

New Orleans 17th June 1865.

My dear Sir!



I have often during the past two years been tempted to write to you or Judge Bell, with a view to give you my crude ideas of passing events, but on reflection, I have always desisted from writing, for fear that the reception of a letter, however innocent, might have led to serious trouble with the dominant mob, who have so un- fairly, and intolerantly held sway in Austin.

You are no doubt, by this time, fully aware of all the important changes which have so rapidly crowded upon us for the last three months, and which have happily broken the power of the military tyranny which for so long a time has been the dread and the bane of the Southern part of the Republic but an equally important part of the ^{class of} rebellion still remains to be settled, and in it, I sincerely hope you, and other good and wise men will take a prominent part in Texas. The reconstruction of state

Government, I do not think will be so easy or rapid, as seem to be the impression in Texas, if Gov. Murrah's acts, is to be taken as an index of opinion there, on this subject. I rather think that Texas will for some reasonable time be governed by a Military Governor, and aided by the military power now transferred to Texas. Genl. Hamilton is the Governor, and I have no doubt will exercise the functions as such, until Civil Government shall be established. He is now at Washington or on his way back, and I am informed by letter from thence, that he possesses the confidence of the Pres. and Cabinet - I know there is great and bitter prejudices in Texas against him, but I think they are ill founded, except so far as his occasional irregular habits may make him objectionable. He is I am sure kindly disposed to all, even those who persecuted and hunted him, and not apprehend any revengeful acts on his part, and I am equally confident that he desires to promote the best interests in Texas. You

Know him as well, perhaps much better than I do. he will need aid and good counsel - I hope you will be his friend and thereby both aid him, and promote the welfare of the State.

I do not know, or clearly understand the policy of President Johnson towards the Southern States, but I feel confident that it is widely different from that, of the late Mr Lincoln, who was truly a good and a liberal man, perhaps too much so - his martyrdom is a great loss to us - so far as I can judge, (I may be in error, but I prefer to err on the dark side, rather than to hold out any false hope) the Government does not intend to tolerate the perpetuation in power, of any officer, or other influential person having held office or been conspicuous in the late rebellion, I think also that slave owners generally will be restrained as much as possible from participation in the reconstruction, for fear that they might by state legislation perpetuate slavery, though in disguise

And hence the various efforts to make
negroes voters - I think the Amnesty Pro-
clamation of Pres. Johnson will be the
strict rule, by which the qualification
for the exercise of political rights will
be judged - and the reconstruction to be
governed pretty much according to his North
Carolina prescriptions - I know there is
a large class of influential citizens in Texas
who yet think that they will govern the
State as formerly, but they will no doubt
realize the mortification of being mistaken
in that respect, but otherwise I think they
will have very little to apprehend either to
their personal safety or property - except
those who do not come under the rule of
pardon, and such as may hereafter show
hostility to the Government - It is no doubt
that the government will make itself re-
spected by all, and felt by those who
may choose to remain offenders -

In commercial relations the Government
will undoubtedly be equally just to the
South as to the North, restrictions upon

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Commerce is daily disappearing, and the duties upon the products of insurre^d trary States are abolished east of the Mississippi river, and I have no doubt, will be extended over the country west of that river in a very short time. but on the other hand we must necessarily bear our quota of burden, to which the loyal States have so patiently and liberally submitted during the whole period, since the rebellion broke out, this may be inconvenient, but we must do it cheerfully.

The effort at reconstruction in Texas under the auspices of Gov. Murrah, I think is decidedly premature, and how, ever well meant by the Governor, I fear will nevertheless be construed as a wish on his part to perpetuate a defunct power, It had better be abandoned at once, I don't think the assembling of a Convention or the State Legislature will be tolerated by the military power

In Texas, and certainly cannot be countenanced by the Government at Wash^{ington}. If we forget that we were Rebels but yesterday, the government cannot be so oblivious of that fact - We are not going to come back under impression that by so doing we are bestowing a favor upon the government, but rather ask, this hour as erring and repentant citizens - the government is well able to take care of itself, and of us, - that we do no more harm.

As regards the negroes - they are free - and the only question, as yet undecided, is whether they shall not immediately be allowed to exercise all political rights this latter concession may be delayed a little while, but it will not be many years before color, or caste, will be no part of the qualification of a voter either South or North. but I think the government will lend all aid and encouragement in order to make them useful & industrious agriculturists, in fact it

Is now a question of great solicitude
as a subject of political economy a,
part from humanity - or compantly with
it. And to give proper direction to this
important element for the well being
of Texas, will be one of the most im-
portant cares - of the governing class.

Illiberality to the negroes will be dis-
astrous to the planter and the State, if
the planter can realize their situation
and accomodate themselves to the altered
condition of the slaves - they can un-
doubtedly prosper by raising Cotton with
paid labor, and I have no doubt re-
alize greater profits from their farms
than they ever did under the late labor
system - Cotton is high - and will con-
tinue so. Texas is now the most pro-
minent State for the production of
this staple, and will no doubt remain
so under a wise and liberal govern-
ment, which will enforce justice
to the negro as well as protection
to the planter interest - It is no use

To try to enact laws, that is not equally applicable to the White, as the black man, and any evasion of as full justice to the Negro as to the White man, will only involve us in embarrassment.

We must also make up our minds to treat as void, all enactments, and State obligations, passed under rebel rule - This involves repudiation of the revolutionary part of the State debt which is very imputable to me in principle, but it has to come either now or in a few years - and it had better be done at once, while so many other unpleasant doses have to be heated than to be left a subject of future contrivance and discontent - I was in Mobile a few days after that City was captured, and an influential Citizen of Ala. remarked to me "We must rub out and begin anew" - I believe there was wisdom in his goodnatured remark

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Up to the time when I left Texas we were very much in error as to the power and induc-
ance, as well as resources of the rebellion.
last summer there was a very critical period,
in fact many wise men trembled for the
safety of the country, not so much perhaps
simply on account of the rebellion in the
South, but foreign affairs were complicated
and precarious, and above all there was a
powerful party at the North who favored the
election of Genl. McClellan, they were inimical
to Mr. Lincoln's administration, and seemed per-
fectly willing to acknowledge the separate ex-
istence of the South as a Government, and
so sacrificed the integrity of the country, they
failed, and with it the rebellion was doomed
to failure also. I was in Washington a couple
of months during that period, and it was pain-
ful to witness the anxiety of the loyal men,
and equally disgusting to hear Northern men as
well as from other sections, talk treason as
publicly and vauntingly as they could have
done in Mexico. I was much surprised at the
tolerance of the Government, and I yet doubt
whether it had not been a better policy to
silence the continual, and undisguised ef-
forts in all the large cities to overthrow the
Republic - I spent also some time in Connec-
ticut

And called occasionally on Mrs Niles and Miss Hulick, they were there well, and I think they yet continue to enjoy good health, I occasionally have letters from Mr Pearson & he always mentions them. In the country all was peace and prosperity, and apparently all were growing rich from the untiring pursuit of industry. And should the finances of the U. S. be well managed hereafter, I think the war has made the North permanently wealthy, at present there is the most unbounded confidence in the Govt to pay all its liabilities, and even to extinguish the debt in a comparatively short period, the magnitude of the debt is as far above my real comprehension as is the resources of the country to pay it, I think the financiers are right, but it is not really sensible to suppose that a country which has impaired its industry and destroyed one fourth of its resources can be more really prosperous now, than before the war, therefore I take for granted that the prosperity is apparent, and that a period not very distant will come, when financial embarrassment will overtake the great masses as well as the Government but this is really beyond my comprehension.

And I hope I am wrong in mistrusting the very confident assertions of Financiers all over the country - I do not however fear any great depreciation in the Treasury notes, because the Govt has it in its power to exchange it for interest bearing debt, or take it out of existence, I could absorb it by taxation, what I do fear is a depletion of Coin, and a want of products for export, to meet the demand for foreign liabilities, I am sorry to see large exports of specie are now being made from New York, and consequent rise in gold, this is a sure test that Govt Bonds in Europe are not up to our notions of their value - Gold now is 42% pre. and seems to be steadily advancing. Cotton would mend this matter at once, but I fear there is not enough of it in the country, and but very little will be produced this year. Be this as it may, it is true that all who have aided and reposed confidence in the Government, must have prospered, and those who have mistrusted the government credit, or been disloyal, have either been ruined, or impaired their fortunes, as well as their standing in society - I have most bitterly deplored the extreme folly of Texas following in the lead of South Carolina, she has verified the fable

of killing the goose that laid the golden egg, could Texas have remained loyal, she would now be more wealthy than all that remains to the whole South. — The Texans who abandoned the Country rather than take up arms have all been prosperous in a small way, they have been preferred in all government employments at handsome wages — and I am proud to say all have established a reputation for honesty and efficiency truly enviable, particularly to the creole population of La who could not be trusted, and consequently have been deprived of all government support except as charities — here are more than a hundred Texans in civil employment in Gov^t offices in N. C. and perhaps one half have salaries equal to five dollars per day — and none I think have less than three dollars per day unless it be some poor fellows unqualified for better duties than watchmen etc —

Judge Duval has been recognized as in office all the time, and he is well deserving of this distinction for his devotion to the government — He is at present with his family at Bay Saint Louis, but like all the rest, anxious to return to Texas — I believe I am the only one who has no such intentions, and I do violence to my inclinations

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In making an exception to the general rule
of returning to ~~my~~ home, I commenced here,
since here about three months ago, and
I wish to try to make a living as a Com-
mission Merchant. Doctor Pebles is here,
he has been sick for some time past, I learn
he is convalescent, and hope he may get well
he often speaks of you, and the people of Aust,
in general, with great affection, he says
Aust is the only place, where he ever received
any kindness during his long confinement.
Mr Morrill went to New York about three ^{or four} weeks
ago, I look for him by the Monrovia steamer
Dr Lane accompanied Genl Hamilton to
Washington, and I understand has been ap-
pointed U. S. Marshal for Duval's Dist. E
B Turner is here, I learn also, that he will be
the U. S. Dist. Atty.

Dr. Asahel Smith and Mr Ballinger were
here on behalf of Genl Magruder to surrender,
but had been anticipated by Genl. C. Smith
through Genls. Buckner & Price, and they were
also on behalf of Gov. Murrah. It is my
opinion they did not accomplish much,
or at least not all that they desired. Col.
Smith's account as given in The Texas papers
is strange news to us - I was much pleased
to find these gentlemen so well disposed

Towards the Government and I admired
their manliness and devotion to the State,
I saw more of Mr Ballinger than Col. S.
and I shall be much mistaken if he does
not accomplish some good for the State
although himself excluded from all direct
participation in political affairs - I think
he is an estimable and trustworthy gentle
man. and I feel sorry that he should
have consented to have held so obnoxious
an office, which will undoubtedly be
embarrassing to his fortune for the balance
of his life. In fact all the officers of the
late rebel Government, will be held indi-
vidually responsible for all acts of depre-
dations upon property.

I had a letter a few days ago from Mr
Cane, he is in Savannah, and intends to
return to Texas, braving 'the odium of
having acted with the rebellians, as pre-
ferable to perpetual banishment. he says
he never changed the sentiments he entertain-
ed at the dawn of Secession -

I learn Mr Shaw is alive - and in
Europe, but I have not had any letters
from him since 1863.

Col. Alston and his wife (Ellen Robinson)
are here awaiting transportation to So. Car.

The Cal. looks subdued, but can ill dissemble the wounded pride, peculiar to the Citizens of that State, I think he is also a sincere mourner of the death of the "divine Institution" - in this he is not singular, and possibly has greater reason than most of us, who have comparatively but little to lose of that property. Ellen looks to be in delicate health.

I also met, the other day, with another Austin Girl, (Miss Clara Freeman) She is now Mrs Kent - her husband is a native of this City and appears to be very respectable.

It is said Genl Beauregard was arrested on yesterday and sent to Washington - It seems to be the fate of all the prominent Rebels to make involuntary journeys northward, particularly so, with the Governors of insurrectionary States, who have held power under usurped authority. Poor Libbeck has been in limbo for some time - this must make Gov^{rs} Clark and Murrah feel uncomfortable, as it no doubt is a striking admonishment to them.

I have all the legal league publications which I procured for the purpose of sending to you as to Uncle Swante, but I never had a safe opportunity to do so. and now

They are useless literature, I don't know
whether to trouble any one with them,

I frequently send papers to my wife and
I hope she has been neighborly with them,

Give my kindest regards to Mrs Peace,
your Daughters, Mr Ward, Judge Bell & Paschal
Mr Harris - Hamilton and all other friends
and with my best wishes for your health
and happiness, I am sincerely yours

Friend and most obedt servant

S. M. Swenson

Dear E. M. Peace }
Austin }

I don't know that I have done right
in writing so long a letter - When I began
I did not intend to write more than one
sheet at most, but it being Saturday night
and alone at my room, I have rambled
away without reflection, I hope there may
be some items of news to you - I heard
from your Brother who lives at Leesville
through a Mr Blossom who had seen him
recently - he was well -

Resp.

S. M.