

AP 10, 1862

Re 25. Apr
 Paris 10 April 1862

Private

Dear fri:

I left Brussels yesterday afternoon for a days sojourn here & on arriving ~~proceeded~~ went to Mr. Thouvenin's reception, where I spent the evening. The conversation I had with him I will give you in brief.

He received me with great cordiality & stopping me before I proceeded into the reception room, commenced upon our affairs. After speaking of our victories, his wishes, he said, were for the success of our cause, but above all for the early termination, one way or another, of the war, which was bearing heavily upon them in France. They were nearly out of cotton, he continued, & cotton they must have. I replied, that they had to blame in part their own manufacturers who had speculated on late high prices & sold largely to go back to the United States - that the stock here was, at the beginning of the year unusually large - that demand for fabrics was less, & that to the want of cotton ought not, moreover, to be ascribed the distress among the working classes.

Honble William H. Seward, n. n. n.

the price of coarse cottons which was nearly that of the raw material was proof that it was rather a want of demand from consumers. - He said the amount sold abroad by their manufacturers was comparatively trifling, & the fact as regards stock in the country was, that there was only supply at full employment of their mills to last into the month of May. - That this question of cotton supply was with them the grave question of the moment & that unless the war had an early termination he could not say what grave complication might arise.

I replied that we were going on rapidly, should soon be in possession of New Orleans, & I had little doubt, that ere long that important outlet to the great desideratum would be open to the Export of cotton. He said his reports were that the army, especially that of the Potomac was in a high state of efficiency & he hoped it would make rapid work with the enemy.

On leaving him I met Louis Masabianca, formerly Minister of Justice, now Senator, one of the Emperor's protégés & a very able man. He also commenced on the question of cotton - said that it was a matter of grave preoccupation with the Govt. I suggested that the distress in some districts in France was owing to our small consumption of their products.

- That the war had caused economies with us & therefore instead of taking 175 millions francs worth of the 500 millions manufactured at Lyons & St Etienne we had taken but 25 millions - That he said was in part a reason of the distress but it was local & would correct itself, it was not a source of anxiety as was the wide spread distress of the working classes dependant on cotton - this troubled them & this they must provide for - I asked him if the late Commercial Treaty with England had not something to do with it; undoubtedly he said, it had thrown some confusion into their manufacturing & commercial affairs, but no one could yet say the Treaty was a misfortune rather than a benefit - It would require time to develop its workings & results - it would have been of little moment, but for the American crisis which it had helped to aggravate, he admitted - At any rate here was the larger class among the manufacturing classes in danger of absolute suspension of their means of livelihood from the want of cotton, & they must provide means to supply it, or he led to be inferred rather than intimated, most serious political disturbances at home when distress among the working classes, has on more than one occasion, led to Revolution.

I met quite a number of political personages. Members of Gov^t of the chambers. or of the Diplomatic corps -

I found that this question of Cotton Supply was deemed on all sides a very grave one, to be met decisively at an early date & the word intervention I heard from several -

Before leaving M. Thouvenel again renewed his conversation about cotton & our affairs which was kept up till most of the guests had dispersed - He said their own people were getting to be irritated & some of the communications he had received from Chambers of Commerce were even menacing in their language & the thought the Gov^t of the U. States had unnecessarily stimulated this feeling by its rigorous refusal of communication with the South - He instanced the case of French Merchants & Manufacturers to whom was owing 15 millions by residents in New Orleans who asked nothing better than to pay their debts - He had vainly asked four months ago that correspond-
ence on this subject open to the surveillance of our authorities should be permitted to enable Frenchmen to receive their dues - Such facts could not but augment the already great irritation - I remarked that Merchants were rarely satisfied with wars, but that like all others had to submit to their necessities - After some further remarks about this necessity for cotton which I thought contained an intimate

2

at they might be compelled to take it. I said to him
very bluntly, "well what can you do about it; the
intervention of all Europe cannot make Cotton
grow - on the contrary it might destroy it; it cannot
heal its Sore - The only intervention ~~where~~
that could be useful, but which we do not want or
need, would be in favor of the Union to help crush
its enemies, who are pursuing their savage warfare
not only to burning cities of their own people, but to
destroying in their revengeful malice the very steps
you need" He could not say he said, what could
be done, or worse best to be done but concluded "it
may not be simply a question of policy abroad that
we shall have to deal with but of public peace
at home" This significant remark is the key
to all their troubles.

Baron Rothschild, with whom I had had
some conversation in the same terms previously,
joined in our conversation before I left & was very
emphatic with his opinion on the subject, after saying
that he was for the North &c. &c. I knew not
what you politicians may say about it, said
he, but I tell you as a business man that
the

State of things cannot continue long.
I will admit to you ~~that~~ that European
intervention may not secure a sale of cotton
but here is a whole Continent in convulsion
from this cause - When your patient
is desperately sick you try desperate remedies
even to blood-letting said he with emphasis
My whole evening conversation elicited
the same anxiety & the same general
opinion that cotton must be had -

And there is cause of anxiety in the
condition of the working classes at home, the
severe financial & industrial disturbance
& the complications in Italy & elsewhere pre-
shadowing trouble - Driving out in the Bois
de Boulogne today with Prince Murat, we
met the Emperor - I remarked upon his changed
appearance - Yes said he, he is much changed
of late, he seems very much preoccupied &
is unusually taciturn &

Whilst I am not alarmed at these

indications hastily sketched to you. I am prepared
& I think you should be, for an early & strong
Expression of feeling on the part of this Gov^t with
regard to the protracted Delay in getting Cotton -
& I deem it a duty to give you thus hurriedly
& imperfectly these indications -

And I cannot too strongly express the hope that
You may be able early to respond to this wide
spread anxiety by opening one at least of our
Southern ports ~~at least~~ to Cotton Export - if it
will come out - leaving it to the rebel authorities
to refuse to permit their people to export and it
forward - I am aware of the difficulties which
surround such an undertaking as opening
about to partial commerce instead of our internal
policy as well as of Treaty obligations respecting
unrestricted trade which I would not re-
commend any course which would interfere
with carrying out that internal policy, which
must be permanent. I hope you will find
some means to give at least a partial
satisfaction to the desires of European Powers

on this subject -

Return immediately to Brussels - but
think I will return here the day following in order
to be present at the Reception of the Duc de Bopsano
& Michel Chevalier when I would be apt to meet
two very distinct classes & be able to judge
more certainly of the drift of sentiment here
touching this question - the book event will report to you

Very Respectfully & Truly Yours

Wm. H. Seward

Henry, Shelton & Sanford

Salmon Portland Chase Ap 1862

My dear Charles

Please read the
letter accompanying this
envelope, and call at the
Dept. of Commerce, I
wrote to those that
we may open three
or four ports saving
this with restrictions, and
then pass through this
best place here. and
the Fort, getting under
and in France getting
(I hear) and cotton.

If we shall open three or
four ports, we shall probably
be able to save all the
great ones, and make it
a grand one which France
might be able to do
and by billiard and
I will be in capital
places at 10 a/c after
London.

Very yours

H. W. S.

William Henry
Seward