THE LIFE OF APPLETON OAKSMITH: ITS LATIN AMERICAN ASPECTS

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PREFACE

In November of 1887 a small article appeared in a New Bern newspaper. It stated:

> The remains of Capt. Appleton Oaksmith passed down on the train Saturday night to Hollywood, Carteret County. He died on Wednesday morning last. In many respects Capt. Oaksmith was a remarkable man. A true history of his life would doubtless be an interesting little volume.[1]

Truly the study of the life of this extraordinary man has been an interesting one, but to make the life of Appleton Oaksmith the focal point of this thesis would be naive. Thus, I have chosen to sketch his life only in brief, but I have analyzed in some detail his connection with events having historical importance, particularly the filibustering movements in 1855 and 1856.

Writing principally from manuscript and newspaper sources, I have attempted to give an insight into filibuster operations in the United States by following the activities of one man, Appleton Oaksmith. Oaksmith's journal of 1855 recounts how he associated himself with General John Quitman and other Americans and Cubans in an attempt to free Cuba from the Spanish yoke. An analysis of his participation in this scheme casts new light on the formation and organization of this scheme. The correspondence of Oaksmith for 1856 opens the way for a clearer under-

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1. New Berne Weekly Journal, November 3, 1887.

standing of how William Walker's supporters operated in the United States. His activities on Walker's behalf have been divided into two parts for the sake of clarity. In chapter IV I have discussed Oaksmith as a recruiter, supply agent, and financier for Walker. In chapter V I have discussed Oaksmith as a filibuster diplomat. By so doing I have hoped to give some indication of the course of filibuster diplomacy as well as the recruiting, supplying, and financing efforts of Oaksmith and his cohorts.

Around this theme of Oaksmith as a filibuster, I have attempted to ~~briefly~~ recount briefly the life of this extraordinary man which I have discerned from his letters, papers, and from conversations with those acquainted with him. Some stress has been placed on Oaksmith's personal life in the hope that in this short sketch he might emerge as a man with human traits and attributes.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. John Tate Lanning, who was responsible for my beginning this study and who rendered invaluable and sympathetic advice on the entire paper. I should also like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Graham Roberts, who greatly aided me in obtaining valuable manuscript and newspaper materials on Appleton Oaksmith.

J. J. T.

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THE LIFE OF APPLETON OAKSMITH: ITS LATIN AMERICAN ASPECTS

Chapter I

APPLETON OAKSMITH: HIS EARLY YEARS

The "Valentine Child"[1] that was born to Elizabeth and Seba Smith on February 14, 1827, was the product of a marriage that was unfortunate. Describing her husband to be, Elizabeth Prince wrote: "Mr. Smith was twice my age, wore spectacles, and was very bald."[2] After the marriage the bride observed that her husband had all the attributes of a bachelor, but that he was not disposed to allow his wife to let up on any point of household duty.[3]

Elizabeth Prince had been prodded into her marriage to Seba Smith by her mother. Elizabeth's own ambition had been to obtain a higher education and ultimately, to become the head of a girl's

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1. Appleton Oaksmith in the journal he kept in 1851-1852 refers to himself as the "Valentine Child" of the family.

2. Mary A. Wyman, ed., Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith (Lewiston, 1924), p. 43.

3. Ibid., p. 45.

school. These aims were frustrated when on March 6, 1823, Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Prince were married. The young bride wrote later: "I knew of my hunger and thirst for knowledge and how imperfectly this had been gratified--how prematurely abridged by marriage."[4] The one compensation in life for the unhappy Elizabeth was that after 1825, children came one after the other to brighten the Smith home. Rolvin, the first son, was born in 1825, and two years later Appleton, her favorite, was born.[5] After them came Sidney, Alvin, Edward, and Benjamin.

Seba Smith, the aging and "very bald" husband, was not devoid of talent or ambition. He attended Bowdoin College from 1815-1818 and graduated with honors. After a trip to Europe following his graduation, he went to Portland, Maine, and became editor of the Eastern Argus, an important Democratic paper in that city. In 1829 he launched his own newspaper, the Portland Courier, using it as a vehicle for his famous Jack Downing letters, satirical epistles written in a yankee dialect on political topics of the day. In disposition Seba Smith was shy and retiring, although he enjoyed the respect and admiration of a numerous circle of friends.[6]

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4. Wyman, Selections . . . , p. 46.

5. The writer has been unable to ascertain the exact date of Appleton's birth, but from the evidence at hand it seems that the February 14, 1827, date is the most accurate.

6. See the sketch of Seba Smith written by Mary A. Wyman in Dictionary of American Biography. Edited by Dumas Malone, XVII (New York, 1935), pp. 345-346.

It was in this atmosphere that Appleton Oaksmith grew up, having a young, vivacious, and gracious mother, and a shy, retiring, but talented father.[7]

Appleton Oaksmith has been described as "a remarkably beautiful child, with large open eyes and wavy brown hair." He was such a beautiful child that strangers often stopped to look at him on the streets of Portland.[8] The few glimpses that are had of Oaksmith's childhood point out that he was also a precocious infant. At eleven months he was reported to have climbed a ladder to the second floor of the Smith's Portland home. When he was one year old, he saved a child his own age from falling down the steps, and at three and a half was daring enough to climb to the ridge pole of the house. He was an obedient child though. Elizabeth Smith observed that he was a model youth: intelligent, energetic, and thoughtful.[9]

Appleton had no formal education but was taught by his able and competent mother. Being able to teach her sons gave Elizabeth Smith some compensation for not realizing her ambition of becoming head of a girl's school. She pursued the teaching of her

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7. Hereafter the name Oaksmith will be used in place of Smith. All the sons had their name changed legally so as to have a more distinctive name than Smith for their business affairs. This was ascertained by the writer in conversation with Oaksmith's daughter Geraldine on December 13, 1951.

8. Beaufort Weekly Record, November 18, 1887.

9. Ibid.

boys with great avidity. Little was neglected. Appleton learned four languages: French, Spanish, Latin, and Greek. He was encouraged to read, quickly adapting himself to books on art, literature, history, philosophy, and science.[10] Long walks in the country and along the Maine coastline served as an introduction to nature study and sea lore. In their spare time Oaksmith and his brothers were taught to play chess.[11]

In 1839 the Smith family left Portland for Charleston, South Carolina. Seba Smith had become engaged in land speculation in 1834, but in the panic of 1837 he lost a great deal of money on this venture. Hoping to recoup his losses by promoting the sale of a cotton fiber cleaning machine in Charleston, he moved with his family to the Southern port city in 1839. Their stay there was uneventful, but perhaps it was the sojourn in Charleston that gave Appleton his affinity for the South and the Southern people so evident in later years. The fact that Charleston like Portland was a harbor city undoubtedly served to increase the interest of the young and impressionable Appleton in the sea, intensifying his desire to sail. In any event, the attempt to sell the

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10. Ibid. After an examination of Oaksmith's library at his home in Morehead City, it was evident that Oaksmith was widely read. It is also evident from Oaksmith's writings that he had a wide range of interests stimulated by this early training.

11. Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith in manuscript, p. 446. Elizabeth Oakes Smith Collection, New York Public Library. Hereafter cited as Autobiography. Smith Collection, N. Y. P. L.

cotton cleaning machine failed. In 1843 the family moved to New York City.[12]

The family income was small and to supplement it Elizabeth Prince Smith began writing poems for various newspapers and periodicals in New York, achieving success as well as an income from this avocation. Seba Smith again took up his editorial duties. He secured a position on the staff of a New York magazine of some dignity, the Rover. It was not long, however, before the Smith family had one less mouth to feed, for in 1843, the same year that the family moved to New York, Appleton Oaksmith went to China. It was his first taste of the seafaring life to which he had become addicted in his early years in Portland and Charleston. On this voyage to China he learned the rudiments of navigation and sea lore that were to be so valuable to him in his later years.[13] In 1845, after being gone two years, Oaksmith returned to New York.

What occupation he pursued on his return to New York is not clear, but it is known that he served as an escort for his mother to the fashionable literary soirées that were held in New York at that time. As Seba Smith preferred the flicker of the fireside to the glitter of the social whirl, the handsome Appleton suited the purpose of Elizabeth Oakes Smith admirably.[14] While attending

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12. Mary A. Wyman, Two American Pioneers (New York, 1926), p. 103.

13. Beaufort Weekly Record, November 18, 1887.

14. Autobiography, p. 456. Smith Collection, N. Y. P. L.

these gatherings, the youthful Oaksmith met such men as General Domingo Goicouría, the Cuban patriot, and several Italian liberals who had fled to the United States from their native land. Oaksmith's mother wrote that these liberals "were charmed by the boyish graces and intelligence of Appleton, and they fostered the spirit of enterprise in my son."[15] What tragic import the friendship with Goicouría had will be determined later.

Oaksmith's mother has recounted one final event in Oaksmith's youth that occurred after he had returned from China. He and his mother decided to row a small boat from the Battery in lower Manhattan to Staten Island in order to show two friends the New York harbor area. All went well on the trip until an approaching steamer veered in its course and headed directly for the small boat in which the four were riding. There seemed little doubt that the craft would be broken in two. This would most certainly have happened had it not been for the quick action of Appleton. As the steamer was about to touch the small boat, Oaksmith pushed against the oncoming vessel shoving the small boat away. In so doing he fell into the swirling waters, giving those remaining in the boat a few anxious moments, but the youth suddenly appeared on the surface of the water and jumped into the craft as if nothing had happened.[16]

In any case, the transition from childhood to manhood came slowly. The formative years were neither unusual nor exceptional-

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15. Autobiography, p. 469. Smith Collection, N. Y. P. L.

16. Beaufort Weekly Record, November 18, 1887.

ly significant, but for Oaksmith they were years of happiness and joy. In later years he wrote:

> There are no reminiscences, or events in life over which our memory so delights to linger as those of childhood--we turn to them even in the moment of adversity, and our hearts seem to drink consolation from the forgotten fountain of our first happiness. . . . They are a safeguard always when in our first intercourse with the world; we have as it were the harbor that has protected our childhood, and launch forth into the great ocean of life, to battle above with its gales of adversity and its storms of passion.[17]

Aside from the few incidents that have already been recounted, Oaksmith's life and occupation until 1851 is something of a puzzle. No documentary proof is available that states positively Oaksmith's occupation, but from his own reminiscences it is safe to state that the young Oaksmith was engaged in "commercial life."

In April of 1851 he wrote:

> Many years ago I kept a journal--life before seems to have been one of toil. Then came a period of deep and bitter grief to me; of sad and helpless disappointment, none knew of my grief. With a spirit of martyrdom I committed my early writings to the flames, and watched with a bitter smile the dying embers until I saw the last spark expire.
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> Then with an aching heart I turned to the first duties of my life--And whenever in the fulfillment of these duties I would see the sad eyes of my mistress looking reproachfully or pitingly upon me I would steel my heart against their entreaties and strive to forget what I once delighted to remember.
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> Wrapped in commercial life, four years happened away unheeded by me. I never wrote at all on paper.[18]

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17. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, April 18, 1851-December 6, 1852, Entry of May 16, 1851. Appleton Oaksmith Papers, Manuscript Divison, Duke University Library. Hereafter cited as Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

18. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Acapulco, April 18, 1851, Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

It is not difficult to see why a young man of nineteen became enamoured with a young woman, particularly if she was as beautiful as Oaksmith described.

> She dressed with exquisite taste, her figure was faultless, her style attractive, her walk a personification of grace, and her beautiful eyes gave a brilliancy to her whole face that was most exciting and lovable. What commenced in sport or vanity became a bitter reality. . . . I was living beyond my income, and found it necessary to leave New York. When we parted then was when we found we loved each other. I wrote "bitter Byronic lines" on the deck of the vessel as we parted and a few short weeks found me buried in Panama.[19]

Thus it was that Oaksmith left New York in 1847 for Panama. There he stayed for three years.

Oaksmith's recollections of his stay in Panama are few. He does, however, recall one incident, and again it concerns a woman. One April evening in 1850 Oaksmith found himself being chased by Panamanian "rioters and assassins," He was forced to take refuge in the home of a young señorita whom he knew in Panama City. Explaining his plight to the young lady, he asked if he might have the use of the sofa for a bed that night. The señorita replied in the affirmative, and Oaksmith was allowed to remain. In the meantime the young girl had uncovered her image of the Virgin Mary and prayed fervently to it. After she was through, she covered it up again. Oaksmith asked her why she did such a thing. She replied coyly that she didn't want her Saint to see her do anything naughty.[20]

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19. Ibid.

20. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, May 16, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

The "gold rush" in California in 1849 had caused a great boom in that area, and in 1850 Oaksmith decided to leave Panama and go to San Francisco to set up a shipping firm in that city. In late 1850 he wrote to many of his friends in New York asking consignments of goods to sell in San Francisco.[21] One friend wrote him, however, in February of 1851, that Oaksmith might as well return to New York. Business was bad, and no consignments could be procured for sale in San Francisco.[22] Oaksmith took the advice of his friend, closed his shipping firm, and obtained a position on the steamer Gold Hunter. He left San Francisco early in April on this vessel.

[1851] The Gold Hunter touched at Acapulco, Realejo in Nicaragua, and finally reached Panama on May 7. After a six day sojourn there, the ship left again for San Francisco. It was a different city from the one Oaksmith had left two months before, for fire had ravaged the area. The scene Oaksmith pictured was one of "dead bodies withered up by the fire, overtaken in their very efforts to escape from the rushing flames. Carts were driven furiously through the crowds laden with goods--Men were shot down dead detected in acts of plunder."[23]

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21. Ford Avery to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, January 18, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

22. Edwin Reynolds to Appleton Oaksmith, Brooklyn, February 23, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

23. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, San Francisco, June 23, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

Oaksmith remained in San Francisco for two months. While he was in that city, he joined the Vigilance Committee, an organization that had been set up to deal with the lawlessness that was so prevalent in the fire-devastated town. Oaksmith's opinion was that the people of San Francisco relied only on the Vigilance Committee for protection and that all law enforcement was in the hands of this Committee.[24] In the two months that Oaksmith was in San Francisco, he had two law suits before the courts, and these were settled in his favor. With the money obtained from these suits, he bought part interest in a small three-masted bark, the Mary Adeline.

On August 6, 1851, Oaksmith left San Francisco for Acapulco on the Mary Adeline, as he had taken over the captaincy of the vessel after he had secured its ownership. Oaksmith felt, however, that he was not fitted for his new occupation. He wrote:

> I do not feel that the vocation which circumstances have compelled me to return is my proper one. I like the romance of it, but alas there is too little of that left now. I have a vague yearning for something that I know not of--there is a void in my life--I am not happy. . . . All feelings of youth seem to have passed away from me, and I know not that they ever will return. I regret them for their freshness and their earnestness.[25]

The Mary Adeline touched at Acapulco early in September and reached San Juan del Sur in Nicaragua in October. Oaksmith spent almost two months in San Juan trying to obtain a cargo for his

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24. Ibid.

25. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, August 12, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

ship. When he failed to secure this cargo, he left the Nicaraguan port for Peru late in November.

The voyage to Peru was a troubled one, for the crew that Oaksmith had obtained in San Francisco was "treacherous and mutinous." Oaksmith observed that they "had the mark of 'Cain' written upon their brows."[26] Three days later he wrote that a crisis was approaching on board the ship and that the mutiny had "now become a matter of life or death."[27] Consequently, a plan had to be formulated to quell the mutiny. Oaksmith and his mate decided it would be best to put the ring leaders of the proposed mutiny in irons. In the middle of the night on December 7, the two leaders were accosted on their respective watches and placed in irons. The next day Oaksmith warned the crew that the same thing would happen to them if they tried any plan to take over the ship.

On January 11, 1852, the Mary Adeline reached the port of Paita in Peru. Here Oaksmith took on a different crew and again attempted to secure a cargo for his vessel. Again he failed. He continued his amorous adventure, however, with two young Peruvian señoritas who mistook him for "Don Eduardito," an American seaman who had touched at Paita. He did not see fit to tell them of their mistake as to his identity and confidently wrote: "I am

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26. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, November 30, 1951. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

27. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, December 3, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

certain, without egotism, that they will find it difficult to decide which of the two 'Don Eduarditos' they liked the best, the spurious or the genuine."[28]

Oaksmith left Paita for Montevideo, Uruguay, on January 31, 1852, and on March 7 his ship rounded Cape Horn. The Mary Adeline reached Montevideo on March 21, but bad currents in the Rio de la Plata forced Oaksmith to weigh anchor and go to Rio de Janeiro. On April 4 he arrived in Rio where he finally secured a cargo for his ship. On April 18 he wrote that "the only freight that was offered for my vessel was to the Coast of Africa, and I felt constrained by the circumstances to accept it."[29] Eight days later he asserted:

> I should have got to sea on Saturday but was delayed by a very mortifying search which was instituted by the Brazilian officials in consequence of the alleged suspicion that my vessel was to be engaged in the slave trade--Of course I offered no objection, but could hardly keep my indignation from boiling over, as I walked the deck while the search was being made.[30]

Early in June Oaksmith's small three-masted bark found itself in Loango on the coast of Africa. Oaksmith was impressed with the beauty of the place and was amused at the naiveté of the natives. "For a common old musket," Oaksmith stated, "a son would sell his

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28. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, January 31, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

29. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Rio de Janeiro, April 18, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

30. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, April 26, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

father or mother."[31] He also observed that the deck of his vessel looked like a barnyard because of the great number of animals that the natives had brought on board the Mary Adeline.[32]

From Loango, where Oaksmith met the Portuguese agent for the cargo, the ship proceeded to the mouth of the Congo. Despite Oaksmith's protestations in Rio de Janeiro concerning the rumors that his vessel was a slaver, it seems certain that the Mary Adeline was fitted out as a slave ship. Oaksmith was strangely quiet about the identity of his cargo, and there can be little doubt that he made the voyage to Africa to secure slaves. Circumstances arose, however, that made it impossible for Oaksmith and the Portuguese agent to procure these slaves they were seeking.

When Oaksmith reached the mouth of the Congo, he was prevailed upon by the Portuguese agent to go up the river to make it easier to pick up the slaves. Oaksmith was extremely apprehensive about the sailing conditions on the Congo, as he feared his vessel would run aground on the treacherous shoals of the river. His fears were well founded. A few days after Oaksmith began his voyage up the river, the Mary Adeline was stuck on a mud bank. The ship being stranded on this mud bank was a vexing problem, but to add to this difficulty the natives in the area were hos-

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31. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Loango, June 5, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

32. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Loango, June 5, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

tile. The vessel was attacked several times by these savages, but they were beaten off because of the gun fire of a British warship that happened to be on the river at that time. After the natives had been driven away, the British warship, the Dolphin, pulled Oaksmith's vessel free, and the Mary Adeline was finally able to make her way back down the river to the Atlantic without the slaves. Oaksmith spent a few days on board the Dolphin before returning to his own ship and wrote:

> To a poor devil who has but just escaped the double horrors of being shipwrecked and murdered, and perhaps tortured by savages, the cordial and genuine hospitality, with which I was treated on all sides is a most gratifying thing.[33]

Oaksmith finally left Africa for Bahia, returning to Brazil without the slave cargo that was intended for his ship. At Bahia, however, he secured a cargo for the United States. Late in October of 1852 he observed: "I am now returning to my home; a wiser, if not better man than when I left."[34]

In December of 1852 Appleton Oaksmith reached the United States, but it was not long before he left the country again, this time for Haiti. His brother Sidney had become American consul in that country and was optimistic about the prospects of his brother's obtaining a cargo there.[35] Oaksmith answered Sidney's

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34. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, At Sea, Oct. 6, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

33. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Off Shark's Point on Congo River, June 27, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

35. Seba Smith to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, December 8, 1852. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

summons early in 1853 but returned in June of that year to set up his own shipping firm in New York.

Although his life as a shipping agent was not as adventurous as the one he had been living, it was, nevertheless, profitable.[36] It was unfortunate that Oaksmith had cultivated the friendship of General Domingo Goicouría, the Cuban patriot, for it was this friendship that prompted Oaksmith's participation in the Cuban filibustering expedition of 1855.[37] His investment in this expedition was completely lost, but it did not appreciably affect Oaksmith's interest in filibustering schemes. In 1856 he became one of the most avid supporters of William Walker, the filibuster with the plan for a Central American empire.[38] Oaksmith's involvement in this plan again resulted in great monetary loss. In order to recoup his losses in these schemes, he had to turn again to the more profitable but less exciting business life.

Before turning to his activities as a businessman, it is necessary to discuss an event in Oaksmith's life that occurred while he was involved in the Cuban scheme in 1855. This event was his marriage to Isotta Rebecchini on September 23, 1855. Oaksmith had met this Italian girl in New York early in 1853 at one

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36. In the Appleton Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L., there are a number of charter parties which Oaksmith concluded and which point out that he must have made a good living as a shipping agent.

37. For a full account of Oaksmith's activities in regard to this expedition see chapter III, pp. 46-67.

38. Oaksmith's activities on behalf of Walker are discussed in detail in chapters IV and V. See below, pp. 68-121.

of the gatherings of the literati he attended with his mother. The two young people were drawn together because of their love for music, for Oaksmith had a fine tenor voice, and Isotta was a violinist of no mean ability. Ultimately, Isotta and Appleton became so enamoured with one another that they married, but neither love for music nor the three children that were born as a result of the marriage were strong enough ties to hold the marriage together. Isotta was reported to have been a fiery-tempered jealous person who demanded a great deal from her husband.[39] In any event, the marriage boded ill for both the husband and wife. Oaksmith's mother has called it "the unhappy marriage of Appleton to the spirit of romance for Italy."[40]

The years 1857-1861 were not so fraught with excitement, as Oaksmith again turned to a business and literary life. He had lost heavily on his investment in the filibustering schemes of 1855 and 1856, and for the most part, his principal aim in the ensuing years was to recoup these losses.

In 1857 Oaksmith turned to his father for aid. Seba Smith found a position for his son on the staff of The United States Magazine. Appleton was an able writer and had already published

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39. Oaksmith's daughters, Geraldine and Dorothy, are very vehement in their criticism of Isotta. See below, pp.28-30.

40. Autobiography, p. 456. Smith Collection, N. Y. P. L.

some poems and had many requests to write more.[41] Oaksmith was on the staff of The United States Magazine until 1858, when he and his father began publishing their own magazine, The Great Republic. It was a monthly publication that served as an outlet for the Jack Downing letters of Seba Smith and the poems and essays of Elizabeth Smith. Appleton wrote poems and descriptive travel narratives to supplement the articles written by his parents. The publication lasted only a year.[42]

In addition to his editorial duties, Oaksmith became involved in a railroad venture. Broadly, the plan in which Oaksmith was associated hoped for the establishment of an Ohio Grand Trunk Railway Company, a railroad to extend across the entire state of Ohio. The scheme called for the buying up of small railroad companies and the building of railways to complete the proposed line.[43] For three years, Oaksmith worked to bring the plan to fruition, but a fraud in the bond issue of the company caused its complete failure.

In 1860 Oaksmith gained an interest in a Wheeling, West Virginia, paper mill. He hoped to make the mill a profit making investment, but the threat of a sectional conflict doomed this plan.

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41. In a letter C. S. Derby to Seba Smith, New York, August 20, 1857. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.; Derby asserts to Seba Smith that Seba's son should write something equal to Appleton's poem "Maggie Bell." This, states Derby, would bring great fame to Appleton.

42. Wyman, Two American Pioneers, pp. 136-159.

43. Letters concerning the proposed railroad scheme are very proliferous in the Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L., as most of Oaksmith's correspondence of 1858, 1859, and 1860 concern this plan.

Oaksmith's friend wrote from the West Virginia city that "everything is blue in Wheeling. If we secede and go with the South, we can give up."[44] Thus the threat of war and secession had precluded the possibility of a profitable enterprise, and Oaksmith was forced to abandon his plan.

The beginning of 1861 saw Appleton Oaksmith embroiled in a plan to prevent the seceded states from breaking up the Union. Early in that year he associated himself with a group of New York City Democrats, who proposed a mass meeting to create enthusiasm in the city for the cause of Union and for moderation and justice in dealing with the Southern States. Oaksmith, who had experience in planning mass meetings of this type when he had organized them in 1856 for the William Walker cause, was one of the leading lights in planning the gathering.

Handbills were circulated advertising the meeting.[45] On January 28, 1861, cannons and rockets were shot off before the Cooper Institute where the gathering was held. The speeches made at the Institute were many and lengthy. Oaksmith was on the speaker's rostrum where he read the resolutions drawn up by the preliminary planning committee. He stated that the Union should be preserved at all costs and that moderation and fairness should

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44. S. P. Hildreth to Appleton Oaksmith, Wheeling, February 13, 1861. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

45. See handbill of the meeting of the Union League, New York, January 28, 1861. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

be shown the Southern States. These resolutions were supposedly expressive of the feeling of the people of New York on secession and the need for moderation in dealing with the South, but the New York Herald observed that "the people of New York" did not seem to include any Republicans. Any action taken by the meeting, stated the Herald, would carry little weight. The fact that no Republicans were present made any action "like the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out."[46]

As a result of the meeting, three men were appointed commissioners to the Southern States. These men were: James Brady, Cornelius Garrison, and Appleton Oaksmith. Their credentials read:

To the People of _____,[47] their Executive and Representatives Greetings.

WE THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, in mass meeting assembled, taking into consideration the distracted state of the country, and the imminence of Civil War; and believing that the specific rights and demands of the South are imperfectly understood, not only in this great metropolis but in all the North--have appointed and by these Presents do appoint, citizens James T. Brady, Cornelius Garrison, and Appleton Oaksmith our commissioners to the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, to confer with the people of such states, their governors, conventions, and representatives as to what measures are best calculated to preserve peace and secure the rights of the South; and at the same time to obtain from such states and such people a precise distinct statement of demands; and an avowal of what measures they are prepared to take to avert the calamity of the Civil War.[48]

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46. New York Herald, January 29, 1861.

47. The name of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana may be inserted in this place.

48. A copy of the credentials given to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, January 28, 1861. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

Fernando Wood, Mayor of New York, signed the papers accrediting the commissioners and stated that: "I further certify that I am personally acquainted with the said commissioners above named, that they are citizens of New York and gentlemen entitled to the highest consideration."[49]

The commissioners never left New York City. A week after the mass meeting Oaksmith wrote to a friend in Charleston concerning his expected departure. He stated that he had been prevailed upon by the powers that control the Virginia Conference to stay his departure in order not to impair the negotiations taking place at that Conference. Oaksmith wrote that his plan was that the three men should first attend the impending Washington Conference, and then go to Montgomery. After visiting Montgomery, the three could then proceed to Charleston with a better understanding of the situation. In the letter he set up three questions that had to be answered to obtain a fair settlement of the grievances between the two sections. (1) What would induce the South to stay in the Union? (2) What guarantees would they need for these terms? (3) What would be the course of the South if secession was not prevented? Oaksmith firmly believed that on these three questions hung the possibility of peace or war. Oaksmith was doubtful, however, that the commissioners would ever leave New York.[50]

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49. Proclamation of Fernando Wood, New York, January 29, 1861. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

50. Appleton Oaksmith to Robert N. Gourdin, New York, February 7, 1861. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

The plan of the New York City Democrats to send Oaksmith and his compatriots to the South never came to fruition. Oaksmith remained in New York in the hope that he might go to Montgomery and Charleston, but in April war broke out, and consequently, finis was written to the plans of the New York Democrats. Oaksmith turned his attention to other matters that held the possibility of notoriety but not the distinction that went with the Union League plan.

Chapter II

APPLETON OAKSMITH: HIS LATER YEARS

The collapse of the Union League plan of 1861 made it necessary for Oaksmith to cancel his proposed trip to the Southern States. In April of that year the outbreak of war ruined the last hope of obtaining any sort of compromise, and Oaksmith turned his activities to other channels--channels of activity that were to bring his name again into prominence. In December he was indicted in a Boston Court for fitting out a slave ship.

What his motives were in associating himself with such a scheme is a matter of conjecture. He may have seen the opportunity to make a profitable investment on the ship, or his motives may have been entirely altruistic as his daughters aver.[1]

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1. Oaksmith's daughters vehemently deny that their father was in any way connected with the slave trade and that his only reason for taking part in the affair was the hope that many slaves might be colonized in Haiti. Conversation with writer, April 13, 1952.

In any event, he was indicted on the charge of furnishing a Boston captain with $20,000 which was needed to secure a ship and to fit it out as a slaver. The Boston Morning Journal observed: "The recent trial of Skinner for fitting out the slaver, Margaret Scott of New Bedford, developed some facts which connected Appleton Oaksmith of New York with that transaction, as the person who furnished the means by which it was carried on."[2]

When he was brought before the court to answer to the charges, Oaksmith asserted vigorously:

> This is the first time in my life I have come into court to appear in this relation. It may be needless for me to say it but as God Almighty is my judge, I have not been engaged in the slave trade, or bought any vessel for that purpose. . . . In the face of all the world I say that I am the victim of persecution. If a man can be torn from his home, taken to a dungeon, confined there five weeks without any show of legal authority, brought from that dungeon by force and put on board a steamer, searched and papers of value taken from him, and then brought here to meet an indictment which is found against him during his confinement, it seems to me that there is little use in even obtaining a counsel.[3]

This impassioned plea of innocence did not deter the court's decision to indict him. While Oaksmith was waiting for his trial to take place, he was imprisoned in Fort Lafayette.

From all reports Oaksmith was a model prisoner. His jailor has described him as "a singularly handsome man, tall, straight, with dark hair, and a commanding presence, an ideal buccaneer. He told constantly the wildest stories of the sea, hair-breadth

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2. Boston Morning Journal, January 6, 1862.

3. Ibid.

escapes, and adventures. He was thoroughly well educated, wrote considerably for the papers, and studied a good deal in his incarceration."[4] While he was in prison, Oaksmith tried desperately to secure a lawyer to take up his case. This was difficult, for the atmosphere in Boston was charged against anyone who appeared friendly with the South. One of Oaksmith's friends wrote him that he was in the hands of "fanatics" and "madmen in reform." The friend also stated that no one would take his case through the courts and that Oaksmith would have to act in his own defense.[5] As a matter of fact, Oaksmith never needed a lawyer for his trial. While he was waiting for the trial to take place, in September of 1862, he escaped.

The story of the escape is not tremendously significant, but it is, nevertheless, interesting. Oaksmith had made it a habit during his imprisonment to take his breakfast late, as he usually slept to a late hour. One day in July he received a note on his breakfast tray stating that he should be ready to escape at any time but to be sure to continue in his usual habits. For over a month nothing happened to indicate to Oaksmith when or how an escape might be effected until finally, on September 9 at four o'clock in the morning, Oaksmith was awakened by a man standing over him with a bundle of woman's clothes. Oaksmith put on

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4. Raleigh News, July 11, 1879. Taken from the Boston Herald, September 11, 1862.

5. W. A. Clarke to Appleton Oaksmith, Boston, March 31, 1862. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

these clothes and walked out of the prison on the man's arm without a hand being laid on him. It seems certain that Oaksmith's friends had bribed the guards, thus making the escape possible. Because of Oaksmith's habit of rising late, his escape was not discovered until he had gotten safely away.[6] From Boston Oaksmith travelled to Portland, his former home, and there he remained in hiding for over a year.

While he was in Portland, Appleton Oaksmith stayed with his grandmother, Elizabeth Prince, and it was there he met his cousin, Augusta Mason, for the first time. It is reported that on first sight of the stranger the young Augusta broke into tears and rushed from the room. Whatever fear or apprehension Augusta felt for Oaksmith soon abated, for the two became deeply attached to one another.[7] In 1867 this same Augusta became the second wife of Appleton Oaksmith.

In the year that Oaksmith was hiding in Portland, he left that place and spent some time in New York City in disguise. He visited with his family and friends there, but his principal purpose for going to New York was to obtain money. After he had secured the money, Oaksmith left that city and returned to Portland

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6. This is the story of the escape that Oaksmith related to his daughters and told to the writer on April 13, 1952. Another account of the escape is in the Raleigh News, July 11, 1879.

7. This incident was recounted to the writer by Dorothy Agrillo and Geraldine Oaksmith on April 13, 1952.

accompanied by his eldest daughter Bessie.[8] Sometime after November of 1863 Oaksmith and his daughter left Portland for England.[9]

When he reached England in 1864, Oaksmith was quick to secure the captaincy of a ship that was running the Union blockade. The ship that he obtained was running badly-needed cotton from Galveston, Texas, to Liverpool. In exchange for the cotton, the English gave Oaksmith a cargo of arms and ammunition for his ship. Oaksmith was no doubt motivated to run the blockade by a passion to get revenge on the United States government for causing him so many difficulties in previous years, particularly in regard to the Cuban expedition of 1855 and the slave trading scandal of 1861-1862.

Oaksmith's first voyage as a blockade runner was uneventful. He was able to slip in and out of Galveston without being detected by the Union blockade squadron. He was able to deposit his cargo of arms and ammunition, secure a cargo of cotton, and return to England without incident. The next voyage late, in 1864, proved disastrous.

After he had touched at Havana, Cuba, to see his brother Sidney, Oaksmith proceeded into the Gulf of Mexico on his way to

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8. This story was told by Geraldine Oaksmith on December 13, 1951.

9. Appleton Oaksmith wrote a poem in memory of his brother, Rolvin, dated in Portland on November 6, 1863. Thus, he must not have left Portland before this date, but when he departed for England is not clear.

Galveston. Here he was sighted by a ship of the Union blockade squadron and overtaken. Oaksmith had had enough of Union prisons, however, and was determined to make an escape before he was taken into custody. As the Union sailors came up one side of his vessel, Oaksmith and his crew clambered into a small boat on the other side of the ship, setting themselves adrift in the Gulf of Mexico. They floated in the Gulf for twelve days before they finally reached the Mexican coast.[10] Oaksmith remained in Mexico several months before he secured passage on a ship going to England.[11]

After the end of the Civil War, Oaksmith faced many problems. The two charges against him for slave trading and blockade running made it impossible for him to return to the United States to his family. The problem that was most vexing to him was that he had fallen in love with Augusta Mason during his stay in Portland, and the difficulty created by this unfortunate romance produced a delicate problem for Oaksmith to solve.

Oaksmith's marriage to Isotta had not been a happy one, but it was, nevertheless, fruitful. As has been pointed out, three children had been born as a result of the union: Bessie, Corrine, and Randolph. Bessie, of course, had come to Portland in 1863 and had gone to England with her father in 1864, remaining there

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10. This story was told to the writer by Dorothy Agrillo and Geraldine Oaksmith, April 13, 1952.

11. See the letter I. H. Ward to Appleton Oaksmith, Liverpool, April 30, 1875. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

with friends while he was engaged in blockade running. Corrine and Randolph remained with their mother in New York. On June 25, 1866, however, Oaksmith wrote to Isotta explaining that he wished her to come to England, advising her to leave Corinne and Randolph with Elizabeth Smith, his mother, until they were settled in England. Isotta naturally supposed that she was going to England to make a home for her husband and her children, and that Corinne and Randolph would be sent for after she had become settled in England.[12] The events that took place in Liverpool after her arrival there certainly came as a shock to the Italian woman.

In a letter to President Johnson written a year after these shocking events took place, Isotta recounted the whole story:

> When I arrived he [Oaksmith] came to meet me and took me to a lodging house in Chatsworth St., saying he dared not take me to a hotel as he feared to be rearrested. I was very careful not to commit any imprudence and was deceived by him in every way. He told me it would not be prudent for him to live there with me, but that he would come every day and see me: promised to bring Bessie from London where she had been living but never did so. He showed me to my room and left me there. The next day he came and taking a letter out of his pocket, he read it to me. . . .
>
> He insisted on my signing divorce papers which I refused to do. He then told me that unless I did as he said he would never let me see my children again. He said you have no means to return with and if you had, they would be removed before you get there. If you sign them, I will send for you again in a year. I was in his power entirely and saw that resistance was useless and signed the fatal papers. I had no idea such a thing was expected of me when I went to him. He then sent me to Smyrna in Asia Minor. While there I received letters telling me that several months

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12. Isotta Oaksmith to President Andrew Jackson, New York, May 24, 1867. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

previous to this he had gone to Portland, Maine, where we were married, and married a girl by the name of Augusta Mason. . . .[13]

Isotta further related to President Johnson that on her return to the United States she had heard that Oaksmith had been seen in Brooklyn at his mother's home there, but when she went there to ask about his and the children's whereabouts, she was told that her children were in Brazil with her ex-husband and their new mother.

The divorce and loss of her three children was a crushing blow to Isotta. She had stood by her husband through much adversity, had mothered his three children, and after the war had worked hard to obtain a pardon for Oaksmith. In 1866, before she left for England, she had received an encouraging letter from Thurlow Weed that stated that something might be done about her husband's case, and that perhaps he might be able to return to his native land without a price on his head.[14] The divorce and the circumstances surrounding it naturally aroused bitterness in the Italian woman that lasted for years.[15]

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13. Isotta Oaksmith to President Andrew Johnson, New York, May 24, 1867. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

14. Thurlow Weed to Isotta Oaksmith, New York, September 14, 1866. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

15. Isotta vehemently attacked her former husband in the New York press as late as 1879. See the Sunday News (New York), July 22, 1879.

Oaksmith had not gone to Brazil as had been suggested to Isotta but had returned to England with his family. What type of life he and his family led in England is something of a puzzle.[16] He did turn to the sea again as a means of livelihood, obtaining a British commander's certificate. He also passed the British Board of Trade.[17] In 1871 Appleton Oaksmith became owner of a ship, the Troubadour.[18]

Oaksmith also turned to editorial work in his stay in England. In 1869 he became associate editor of the London Cosmopolitan, and later during the Franco-Prussian War, became a war correspondent for the London Globe.[19] Oaksmith went to France in 1870 principally to put forward a scheme to supply the French, a scheme that several self-seeking men had formulated early in that year and with which Oaksmith became associated in December.

This plan called for the formation of a trading concern, the William Frear Company. The company was organized solely with the purpose of supplying the French with military, naval, and food supplies.[20] Oaksmith acted as an agent for the organization, and

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16. The documentary evidence for this period is fragmentary.

17. From an undated newspaper clipping in a scrapbook in the Smith Collection, N. Y. P. L.

18. Log book of the bark "Troubadour," 1860-1873. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

19. See the articles written on the war by Oaksmith in a scrapbook in the Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

20. Agreement over the formation of the William Frear Company, London, December 12, 1870. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

his assignment was to work for supply contracts in Bordeaux, one of the few remaining French strongholds. While he was here in Bordeaux, he wrote his articles for the Globe. Unable to secure any contracts, he gave up his post as agent for the William Frear Company and returned to England early in 1871. Oaksmith found that his cohorts were more successful than he was in securing contracts. One member of the company was able to conclude a contract that called for a great many supplies to be sent to Paris. There was a stipulation in the agreement with the French government, however, that one-sixth of the profits obtained by the William Frear Company was to be used for the aid of the sick and wounded in Paris.[21] The supply company collapsed, as the end of the war came too soon for William Frear and his associates to ship the goods that the French requested.

Oaksmith remained in England until June of 1872, when he left that country on the Troubadour with his wife Augusta and his four children. One daughter had been born to Augusta in England increasing the number of children to four. In any event, Oaksmith first touched in Galveston to dispose of a cargo, but early in 1873 the Troubadour dropped anchor in Beaufort harbor on the North Carolina coast, the area in which Oaksmith and his family were to spend the rest of their lives.

Oaksmith's decision to settle in North Carolina was the result of a set of strange circumstances. On one of his voyages

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21. William Frear to Appleton Oaksmith, London, January 15, 1871. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

prior to 1873, most likely the trip to the United States in 1867 to marry Augusta, Oaksmith was forced to put in at Beaufort harbor because of damage his ship had incurred in a violent storm.[22] Here he was forced to remain for a week. One day, while awaiting the repairs to be effected, Oaksmith happened to stop at a land auction that was taking place near Morehead City. Hoping to aid the auctioneer in obtaining the highest price possible for the land, Oaksmith bid on the land then being auctioned at an absurdly low price and walked away. The next day he was walking down a Beaufort street and was approached by the same auctioneer who informed him that his was the only bid on the land, and that Oaksmith now owned the old Beckton Place outside of Morehead City.[23] Thus Appleton Oaksmith had inadvertently bought a home in North Carolina where he was to live for the rest of his life.

Before Oaksmith could settle in the United States with any sense of security, pardons had to be secured for his blockade running and his attempts to fit out a slaver. When he left England in 1872, Oaksmith felt that the passions aroused by the Civil War had cooled enough so that the possibility of obtaining a pardon was good. The story is still circulated in Beaufort of Oaksmith's attempt to obtain a pardon in Washington. Immediately

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22. There is no documentary evidence as to just what voyage this incident occurred, but this voyage is the most plausible as the one in which Oaksmith bought his future home.

23. Geraldine Oaksmith to the writer in an interview on December 13, 1951.

after he reached North Carolina, he went to the capital to see President Grant. Oaksmith was very persistent in his attempts to secure the necessary pardon, although he was very careful not to disclose his true identity. Finally, the President granted Oaksmith the pardon but asked the persistent and tenacious fellow why he was so anxious to secure amnesty for this Oaksmith. Oaksmith replied simply: "Because I am Appleton Oaksmith."[24]

When he and his family took up residence in North Carolina, Oaksmith evidently made a good impression on the citizens of the area. He was immediately offered the general managership of the Midland North Carolina Railroad Company, a newly chartered organization that hoped to build a railroad across the state of North Carolina from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Beaufort.[25] Oaksmith quickly seized the opportunity offered to him and went to Raleigh to make a speech before the House of Representatives concerning the proposed railroad. If he hoped to arouse the members of the House to action on the scheme and ultimately to obtain state support for the Midland, he failed. He did obtain favorable comment from John L. Morehead[26] and another man who wrote that he hoped Oaksmith would return to the capital since he had created such a

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24. In a conversation with the writer on December 14, 1951, Leslie Davis of Beaufort related this story.

25. The Midland North Carolina Railroad Co., Charter, New Bern, February 12, 1873. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

26. John L. Morehead to Appleton Oaksmith, Charlotte, February 23, 1873. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

good impression there.[27] Oaksmith saw little chance for financing the railroad in the United States, and as soon as he had his family settled in their new home, he left for England in the hope of financing the enterprise there.

When he reached England, Oaksmith was quick to interest the public in his plan, for he wrote an article in the London Cosmopolitan called "North Carolina and her Future." In this article he painted a rosy picture of the possibilities of a lucrative trade between North Carolina and England.[28] No manner of articles, letters, or conversations would convince any Englishman to finance the Midland, however, and early in 1874 Oaksmith returned to North Carolina. In April of that year he resigned as general manager of the Midland Company, testifying to the failure of his mission.[29]

Hoping to make political capital out of his popularity in the Beaufort-Morehead City area in 1874, Appleton Oaksmith decided to run for the North Carolina House of Representatives. Running on an independent ticket that opposed the Ku-Klux-Klan and the repudiation of the state debt, he won over his Democratic opponent by a good majority. For Oaksmith, who had not lived in the area long, it was an important and encouraging victory.

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27. Peter Mallett to Appleton Oaksmith, Raleigh, March 2, 1873. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

28. London Cosmopolitan, August 28, 1873.

29. Minutes of the Board of Director's Meeting of the Midland North Carolina Railroad Company, New Bern, April 9, 1874. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

Oaksmith's credentials were challenged by a member of the House when they were presented for acceptance. This challenge was only temporary, however, and Oaksmith was voted in as a bona fide member of the House of Representatives from Carteret County.[30] Aside from this incident, Oaksmith's stay in Raleigh was uneventful. At the request of a few of his Beaufort constituents, who were hopelessly in debt and who hoped to get around payment of their town taxes, he introduced and passed a bill repealing the charter of the town of Beaufort.[31] Oaksmith also introduced a bill that authorized the people of Carteret County to compromise their debts,[32] but otherwise he did little to achieve any fame or renown in his sojourn in Raleigh.

The election of Oaksmith to the House of Representatives of the General Assembly marked the last time that he attained any prominence, and his last years from 1877 until his death in 1887 saw him fighting debt, sickness, and tragedy.

In June of 1877 Appleton Oaksmith received a letter from his brother that aptly demonstrates the pattern of his final years. The letter stated:

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30. Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session of 1874-'75 (Raleigh, 1875), p. 9.

31. Ibid., pp. 507, 535-536.

32. Ibid., pp. 252-253.

> I am truly sorry to hear from you as well as mother of your continual illness of body and mind. . . . I have heard repeatedly of the illness of yourself or some member of your family, and it must be more than discouraging. . . . The people among you appear to be broken, dead, dispirited, and want life and energy. If you are willing to sacrifice your own health and talent, do you think it best for the children--What could the girls do if you are taken away.[33]

The pattern that this letter set down, of a life of discouragement, sickness, and tragedy was to follow Oaksmith in his business and family life until his death in 1887.

It would be absurd to analyze all of Oaksmith's business enterprises from 1877-1887, for he took part in plan after plan to secure an income for himself and his family. Time after time these enterprises failed, but in spite of these business failures, Oaksmith demonstrated in many of his ideas far-sighted plans that were not to be realized in his day, but at a time considerably after his death. In 1877 and 1878 he worked tirelessly to secure a promise from the United States government for the dredging of Beaufort harbor and the Neuse River.[34] In his desire to have Beaufort become a major port city comparable to Wilmington, he labored to establish ship-repair docks in the Beaufort area.[35] His participation in the Midland railroad enterprise was also dedicated to the aim of making Beaufort an important Atlantic

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33. Alvin Oaksmith to Appleton Oaksmith, Patchogue, June 8, 1877. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

34. Appleton Oaksmith to the United States Engineer's Department at Norfolk, Hollywood, August 24, 1878. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

35. Contract for the establishment of the Beaufort Marine Railway Company, New York, November 12, 1877. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

port. These hopes were to be realized but not in Oaksmith's lifetime.[36]

Oaksmith also advocated the development of the beach area surrounding Morehead City into a resort playground, again giving testimony to his far sightedness. He wrote to a New York banker concerning this possibility stating:

> We have an ocean beach near this place 26 miles long, unsurpassed on the whole Atlantic Coast for accessibility and constant cool sea-breezes during the hottest summer months. It possesses advantages for a great seaside resort superior to any on the whole coast.[37]

To most of the people in the Beaufort area, Oaksmith's plans were chimerical and held little prospect of success.[38]

Not all of Oaksmith's schemes were of such a praiseworthy nature. In February of 1877 he approached a New York broker on the possibilities of a proposed bond speculation in Carteret County. He proposed the buying up of all the Carteret County Bonds in the area at the lowest possible price. He then proposed selling them on the New York market for a higher price than he had paid for them. Financial backing for the proposed speculation was, of course, to be furnished by the broker. The broker answered Oaksmith's request for this financial backing with the

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36. The United States government is now expanding the port facilities in much the same way as Oaksmith proposed in 1877-1878.

37. Appleton Oaksmith to J. W. Seligman, Hollywood, July 30, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

38. Morehead City is now a principal North Carolina resort area.

statement that "scandals are great nowadays. How can you with a clear conscience try this gamble depending on others than yourself?"[39]

Oaksmith was deterred in all his actions in his last years by sickness that sapped his energy and oftentimes made business impossible.[40] It was recurring malaria that bothered him most in these last years, and it often kept him in bed for months at a time. To add to the difficulty of being ill and unable to work, Oaksmith's standing in the community was jeopardized when in 1878 and 1879 rumors were circulated that he had fathered the child of a married woman. Besides being deleterious to his position in the community, these rumors served to deteriorate ~~worsen~~ his already impaired health. In answer to them, Oaksmith wrote to the father of the woman who had accused him of being the father of the child, stating:

A matter has come to my knowledge of such an infamous nature that painful as it is I feel it should be settled at once. I have heard that Ida Pelletier had a child previous to her last one, and that she had stated that I was its father. I do not believe that she could in her right mind make such a statement: but whoever asserts--be they man, woman, or child--that I have ever had improper relations with any woman since my residence in this State is an infamous liar. . . . If Ida has ever used my name in any such manner, she is either insane or one of the basest women I

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39. Charles Fitz to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, March 5, 1877. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

40. In the Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L., there are a great many letters from 1877-1887 that express hope that Oaksmith is feeling better, or that he has recovered from his seige of illness, etc.

ever knew. . . . While I very pity a fallen woman, I never associate with them or permit any of mine to do so.[41]

The tragedy that struck Appleton Oaksmith on July 4, 1879, was by far the most significant event in the last part of his life, and he never was to recover from its effects. The accident of July 4 practically destroyed the personality of a man whose life had become filled with sickness and financial adversity.

By 1879 there were six children in the Oaksmith home: Corrine, Bessie, and Randolph, Oaksmith's children by his first wife, and Mildred, Fannie, and Dorothy who had been born to Augusta.[42] Mildred had been born in England, while Fannie and Dorothy had been born in North Carolina. Despite the fact that the three older children were Isotta's, Oaksmith and his wife are said to have loved and respected all the children on an equal basis.[43] Oaksmith's two eldest daughters, Bessie and Corrine, had become interested in writing poetry and fostered by their talented grandmother, who had come to live with them, the two wrote poems of some merit. Randolph and his father were never close to one another, and after the accident Randolph left home for good.

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41. Appleton Oaksmith to John Pelletier, New Bern, January 29, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

42. Again the loss of the family Bible makes it impossible to determine the date of birth of these children, although it can be inferred from letters in the Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L., that Dorothy was born in July of 1877.

43. Both of Oaksmith's daughters in a conversation on April 13, 1952, assert that their father and mother showed no partiality at all.

The younger children received attention from their father also. The few glimpses that are had of Oaksmith's home life show him sitting at the bedside of his youngsters, strumming his guitar and singing lullabies in his fine tenor voice. He often walked with the children and took them sailing. Oaksmith has been characterized as a "home man,"[44] but the accident that occurred on July 4 served to break up scenes such as these and to make the home a place of bitter memories for Oaksmith and his wife.

The accident was the result of an intended holiday excursion. Oaksmith had promised his four daughters and his son that he would take them to Beaufort to visit some friends there, and the six set out in a small sail boat with this in mind. It was a bright warm day, but the wind was strong and gusty, and as the small boat approached its Beaufort destination, a gust of wind caught in its sails and the boat capsized. The six occupants were all safe as their father had ordered them to cling to the side of the craft. While they were awaiting rescue, a great swell broke over the capsized boat, breaking the hold of the six who were clinging so tenaciously to the craft. Only Oaksmith and his son reappeared on the surface, as the four girls had been washed away by the swell. The frantic attempts of Oaksmith and his son to save them failed. Randolph, the son, became so hysterical that when he reached shore he ran to the Morehead City

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44. This was Dorothy Agrillo's characterization of her father.

Sheriff and stated that his father had intentionaly drowned his four sisters.[45] Those that saw Oaksmith after the drowning claim that there could be little credence in such a story, for Oaksmith was completely crushed by the tragedy. The Raleigh Observer wrote:

> In yesterday's noon dispatches will be found one of the saddest accidents that THE OBSERVER has ever recorded. The four beautiful daughters of APPLETON OAKSMITH Esq., were drowned in Bogue Sound on Friday evening. Baptized unto death these children were sung to sleep by the ceaseless hymn of the waves.[46]

The effects of the tragedy dominated Oaksmith's life until his death in 1887. A month after the tragedy he wrote to a friend stating: "I am sick in body and mind and cannot attend to business."[47] In December of 1879 he wrote to Zebulon Vance in Washington that "since that dreadful day I have never left my home and have well nigh broken down under the strain of my afflictions."[48] Another bit of news that added to his depression was that his former wife had been carrying her bitterness through

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45. The story of the drowning was told to the writer on December 14, 1951, by Leslie Davis of Beaufort to whose home the Oaksmiths were coming to visit that fateful day. He claims that rumors are still prevalent in the Morehead City area that Oaksmith had drowned his daughters intentionally.

46. The Observer (Raleigh), July 6, 1879.

47. Appleton Oaksmith to Dan Beel, Hollywood, August 12, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

48. Appleton Oaksmith to Zebulon Vance, Hollywood, December 9, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

the newspapers, putting him in a bad light.[49]

A good indication of the state of Oaksmith's mind was given immediately following the drowning. He gathered all the toys, clothing, and other belongings of his four daughters and placed them in an upstairs bedroom. It is said that he often sat brooding in that room for hours at a time. To this day the room is still intact as Oaksmith had left it after that fateful July 4.[50]

The attempts of Appleton Oaksmith to recover his mental and physical balance were feeble indeed, and it was only through the efforts of his devoted wife, who operated a small ship's store on the edge of Beaufort harbor, that the family was able to survive. The one daughter, Dorothy, who remained in the house brought some joy to Oaksmith and his wife, but their son Randolph left home after the drowning, leaving only one child to the unhappy couple.

Late in 1884 Oaksmith became so ill that he was taken to New York where he was put under the surveillance of New York doctors in the hope that he might be cured of the malaria that had lingered with him for so long. From New York he wrote an almost illegible letter to his mother concerning his condition. He stated that the New York physicians who examined him, eleven in

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49. Fannie Oaksmith to Appleton Oaksmith, Portland, October 7, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

50. Captain I. J. Barney, U. S. M. C., of Mansfield Park, N. C., on a visit to the Oaksmith house in September of 1951 came upon the room as Oaksmith had left it in July of 1879.

number, were unable to diagnose the disease of the brain with which he was afflicted. He reported that he kept a bottle of chloroform under his pillow, and whenever he felt a paroxysm coming on, he would take a dose of the drug to keep from feeling the pain. He concluded with the statement that he was doing everything in his power to keep his physical and mental prowess, but that the disaster of 1879 still preyed on his mind.[51]

In October of 1886 Oaksmith returned to his home, evidently cured of what he thought was a brain malady. Perhaps it was the news that Augusta had given birth to a daughter, Geraldine, that caused this recuperation, for it is said that he appeared to be completely cured of the disease.[52] This was only temporary, however, and he was forced to return to New York for treatment. Treatment did little good for Oaksmith, as his malaria was accompanied by paralysis from which he never was to recover. For almost a year he lay in a New York hospital wracked in pain until finally, on October 29, 1887, he died.

To write of the decline of the personality of Appleton Oaksmith is not a gracious task, for when one looses his hold on life as Oaksmith did, there is too great a temptation to pass too quickly over the process. There is no doubt, however, that Oak-

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51. Appleton Oaksmith to Elizabeth Oakes Smith, New York, August 15, 1886. Oaksmith Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library. Hereafter cited as Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

52. This is the assertion by Dorothy Agrillo in conversation with the writer on April 13, 1952. When Geraldine was born is a matter of conjecture as she will not admit to her age. She states, however, that she never remembered her father at all.

smith's last years after his term in the House of Representatives were an anti-climax to those that had gone before. It is surely with a sense of pity that the last years of Appleton Oaksmith are surveyed.

One Beaufort newspaper observed after his death:

> After two years of great suffering as he lay in his narrow bed, his serene, lovely face seemed too beautiful to be covered up in the earth. . . . Buried with Masonic orders Captain Oaksmith was a man of large brain and strong will, and nerve power. If our late friend and brother had faults and who has not? let us cover them with a mantle of charity and remember only his virtues.[53]

After the Masonic funeral, Oaksmith was buried behind his home near Morehead City.

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53. Beaufort Weekly Record, November 18, 1887.

Chapter III

APPLETON OAKSMITH AND THE CUBAN FILIBUSTER EXPEDITION OF 1855

The infusion of American blood into the Cuban liberation movement having its inception in 1848 was begun vigorously by Narciso Solano López when he came to the United States to seek aid for his scheme to free Cuba. He claimed that he had no ambition except to liberate his country; that he had been convinced for a long time that any scheme for Cuban liberation needed American blood to vitalize its energies.[1] López not only needed American blood, but he needed American money, American arms and ammunition, and American leadership. From 1848-1855 this leadership and aid were rendered to Cuba in great quantities.

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1. J. F. H. Claiborne, Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman (2 vols., New York, 1860), II, 54.

This aid came from many quarters. Diplomatic activity had Cuba as its focal point in the early 1850's, and efforts were made to acquire Cuba by purchase. When Pierre Soulé was sent to Spain as Minister to that country, the chauvinistic attitude of the United States towards the Spanish over Cuba was clearly in evidence.[2] Another incident that pointed up the importance of Cuba and served to arouse the populace of the United States over the island was the "Black Warrior" affair of 1854.[3] The Ostend Manifesto of October, 1854, was a third step in tightening the tension over Cuba and in creating a furor in the United States over the island.

For many people, Cubans and Americans, diplomacy was too laborious and could accomplish little for the Cuban cause. The López expeditions of 1848-1851 gave an indication that force might well be used instead of diplomacy to free Cuba.[4] This feeling even spread to the floor of the United States Senate, for on May 1, 1854, John Slidell moved that the neutrality laws be abolished for one year. This would, in effect, have been a blanket endorsement of filibustering by the administration.[5] The Southern

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2. The best work on Soulé's sojourn in Spain is Amos A. Ettinger, The Mission to Spain of Pierre Soulé: 1853-1855 (New Haven, 1932).

3. See H. L. Janes, "The 'Black Warrior' Affair," The American Historical Review, XII (January, 1907), 280-298.

4. Robert G. Caldwell, The Lopez Expeditions to Cuba 1848-1851 (Princeton, 1915), pp. 43-113.

5. Roy F. Nichols, Franklin Pierce (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 340.

States in particular were extremely anxious over rumors that Spain was going to "Africanize" the island and make it a base for the freeing of the slaves in the Southern States by the Negroes of Cuba.[6] Officially, however, many statements by representatives of the government gave warning to filibusters that such activities were looked upon with disfavor. On May 1, 1854, instructions were issued to the minister to Spain succeeding Soulé. These instructions stated that the United States wanted to acquire Cuba only by peaceable means.[7] Secretary of State Marcy stated in April, 1855, that

> I am entirely opposed to getting up a war for the purpose of seizing Cuba. . . . The robber doctrine I abhor. If carried out it would degrade us in our own estimation and disgrace us in the eyes of the civilized world. . . . Cuba would be a very desirable possession if it came to us in the right way, but we cannot get it by robbery or theft.[8]

With this statement finis was written to attempts to obtain Cuba by the United States, but it was not the last of the filibuster story.

Robert Caldwell has quoted an article from a New Orleans newspaper that may well express why Oaksmith became interested in the cause of Cuban independence. The article observed:

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6. Basil Rauch, American Interest in Cuba: 1848-1855 (New York, 1948), pp. 275-277.

7. Nichols, op. cit., p. 396.

8. Quoted in Charles E. Chapman, History of the Cuban Republic (New York, 1927), p. 61.

We know that among the volunteers who will fly to the help of the island of Cuba, there will be found many adventurers like those who accompanied William the Conqueror in his expedition against England; we know that there are some natives, inquiet and restless, for whom repose is a punishment and action and danger are necessities. But we know that there are also generous impressionable natures, friends of peace, but believing that war is an honorable and sacred mission when a sword is bound and drawn in the interests of a great and sacred cause. And why should not Americans do for Cuba what Byron did for Greece and what Lafayette did for America?9

Oaksmith obviously had an interest in the Cuban liberation movement as early as 1851 when he wrote after hearing of the execution of Crittenden and López:

By a recent arrival from "the States" I have obtained a copy of the New York Herald of Sept. 13th, 1851 by which I learn of the landing of the Cuban Expedition, and their total failure together with the sad fate of the unfortunate but brave party.
I subjoin the account as I received it as in after years those things may be forgotten by the world in general while to me they will always have an interest from the remembrance I have of the emotions with which they filled me.10

This statement points out that Oaksmith's sympathies were certainly with the cause of Cuban freedom. This fact combined with his "inquiet and restless" nature prompted him to become associated with the Cuban junta in New York in 1855.

The immediate cause of Oaksmith's association with the Cuban liberation movement came about because of his friendship with General Domingo Goicouría, the Cuban patriot. The two men had

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9. L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orleans, July 28, 1851. Quoted in Caldwell, López . . ., pp. 38-39.

10. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, April 18, 1851-December 6, 1852, San Juan del Sur, October 9, 1851. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

met at one of the gatherings that Oaksmith had attended with his mother. Goicouría had been impressed by Appleton's intelligence and cleverness, and was a frequent visitor in the Smith home.[11] When in 1855 Goicouría wished to fit out an expedition for the liberation of Cuba, it was only natural that he should turn to his friend Appleton Oaksmith, who by this time had become a ship owner and dealer in supplies that would be of use to Goicouría and his Cuban compatriots.[12] Oaksmith wrote to Goicouría in 1859 of "the old unfortunate matters connected with operations in which I embarked at your solicitude and urgent request," adequate testimony as to why Oaksmith embarked on the course of action he did in 1855.[13]

Goicouría had been connected with the Cuban liberation movement in the United States since it had begun under the prodding of López in 1848. Juntas, or organizations working for the liberation of Cuba, were organized in the United States, and Goicouría took an active part in their operations. These juntas had various names such as Junta de Fomento, Junta Cubana, Junta Promotora de la Libertad de Cuba, Junta Suprema Secreta, and Junta Pública Promovedora de los Intereses Polfticos de Cuba. The juntas that were organized in New York had a propaganda organ,

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11. Autobiography, pp. 457, 469. Smith Collection, N. Y. P.L.

12. See list of items on hand in Oaksmith's firm, October 27, 1854. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

13. Appleton Oaksmith to Domingo Goicouría, New York, January 22, 1859. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

the newspaper La Verdad.[14]

In 1852 a new junta was organized in New York under the leadership of Goicouría and included some followers of López and a few Americans such as John O'Sullivan, the originator of the phrase "manifest destiny."[15] Goicouría was elected treasurer of the junta, and his followers, or "Young Cuba," took their place in New York parades with "Young Germany," "Young Italy," and other exile groups that had sprung up in New York at that time.[16]

The organization of the expedition that finally was undertaken in 1855 had begun as early as 1853. In that year the Cuban junta in New York had begun negotiations with General John Quitman of Mississippi in the hope that he might head up the proposed expedition.[17] Quitman accepted the post in April of 1854 but with three reservations: that the enterprise be a union of all the leading patriotic Cubans in the United States, that the powers delegated to him be sufficient, and that adequate financial backing be given the expedition by the junta.[18] He also laid down

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14. Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Manual de historia de Cuba (2 vols., Havana, 1939), I, 484.

15. J. W. Pratt, "The Origin of Manifest Destiny," The American Historical Review, XXXII (July, 1927), 795-798.

16. Rauch, op. cit., p. 264.

17. New information on Quitman's part in the expedition has been obtained from the Quitman Papers. This new light on Quitman has been published by Basil Rauch, in American Interest in Cuba: 1848-1855.

18. Hermino Portell Vilá, Historia de Cuba (2 vols., Havana, 1939), II, 82-83.

the conditions that 3,000 men, one moderately armed steamer, and $220,000 be the minimum requirements for the expedition.[19] Finally, the spring of 1855 was decided upon as the date that the expedition should sail, and into the picture stepped Appleton Oaksmith.

Oaksmith was persuaded by Goicouría that it would be profitable to fit out two ships loaded with supplies of arms, ammunition, and other war material to be used by the expedition which was being planned by the junta and led by Quitman. Oaksmith immediately procured two ships the Amelia and the Magnolia with funds made available to him by Goicouría and funds from his own pocket. Cisneros, the President of the Cuban junta in New York, mortgaged his home for $25,000 which went into the fund for the liberation of Cuba and which was ultimately represented by the cargo on board the two ships.[20] Oaksmith placed on board the Magnolia two hundred cases of rifles, two cases of pistols, two field pieces, five cases of boots and shoes, three hundred cases of ammunition, eight bales of clothing and shirts, one case of ax handles, six cases of shells, one case of drums and fifes, one thousand shovels, four cases of cooking utensils, one small wagon, and three cases of canteens.[21] A similar cargo was placed on

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19. Rauch, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

20. Rauch, op. cit., p. 298.

21. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, Copy of the Indictment against him, Mobile, June 23, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

the Amelia.[22]

The two ships cleared New York on March 5, 1855, ostensibly bound for St. Mary's, Georgia. On leaving the port the captains of the ships represented to the port officials in New York that their vessels only carried ballast and had no cargo on board.[23] The two ships were not bound for St. Mary's at all but for St. Joseph Bay off the coast of Florida where they were to rendezvous with Quitman's ships, the United States and the Massachusetts. The goods on board Oaksmith's vessels were intended to be transferred to these ships.[24] The Boston Daily Advertiser reported concerning Oaksmith's vessels:

> Two barques, the Amelia, Capt. Swenson, and the Magnolia, Capt. Morrison, which left New York towards the last of February, ostensibly for St. Mary's, Georgia, were recently reported missing. New York underwriters have recently learned that they were in St. Joseph's Bay, Florida 9th inst., and that they touched about a month before off the West Pass entrance to Appalachicola, but didn't report themselves to the customs house. There can be little doubt that the vessels were connected with the recent abortive filibuster movement.[25]

While Oaksmith's ships were awaiting the arrival of the United States and the Massachusetts in St. Joseph's Bay, events in New York took a turn for the worse. The most significant

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22. The ships were in very poor condition. See New York Daily Times, February 20, 1856.

23. Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives, nos. 343-440, 1st Session, 44th Congress, 1875-1876 (Washington, 1876), Report no. 420.

24. New Orleans Daily Crescent, July 20, 1855.

25. Boston Daily Advertiser, May 18, 1855.

event was the resignation of Quitman late in April. Quitman had been persuaded by Pierce to give up his connection with the proposed expedition,[26] and in a public declaration on April 30, 1855, declared:

> Be it known to all whom it may concern, that, I do hereby relinquish and surrender to the Cuban Junta, established in the United States for the promotion of Cuban independence, all the powers, rights, and faculties which were by them conferred on me by their contracts and agreements, made with me in New York on the 18th of August, 1853, and afterward modified and concluded by the agreement made in Natchez in the month of May 1854, reserving only such powers and rights as may be necessary to effect final settlement of any funds, effects, and claims which still remain in the hands of myself or my agents. All other effects and resources are hereby relinquished to the said junta, but without recourse to me.[27]

Details of the now leaderless expedition had ~~now~~ been learned by Concha, the Captain-General of Cuba.[28] Little hope for a successful expedition remained.

Perhaps Quitman still made some representation to the junta that he might lead the expedition, for it was not until August that the junta denounced Quitman as being interested only in the extension of slavery into Cuba. The junta further declared in the same "manifesto" that denounced Quitman that it had dis-

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26. Rauch, op. cit., p. 300.

27. Claiborne, op. cit., p. 392.

28. Diego González, Historia documentado de los movimientos revolucionarios por la independencia de Cuba de 1855 a 1867 (2 vols., Havana, 1939), II, 232.

solved itself.[29] In reality the "manifesto" was unnecessary, for the admission that the expedition was a failure came in June.

In that month the New York papers had begun to seek an explanation of the failure of the expedition. The New York Evening Express on June 7 recounted how the Amelia and the Magnolia had been fitted out at a cost of $150,000. It further declared: "The plans of the Junta were thrown into confusion. The Government had their secret, and the Cuban authorities had it also, and $150,000 were swept away in one foul atrocious piece of treachery."[30] The New York Herald took up the cry a few days later and demanded information from Goicouría as to where the $150,000 had gone.[31] The next day he perfunctorily replied that he had had nothing to do with the affair.[32] In a final admission of failure the Cuban patriot wrote on June 19: "Now, experience and disenchantment have shown us the necessity of adopting for the future a plan more apt to ensure the success of the undertaking and avoid the shoals upon which others have been shipwrecked."[33]

This admission by Goicouría in the New York Herald exhibited to the public that the proposed expedition had been written off as a failure, but this admission did not solve any of Oaksmith's problems. He still had two ships loaded with guns and ammunition

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29. Portell Vilá, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
30. New York Evening Express, June 7, 1855.
31. New York Herald, June 12, 1855.
32. Ibid., June 13, 1855.
33. Ibid., June 19, 1855.

worth over $150,000 cruising in St. Joseph's Bay. To complicate the matter, government cutters had been sent out to look for the Amelia and the Magnolia and to bring them in to port if they were found. Thus, means had to be found to get rid of the cargoes of the two ships before they were found by the cutters. If this was not accomplished, the investment of Oaksmith and the Cuban junta would be completely lost. In order to see that the cargoes were saved and disposed of, Oaksmith left New York for Florida to communicate with the vessels if possible. Fortunately we have Oaksmith's record of his activities.

He wrote in his journal of 1855:

> As this period of my life is fraught with events of some importance, which from their peculiar nature are particularly liable to be misconstrued and presented in false colors, I have determined to keep a record of the leading features, in order that my family and those who are dear to me may know where to find the authorities for my vindication, in case my destiny leaves to them that duty. . . . My purpose as I first remarked is simply to establish dates and the brief outline of facts, which will undoubtedly live in my memory, and which should I deem it advisable--I may hereafter enlarge upon--or leave as a guide book to point the way whence more important facts may be elicited should another hand than mine write their peculiar history, with which my name is in a measure identified.[34]

On May 26 Oaksmith left New York for Savannah on the steamer Knoxville with the intention of proceeding to Apalachicola to attend to the two ships. He had instructed his brother Sidney, who was in Apalachicola, to say nothing or do nothing about the ships

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34. Journal of Appleton Oaksmith, May 26, 1855-October 18, 1855, Mobile, June 17, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C. Hereafter cited as Journal.

as "something was wrong."[35] Seven days later he wrote his brother that he was considering the sale of the goods on board the two ships to Venezuela.[36] While Oaksmith was negotiating this sale, one of the barks, the Magnolia, was taken into Mobile Bay by a government cutter.

Immediately upon receipt of this disconcerting information, Oaksmith wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, William Marcy. In it, Oaksmith asked for aid and protection. He stated that he had been disappointed in the market where he hoped to dispose of the Magnolia's cargo and that he now hoped to forward the cargo to New York to meet his liabilities. He knew that the government had false impressions about the destination of the cargo, but he had only honorable and legal intentions in disposing of the cargo. He stated further that he had no knowledge of General Quitman and that he hoped to sell the goods to the Venezuelan Government. Oaksmith averred that his activities were strictly honest and that he wished only for the return of the vessel and its cargo. As a parting shot Oaksmith audaciously wrote that "if the Government desires to purchase the rifles which are 'Sharp's Patents' they are at their disposal."[37]

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35. Journal, Savannah, Entry of May 28, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

36. Journal, Savannah, Entry of June 4, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

37. Journal, Appleton Oaksmith to William Marcy, Macon, June 11, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

The same day, Oaksmith wrote to Captain Swenson of the Amelia to weigh anchor immediately, if he was not already at sea, and cruise for thirty days in the latitude of 27° North and of longitude 85° West, giving all ships in the area a wide birth. Swenson was further ordered to be at the above position every Wednesday and Sunday at two o'clock in the afternoon in order that any further message might be communicated to him. Swenson was under no circumstances to acknowledge to anyone where the cargo came from, but if questioned he was to say simply that the cargo belonged to Appleton Oaksmith. Oaksmith further stated: "I shall not be able to sell the cargo to the parties I expected to--so that you can say with a clear conscience, that you are engaged in a perfectly legal business." In conclusion, Oaksmith sent regards to Swenson's wife, who was on board the Amelia.[38]

With Swenson advised as to the position he was in and the advisability of staying away from ships that might be government cutters, Oaksmith felt that he could proceed to Mobile to see what might be done to recover the cargo of the Magnolia. When he arrived in Mobile, he wrote to his brother asking him to get $3,000 from Goicouría so that he could proceed with his plan to get back the munitions aboard the vessel.[39] His brother replied quickly that Goicouría did not have the money and that he would

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38. Journal, Appleton Oaksmith to Captain Peter Swenson, Macon, June 11, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

39. Journal, Appleton Oaksmith to Sidney Oaksmith, Mobile, June 14, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

have to proceed without it.[40]

Oaksmith then pursued a different tack, attempting to ingratiate himself with the various officials who would determine the case. He visited with the United States District Attorney at Mobile, A. J. Requier, and became a friend of the District Attorney.[41] Oaksmith also made it a point to become acquainted with a Mr. Sandford, the Collector of the Port of Mobile, and he too became quite friendly with Oaksmith.[42] Oaksmith maintained to Sandford, as he had to Marcy, that his vessel, seized for alleged violation of the neutrality laws, was engaged in a perfectly legal business, and he wished to send the cargo of the Magnolia to New York under Sandford's jurisdiction. Oaksmith emphasized to Sandford that there was the "strongest disapprobation on all sides at the administration's action."[43]

Oaksmith continued to court the District Attorney and was a frequent visitor in Requier's home, but on June 22 was informed by Requier that he had orders from the Secretary of the Treasury to prosecute the Magnolia to the extent of his ability.[44] Oaksmith's reaction was one of surprise if not one of bitterness.

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40. Journal, Sidney Oaksmith to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, June 17, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

41. Journal, Mobile, June 14, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

42. Journal, Mobile, June 15, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

43. Journal, Appleton Oaksmith to A. B. Sandford, Mobile, June 15, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

44. Journal, Mobile, June 23, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

He wrote:

> Kind administration! You will awake a spirit of antagonism in me that will prompt me to do much that I otherwise would not have done. One spark of leniency or kindness would have done more good than all your harsh measures--I shall take a pride now in defeating you--not only in this matter but in others--When I told the simple truth it was not believed. We shall see!--[45]

On June 23 Oaksmith received a copy of the suit which was to be brought against his ship by the government. The charges were: (1) that the vessel was fitted out, armed to be employed against a foreign power or some colony of a foreign power with whom the United States was at peace, (2) that the above ship was to be of use to the people of the island of Cuba who were disaffected towards the existing regime and that it would be used by these people to damage property and take the lives of the citizens of Cuba. The indictment demanded that the ship and the goods on board be forfeited to the United States government.[46] Oaksmith felt that his case was a desperate one and that there was little hope of a decision in his favor.[47] He did, however, retain a lawyer, a Mr. Bailey, to present his side of the matter.

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45. Journal, Mobile, June 23, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

46. Journal, Copy of libel against the Magnolia, Mobile, June 23, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

47. Journal, Mobile, June 23, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

In the meantime, Oaksmith had received word that the fleet searching for the Amelia had been supplemented by additional cutters. Goicouría had arrived in Mobile, also, to make arrangements concerning the cargo. As has been seen, it was the Cuban junta in New York that had furnished most of the money for the cargoes of the Amelia and the Magnolia. Goicouría felt that Oaksmith was a logical person to dispose of the cargo, and he resigned all of the junta's interest in the cargo to him. Oaksmith received a title to all of the goods on board the ship from Goicouría as well as permission to sell the goods wherever he thought best. A part of the money he might obtain from disposal of the goods was to be turned over to a Cuban in New York, José María Mora.[48] Thus Goicouría absolved himself and the junta from interest in the cargo, except in the event that Oaksmith might be able to sell the goods that were on board the two ships.

In any event, on July 16 the case of the Magnolia opened in Mobile. Requier, whom Oaksmith seemed to think was inclined to do more than his simple duty in prosecuting the case, opened the case for the government. Requier pointed out that there was an organization in the United States that had as its sole purpose the liberation of Cuba by inciting revolution on the island. This organization, said the District Attorney, was responsible for sending out the Magnolia. He pointed to the suspicious manner in which the Magnolia cruised in St. Joseph's Bay and to the fact

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48. Agreement between Appleton Oaksmith and Domingo Goicouría, Mobile, July 6, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

that the ship never touched St. Mary's, Georgia, the port it ostensibly had as its destination. Requier obtained testimony from the second mate on board the Magnolia that the cargo of the ship was meant to be transferred from Oaksmith's vessel to the ships that Quitman was to send to St. Joseph's Bay. He further testified that the ultimate destination of the cargo was Cuba.[49] Requier's final point was that the vessel was fitted out with one and only one intention--to supply an expedition that was planned to liberate Cuba.[50]

Oaksmith's lawyer made an admirable defense of the case. Bailey first proved that Oaksmith was the sole owner of the Magnolia. He then pointed out that the government Neutrality Law of 1818 under which the government was attempting to prosecute the Magnolia only covered privateers and had nothing to do with ships carrying merchandise. The onus probandi was with the government, and that in spite of the fact that the vessel was sold to a political organization of Cubans with the intention of invading Cuba, an attempt without an overt act could not be proved. There was no law of the United States that disallowed the selling of merchandise to whomever he wished, as long as it was not an enemy of the United States.[51]

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49. New Orleans Daily Crescent, July 20, 1855.

50. Journal, Mobile, July 16-17, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

51. Journal, Mobile, Entry of July 18, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

Oaksmith did not wait in Mobile for a decision on his ship, but immediately left that city on a steamer, the Martha Wolf, to find the Amelia to see that it did not meet the same fate as the Magnolia. The Martha Wolf cruised in the neighborhood of latitude 27° North and longitude 85° West for two weeks before the Amelia was finally sighted. Oaksmith overhauled the ship and placed his brother Sidney on board as supercargo. Sidney was instructed to proceed to Haiti with his cargo and open negotiations for the sale of its cargo there. Oaksmith also saw to it that the ship had a fresh supply of food and water.[52] He decided to return to Mobile to attend to his affairs there while leaving Sidney with the responsibility of attending to the Amelia. On the return trip Appleton sighted two Government cutters on August 9 and 10, that were proceeding on exactly the same course as the Amelia. His remark on observing the cutters was: "Nothing but good luck can save the 'Amelia' now."[53]

The news that greeted Oaksmith on his return to Mobile was a combination of good and bad. The Magnolia affair was decided in his favor, but the government had decided to appeal the case, and there was little hope of an immediate settlement.[54] This was a bitter blow to Oaksmith who had hoped to sell the cargo in Venezuela, if possible. He then decided that the only way anything

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52. Journal, At Sea, Entry of August 8, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

53. Journal, At Sea, Entries of August 9 and 10, Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

54. Journal, Mobile, Entry of August 13, Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

could be accomplished was to go to Washington, but he first decided that it would be better to go to New York and Portland for a rest to "recover my mental health."[55] This hope of a rest ultimately resulted in his marriage to Isotta on September 23, 1855, but soon Oaksmith was again seeking the recovery of his ship's cargo.

From Portland he went to Washington where he hoped to persuade the Secretary of the Treasury to return his ship and its cargo. On October 5 he wrote that he had not violated the neutrality laws and had no intention of doing so. The court at Mobile had made a decision favorable to him, and Oaksmith saw no reason why it should not be upheld. He continued to insist that his cargo was being ruined while the "efficacy of a law was being tested by the Government."[56] The Secretary did nothing, and the case became tied up in legal technicalities. The final judgment on the Magnolia was not in Oaksmith's favor, and as late as 1876 Oaksmith was still seeking claims on the ship.[57]

The Amelia, however, was still free, and good luck had saved her, for she had reached Haiti in early October. Sidney, who had been consul in Haiti in 1853, asked permission from the Emperor,

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55. Journal, Mobile, Entry of August 16, Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

56. Appleton Oaksmith to Secretary of Treasury, Washington, October 5, 1855, Journal, Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

57. See Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives, nos. 343-440, 1st Session, 44th Congress, 1875-1876 (Washington, 1876), Report no. 420.

Faustin I, to lie in the outer harbor of Port au Prince without going through customs. Faustin agreed and negotiations were begun with the Emperor for the sale of the arms. Samples of the goods on board the Amelia were sent to Faustin in the hope that he might buy them for forays on the neighboring Dominican Republic.[58] The goods were never delivered. Faustin averred that there was too small a quantity of flint muskets and that he did not wish to buy the cargo.[59] Thus Sidney was unable to sell the goods, but his problems were only beginning.

On October 15 the Amelia was boarded and taken over by Haitian soldiers. Not only did they board the ship and take it into the inner harbor, but they ran the ship aground in the process. Sidney Oaksmith wrote the New York Daily Times that if the ship remained in its present state, there was a danger that the cargo might be lost altogether.[60] Sidney believed that Lewis, the United States Consul in Port au Prince, had prevailed on Faustin to seize the ship and to turn it over to the United States, but whether Lewis was advised by Washington to see that the Amelia was seized is a matter of conjecture.

Sidney was outraged over the seizure. In an open letter to the New York Sun he sarcastically observed that the seizure of the Amelia "will be due a place among the catalogue of the bril-

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58. New York Evening Express, October 24, 1855.

59. New York Daily Times, November 6, 1855.

60. New York Daily Times, November 6, 1855.

liant achievements of the present administration; the bombardment of Greytown, the blockade of the steamer United States, and the valiant capture by the gulf squadron of the Magnolia."[61]

One unfortunate incident that occurred in the taking over of the Amelia was reported by the New York Sun.

> We regret to have to add that the captain of the Amelia has been placed in deep affliction through this affair. His wife, a noble woman, was greatly affected by the occurrences at Port au Prince, and on the passage to New York she died. Before leaving Port au Prince her husband sought permission to take her clothing from the vessel, but this was insolently refused, and she was obliged to leave with little more than the dress she had on.[62]

In any event, the Amelia was turned over to the American authorities, put in charge of the officers of the United States warship Saratoga, and sent to New York.[63] For all practical purposes, the Amelia and the Magnolia affair was ended with complete loss to all parties involved, particularly Oaksmith and the Cuban junta in New York.

The significance of the events surrounding the Amelia and the Magnolia are not difficult to determine. The story of these two ships casts new light on what is already known about the proposed expedition to liberate Cuba in 1855. The attempts to prosecute the owners of the ships demonstrates the official attitude of the United States towards filibuster movements, and

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61. New York Sun, October 24, 1855.

62. New York Sun, October 25, 1855.

63. New York Sun, December 12, 1855.

for Oaksmith it served as an introduction to the filibuster movement, and perhaps, was the most important reason for his becoming interested in Walker and his Nicaragua scheme in 1856.[64]

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64. William O. Scroggs in "William Walker's Designs on Cuba," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, I (September, 1914), 198-211, takes the position that Walker's expedition to Nicaragua was a part of a larger plan to free Cuba, using Nicaragua as a base. If this thesis is accepted, then Oaksmith's interest in Walker may only have been a cover for his real interest in the liberation of Cuba.

Chapter IV

APPLETON OAKSMITH AND WILLIAM WALKER

On May 4, 1855, William Walker set sail for Nicaragua with his fifty-eight immortals on what Dexter Perkins has called "the most audacious piece of unofficial imperialism in the history of American politics."[1] The narrative of events which took place in Nicaragua after Walker's arrival has been recounted elsewhere,[2] but it is the part played by Appleton Oaksmith on behalf of the "gray eyed man of destiny" that concerns us here.

Oaksmith's first interest in Walker and the Nicarauguan venture is a matter of conjecture. If Walker and Oaksmith met in California in late 1850 or early 1851, Oaksmith was not impressed,

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1. Dexter Perkins, The Monroe Doctrine 1826-1867 (Baltimore, 1933), p. 230.

2. The standard work on Walker is W. O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers (New York, 1916). Walker's own account, War in Nicaragua (Mobile, 1860), is the best military narrative of the expedition.

for he left no record of a meeting with Walker.[3] The first concrete evidence of Oaksmith's interest in the Walker affair was in a letter written by General Domingo Goicouría to Oaksmith on March 18, 1856, from Granada, Nicaragua. Goicouría, as has been seen, had become acquainted with Oaksmith in New York and had worked closely with him in supplying the Cuban filibusters and nationalists in 1855. Goicouría felt that Oaksmith could be depended upon to supply badly needed guns and ammunition to Walker, for in March he wrote for two hundred rifles and sufficient cartridges to use with them.[4] This was the first indication of Oaksmith's interest in Nicaragua and Walker, and from this time until late in November of 1856 he supported the Nicaraguan cause to the utmost.

Oaksmith's first move after he received Goicouría's communication was to settle a suit with a New York supply house, Hitchcock and Company, that firm which had been of such invaluable aid to Oaksmith in 1855 in procuring supplies for the Cubans.[5] On April 14 the suit that had been pending between Oaksmith and the supply house was cleared up in an amicable fashion, and the

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3. In an interview with the writer, December 13, 1951, Geraldine Oaksmith stated that Walker and Oaksmith had met in California in the 1850's. Oaksmith kept an extensive journal of his sojourn in California at this time, but he left no record in this journal of a meeting with Walker.

4. Domingo Goicouría to A. Oaksmith, Granada, March 18, 1856, Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

5. See the journal of Appleton Oaksmith, May 26, 1855-October 18, 1855. Oaksmith Collection, U. N. C.

way was opened for Oaksmith to obtain supplies for Walker.[6]

In the last days of April Oaksmith also took steps to become acquainted with Major George Hall. Hall, a hero of the Mexican War and son of a former mayor of Brooklyn, was the principal supply and recruiting agent for Walker in New York in the first half of 1856. It was largely through Hall's organizational efforts that recruits were obtained and sent on Vanderbilt's ships from the Atlantic States in these early months of 1856.[7] It was this same Hall who induced Oaksmith to aid in the planning of a mass meeting to secure support for the Walker cause.

The formulation of the plans for the meeting took place at St. Charles Saloon in New York on May 6.[8] This meeting was attended by Oaksmith, Hall, and a few Tammany Hall politicians such as John Clancy, a New York City Alderman from the Fifth Ward. A handbill was drafted that set forth information on the meeting. It was to be held on May 9 in National Hall at seven-thirty o'clock. The purpose of the gathering was to express sympathy for the cause of liberty in Nicaragua and to obtain money and supplies for General Walker and his struggling patriots. The handbill contained such statements of a "manifest destiny" nature

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6. Agreement between A. Oaksmith and Hitchcock and Company. New York, April 14, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

7. Hall placed much of his correspondence in Oaksmith's hands. It contains an interesting commentary on the difficulties involved in recruiting as well as difficulties on board ships bound for Nicaragua.

8. New York Tribune, May 7, 1856.

as: "No pent up Utica contracts our powers, the whole boundless continent is ours."[9]

A slate of speakers was also drafted. Among those asked to speak were such Democratic presidential aspirants as Stephen A. Douglas and Lewis Cass. Also invited were such luminaries of the Democratic Party as Robert Toombs of Georgia, Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, John Quitman of Mississippi, J. B. Weller of California, Alexander Morton of Georgia, and Hiram Walbridge, Daniel Sickels, and Gilbert Dean, all of New York. The short notice on which the speakers were invited received criticism from several sources. One New York paper commenting on this short notice stated:

> As the preliminary meeting to make arrangements was only held two nights ago, the time seems rather short to have settled preliminaries with so many "distinguished" men. Perhaps the announcement is meant to "call" the speakers as well as the audience. If the big names succeed in drawing a crowd, however, we suspect the object of Mr. Clancy and coadjutors will be accomplished. It will be very easy at the meeting to make excuses for the absence of the United States Senators who head the list, and the congregated ralliers will have to be content with the smaller fry who fetch up the rear guard.10

The meeting came off, nevertheless, and was a big success. Despite the correctness of the Tribune's prophecy, the "smaller fry" such as Oaksmith, Clancy, Hall, and others carried on the meeting with vigor and zest. Though none of the important speakers appeared, telegrams were read from Cass and Morton which ex-

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9. Original draft of handbill, New York, May 6, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

10. New York Tribune, May 9, 1856.

pressed sympathy with the meeting.[11] Oaksmith was on the speaker's stand and read the resolutions drawn up at the preliminary meeting on May 6. Among the most important were: that the United States should recognize Nicaragua, that the neutrality laws of the United States should be renounced, and that aid must be given to Walker to carry on his campaign in Nicaragua. Speeches were made by Rynders, Clancy, and Walbridge, and at the close of the meeting H. N. Wild, a New York City Councilman, pledged five hundred rifles and five hundred thousand cartridges with the comment that he would rather see them sent to Nicaragua than to Kansas.[12]

The crowd is said to have been large and enthusiastic despite a little confusion at first. Estimates of the attendance at the meeting ranged between one and two thousand people. The crowd filled the hall to capacity and prevented many who wanted to gain entrance into the Hall from doing so, but a large impromptu meeting was held on the steps of the building and speeches were made there as well.[13]

Press reaction to this meeting was varied. The next day the New York Daily News wrote:

> The adjournment displayed the intense and profound attachment of the true people to the cause of liberty in Central America and their defiance of European interference, for it, by its glorious exhibition of unanimous devotion to the principles enunciated

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11. New York Herald, May 10, 1856.
12. New York Herald, May 10, 1856.
13. New York Times, May 10, 1856.

during the evening gave a warranty that the voices heard last night will echo in our Confederacy.14

The New York Herald stated simply: "The Nicaraguan sympathy meeting last night was large and enthusiastic."[15] The New York Sun was non-committal, although in general, pro-Walker.

More unfavorable were the statements of certain other papers. One paper was very unequivocal in its attack on the meeting:

There was a large and particularly hard fisted gathering at National Hall last evening. . . . The inducement to attend was unusually great. It is seldom that so many prominent men are promised at a meeting. . . . The Democrats of Tammany never presented a more imposing list of speakers and never fell further from fulfillment of their promises.16

The New York Mirror stated:

The distinguished gentlemen present were all politicians of the office seeking stamp. . . . The following from Rynders speech is expressive of the character of the meeting. "Gentlemen, it is a most exasperating thing when a man is endeavoring to express his ideas, to have an impertinent fellow on the right and a jackass on the left interupting, and the Committee on Invitations pulling his coat tails or trying to pick his pockets--he's be d_____d if he knew which.17

Another less caustic but nevertheless derogatory criticism of the affair appeared in the columns of the Evening Express.

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14. New York Daily News, May 10, 1856.
15. New York Herald, May 10, 1856.
16. New York Times, May 10, 1856.
17. New York Mirror, May 10, 1856.

Oaksmith and his Tammany Hall cohorts were undeterred by the unfavorable comments, and plans were formulated for another larger meeting. Forsaking the saloon for the Astor House as the meeting place of the planning committee, the leaders met on May 16, setting May 23 as the date of the next mass meeting. Elaborate plans made provision for one hundred cannon to boom out at the start of the meeting, and another list of speakers was drafted, although not so imposing as the speakers promised at the first meeting. The gathering was to be held in the park in order that all of the crowd might be accommodated. Oaksmith was to take charge of the press and attempt to establish favorable relations with the papers. Clancy, Wild, Hall, and others were to have charge of such things as the guns, speakers, music and invitations.[18]

The meeting was held as planned. The one hundred cannon boomed out at its inception. Although the speakers who were to talk were not of the Douglas or Cass prominence, a crowd of between five thousand and fifteen thousand people gathered in the park.[19] The meeting was carried on in the same manner as the preceding one on May 9. Oaksmith was again on the speaker's rostrum making a few remarks and reiterating the resolutions of the previous gathering.[20] Press reaction to the second meeting

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18. Minutes of the meeting of May 16, New York, May 16, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

19. The hostile New York Tribune estimated 5,000 people while the sympathetic New York Herald estimated 15,000.

20. New York Herald, May 24, 1856.

was similar to the first and needs little analysis.

At the close of the meeting a parade, made up of various officials of the meeting and part of the crowd that had attended the meeting, was begun. Led by Shelton's band, who, by even the most forceful critics of the meetings was admitted as furnishing good music, the parade marched up Broadway to the Metropolitan House where the crowd stopped and called for Padre Vijil. Vijil, whom Walker had sent as Minister to the United States from Nicaragua, stepped out on the balcony and made a few remarks in Spanish that Oaksmith interpreted for the crowd. After this, the parade continued a short way up Broadway and dispersed.[21]

This was the last large popular meeting on Walker's behalf that was held in New York until December. Oaksmith, who had become one of the leaders of the Walker cause in New York, turned his activities to other channels.

It was Oaksmith's acquaintance with Major George Hall that led him into his participation in recruiting for the Walker cause in Nicaragua. Earlier in the year many difficulties had been encountered by the recruiting office in New York. John McKeon, the District Attorney of New York, had challenged the legality of the recruiting methods and attempted to prosecute many of those who were going to Nicaragua to aid Walker.[22] Vanderbilt,

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21. Ibid.

22. Scroggs, op. cit., pp. 140-148.

who had furnished transportation on his ships for the recruits that Hall sent, became disaffected when Walker turned the charter of the Transit Company over to Charles Morgan and Cornelius Garrison. It took six weeks for Morgan and Garrison to get the ships running again, and in these six weeks many valuable recruits were lost to Walker.[23]

It was at the time that Vanderbilt lost control of the transit to Morgan and Garrison that Vanderbilt called a conference with Oaksmith. In this conference Vanderbilt offered Oaksmith a position on his shipping firm, if Oaksmith would aid him in ruining the Walker regime in Nicaragua and in restoring the transit to Vanderbilt's control. Oaksmith refused to take up the offer, as he had already committed himself to the Walker cause. He felt that by throwing in his lot with Walker he would obtain some prominence and importance in the Nicaraguan government, and to Oaksmith this was more of an inducement than the financial remuneration that Vanderbilt had offered.[24]

Appleton Oaksmith continued his recruiting activities, however, and found that his principal aid to Hall was advising prospective recruits of possibilities in Nicaragua. Hall had placed much of his correspondence in Oaksmith's hands, and Oaksmith wrote to emigrants in Cincinnati and Germantown, Ohio; Columbia,

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23. Ibid., p. 153.

24. Oaksmith's daughter, Dorothy Agrillo, stated in an interview on April 12, 1952, that Vanderbilt tried all sorts of inducements to get her father to shift sides, but her father was a man of honor and refused Vanderbilt's offer.

Mississippi; Norwich, Vermont; and Portland, Maine. Other letters went out to Portsmouth, Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina.[25]

Oaksmith's main objective in writing these recruits or prospective emigrants was to get them to act as agents for recruiting in their respective cities. The men recruited from these cities were encouraged to choose officers of merit before they left for New York. Thus, men could be obtained in groups from the same locality, and they would be officered by men having the respect of the particular group that they commanded. Typical of the letters written by Oaksmith was one he sent to E. D. Denson of Portsmouth, Virginia. Oaksmith wrote:

> The laws of the United States will not permit the Agents of the Nicaraguan Government to recruit here, but I see no objection to emigration. The next steamer leaves on the 24th inst., the next on the 24th of July. If you could take with you a considerable body of emigrants, passage would be furnished you.[26]

Oaksmith's recruiting activities were suspended temporarily, however, when on June 24, 1856, in company with Major Hall, he left New York on the Orizaba for Nicaragua. Despite the existence of a great many goods of war intended for Walker[27] and a number

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25. Oaksmith received numerous letters requesting information on Walker, possibilities in Nicaragua, means of transportation, etc. See letters of May and June, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

26. Appleton Oaksmith to E. D. Denson, New York, June 14, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

27. Copy of goods sent on the Orizaba, New York, June 24, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

of filibusters aboard, a New York paper wrote:

> The only persons known to have filibustering tendencies that went off with the steamer were, Major George Hall and Appleton Oaksmith. . . . These gentlemen stood alone high up on the roof of the hurricane deck and as the ship left the dock they waved their handkerchiefs and smoked their segars [sic] in a perfect halo of present satisfaction and prospective glory.28

Both men obtained positions from Walker that certainly had possibilities of prospective glory. Oaksmith was endowed with the imposing titles, Minister Plenipotentiary of Nicaragua to the United States and Agent of the Nicaraguan Government. Hall was appointed to the rather unenviable position of Commissary General of the Nicaraguan Army. Hall remained in Nicaragua, but Oaksmith returned to the United States and became the principal recruiting and supply agent in the New York area.

There were two types of recruits who joined Walker. The first type could be classed as the adventurer, that individual who was eager for a fight and not afraid of death or trouble. In general, this type of individual predominated in the Walker ranks. One writer who joined the Walker cause in Nicaragua has stated: "Those were the days when the ardor for adventure was hot in the breasts of men."[29] On the other hand, there was that group of people, who, by hard work, industry, enterprise, and change in environment hoped to improve their station in life. Such was the

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28. New York Herald, June 25, 1856.

29. James C. Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua (Columbia, Mo., 1909), p. 11.

group headed by Rudolph Knecht.

Knecht was the spokesman for a group of Swiss families who wished to emigrate to Nicaragua. In the summer of 1856 he wrote to Oaksmith to put his own scheme on the table. He wished to be given a tract of land sixteen miles square with a railroad and river in close proximity to this area. The city that was to be situated on this sixteen mile tract of land was to be called "Nueva Helvetia." Fifty families would form the nucleus of the settlement. These families would engage in weaving and embroidering, but would attempt to foster silkworm culture in their area as well. Knecht also hoped to manufacture his newly-invented air cleaning machine that he maintained could purify the air in ship's holds, musty rooms, and factories. The Swiss families would win title to their land in Nicaragua by industry, hard work, and enterprise. The prospective emigrants had little money and requested passage free from Havre to Nicaragua on a ship to be provided by Walker.[30]

Oaksmith was extremely interested in Knecht's scheme and sought Walker's permission to make arrangements to transport these people to Nicaragua.[31] Walker's acquiescence was not forthcoming, and the scheme came to naught. Walker's feeling about colonists of this type can best be understood from a statement

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30. Rudolph Knecht to Appleton Oaksmith, trans. of letter, Zurich, Switzerland, August 30, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

31. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

he made concerning the arrival of some poor German emigrants from New York in September of 1856. "A very large proportion of them were Europeans of the poorest class, mostly Germans. . . . These New York Volunteers, as they called themselves, had not been in the country ten days before they began to desert in numbers."[32] Walker was undoubtedly afraid that Knecht and his group would be men of this stamp, and he paid no attention to Oaksmith's request.

The Knecht proposal aptly demonstrates that there was interest in Walker in Europe as well as in the United States. The incident also points up the fact that not all of Walker's men were necessarily rouges or adventurers, but that some men were seeking more than just a life of adventure under the "gray-eyed man of destiny." Knecht and the Swiss families were a good example of the earnest hard working group who wished for something better in life in Nicaragua.

Oaksmith's official position as Minister Plenipotentiary from Nicaragua to the United States made it necessary for him to curtail some of his recruiting activities in lieu of the recent Crampton affair, but he still kept in touch with the various recruiting agents throughout the country. He corresponded with Colonel Jack Allen, the principal recruiter in the Kentucky-Tennessee area, giving him promises of financial support to en-

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32. William Walker, War in Nicaragua, p. 287.

courage his work.[33] He sent two agents into the Southwest to work for Walker in that area[34] and appointed agents to work in New Orleans for recruits.[35] He also continued to encourage those individuals who were acting as semi-official agents in the smaller cities.

In August of 1856 Oaksmith put forward a plan that offered inducements to those who wished to emigrate to Nicaragua. Its operation was similar to a plan that had been in operation in New Orleans in 1855.[36] The plan established a Nicaraguan Emigration Agency under the leadership of Alexander Lawrence. Its principal purpose was to present information to the public on prospects in Nicaragua. Oaksmith had written to Walker in early August deploring the fact that few recruits could be obtained because of lack of information on Nicaraguan emigration possibilities.[37] This plan, with its inducements, remedied the situation somewhat, and on August 28 it was announced in the New York newspapers.[38]

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33. Appleton Oaksmith to Colonel Jack Allen, New York, September 1, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

34. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

35. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 23, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

36. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 139.

37. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, August 7, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

38. New York Herald, August 28, 1856.

This new Emigration Agency offered single men 250 acres of land in Nicaragua and families 350 acres. Those people who emigrated would have to turn part of the land alloted to them over to the agency to be used as capital stock. Single men would turn over one hundred acres, and families would turn over two hundred acres to the Agency. If the emigrants wished to be transported on the Transit Company's ships without payment of passage, single men would turn over approximately sixty-six acres and families would hand over 133 acres to Morgan and Garrison. On reaching Nicaragua the Colonization Director of that country would allot the land.[39] It is not surprising that the response to this plan was almost negligible, for a closer look at the scheme demonstrates that if a family was transported to Nicaragua free of charge, it would receive only seventeen of the original 350 acres alloted to them. This seventeen acres had a good possibility of being tropical jungle and good for little or nothing. The Agency did provide, however, a means of disseminating information to those who wished to go to Nicaragua but who lacked the knowledge of the proper individuals to see to obtain information about that country.

Recruiting, in general, failed for a number of reasons. Most apparent was the lack of coordination between those who were trying to secure recruits. Oaksmith was appointed by Walker to head the recruiting system in the United States, but other individuals

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39. Emigration Agreement, Joseph Fabens and Alexander Lawrence, New York, August 30, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

proceeded independently of him. For example, Fermín Ferrer, the Secretary of State for Nicaragua, made an agreement with William Cazneau of Texas that gave Cazneau the power to recruit one thousand colonists for Nicaragua.[40] After Cazneau had obtained the one thousand colonists, he wrote to Oaksmith requesting information as to how these people might be transported.[41] A somewhat baffled Oaksmith replied that he would like to know particulars on what Cazneau had been doing before he arranged any transportation.[42] Cazneau refused to give the desired information and stated that he would proceed independently of Oaksmith.[43] Oaksmith was very irate and reported the incident to Walker stating that "this independent action caused my plans to go ascue [sic] and awry."[44]

Factionalism existed in New Orleans also. Here it was the problem of two recruiting agents who were unable to work together and who spent more time criticizing one another than in trying to obtain recruits. Colonel John Jaques was chief recruiter in New Orleans for the better part of 1856, but on September 28 Oaksmith

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40. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 236.

41. William Cazneau to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, September 13, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

42. Appleton Oaksmith to William Cazneau, New York, September 18, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

43. William Cazneau to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, September 19, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

44. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

appointed a new agent, Pierre Mancosos, to take over the New Orleans office. Jaques immediately protested to Oaksmith concerning his ouster and asked to be put on an equal basis with Mancosos as far as recruiting power was concerned.[45] Both men accused each other of having spent too much money and of not having done their best to secure recruits. After much bickering, they finally compromised their differences and began to work together.[46]

Even after these differences had been compromised, the two men were not able to accomplish much. Mancosos was very pessimistic. He wrote to Oaksmith: "The election engrosses the mind here, and few will leave for Nicaragua."[47] Jaques wrote that the failure to have ships to take the prospective recruits hampered his activities, and that many of the men he had procured returned home when a ship failed to arrive in New Orleans to take them to Nicaragua.[48]

Another factor contributing to the collapse of the recruiting system was the inability of Walker to obtain any military successes. Oaksmith wrote to Walker on September 11 stating that re-

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45. John Jaques to Appleton Oaksmith, New Orleans, October 3, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

46. John Jaques to Appleton Oaksmith, New Orleans, October 13, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

47. Pierre Mancosos to Appleton Oaksmith, New Orleans, October 13, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

48. John Jaques to Appleton Oaksmith, New Orleans, October 2, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

cruits could not be obtained because they held an unfavorable view of his position in Nicaragua.[49] The decree of September 22 establishing slavery in Nicaragua may have had some effect on the Northern people who wished to escape the rigors of a hard winter by going to Nicaragua. Oaksmith's inability to obtain recognition in Washington of the Walker regime was also a factor in cutting the number of recruits that might be obtained.

Newspaper accounts of Walker's tribulations can by no means be discounted. Although the New York Herald and the New York Sun generally favored Walker and presented glowing accounts of the prospects in Nicaragua, such papers as the New York Tribune painted bleak pictures of the events occurring there. On September 2 it stated: "Walker's own men were deserting on every occasion. Sickness, poverty, death stare them in the face while cholera and yellow fever are steadily thinning their ranks on all sides."[50]

How many recruits Oaksmith sent from New York and New Orleans while he was aiding Hall and, afterwards, when he became head of the recruiting system in the United States is impossible to determine. The army that Walker had in Nicaragua never numbered more than 2,500,[51] and it seems certain that Oaksmith sent no more than one thousand on the ships of Morgan and Garrison. Oak-

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49. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

50. New York Tribune, September 2, 1856.

51. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 305.

smith kept no official list of recruits that he obtained, as he did not wish to be involved in an incident similar to the Crampton affair. Another difficulty that presented itself was that the recruits could not be separated from those who were using the transit. When a recruit or emigrant saw that the prospects were not good for Walker's success, he assimilated himself into the regular passengers of the transit and proceeded to San Francisco, New Orleans, or back to New York. With better support and less factionalism, Oaksmith's system might well have worked to Walker's advantage.

In his efforts to procure supplies for Walker, Oaksmith was much more successful than in obtaining recruits. In 1855 a New York newspaper pointed to Oaksmith as a man who dealt extensively in arms and ammunition,[52] and this fact combined with his knowledge of trading and shipping made Oaksmith a likely procurer of supplies for the Walker cause.

As has already been recounted, Oaksmith took an active part in supplying the Cuban filibusters and nationalists in 1855. Goicouría had worked closely with Oaksmith when he obtained guns and ammunition as cargo for the Amelia and the Magnolia, and it was to Oaksmith that Goicouría turned in March of 1856. Oaksmith had by this time set up his own shipping business and had established himself as a reputable New York merchant. The contacts that he had been making with various New York supply houses and

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52. New York Herald, November 3, 1855.

arms dealers put Oaksmith in a very favorable position to secure supplies for Walker.

Oaksmith did not immediately answer Goicouría's request of March 18 for rifles and ammunition, but he did take some steps that made it possible for him to obtain some supplies, for on June 24, 1856, Oaksmith shipped many valuable goods aboard the Orizaba. Among the goods Oaksmith sent were: five hundred percussion muskets, one hundred Sharp's rifles, one hundred and twenty thousand cartridges for the muskets, fifty thousand cartridges for the Sharp's rifles, as well as numerous other articles such as fifes, camp kettles, spoons, bread, bacon, crackers, sugar and coffee.[53] Many of these articles Oaksmith had procured in 1855 with the hope of sending them to Cuba.

When Oaksmith was in Nicaragua for Walker's inauguration as President in July of 1856, many requisitions for goods needed by the various departments of the government were placed in his hands. These departments included the Quartermaster General's Department, the Ordnance Department, and the Commissary Department which had been placed under Major Hall's supervision. Walker had instructed that all requisitions be placed in Oaksmith's hands, and that he was an authorized purchaser of arms and supplies for the Nicaraguan government.[54] These requisitions listed

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53. List of goods shipped on board the "Orizaba," New York, June 24, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

54. Proclamation of William Walker, Granada, July 17, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

everything from mountain howitzers and field pieces to brogans and dungarees.[55]

Awaiting Oaksmith on his arrival in New York after the inauguration was an interesting requisition from the Quartermaster General's Office of the Nicaraguan Army.[56] It presented a significant commentary on the goods most needed by Walker and those goods most regarded as a necessity by the Quartermaster General. The requisition Marked A was the list of goods absolutely needed. The requisition marked B was not quite so important and so on down to G. Guns and ammunition were not on the A list at all, but on the C list. The articles on the A list included such things as boots, hats, pants, drawers, blankets, and pots and kettles of different types. Anvils, buttons, and account books were on the greatest demand list also.[57]

This new list awaiting him in New York and the requisitions placed in his hands in Nicaragua required a great deal of money. Oaksmith was hampered by lack of funds and had to resort to contract, credit, and promises of a Nicaraguan bond issue to obtain supplies. The supplies he obtained in June and sent on the Orizaba were principally from a reserve stock that Oaksmith had on hand

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55. Requisitions of the Nicaraguan government, Granada, July 16, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

56. Oaksmith had spent a few days in New Orleans and Washington, and thus he did not reach New York until after the requisitions arrived there.

57. Quartermaster General F. F. Fischer to Appleton Oaksmith, Granada, July 25, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

in the hope that they might be sent to Cuba, and he had little difficulty in procuring them. Despite these later difficulties, caused by lack of money, Oaksmith shipped 103 cases of goods on board the Texas in September, and in October he shipped 146 cases of goods on the Tennessee.[58] Oaksmith complained to Walker, however, that he was getting all the supplies he could, but lack of money had made him somewhat "impotent" when it came to the matter of securing more of the badly needed supplies.[59]

Some aid was given to Oaksmith in procuring supplies by Francisco Alejandro Lainé, a Cuban friend of Goicouría, who worked for Walker in the United States for some time before he left for Nicaragua on June 24. Lainé's principal achievement was a contract for five thousand Minié barrelled rifles that he concluded with Benjamin Perkins, a Worcester, Massachusetts, manufacturer. The contract provided for the manufacture and shipment of five thousand of these rifles. They were to be sent to Nicaragua on or after October 20 and were to cost $17.25 a piece. Financial arrangements included the necessity for a Nicaraguan bond issue.[60] The contract is especially significant because the Minié rifle was the newest thing in fire arms. It was more accurate and more effective than the old muskets and Sharp's rifles that Oaksmith

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58. Receipts of goods shipped on the "Texas" and "Tennessee," September and October, New York. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

59. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

60. Agreement between Benjamin Perkins and Francisco A. Lainé, Worcester, June 23, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

had sent to Walker on the Orizaba. The contract demonstrated that Walker and his agents realized the importance of having the most effective arms to use in their fight in Nicaragua. Unfortunately the rifles were never delivered, as Perkins was unable to meet the delivery date.[61] It seems doubtful that Oaksmith could have met the stipulated payment in any case.[62]

Lainé left New York immediately after he had concluded the agreement with Perkins. He left for Nicaragua on June 24, and when he reached that country, he became Aide-de-Camp to General Walker. When his fellow Cuban, Goicouría, had a falling-out with Walker in September of 1856, Lainé did not abandon the Walker cause but chose to remain in Nicaragua. Almost immediately after he had made this decision, he was captured by the Guatemalans during a battle and shot, but not before he had uttered the famous words: "Men die, but their ideas remain."[63]

Oaksmith continued to contract for supplies as best he could, considering the financial difficulties which faced him. A supplementary agreement was reached between James Devoe, an agent for Perkins, and Appleton Oaksmith concerning the Minié rifles involved in Lainé's June 23 contract. Plans were made to send

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61. Contract, James Devoe and Appleton Oaksmith, New York, October 29, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

62. As payment for the rifles was to come from the bond issue and as the bonds had not been issued, there was no money to pay for the rifles.

63. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 254.

2,120 Minié rifles to Nicaragua instead of the five thousand that had originally been contracted for by Lainé.[64] Oaksmith also reached an agreement with Hitchcock and Company who consented to send five hundred Sharp's rifles, one thousand Minié rifles, five hundred Colt revolvers, five thousand blouses, and five hundred sabers to Nicaragua. The total cost of these articles amounted to $250,000, and the payment for these again depended largely on the proposed bond issue.[65] This was the last agreement that Oaksmith concluded for Walker before his defection in November.

Oaksmith had little difficulty in contracting for supplies, but lack of adequate financial support forced him to forfeit on his contracts, and thus Walker was deprived of the much-needed supplies. The only supplies that Oaksmith sent were those that he had obtained with his own money or had on hand in his own shipping firm. Attempts to get money from friends of Walker in the United States for supplies failed miserably.[66] Perhaps adequate financial support might have seen the fulfillment of the contracts that Oaksmith had made and the ultimate success of the Walker cause. Considering the problems involved, Oaksmith seems to have done well in procuring the supplies that he did.

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64. Agreement between James Devoe and Appleton Oaksmith, New York, October 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

65. Agreement between Hitchcock and Company and Appleton Oaksmith, New York, October 29, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

66. See letter from Charles Morgan to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, September 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

As has been seen, finances created a delicate problem for Oaksmith. The many contracts that had been made for guns and ammunition needed money to back them up. Vanderbilt had offered some aid in March of 1856, but at that time Walker decided to turn the Accessory Transit Company charter over to Morgan and Garrison, thus serving to alienate Vanderbilt.[67] In August of 1856, however, Goicouría persuaded Vanderbilt to advance $100,000 on the condition that Walker return control of the isthmus shipping line to Vanderbilt. If Walker was willing to do this, Vanderbilt would add $150,000 to the original $100,000 during the course of the year.[68] Walker refused to take the offer and condemned Goicouría for taking too much authority in his own hands. Walker decided to let Morgan and Garrison retain control of the transit, and thus Vanderbilt was alienated even more. The wily financier prepared to take his vengeance.

One way for Walker to raise money, as is plainly indicated, was by a Nicaraguan bond issue. It was on this bond issue that most of the contracts made for supplies depended. In June, when Lainé had engineered his contract with Perkins, the financial arrangements involved the bond issue. The initial down payment of $5,000 was to be paid in cash. The sum of $23,750 was to be drawn in installments from the Intendente General or Treasury of the Nicaraguan government, the final draft payable in eighteen

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67. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 219.

68. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 221.

months. Most significant, however, was the provision that over half of the payment for the rifles or $57,500 was to be paid in Nicaraguan Bonds that would become due in twenty years at an interest rate of seven per cent per annum.[69] This agreement is adequate testimony to the importance of the issuance of Nicaraguan bonds by those laboring for Walker in the United States.

Despite the importance of the bond issue, a formal decree establishing the basis of the loan was not promulgated until July 22. It is certain that while Oaksmith was in Nicaragua for the inauguration of Walker, he advocated the bond issue and possibly drew up the decree himself. He discussed the proposed bond issue with Soulé, Pilcher, and Slatter in New Orleans on his return to that city late in July, but these men were reluctant to act as agents for Oaksmith's plan in New Orleans.[70] As a matter of fact, these men went to Nicaragua to make their own arrangements for a bond issue with Walker. They were more successful than Oaksmith, for the only Nicaraguan bonds that were sold in the United States were sold by these men.[71]

The bond issue of which Oaksmith was the negotiator had as its avowed purpose "the development of the Republic of Nicaragua, its riches and its elements," but its underlying purpose was to obtain financial aid to carry out the war against the Central

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69. Agreement between Francisco Lainé and Benjamin Perkins, Worcester, June 23, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

70. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, August 9, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

71. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 210.

American Allies. The loan was to be for $2,000,000, and the bonds were to be issued in various denominations. They were to run for twenty years with an interest rate of seven per cent per annum payable in New York. Security backing the bonds was to be the credit of the Nicaraguan government and plots of land in Nicaragua to be divided among the bond holders if the bonds were not paid off in the twenty years that had been stipulated. Oaksmith, of course, was the negotiator of the loan.[72]

When he returned to New York in September, Oaksmith immediately began to seek the support of a reputable New York banking house to aid him in putting the loan forward. He requested an interview with Duncan Sherman and Company bankers[73] and received an affirmative reply to the request, although he was unable to meet with the officers of the banking house because of diplomatic business in Washington.[74] Perhaps it was the failure of Oaksmith to meet with the bankers that caused the failure of the bond issue. More reasonable is the fact that the Walker star was on the wane in Nicaragua, and a favorable moment for the issuance of the bonds never came. Oaksmith wrote to Walker as late as November that "reputable capitalists" were considering the issuance of the

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72. Loan Decree of the Government of Nicaragua, Granada, July 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

73. Appleton Oaksmith to Duncan Sherman and Company, New York, September 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

74. Appleton Oaksmith to Duncan Sherman and Company, New York, September 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

bonds, and that the bonds had already been engraved, but all he needed was a favorable moment to put them on the market.[75] That favorable moment never came.

The failure of the proposed bond issue caused the loss of many supplies to Walker. Oaksmith was forced to cancel the contracts he had made with Devoe for the Minié rifles, and with Hitchcock and Company for the rifles, ammunition, and other supplies. Oaksmith also incurred personal liability when the contracts were not met, for he had given his personal promise that the agreements would be kept. When the proposed bond issue failed, it plunged Oaksmith into desperate financial straits.[76] This was definitely one of the causes for Oaksmith's break with Walker in November.

Oaksmith did attempt to recoup some of the losses he had suffered, for on December 1, 1856, he made a $1,000,000 contract with General Jose Antonio Páez, the Venezuelan caudillo, who was attempting to reestablish himself in that country. By this contract Oaksmith hoped to establish a market for the guns and ammunition originally intended for Walker, and consequently, to make up for the losses he had incurred by involving himself with Walker.[77] This was not the end of the story of Nicaraguan fi-

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75. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, November 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

76. Ibid.

77. Agreement between Appleton Oaksmith and Jose Antonio Páez, New York, December 1, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

nances, at least as far as Oaksmith was concerned.

In March of 1879 the Senate Committee on Nicaraguan Claims was organized to consider claims of citizens of the United States against the Nicaraguan government. Oaksmith tried to seize this opportunity to get back some of the money he had lost in his venture in 1856. On March 17, 1879, he wrote to the Committee:

> The undersigned was appointed agent of the Nicaraguan Government in the United States, and in that capacity made large engagements for arms, ammunition, and supplies for that Government for none of which have payments ever been made, and for which the citizens of the United States hold claims against Nicaragua. The undersigned was also accredited a Minister Plenipotentiary from Nicaragua to the United States, but in consequence of his being a citizen of the United States was not received in that capacity although recognized as the Agent of that Republic.
> There are claims of citizens of the United States against the Government of Nicaragua of which I have cognizance as follows, viz.
> Under the Rivas administration for over $100,000.
> Under the Walker administration for over $300,000.

He continued that in spite of the fact that governments in Nicaragua after Walker's fall in 1857 had annulled the claims on the Walker regime, the claims were still valid because the Walker government was only "de facto and de jure Government in Nicaragua at that time."[78]

Oaksmith never received any remuneration in 1879 for the fruits of his labor in 1856. Claims such as the one put forward by James Devoe, who hoped to get some claims payment on the basis of the unprofitable contracts he had made with the Walker govern-

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78. Appleton Oaksmith to the Honorable Committee on Nicaraguan Claims, Hollywood, March 17, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

ment for arms and ammunition,[79] may have caused the Senate committee to become suspicious, and ultimately to disallow all of the claims put forward by those who were associated with Walker. Perhaps it was the lack of sustained work by the lawyers who were retained by Oaksmith to prosecute the claims that ultimately resulted in his failure to obtain any claim payment at all.[80] In any event, after a year of hope that he might get some financial reimbursement for his 1856 activities, Oaksmith wrote to Alexander Lawrence in May, 1880, that if anything was to be done about the claims, it had to be done quickly or not at all.[81] Nothing was done, however, and Oaksmith received no payment on the claims that he had put forward.

At present writing the claims are still being sought. Oaksmith's daughters, Dorothy and Geraldine, are still attempting to obtain something out of their father's venture, but little has been done to see that their claims are put forward in the most favorable light.[82]

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79. A. Pike to James Devoe, New York, April 6, 1879. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

80. Appleton Oaksmith to William Arthur, Hollywood, February 8, 1880. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

81. Appleton Oaksmith to Alexander Lawrence, Hollywood, May 29, 1880. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

82. In a conversation with the two daughters on April 12, 1952, the writer learned that they are still seeking some settlement from the government on these claims, but the writer's opinion is that the sisters are being "fleeced" by an unethical lawyer.

By the middle of November of 1856 Oaksmith had become dissatisfied with the whole Walker affair. In Nicaragua Walker met with little success and much adversity. His battles with the Central American Allies were losing ones, even though he had forced them to withdraw from Granada, the Nicaraguan capital. On November 7 the transit was cut by the Allies when they occupied San Juan del Sur, and little outside aid could be rendered to Walker when this was accomplished.

In New York, Oaksmith was forced to cancel contracts which he had made for guns and ammunition because of the lack of adequate financial support. Lawrence had resigned as head of the Nicaraguan Emigration Agency and was pressing Oaksmith for money that was due him.[83] Morgan and Garrison had become involved in a suit over the Transit Company with Vanderbilt, and the financier was finally getting his revenge. Newspaper accounts of Walker's exploits in Nicaragua were less glowing and oftentimes very depressing.[84]

On November 22 Oaksmith wrote a letter to Walker in which he aired his many grievances. It is highly indicative of Oaksmith's ill feeling toward Walker and gives some indication of the reasons for his dropping his activities on Walker's behalf. The letter to Walker stated that Oaksmith had done a great deal to further

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83. Alexander Lawrence to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, November 20, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

84. See above, p. 85.

the Walker cause. He had acquired confidence for the government securities, made a large number of contracts for badly needed supplies, and had secured three men from a reputable banking house as negotiators for the bond issue. He had organized a recruiting system and had secured influences that would have ascertained his acceptance as Minister from Nicaragua. The letter also pointed out that he had put all of his own money into the Walker cause and had incurred twice the amount he had put in from his own pocket in debts and bills to supply houses. He requested money from Walker and finally wrote:

> No one man or body of men shall with impunity undertake to sully the fair record of my connection with the cause of Nicaragua. If I abandon it I do so fairly and squarely and honorably--if circumstances should induce me to continue with it, I shall insist upon the fullest justice being done to all my actions.85

For all practical purposes, this letter ended Oaksmith's connection with Walker. Although he appeared in a mass meeting in New York on December 20 on Walker's behalf,[86] his contract on December 1 with Páez for the guns and ammunition, that had been originally intended for Walker, demonstrated his disaffection.

Thus the Walker movement lost one of its most avid supporters. Oaksmith had worked as supply and recruiting agent for Walker. He had also worked as financier and diplomat, achieving some success. He had succeeded in negotiating many contracts

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85. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, November 22, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

86. New York Herald, December 20, 1856.

for badly needed supplies, despite the fact that he had no money to work with and had to rely on credit, promises of a Nicaraguan bond issue, and his personal recommendation that the goods would be paid for in full. He sent some recruits to Nicaragua, and almost secured recognition for the Walker regime in August of 1856.[87]

Whether Oaksmith was a success or failure is not as significant as the fact that through the activities of one man, a deeper insight can be obtained into the difficulties faced by Walker supporters in the United States. By tracing Oaksmith's activities through the months when he was working for Walker in New York and Washington, a clearer picture of filibuster methods and techniques can be gained.

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87. For a full account of Oaksmith's diplomatic activities see chapter V, pp.101-121.

Chapter V

A FILIBUSTER DIPLOMAT

Since October of 1855, when Walker landed in Nicaragua, filibuster diplomacy had but one aim--recognition of the new regime in Nicaragua by the United States. Except for one brief moment this aim was never realized. At almost every juncture, obstacles were placed in the way of Nicaraguan diplomats which were impossible to surmount and over which these diplomats had no control. Nevertheless, the futile and frustrating attempts of Walker's ministers to secure recognition cast light on American policy that was far more important than the mere attitude of the United States towards filibuster regimes. Also important is the fact that the failure of Walker's diplomacy was decisive in the ultimate collapse of his plan for a Central American empire.

Diplomats sent by Walker had to contend with such things as the opposition of the Central American diplomats, the Dallas-Clarendon negotiations, and the contrivances of many of the South

American countries. The choice of unreliable, self-seeking, and more often than not, inexperienced diplomatic leaders also contributed to the downfall of Nicaragua's attempts to be recognized. Inability of Walker to achieve decisive military victories over the Rivas faction within the country or over the Central American Allies on Nicaragua's borders, or to establish a regime in his country that was not on a precarious footing contributed greatly to the failure of filibuster diplomacy. Before considering Oaksmith's activities as Walker's Minister to the United States and before seeking the reasons for the failure of filibuster diplomacy in more detail, Nicaraguan-American relations before Oaksmith's appointment need some analysis.

When Walker landed in Nicaragua and accomplished his coup de main over the Estrada or legitimist government in Nicaragua, the United States was placed in an anomalous position. On the one hand the United States could not continue to recognize the Estrada Government as the legitimate one, for it was no longer in power and was obviously a "paper affair."[1] In its own interest the United States would have been more inclined to discontinue its recognition of the Estrada Government Minister in Washington, Señor Marcoleta, as Walker was looked upon by many as the representative of American imperial interests in Central America. On the other hand to sever relations with Estrada could be interpreted as meaning that the official policy of the United States

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1. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 165.

was to encourage Walker.[2] No steps were taken by the United States to change the status quo. Marcoleta remained in Washington despite the fall, in fact, of the government he represented, and the question many people asked late in 1855 and early in 1856 was: From whom does he receive his dispatches and to whom does he send his?[3]

Walker was not idle. In order to create an alternative government for the United States to recognize and in the hope of changing the status quo in his favor, Walker sent a Minister to the United States, a Mr. Parker French, whom one writer points out "would have been wearing felon's stripes if he had received his just dues."[4] French arrived in Washington in December, 1855, requesting a preliminary interview with Secretary of State Marcy before he presented his credentials, obviously hoping to make some kind of deal with Marcy.[5] Marcy replied that until such time as the people of Nicaragua demonstrated their approval of Walker and his scheme, he could not see his way clear to receive French, and there was no need for a preliminary conference.[6] In

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2. Scroggs, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

3. Estrada had set up a government in a remote district of Nicaragua that he claimed to be the legal government. Perhaps this was the government to whom Marcoleta sent his dispatches.

4. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 166.

5. William R. Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Inter-American Affairs 1831-1860 (12 vols., Washington, 1934), IV, 496-497.

6. Manning, op. cit., IV, 80.

the meantime, Marcoleta had become more prominent than ever. At a White House reception on New Year's Day, 1856, he received a great deal of attention from the diplomats that were there, especially those who wished to hit at "manifest destiny" as represented by Walker in Nicaragua.[7]

Unfortunately for Nicaraguan diplomacy and for French, Walker's minister was exposed as a rogue of the first order. He was arrested for forging letters of credit on a western trip in 1850 and for duping several Texas merchants with them.[8] This boded ill for any attempt that might be made for recognition by French. Obviously he had become odious to many of the American people. French withdrew his second request for recognition on January 18 because of his arrest,[9] but on February 5 he addressed Marcy again asking to be received. Again he was refused.[10] This was the last of French's diplomatic activities, and he went to New Orleans to enlist sympathy for the Walker cause in that city.

Walker's choice to replace French was Padre Agustín Vijil, a Nicaraguan cleric who has been described as "endowed with a splendid memory and intellect, graceful delivery, unctuous, penetrating voice, and massive physique."[11] On May 14 he presented

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7. New York Sun, January 3, 1856.
8. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 168.
9. Manning, op. cit., IV, 503-504.
10. Manning, op. cit., IV, 81.
11. Quoted in Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 172.

his credentials to Marcy and stated:

> My Government desires to maintain by diplomatic intercourse the good friendship that always united Nicaragua to this great Republic on every ground, and especially because the great highway between the two oceans, that is equally interesting to these States and to Nicaragua, is embraced within the borders of the latter.[12]

The next day Vijil was received, and in his message to Congress concerning the recognition Pierce explained that recognition was accorded in order that satisfactory arrangements might be made to keep the trans-isthmian highway open. Since it was necessary to keep the inter-oceanic highway unobstructed, recognition had to be extended to some government in Nicaragua. As Walker's government was the only one in existence, it was the one that was recognized.[13]

Recognition produced diverse reaction. The New York Tribune wrote:

> This movement reflects credit neither on our Government nor its Executive head. It is dictated by the exigencies of the candidate, not by the convictions of the President or the requirements of public duty. . . . It has been done too late for Cincinnati--too soon for History.[14]

Another New York paper wrote of recognition in a different light.

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12. Manning, op. cit., IV, 527.
13. Nichols, op. cit., p. 463.
14. New York Tribune, May 16, 1856.

We hope that when Mr Marcoleta writes his tale of woe, he will begin by informing the diplomatic corps, and the "rest of mankind" of what Government in Nicaragua he was Minister, when shoved out of the diplomatic circle; and also what Government he has been representing the last six or eight months.[15]

The explanations of why Pierce extended recognition are varied. Scroggs points out that the predominant reason for Pierce's extension of recognition was political. Believing that recognition would be a strong factor in securing his nomination at Cincinnati in June, Pierce decided to receive Vijil.[16] Another explanation that has been put forward is that Pierce was pushed into recognition by men such as Stephen A. Douglas and Alexander Stephens and newspapers such as the New York Herald.[17]

The most significant reason for Vijil's reception has been pointed out by Mary Wilhelmina Williams who takes the position that Pierce recognized Vijil as a counter-move against the British, who had sold two thousand muskets to Costa Rica for its war on Walker.[18] In view of the Crampton affair and the antagonism existing between Great Britain and the United States in May of 1856, this interpretation certainly bears great consideration. The New York Sun sarcastically observed on May 10 that Lord Clarendon of the British Foreign Office had given his fullest assurance of sympathy and had expressed warm approval of the con-

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15. New York Sun, May 16, 1856.

16. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 173.

17. Nichols, op. cit., p. 462.

18. Mary W. Williams, Anglo-American Isthmanian Diplomacy 1815-1915 (Washington, 1916), pp. 211-212.

centration of troops on the Nicaraguan frontier.[19] Despite the motives underlying Pierce's recognition, Vijil was received, and for the moment, Walker's diplomatic aims had reached fulfillment.

In spite of recognition, the diplomatic waters were troubled for Walker's Minister, and the Padre encountered no little difficulty in his new post. Irisarri, Guatemalan and Salvadorian Minister to the United States, and Molina, Costa Rican chargé d'affaires in the United States, made strong protests to Marcy about Vijil's recognition. Irisarri protested, among other things, that "in the act of Walker and his followers, there is hardly to be seen the character of auxiliaries of a Nicaraguan party, but simply the character and all the acts of usurpers who have abused the confidence of those who called them to their assistance."[20] Molina protested that recognition sanctioned the criminal acts of filibusters in Nicaragua and induced them to perservere in their illegal enterprise.[21] Even Marcoleta, the "diplomat without a country," registered a protest.[22] Other Latin-American diplomats in Washington joined in these protests and went so far as to draw up a treaty of alliance that would oppose Walker. This treaty was sent out to the various South American countries for ratification, although it was never put into

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19. New York Sun, May 10, 1856.
20. Manning, op. cit., IV, 532.
21. Manning, op. cit., IV, 535.
22. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 175.

effect.[23]

Vijil also met opposition from the administration. After his reception, an attitude of "studied coldness" met him on all sides. Vijil was even shunned by the Catholic clerics in the United States, and it was reported that an incident with a Baltimore priest caused him to be disgraced, and ultimately to give up his job as Nicaraguan Minister to the United States.[24]

On June 23 Vijil left Washington for New York. The next day he set sail for Nicaragua. The New York Herald wrote a few weeks later:

> It is understood that the Padre will not return to the United States, if he can help himself. He is an ecclesiastic: his life has heretofore been a quiet and studious one, and he is desirous of returning to his priestly duties, instead of attending to the exciting duties of a Minister Plenipotentiary at Washington.25

This was the scene into which Oaksmith stepped in August of 1856.

Oaksmith had left New York on the same boat as Vijil in June, 1856. He had reached Nicaragua early in July in time to take part in Walker's inauguration in that month. While in Nicaragua he received the title, Minister Plenipotentiary from Nicaragua to the United States and Special Agent of Nicaragua in the United States, and on July 16 left Nicaragua for New Orleans. He reached

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23. Scroggs, op. cit., p. 175.

24. New York Sun, June 19, 1856.

25. New York Herald, July 12, 1856.

that city late in July and after spending several days there, departed for Washington.

Oaksmith arrived in Washington on August 2 and immediately got in touch with John Quitman, the ex-filibuster, who was now serving as a member of the House of Representatives from Mississippi. Quitman, who had been informed of Oaksmith's coming, had arranged a conference with Pierce for August 3 to discuss the matter of Oaksmith's reception. The conference between the three men proved to be unsuccessful as far as Oaksmith was concerned. He wrote about the conference: "The President's attitude deemed it necessary to defer presentation of the credentials."[26] Leaving Quitman as his intercessor, Oaksmith left for New York to attend to his duties as Special Agent for Nicaragua.

Before his departure, Oaksmith left with Quitman a memorandum setting forth six principal reasons and arguments for his recognition. (1) Vijil had been recognized as the official representative of Nicaragua in the United States. This recognition had come while the Rivas was in power. (2) The Walker government was the only legal administration in Nicaragua, as the Rivas government had fallen by fair and legal election to Walker. (3) At the present time, Walker's government was the only government "in fact and in law." (4) The fact that the Nicaraguan Government had recognized Wheeler, American Minister in that country, placed relations between the United States and Nicaragua on a

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26. Entry in Official and Private Records of the Legation of Nicaragua, Washington, August 5, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

friendly basis in Nicaragua, and there seemed to be no reason why these friendly relations could not be maintained in the United States. (5) The United States had recognized Vijil as Minister to the United States, and nothing had been done to change this relationship, even after the split between Walker and Rivas in Nicaragua. (6) The interests of the United States would be better served by Nicaragua's opposition to "European establishment of interests and privileges, particularly on the Mosquito Coast."[27]

Using these reasons to enforce his arguments, Quitman arranged several conferences with Pierce for the purpose of discussing Oaksmith's recognition. Quitman's representations seem to have been successful, for on August 13 he telegraphed Oaksmith to come to Washington immediately to present his credentials.[28] Two days later they were presented to Marcy.[29]

When Oaksmith presented them, he also included a letter to Pierce from Walker. Walker presumptuously wrote: "God grant a continuance of happy harmony, between two sister Republics, linked in the same continental cause."[30] Oaksmith wrote simply that he wished to be informed of the time of his reception, con-

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27. Memorandum, Appleton Oaksmith to John Quitman, Washington, August 5, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

28. Entry in Official and Private Records of the Legation of Nicaragua, New York, August 13, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

29. Manning, op. cit., IV, 566.

30. William Walker to Franklin Pierce, Granada, July 16, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

fident that recognition would be accorded him.[31] Marcy neither accepted or refused Oaksmith but left the matter in a state of suspension. The two men conferred on August 19, but again nothing was decided. Finally, on August 21, Oaksmith wrote requesting a definite answer to his request for recognition. The time he had spent in Washington waiting for Marcy's reply had caused him a great deal of inconvenience, wrote Oaksmith, and illness in his family made it necessary for him to leave for New York.[32] The Secretary of State still remained non-committal. He stated that Pierce was not yet prepared to receive him or to decide as to the efficacy of recognizing Walker's new Minister.[33]

Oaksmith had become indignant over the delay in acting on his credentials, but he had the perception to see that it was the British-American negotiations over Central America that really caused the delay. Proceeding along a different tack than he had followed in previous notes, Oaksmith bluntly declared that Nicaragua would not recognize any treaties made between foreign governments over territory which Nicaragua claimed. He further stated that Nicaragua still held claim to the controversial Mosquito Coast from Cape Gracias a Dios to the southern bank of the Colorado River with such modifications as could be decided between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. He continued: "I am empowered

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31. Manning, op. cit., IV, 566.
32. Manning, op. cit., IV, 566-567.
33. Manning, op. cit., IV, 567.

by my government to treat upon these questions, and am led to beleive [sic] that a full and distinct understanding of the positions of all parties in interest, would lead to their speedy, amicable and satisfactory settlement."[34] Oaksmith was obviously hitting at the rumors concerning the Dallas-Clarendon negotiations and the inclusion of a Honduran minister in the talks, but his attempts to be included in the talks failed. Again, nothing was done to clear up the question of Oaksmith's reception.

While he was attempting to obtain recognition, Oaksmith also attempted to take charge of the Nicaraguan Legation in New York which had been directed by John Heiss since Vijil's departure. When on September 1 Oaksmith asked the chargé d'affaires to hand the legation over to him,[35] Heiss refused on several grounds. He maintained that he could not turn the legation over to Oaksmith until he had been recognized. Also, the interests of Nicaragua would be jeopardized by the suspension of the legation before Oaksmith was received. He did, however, state that he would be glad to help Oaksmith privately or officially, and that the archives of the legation were open to him at all times.[36] Heiss was joined by Morgan, Garrison, Gazneau, and other friends of Walker in the United States in the feeling that Oaksmith should not be given control of the legation until he was recognized.[37]

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34. Manning, op. cit., IV, 570-571.

35. Appleton Oaksmith to John Heiss, New York, September 1, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

36. John Heiss to Appleton Oaksmith, New York, September 4, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

37. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 9, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

This was undoubtedly the wisest course as Heiss was the appointee of Vijil and the only link with the United States government after Vijil had departed.

It may have been jealousy that motivated Heiss to be hostile toward Oaksmith. Late in June a New York newspaper reported that Heiss, "the shrewd, active, and practical go-ahead man," might soon be appointed in Vijil's place.[38] Heiss only received the post of chargé d'affaires, however, and it was Oaksmith who obtained the appointment as Minister from Nicaragua to the United States.

The affair with Heiss and concern over recognition caused Oaksmith a great deal of anxiety. To add to these difficulties he received information that the Rivas faction in Nicaragua had decided to accredit Irisarri as its Minister to the United States.[39] This gave Irisarri three countries to represent, El Salvador, Guatemala, and now Nicaragua. The news of Irisarri's being accredited did not bother Oaksmith. He confidently wrote to Walker: "I am behind the scenes and watch and direct everything," and that the sending of a "Rivas man" would cause him little concern.[40]

The assertion by Oaksmith that he was behind the scenes and could watch and direct everything was unfounded. Two days after

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38. New York Herald, June 28, 1856.

39. Irisarri was not officially accredited until October 16, but Oaksmith heard of the move in early September.

40. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

he had made this assertion to Walker, on September 13, Marcy wrote to Oaksmith. In this note the Secretary of State perfunctorily declared: "In view of the present condition of political affairs in Nicaragua, the President has come to the conclusion not to receive you as a diplomatic representative from that State to the Government of the United States."[41] Oaksmith added a postscript to his attempts at recognition when he asked "to be informed whether the Government of the United States has been influenced to this determination by any consideration of an objectionable personal character regarding myself."[42] Marcy curtly replied that no explanation was necessary except to the Government that had asked to have him received.[43] This ended Oaksmith's diplomatic activities.

There were several reasons for Oaksmith's non-recognition. The attacks on Walker's regime by the Central American diplomats, Irisarri and Molina, have already been pointed out. Their attacks pointed out that the Walker regime was not the de jure government in Nicaragua, and for this reason his ministers should not be recognized. These attacks have some significance in determining why Oaksmith failed to be received, but far more important than any other factor in causing the failure of filibuster diplomacy was that recognition of Nicaragua under Walker

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41. Manning, op. cit., IV, 86.

42. Manning, op. cit., IV, 572.

43. Manning, op. cit., IV, 87.

was concerned with the Anglo-American power conflict over Central America.

The New York Sun of May 16, 1856, gave some indication of American feeling on British encroachment in Central America. It observed:

> For years the great aim of British policy in Central America has been to obtain a controlling influence in all the Central American States. England's aggression in that quarter has been steadily pursued, with the view of strengthening her political power and bringing under her control the most available routes to the Pacific. She has robbed Honduras, intrigued in Guatemala, inflamed the envy and ambition of Costa Rica, dictated to Nicaragua, setting up pretensions to the Mosquito Coast, and seizing the only Nicaragua port on the Atlantic side, and now she is endeavoring by covert means to crush the democratic party in Nicaragua because that party has always expressed its preference for the United States.[44]

As has already been recounted, Vijil's reception was a result of American desire to get revenge on the British for furnishing the Costa Ricans with arms and ammunition, demonstrating that antagonism definitely existed in Central America. The Crampton affair had also served to inflame the United States, as John Crampton, English Minister to the United States, had been accused of recruiting for the British armies in the United States.[45] At the time Oaksmith was seeking recognition, negotiations had begun between the United States and Great Britain to settle differences, principally over Central America. These negotiations were, of

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44. New York Sun, May 16, 1856.

45. The best study of the Crampton affair is Richard W. Van Alstyne, "John F. Crampton, Conspirator or Dupe?" The American Historical Review, XLI (1936), 493-502.

course, the Dallas-Clarendon talks.

In order to clarify the issues involved in these talks, it is necessary to sketch briefly how the antagonistic situation evolved in Central America. In 1848 Great Britain had seized the Nicaraguan port of San Juan del Norte and had established a protectorate over the Mosquito Indians along what had formerly been the coastline of Nicaragua. Ostensibly, the protectorate was established to protect the Mosquito king from the Nicaraguans, but in reality the British hoped to gain control of the eastern terminus of the proposed Nicaraguan canal. The question of the Bay Islands and Belize (British Honduras) and the British right to these possessions also was raised after the British had established them as a crown colony. The United States, in lieu of the Monroe Doctrine, was opposed to British encroachment in the Central American area, although its attitude toward the British was, from a broad point of view, conciliatory.[46] To settle these problems in Central America, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850 was signed.

The provisions of the treaty proved to be ambiguous and open to different interpretations. The treaty read that neither country was to occupy, colonize, or exercise dominion over any part of Central America. Clayton, the American negotiator, interpreted the provision as being retroactive. This would mean that the British would have to give up all of their protectorates and

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46. Perkins, op. cit., p. 197.

colonies in the area. On the other hand, Bulwer, the British negotiator, did not interpret the provision as being retroactive, making it unnecessary to give up the protectorate.[47] Even after the signing of the treaty, difficulties still existed in the Central American cockpit.

Further events in the area after 1850 had served to sharpen the differences of the United States and Great Britain. In 1854, Greytown, the new name for the Nicaraguan port of San Juan del Norte, was bombarded by an American ship, again heightening the tension between the two countries. Walker's entry into Nicaragua in 1855 was another event that served to strain relations between the United States and Great Britain in the Central American area. It became apparent that some sort of agreement was necessary concerning the area.

To iron out these difficulties, negotiations were begun between George Dallas, American Minister in London, and Lord Clarendon of the British Foreign Office. The three principal issues were the right of Great Britain to Belize, to the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras, and to the protectorate over the Mosquito coast.[48] The United States was willing to recognize the right of Great Britain to Belize. The United States was also willing to let Honduras and Great Britain settle the Bay Islands issue. A

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47. Richard Van Alstyne, "British Diplomacy and the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, 1850-1860," The Journal of Modern History, XI (1939), 154-157.

48. Williams, op. cit., pp. 226-227.

Honduran diplomat, Herrán, joined the discussions for this purpose, and thus only one problem really remained. That was the question of the Mosquito protectorate, and its solution did not appear difficult.[49]

Despite the relative ease with which a settlement over the Mosquito coast might be obtained, Walker's presence in Nicaragua placed a great deal of pressure on the United States government. If the United States rendered official recognition or gave official support to the Walker cause, it would be a demonstration of bad faith on the part of the United States. It would also show a desire of the government to change the status quo in Central America. This in turn would make the British more reluctant to give up their claim on the Mosquito coast, which they seemed very willing to relinquish. It was in this sort of diplomatic climate that Oaksmith was attempting to secure recognition.

Oaksmith clearly understood why he had no success in obtaining recognition. On September 11 he notified Fermín Ferrer, Nicaraguan Secretary of State, that "delicate negotiations" delayed recognition.[50] On September 23 after he had been refused by Marcy, Oaksmith wrote to Walker that negotiations between the

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49. Williams asserts that the British wished to be rid of the troublesome Mosquito Territory for they were on flimsy juridical ground in obtaining the protectorate in the first place. Williams, op. cit., p. 219.

50. Appleton Oaksmith to Fermín Ferrer, New York, September 11, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

United States and Great Britain had delayed his reception. Oaksmith gave other reasons for his not being received. He maintained that the Presidential campaign and the adjournment of Congress combined with the bad news coming out of Nicaragua caused Marcy not to receive him. He emphasized, however, that it was the Dallas-Clarendon talks that really contributed to his non-recognition.[51]

It is sufficient to state that the Dallas-Clarendon talks, ultimately resulting in the Dallas-Clarendon Convention, never were put into effect, as the Convention was defeated by the United States Senate in 1857. The fact remains that these negotiations were going on while Oaksmith was attempting to secure recognition. Consequently, Oaksmith failed to be recognized and to realize the aim of Nicaraguan diplomacy.

Oaksmith was very irate over his failure to obtain recognition. The state of his thinking is very well illustrated in a letter he wrote to Walker in October. He advocated violent action against Honduras as the only way to obtain a just settlement over boundary disputes with that country. He looked upon the agreement that had been made between Honduras and Great Britain and that had been sanctioned by the United States as "more detrimental to the interests of the United States than that abortion which they christened 'Clayton and Bulwer.'" Realizing that American acquiescence in the British-Honduran agreement was, in

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51. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, September 23, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

effect, a slap in the face to Walker and his aims in Nicaragua, Oaksmith angrily wrote that if the United States did agree to a final settlement of the Central American question, they would be turning their back on the Monroe Doctrine, putting an inseparable barrier between themselves and Americans in Nicaragua, and setting final boundaries to the natural expansion of her people. In a last word, he wrote: "If necessary for self-preservation, Nicaragua should conquer the states which oppose it."[52] This last statement of Oaksmith on foreign policy fell on deaf ears, for Walker was hopelessly locked in a life and death struggle with the Central American allies and the Rivas faction within Nicaragua.

The ill-success of the Walker forces caused press reaction to be antagonistic toward the Nicaraguan cause. Very few newspapers gave Oaksmith's refusal by Marcy any publicity at all, but the New York Daily Times observed:

> APPLETON OAKSMITH has not been received though appointed regularly to succeed Vijil and relieve Heiss. But why not? I have been unable to obtain any satisfaction therefor. Certainly no official step has been taken to withdraw PIERCE'S recognition of the Nicaragua Government. Why then not receive OAKSMITH?[53]

In October Oaksmith was replaced by Fermín Ferrer, the former Secretary of State for Nicaragua, but Ferrer never presented

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52. Appleton Oaksmith to William Walker, New York, October 13, 1856. Oaksmith Papers, D. U. L.

53. New York Daily Times, November 29, 1856.

credentials, and he accomplished nothing for Walker diplomatically.

In any case, the activities of Appleton Oaksmith as a filibuster diplomat give an indication of the difficulties that Walker's ministers faced. More significant is that through an analysis of the efforts of Oaksmith to obtain recognition, a clearer picture of the Anglo-American power conflict in Central America can be secured. Finally, the failure of Nicaraguan diplomacy can be pointed to as one explanation of why the Walker scheme for a Central American empire failed.

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