



Courtesy of The Art Museum, Princeton University

GEORGE MIFFLIN DALLAS
By Thomas Sully, 1810

THE LIBRARY

The Mystery of the Dallas Papers

I

IN the last hours of the troubled year 1864, George Mifflin Dallas rose from his evening meal and, as was his wont, began to pace up and down his drawing room. He seemed particularly weary, however, and shortly bade his family "good night" with the remark that he was retiring "for a long sleep." From that sleep he never awakened. In due time his body was interred in St. Peter's churchyard, and his affairs and effects were cared for by his executors and his family; in the process there developed a tantalizing mystery.

Mr. Dallas had lived a very full and interesting life. After graduating from Princeton, he had entered law and politics. When his distinguished father, Alexander James Dallas, sometime Secretary of the Treasury, was in the flood tide of his success, young Dallas had been initiated into public life as Albert Gallatin's secretary on the futile peace mission to Europe during the War of 1812. He had later been Senator, Minister to Russia and Great Britain, and Vice-President of the United States, Pennsylvania's only son to attain that honor. To be sure, he and his friends had not been without hopes for the presidency.

During this long career Dallas had conscientiously recorded his experiences. He kept lengthy diaries and wrote countless letters; his neat copperplate handwriting filled thousands of sheets of paper. On his official missions he kept letter books and, together with his diaries, they must have constituted quite a library. He carefully docketed his law papers and incoming correspondence, both legal and political. Furthermore, he had inherited much of his father's less ordered archives, and had written a life of his father, which at the time of Mr. Dallas' death lay yet unpublished.

Among the many problems which his death presented to his large and devoted family was the disposition of these extensive family papers. The problem was complicated by the fact that his wife, Sophia Chew Nicklin Dallas, survived him by scarcely four years and

his son, Philip Nicklin Dallas, but two. The responsibility of these papers seems nowhere to be of record. Certain facts about some of them, however, are known.

Miss Juliana Maria Dallas, the eldest daughter, interested herself in the publication of portions of her father's work. She arranged with the Philadelphia firm of J. B. Lippincott and Company to publish a number of her father's London letters, which he had selected before his death and which she now "edited." These appeared in 1869 under the title, *A Series of Letters from London written during the Years 1856, '57, '58, '59, and '60*. Two years later the same publisher brought out *Life and Writings of Alexander James Dallas*, which had been in manuscript since 1862.

Some twenty years later, interest in Dallas' papers revived. Miss Julia Dallas had died, but her sister, Miss Susan, probably in co-operation with her nephew, Russell Thayer of Philadelphia, undertook another publication. In 1892, Lippincott published *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas while United States Minister to Russia, 1837 to 1839, and to England, 1856 to 1861*, edited by Susan Dallas with a prefatory note by Mr. Thayer. This book does not seem to contain, despite the title, full diaries, but merely selections from them.

Thirty-five years later, the Philadelphia auctioneer, Stan V. Henkels, issued his catalogue No. 1401, which advertised the sale of "Valuable Autograph Letters and Historical Documents from the Correspondence of George Mifflin Dallas." This collection consisted of eleven pieces from the papers of Alexander James Dallas and something under three hundred items from the manuscripts of George Mifflin Dallas. The most important group of these latter items bore dates of the British Mission period, 1856-1861, and seems to have been selected because of famous autographs, rather than because of any significant content of the letters. Quite obviously, this was but a small part of the bulky collection.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania became interested in the problem of the Dallas papers a few years afterwards, when it was learned that there was a diary of George M. Dallas kept during his last Congressional session as Vice-President, December 4, 1848-March 6, 1849. This diary is the property of Robert D. Abrahams of Philadelphia, who had found it in an old desk which evidently had been sold by the Dallas family. He kindly permitted the Society to

photostat it. This started a search for the other diaries, letter books, and general correspondence, which, it was hoped, had not been destroyed.

No significant discoveries were made until 1946, when the Society was able to acquire by purchase from a rare-book firm some eleven hundred items which, like the Henkels sale-lot, was highly miscellaneous and contained none of the diaries and letter books. These discoveries and acquisitions raise two interesting questions: What do the papers so far found reveal, and where are the remainder of them?

These fragments from the great family archives disclose much of interest, particularly in regard to mid-nineteenth-century American politics, both national and Pennsylvania. Dallas was born to the purple, politically and socially. His father, as the two hundred letters of the elder Dallas demonstrate, was of the inner circle, first of Commonwealth politics and then of the Madison Administration, 1809-1817. Here are many notes of his activities on the local scene and some revealing bits about the growth of the political organization talents so characteristic of Pennsylvania. There are significant side lights on the part played by the politicians of the Commonwealth in the so-called Jeffersonian Revolution of 1800. The most valuable parts of the A. J. Dallas section of these papers are his correspondence, particularly in 1814, with William Jones, Secretary of the Navy and temporary successor to Gallatin in the Treasury, and those items which give details about the process of establishing the Second Bank of the United States. There are letters from Senator Jonathan Roberts, Minister Jonathan Russell, and from treasury agents and financial leaders.

With this background, George Mifflin Dallas had a near-perfect introduction to the politico-legal career so much desired in the early days of the Republic. Not only was his father in high position, but he himself married Sophia Chew Nicklin, his sister Sophia married Richard Bache of the Franklin connection, and a sister and a brother married into the powerful Wilkins family in Pittsburgh, thus giving him entree into western Pennsylvania. He became an increasingly important member of what was known as the "Family Party," frequently dominant in Pennsylvania affairs.

The steps in his rise are recorded in his papers. He began his career as Major Dallas on General Joseph Bloomfield's staff in 1813,

as his commission shows, and at the return of peace, after going abroad with Gallatin, he plunged into law and politics. His father's place as founder of the Bank of the United States made his lawyer son *persona grata* there, particularly at the time of A. J. Dallas' premature death. He also had legal associates like Henry D. Gilpin. He was active in Masonic circles, and took off his coat to work in Philadelphia city politics. All these promising preliminaries are illustrated in the scattered gleanings of the second chronological section of the manuscripts.

In 1831, his *locus operandi* was shifted to Washington, for in that year he was appointed Senator from Pennsylvania. A third section of the papers, of considerable number, describes the two sessions (1831-1833) of his service in this capacity. Here is a revealing, though incomplete, correspondence between Dallas and his wife, and a long file of letters to his friend Gilpin, which were evidently returned to Dallas by Gilpin or his heirs. We follow Dallas as he travels to Washington by stage, escorting three ladies and somewhat sickish because he had to ride with his back to the horses. He settled down two miles from the Capitol, missed his wife and family, suffered from biliousness, migraine headaches and the accompanying "blue devils," and resorted to snuff and "waters." There is much argument back and forth about the war on the Bank, for, despite his Jacksonian partisanship, Dallas was a Philadelphian, his father's son, and an agent of the Bank. His position was not enviable. He seems to have kept on friendly relations with Jackson and Biddle—no mean accomplishment—although it probably contributed to his decision not to try for election to a full term as Senator. The embarrassments of the tariff and secession controversies are here reflected, with interesting notes on Philadelphia attitudes towards both. Incidentally, one learns much about "Society" and "Family" in Philadelphia, where they counted for so much, and in Washington, where some people tried to maintain some measure of exclusiveness without too great success—witness Peggy O'Neal Timberlake Eaton.

Dallas and his wife shared a keen interest in politics, and he would write her occasionally on such matters under seal of confidence. He once explained his feeling to her: "Don't imagine for a moment that when I wished you not to worry yourself with politics I intended you to abstain from participating with me in all that is said and done.

When you cease to go halves with me, my time is up." He was a good friend of his children; there was nothing he liked better, when away in the country of a summer, than to make and fly kites with them as his own father had done. "I have children enough for all purposes of harmless frolics and love them sufficiently to find their happiness and hilarity, my own," he once wrote.*

There is little information in these papers on the decade following Dallas' retirement from the Senate; they contain almost nothing about his experience as Minister to Russia. But in 1844 they assume new importance. Dallas rather unexpectedly was given the Democratic nomination for Vice-President on the ticket with Polk. By this time, his brother-in-law, William Wilkins, was in Tyler's Cabinet, and his niece, Mary Bache, had married a rising southwestern politico, Robert J. Walker, one of the contrivers of Van Buren's defeat and one of the architects of the Polk-Dallas ticket. Here are to be found a few details about the nomination procedures, and some side lights on both the campaign and the choice of the Cabinet. His brother-in-law was not retained, but his nephew Walker was given his great opportunity. An interesting series of letters throws some light on Simon Cameron's first election to the Senate—as in later times, a rather devious process.

Because the materials relating to Dallas' service as Vice-President are so interesting and varied, the Society is presenting in two parts a series of items from the letters and from the brief diary in the possession of Mr. Abrahams. (The excerpts from this diary are published with his kind permission.) The first group of letters, with few exceptions written to Mrs. Dallas, cover the period 1844–1848; the second part will include the diary and supplementary letters, 1848–1849.†

The letters are particularly revealing because they are written to his wife and children and contain a minimum of restraint. Since she was in Washington only occasionally, Dallas wrote almost daily letters to "Mrs. Vice"—letters filled with gossip, social details, news of

* George Mifflin Dallas (1792–1864) was married to Sophia Chew Nicklin (1798–1869) on May 23, 1816. They had eight children: Alexander James (died young); Philip Nicklin (1825–1866); Julia Maria; Elizabeth Nicklin (married David Hunter Tucker in 1842); Sophia Philips; Catharine Chew (married Fitz Eugene Dixon in 1849); Susan; and Charlotte Bryon (married Charles Henry Morrell).

† I am very much indebted to Miss Lois V. Given for her able editorial co-operation.

the weather and his health, and some politics. On public affairs, these letters give accounts of Dallas' success in improving Senate procedures, in formulating and publishing rules. He never liked his rival Buchanan, the Secretary of State, and he eventually came to distrust Polk, whom, it is easy to see, he believed to be unreliable in keeping promises. He was constantly in touch with Walker, with his Sister Bache, and the Markoes of the State Department.

The two greatest concerns of this period were the tariff and the Mexican War. As to the first, he found his position even more embarrassing than in the thirties, for since the Senate was about evenly divided, it soon became apparent that Dallas would be forced to cast the deciding vote. In these papers are careful tabulations of the probable Senate vote, and the final record of how the Whig Jarnagin of Tennessee created a tie, thus forcing Dallas to decide whether he would vote as party or as Pennsylvania demanded. Despite threats of being burned in effigy and of violence, he voted against Pennsylvania interests; for a few tense days he feared for the safety of his family. He was apprehensive lest his home be attacked, and he prepared to send the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate to Philadelphia to convey Mrs. Dallas and the children to safety.

The atmosphere of the Mexican War is also recorded, with interesting characterizations of the Senators who performed before him—Webster, Benton, Foote, Calhoun and a host of others, some in fresh and not very flattering guises.

When one reads the small diary of those few weeks of Dallas' last session as presiding officer of the Senate, December, 1848–March, 1849, there comes a pleasant surprise. The diary of James K. Polk, President during those exciting years, is well known and has generally been considered the unique record of that Administration. But here is another, very brief to be sure, but better written and equally interesting. The selections from this diary to be printed reveal a man with an interesting style, a literary and social bent, and a judgment of events and personalities, which, being human, was not always accurate. The spice of his comments arouses a taste for more. Did Dallas keep diaries for the other sessions of Congress, 1845–1848, and if so, where are they?

The remaining years of Mr. Dallas' career are represented by a rather numerous, but even more miscellaneous, series of letters.

There are some indications of presidential hopes in 1852, but the majority of the letters relate to his mission to England, 1856-1861. The papers of this period, while many, are exceedingly disappointing and inconsequential. There are some good letters from James M. Mason, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and an occasional interchange between Dallas and Francis Markoe, still at his desk in the State Department. Except for some small correspondence over Lord Brougham's exasperating reference to the Negro question at the Statistical Congress in 1860, there is little on his diplomacy, save a manuscript copy of the Dallas-Clarendon Convention. In 1860, there are a few items about the disturbed tenor of party politics. Dallas' sympathies were with Breckinridge, and he was advised that if Breckinridge were elected, he would surely stay where he was and might even become Secretary of State. Otherwise, the papers are mostly of a social or an autograph significance.

In general, therefore, the Dallas papers, as far as they have been discovered, provide many tantalizing fragments of his career, but they are, unfortunately, complete for so few of the many interesting and important phases of American history with which Dallas was intimately connected. It seems difficult to believe that the major part of this carefully kept record—particularly in the substantial form of letter books and diaries—should have been destroyed. It is the hope of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania that they still survive. But where are they?

University of Pennsylvania

ROY F. NICHOLS

Dec. 15th 1844

My Dear Sir,

Yours of the 4th instant reached me on the 12th. I was anxious to hear your intention as to visiting this City,¹ to be able to answer the many daily enquiries upon the subject:—but I shall still abstain from giving any information because I hope you may reconsider your decision. It is impossible for you to reach Washington without travelling many hundreds of miles in constant popular triumph; and this, tho' both you and Mrs. Polk may dislike it, and whether you come to Philad^a or not, will furnish to political opponents all the

¹ James K. Polk was en route to his inauguration as President.

basis they want for an imputation of a fondness and a pursuit of public display. Your friends know you better than to dream such a motive, and those of your fellow-citizens whom you enabled to see you by so short an extension of the journey, will, I am quite sure be much more apt to regard it as a manifestation of reciprocal and courteous kindness. The short time you spent with us would I confess, be much occupied in the sort of congratulation and exhibition, which, for a season, cannot be separated from your position, and to which you must submit with as little show of weariness, and as good a grace as possible:—but then the days consumed in Philad^a and at the house of a friend, will be days deducted from the roaring publicity and central éclat of Washington:—they would be days of comparative seclusion and quiet. It does not appear to me that you need be in Washington before the 12th or 15th of February:—if you got to this place on the 8th or 10th you can stay 4 or 5 days, and, without the slightest trouble or fatigue, quitting in the rail-road cars at 8 a. m, you pass through Baltimore and arrive at the Capitol at about 8 p. m.—conveniently *after* dark.

I am impressed with the conviction that every hour you can with decorum abstain from spending at Washington, before your inauguration, will be so much saved in political perplexity, and gained in personal comfort. You will not have the excuse of national business to attend to, and you will be beset by shoals of exulting and devoted friends of anxious advisers, of indefatigable and forecasting office-seekers, and of penny-paper spies and letter-writers. It is enough to endure this process for the inauguration week:—to live it through for a month is beyond the power of most men. It is certainly the most trying and impracticable season of Presidential duty. I invoke the persuasive aid of Mrs. Polk to save you from as much of it as possible, by a brief sojourn with Mrs. Dallas.

In the frank and confidential spirit which marks your last letter, I propose sending you whenever I can my views as well of men as of measures, and all that I hear apparently worthy to be submitted to your consideration and judgment. If I shall thus assist in the smallest degree, in the wise, safe, and honorable performance of the exalted and arduous task to which you have been called, at a most interesting period of American History, I shall feel a secret and unalloyed pleasure.

Your short address at Nashville, published in the "Union" was effective and happy. It has given universal satisfaction, and is regarded as the first kindling streak of a new and auspicious dawn. It combines a just allegiance to the Democratic party, with the loftier spirit of Constitutional patriotism. The sentiment is of fine moral tendency, and will bear repetition on a more imposing occasion.

You will be severely exercised in the construction of your Cabinet. The Departments are all well-filled:—the incumbents are unexceptionable as men and as officers, and almost so as Politicians:—and there are obviously some points of private feeling in relation to several of them, not easy to controul. To me, however it appears, harsh as it may at first seem, that the Country expects an entire and indiscriminating change. It wants a Cabinet at the hands of James K. Polk—of his original and exclusive choosing. This too, is not only the general wish:—it is the safest, and fairest, and gentlest principle of action:—for, where a recognized rule is applied to all, no one is found fault with, or has cause of complaint. To retain some implies censure upon those dismissed, inflicts unavoidably, even though unintentionally, a wound and its pain, and lays the groundwork of reproach & discontent.

I have presumed that you might be reluctant to accept the resignations of Mr. Calhoun,² Mr. Mason,³ and Mr. Wilkins⁴:—the first as an eminent Southern republican statesman of great ability and experience, who went *unanimously* into the Cabinet of Pres^t Tyler, solely to adjust, if possible, the Texas and Oregon questions:—the second as an early and long esteemed associate, of unblemished fame, sound practical talent, and of the best political School of Virginia:—and the third as one whom you would wish to treat with every delicacy owing to his connexion with my family. My opinion (to be expressed to none but yourself) is, that averse as you may be to give pain to him or to his friends you cannot retain Mr. Calhoun as Secretary of State without hazarding endless mischiefs, and, as this opinion governs the cases of the War, and Navy departments you must be patient with me while I explain its reasons.

² John C. Calhoun (South Carolina), Secretary of State.

³ John Y. Mason (Virginia), Secretary of the Navy.

⁴ William W. Wilkins, Dallas' brother-in-law.

1. Mr. C. looks and has cause and right to look, and his admirers insist upon his looking, to the Presidency. He is thus the head of a certain sect and system, which sect and system are not *yours*:—which have their peculiar enemies whose numbers are great and already organized. To keep him where he is, would so to speak, be a merger into that sect and system in the estimation of the people at large, and could not fail to involve your administration in all the partialities and oppositions of that sect and system. Much of that sect and system is undoubtedly admirable, but there are parts very doubtful and debateable, to say the least, and with these the people have not identified you for a moment. These remarks apply, directly or remotely to every aspirant for the Chief-magistracy:—any one of whom introduced into the Cabinet, would necessarily introduce along with him, the attachments and hostilities peculiar to his pretensions.

2. Mr. C. is universally regarded as the apostle of *Free Trade* and his retention would at once be a heavy blow upon the republicans in Pennsylvania who cheerfully adopted your wise and constitutional doctrine and rallied their majority upon assurances that the Government would be administered upon *that*, and not upon free-trade. I will not say that even this State may not gradually in the progress of time be weaned from its existing opinions and apparent interests, but, at present, our condition is such, that a sudden and unexpected stroke of this character, might throw us all aback.

3. Mr. C. has made some signal if not fatal mistakes in his treatment of our Foreign Relations, and has thus created an apprehension that, notwithstanding his extraordinary powers of mind, and unquestionable elevation of purpose, he is unfit for a post which requires profound caution, an habitual spirit of conciliation, and a total absence of what may be termed sectarian and sectional, in contradiction to universal and national politics.

As I wish before concluding (which I must do speedily) to mention the person whom after the most careful reflection, I should say might most properly and most popularly be selected by you for the Department of State, you will have to pardon my brevity and abruptness; Mr. Walker⁵ of Mississippi is obnoxious to none of the objections

⁵ Robert J. Walker, who became Secretary of the Treasury.

that might be raised against others, and his merits are conceded by every section of the Republican party. His letter on Texas flew like wild-fire through the whole country, and created for him a solid national reputation. Perhaps no one of our Statesmen is entitled to a larger share of merit and honor, as connected with the moving impulse or active progress of the late canvass. There is no organized party averse to him:—each and all would regard his appointment as the natural result of events, of your discriminating sense of his peculiar position, and of his own fitness to manage the subjects foremost in interest.

Anxious to say more, and to send you my notions as to the other Departments, I find that I have exhausted my time, and probably your patience, on the State alone. I will tax your indulgence again in a few days.

Always sincerely & faithfully yrs.

G. M. Dallas.

Hon

James K. Polk

My Dear Soph,

That we got here safe is quite certain, but a more roaring, squeezing, and enthusiastic time cannot well be imagined.⁶

Our start from Philadelphia was very handsomely managed amid troops, cannon, cheers, and Maria Campbell's terrors. Saint⁷ swore lustily that his mother should quit the car if she did not command her fears.

We met Col. Polk at what is called the Relay House about 13 miles this side of Baltimore. Mrs. P. is the only lady with him:—but he has some twenty or thirty men as escorts. I introduced Philip to both, and we at once became important. She is better, in every respect, than I had anticipated finding her. The scene at the Relay House, and on our arrival at the depot here, was extravagant in its noise, and jam, but full of excitement and gratification. The President & Vice were literally in danger of being squeezed to death.

I have had with me a gallant little escort—Gilpin,⁸ Vaux,⁹ Murray

⁶ Dallas is referring to his arrival in Washington for Polk's inauguration.

⁷ St. George Tucker Campbell, son of Maria Dallas (Mrs. Alexander) Campbell.

⁸ Henry Dilworth Gilpin.

⁹ Richard Vaux.

Rush, Leiper,¹⁰ and H. M. Phillips.¹¹ The rooms I occupy are the same I had when I came here in 1837 to take my instructions from Mr. Van Buren¹² after being confirmed as minister to Russia.

I have seen none of my kind, except Walker & Emery,¹³ who came last night to see me.

Love to all—most affectionately yrs.

G. M. Dallas.

14. Feb. 1845

Mrs. Dallas.

15. Feb. 45

Dearest Soph,

The stream of visitors is unceasing. I have not yet been able to go to Mrs. Bache's¹⁴ or Matilda's.¹⁵ Matilda and Kate and Charles tho' came to see me.

Mrs. Polk, after keeping quiet for a day, will receive visitors this morning.

Yesterday afternoon, the Joint Committee of the two Houses waited on me, and formally handed the Certificate of my election as Vice-President:—thus, nothing is now left of the forms unexecuted but the administration of the oath of office on the 4. of March. I send you the Certificate for safe-keeping.

My face has taken a turn, and become worse than it ever was. Perhaps it is the last flash of the flame before it expires.¹⁶

Mr. Polk brought his brother in law, a Mr. Walker,¹⁷ to introduce to me, at 11 o'clock last night. We take little or no note of time. My sitting room is so constantly crowded by men, that when you come on (notwithstanding your cross vows) I shall have to engage another parlour.

I find it impossible to get a moment.

¹⁰ George G. Leiper.

¹¹ Henry M. Phillips.

¹² Martin Van Buren.

¹³ William H. Emory, Topographical Engineer, nephew to Dallas.

¹⁴ Probably Mrs. Alexander Dallas Bache.

¹⁵ Mrs. William W. Wilkins.

¹⁶ Dallas suffered at times from a painful face affliction.

¹⁷ J. Knox Walker.

16. Feb. 45

My Dearest Soph,

Nothing, absolutely nothing, transpires for the public ear respecting the future Cabinet. Mr. Polk and the Vice are together all day, with an incessant stream of visitors of every possible description. I do not believe that any thing will be known as to the Cabinet until Congress has finally acted upon the Texas question, as the fate of that question might be affected by the disappointments that must necessarily follow the executive arrangements.

Mrs. Polk made a most favorable impression yesterday when she saw company. Her manners are easy, unaffected, and lively. Her dress was rather too showy for my taste, tho' Matilda admired it very much:—it was a silk, with broad stripes of brown figured with white. She certainly eclipsed Mrs. Catron¹⁸ very far.

. . . I am kept in consultation, every night till 1 o'clock, and my face is a monstrous bore. The committee of gentlemen who accompanied me from Philadelphia dine with me to-day. By-the-bye, I want my wine *extremely*, and I dare say that Macalester can have it carefully forwarded by the same channel that Phil's trunk arrived safely by.

No certainty about Reed's¹⁹ nomination yet:—the rumor is that he will be rejected, tho' I doubt it. . . .

I hope you are getting all ready to come down. Two weeks will rapidly pass by.

Monday

Dearest Soph,

After bidding good-bye to Vaux, Leiper, & Phillips, three of my Philadelphia escort yesterday afternoon, I sallied forth with Mr. Bancroft²⁰ and Mr. Gilpin to pay some visits. We went first to Mr. Buchanan's²¹ and had the pleasure of half an hour's chat with him:—thence to Mr. C. J. Ingersoll's,²² who was out:—thence to Mr. J. R. Ingersoll's,²³ who was in bed and invisible to all but Gilpin:—I found

¹⁸ Mrs. John Catron, wife of the U. S. Supreme Court Justice.

¹⁹ John M. Read.

²⁰ George Bancroft.

²¹ James Buchanan.

²² Charles J. Ingersoll.

²³ Joseph R. Ingersoll.

with Mrs. Markoe,²⁴ a daughter of Col. John Mercer who appeared well pleased with Mr. Wm. Waln:—thence to Walker's, where it seemed as if all Washington had assembled:—here I met Judge Ellis,²⁵ formerly a Senator in my time, since our minister to Mexico, and Mr. John Nowell:—we drank tea, and shortly went thence to Mr. Blair's,²⁶ who entertained us highly by reading a capital letter of Jefferson's, recently found, on the subject of Texas.

This morning, after receiving throngs of visits until 12 o'clock, I accompanied Colonel and Mrs. Polk to pay our ceremonious visit to President Tyler. It passed off quite well. Mrs. Tyler was the personification of a tragic queen. I go for the new lady all hollow. She is certainly mistress of herself, and, I suspect, of somebody else also. She is affable, yet full of watchfulness and vivacity. She expressed herself anxious to make the acquaintance of yourself and daughter.

At 1, I went to the Senate, and listened to Mr. Woodbury,²⁷ on Texas, for two hours. Mr. Choate,²⁸ whom I have never heard, speaks tomorrow.

At 6. went to dine with the public banker Mr. Cochran,²⁹ and a more brilliant and exquisite entertainment, in every respect, I never enjoyed. The guests were Mr. Mason, Sec. of Navy, Woodbury, Hammet,³⁰ Col. Butler³¹ of Kentucky, Cushing,³² Holmes³³ of S. C., Walker, Nelson³⁴ Atty. Genl, Bodisco³⁵ &c. &c. We dispersed at 10:—and I went to Matilda's weekly soir  e, which turned out to be the veryest jam of a dance. Wilkins has certainly managed to make his house attractive and popular.

The solicitude about the Cabinet augments hourly, but nothing of a definite character has transpired. I can discern no cause for the least anxiety: perhaps I am too confident, and do not sufficiently understand southern statesmen:—but to me there is every reason to

²⁴ Mrs. Francis Markoe.

²⁵ Powhatan Ellis.

²⁶ Francis P. Blair, Sr.

²⁷ Levi Woodbury (New Hampshire).

²⁸ Rufus Choate (Massachusetts).

²⁹ W. W. Corcoran.

³⁰ William H. Hammett.

³¹ William O. Butler.

³² Caleb Cushing.

³³ Isaac E. Holmes.

³⁴ John Nelson.

³⁵ Waldemar de Bodisco, Secretary of the Russian Legation.

believe that Mr. Polk will meet the expectations of the country and his friends. One false step, it is true, at this crisis, may do permanent mischief. Bancroft is here.

I write short letters because constantly interrupted. Philip takes your advice—goes every where—and seems to enjoy himself.

Tuesday 18

21 Feb. '45

My Dear Soph,

. . . External indications all point now to the appointment of Buchanan as Sec. of State. I do not think, however, that we shall know any thing with certainty before the 4. of March.

. . . There is nothing worth telling. I have a misgiving that there are not as much resolution and judgment in a certain quarter as might have been hoped for.

22. Feb. '45

Dearest Soph,

. . . The expense of the Hotel is intolerable:—my first week (to be sure somewhat beyond any future one, from circumstances) made a bill of eighty three dollars! independent of hack-hire &c.

Texas will be admitted:—no one now doubts. If rumor be correct, you will be pleased with all the members of the Cabinet, except the chief one, and he is certainly a most dangerous choice.

23. Feb. '45

Dearest Soph,

. . . Explosions about the supposed Cabinet are rife every where:—and Mr. Ch. J. Ingersoll has just been to see me, in towering excitement, and vows that he will denounce the arrangement in the House of Representatives and cut loose from Mr. Polk forever! He threatens that upon the rumor that the offices are to be parcelled as follows:—

Buchanan, State Dept.

Bancroft, Treasury

Walker, Atty. Genl.

Marcy,³⁶ War

Mason (now in) Navy

Cave Johnson—P. Office

³⁶ William L. Marcy (New York).

All are to me right and proper, except the first; and I think his appointment will involve Mr. Polk in great difficulties. By putting Walker in the State Department, and taking a Virginian, of the full blooded Calhoun school, for Atty. Genl, every discord would have been hushed. . . .

11. Mar. '45

Dearest Soph,

My lodgings are excellent. Bancroft and Marcy will probably join Genl. Cass³⁷ and myself. The good folks of the house who had not before attracted attention seem to think that I have made their fortune. I wish all the office-seekers were as easily satisfied.

The nomination of Mr. Bancroft was yesterday confirmed unanimously.

I dined yesterday with Dr. Patterson,³⁸ Col. Totten,³⁹ Col. Abert,⁴⁰ Mr. Bancroft &c. at Dallas Bache's. Genl. Vanness⁴¹ gives me a dinner on friday next. I am afraid that I cannot get away before the lapse of at least ten days.

The wives of the foreign ministers say they did not know you were in town:—yet you and they were together at the 5 Dr. party. They are silly women, and may be taught a lesson:—I have already begun abridging the privileges of their husbands on the floor of the Senate chamber.

Wilkins &c. go tomorrow.

12. Mar. '45

Dearest Soph,

. . . The President is slow and discreet in making nominations; so that he keeps the Senate idle half the time, and, will therefore protract the session, probably to the close of next week. Julia and the Baches intend going to what is called the Relief Ball to-night—that is a ball intended to relieve the sufferers by the late disastrous fire. I wanted to send her a bouquet from the Green-house attached to my lodgings; but found that a mere nothing cost \$3, and that I

³⁷ Lewis Cass (Michigan).

³⁸ Robert M. Patterson.

³⁹ Joseph G. Totten, Chief of Engineers.

⁴⁰ John J. Abert, Chief Topographical Engineer.

⁴¹ John Peter Van Ness.

could not obtain what I liked for less than 10 Dr:—so I kept my cash.

Our domestic life is but temporarily interrupted. In a few days we shall look back upon the distractions of the last month as subject for fire-side amusement. I would not give up my own circle at home for any earthly consideration. In assuming high and new duties, it is more than probable that my anxieties of mind, (which I have a habit of working through silently) may have seemed strange to all of you:—but, rely upon it, there is but one polar star for me—the knob of which you are the centre.

14. Mar. '45

Things are not, Dear Soph, as favorable to my getting off by tomorrow night as I thought they would be. Old Mr. Bates,⁴² of Massachusetts, will probably die to-day, and we shall, on that account, lose tomorrow and perhaps monday. I can, however, see no good reason for prolonging my absence beyond Wednesday next.

I shall have to devote one day at least—it may be tomorrow & Sunday—to returning the visits paid me. They will be numberless.

My colleagues of the Senate do not wish me to withdraw, according to the usual practice, in order to enable them to choose a *Pro tem.* This, tho' complimentary, obliges me to stay to the last hour.

17. Mar. '45

Dearest Soph,

. . . I dined yesterday at Mr. Sullivan's, and met there the ablest of our whig Senators, Mr. Crittenden⁴³ of Kentucky. He made himself extremely agreeable by narratives of western life and men.

The necessity of drafting a long written decision on the question of the mileage payable by law to the Senators has kept me too busy to write. My decision will probably give them all great satisfaction, and I entertain no doubt of its correctness.

The politicians of N. York and of Harrisburg are all in uproarious commotion. I am out of those scrapes, however. "Let the galled jade

⁴² Isaac C. Bates.

⁴³ John J. Crittenden.

go wince, our withers are unwrung"! I have sworn in, as our new Penna. Senator, Genl. Simon Cameron, the same gentleman who in November last congratulated you on the result of the election, and hoped in '48 to congratulate as the wife of the President! Psha! Such despicable hypocrisy!

18. Mar. '45

Dearest Soph,

We buried Mr. Bates—no, we did not bury him, but accompanied his body, to the cars. The sermon and ceremony were solemn and impressive.

Julia and I are equally anxious to start tomorrow afternoon, if the Senate finally adjourns:—but, the President has asked to have a full and long conversation with me before I go, and I cannot conform, as I must conform, before tomorrow afternoon. So, we delay till thursday morning.

I dine today with Col. Murray.

27. Nov. '45

Dearest Soph,

The members of Congress are flocking in from all quarters. Every train of cars creaks with their weight. Most of them have performed very long journeys, and are heartily glad to repose. What have I to complain of, compared to men who leave their families nearly two thousand miles off, and can indulge no expectation of seeing them for seven or eight months?

Col. Benton⁴⁴ came and sat with me an hour last evening. I could not ascertain, tho' I made several delicate experiments, whether he was for or against the administration. One thing, however, was quite clear,—that he is ready and eager to oppose Mr. Calhoun wherever possible. If Mr. Calhoun should support the administration, Col. Benton will not be able to resist the impulse to oppose it:—on the contrary, if Mr. Calhoun opposes, Col. Benton will be our champion. Such are, in the highest spheres of action, the uncertainties and extravagancies of human passions!

I called on and saw Mrs. Madison⁴⁵ yesterday, having first left

⁴⁴ Thomas Hart Benton (Missouri).

⁴⁵ Dolly Madison.

cards for the ladies at the White House. Mrs. M. spoke of the girls with great kindness, and hoped to see them here during the winter.

The Senate chamber has been redeemed from a thousand barbarisms and is now, in point of taste, restored to its original beauty. *That* clock is up and much admired.

I promised Markoe to dine with him today.

Mrs. Vice.

30. Nov. 45*

My Dear Sophy,

I begin to find that I cannot command ten minutes of my own time. Visitors are perpetual, and points of business and arrangement are perpetually occurring. It is difficult for me to get into bed before one o'clock, and I cannot, without throwing every thing into confusion, stay there after seven in the morning. So, you see I have reasons for not being as rapid and punctual a correspondent as I wish to be.

My lodgings realize my expectations, and I do not think I could have been as comfortably fixed any where else.⁴⁶ The *equipage* is all I could desire; and, so far from being thought "splendid," "magnificent" and so on, it is praised as a true republican turn out. It has been so constantly of use, that I should have been at a loss to get on without it. The horses improve daily by attentive grooming.

We open Congress tomorrow morning:—and on tuesday, we shall receive the President's message:—on wednesday the Treasury Report. These papers will make an immense stir and sensation. Tell Doc⁴⁷ that the Caucus of last night was 101 strong, out of 159—that Chapman⁴⁸ of Alabama offered a resolution requiring the nomination of a Speaker to be made by a number equal to a *congressional majority*—that it was debated coolly for two hours, when they adjourned, *without coming to a vote*, to meet again at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

* This letter is from the collection of Fitz Eugene Dixon, Jr., and has been published with his permission from a photostatic copy in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁴⁶ During the first session of the Twenty-ninth Congress (December 1, 1845–August 10, 1846), Dallas lived at Henry E. Riell's, corner of Maryland Avenue and Third Street E.

⁴⁷ Possibly Dr. A. C. Draper of Philadelphia.

⁴⁸ Reuben Chapman.

1. Dec. 1845

My Dear Philip,

Your white-haired father has just opened the Senate of the United States for a session which, as he anticipates, will be one of the most important, disturbed, and protracted, in the history of his Country. The labor and responsibility, I perceive, are destined to be very great. These are reasons of a peculiar nature, growing out of the weakness comparatively of the friends of the administration on the floor of the Senate, which may exact more exertion from me than would otherwise fall to my share.

The House of Representatives have this morning, on the second ballot, elected Mr. John W. Davis, of Indiana, their Speaker. That post, as you know, is one of much popular éclat and influence:—and the choice of today is the signal commencement of the overwhelming action of western power. In a few years, the political strength beyond the Alleghennies will controul the nation, and may remove the Capitol to Cincinnati, or even farther towards the valley of the Mississippi. This will be for your time.

We shall probably have the President's message tomorrow:—tho' Mr. Allen,⁴⁹ of Ohio, unthinkingly interfered with the passage of a necessary preliminary resolution in the Senate, for the appointment of a committee to wait on the President and inform him that we had organized &c. The inadvertence may be rectified tomorrow. Our hour of daily meeting is 12.

I fervently hope that you will resolutely devote yourself to the law, so as to make your examination not merely a satisfactory, but a remarkable one.

P. N. Dallas Esq.

2. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

Mr. Ingersoll received last night the news of Mr. Wilcocks'⁵⁰ death; and both he and his brother have gone to Philadelphia, in order to attend the funeral. He says that Mr. W. dies rich, and that the widow will probably have a clear income of some five or six

⁴⁹ William Allen.

⁵⁰ Benjamin C. Wilcocks, Esq., died December 1, 1845.

thousand a year. I hope she has behaved well during her husband's last days.

The message has produced a strong sensation, but whether, on the whole and durably, it will be a beneficial one remains in doubt. Our Pennsylvanians are struck with despair, and I do not see how they are to survive the free trade battery which Walker will assail them with in his annual report tomorrow.

I have been so closely at work that I have seen nobody but official visitors for several days. I come to the Vice-President's chamber at the Capitol at 9 in the morning, go home to dine at 4, return and remain till 9 or 10. Occasionally I walk rapidly round the square, or down the avenue. I have seen the President but twice and the Presidentess but once.

Was there ever such a plunge as that made by the Secretary of State, in offering the 49 parallel as the boundary of Oregon? The country was at the mercy of Pakenham,⁵¹ whose egregious blunder enabled the President, with great vigor and promptness, to rescue us.

4. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

The first movement of opposition is now going on in the Senate. The friends of the Administration are anxious to authorize me, as presiding officer, to appoint the Committees:—the disaffected and the Whigs are for choosing them by ballot. I have called General Sevier,⁵² of Arkansas, to the Chair, and retiring to my own apartment, have left them to the freest [*sic*] possible discussion:—in reality, tho' not politically, indifferent to their decision. If our adversaries succeed, which I hardly think possible, altho' they may be aided by Col. Benton, the committees will be hostile to the Administration, and the efficient majority in the Senate may be considered as against us. You will see the result in the papers, and understand it's bearings.

The President is acting towards me with the utmost confidence and kindness. I am apprehensive, however, that he is not altogether free from the ordinary foible of instability, and that he may again, one

⁵¹ Richard Pakenham, British Minister.

⁵² Ambrose H. Sevier.

of these days, present the cold shoulder. I shall not, however, give him the cause, and, of course, if it occurs, will care little about it.

I have nothing to say, or think of, but public matters.

My love to all. I think it would be well for Philip to see Mr. Kane,⁵³ and read to him the first paragraph of this letter about the Senate's committees.

9. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

You must get accustomed and callous to political movements. They assume all shapes, and are against all persons in turn. While I do nothing wrong myself, let us be indifferent to the inevitable hostility and attacks of others. As to the matter of the Committees, it was a factious manifestation of Col. Benton in alliance with the whole body of Whigs. It had nothing personal in it whatever. So far from affecting injuriously my political standing or pretensions, it has strengthened both, by exciting the attention and adherence of all the democrats. The Whigs express their regrets in private at having been led into the folly.

This morning, Col. Benton and his squad again shewed their teeth:—defeating the democratic caucus candidates for Secretary and doorkeeper by joining the Whigs, and, as in the vote on the committees, by a majority of one only. The democrats are becoming enraged beyond measure. Had they elected their own Secretary, there would have been some eight or nine clerkships to distribute among their friends who have come from all quarters hungry for any small office. All these clerkships are now at the disposal of the Whigs, for they are all appointable by the Secretary.

I worked unusually hard in the Senate this morning:—having to superintend some sixteen or twenty ballottings for officers and chairmen of Committees. I am much encouraged by the kind manner in which I am complimented on my mode of presiding. But I assure you, contrary to my expectations, it is *not* done without a great deal of preparatory labor. Now that hostility has shewn itself, I am bound to be ready at all points and against surprises.

We have had a mild day, and quick thaw.

⁵³ Judge John K. Kane. See note 87.

16. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

I am tempted to regret that I did not persuade you to come on with me, for we have had in the Senate, during the last two days, a most animated and interesting debate on the prospect of peace or war. . . . We were crowded, as it was our first display. It glowed with patriotism:—each and every Senator solemnly declaring that if war did come, he would go heart and hand for his country, right or wrong! The resolutions which were directed towards augmenting the defences of the nation, were *unanimously* carried.

I saw Maria Scott in the Gallery all this morning, and am happy she had so fine a treat. I made her leave her father last evening to his law-colleagues and segars, and go wandering with me. I took her first to see Mrs. Polk, and left them tête à tête for half an hour, while I went upstairs to see the President. Thence, I took her to see Mrs. Bancroft, whom we found just finishing nuts & apples, & where we were fortunate enough to encounter Mrs. Madison and Mr. Buchanan, and a great beauty, daughter of Star-spangled Banner Key. Thence, after two exquisite cups of tea, and several songs, we went to Walker's, and remained till we returned home. I mention all this to satisfy Sophy both that I took care of her friend, and that her friend was delighted.

The Resolution for the admission of Texas came from the House to the Senate just as we were on the point of adjourning—I made them stop, however,—received it—had it read twice—and referred—thus pressing it at a single blow as far as it could be pressed. We shall probably pass it finally tomorrow.

18. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

. . . The House have spent two days in discussing Nativism. Our Southwark rioter, Mr. Levin,⁵⁴ made, I am told, a capital speech. He has, however, been effectually torn to shreds & tatters.

We went into executive session today. No nominations of any importance. The Judgeship is undecided, tho' it is strongly rumored that the President has decided for Judge Woodward.⁵⁵ I have myself

⁵⁴ Lewis C. Levin.

⁵⁵ George W. Woodward.

a suspicion that he may be puzzled yet by the names of Mr. C. J. Ingersoll, and Judge Rogers.⁵⁶ However, I can't say. . . .

19. Dec. '45

Dearest Soph,

I performed miracles of visitting to-day:—from the Hill to the Heights of Georgetown. All the Diplomats, all the Cabinet, all the Senate, and all the House. I have fairly brushed my list clear.

Nothing new, except that they tell me I have already achieved a most extraordinary reputation as a presiding officer. If this be so now, only think what I shall be by and by!! I did yesterday what is unusual:—they resolved to have a select committee on the French claims, and desired the chair to name them:—I named them instantler:—it is customary to wait and consult. So you see, I am getting easy in my traces. But no hard work has tired me yet. . . .

I have seen the President but once, and for half an hour, since I returned here.

[1845?]

My Dear Sir,⁵⁷

The remarks in some newspapers about my continuing to practice the law have been read by me, as one willing to conform his personal conduct to just and reasonable suggestions from any quarter as to the proprieties in office. What is becoming & consistent is liable to be the subject of disagreement:—but certainly, I should not hesitate in sacrificing my own notions, now that I have undertaken the place, to a prevailing sentiment among my fellow-citizens founded, not merely on captious political hostility, but on candid and sound considerations. I have no pride of opinion about it. Most people would like,—I am sure I would, after thirty years of work—to feel justified by their domestic relations and social intercourse, in indulging a national tendency to repose and be idle: very few, if any, would require the additional incentive to inertness, if I may be permitted the phraze, which springs from its' public approval.

Assuredly, the duties of an office once assumed must be performed, fully, faithfully:—and every body knows that an office may have its

⁵⁶ Molton C. Rogers, Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

⁵⁷ Addressee not given.

collateral as well as its' direct duties—the duties, for instance, of deportment, as the political abstinence of a Judge or the hospitality and etiquette of an Ambassador.—Nothing of a private and personal kind can be permitted to interfere with these duties, be the consequences to the individual what they may. If one man from any cause cannot fulfill the exigencies of a post, let him resign or be withdrawn that another may, for no post has ever yet been formed to which a competent incumbent could not be assigned. The purposes for which offices have been created are indispensable to the general system: they must be accomplished, and like time and tide can wait for none. All this is unquestionable.

But the office of Vice-President should be correctly understood. Why is it regarded as dignified? Clearly, not because it is an office, but because first, its' incumbent is anointed by the national ballot-box, second, its' action is manifested in the noblest of all deliberative bodies the Senate of U S. and third, its' *accidency* is the supreme executive. "*Magnificabo apostolatum meum*";—I am not at all indisposed to swell it up somewhat:—but it is impossible to read the Constitution and not discover that a single duty only is devolved upon the Vice-President, that of being "*President of the Senate.*" Except so far, he forms no part of the government:—he enters into no administrative sphere:—he has practically no legislative, executive, or judicial functions:—while the Senate sits, he presides, that's all:—he don't debate, or vote, (except to end a tie) he merely preserves the order and courtesy of business. While Congress is in session, and during the separate meetings of the Senate, I agree with you that the Constitution designed him to be at the seat of government, occupying his chair:—but in the recess, where is' he to go? what has he to do?—no where, nothing! He *might*, to be sure, meddle with affairs of state, rummage through the departments, devote his leisure to the study of public questions and interests, holding himself in readiness to counsel and to help at every emergency in the great onward movement of the vast machine:—But, then, recollect, that this course would perhaps sometimes be esteemed intrusive, sometimes factious, sometimes vain and arrogant, and, as it is prescribed by no law, it could not fail to be treated lightly because guaranteed by no responsibility.

As then, the short sessions of Congress cannot be protracted beyond the 4th of March, and the long ones rarely extend beyond July, can it be that any sort of sickly sentiment respecting the elevation of office shall exact from the V. P. during the first of every two years absolute idleness for nine months, and during the second for six months? that is for two years and a half of his constitutional term of four years! I cannot exactly comprehend the *dignity* of doing nothing:—the Italian goes no farther than to praise its *pleasantness*.

27. Jan. '46

Dearest Soph,

The rumor grows louder and stronger that our Secretary of State longs to be transferred to the Bench. He is weary of his present post, especially amid the embarrassments consequent upon the offer of the 49. parallel as the northern boundary of Oregon. Perhaps too, he is conscious of having reaped all the reputation he can reap from the place, and is apprehensive of change. The President may, I think, yield to his desire, if he can find another Secretary to his mind.

We had a handsome debate on the new Navy Bill, in Senate today. Benton spoke, and decidedly anti-administration. It was unfinished, when we went into executive session.

Baltimore—Half past 3. oclock on
Monday the 16 March 1846

Dearest Soph,

All's well that ends well!—but such a miserable time of it as I have had! I have congratulated myself repeatedly on being without you or either of the girls, and hardly think that even Philip could have borne the matter with my philosophy.

We did not leave the depot at Market & 11 St^s before half past 10 last night, the New-York mail having delayed us by swamping somewhere and never making its' appearance. It rained gloriously for a short time at Gray's Ferry:—but the moon soon dispelled the clouds. So deuced slow, however, was the first attempt at altered hours that we did not get to Havre de Grace before 3 o'clock in the morning, and there we found the Susquehanna raging & roaring with a freshet and crowded with logs and trees, and withal lashed by a

heavy gale—so the big boat could not cross to us; and there we sat for more than 7 long hours, instead of reaching the Capitol & Mr. Calhoun! After four trains had convened there—loaded with uproarious passengers—and all sorts of difficulties & delays, we got here about an hour ago. I must solace myself with one of Mr. Mason's segars, and be ready to start at 5. . . .

19. Mar. '46

Dearest Soph,

. . . The general impression seems to be that Mr. Calhoun did every body injustice, himself, his country, his subject, and his government. We have had two tough speeches yesterday and today—Archer⁵⁸ and Niles:⁵⁹—nothing could be more paltry than the former. Judge Chalmers⁶⁰ has the floor for monday, but may not speak before tuesday. He will probably be followed by Genl. Cass. No doubt the whole of next week will be consumed before a vote is taken. I still am of opinion that the resolution as it came from the House will finally be carried through the Senate. It is possible that the news, expected by the Steamer every hour, may put a fresh aspect on the affair. . . .

7. Apr. '46

Dearest Soph,

The speech of Mr. Webster⁶¹ to-day would have overwhelmed and perhaps disgusted you. He attacked Mr. C. J. Ingersoll with the savage and mangling ferocity of a tiger. For at least half an hour, he grit his teeth, scowled, stamped, and roared forth the very worst & most abusive language I have ever heard uttered in the Senate. He will, of course, be replied to in kind. You must get and read so much of Mr. Webster's long speech of two days as relates to Mr. Ingersoll, in order to understand the answer when it comes.

I never see any Whig newspaper but the National Intelligencer and should not know that they attacked me were it not for a defence that I now and then notice in some democratic journal. You must

⁵⁸ William S. Archer (Virginia).

⁵⁹ John M. Niles (Connecticut).

⁶⁰ Joseph W. Chalmers (Mississippi).

⁶¹ Daniel Webster (Massachusetts).

join me in being utterly indifferent to these attacks. They are part of the game played by the adversary, and only prove that I must have made a good move, which has provoked him. As to the small noise at the close of Hannegan's⁶² speech, it was instantly stopped, and Mr. Webster only burnt a little incense for Col. Benton, when he talked, amid profound silence, of clearing the galleries.

I am told that the Senate does not adjourn over on account of Good Friday. Mr. Walker says he never knew it to be done. As another score of speeches appear to have been started for the Oregon debate, I am inclined to think the Senators will continue to sit uninterruptedly.

9. Apr. '46
10 o'clock.

Dearest Soph,

Mr. Ch. J. Ingersoll has formally moved in the House for the production of documents from the Department of State by which, he says, he will establish that Mr. Webster while Secretary corruptly took the public moneys, applied them as well to corrupt the party press as to procure the release of McLeod,⁶³ and was guilty of impeachable misdemeanors in office. He represented to the House that Mr. Webster was a defaulter when he left the office, having used the secret service fund for his own purposes, and only repaid it about a year ago. He proposes too to establish by the record of the Committee of Foreign Relations a fact which Mr. Webster denied vehemently as false—that fact is in the handwriting of Mr. Adams⁶⁴—who kept the journal of the Committee—So you see the fight is furious!

Friday 10. Apr. '46

Dearest Soph,

. . . The affair of Mr. Webster has almost entirely suspended, in the excitement of the times, that of war or peace, to which it is near akin. There is a difficulty of form in the way of examining the secret service fund which I don't think Mr. Ingersoll has sufficiently considered.

⁶² Edward A. Hannegan (Indiana).

⁶³ Alexander McLeod.

⁶⁴ John Quincy Adams.

Mr. Bagby⁶⁵ speaks in Senate today.

The prospect of war with Mexico is more imminent. English news is not very hostile.

16. April '46

Dearest Soph,

Genl. Houston's⁶⁶ speech yesterday disappointed every body. He had better have held his tongue, and relied upon the prestige of San Jacinto. Men are perpetually spoiling their reputations and marring their futures by attempting what they are wholly unfit for.

Mr. Crittenden begins to-day. We meet at 11. o'clock, and we shall not adjourn until the final vote be taken, even should tomorrow's sun rise upon us. I think the notice as it came from the House will be adopted. . . .

11. May '46

Dearest Soph,

I got safely here at half past 8, and have already been made sensible that I was most fortunate in tearing myself away from you all. The excitement in Baltimore and in this place on the Mexican business far exceeds my expectations. The President will send us a Message as soon as we meet, and the Military Committee of the House are prepared to recommend an immediate appropriation of Ten Millions and an army of fifty thousand.

The night was lovely as a full moon could make it.

Genl. Worth,⁶⁷ I am told, left here to rejoin the army, this morning.

12. May '46

Dearest Soph,

. . . The Mexican business thus far is by no means as bad as was first represented. It is possible, to be sure, that we may receive in a day or two disagreeable accounts from Genl. Taylor,⁶⁸ whose predicament all agree to be exceedingly critical:—but Capt. Thornton,⁶⁹ instead of being killed and his company captured, cut his way

⁶⁵ Arthur P. Bagby (Alabama).

⁶⁶ Sam Houston (Texas).

⁶⁷ William J. Worth.

⁶⁸ Zachary Taylor.

⁶⁹ Seth B. Thornton.

gallantly through the Mexicans and returned to our army with a loss of only one fourth. The spirit of the whole South is roused in the finest possible tone:—and the entire national sentiment was exhibited yesterday in the House of Representatives, where war was in effect declared, ten millions and 50.000 men put at the disposal of the President, and all the navy ordered to be equipped for action, by a vote of 174 to 14—*every* democrat—real or pretended—even Holmes of South Carolina—voting in the affirmative! Is it not marvellous that at such a moment as this, Mr. Calhoun should take the lead of the whigs, and with his hair-splitting distinctions between “*war* and *hostilities*,” endeavour to throw cold water upon a great national movement.

Slidell,⁷⁰ came & drank tea with me last evening—so did Walker—& Col. Hubbs, & Commissioner Smith, & Mr. Amory & Mr. Schnabel.⁷¹

I am asked to embark in pursuit of a prize of Twelve Millions of acres of land!

13. May '46

Dearest Soph,

We continued in session in the Senate yesterday until half past six, and, occupying the whole time with the great bill against our Mexican invaders, compleated the measure by a triumphant majority of 40 to 2:—Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Berrien,⁷² Mr. Evans,⁷³ and Mr. Huntingdon⁷⁴ refusing to vote at all! The bill recognizes the existence of a war brought on us by Mexico, authorizes the President to accept the services of 50.000 volunteers, to employ the whole army and navy, and take, as a beginning, for these purposes ten millions of dollars. I think Congress has acted as becomes a great nation, conscious of it's power, and that the people will sustain us gallantly. The Whigs in the Senate, after struggling hard for hours, finally, almost got upon their knees to beg to be spared from voting on the preamble:—but the democrats were resolved that they should speak out. The House had an evening session at half past 7, and concurred in the few

⁷⁰ John Slidell.

⁷¹ Ellis B. Schnabel.

⁷² John M. Berrien (Georgia).

⁷³ George Evans (Maine).

⁷⁴ Jabez W. Huntingdon (Connecticut).

amendments made by the Senate:—so that the bill will be ready for my signature this morning.

I went to the Drawing Room last evening, after leaving the House at 8½. Great crowds to congratulate the President on the action of Congress. Still anxious about the fate of Genl. Taylor, from whom we have no fresh news.

Mr. Chr. Hughes⁷⁵ wrote me word that he would come on, and I expect his arrival this morning. I have not yet got a coachman:—but have had a row with Grimes, on finding the carriage look like a hack, and one of the horses lame.

Tuesday 19. May '46

Dearest Soph,

The news of last evening came early enough to be forwarded, and you have no doubt got it this morning. It had inspired great confidence. It seems, in all respects, unimpeachable. An official letter from Genl. Gaines,⁷⁶ at New-Orleans, to the Secretary of War, which I have seen, recognizes it's correctness. If true, Genl. Taylor, tho' on the eve of another battle, has acted with boldness, vigor, and promptness, and has retrieved his mistakes. The slaughter of the Mexicans when they attempted to take the intrenchment, after Taylor had gone to Point Isabel, was immense, and shews two things, first that the Mexicans are more numerous, and second that they are more brave, than we supposed them to be. They must have lost at least one third of their number before they abandoned their object. We lost one man only, and him by the bursting of one of our own shells. Col. Twiggs⁷⁷ (the military rival of Genl. Worth) or Major Ringgold,⁷⁸ was in command of the intrenchment. Another assault on the intrenchment probably took place on the 6. May, as heavy firing was heard in that direction:—or it may be that our forces, under cover of their guns, crossed the river to finish their destruction of Matamoras, get some small vessels on the other side, or spike the enemy's artillery:—or it may be that the firing heard was in fact an engagement between Genl. Taylor and Arista⁷⁹ half-way between

⁷⁵ Christopher Hughes.

⁷⁶ Edmund P. Gaines.

⁷⁷ David E. Twiggs.

⁷⁸ Samuel Ringgold.

⁷⁹ Mariano Arista and Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga.

Point Isabel and the intrenchment. We, of course, await the next news with extreme anxiety. If Taylor has whipped the Mexicans, he will pursue them across the river, bivouack on the ruins of Matamoras, and thence proceed to release all the northern states of Mexico from the tyranny of Paredes⁷⁹ and to achieve a complete revolution in favor of the "great northern union."

Mr. Walker mentioned to me last night that he spoken to Watmough⁸⁰ when here on *that* subject, and had obtained the most solemn promises.

20. May '46

Dearest Soph,

All well in Texas, tho' the force of the Mexicans and the prowess of our forces have been somewhat exaggerated. The despatches from Genl. Taylor received last night place us in the right position, and secure the future. I hope we shall not halt in our progress until we get full redress, produce the downfall of the military usurper Paredes, and prepare all the northern departments of Mexico for annexation to the U. States.

Mr. Brooke and Bev. Tucker⁸¹ dined with me yesterday. The latter has secured a contract from the War Department for making cannon balls, and need not now go to Missouri.

I am afraid the Senate will not again adjourn over. The freshets so common just now frighten me from a trip unless I have ample time.

Mr. Christopher Hughes has never made his appearance.

One good thing deserves another:—so the witticism of Company I justifies my saying that on being asked for a toast yesterday morning by several Senators who were disposing of some champagne won by a bet on the success of Genl. Taylor, I gave: "the *tailor*, whose skill enables him to *cut up without measure*."

26. May 46

Dearest Soph,

I got here safely yesterday at 9:—and felt amazingly sleepy during Col. Benton's wearisome speech.

We went into Executive session, and did not adjourn until 4½,

⁸⁰ John G. Watmough.

⁸¹ Beverly Tucker, the younger.

having during that time *rejected* Henry Horn's nomination as collector.

In making the officers of the new Regiment of mounted riflemen, the tenant of the White House has maintained his consistency of action by excluding every one for whom I felt an interest.

The details of our victories in Texas are beautiful beyond measure. They attest great gallantry and the highest military talent. Genl. Taylor is henceforward a splendid constellation.

Mr. Chr. Hughes writes me word that he will be here this morning.

7. June 1846

Dearest Soph,

I lectured you once about not noticing the drafts sent, and hate to lecture again:—but I can't entirely trust our post office after the experience of the last year, and must, therefore, ask whether you got safely what was sent about a week ago for the oil cloth &c?

The Senate not only did not adjourn over, but actually protracted it's Saturday's session until late in the afternoon. We are becoming quite industrious. The debate on Friday was one of great animation. Mr. Reverdy Johnson was assailed by Mr. Webster, Mr. Crittenden, and Mr. Archer:—but he skilfully defeated each in succession. The matter was the resolution of Genl. Cass intimating a censure upon Genl. Gaines, who has foolishly and without authority, under the influence of alarm and patriotism combined, been mustering soldiers and commissioning officers without number. He has probably run the Government into an illegal expense for his own volunteers of a million of dollars, besides throwing upon them the necessity of doing an unpopular act by dismissing his improperly collected forces.

I am surprized by a summons to be at the White House *tonight* at 8 o'clock for "*a most important communication*", and have racked my brain into a violent head-ache in conjecturing what this portentous matter can be. The President, however, has the faculty of making mountains out of mole-hills, and I shall be surprized to find any thing more overwhelming than some resignation of office, or some revolutionary letter from California, Cuba, or Yucatan. There are possibilities, however, of extreme interest, and as I know your discretion, I hope to give you a hint tomorrow. Suppose an English

war? Suppose Benton to supercede Buchanan? Suppose Haywood⁸² to supercede Bancroft? Suppose Rush⁸³ to be sent to England? Suppose a bombardment of the Castle off Vera Cruz? Suppose Canada ripe for annexation? *SUPPOSE, SUPPOSE, SUPPOSE*—any thing!

I give up the idea of the house on the Hill. Indeed, movements are now and then made in Congress which indicate an earlier adjournment than has heretofore been thought possible. As soon as any sort of vote is taken on the Tariff question, in the House, we shall be able to see the probable period of adjournment. If a determination to change the law of 1842 be not manifested, Congress will soon break up:—if the contrary, we shall be battling it certainly for two months longer.

Judge Tucker⁸⁴ has returned to Richmond. Owing to our engagements we hardly saw each other after the first morning. Bev. is still here. Emory went off for Santa Feé and California yesterday, and may probably be absent from his family for two years. I am told that the chief of his department of service has recommended him, in consequence of his service on the north-eastern frontier, to the President to be made a *brevet captain*.

This is one of my quiet Sundays—during which I think and write a great deal.

8. June 46

Dearest Soph,

As I expected, the interview of last evening, altho' somewhat interesting was, compared with it's pompous & mysterious prologue, another illustration of the mountain and the mouse. I am heartily sick of factitious importance.

Taking off my silk jacket a few days ago was rather indiscreet, especially as the weather suddenly cooled. I have not been exactly right since, though not unwell. This morning I am better by a great deal, which I ascribe to a long walk with Markoe yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Brooke brought me a letter from the Doctor this morning. I will accompany him to Mr. Walker this afternoon as soon as

⁸² William H. Haywood, Jr. (North Carolina).

⁸³ Richard Rush.

⁸⁴ Henry St. George Tucker, the elder.

released from the Senate, and hope to aid in effecting his object. Walker's health is restored, and he may probably be at his office today.

My new coachman is the very thing, and I get him for 5 Dr. a month less than I gave Grimes. He makes his horses look quite different things—his whole equipage a better matter.

A movement somewhat imposing in it's character, under the agency of Mr. Donelson,⁸⁵ has been made for the removal of Bancroft. The President, however, won't listen to it for a moment. The Att. Genl. Mr. Mason has been very ill—but is reported convalescent.

Look out for Genl Scott's⁸⁶—and Gaines'—correspondence with the Government. It is sent today to the Senate: is the oddest and most fatal thing to both Generals imaginable. They abuse each other most intemperately.

Saturday 13. June '46

Dearest Soph,

I have abandoned with great reluctance today the idea of seeing you all this evening. The weather is so wretched and my own system so doubtful that I am afraid of the exposure. On monday, too, I *must* be in the Senate, as the casting vote is liable to be invoked on a point of considerable interest.

It seems to be no longer a secret—altho' none of you must by a word or look sanction rumors respecting the Senate—that the Oregon affair is amicably adjusted between the two countries. How far this adjustment will be acceptable to the American People, or redound to the credit of the administration, can only appear when it's terms and circumstances are known.

I bathed my feet in hot water & mustard, and went to bed before 10, last night:—and feel this morning considerably better.

Kane⁸⁷ will, no doubt, be soon confirmed as Judge. I do not, as yet, perceive the slightest opposition to him. Mr. Horn's predicament becomes again very critical, and the chances are against him.

I am never allowed to be five minutes alone.

⁸⁵ Andrew Jackson Donelson.

⁸⁶ Winfield Scott.

⁸⁷ Kane was confirmed as a Judge of the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, June 16, 1846.

14. June '46

Dearest Soph,

. . . Walker is again thrown back, obliged to keep his room and almost his bed. Late last night he looked deplorably, and will probably be slow in recovery. His stomach appears thoroughly disorganized.

Thousands of reports about Mr. Buchanan are in circulation. His retreat from the Cabinet is spoken of as certain and soon:—and he is said to be destined to London. This all smoke:—a method of keeping up his importance, resorted to by his partizans. He too has been sick.

We are promised the Treaty giving up Oregon tomorrow:—and I suppose the Senate will proceed to ratify without delay. Political explosions will follow. Allen, it is said, opens the demonstration by resigning his place as chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. This breaks at once with the White House.

Since the political suicide of Genl. Scott the Whigs are in full and anxious hunt for a fresh Presidential candidate. They are afraid they may burn their fingers, if they touch Genl. Taylor. Present appearances indicate that they will swarm upon Judge McClean⁸⁸ of Ohio. . . .

Love to all. Beverly Tucker left here yesterday, *with his contract in his pocket*.

13. July '46

Dearest Soph,

The heat has considerably abated, and the weather is fine. We begin on the Tariff, therefore, under favorable auspices. Appearances do not *now* indicate that I shall have the casting vote. The Bill will probably be carried by a majority of *two*. . . .

17. July '46

Dearest Soph,

Congress, in both Houses, have agreed to adjourn on the 10. of August. I think we shall have ended all our business before that.

The Tariff discussion may probably close tomorrow, and the final vote be taken in the course of the evening. It is still an uncertain matter, tho' I strongly suspect the defection of Mr. Haywood from the Executive policy.

⁸⁸ John McLean.

You ought to acknowledge, no matter how slightly, the receipt of money-letters.

There is a growing discontent against the nomination of Mr. Buchanan as Judge, and I think the Whigs are moving in a body against him. The 54.40's will, of course, go with them. . . .

22. July 46

Dearest Soph,

These Tariff speeches are as vapid as inexhaustible:—but they must have their way. All sorts of ridiculous efforts are making, by letters, newspaper-paragraphs, and personal visits, to affect the Vice's casting vote, by persuasion or threat. And yet he will not vote, or I am greatly mistaken.

I am much better this morning, tho' the effect of the magnesia is not yet quite gone.

Write to West Point to Phil.

Genl. Davis brought to me at breakfast this morning the segars—and Mr. John Cole entertained me with his rhapsodies.

Wed. 28. July '46

Dearest Soph,

The Senate closed the Tariff scene yesterday, and Mr. Jarnagin⁸⁹ managed to compel the Vice-President to shew his hand by a casting vote.⁹⁰ Of course, I shall be exalted to the skies by one side, and sent heartily to the opposite place by the other side. You will see my remarks on voting in the Union.

I shall now think of nothing but getting home as soon as a break in the business of the Senate will authorize me to make my bow. So look out for a surprize.

⁸⁹ Spencer Jarnagin (Tennessee).

⁹⁰ Among his papers is Dallas' breakdown of the probable Senate vote on the 1846 tariff bill.

For Tariff: Lewis, Pennybacker, Chalmers, Yulee, Bright, Westcott, Haywood, Calhoun, Turney, Colquitt, Fairfield, Sevier, McDuffie, Breeze [*sic*], Cass, Ashley, Atchison, Hannegan, Speight, Dix, Bagby, Benton, Atherton, Allen, Rusk, Houston 26

Against: [Thomas] Clayton, Corwin, [Henry] Johnson, Greene, [Reverdy] Johnson, Niles, Cameron, Simmons, Phelps, Webster, [John M.] Clayton, Evans, Berrien, Davis, Dayton, Barrow, Crittenden, Archer, Morehead, Huntington, Mangum, Upham, Miller, Pearce, Woodbridge, Sturgeon, Cilley 27

[*Vote in question*]: Jarnagin, Semple, Dickinson

When the vote was taken on July 28, a tie resulted: Haywood had resigned from the Senate, Semple and Dickinson voted for the tariff, and Jarnagin abstained.

Thursday 30. July '46

Dearest Soph,

McDuffie⁹¹ said to a gentleman, who immediately reported it to me that "nothing equal in force and dignity to the address of the Vice President had ever been heard in the Senate:—that it would produce an immense impression throughout Europe as well as in this Country, and greatly elevate the character of our institutions."—I give it exactly as it was given to me, as you are certainly more entitled to it than I am. This morning's Union too is unmeasured in it's praise. This is the *music* of the matter:—we shall hear *thunder* enough to counterpoise it. But whatever may be said or done, I know and feel that I should have made myself justly despicable if I had shrunk from the duty.

I send for your relief from your anticipated starvation the enclosed draft.

Thursday 30. July '46

Dearest Soph,

If there be the slightest indication of a disposition to riot in the city of Philadelphia, owing to the passage of the Tariff Bill, pack up and bring the whole brood to Washington. A report was current here for some time to-day that kept me on the rack until I found it to be wholly untrue. If you are at all anxious, let the bearer, Mr. Beale,⁹² the Serjeant at Arms of the Senate, know the fact, and he will apprise me, as well as arrange according to instructions I have given him. Remember that a message will reach me promptly by Telegraph.

Friday 14. Aug. 46

Dearest Soph,

I was last night too much thronged by visitors as well as too much worn out to hunt up pen, ink & paper, and write. The journey to Washington, though tedious beyond all conception and not ending until after 10 at night, restored me entirely to health and strength. I found Coleman's⁹³ an empty hollow-sounding chateau, and rolled into my old quarters as a matter of course. Nobody expected me

⁹¹ George McDuffie (South Carolina).

⁹² Robert Beale.

⁹³ National Hotel of Samuel S. Coleman.

here—The newspapers, indeed, announced yesterday morning that I was at the Virginia Springs, and my appearance in Chesnut S. created quite a sensation. Visitors rolled in upon me until 11 o'clock, and to judge from appearances, the ferocity with which I have been assailed has only awakened the kindest and most anxious feelings. Several committees waited on me to say that if I felt the slightest apprehension of a groan or of an insult of any sort, they would be in the immediate neighborhood, ready to inflict the most exemplary chastisement. Of course, I had seen the real state of things at a glance, and exhorted them all to go quietly home. The Doctor and I smoked together until 12, when he left—and I slept like a rock until Aunt Henrietta's servant knocked at the door of my chamber at 8½ saying that the good old lady & Aunt Susan were waiting breakfast for me. Sophy & Sue are at Bordentown, and I expect them down today. . . .

Sat: 13. Mar. '47

My Dear Soph,

Delay succeeds delay, and I really cannot perceive a chance of my getting away from here before the end of next week. I had determined to quit this afternoon, and return again on monday or tuesday:—but my colleagues insist upon my staying.

I am not admirably off for a wardrobe, but hope to hold out, especially with the aid of the black silk cravat.

I paid your friend Labbé,⁹⁴ and received from him a silk coat which Charlotte had left at the school.

Mrs. Senator Allen died this morning, after an illness of about a week. They talk of her complaint as having been "bilious pleurisy."

Not a line from a soul of you since I have been here!

Charlotte's young beau, Henry Turnbull, came to see me and desired me to convey his compliments to her.

18. Mar. '47

My Dear Soph,

We advance a little towards a close of our business, and have faint hopes of concluding it with the end of this week. It is difficult, however, to speak with any confidence. I am afraid I shall wear out my welcome at Markoes's. I must, however, see it out.

⁹⁴ F. C. Labbé, dancing teacher.

Thank Cass for her letter. It is quite odd that you should all take it into your heads, notwithstanding past instructions, to address your letters to the care of Markoe, and thus unnecessarily make him chargeable with postage.

The war is coming to a crisis, and probably to a close. The massacre at Taos & danger of Santa Fé are exaggerated. My friend Genl. Scott is reported to travel with wagon loads of champagne.

Walker has lost his voice entirely & is otherwise unwell. The rest are well. Mary Markoe has never yet left her chamber, and seems very delicate. Mrs. Hughes⁹⁵ comes on a visit this evening.

19. Mar. 47

My Dear Philip,

Thank you for your letter. It relieved my mind considerably as to those heavy Equity cases.

By dint of incessant urging and boring we have got the business within striking reach of a close. I fear, however, an additional delay tomorrow. I hoped to quit tomorrow evening and travel through at night, getting home, I suppose, at 3 or 4 on Sunday morning. If no fresh obstacle starts, I may yet do so.

Mr. Rush is here—I saw him an hour ago, at a distance, as I rode to the Capitol. I suppose he came last night.

22. Mar. '47

My Dear Soph,

It is quite useless to anticipate a day for [my return]. I have lost my temper on the subject so completely that I [have] no resource but silence. The accounting officer is as stubborn as a mule, and probably gratifies his feelings by thinking how he makes the Vice President wait on his humors like any other person. Were I not V. P. I should be less patient by a great deal.

The war news keeps our household in a feverish state. There are some five or six ladies in the immediate neighborhood whose husbands have all gone to the army:—Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Emory, Mrs. Turnbull,⁹⁶ Mrs. Totten, &c. &c. and they are naturally just now extremely anxious. We are hourly expecting to hear of the attack on

⁹⁵ Mrs. George W. Hughes.

⁹⁶ Mrs. William Turnbull.

Vera Cruz, and my own private belief (derived from conversations with Atocha,⁹⁷ just returned from there) is, that the fighting will be severe. Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Markoe are obviously under much solicitude, but bear up bravely. The letters of Capt. Hughes are constant, but give a painful foreshadowing of what may soon happen. He is an aide of Worth's. I notice that our Capt. Saunders is also with Worth. The landing & storming will be Worth's business. The position of Genl. Taylor is wrapped in doubt, and that whole region of our past victories is critically situated:—but we shall triumph in every direction

23. Mar. '47

Dearest Soph,

I have nothing to say, doing nothing in fact but complain of the delays of public officers.

It is possible that we may hear tonight or tomorrow of the result of Scott's attack upon Vera Cruz. I am afraid the details may be painful. As to Taylor, he is cooped up perhaps:—but I strongly suspect that he has defeated Santa Anna, and that the communications are interrupted by squadrons which find their safety in keeping at a distance from Taylor's guns, tho' they move all round him. The suspense is exceedingly unpleasant.

13. Apr. '47

Dearest Soph,

. . . It is wholly useless to grumble and pine about the time consumed in Sibbald's business. It can't be helped. I regard it as one of the most important and interesting cases of professional practice I have ever been engaged in:—and, unless Mr. Walker has lost his intelligence and fairness, it will be the most lucrative one. When Mr. Webster, who is dying to be off on his southern tour, and Mr. Berrien, who sent Mrs. B. to Savannah two weeks ago, can resolve on keeping the field, surely I ought not to dream of flying.

By all means, let your illumination on Monday be as emphatic as possible. If such a noble fellow as Taylor cannot command universal and heartfelt celebration, there is no patriotism left.⁹⁸ I care not one cent what his party predilections may be.

⁹⁷ Alexander J. Atocha.

⁹⁸ Vera Cruz capitulated on March 29, 1847.

I dine out to-day—at Secretary Mason's—for the first time this week.

Tom Thumb is making quite a stir here. His chariot is certainly the prettiest piece of miniature equipage I ever saw.

Mr. Walker has been eminently successful in obtaining his loan of 18 millions. This is a proof of his success in the Tariff and of the general confidence in the Government. He was offered 58 millions—forty more than he wanted.

The ground for the Smithsonian Institution is staked off—and operations will begin shortly.

21. Apr. '47

Dearest Soph,

. . . After all, your illumination don't seem to have been much. I expected a most pompous and glowing description from some of you:—and am only told that "it went off very quickly"! General Taylor is certainly immortalized by a celebration so calm and tranquil!

I think Peace is on the carpet—but *MUM!*

8. April '48

My Dear Philip,

The correspondence of Mr. Wise⁹⁹ with the British Minister at the Court of Brazil, on the subject of the Slave Trade, is not yet *in print*:—it will be soon out:—and you shall have an early copy, unless it be confidential.

You cannot be too "*fierce*" against the *Slave Trade*:—all the world unites in condemning it. Our country was the first to punish those who carry it on, as *pirates*. You must take care, however, not to confound our Southern domestic *slavery*, with the *African slave trade*.

Never mind how often you write. A single idea is enough for a letter: and I shall always be glad to receive it.

All well—Charlotte a little *meazlyfied*, we think, this morning.

I had a narrow escape, with the crazy fellow who jumped on my canopy:—had he jumped 2 inches to the right or left of where he did, he must have come plump down on my head.

⁹⁹ Henry A. Wise.

9. May '48

My Dear Philip,

Your mother intends sending Nathan on a week in advance of her own movement, so that he may have the house put in proper order. It is not improbable that she may come before the expiration of the lease here.

Nothing yet satisfactory about peace. Plenty of adverse rumors, but no facts. I am inclined to believe that the Treaty may be ratified, if our Commissioners are peremptory in exacting a decision before the sickly season sets in:—if the Mexicans delay until after that period, their perfidy cannot be doubted. . . .

21. June '48

Dearest Soph,

. . . I dined yesterday with Mr. Mason,¹⁰⁰ Judge Butler,¹⁰¹ and Mr. Hunter.¹⁰² They are keeping house together very snugly. Went to the Drawing Room at 9. The President was invisible, having chills & fevers. Mrs. Polk looked well. She has resolved on being one half in eclipse for the rest of this summer, and will receive only one evening in the week.

I have given two casting votes within the last week:—but, fortunately, neither of them was of much importance.

We work in the Senate pretty steadily & hard now-a-days:—but no prospect of adjournment has yet opened.

15. July '48

Dearest Soph,

Never was a poor fellow so tired of a congressional session as I am of this. Were it not that I expect the casting vote to be invoked on several leading questions that may start up almost every day without warning, I think I should muster enough of rebellious spirit "*to cut & run.*"

I took home¹⁰³ to dine with me yesterday, young Mr. Biddle (son of C. C. B.) and in the evening went with him & Mr. Mc. Murtrie

¹⁰⁰ James M. Mason (Virginia).

¹⁰¹ Andrew P. Butler (South Carolina).

¹⁰² R. M. T. Hunter (Virginia).

¹⁰³ Dallas lived at Mrs. Gadsby's on President's Square during the first session of the Thirtieth Congress (December 6, 1847–August 14, 1848).

to the White House, intending to present them to Mrs. Polk. She has, however, discontinued receptions except on tuesdays, & we resorted to the study of the President as a "*pis-aller*." The President is under the weather in health and spirits.

Bodisco invites to a dinner on thursday next at his country seat, near the Race Course, called the Argyle Farm.

(Part II will appear in the October issue.)