

INSTRUCTIONS OF SECRETARY WEBSTER TO CALEB CUSHING, WASHINGTON, MAY 8,
1843

It now remains for this department to say something of the political objects of the mission, and the manner in which it is hoped those objects may be accomplished. It is less necessary than it might otherwise be to enter into a detailed statement of the considerations which have led to the institution of the mission, not only as you will be furnished with a copy of the President's communication to Congress, recommending provision to be made for the measure, but also as your connexion with Congress has necessarily brought the considerations to your notice and contemplation.

Occurrences happening in China within the last two years have resulted in events which are likely to be of much importance, as well to the United States as to the rest of the civilized world. Of their still more important consequences to China herself, it is not necessary here to speak. The hostilities which have been carried on between that Empire and England have resulted, among other consequences, in opening four important ports to English commerce, viz: Amoy, Ningpo, Shanghai, and Fuchow.

These ports belong to some of the richest, most productive, and most populous provinces of the Empire, and are likely to become very important marts of commerce. A leading object of the mission in which you are now to be engaged is, to secure the entry of American ships and cargoes into these ports on terms as favorable as those which are enjoyed by English merchants. It is not necessary to dwell here on the great and well known amount of imports of the productions of China into the United States. These imports, especially in the great article of tea, are not likely to be diminished. Heretofore they have been paid for in the precious metals, or, more recently, by bills drawn on London. At one time, indeed, American paper, of certain descriptions, was found to be an available remittance. Latterly, a considerable trade has sprung up in the export of certain American manufactures to China. To augment these exports, by obtaining the most favorable commercial facilities, and cultivating, to the greatest extent practicable, friendly commercial intercourse with China, in all its accessible ports, is matter of moment to the commercial and manufacturing as well as the agricultural and mining interest of the United States. It cannot be foreseen how rapidly or how slowly a people of such peculiar habits as the Chinese, and apparently so tenaciously attached to their habits, may adopt the sentiments, ideas, and customs, of other nations. But if prejudiced, and strongly wedded to their own usages, the Chinese are still understood to be ingenious, acute, and inquisitive. Experience, thus far, if it does not strongly animate and encourage efforts to introduce some of the arts and the products of other countries into China, is not, nevertheless, of a character such as should entirely repress those efforts. You will be furnished with accounts, as accurate as can be obtained, of the history and present state of the export trade of the United States to China.

As your mission has in view only friendly and commercial objects — objects, it is supposed, equally useful to both countries — the natural jealousy of the Chinese, and their repulsive feeling toward foreigners, it is hoped, may be in some degree removed or mitigated by prudence and address on your part. Your constant aim must be to produce a full conviction on the minds of the Government and the people, that your mission is entirely

pacific; that you come with no purposes of hostility or annoyance; that you are a messenger of peace, sent from the greatest Power in America to the greatest Empire in Asia, to offer respect and good will, and to establish the means of friendly intercourse. It will be expedient, on all occasions, to cultivate the friendly dispositions of the Government and people, by manifesting a proper respect for their institutions and manners, and avoiding, as far as possible, the giving of offence either to their pride or their prejudices. You will use the earliest and all succeeding occasions to signify that the Government which sends you has no disposition to encourage, and will not encourage, any violation of the commercial regulations of China, by citizens of the United States. You will state in the fullest manner the acknowledgment of this Government, that the commercial regulations of the empire, having become fairly and fully known, ought to be respected by all ships and all persons visiting its ports; and if citizens of the United States, under these circumstances, are found violating well-known laws of trade, their Government will not interfere to protect them from the consequences of their own illegal conduct. You will at the same time assert and maintain, on all occasions, the equality and independence of your own country. The Chinese are apt to speak of persons coming into the empire from other nations as tribute bearers to the Emperor. This idea has been fostered, perhaps, by the costly parade of embassies of England. All ideas of this kind respecting your mission must, should they arise, be immediately met by a declaration, not made ostentatiously, or in a manner reproachful towards others, that you are no tribute bearer; that your Government pays tribute to none, and expects tribute from none; and that, even as to presents, your Government neither makes nor accepts presents. You will signify to all Chinese authorities and others, that it is deemed to be quite below the dignity of the Emperor of China and the President of the United States of America to be concerning themselves with such unimportant matters as presents from one to the other; that the intercourse between the heads of two such Governments should be made to embrace only great political questions, the tender of mutual regard, and the establishment of useful relations.

It is of course desirable that you should be able to reach Peking, and the Court and person of the Emperor, if practicable. You will accordingly at all times signify this as being your purpose and the object of your mission; and perhaps it may be well to advance as near to the capital as shall be found practicable, without waiting to announce your arrival in the country. The purpose of seeing the Emperor in person must be persisted in as long as may be becoming and proper. You will inform the officers of the Government that you have a letter of friendship from the President of the United States to the Emperor, signed by the President's own hand, which you cannot deliver except to the Emperor himself, or some high officer of the Court in his presence. You will say, also, that you have a commission conferring on you the highest rank among representatives of your Government; and that this, also, can be exhibited to the Emperor or his chief officer. You may expect to encounter, of course, if you get to Peking, the old question of the *Kotou*. In regard to the mode of managing this matter, much must be left to your discretion, as circumstances may occur. All pains should be taken to avoid the giving of offence, or the wounding of the national pride; but, at the same time, you will be careful to do nothing which may seem, even to the Chinese themselves, to imply any inferiority on the part of your Government, or any thing else less than perfect independence of all nations. You will say that the Government of the

United States is always controlled by a sense of religion and of honor; that nations differ in their religious opinions and observances; that you cannot do any thing which the religion of your own country or its sentiments of honor forbid; that you have the most profound respect for His Majesty the Emperor; that you are ready to make to him all manifestations of homage which are consistent with your own sense; and that you are sure His Majesty is too just to desire you to violate your own duty; that you should deem yourself quite unworthy to appear before His Majesty, as peace bearer from a great and powerful nation, if you should do anything against religion or against honor, as understood by the Government and people in the country you come from. Taking care thus in no way to allow the Government or people of China to consider you as tribute bearer from your Government, or as acknowledging its inferiority, in any respect, to that of China, or any other nation, you will bear in mind, at the same time, what is due to your own personal dignity and the character which you bear. You will represent to the Chinese authorities, nevertheless, that you are directed to pay to His Majesty the Emperor the same marks of respect and homage as are paid by your Government to His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, or any other of the great Powers of the world.

A letter, signed by the President as above intimated, and addressed to the Emperor, will be placed in your hands. As has been already stated, you will say that this letter can only be delivered to the Emperor, or to some one of the great officers of State, in his presence. Nevertheless, if this cannot be done, and the Emperor should still manifest a desire to receive the letter, you may consider the propriety of sending it to him, upon an assurance that a friendly answer to it shall be sent, signed by the hand of the Emperor himself.

It will be no part of your duty to enter into controversies which may exist between China and any European State; nor will you, in your communications, fail abstain altogether from any sentiment, or any expression which might give to other Governments just cause of offence. It will be quite proper, however, that you should, in a proper manner, always keep before the eyes of the Chinese the high character, importance, and power, of the United States. You may speak of the extent of their territory, their great commerce spread over all seas, their powerful navy every where giving protection to that commerce, and the numerous schools and institutions established in them, to teach men knowledge and wisdom. It cannot be wrong for you to make known, where not known, that the United States, once a country subject to England, threw off that subjection years ago, asserted its independence, sword in hand, established that independence after a seven years' war, and now meets England upon equal terms upon the ocean and upon the land. The remoteness of the United States from China, and still more the fact that they have no colonial possessions in her neighborhood, will naturally lead to the indulgence of a less suspicious and more friendly feeling than may have been entertained towards England, even before the late war between England and China. It cannot be doubted that the immense power of England in India must be regarded by the Chinese Government with dissatisfaction, if not with some degree of alarm. You will take care to show strongly how free the Chinese Government may well be from all jealousy arising from such causes towards the United States. Finally, you will signify, in decided terms and a positive manner, that the Government of the United

States would find it impossible to remain on terms of friendship and regard with the Emperor, if greater privileges or commercial facilities should be allowed to the subjects of any other government than should be granted to citizens of the United States.

It is hoped and trusted that you will succeed in making a treaty such as has been concluded between England and China; and if one containing fuller and more regular stipulations could be entered into, it would be conducting Chinese intercourse one step further towards the principles which regulate the public relations of the European and American States.