

CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bordeaux, France, Sep t. 17th, 1903.

My dear Gould:

Your letter congratulating me on my appointment as Consul-General at Halifax was duly received, but was not answered because I had no desire to go to Halifax and objected to being "promoted" for the benefit of somebody else. The fogs and cold of Nova Scotia did not appeal to me after a six years' residence in southern France.

The Consulate Generalcy at Halifax is counted one of the fancy posts in our service, but it has almost everything to make it undesirable to me. Because of the old spinal injury, I am peculiarly susceptible to changes of temperature. It is bad enough at the best. Even in this mild and uniform climate I am a terrible sufferer. The chief reason for coming here was the hope that the climate would have an ameliorative effect on my shattered nervous system. It did, though one would hardly think it who knows what I still endure. However, the best medical opinion of two continents was unanimous in the opinion that a transfer to Halifax at the beginning of winter, would be fatal.

It is true, that nominally or rather theoretically, a Consul-General is supposed to be an officer of higher grade than a Consul. In a graded service this is true; in ours it is absurd. With us a man is nominated and confirmed not as "Consul" or "Consul-General" but as "Consul at Bordeaux" or "Consul-General at Halifax", and the "Consul at Bordeaux" has exactly the same functions

in his Consular District as the "Consul-General at Halifax" has
 in Nova Scotia. Nominally, the compensation at Halifax is \$500.
 and I was ~~not~~ ^{more} than here; really it is hardly \$250., and I much

It would seem natural to me to get
 more than make up the difference here by the adjustment of in-
 the difference between individual controversies and other legal business which I would
 lose there. Besides, living in Halifax is about 30% higher than
 here, and it would have cost me \$1000, to pull up here and locate
 there. Here we live quietly and are not expected to do otherwise
 There, the Consul-General must hold a place in society which is
 almost as well live in ~~anywhere~~ outside of Europe. So in fact, the post is less
 meat and flour are nearer than here. So in fact, the post is less
 except to user of official service and everything but fish,
 even friendliness for the stranger. No advances are made to
 than Bordeaux.

To show you the absurdity of the idea that a Consul-General
 is necessarily a promotion to a Consul, one has only to think of
 the "Consul at Liverpool" who enjoys an official compensation
 of \$13000, annually, "promoted(?) to "Consul-General at Tangier"
 whose entire salary and fees amounts to less than \$2500. Bordeaux
 is the best "Consulate" in Europe, all things considered, except
 Liverpool and Havre. There have been numerous efforts to get me
 to exchange for other Consulates or Consulates-General, but I have
 always declined as I did this time, including St Petersburg and
 Cairo. This time, however, the Acting Secretary of State Loomis,
 seemed determined to make me go and announced the transfer not-
 withstanding my emphatic declination. This, of course, demanded a
 fight which I promptly put up and as soon as the President learn-

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After being written, when I went to him to tell him the facts of the proposed "promotion", the order was revoked and I was informed that I would be undisturbed.

It would seem nearer home to be at Halifax, but after all the difference between three days and seven is not much especially when one considers the difference in comfort between the great ocean grayhounds and the steamships which run from Halifax to Boston. I get awful homesick here. Except for a very few people who realize that the United States is on the map, one might almost as well live in Sahara. The Frenchman cares nothing for any one outside of France. He never speaks of other countries except to sneer at or find fault with them. He has none of our sentiments, the result of an executive department open friendliness for the stranger. No advances are made to a new comer. Men meet in business, and if a lady is willing to solicit permission to call she may be able to make a good enough impression to have her call returned. We attended the French Protestant Church here for two years before any of the congregation learned that we were in town. Then one of the members called and the next week brought a subscription paper.

Our late Pure Food Law has made a terrible commotion here. Probably, three fourths of the exports from this port come under its provisions. The machinery of this law is very incomplete and if delays are to be avoided. Of course this makes a lot of annoyances and in many cases, great loss from inability to fulfill time contracts. The shippers like to come in and tell their woes to the Consul. Many of them seem to think he could help them

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if he only would. When I first came they did not hesitate to denounce the United States whenever anything went wrong and were greatly surprised when I told them if they must speak disrespectfully of my government, I must ask them to step outside the Consulate. Now we are on very good terms and if I cannot be of service to them, I give them lots of sincere sympathy. It is always a difficult matter to make the laws and commercial relations of two nations fit each other smoothly and always will be. Our laws are in a sense more difficult for the people of other countries to comply with because one never knows exactly what they are until the courts have construed them. In other countries, France for instance, the ruling of the head of an executive department is the highest law. No court has any power to review, revoke or modify it. With us, the Secretary of the Treasury makes a ruling as to duties. The case is appealed through the District and Circuit courts and three or four years afterwards we find he was wrong. In the meantime, the merchant has had to pay his duties, sue at enormous cost and not even get interest on his loss. This is often very hard on the foreign merchant who naturally compares us with other countries where everything is settled in a few days or weeks at most by an administrative order. It is no use to explain it to them. They cannot understand our system, and when an American lawyer tells them to sue, as many do with more thought of fees than of the client's interest, it is often hard for the Consul to show them that even if they sue and recover every franc, they may yet have cost them a dollar.

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These things make the legal knowledge and moral quality of the Consul of prime importance, both to importer and exporter. It has gotten so that nearly all matters of difference between Bordeaux exporters and American importers come to me for settlement, the importers having found it better to leave things to my decision than have the costs of a suit.

I must beg your pardon for having written at such length of affairs connected with Consular work, but your congratulations made much of it necessary and it probably gives you a better idea of my life than anything I could have written. We are now approaching the vintage and no one thinks of anything else. Wine is the great absorbing feature of life here--nothing else comes near it. To think or speak evil of wine or the wine-trade is worse than blasphemy. One who does not drink wine is looked upon with suspicion and one who advocates abstention from it is regarded as little better than a public enemy, if he is French. If a foreigner, he is simply regarded as a fool.

I feel quite at sea as regard home-politics. I read, or more properly skim over a good many American papers, but somehow find them about as badly muddled as I am. It seems to me the President controls the situation. The bosses and the trusts are not exactly happy about him, but so far as I can see he is likely to have the people with him.

Here we are interested in the Panama Canal. If it should fail and the ditch be dug in Nicaragua, there are a lot of French men who would have a very poor opinion of the United STATES.

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I have always been in favor of the Nicaraguan route--probably because the transcontinental obstructionists favor Panama.

Please give my regards to Judge Gunnison and any other friends you may judge would care to hear from me, but do not let this letter get into the newspapers. The French are very touchy and if what I say in it should get back here they might find something they did not like and charge me with unfriendliness to them. This is the bane of a Consul's life. He must always be on the look-out lest some one take offense.

With all good wishes for you and yours, I remain,

Your long-time friend,