Washington Jan'y 30th 1841—

Hon. Daniel Webster

Sir,

The desirousness of my motive and the vast importance of the object have induced me to seek the audience with which you were pleased to favor me and my worthy friend Rev. L. Bacon a few days since. The readiness with which you entered into the subject and your own request that I would express in writing, for yourself and others whom it may concern, the facts and suggestions then submitted, relative to the crisis that exists between China and this Country, are my excuse for briefly addressing you on this occasion.

Here allow me to premise, it is not a subject that has been taken up precipitately but one that has been a subject of consideration and unqualified approbation with gentlemen of intelligence who contemplate it entirely disconnected with personal ends.

Indeck
Indeed such is the nature of the case that there
seems a peculiar propriety in its being sub-
mitted to the Consideration of the American
Government as a concern that affects the whole
Nation, rather than any particular section
of it. Were the interests of our Commercial
Institutes to be most forward in presenting it,
it might be suspected that private interests
were the motive that prompted them, and the
subject would not stand as at present upon
its own basis.

The suggestion submitted with all
difference to the Consideration of the Executive
Department of the American Government, is the
expediency of improving the present unprecedented
crisis in the relations of this Government and
China, to send a Minister Plenipotentiary,
direct and without delay to the Court of
Tien-Kwang.

Several considerations urge the
propriety of such an Envoy.
1. Whatever course the British Government
may have taken, and be the result of their
negotiations or concave measures, as they may,
or the arrival of your Minister, such will be
the unsettled relations between China and
America.
America, as to demand the attention of this
Government.

2. The second consideration, the first it may be
in importance, is that an American Minister,
possessing the requisite qualifications of age,
ability and rank, may be most timely and
acceptable both to the Chinese and English as
a mediator in the adjustment of the difficulties
of these two nations, and the restoration of the
foreign commerce upon terms advantageous and
honorable to all.

The mediation of America was a subject
of frequent conversation with Chinese of intelligence
and not new to officers of government also previous
to my leaving that country. The mediation
of William IV in the recent dispute between
France and America, was known to the Imperial
Commissioner Lew, and as he is in the practice
of communicating directly to the Emperor every
item of important foreign intelligence, it is
probable that His Majesty is made acquainted
with this fact. It is a subject the Chinese
appreciate, they will understand the meaning of
"Chung-Reen-jen" or middle man
and regard that a rational way of adjusting
future difficulties. Not to speak too confidently,

Thus—
...There is a strong presumption that the Chinese will be happy to avail themselves of such a nomination for it. After all the affected disregard the Chinese have manifested for foreign commerce, Imperial Estates often representing the revenue derived from it as comparable to the 'feathers down', there is abundant evidence to the contrary. I believe the desire is strong and extensive to continue the foreign trade. The representation of a late Governor of the two Provinces of Canton and Amoy, was to the point in this respect. In a memorial to the Emperor, the revenue from foreign commerce so often spoken of as the 'feathers down' he contended, is untrue: for in a great measure the soldiers of these two Provinces is sustained by it, and upon it, in part at least, depends the support of the Imperial Household. This sentiment is sustained also by the merchants and others. But for the sanguine estimate of the Imperial officers the value of this revenue would be still more apparent to the Majesty. The revenue is greater in fact than in name.

The Office of Superintendent of Customs, in which the Imperial officials and his attendants are able to depend, the Government is formed out...
at an exorbitant sum, so that what in other countries
is paid in fixed duties, is obtained here by fraud.
For example, in the importation of American domestic
silk, these bales are landed by so much duty on a bale, that
their passage the Custom House four times are included.
In one and having passed the hoops are removed,
and instead of one bale there are four. The stipulated
duty is paid on one to the Emperor, and that—
on the remaining three goes to His Excellency the
Hoppo and his servants.

4. The Chinese only wish for a method of
purification and restoration of commerce, by which
the Government shall not "lose face" or credit, at
the same time it secures the cessation of the Opium
traffic. By Imperial Edict the British trade is
"cut off forever," and without some protest that
shall appear reasonable to the people, the Emperor
cannot without lowering himself in their
estimation resist his Deny. Through an impartial
Mediator such explanations, and apologies, such
apologies are due, might be made on either side,
as it should obviate this difficulty, and may be
the means in an overruling Providence of
preventing a deplorable sacrifice of property and
life.

5. There is serious ground of apprehensions that
if the Subject is not seasonably attended to that
all foreign intercourse will be cut off, and
China will act after the policy of Japan.
Even now this is the wish of one of the two
great factions into which the Chinese Government
is divided as is apparent by the whole tenor
of the measures recently adopted by Liou T'ieh Sun.
The foreign residences in Canton have been
enclosed by a row of palisades in the river
forming a Semicircle and extending some
distance above and below them. The area in
front is enclosed by a high fence, and gates—
extend across the streets, so that in five
minutes at any time the foreigners may be
made prisoners in their own houses.
Privileges of going abroad upon the river,
and in the suburbs and neighboring
villages for air and exercise formerly enjoyed
are now prohibited. The business is
denied and thousands and tens of thousands
of silk manufactures and tea cultivators,
depend upon it, yet as the least of two evils,
the government may with one decisive stroke
cut off all foreign intercourse. This plan
has been suggested by one Memoralist—
Tsang Wang Yew (Chinese Repository Vol. 8 p. 530).
It is urged if all are treated alike none complains of partiality. The trade once prohibited, it will be more difficult to restore, than it is now to prevent it by timely attention. The importance of the Chinese commerce to this Country as a source of comfort and healthy gratifications requires no comment, and the moral benefits to the Chinese, which are suspended upon this issue, are such as a free, enlightened Christian nation like ours can best appreciate. It should not be forgotten that a trade of about $12,000,000 per annum is also worth preserving and protecting.

The American Nation probably stands higher in the confidence of the Chinese than any other nation. American merchants have had but a limited traffic in the prohibited article, whilst some, as is well known to that Government, have taken a decided stand against it, and have exerted their influence to expose the evil and to raise the moral sense of Western Nations against it. America is known not to be a Colonizing Nation, and a person of the highest diplomatic tact should be selected for the undertaking.

A man who is qualified to execute a similar mission to any of the Continental Powers of Europe, might not be the individual for this occasion.
If among those who have preceded over this Nation, one could be selected, besides his experience and skill in public affairs, the mere circumstance that he has been Chief Magistrate of an "Emperor" of the United States of America, as the Chinese would regard him, would go for to secure for him respect and access to the "Celestial Court."

The Emperor of China now in his 70th year would feel a strong sympathy and regard for me approaching his own advanced age, one of similar rank — who had been over many tens of thousands of li to the inner land. And the person of this description like the Hon. Member of Congress who has so far interested himself in China as to call for information respecting it might shrill from the undertaking at so advanced an age yet could it not, an evitable cause to a long life of devotedness to one's country, to effect an honorable treaty with such an Empire to save, as is quite possible, a vast effusion of blood, and to achieve an object which will be a blessing to the Universal World — To benefit a nation, an Empire, to do good to a generation, and especially to generations of unborn millions.
are robotic of noble objects, are adapted to the
capabilities of the most disinterested and noble
minds, and are worthy the enterprise of the
American Government.

With sentiments of long cherished admira-
tion and esteem, I am most respectfully,
Your obedient,
(Siler Parker)

A great object is gained by calling your attention
to this subject, without carrying it out in all
its details.
(C.C.)
To Daniel Webster
re: Embassy to China
Feb 20th

1841

[ handmade seal impression ]

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for Lord Collingwood
in London to

Mr. Webster