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CHAPTER XIII - THE HAMPTON ROADS CONFERENCE



Abraham Lincoln



William Seward



Alexander Stephens



Robert Hunter



John Campbell

The participants at the Hampton Roads Conference in Virginia, on board the "River Queen", February 3, 1865

Vice-President Stephens, as shown in his *History of the War Between the States*, and in utterances after the fall of Vicksburg and the drawn battle at Gettysburg, and even before that, seemed to think something could be done to arrest the carnage of war by negotiations; and offered his service for that purpose in June, 1863. He evidently believed there was some possibility of favorable results from an effort at that time. After this matter had been discussed between them, the President gave him authority to go to

Washington and see whether anything could be done. The authority he had from the President was to endeavor to secure a renewal of the cartel for the exchange of prisoners; but the discussion, as shown in Mr. Stephens's book, indicated that he hoped to offer suggestions looking to a cessation of hostilities. While it is not stated by him or by the President in their printed accounts about the matter, I understood at the time that the Vice-President hoped for some good effect on account of the fact that he and President Lincoln had been associated as Whig members of Congress, and as friends before the war, and that he might, because of that, be in a better position to invite the attention of Mr. Lincoln to pacific measures. He went to the Federal lines, but was refused permission to proceed to Washington.

In his history (Vol. II, p. 561) he uses this language, referring to what he hoped to accomplish: "*But if Mr. Lincoln could be prevailed on to agree to such a conference, then the object proposed, besides effecting, if possible, the general amelioration of prisoners, and the mitigation of the horrors of war as conducted by the Federals, was to use the occasion for effecting also, if possible, other material results which might open the way for future negotiations that might eventually lead on to an amicable adjustment*". In this view Mr. Davis did not concur. He did not believe that the road to peace lay in that way. He did not think that anything towards its ultimate obtainment could be affected on this line of external policy indicated by me.

But his book shows that after the siege of Vicksburg and the battle of Gettysburg, he himself had lost confidence in the scheme. However, it was finally agreed between them that he should undertake the trip to Washington; but this programme was superseded by the Hampton Roads Conference, growing out of the Hon. Francis P. Blair's intercession.

On the 12th of January, 1865, the venerable Francis P. Blair, by permission of the Federal and Confederate authorities, visited President Davis at Richmond, Virginia, in the interest of peace between the United States and the Confederate States. He disavowed any authority from the Government of the United States to act for it. His idea seems to have been to secure a conference between the military authorities of the two governments; and to arrange a plan, without any formal negotiations, by which the armies of the two countries could be united and sent to Mexico to enforce the Monroe Doctrine against the Government of the Emperor Maximilian.

After this conference, Mr. Davis gave Mr. Blair a letter stating that he had no desire to throw obstacles in the way of negotiations for the restoration of peace between the two countries, and that he was ready to send commissioners for that purpose whenever he had reason to suppose they would be received.

Mr. Blair having returned to Washington, on the 13th of January, President Lincoln addressed a note to him in which he referred to the letter of President Davis, and expressed his willingness to receive any agent whom Mr. Davis might send him, with a view of securing peace to our common country.

Upon learning of this disposition, Mr. Davis determined to send as Commissioners, for an informal conference, Vice-President Stephens, the Hon. R. M. T. Hunter, president of the Confederate Senate and former United States Senator; and the Hon. John A. Campbell, formerly a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The following is the commission under which they were to act:

"In conformity with the letter of Mr. Lincoln, you are requested to proceed to Washington City for an informal conference upon the issues involved in the existing war, and for the purpose of securing peace to the two countries".

Mr. Lincoln changed his purpose, and, instead of receiving them at Washington, met them at Hampton Roads. The Confederate Commissioners were met there also by Secretary of State W. H. Seward on the part of the United States.

During recent years there has been an extensive discussion through the public prints of the questions which rose at the Hampton Roads Conference. It has been asserted over and over that President Lincoln offered to pay \$400,000,000 for the slaves of the South to secure an end of the war; and that he held up a piece of paper to Mr. Stephens, saying: *“Let me write the word Union on it, and you may add any other conditions you please, if it will give us peace”*. I am probably not using the exact words which were employed, but I am expressing the idea given to the public, in the discussion. It has frequently been alleged that Mr. Stephens said these offers were made. This has been repeated by citizens of acknowledged ability and high character, and it has been said that these offers could not be acceded to because the instructions given to the Commission by President Davis prevented it.

The purpose of urging these untrue statements seems to have been to induce the public to believe that Mr. Davis could have obtained peace on almost any terms desired and \$400,000,000 for the Southern slaves if he would have consented to a restoration of the Southern States to the Union; and that, because of this, he was responsible for the losses of life and property caused by the continuance of the war. I shall submit evidence which will prove that no such propositions were ever made. This course is rendered necessary and just, both for the truth of history, and to vindicate the action of President Davis and his Cabinet. For, undoubtedly, one of the purposes of insisting that such offers were made is to mislead the public as to the truth. The following is the report of the Confederate Commissioners to President Davis as to what occurred at the Conference held on the 5th of February:

To THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES:

“Under your letter of appointment of the 28th ult., we proceeded to seek an ‘informal conference’ with Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, upon the subject mentioned in the letter. The conference was granted and took place on the 30th ult., on board a steamer anchored in Hampton Roads, where we met President Lincoln and the Honorable Mr. Seward, Secretary of State of the United States. It continued for several hours, and was both full and explicit. We learned from them that the message of President Lincoln to the Congress of the United States, in December last, explains clearly and distinctly his sentiments as to the terms, conditions, and methods of proceeding by which peace can be secured to the people, and we are not informed that they would be modified or altered to obtain that end.

We understood from him that no terms or proposals of any treaty or agreement looking to an ultimate settlement would be entertained or made by him with the authorities of the Confederate States, because that would be a recognition of their existence as a separate power, which under no circumstances would be done; and for a like reason that no such terms would be entertained by him for the States separately; that no extended truce or armistice (as at present advised) would be granted or allowed without a satisfactory assurance in advance of the complete restoration of the authority of the Constitution and laws of the United States over all places within the States of the Confederacy; that whatever consequences may follow from the reestablishment of that authority must be accepted; but that individuals subject to pains and penalties under the

laws of the United States might rely upon a very liberal use of the power confided to him to remit those pains and penalties if peace be restored.

During the conference, the proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States adopted by Congress on the 31st ultimo was brought to our notice. This amendment provides that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except for crime, should exist within the United States, or any place within her jurisdiction, and that Congress would have power to enforce this amendment by appropriate legislation.

Very respectfully, etc."

ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS,
R. M. T. HUNTER,
JOHN A. CAMPBELL.

Complaint has been made that Davis, by the wording of his instructions to the Commission, prevented them from making peace on any other terms than upon the condition of the independence of the Confederate Government; and that but for this condition, peace might have been secured at the Hampton Roads Conference. The official papers of that conference show that no terms could have been obtained or considered other than the unconditional surrender of the Confederate authorities. Mr. Davis knew the Vice-President's strong inclination to make peace on such terms as could be had.

This is evidenced by Stephens's *History of the War Between the States*, and by his many statements to others; and it is fair to presume that the limitation put upon the power of these Commissioners was for the purpose of making it certain that they should agree to nothing less than either the recognition of the independence of the Confederacy, or at least the securing of protection against the unlawful domination of its enemies. There was a wide divergence of views between the President and Vice-President on this subject. Mr. Stephens never seemed to realize that there was no time, while we had fighting armies in the field, that the people and the Army would have permitted an unconditional surrender if the President had been so inclined; nor would Mr. Davis at any time have consented to surrender while we had armies in the field able and willing to prolong the contest, rather than submit to Federal wrongs.

It is seen that the Confederate Commissioners say that no terms or proposals of any treaty or agreement would be entertained by President Lincoln with the authorities of the Confederate States, or with any of the States separately, and that no truce or armistice would be allowed without satisfactory evidence, in advance, of the complete restoration of the authority of the Constitution and laws of the United States over all places within the States of the Confederacy. This report was signed by Mr. Stephens, Mr. Hunter, and Judge Campbell. It shows conclusively that unconditional surrender, in advance of any negotiations, was the only condition whereby the war could be ended. And Judge Campbell, in his memoranda relating to this Conference, says that: "*In conclusion, Mr. Hunter summed up what seemed to be the result of the interview: that there could be no arrangements by treaty between the Confederate States and the United States, or any agreement between them; there was nothing left for them but unconditional submission*".

On the 6th of February, 1865, President Davis sent the report of the Commissioners to the Confederate Congress, with a message in which he used this language: "*I*

herewith transmit for the information of Congress the report of the eminent citizens above named, showing that the enemy refused to enter into negotiations with the Confederate States, or any of them separately, or to give our people any other terms or guaranties than those which the conquerors may grant, or to permit us to have peace on any other basis than our unconditional submission to their rule, coupled with the acceptance of their recent legislation on the subject of the relations between the black and white population of each State”.

In his *History of the War Between the States* (Vol. II, pp. 599-626) Vice-President Stephens gives a carefully compiled account of what was done at the conference; and in this he shows plainly and fully the distinct refusal of President Lincoln to recognize, or in any form to make or agree to any terms for peace with the Government of the Confederate States, or with any of the States separately, except upon the condition that they should, before any other measure should be considered, recognize and accept the Constitution and laws of the United States, and trust to Congress as to what disposition was to be made of the Confederacy, their people, and property.

There is no word in his long account of any proposition as to the payment of \$400,000,000 for the slaves, or of President Lincoln's writing the word Union on a sheet of paper and allowing Mr. Stephens or any one else to determine the terms and conditions upon which the war should be ended. The joint resolutions, expressing the sense of the Confederate Congress on the subject of the Peace Commission, are as follows:

“Whereas, the Congress of the Confederate States have ever been desirous of an honorable and a permanent settlement, by negotiation, of all matters of difference between the people of the Confederate States of America and the Government of the United States; and to this end provided, immediately on its assembling at Montgomery in February, 1861, for the sending of three commissioners to Washington, to negotiate friendly relations on all questions of this agreement between the two Governments, on principles of right, justice, equity and good faith; and, whereas, these having been refused a reception, Congress again, on the fourteenth of June, 1864, adopted and published a Manifesto to the civilized world, declaring its continued desire to settle, without further shedding of blood, upon honorable terms, all questions at issue between the people of the Confederate States and those of the United States, to which the only response received from the Congress of the United States has been, the voting down, by large majorities, all resolutions proposing an amicable settlement of existing difficulties; and, whereas, the President has communicated to this Congress that, in the same spirit of conciliation and peace, he recently sent Vice-President Stephens, Senator Hunter, and Judge Campbell to hold conference with such persons as the Government of the United States might designate to meet them; and, whereas, those eminent citizens, after a full conference with President Lincoln and Secretary Seward, have reported that they were informed explicitly that the authorities of the United States would hold no negotiations with the Confederate States, or any of them separately; that no terms, except such as the conqueror grants to the subjugated, would be extended to the people of these States; and that the subversion of our institutions, and a complete submission to their rule, was the only condition of peace: Therefore,

Section 1st. Resolved by the Congress of the Confederate States of America, that while Congress regrets that no alternative is left to the people of the Confederate States but a continuance of the war or submission to terms of peace alike ruinous and dishonorable, it accepts in their behalf the issue tendered them by the authorities

of the United States Government, and solemnly declares that it is their unalterable determination to prosecute the war with the United States until that power shall desist from its efforts to subjugate them, and the independence of the Confederate States shall have been established.

Section 2nd. Resolved, that the Congress has received with pride the numerous noble and patriotic resolutions passed by the Army, and in the gallant and unconquered spirit which they breathe, coming from those who have for years endured dangers and privations, it sees unmistakable evidence that the enthusiasm with which they first dedicated their lives to the defense of their country is not yet extinct, but has been confirmed by hardships and suffering into a principle of resistance to Northern rule, that will hold in contempt all disgraceful terms of submission; and for these expressions in camp, as well as for their noble acts in the field, our soldiers deserve, and will receive the thanks of the Country.

Section 3rd. Resolved, that the Congress invite the people of these States to assemble in public meetings, and renew their vows of devotion to the cause of independence; to declare their determination to maintain their liberties; to pledge themselves to do all in their power to fill the ranks of the Army; and to provide for the support of the families of our soldiers, and to cheer and comfort, by every means, the gallant men, who, for years, through trials and dangers, have vindicated our rights on the battlefield.

Section 4th. Resolved, that, invoking the blessing of God, and confiding in the justice of our cause, in the valor and endurance of our soldiers, and in the deep and ardent devotion of our people to the great principles of civil and political liberty for which we are contending, Congress pledges itself to the passage of the most energetic measures to secure our ultimate success”.

T. S. BOCOCK,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

R. M. T. HUNTER, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Approved 14th March, 65. JEFFERSON DAVIS.

So it is seen that we have the report of the Confederate Commissioners to the President, the message of the President to Congress, the joint resolutions of the two Houses of the Confederate Congress, and the evidence of Mr. Stephens's history of what occurred at that Conference to prove that no such offers were made by Mr. Lincoln. While it may seem unnecessary, I will go further and add to these testimonials those of President Lincoln and Secretary Seward. Mr. Lincoln at first determined to send Secretary of State Seward to meet the Confederate Commissioners, and on the 31st of January, 1865, furnished him with instructions for his Government, which contained these provisions:

You will make known to them that three things are indispensable, to wit:

- 1, the restoration of the national authority throughout all the States;*
- 2, no receding by the Executive of the United States, on the slavery question, from the position assumed thereon in the late message to Congress, and in preceding documents;*
- 3, no cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the Government.*

In Mr. Lincoln's annual message to Congress dated December 5th, 1864, he says:

"At the last session of Congress a proposed amendment of the Constitution abolishing slavery throughout the United States passed the Senate, but failed of the requisite two-thirds vote of the House of Representatives. Although the present is the same Congress, and nearly the same members, and without questioning the wisdom and patriotism of those who stood in opposition, I venture to recommend the reconsideration and passage of the measure at the present session".

And the same message contained the following:

"In presenting the abandonment of armed resistance to the national authority, on the part of the insurgents, as the only indispensable condition to ending the war on the part of the Government, I retract nothing heretofore said as to slavery. I repeat the declaration made a year ago, that while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress. If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it an executive duty to re-en slave such persons, another, and not I, must be their instrument to perform it".

The proclamation here referred to by President Lincoln was that of January 1, 1863, for which that of September 22, 1862, had prepared the way. In that of the later date he declared: *"That on the 1st day of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free".*

In the face of his annual message of December 5, 1864, and of these two proclamations, how could President Lincoln have proposed to pay \$400,000,000 for the slaves he had already set free, and did not intend to return to a condition of slavery? And how could he have said that if he were allowed to write the word Union on a piece of blank paper the Confederate Commissioners might name any terms they pleased to end the war?

On the 7th of February 1865, Mr. Seward addressed a communication to the Hon. Charles Francis Adams, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to Great Britain, giving, for his information, an account of what occurred at the Hampton Roads Conference. This letter, it will be observed, was written four days after that Conference. In it, among other things, he said that President Lincoln announced to the Confederate Commissioners:

"That we can agree to no cessation or suspension of hostilities, except on the basis of the disbandment of the insurgent forces, and the restoration of the national authority throughout all the States in the Union. Collaterally, and in subordination to the proposition which he thus announced, the anti-slavery policy of the United States was reviewed in all its bearings, and the President announced that he must not be expected to depart from the positions he had assumed in his Proclamation of Emancipation, and other documents, as these positions were reiterated in his last annual message. It was further declared by the President that the complete restoration of national authority everywhere was an indispensable condition to any assent on our part to whatever form of peace might be proposed".

The President assured the other party that while he must adhere to these positions, he would be prepared, as far as power was lodged with the Executive, to exercise it liberally. His power, however, is limited by the Constitution; and when peace should be made, Congress must necessarily act in regard to appropriations of money and the

admission of representatives from the insurrectionary States. The Richmond party was then informed that Congress had, on the 31st ultimo, adopted by a Constitutional majority a joint resolution submitting to the several States the proposition to abolish slavery throughout the Union, and that there is every reason to expect that it will be accepted by three-fourths of the States, so as to become a part of the organic law.

I have not access to the *Life of Lincoln* by Nicolay and Hay, but I am informed that it fully sustains the views I am presenting on this question. While it is true that some respectable men have asserted that Stephens told them of Lincoln's alleged offer, and I have all their statements in writing or print, there must have been some misunderstanding as to his language, for he was an honorable and truthful man, and a man of too much good sense to have made such allegations in the face of such record as is here presented. Among those who assert that Stephens made one or the other of those statements are Henry Watterson, editor of the *Courier-Journal*; Rev. E. A. Green of Virginia; Dr. R. J. Massey of Georgia, and Mr. Clark Howell of Georgia.

Any impartial person who may read the statements of Mr. Green will see his gross ignorance of the matters of which he writes, and any one who will read what he says and what Dr. Massey says will see that the main purpose with them was to throw discredit on President Davis for not making peace on terms which, as the evidence shows, were not offered, and which we were fully informed could not be allowed by the Confederates. And it is also clear that a prime object with Dr. Massey was to lionize Stephens while discrediting Davis.

Among those who say Mr. Stephens denied making these statements are the Rev. F. C. Boykin of Georgia; Mr. R. F. Littig of Mississippi; Hon. James Orr of South Carolina, who was at that time associated with Vice-President Stephens as a member of the Confederate Senate; Hon. Frank B. Sexton, then a member of the Confederate Congress; Col. Stephen W. Blount of Texas, who had been a schoolmate, and was a friend to Mr. Stephens, who, in answer to Blount's inquiry, wrote that he never made any such remark; Mr. Charles G. Newman, of Arkansas; and Governor A. H. Garland, of Arkansas, who was at the time of the Conference a member of the Confederate Senate, and the roommate of Mr. Stephens, and who has been United States Senator, and Attorney-General of the United States. Governor Garland says that on the return of the Confederate Commissioners Mr. Stephens told him no terms of peace could be had except upon unconditional submission of the Confederates.

It is not pleasant to have to consider such a conflict of statements. It has arisen between men of ability and character in the discussion of one of the important historical questions which grew out of the great contest. And the published statements show that there was an extensive effort being made to pervert and falsify the history of that important conference so as to cast public censure on President Davis for not terminating the war upon conditions which were not offered.

I also have a letter from Senator Vest of Missouri, who was then a Confederate Senator, in which he says: "*R. M. T. Hunter, who was President of the Confederate Senate, told me in detail what occurred at the Fort Monroe Conference, and it agrees with your statements. No more truthful and conservative man than Hunter ever lived*".

The message of Mr. Lincoln of March 6, 1862, and his conference with border State representatives, at that time, and the statements he made to Mr. Stephens at the Hampton Roads Conference, and perhaps other expressions of his, showed, I think, his personal willingness that compensation should have been made for the slaves of the South, but the message referred to, and the conference which followed, were in March

of the second year of the war; his suggestion then was that the border States of the Confederacy should adopt a general plan of emancipation upon the basis of compensation, and that if this was done it would defeat the purpose of the Southern States.

It was a bid to the Border States to desert their Southern sister States. Those representing the border States declined to act on this suggestion, for it was only a suggestion; for them to have acted in advance of any move by the Northern States, and with no assurance that if they should adopt such a policy it would ever be accepted by the North would have been a species of madness. This, however, had no direct relation to what occurred at Hampton Roads.

I have no doubt that Mr. Stephens recited the statement made by President Lincoln at that conference to the effect that he, personally, would have no objection to an arrangement for compensation for the slaves if that would end the war, and that he knew persons who would be willing to pay \$400,000,000 for that purpose. This is probably the basis and the only basis for the stories so often repeated about his offering at that conference to pay \$400,000,000 if it would end the war. And when Mr. Stephens spoke of these two things, his hearers, I must suppose, misunderstood him, or misconstrued his words. It is better to view it thus and to assume that the stories referred to had their origin in that way than to believe that willful misstatements were made.

I served with Mr. Stephens in the Congress of the United States four years before the war. We served together in the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy; were thrown together more or less during the war; and we served together in Congress for several years after the war. I always regarded him as an upright, honorable man. I was his friend, and admired his genius and ability, though I thought during the war, and have not changed my opinion, that he had very impracticable views as to the methods of conducting the war. And I fear from his writings and from the statements attributed to him by others that during the latter part of the war, and after it closed, he allowed his great name and influence to give too much encouragement to malcontents, who caused embarrassment to the Confederate Government, and who endeavored to cast unjust reflections on the policy, actions and services of President Davis, his Cabinet and the Confederate Congress.

CHAPTER XIV - THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1864 AND 1865

After the retreat of Lee from Gettysburg, a pall fell over the Confederacy, for much had been expected of the invasion of the North. This shadow was deepened, too, by the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson, for the Confederacy was now cut in two by the Mississippi River. But we still had Lee and his army and other armies, and therefore hope had not expired.

In February, 1864, an expedition under the command of Colonel Dahlgren was sent from the Federal army, then in Virginia, having for its object the release of 22,000 Federal prisoners on Belle Isle and other prisons in Richmond, the destruction of the city of Richmond, and the killing of President Davis and his Cabinet. Dahlgren's command was to cross the James River some distance above Richmond, pass down the south side of the river to Belle Isle, reach it through the shallow water and release the prisoners. On account of the swollen condition of the river, he was unable to cross it, and turned his command down a road on the north side.



Defeated Confederate soldiers on their way to a Federal prison camp (Harper's Weekly)

Governor Wise learned of the movement, and brought word of it to the city. This caused the Tredegar battalion and the regiment of clerks and citizens to be called out, an expedient resorted to only in emergencies. At a bend in the road not far above Richmond, he met the battalion of workmen, employees of the Tredegar works. The battalion was dispersed by Dahlgren. In the mean time Colonel McAnerny's regiment was hastening to the defense of the city. This command was in a large measure made up of men who had been soldiers, but who by wounds were unfitted for regular duty. McAnerny, himself, had been adjutant of an Alabama regiment, but had been incapacitated for field service by wounds and was a clerk in the Post Office Department.

A citizen who witnessed the defeat of the Tredegar battalion, riding rapidly to give the alarm, met McAnerny's regiment, not Colonel G. W. C. Lee's, as Mr. Davis through mistake states in his history just outside the suburbs of the city, on the road by which

Dahlgren was advancing, and notified them of the pending danger. It having become dark with a drizzling rain, Colonel McAnerny formed his line of battle across the road in a field, and threw forward a line of skirmishers, who, when the enemy approached, were instructed to keep up a desultory fire as they fell back to the line of battle, in order to define the line of attack. The skirmishers acted with admirable coolness, falling back slowly and firing to keep their line defined, until they brought Dahlgren's command in close range of McAnerny's regiment. The men had been ordered to lie down, until the enemy had come within range, when they were ordered to rise and fire. This they did admirably, killing and wounding some of the men and horses of the enemy, and causing them to retreat precipitately. They crossed the Chickahominy and York rivers in the direction of King and Queen Counties. There some furloughed soldiers, home guards

and citizens, having been apprised of their coming, ambushed them, killing Dahlgren and a number of his men, and wounding and making prisoners of the rest. To quote Mr. Davis (*Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, Vol. II., p. 506): “*On the body of Dahlgren was found an address to his officers and men, giving special orders and instructions, and one giving his itinerary, the whole disclosing the unsoldierly means and purposes of the raid; such as disguising the men in our uniform, carrying supplies of oakum and turpentine to burn Richmond, and after releasing the prisoners on Belle Isle, to exhort them to destroy the beautiful city, while on all was pressed the special injunction that the city must be burned and Jeff Davis and his Cabinet killed*”.

Photographic copies of those papers were made and sent to the Cabinets of Europe to show the barbarous infractions of the laws of war among civilized nations, to which we were exposed.

President Davis had on more than one occasion threatened retaliation for the violation of the usages of war; and at a meeting of the Cabinet, after the above facts were brought out, the members of the Cabinet united in urging upon the President that there should be no more threatening of retaliation, that the prisoners who had been taken should draw lots and every tenth man be shot; and that the President of the United States should be informed of what we had done, and of the reasons for such action. Mr. Davis objected to shooting unarmed men, observing that if we had known these facts and could have shot them with arms in their hands, it would have been all right.

There was on this point more feeling expressed by the members of the Cabinet, and seemingly more danger of a serious disagreement than occurred at any other of its meetings. Some of them called attention to the monstrous purpose of burning the city, and of exposing the women and children to the infuriated mob of released prisoners, and the purposed murder of the President and Cabinet, and insisted on their recommendations being carried out. The President in an emphatic manner said that he would not permit an unarmed prisoner to be shot; and so the matter ended.

There was one battle during the war which has not gone into history, and as I was an active agent in it, I shall tell something of it. One morning in the summer of 1864 cannon firing was heard to the northwest of Richmond, and we were at a loss to understand it, as we had no information of the approach of an enemy. As we had no troops there, Secretary Mallory and I got our horses and galloped out to where the noise was. When we got near our old line of entrenchments we saw Colonel Lyon, one of Richmond's most prominent citizens, riding along the line of entrenchments, gesticulating as if giving directions. When we reached him, we inquired what he was doing. He said: “*Commanding the forces; Reagan, you command the right; Mallory, you the left, and I will take the center*”.

We rode up and down the line of entrenchments for some time, as if giving directions to men, with the shells cracking over us, until the firing ceased. The attacking party consisted of a regiment of cavalry and some pieces of light artillery, and if I remember correctly they were commanded by Colonel Grierson, who had prior to this raided extensively in Mississippi; but I am not positive as to the name of the commander. Colonel Lyon's residence was out near that line of entrenchment, which accounted for his presence. The Federals evidently feared that there were men in the trenches, but if they had known, there was nothing to have prevented their marching unresisted into the city. Several times during the war Richmond seemed to have been providentially saved from capture.

When, in 1864, General Grant had taken up his march on Richmond, and the battle of the Wilderness had been fought and he had moved forward toward Spotsylvania Court House, Sheridan with a force of something more than 8,000 cavalry interposed between Lee and Richmond. He rightly thought that he might take the city by surprise. But Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, our gallant cavalier and great cavalry leader, with a force of about 1,100, hung on his flank.

At this time there were but two brigades of infantry near for the defense of the capital, which had been notified of its danger by couriers dispatched by Stuart. A brigade commanded by General Fry was ordered up from below the city, and put in position on the Yellow Tavern road, by which it was expected Sheridan would come. The regiment of clerks and citizens was called out and posted on our line of defense on the Meadow Bridge road. The Tredegar battalion was put in position further to the right. The Confederate line was defended by several batteries of siege guns. Sheridan came up on the Meadow Bridge road instead of the Yellow Tavern road, and began his attack early in the day. The regiment of clerks and citizens had wanted me to command them, but the President and Cabinet, when the matter was mentioned to them, advised against it, saying that I might be wanted at both places at the same time. At my suggestion, Colonel McAnerny was put in command of the regiment.

Before the fighting was fairly under way, General Elzy, who was in command of our forces, and Colonel McAnerny came to me and requested me to command the regiment during the fight. I declined to do so on the ground that it would be unjust to take the command on the first opportunity McAnerny had of being engaged in battle. They then proposed that I should command the battalion which was supporting the battery on the Meadow Bridge road, and the two batteries to the right of it. I answered that I would do that, but would not take McAnerny's command from him.

The artillery firing now became rapid on both sides; Fitzhugh Lee's brigade of cavalry was hanging on Sheridan's rear, and Gordon of North Carolina, with his brigade of cavalry, both of those brigades being under General Stuart, was fighting heavily on Sheridan's right flank. About twelve o'clock General Gracie's brigade of infantry came up from Charm's farm below Richmond, where it had been placed with Fry's brigade to protect the city against the threatened attack from that direction. General Gracie inquired of me where General Elzy was, and I told him that half an hour before he had gone up our line to the left. He said that he would move out in front and do what he could to relieve Lee and Gordon.

He formed his line in front of our works, sending his skirmishers forward; he requested me to place three hundred of my best men outside of our works, to be ordered up if found necessary. While I was forming my line of three hundred, a friend who had come out from Richmond brought me a bottle of what he said was the finest brandy. I saw the officers of Gracie's command come together, I supposed for consultation. They had been in the rain during the latter part of the night and all the morning. I rode to where they were assembled and told them a friend had brought me a bottle of brandy, and that I supposed they needed it. They disposed of it very quickly, and General Gracie told me that when the battle was over he would have me promoted.

The skirmishers were already under fire and General Gracie advanced his command until two Federal batteries with infantry supports were enfilading his line from the right. He then changed front at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and marched forward until he drove the batteries away. He then changed his front to his original course, and moved forward in the open field, I suppose three-quarters of a mile wide, until he

reached the woods occupied by the enemy. His line being then enfiladed from both ends and confronted by a superior force, he slowly withdrew toward our works.

All these movements were made with as much regularity as on an old field muster. They were certainly the handsomest and most regular movements I ever saw on a field of battle. He rode about among his command apparently as cool as if directing farm operations. He lost some seventy-five men in killed and wounded; his horse was struck three times, and he himself received one or two slight wounds. The battle lasted until about the middle of the afternoon, when General Sheridan withdrew, and moved off in a northwesterly direction.

I witnessed a piece of heroic conduct on that occasion, which deserves to be noticed. There was a two-story frame house on a mound surrounded by some trees, so near to the battery on my right as to enable the enemy's sharpshooters, who occupied it, to reach our men with their shots. It had rained and the platform on which our guns stood was wet and slippery, and in firing one of the guns it bounced off the platform. I rode to where it was and was giving directions to the men about getting it back on the platform, when a non-commissioned officer, whose name I cannot recall, came to me and said that if I would permit it, he would take some men and drive the sharpshooters out of that house and burn it. My reply was, "*I shall not object to your doing so, but will not order it*". He went away and in a few minutes returned, saying that he had his men. There were, I think, eight of them. They jumped outside of the works and went at a double quick, half-bent with trailed arms. Three of them fell before they reached the house, but they drove the Federals away and burned it.

In the effort of General Stuart to impede the advance of Sheridan, when near Richmond, in a hand-to-hand struggle he received a mortal wound by a shot so close to him that it burnt his clothes.

General Stuart was an Episcopalian, and I attended his funeral services at one of the Episcopal churches of Richmond. As if to add to the solemnity of the occasion, while the funeral services were going on the noise of the enemy's cannon made it partially difficult to hear what was said. His death, following that of General Jackson, added to the deep gloom produced by the death of that invincible leader. In life General Stuart was as genial and lovable in his social intercourse as he was skilful and brave in battle. In May 1864, Gen. B. F. Butler landed a force, about 40,000 strong, on the south side of the James River, above the mouth of the Appomattox, for the purpose of cutting the railroad connection of Richmond with the South. He actually reached and took possession of the railroad between Richmond and Petersburg.

It devolved on General Lee then, with an inadequate force, to defend both Richmond and Petersburg; and he was perplexed with this difficult problem. If he should take soldiers from the north side of the James to enable him to repossess the railroad, it would endanger Richmond. If he should take them from the east side of the Appomattox this would endanger Petersburg; and the loss of either place would have been most unfortunate for the Confederate cause.

In this condition of things Gregg's brigade (formerly Hood's) was confronting the Federal forces that occupied the railroad. Suddenly, without orders, and as the result of an accidental movement of the brigade standard, it rushed forward and drove the Federals from the line of the railroad and thus relieved this embarrassing situation, by reestablishing communication between Richmond and Petersburg. I inquired of General Gregg how this came about. He told me they were expecting orders to advance; that he was at one end of his line and the standard of the brigade at the other; that the flag was

moved forward, he did not know by whom or for what purpose, and that the men assumed the order to advance had come, and dashed forward, driving the enemy before them.

Great was the relief this daring movement afforded to General Lee and the authorities and people of Richmond and Petersburg. While it was accomplished with much less sacrifice of life than was suffered by this brigade on other occasions, we may hardly overestimate its importance. And a few weeks later the pictorial papers of London and Liverpool which came to us contained very amusing and interesting pictures and descriptions of Lee's "*Texans straggling to the front*". It may be allowable for me, in this connection, to mention two other instances, illustrating the heroic service of Hood's brigade, which occurred after Gen. John Gregg became its commander. One of them was at the opening of the campaign of 1864.

After the great battle of the 4th of May, 1864, known as the battle of the Wilderness, General Grant, during the night, moved a portion of his force to the left for the purpose of turning General Lee's right, and interposing between him and Richmond. General Lee at the same time commenced a counter movement for the purpose of enabling General Longstreet's corps to turn Grant's left and thus to double him back on the Rappahannock.

While Longstreet was moving into position along the turnpike, the Federals just at dawn, with three lines of infantry, attacked the divisions of Heth and Wilcox. Many of their men wearied by a day of battle, succeeded by a night march and the digging of entrenchments, had fallen down to sleep, and the sudden attack of the Federals threw them into some confusion, and a number of them struggling to the rear so blocked up the turnpike as to impede Longstreet's progress. General Gregg's brigade being in the front of Longstreet's corps, General Lee rode up and directed him to move out his brigade and "*stop those people*" (meaning the Federal forces), until Longstreet could execute his movement.

Gregg moved his brigade out to the front, passing through the stragglers, and having passed the Confederate line of works, halted his command to re-align it. In ordering them to go forward, he announced that the eye of General Lee was on them. In his anxiety for the success of this movement General Lee had followed them, and had ridden up on the line of works, when a soldier took hold of his bridle to stop his horse. General Lee spoke to him, and the soldier let go and the General rode down in front of the line of works. When Gregg announced to his men that the eye of General Lee was on them, they faced about without an order, and shouted, "*General Lee, go back ! go back ! We know what you want, and it will be done if you will go back*". General Lee took off his hat, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

Then the brigade moved forward to encounter the enemy. They were outnumbered in front and flanked at both ends, but staved the advance of the enemy until Longstreet so far executed his movement as to uncover their front; in doing which, through mistaken identity, he was seriously wounded by the Confederates, and General Jenkins, who was with him, was killed. Gregg passed the old line of works with seven hundred and eleven muskets. He lost over four hundred in killed and wounded, and he had three horses killed under him during the fight. He told me that if they had not been relieved by General Longstreet he believed the old brigade would have been annihilated, for, in his opinion, the Texans had not intended to go back alive.

I am indebted for the foregoing facts to General Gregg's account of them to me. And there was no more sincere and truthful man than Gregg, who at last was killed in advance of his command, in an assault upon a strongly entrenched line near Richmond.

Elsewhere I have spoken of President Davis being under fire at the battle of Seven Pines. While I was not a witness to it, he spoke in the Cabinet of being on the battlefield, in the open ground between the Chickahominy and Mechanicsville, when the ground was being swept by the shot and shell of the enemy, and of his being ordered from the field by General Lee. He jocularly remarked that he had supposed himself to be the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, but that General Lee insisted on his retiring, with the statement, "*This is no place for you*". Either anxiety for the results, or military training and instinct seemed to draw him to the battlefield, and to points of danger.

The Hon. Ely Bruce, a member of the Confederate Congress from Kentucky, said to me that he had never seen a battle, that I might know when one was to occur, and if so he would be glad if I would let him know. A few days later on meeting him, I told him that if he would meet me at the Post Office Department at ten o'clock the next morning, we would go down the Petersburg road, and might witness a battle. General Beauregard was then in command of the Confederate forces between Richmond and Petersburg, confronting the Federals under Gen. B. F. Butler. General Whiting was in command of the Confederate forces at Petersburg. I had been advised that a battle was likely to occur between them on the day to which I refer, and that the attack on the Federals was to be made by General Whiting on the Petersburg side, and that the sound of his guns was to be the signal for an attack by Beauregard from the Richmond side. It turned out that the Federals had determined to bring on the battle on the same day; so that they attacked Beauregard's forces, and during the battle were driven back from the open ground into the woods. But nothing was heard from General Whiting. The Confederates occupied a line which had been fortified by the Federals just at the edge of the woods; but their advance was stopped at this line.

The general officers met at the Petersburg turnpike for consultation, and while talking, one of them was hit in the back by a bullet; the others joked him about being shot in the back. Still nothing was heard from Whiting. General Butler had pressed his artillery and sharpshooters near enough to the Confederate line to cause some danger and kept up an almost continuous fusillade. In this condition a shower of rain came up, and President Davis, who was present, rode under a leaning silver maple tree and a young officer threw his water-proof cape over his shoulders.

At this time General Beauregard approached and suggested to the President that they had better go into one of the shanties nearby, which had sheltered the soldiers, and get out of the rain. Before that, however, some of the officers and two of the staff of the President had come to me and asked me to try to get him to leave the field, as persons were getting hit occasionally and he was as likely to be struck as others, and that he could be of no use there.

I presented their request, which he disregarded, going instead with Beauregard into the shanty. A soldier boy accompanied them, and presently a shell from the guns of the enemy took one of the boy's arms off near his shoulder while he was standing by them. General Beauregard suggested that the enemy seemed to have the range of that place, and that they had better go across the turnpike to the open ground, which they did. The shells continued to sweep the ground there also and Beauregard suggested that they seemed to have the range everywhere.

At last the firing ceased, and we and the President and his staff officers returned to the city. It turned out that the reason General Whiting did not commence the attack, as expected, was because he was drunk, which he frankly admitted in a letter to the President. He was not disciplined as he ought to have been, for such conduct. Because of his great popularity and valuable service in a number of battles before that, he was permitted to retain his command. The next day at a meeting of the Cabinet, the President spoke of my taking the message to him requesting him to retire from the field, and said he realized as well as the officers did that his presence was not necessary, but added that it was very inconvenient to ride off under fire.

On the 3rd of June, 1864, the second battle of Cold Harbor was fought, in which General Lee had less than 50,000 men, while General Grant had more than 100,000. In that battle the loss on the Federal side was over 13,000, while the loss on the Confederate side was probably not as many hundred. This disparity was due to the fact that the Confederates were assaulted in their trenches.

On the morning of that day, Judges Lyons and Meredith, two of the State judges living in Richmond, and myself, rode out to our line of battle, crossing the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville, and passing along a few hundred yards in the rear of our line of battle until we came in sight of General Lee's headquarters, on the field at the Gaines Mill farm. Several squads of Federal prisoners were brought back to the road we were riding on as we passed down the line. When we got in sight of General Lee's headquarters, I suggested to Judge Lyons and Judge Meredith that I would ride down to where General Lee was. They did not go any farther. We could see that the enemy's shells were falling on the field about General Lee. A few hundred yards in the rear of his headquarters were probably fifteen or twenty acres of forest trees, surrounded by cultivated land. At that time there was a good deal of anxiety, both in the army and among the civilians, about General Lee's exposing himself too much in battle, accompanied by a feeling that his loss would be of the greatest consequence; and Judges Lyons and Meredith suggested that I should inquire of General Lee whether he might not send his orders and receive his reports, covered behind that timber, as well as in his then exposed situation. I said to them that I would see the General, but did not know about making suggestions to him as to his headquarters in the midst of a battle.

When I reached the camp there was none but an orderly with him, his staff officers being away on duty. After passing the compliments of the day, I said to him it seemed that a great deal of artillery was being used.

"Yes", he replied, "*more than usual on both sides*". He added, "*That does not do much harm here*". Then, waving his hand toward the front, where the rattle of musketry made a noise like the tearing of a sheet, he observed: "*It is that that kills men*". He then remarked that General Grant was hurling columns from six to ten deep against his lines at three places for the purpose of breaking them.

"General", I said to him, "*if he breaks your line, what reserve have you?*"

"Not a regiment", he replied. "And", he added, "*that has been my condition ever since the fighting commenced on the Rappahannock. If I shorten my lines to provide a reserve he will turn me; if I weaken my lines to provide a reserve, he will break them*". He also said that he had to fight and march his men without sufficient rest, and that exhaustion and the want of vegetables had caused the loss of more men than the bullets of the enemy. He said he had advised them to use the buds of sassafras and of grapevines as a substitute for vegetables, but that this was a poor substitute. He asked me, on my return to Richmond, to see the commissary-general before going home, and

to urge him to send as fast as possible all the potatoes and onions he could. "*Some of the men now have scurvy*", he said.

I said to the General that there was some uneasiness about his being exposed so much, and that Judges Lyons and Meredith, who had come out with me, had suggested the inquiry whether he might not cover himself by the forest trees in his rear, and from there send his orders and receive his reports as well as from this exposed position. His reply was that it was best for him to be as well up toward the front as he could, and that when the shells had begun to fall on the field, he had ordered the wagons containing the quartermaster, commissary, medical and ordnance stores to fall back behind the forest trees. He added: "*I have as good generals as any commander ever had, and I know it, but still it is well for me to know the position of our lines. To illustrate this*", he continued, "*in forming my right, I directed that it should cover Turkey Hill, which juts out on the Chickahominy valley so as to command cannon range up and down the stream. In forming the line, how ever, this was not done, and on yesterday afternoon I had to direct General Breckinridge to recover that position by an assault which cost us a good many men*".

General Lee's lines were then about seven miles from Richmond, and he was confronted by a well equipped and well organized army of more than double his numbers. And thus situated in the midst of a great battle, he was calm and self-possessed, with no evidence of excitement; and in his conversation showed he was thinking of the condition and wants of the brave men under his command, as well as guarding with invincible courage the besieged capital of the Confederacy. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, the widow of the President, in her Memoir of him, says that "*in April, 1864, in General Lee's tent meat was served twice a week. His bill of fare was a head of cabbage boiled in salt water, sweet potatoes, and a pone of corn bread; when he invited an officer to dine with him he had, to his astonishment, four inches of middling; every one refused from politeness, and the servant excused the smallness of the piece by saying it was borrowed*".

This shows how the greatest general of the age consented to live and to suffer privations in the struggle for justice to the people he was serving. When we remember that if General Lee had taken sides against his own people and State, he could have been Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the United States, and that he had to abandon his great landed estate and palatial residence fronting Washington City on the Potomac, and that his family, but for the kindness of friends, would have become homeless refugees, we can understand the unparalleled sacrifice this heroic general made in supporting and defending the cause of right. I can but feel that God made him one of the bravest, best, and most patriotic, as well as one of the greatest of men.

August 29, 1864, a severely contested battle was fought on the north side of James River, below Charm's farm, between General Field's division of Confederates, and a portion of the Federal army. President Davis and I rode down some nine or ten miles to the battlefield. When we reached our outer line of works we were told the fighting had occurred about one mile to the left of that point, and that the firing had ceased. We rode to General Field's headquarters, and found him in much distress, his brother-in-law, who was a member of his staff, having been killed. We saw the Federal soldiers under a flag of truce, in the rear of our line, burying their dead, and the Confederates under a flag of truce, in the rear of the Federal lines, burying our dead. The two armies had alternately been driven back and then recovered their ground, and when the fighting ceased each occupied its original position.

The President wished to see General Lee, who, as General Field told us, was on our line about four miles to the right. Field said to the President that the country to General Lee's headquarters was wooded and rough and that he would send one of his staff to pilot us. On our way, when we reached the point where we had first struck our line, the young officer piloting us rode across it, the President remarking that this was our outer line. But that officer could not have heard what he said, as he made no response. When he had gone two or three hundred yards we heard hallooing, and looking to the left on higher ground, saw persons beckoning to us. We halted, and Judge George Clark, who now lives at Waco, Texas, then commanding the company on that part of the line, came down to us and said that seeing us outside of our lines, he had ordered his men to fire on us, when he noticed our Confederate gray. He told us that in half a minute we would have been in the Federal lines, and would have been dead or prisoners. It is needless to say that we beat a retreat. The President, as may be supposed, was not in a good humor; and, as we rode on, recognizing the mistake of our guide and seeing that he was much mortified, I sought to relieve his feelings, and went forward and suggested to the President that the young man was much hurt and that it might be well for him to give him a word of relief. Mr. Davis slacked his pace a little, and when the young officer came up, spoke of his serious mistake; but in a way which somewhat relieved his embarrassment.

It was some time after nightfall when we reached General Lee's headquarters; and in the course of the conversation he said it had been over one hundred days since the fighting began on the Rappahannock, and that there had not been a day in which some of his men had not been killed.

CHAPTER XV - THE SURRENDER OF OUR ARMIES



General Robert Lee signs the surrender of the Confederate army at Appomattox Court House (Painting by Tom Lovell)

In March, 1865, the army defending Richmond had become much reduced, and suffered more or less from insufficient supplies. Our lines for the defense of Richmond

and Petersburg were some thirty miles long, and the force under General Lee barely sufficed for a skirmish line. On the morning of the 2d of April (Sunday), General Lee commenced the withdrawal of his entire force from the front. Being anxious about the situation, I was with the Secretary of War until pretty late Saturday night. On the next morning I returned to the War Department at an early hour. While there the Secretary received two dispatches from General Lee, saying in substance that his whole line would retire from its position at seven o'clock that evening, and making suggestions for the security of the public archives. Immediately on receipt of this information I started to communicate it to the President, and on the way to the mansion met him and Governor Frank R. Lubbock, a member of his staff, on their way to church, and informed him of the dispatches from General Lee to the Secretary of War.

In making this statement I am not unmindful of the fact that it has gone into history that President Davis received a dispatch from General Lee that morning while at church, which is assumed to be his first information as to the withdrawal of our army. In President Davis's *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, he uses the following language: "*In the forenoon of Sunday, April 2d, I received in church a telegram announcing that the army would retire from Petersburg at night*".

This is true; it is also true that I gave him the first information of that fact. And it is not unnatural, mine being an unofficial communication, that he should state as a historical fact that his first official information reached him while at church.

That Sunday was a sad day for us all. The President called his Cabinet together and they were met by John Letcher, the Governor of Virginia, and Mr. Mayo, the Mayor of Richmond. There were naturally many and serious questions to be discussed, and among them the disposition that was to be made of the public archives. A considerable portion of them, mainly from the Executive Department, were destroyed. The most important papers of the Post Office Department had been sent away from Richmond in the care of an employee. There was hardly time for any other consideration; the booming of the guns of the enemy told of the approaching host, and preparations were hurriedly made for the departure of the governmental forces. The President and the members of the Cabinet, with the heads of the bureaus of the various departments, together with many of the clerks, made ready for leaving.

The streets of the city were filled with eager and stolid- countenanced people, and everything was hurry and bustle and preparation, for never before had Richmond felt that the doom of capture was in store for her. During four long years, the armies of the enemy had been beaten away from her very gates, but now the sad realization of the inevitable seemed to possess the gallant Confederate citizens. During the years of conflict they had become inured to the rattle of their windows by the thunder of the Federal guns, but now all was suddenly changed. The chief problem with the citizens, as numbers of them expressed it to me, was whether they should attempt to leave the city or to remain at their homes and submit to the invading army. The question, however, was practically predetermined for them. Limited transportation facilities over the single remaining line of railroad south, and the use of that for the conveyance of such of the archives as could be carried, together with the demands made upon it by the officials of the Confederacy, left but small opportunity for the inhabitants to escape; a few, however, were accommodated on the train which bore away the archives and the Government officials.

The fall of the capital of the Confederacy apparently foreshadowed the fall of the Confederacy itself, and the gloom which pervaded all ranks of society was appalling.

The pen of man cannot be dipped in ink black enough to draw the darkness of that night which fell over Richmond. Throughout the city reigned a quiet, undemonstrative confusion, such as the realization of the inevitable draws with it hardly a soul in all the capital found rest in sleep, for on the morrow it was certain the stars and bars would be replaced by the stars and stripes, and the dream of an independent Confederacy would have blown over like a mist from the sea. I like not to recall the terrible tenseness of that one night with the awful message it bore to the Government of the Confederacy.

It was near midnight when the President and his Cabinet left the heroic city. As our train, frightfully overcrowded, rolled along toward Danville we were oppressed with sorrow for those we left behind us and with fears for the safety of General Lee and his army. At the last Cabinet conference our hope had been, and it was General Lee's, that he might join with General Johnston in North Carolina, and that their combined armies might interpose between General Grant and General Sherman. There was in this movement a gleam of hope, for faith in the success of the Confederacy had as yet not been wholly abandoned by the Cabinet. We were speeding on toward Danville when a message came bearing the melancholy tidings that General Lee had actually abandoned the lines about Petersburg and Richmond and was in retreat. After almost constant fighting and a most heroic struggle, for weary days, against overwhelming odds, General Lee was compelled to surrender at Appomattox the army which had fought so many battles and won so many victories over superior numbers.

We reached Danville on the morning of the third of April, and remained there several days. When we were leaving news was brought to us that the citizens were robbing the commissary and quartermaster's stores. We made no stop until we reached Greensboro, North Carolina, on tenth instant. The President called from the field Generals Johnston and Beauregard to discuss with them the situation, for they commanded the forces in that State, and practically our only army in that part of the Confederacy. After receiving their report of the condition of the army there, the President called for the members of the Cabinet and General Johnston to meet him at ten o'clock the next morning at the house of Colonel John Taylor Wood, a member of his staff, for the purpose of considering what should be done in view of the conditions reported by these generals.

The army of Lee having surrendered, this was our last hope in that part of the Confederacy. They reported that they were unable to meet successfully the forces commanded by Sherman, and that retreat would render it necessary to abandon a part of their artillery in order to get horses for purposes of transportation. In addition to this they suggested that a retreat would cause the desolation of the country through which it was made.

Our meeting at Colonel Wood's home the next morning was one of the most solemnly funereal I ever attended, as it was apparent that we must consider the probable loss of our cause. When we were convened, a general conversation was indulged in for some time. No one seemed disposed to take up the business for which we were assembled. With feelings I cannot well describe, I stated that if we were to proceed as in a council of war, where the youngest spoke first, I was prepared to give my views. The President and the other members of the Cabinet suggested that I should proceed. I then proposed in substance, as bases for negotiations for peace with the enemy, the following:

- I. The disbanding of the military forces of the Confederacy.
- II. The recognition of the Constitution and authority of the Government of the United States.

- III. The preservation and continuance of the existing State Governments.
- IV. The preservation to the people of all their political rights and the rights of person and property secured to them by the Constitution of the United States and of their several States.
- V. Freedom from future prosecution or penalties for participation in the present war.
- VI. Agreement to a general suspension of hostilities pending these negotiations.

General Breckinridge, Secretary of War, expressed his approval of these suggestions; Secretary Mallory, of the Navy, did likewise; and Attorney-General Davis commended them; but the Secretary of State, Benjamin, announced himself in favor of continuing the struggle. The Cabinet realized the hopelessness of such a course and decided against him. The President then instructed General Johnston, on returning to his command, to present these views to General Sherman.

On the next day, I think it was, the President and his party left Greensboro for Charlotte, North Carolina. But before we started the citizens began raiding the quartermaster and commissary supplies, and pillaging the stores of the town. They were finally fired on and driven off. While General Johnston was with us at Greensboro he told President Davis that General Sherman had authorized him to say that he (Davis) might leave the country on a United States vessel and take with him whoever and whatever he pleased. To this the President replied, *"I shall do no act which will put me under obligations to the Federal Government"*. This was not given to the public by any member of the Cabinet, so far as I know, as we did not know whether General Sherman was authorized to make such an offer, until he made it public in an after-dinner speech in New York in the summer of 1866. In that address he said he had inquired of President Lincoln whether he should capture Mr. Davis or let him go; and that Mr. Lincoln replied by an anecdote about a temperance lecturer in Illinois, who, when cold and wet, had stopped for the night at a wayside inn. The landlord, noting his condition, inquired whether he would have a glass of brandy. *"No"*, came the reply; *"I am a temperance lecturer and do not drink"*. However, after a pause, he said to the landlord, *"I shall be obliged to you for a drink of water, and if you should put a little brandy in it unbeknownst to me, it will be all right"*.

When we had gotten about half way to Charlotte, the President received a dispatch from General Johnston, informing him that he was in communication with General Sherman, and requesting that some one should be sent to assist in the negotiations. Mr. Davis requested the attendance of General Breckinridge and myself, and, stating the substance of the dispatch, observed that as I had proposed the bases for the negotiations, he desired me to go, and that as there might be a refusal to treat with the civil authorities of the Confederacy, he wished General Breckinridge to go to represent the Army. Breckinridge and myself left at once, traveling that night, the next day and the second night until near daylight, when we reached the headquarters of General Johnston. (Much of the railroad track had been torn up and a number of bridges burned, which caused this delay). General Hampton was with him. We had breakfast toward sun-up; and shortly afterward General Johnston suggested that he and General Breckinridge would go to the place of meeting and entertain General Sherman until I could put in writing our proposed terms. This programme was followed, and I sent the paper to General Johnston, who subsequently stated that it contained with slight variations the terms of the armistice agreed on by those generals.

I did not join in the negotiations beyond this, because objection had been made to the recognition of the civil government of the Confederacy. But the Federal Government refused to recognize the terms of surrender as proposed between Johnston and Sherman; and so an arrangement was drawn up similar to that effected at Appomattox, and General Johnston's army was surrendered. On receipt of information of the surrender of General Johnston, Mr. Davis requested the written opinion of the members of his Cabinet as to what course should be adopted in this extremity. In my opinion, which contained a pretty full review of the situation, I advised acquiescence in the terms of surrender. It was as follows:

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, April 22, 1865.
To THE PRESIDENT.

SIR:

"In obedience to your request for the opinions in writing of the members of the Cabinet, on the questions: First, as to whether you should assent to the preliminary agreement of the 18th instant between Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, of the Confederate Army, and Maj.-Gen. W. T. Sherman, of the Army of the United States, for the suspension of hostilities and the adjustment of the difficulties between the two countries; and if so, second, the proper mode of executing this agreement on our part, I must advise painful as the necessity is, in view of the relative condition of the armies and resources of the belligerents the acceptance of the terms of the agreement. General Lee, the general-in-chief of our armies, has been compelled to surrender our principal army, heretofore employed in the defense of our capital, with a loss of a very large part of our ordnance, arms, munitions of war, and military stores of all kinds, with what remained of our naval establishment. The officers of the civil government have been compelled to abandon the capital, carrying with them the archives, and thus to close, for the time at least, the regular operations of its several Departments, with no place now open to us at which we can reestablish and put these Departments in operation, with any prospects of permanency or security for the transaction of the public business and the carrying on of the Government.

The army under the command of General Johnston has been reduced and this force is, from demoralization and despondency, melting away rapidly by the troops returning to their homes singly and in numbers large and small; it being the opinion of Generals Johnston and Beauregard that with the men and means at their command, they can oppose no serious obstacle to the advance of General Sherman's army. General Johnston is of the opinion that the enemy's forces now in the field exceed ours in numbers by probably ten to one. Our forces in the South, though still holding the fortifications at Mobile, have been unable to prevent the fall of Selma and Montgomery in Alabama, and of Columbus and Macon in Georgia, with their magazines, workshops, and stores of supplies.

The army west of the Mississippi is unavailable for the arrest of the victorious career of the enemy east of that river, and is inadequate for the defense of the country west of it. The country is worn down by a brilliant and heroic, but exhausting and bloody struggle of four years. Our ports are closed so as to exclude the hope of procuring arms and supplies from abroad; and we are unable to arm our people, even if they were willing to continue the struggle.

The supplies of quartermaster and commissary stores in the country are very limited in amount, and our railroads are so broken and destroyed as to prevent, to a great extent, the transportation and accumulation of those remaining. Our currency has lost its purchasing power, and there is no means of supplying the treasury; and the people are hostile to impressments and endeavor to conceal such supplies as are needed for the army from the officers charged with their collection. Our armies, in case of a prolongation of the struggle, will continue to melt away as they retreat through the country.

There is danger, and I think I might say certainty, based on the information we have, that a portion, and probably all of the States will make separate terms with the enemy as they are over-run, with the chance that the terms so obtained will be less favorable than those contained in the agreement under consideration. And the despair of our people will prevent a much longer continuance of serious resistance, unless they shall be hereafter urged to it by unendurable oppressions.

The agreement under consideration secures to our people, if ratified by both parties, the uninterrupted continuance of the existing State governments; the guarantees of their political rights and of their rights of person and property, and immunity from future prosecutions and penalties for their participation in the existing war, on the condition that we accept the Constitution and Government of the United States and disband our armies by marching the troops to their respective States, and depositing their arms in the State arsenals, subject to the future control of that Government, but with a verbal understanding that they are only to be used for the preservation of peace and order in the respective States. It is also to be observed that the agreement contains no direct reference to the question of slavery, requires no concessions from us in regard to it, and leaves it subject to the Constitution and laws of the United States and of the several States just as it was before the war.

With these facts before us, and under the belief that we can not now reasonably hope for the achievement of our independence, which should be dearer than life if it were attainable, and under the belief that a continuance of the struggle, with its sacrifices of life and property, and its accumulation of sufferings, without a reasonable prospect of success, would be both unwise and criminal, I advise that you assent to the agreement as the best you can now do for the people who have clothed you with the high trust of your position.

In advising this course, I do not conceal from myself, nor would I withhold from your Excellency, the danger of trusting the people who drove us to war by their unconstitutional and unjust aggressions, and who will now add the consciousness of power to their love of dominion and greed of gain.

It is right also for me to say that much as we have been exhausted in men and resources, I am of the opinion that if our people could be induced to continue the contest with the spirit which animated them during the first years of the war, our independence might yet be in our reach. But I see no reason to hope for that now.

On the second question, as to the proper mode of executing the agreement, I have to say that whatever you may do looking to the termination of the contest by an amicable arrangement which may embrace the extinction of the government of the Confederate States, must be done without special authority to be found in the Constitution. And yet, I am of the opinion, that charged as you are with the duty of looking after the general welfare of the people, and without time or opportunity, under the peculiarity and necessities of the case, to submit the whole question to the States for their deliberation

and action without danger of losing material advantages provided in the agreement; and as I believe that you, representing the military power and authority of all the States, can obtain better terms for them than it is probable they could obtain each for itself; and as it is in your power, if the Federal authorities accept this agreement, to terminate the ravages of war sooner than it can be done by the several States, while the enemy is still unconscious of the full extent of our weakness, you should, in case of the acceptance of the terms of this agreement by the authorities of the United States, accept them on the part of the Confederate States, and take steps for the disbanding of the Confederate armies on the terms agreed on. As you have no power to change the government of the country, or to transfer the allegiance of the people, I would advise that you submit to the several States, through their governors, the question as to whether they will, in the exercise of their own sovereignty, accept, each for itself, the terms proposed.

To this it may be said, that after the disbanding of our armies and the abandonment of the contest by the Confederate Government, they would have no alternative but to accept the terms proposed or an unequal and hopeless war, and it would be needless for them to go through the forms and incur the trouble and expense of assembling a convention for the purpose. To such an objection, if urged, it may be answered that we entered into the contest to maintain and vindicate the doctrine of States rights and State sovereignty, and the right of self-government, and we can only be faithful to the Constitution of the United States, and true to the principles in support of which we have expended so much blood and treasure, by the employment of the same agencies to return into the old Union which we employed in separating from it and in forming our present Government; and if this should be an unwelcome and enforced action by the States, it will be no more so on the part of the States than on the part of the President, if he were to undertake to execute the whole agreement, and while they would have authority for acting, he would have none.

This plan would at least conform to the theory of the Constitution of the United States, and would, in future, be an additional precedent, to which the friends of States rights could point in opposing the doctrine of the consolidation of powers in the central government. And if the future shall disclose a disposition (of which I fear the chance is remote) on the part of the people of the United States to return to the spirit and meaning of the Constitution, then this action on the part of the States might prove to be of great value to the friends of constitutional liberty and good government.

In addition to the terms of agreement, an additional provision should be asked for, which will probably be allowed without objection, stipulating for the withdrawal of the Federal forces from the several States of the Confederacy except a sufficient number to garrison the permanent fortifications and take care of the public property until the States can call their conventions and take action on the proposed terms. In addition to the necessity for this course, in order to make their action as free and voluntary as other circumstances will allow, it would aid in softening the bitter memories which must necessarily follow such a contest as that in which we are engaged. Nothing is said in the agreement about the public debt and the disposition of our public property beyond the turning over of the arms to the State arsenals. In the final adjustment we should endeavor to secure provisions for the auditing of the debt of the Confederacy, and for its payment in common with the war debt of the United States.

We may ask this on the ground that we did not seek this war, but only sought peaceful separation to secure our people and States from the effects of unconstitutional

encroachments by the other States, and because, on the principles of equity, allowing that both parties had acted in good faith, and gone to war on a misunderstanding which admitted of no other solution, and now agree to a reconciliation, and to a burial of the past, it would be unjust to compel our people to assist in the payment of the war debt of the United States, and for them to refuse to allow such of the revenues as we might contribute to be applied to the payment of our creditors. If it should be said that this is a liberality never extended by the conqueror to the conquered, the answer is that if the object of the pacification is to restore the Union in good faith and to reconcile the people to each other, to restore confidence and faith, and prosperity and homogeneity, then it is of the first importance that the terms of reconciliation should be based on entire equity, and that no just ground of grief or complaint should be left to either party.

And both parties, looking not only to the present, but to the interests of future generations, the amount of money which would be involved, though large, would be as nothing when compared with a reconciliation entirely equitable, which should leave no sting to honor, and no sense of wrong to rankle in the memories of the people, and lay the foundations for new difficulties and for future wars. It is to this feature, it seems to me, the greatest attention should be given by both sides. It will be of the highest importance to all, for the present as well as the future, that the frankness, sincerity and justice of both parties shall be as conspicuous in the adjustment of past difficulties, as their courage and endurance have been conspicuous during the war, if we would make peace on a basis which should be satisfactory and might be rendered perpetual.

In any event provisions should be made which will authorize the Confederate authorities to sell the public property remaining on hand, and to apply the proceeds, as far as they will go, to the payment of our public liabilities, or for such other dispositions as may be found advisable.

But if the terms of this agreement should be rejected, or so modified by the Government of the United States, as to refuse a recognition of the right of local self-government and our political rights of persons and property, or so as to refuse amnesty for past participation in the war, then it will be our duty to continue the struggle as best we can, however unequal it may be; as it would be better and more honorable to waste our lives and substance in such a contest than to yield both to the mercy of a remorseless conqueror.

I am, with great respect, your Excellency's obedient servant",

*JOHN H. REAGAN,
Postmaster-General.*

CHAPTER XVI - THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET IN RETREAT

At Charlotte, North Carolina, we received the melancholy information, through General Johnston, of the assassination of President Lincoln. The President and members of the Cabinet, with one accord, greatly regretted the occurrence. We felt that his death was most unfortunate for the people of the Confederacy, because we believed that it would intensify the feeling of hostility in the Northern States against us, and because we believed we could expect better terms from Lincoln than from Johnson, who had shown marked hostility to us, and was especially unfriendly to President Davis.



Left, Jefferson Davis in the attire he was wearing when captured. Right, period drawing showing President Davis held in Fort Monroe (Library of Congress)

While at Charlotte, Attorney-General Davis stated to me that his home and valuable city property at Wilmington, North Carolina, were in the possession of the Federal authorities, and that his children, his wife being dead, were with some friends near Charlotte, and without means of support, and that this raised the question with him as to whether he should go on with us or remain and take care of them, and that he wished to confer with me about it. I said to him that I did not see what good he could do by going on with us, and I did not hesitate to say that he ought to remain and take care of his children. He asked me to bring the matter to the attention of the President and the Cabinet, which I did, and with one accord they said he should remain with his children, that he could be of no further service to us as Attorney-General.

While we were at Charlotte the remnants of Hood's brigade, under the command of Maj. W. H. Martin of Texas, came by, and in conversation with him he told me that at the surrender of General Lee a number of blank parole papers had fallen into his hands. At my request he gave me some of them, and later both Senator Wigfall and Secretary Mallory used them in passing the Federal lines. Here again we witnessed the looting of the commissary and quartermaster stores by the citizens.

Before leaving Richmond Mr. Trenholm, the Secretary of the Treasury, became seriously ill. He had been sent to Greensboro, and thence to Charlotte, but he had been unable to participate in the business of the Cabinet. When we left Charlotte he made an effort to travel with us, but after some twenty miles found himself unable to go farther, and resigned his position as Secretary of the Treasury. Thereupon a meeting of the Cabinet was held, in my absence; and after consultation, the President sent for me and requested me to accept the appointment as Secretary of the Treasury ad interim. I objected, alleging that I thought some other person ought to be appointed, that my duties as Postmaster-General and as manager of the telegraph would require most of my time.

To this he rejoined that there would not be much for the Secretary of the Treasury to do, and that the members of the Cabinet concurred with him in the opinion that I should assume the role. On my accepting the appointment, Secretary Trenholm turned over to my charge the money he had in keeping, consisting of seven or eight hundred thousand

dollars of what was called our "new issue" of treasury notes, and some eighty thousand dollars in gold, and silver coin and bullion. There was also under our escort the money of the banks of Richmond, the amount of which I did not know. On our way to Abbeville, South Carolina, President Davis and I, traveling in advance of the others, passed a cabin on the roadside, where a lady was standing in the door.

He turned aside and requested of her a drink of water, which she brought. While he was drinking, a little baby hardly old enough to walk crawled down the steps. The lady asked whether this was not President Davis; and on his answering in the affirmative, she pointed to the little boy and said, "*He is named for you*". Mr. Davis took a gold coin from his pocket and asked her to keep it for his namesake. It was a foreign piece, and from its size I supposed it to be worth three or four dollars. As we rode off he told me that that was the last coin he had, and that he would not have had it but for the fact that he had never seen another like it and that he had kept it as a pocket-piece.

At Broad River, South Carolina, we stopped on its bank to enjoy a luncheon we had brought along with us, and to take a little rest. While we were there the subject of the condition in which the war left us, came up. The property of Secretary Benjamin, situated in Louisiana, and that of Secretary Breckinridge in Kentucky, was in Federal hands. The fine residence of Secretary Mallory at Pensacola, Florida, had been burned by the enemy. My residence in Texas had been wrecked and partly burned, and my property dissipated except a farm of a few hundred acres and some uncultivated land. After we had joked each other about our fallen fortunes the President took out his pocket-book and showed a few Confederate bills, stating that that constituted his wealth. He added that it was a gratification to him that no member of his Cabinet had made money out of his position. We were all financially wrecked except Secretary Trenholm, whose wealth, we thought, might save him. But it afterward turned out that he too was bankrupt.

As I am here writing of the pecuniary condition of the President and his Cabinet, I ought to mention that when General Grant was moving his forces to turn Vicksburg by going down the west side and crossing to the east bank of the Mississippi River, I was with the President when an officer came to him with the message that in a few days his Briar Field plantation would be in the hands of the Federals, and that he had better send and have his negroes and other movable property taken to a place of safety. Mr. Davis's reply was, "*The President of the Confederacy cannot employ men to take care of his private property*". And again when Grant's army had crossed the river and was moving toward the city of Jackson I was present when Mr. Davis was urged to have his library and other private property removed from his hill residence before they fell into the hands of the Federals. His answer was as in the first instance. Thus in his unselfish and patriotic devotion to the cause so dear to his heart he permitted his entire property to be swept away.

When we reached Abbeville we were there joined by the remnants of five brigades of cavalry. The President had a conference with their commanders, and sought to learn of their condition and spirit. And here again we witnessed the raids made on the provisions by the citizens. I was forced to the thought that the line between barbarism and civilization is at times very narrow.

We crossed the Savannah River, very early in the morning, en route for Washington, Georgia, and were informed that Federal cavalry was at that place. After crossing the river we stopped at a farmhouse and got breakfast and had our horses fed. There Secretary Benjamin, who could not comfortably ride horseback, parted from us. With a

traveling companion he set out in a wheeled carriage. He told me that only the President and his Cabinet knew his purpose, and that he did not want it made public. I inquired of him where he was going. *"To the farthest place from the United States"*, he announced with emphasis, *"if it takes me to the middle of China"*. He had his trunk in the carriage with his initials, J. P. B., plainly marked on it. I inquired whether that might not betray him. *"No"*, he replied, *"there is a Frenchman traveling in the Southern States who has the same initials, and I can speak broken English like a French man"*. He made his way to London, England.

We found no Federal cavalry at Washington, where we remained a few days. Before reaching that place, General Breckinridge and myself, recognizing the importance of preventing the capture of the President, proposed to him that he put on soldier's clothes, a wool hat and brogan shoes, and take one man with him and go to the coast of Florida, ship to Cuba, and thence by an English vessel to the mouth of the Rio Grande. We proposed to take what troops we still had, to go west, crossing the Chattahoochee between Chattanooga and Atlanta, and the Mississippi River, and to meet him in Texas. His reply to our suggestion was, *"I shall not leave Confederate soil while a Confederate regiment is on it"*.

I might have known his attitude in such a matter, for we had discussed the subject of the Hungarian struggle for liberty and of General Kossuth's visit to the United States, and the resolutions by Congress complimentary to him. The President had said to me, *"You may remember that I voted against them"*. I replied that Judge Scurry, the Representative of the district in which I lived, had also voted against them, and that I had written him a letter complimenting him on his vote. Mr. Davis added, *"I voted against those resolutions because I did not believe a brave man or patriot would have abandoned his country with an army of 30,000 men in the field"*.

I ought to say here that it was now our hope to reach General Kirby Smith before his command was surrendered, and that with his troops and such others as we could take with us and those General Hampton hoped to get across the Mississippi, we might have about 60,000 men, and could move out on the plains where we could not be flanked by railroads or rivers, and hold out until we could get better terms than unconditional surrender. After some delay at Washington, we induced Mr. Davis to start on south with an escort of ten men, his staff officers and secretary, and to leave General Breckinridge to wind up the business of the War Department, and me to close the business of the Post Office Department and the Treasury, and to turn over to their agent the money of the Richmond banks. We were then to go on and overtake him. He left Washington in the morning. By midnight we had finished our business and I had delivered the money of the banks to their agent.

A little later General Breckinridge came to me and told me he did not wish to be considered as vacillating, but that he had determined to adopt the course we suggested to the President to take the troops and get across the Mississippi. *"General, you cannot do that now"*, I said. *"Since we submitted that plan I have gone among the soldiers at night in citizen's clothes and heard their talk. They are saying the war is over and that they are going home"*. I added, *"I think you will find that you can take only such men as are personally attached to you"*. He thought he could get them all to go with him. It was then agreed that I should leave that night and overtake the President as soon as possible; and General Breckinridge insisted that I should have an escort. I demurred, but he prevailed, sending me an escort of twelve men.

The escort was instructed to go with me until we overtook the President, and then to turn their course to the northwest and meet the command which would be with Breckinridge. We rode ahead a few hours until we reached a small creek, and while our horses were drinking I told the men that we should have to ride hard to come up with the President; that by that time their horses would be tired; that in turning to the northwest they might fail to meet the Secretary of War, thereby endangering their safety, and that I was safer without an escort than with one not strong enough to fight its way. So I advised them to return to Washington.

They objected, saying that their orders were to go with me until we should meet the President. I replied that I understood their orders, but that it was better for them and safer for me that they should return. They finally agreed, requesting, however, a written statement; but neither paper, pencil, nor pen was to be had. So I told them to take my compliments to the Secretary of War and tell him that I required them to return.

When we left Abbeville, the President and his Cabinet and the members of his staff went in advance of the cavalry. The money of the Confederacy and of the banks of Richmond was carried under their escort, the Secretary of War remaining with them. After they crossed the Savannah River and camped, before reaching Washington, the cavalry, knowing that they were guarding money, demanded a portion of it. There was understood to be about \$25,000 in silver, about \$36,000 in silver bullion, besides about \$700,000 in Confederate notes and a small amount of gold. The Secretary of War told me that after he reached Washington the cavalry demanded that the silver and gold coin, equal to the amount of the silver bullion, should be divided among them, and that he and the officers commanding them found it necessary to yield or to risk their forcibly seizing it. He also told me, and I learned this from others also, that this money was divided among them, each one getting a few dollars, I forget how many, the officers receiving the same amount as the men.

On the evening of the day we reached Washington, I called on General Toombs and his family. After some conversation he invited me into a separate room, and inquired whether I had money. I told him I had enough to take me to the west of the Mississippi. He inquired whether I was well mounted. I replied that I had one of the best saddle horses in the country. He added: *"I am at home and can command what I want, and if you need anything, I can supply you"*, for which I thanked him. He then asked if President Davis had money. My answer was that he had not, but that I had enough to take us both beyond the Mississippi. Then he wanted to know whether Mr. Davis was well mounted. I replied that he had his fine bay horse, Kentucky, and that General Lee had sent to him at Greensboro, by his son Robert, his gray war horse, Traveler, as a present, so that he had two first-class horses.

After a moment, General Toombs observed, *"Mr. Davis and I have had a quarrel, but we have none now; and under the terms agreed to between Johnston and Sherman he is entitled to go anywhere he pleases between here and the Chattahoochee River, and I want you to say to him that my men are around me here, and that if he desires it I will call them together and see him safely across the Chattahoochee River at the risk of my life"*. I was much impressed with so noble a sentiment, because it was so different from the conduct of some others who had pretended to be the President's close friends, and who were then getting away as far as they could from him, and were base enough to malign him, no doubt with the hope that such abuse would secure them the favor of our enemy.

On my return to the hotel I delivered General Toombs's message to the President. Mr. Davis responded warmly, "*That is like Toombs; he always was a whole souled man if it were necessary, I should not hesitate to accept his offer*". This was the interchange of feeling of two noble patriots in the hour of misfortune.

Perhaps in this connection I ought to explain General Toombs's reference to a quarrel between them. He had been appointed Secretary of State by Mr. Davis. He preferred, however, giving up that position and entering the military service; and was appointed a brigadier-general by the President. He afterward sought promotion to the rank of major-general. I had gone twice to Mr. Davis to urge his promotion; but the President, while speaking kindly of General Toombs, said he had in no case made a promotion against the objection of superior officers; adding that both General Lee and General Magruder objected to his advancement.

When General Toombs spoke of the quarrel I felt a strong desire to disclose to him why he had not been promoted, but hesitated to do so because this would have been to transfer the quarrel from Mr. Davis to Generals Lee and Magruder. I saw General Toombs twice afterward, and both times I felt a wish to disabuse his mind as to the President, and now regret that I did not do so.

Before the President left Washington, upon consultation with the Cabinet, it was determined that I should turn over the remaining part of the Confederate gold to a Mr. Semple, a bonded officer of the Navy, and his assistant, Mr. Titball, who were to conceal it under the false bottom of a carriage and to take it to Charleston, Savannah, or to some other point on the coast, and ship it to Bermuda, Nassau, or to our agent in England, for account of the Confederate Government. Before this shipment was made, by an understanding between the President and Cabinet, I directed the Treasurer to pay out a portion of the money to a number of officers, and possibly to others, which was done.

The President, as I learned after coming up with him again, expected me to bring along the Confederate paper money. But as it was packed in large boxes, and I had no means of securing its transportation, I was unwilling that it should fall into improper hands, and, after conferring with and securing the approval of the Secretary of War, I ordered this money brought to my hotel, and, having caused a good wood fire to be made in a wide fire-place, directed the Acting Treasurer to burn it, which he did under protest. The last I saw of the silver bullion, said to amount to about \$36,000, a Confederate commissary by the name of Moses was having it thrown from a wagon into an open warehouse on the square in Washington. From the newspaper accounts which I saw while in prison, it appeared that the Federal authorities got possession of it.

On my way to overtake the President and his party I passed Double Wells, Georgia, in the gray light of the morning. I had been told that a regiment of Federal cavalry was there, but saw none. After going some distance farther I made inquiry at several houses as to whether I could get breakfast and feed for my horse; but was told that they were unable to comply with my request. Toward ten o'clock I learned that there was a widow on ahead who would give me breakfast and have my horse fed. When I reached the place she kindly consented to supply my need.

While breakfast was being prepared, she manifested a disposition to learn who I was, and at the table asked me where I was from. I told her that I was from Virginia, and that I had heard there was a good country for grazing stock in southwest Georgia and I thought I would take a look at it. I at once discovered that she was a strong Confederate. She advised me that there was a regiment of Federal cavalry at a town some ten miles

farther on, and assisted me in making a diagram of the road so that I might pass around it. I did not follow the diagram, but rode on through the town and saw no cavalry. During the afternoon of that day I found Governor Lubbock and Col. William Preston Johnston at a shop getting their horses shod. They informed me that the President and his party were about half a mile away, on another road.

From that place we moved on south to the Oconee River, and encamped on the east bank. During the evening, Colonel Johnston and another man, having walked down to the ferry, heard some men describing a wagon train which was moving across the country, some twenty miles to the left of our course, which they spoke of as a quartermaster's or commissary train, and which they understood was to be robbed that night by some disbanded soldiers. From the description, Colonel Johnston knew it to be that of Mrs. Davis, the wife of the President. Mr. Davis had not seen her since she left Richmond, and had not known where she was for some time. When he received this information he ordered and mounted his horse, addressing himself to those with him: *"This move will probably cause me to be captured or killed. I do not feel that you are bound to go with me, but I must protect my family"*.

The entire company went along. The roads we had to travel for the most part were dim and tortuous, and it was near morning when we reached Mrs. Davis's camp. A Confederate captain from Vicksburg, Mississippi, and a Confederate lieutenant from Texas were acting as an escort for her and family. We met two or three men in the road near the camp, who were interrogated by the President; from others at the camp we learned that some persons had been seen around the camp during the night; but nothing alarming had been attempted.

That day we crossed the Oconee River, and after a short drive camped for the night. Feeling that the danger to his family had passed, the next morning Mr. Davis and I, and the members of his staff and his secretary, left Mrs. Davis and did not expect to see her again soon. But it rained a good deal during the day, and we lost our way, and an hour or so before night we met Mrs. Davis's company at a fork of the road, near the Ocmulgee River. She had gone directly through, while we had lost our way; hence the meeting.

We knew that there were three thousand Federal cavalry at Hawkinsville, twenty-five miles above where we were to cross the Ocmulgee, and as we had to cross at a ferry the river not being fordable, we expected that if this cavalry knew of our movements we should have trouble at the river. We crossed, however, without interruption, and camped at an old village called Abbeville.

The next day we traveled in company with Mrs. Davis about twenty-eight miles, and camped near a small creek in the level pine woods, a mile or two from Irwinsville. The President notified us to be ready to move on that night, the family to be left behind. Information in some way subsequently got to us that some traitor had gone from Abbeville and reported our being there to the military at Hawkinsville. The day we reached our camp near Irwinsville, Colonel Pritchard, with a regiment of cavalry, passed along a road which paralleled the one we were on, to the left of us, and got into Irwinsville in advance of us.

For some reason the President did not call for us that night, though we sat up until pretty late. Under cover of the darkness, Colonel Pritchard moved to where we were, and posted one battalion in front of us, and another across the creek in our rear. About dawn, an Iowa battalion, in pursuit of us, came in sight of the Federals in our rear, and each took the other, in the dimness of the morning, for Confederates. Both battalions

were armed with repeating rifles, and a rapid fusillade occurred between them. One or two were killed and a few wounded.

When this firing occurred, the troops in our front galloped upon us. The major of the regiment reached the place where I and the members of the President's staff were camped, about one hundred yards from where the President and his family had their tents. When he approached me I was watching a struggle between two Federal soldiers and Governor Lubbock. They were trying to get his horse and saddle bags away from him and he was holding on to them and refusing to give them up; they threatened to shoot him if he did not, and he replied (he was not as good a Presbyterian then as he is now) that they might shoot and be damned, but that they should not rob him while he was alive and looking on.

I had my revolver cocked and in my hand, waiting to see if the shooting was to begin. Just at this juncture the major rode up, the men contending with Lubbock disappeared, and the major asked if I had any arms. I drew my revolver from under the skirt of my coat and said to him, "*I have this*".

He observed that he supposed I had better give it to him. I knew that they were too many for us and surrendered my pistol. I asked him then if he had not better stop the firing across the creek. He inquired whether it was not our men. I told him that it could not be; that I did not know of an armed Confederate within a hundred miles of us except our little escort of half a dozen men, and that they were not then with us. We learned afterward that they, or the most of them, had been captured at Irwinsville. The major rode across the creek and put an end to the skirmish.

When the firing began, President Davis afterward told me, he supposed it to be the work of the men who were to rob Mrs. Davis's train. So he remarked to his wife, "*Those men have attacked us at last; I will go out and see if I cannot stop the firing; surely I will have some authority with the Confederates*". Upon going to the tent door, however, he saw the blue-coats, and turned to his wife with the words, "*The Federal cavalry are upon us*". He was made a prisoner of war.

As one of the means of making the Confederate cause odious, the foolish and wicked charge was made that he was captured in woman's clothes; and his portrait, showing him in petticoats, was afterward placarded generally in show cases and public places in the North. He was also pictured as having bags of gold on him when captured. This charge of his being arrested in woman's clothes is not proven by the circumstances attending his capture. The suddenness of the unexpected attack of the enemy allowed no time for a change of clothes. I saw him a few minutes after his surrender, wearing his accustomed suit of Confederate gray, with his boots and hat on, and I have elsewhere shown that he had no money.

After our capture we were taken by the way of Macon. Atlanta, and Augusta to Savannah. On the morning of the day we arrived at Macon, while I and the President's staff were taking an humble breakfast, sitting on the ground, Colonel Pritchard came by where we were, and I said to him that I understood we were to reach Macon that morning, that I had not changed my clothing for some time, and requested some clothes which I had in my saddle bags, taken from me when we were captured. "*We have not got your saddle bags*", he answered me. "*I am sorry to hear you say that, Colonel*", I retorted; "*for I know you have them*".

He asked me how I knew that.

"*Because your officers told me of your examining their contents the night after our capture*", I answered; "*and named correctly what was in them*".

With some temper he questioned, "*Who told you so?*"

"Your officers".

"What officers?"

"Since you question the fact", I said, *"I will not put them in your power by giving their names"*. Then I added, *"It does not look well for a colonel of cavalry in the United States Army to steal clothes"*.

"Sir", he said, *"I will put you in irons"*.

"You have the power to do so", I replied, *"but it will not make you a gentleman or a man of truth"*.

He walked off as if intending to execute his threat, but I heard no more of it.

When we reached Macon, we were taken to the headquarters of General Wilson, which was a large building that had been used as a hotel. General Wilson invited President Davis, his staff, and myself to dine with him, treating us with courtesy. After dinner I learned that orders had been received to send to Washington President Davis and Senator Clay, who had voluntarily surrendered after President Johnson's proclamation implicating him in the assassination of President Lincoln; and that I and the others with us were to remain at Macon. I called on General Wilson and inquired as to the correctness of this report, and received an affirmative answer.

I thereupon observed that President Davis was much worn down, and that, as I was the only member of his political family with him, I might be of some service to him, and requested to have the order so changed as to send me on with him. He asked me if I was aware that this might involve me in danger. I told him I had considered that; that we had entered the contest together, and that I was willing to end it with him, whatever that end might be. He observed that mine was a queer request, but that he would ask that it be granted. In two or three hours he notified us that the first order had been changed, and that all of us would be sent to Hampton Roads. At Augusta we were joined by Vice-President Stephens and General Wheeler, who had also been arrested. At Savannah we were all placed on a stern wheel steamer for the trip to Hampton Roads.

Shortly after reaching there, Vice-President Stephens and I received notice that we were to go to Fort Warren, in Boston harbor. We were placed on the man-of-war *Tuscarora*, the commander of which treated us as if we had been invited guests. Our ship reached Fort Warren early one forenoon, and we were taken separately into the fort and placed in what was called the lower tier of officer's quarters, though no officers had occupied the rooms assigned to us. The overhead ceiling of my room was about on a level with the parade grounds; and the light and air we got came down between the wall of the building and the wall of the parade ground, about six feet from the house. Two windows made secure by cross-bars of iron faced the space between these walls. There was no ventilation except through these. The walls and floor of these rooms were of stone, and there was a thick mass of stone masonry, cement, and earth above them; so that the places we occupied were damp and more like caves than rooms.

I was taken to my room about ten o'clock in the morning by an officer of the fort, and was told that I must give him what weapons of offense or defense, and what money I had. I turned over to him about two thousand dollars in gold, remarking that as I had only a pocket knife and was a great whittler that I presumed I might be allowed to keep my knife for company.

He said he feared not. I added that I had taken a pretty good survey of the situation as I came in, and saw that I passed through two heavy barred and bolted gates, that there appeared to be a strong garrison in the fort, that the fort was about four miles from land,

and that I did not think I would attack the garrison with my little congress knife. This brought him to a laugh, and I was allowed to keep it. Subsequently this officer brought a sergeant into my room and gave him his instructions, no doubt for my observance, that he was to make fires, bring water, and attend to such matters as were necessary about my room, but that he was not to ask or answer questions about anything else; at the same time he informed me that my rations would be so many ounces of bread and so many ounces of meat a day. I inquired why he made that statement. He said he was instructed to do so by the commander of the post. I asked him if this meant that I was to have no vegetables, or milk or coffee; and he replied that he supposed it did.

About two or three o'clock this sergeant came into my room with a tin plate and a piece of dark-looking bread and a darker looking piece of meat, and, placing them on a little pine table, said, "*Here is your day's rations*". I was reading a newspaper and made no response, for I had made up my mind that nothing should cause me to complain. I let it set there. And about the same time the next day the sergeant brought and set on the little table another plate just like the first. I took no notice of it and let it set there also. I did not intend to starve myself to death, but I intended to see how long I could live without eating; for I felt that the purpose of it was to insult me.

On the next morning the officer inquired whether I was sick. I told him I was well, and said, "*You have my money, can I not buy something fit to eat?*" He replied that he supposed not; but added that he would see the post commander. He returned in an hour or so with the message that I could order my meals by the sergeant from the post quartermaster, who furnished meals to the officers, and that every Saturday I could draw on the commissary of prisoners, who had my money, to pay for my week's board. He told me I could order any necessaries, but no luxuries. I asked him to explain what were necessaries so that I might conform to the order. After proceeding a little, I told him he might stop, as I did not want luxuries.

On account of the feeble condition of Vice-President Stephens, I inquired of the officer whether he was in a room like mine, for I feared if he were he could not live long. The officer shook his head, remarking that he was not permitted to answer questions. Vice-President Stephens and I were allowed to walk out on the walls of the fort accompanied by an officer, for half an hour each day, when the weather was good, but never together, and we were not permitted to communicate with others. In taking my walk I passed by the window of Mr. Stephens's room, and from hearing me talk with the officer he learned about the time of day I went out, and placing himself at the window of his room, he hailed me as I went by.

I made inquiry as to his health, and after a few words passed on. A First Lieutenant Woodman was my escort. He seemed to be looking somewhere else and took no notice of our greeting. Every day after that, Mr. Stephens would draw himself up to the window to let me know that he was still alive. He was so frail that he was soon afterward removed to a dry, well-ventilated room. He could not have lived much longer where he was. Lieutenant Woodman took no notice of our hasty talks as I passed him, and in other ways showed that he was a very humane man.

At the end of three months President Johnson sent a telegram authorizing Mr. Stephens and me to have our meals together, and giving us the liberty of the post between reveille and retreat, when there were no visitors on the island.

