

Madrid March 31st 1843.



My dear Papa: I am looking forward in about a week to the pleasure of receiving a letter from you by the Great Western - by the last steamer. I heard of your return to New York and a short visit to Newis - Tell me all about your plans, and what I can do to aid you: As I before said my remaining here or returning ^{home} depends upon this point alone; always supposing a sufficient notice to Mr. Swanwick.

We have had comparatively our hands full of business during two or three weeks: the ~~lastest~~ affair; an outrage on an American vessel at the Port of Malaga, which has created quite a sensation throughout the Peninsula: The Chief of the Customs on a very slight suspicion, and in opposition to all the other officers of the Port, sent armed men to seize the Banque Empress of New York, with orders to fire on the crew in case of resistance: They stripped off the American flag from the hatchway, which were then broken open, and the Cargo landed: The American Consul and our Countryman behaved with great prudence and discretion, and the opposition papers have been filled with violent attacks on the officer and the Government - Three days ago a long note was sent to the Govt., very moderate & courteous to them, but with a full statement of the improper conduct of the officer, and leaving to their own sense of propriety the choice of a reparation - The next day an answer was returned; and last night at the British Embassy I ascertained that the Collector had been already removed - His Excellency, and the Secretary, far in duty bound, are much pleased with this prompt termination of an unpleasant affair, especially as our brother Diplomats predicted

to be quite productive this season - I did not take care you heard last summer: a thousand thanks to Mama & the Girls; and a great deal of love to all

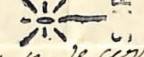
that month would pass (as usual) before anything would be done - I don't believe Spanish Ministers have been in such a hurry within ten years as on this occasion; and ^{this} with several other instances occurring recently, prove that our Country and their Ministers are on a pleasant footing.

To day we have Sir Robert Peel's great speech on the Washington Treaty, and his handsome compliments to Mr. Webster: Sir Robert certainly makes several fair hits against your friend Lord Palmerston, who will be little flattered by his notice of Mr. Benton as "the Palmerston of the United States." I should have proved very clearly that the "red line" so much talked over of late, is not at all against our claim, but on the contrary the investigation after maps, tends rather, if any thing, to exhibit bad faith on the side of English Ministers. I am very much pleased with his explanation of what seemed at first an awkward matter, ^{and} ~~and~~ am especially delighted that Mr. Featherstonhaugh, the original of "Tom Straddle" is appreciated at his true value in England.

The Contract for four years of the quicksilver mines of Almaden was closed on the 28th. These mines you know ^{form} the only supply of any importance throughout the world and consequently the Contractor has a monopoly - The Rothschilds have been for many years in possession of it, and generally by heavy bribes to Spanish Ministers contrived to make seven or eight hundred thousand Dollars a year out of this poor God! - As few, they and their representatives are properly hated by the Don, among ^{the} term "judios" or Jew is the vilest reproach, or that of "Christiano viejo", or Christians of pure blood, is of the highest honor. - In order to take the contract out of Rothschild's hands an alliance was formed ^{to} run up the price of the metal and a guarantee entered into in case of loss from too high an offer - The bidding consequently was very active, and finally was determined in favor of a Mr. Salamanca, acting for Spanish houses who offered 10 cents more per hundred pounds than the Rothschilds were prepared to give - This advance in the price over the former contract makes a difference in favor of the Govt of \$500,000 a year. - It is said however that the new Contractor has made an arrangement with the

House of Rothschild by which the profits are divided: they bearing all the expense - My chief interest in the transaction is that his poor country will be a little relieved by the operation, and therefore escape in some degree from the hands of these grasping bankers who prey upon it through its embarrassments.

On Monday next the Cortes are opened with great pomp and ceremony: the little Queen in person, as a spectator only, while Espartero delivers the speech. - The state of parties is not entirely known, but sufficiently so, to determine that he majority will support Espartero, and the Constitutional Government, tho it is probable the present Ministers will fall: A Courier has been already despatched for General Sancho, the Spanish Ambassador in London inviting him to form a Cabinet: It is thought he will decline leaving his present comfortable post: - The English Everlasting Treaty will be again on the Carpet, and people according to their hearty feeling predict its failure or success - We have been trying in a quiet way to do something for American trade to the Peninsula, which is falling off very rapidly and causing great distress in parts of Andalusia -

Mr. Irving  is recovering slowly, and is now able to walk about a little: the bad weather has delayed his progress, but I hope next week he will be able to ride out, and have some relief from the tediousness of his confinement: - I read to him, and do all in my power to improve his spirits; but I suspect he contradicts his present condition too often with the comfort of his little noot to ~~stand~~ ^{bear} patiently the discomfort of his present situation. He has thought of an excursion in the beginning of the summer to the Baths of the Pyrenees, and suggested it in a draft of a despatch which he showed me yesterday: for your & Maria's benefit I give an extract "In case I have to absent myself from my post, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that in leaving it in charge of Mr. Hamilton, I confide it to a person, who by his talents intelligence, acquirements, and apt and prompt discharge of business is fully competent to carry on the affairs of the Legation!" - With all my rambling I can hardly copy this ~~document~~ without blushing; but it may amuse you

to see how well I have contrived to impose upon my excellent friend:
In the copy to the Department, I shall take the liberty of altering this
draft, so as to bring it nearer to the truth - But let it be known beyond
the family that Mr. S has attempts of making such an excursion. —

Saturday Morning April 1st - I send off to night by the Frenchman, then
alter for the Great Western on the 15th - We have a bright sun, soft air, and
the young leaves of spring - I doubt whether you are so well off - As the
fatal Ministry approaches and the period to make or unmake ministers, the
best Dickens: I dined yesterday with Mr. Astor, at the Embassy which is the
centre of information - It appears that the present Cabinet following a very
laudable example of their predecessors, are selling themselves in anticipation
to very valuable posts and promotion, in order to break their fall decently: for
instance, the Minister of War appoints himself Lieut. Genl.; the of Marine, Admiral
and so on: the reason given is that when out of office no body else will appoint
them however much they may deserve it; so they take care themselves to reward
themselves in their own persons for the sake of the example only. —

The Gazette, official paper, this morning announces the dismissal
of the Intendente at Malaga and his temporary appointment of another person:
this is sharp work; the note from the Legation was dated 27th passed to the
Govt. on the 28th and after travelling thro' the Departments to the Regent,
the decree dismissing the officer was signed on the 30th - We had a letter
yesterday from the Consul, and tho' it was known at Malaga, when he wrote
that orders had arrived for the liberation of the vessel, yet the Custom House
officer, with true Spanish obstinacy denied he had received them - Poor
fellow, the next intelligence he will receive will be that his services are no longer
wanted: this case which has attracted much attention, and has been followed
so promptly by the punishment, will be of great service to the foreigners trading
on that coast, who have been exposed to the arbitrary determinations of Spanish
officials. — I have been delighted with some suggestion in a work on "Agricultural
Chemistry" by Dr. Liebig, a German: there is an American Edition
which I wish you would read; you will find in it very useful hints
for the grape - Now is the Grapery? with another year over its head, it ought