured the consul that he had an "ardent desire to maintain inviolable our treaty stipulations and the rights of American citizens in Mexico." It was the conviction of Twyman that the leaders of the Constitutional Party (Juárez) preferred a United States protectorate to a triumph of the Conservative Party. With the coming of 1859, Twyman was even more enthusiastic about the friendship of the Liberal Party for the United States; and believed that, when it was in power, "the United States can readily negotiate a most advantageous treaty with it." He urged the drafting of a defensive and offensive alliance for the stability of Mexico in its external and internal life. This, he said:

would throw open the doors of Mexico to immigration, and the Anglo-Saxon race feeling secure in their lives, liberty and property, would pour in upon the productive soil and the rich mines of Mexico, and with their capital, industry, energy and skill in mechanics, arts and the sciences, would soon open up a new and magnificent world, in this beautiful country and salubrious climate.

Under such a treaty, he envisioned the United States exerting a controlling influence over Mexico within twenty years; "whereas, the policy suggested in the President's Message of occupying Chihuahua and Sonora would unite the two parties against the United States."

At this time Secretary Cass was sending special agent, William M. Churchwell, to Mexico in order to evaluate the situation; the Secretary's preference was for the Liberal Party: "We are disposed to give it any moral support which may result from our recognition of its supremacy, whenever such recognition can take place in conformity with our usual policy upon such occasions." Churchwell took the cue, and found:

The liberal or constitutional party under President Juárez, representing man's capacity for self-government; and the reactionary or Church Party under the usurper and dictator Miramón, desiring the restoration of monarchical rule or absolute despotism.

He believed the Liberal Party to be in sincere friendship with the United States; and found "no valid reason can be alleged why we should not establish relations with Juárez at Vera Cruz, just as though he were at the city of Mexico." Accordingly Churchwell had "repeated informal interviews with Juárez and his cabinet, of a satisfactory nature." He saw the United States, as Protector of the Liberals; and so winning trade benefits, along with land-rights in Lower California, Sonora, Chihuahua and Tehuantepec. In a special letter to President Buchanan, Churchwell

urged the immediate recognition of the Juárez Government which would have the effect of "making it more difficult for Miramón to bleed the Palace cormorants and untie the purse-strings of the Priests at the City of Mexico."¹³

In March, 1859 Secretary Cass was instructing the new minister to Mexico, Robert M. McLane, on the basis of information received from Forsyth and Churchwell, and, I suspect, from Mr. Twyman. In the conflict between the Conservative Government of Miguel Miramón and the Liberal Government of Benito Juárez, McLane was instructed to recognize the government that had *de facto* power; however, "the sympathies of the United States have been strongly enlisted in favor of the party of Juárez . . . and this government would be glad to see it successful."

In the same month of March, 1860 Twyman wrote to acknowledge that John T. Pickett had again been appointed consul to Vera Cruz by President Buchanan; and on March 31, 1860 the instruments of office were handed over to the irrepensible Pickett. In April Pickett appointed Charles Rieken as vice-consul, and by late July was asking for a leave of absence to care for his health; on September 24 from New York, he requested an extension of leave to get medical care. With the Civil War threatening during the last months of 1860 and early 1861, Pickett must have been concerned; and, on February 15, 1861, he wrote from Vera Cruz to the Secretary of State, resigning his position as consul. "The destructive influence of this climate," he wrote, "and the comparative inadequacy of the salary will be accepted, I trust, as sufficient reason for so unusual a step." He left Mr. Rieken in charge of the consulate. The latter acknowledged an instruction of Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, that he should remain at the post until the arrival of the new consul, Mark H. Dunnell of Maine. On July 4 Rieken informed the Department of the arrival of Pickett "who left a few days since for the city of Mexico in the supposed capacity of a diplomatic agent near the Mexican Government on the part of the seceded States." With the arrival of Mr. Dunnell in late October new information was divulged about that master of virtuosity, John T. Pickett, who "has just arrived from Mexico (City) where he was in prison for two weeks for taking exercise by way of a street fight, for allowing boxing to triumph over diplomacy."¹⁴ The colorful Pickett was not to lose his flare during the Civil War.

¹³ Twyman to Cass, Dec. 21, 1858; Jan. 21, 1859. Cass to Churchwell, Dec. 27, 1858. Churchwell to Cass, Feb. 8, 21, 1859. Also, Churchwell to Buchanan, Feb. 22, 1859, in Manning, *Dipl. Rels., Inter-Amer.*, IX, 255-58, 1025-30. It is to be noted that the government of Zuloaga, on Feb. 2, 1859, gave way to the conservative government of General Miguel Miramón.

¹⁴ Cass to McLane, Mar. 7, 1859, in Manning, IX, 258. It is to be noted that much of the interesting diplomacy of 1859 concerns the drafting and failure of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty of 1859. This is not part of the task of this writing; but can be found in Edward J.

Though the consular reports are mostly indicative of good or bad trade and commerce with Mexico, there are also valuable insights into the diplomatic situation. Messrs. Pickett and Twyman saw the scene from the principal Mexican port, and reflected the general mood of diplomatic ministers and administrations in the United States. It was a time of ruthless expansionism, and Yankee determination to get more territory, an isthmian canal or road-route, and better trade with Mexico. The American Government was disposed to make a deal with any administration in Mexico that would serve its goals; but the Liberal government was more to its liking, since it had a superficial likeness to North American Federalism. When the Conservative government in Mexico refused to enter into a deal, and when it seemed that the Conservatives were looking to Europe for protection from the aggressions of the Colossus of the North, the United States made a bond with the Liberal Party. The radical members of the Liberal Party were in vigorous conflict with the Church. Most of our agents—both ministerial and consular—were strongly and even crudely anti-Catholic in their feelings. Both Pickett and Twyman felt this prejudice which affected their otherwise valuable insights into the local scene of Mexico, and Mexico's relations with the United States in the period from 1853 to 1861.

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Berbusse, "The Origins of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty of 1859," *The Americas*, Jan., 1958. Twyman to Cass, Mar. 31, 1860. Pickett to Cass, Apr. 12; Sept. 24, 860; Feb. 15, 1861. It should be remembered that Jeremiah S. Black took over the Secretariat of State on Dec. 17, 1860; and had only three months in office before the Lincoln Administration came into office. There was no significant diplomacy with Mexico during the secretariat of Mr Black.