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THE GREAT CONTEST.

FROM GEN. SHERMAN'S ARMY.

Rebel Attack on Dalton—Its Surrender Demanded and Denied—Attack on the place—Union Victory at Selma, Ala.

LOUISVILLE, Ky., August 17.

The rebel General Wheeler with seventeen hundred cavalrymen, demanded the surrender of Dalton, Ga., on the evening of the 14th instant, of Col. S. C. Lieboldt, of the 2d Missouri, commanding at that post.

The force of Col. Lieboldt numbers 800 men.

A slight skirmish was going on, when the last train left Dalton.

This train had Col. Callum and three other railroad men on board, returning from between Adairsville and Calhoun.

These men were obliged to repair the road, which had been destroyed by small detachments from Gen. Wheeler's force.

The rebels had also captured about seventeen Government cattle on their way to Atlanta, and nearly all the officers in charge of them.

The railroad men escaped after the train had left Dalton.

General Stedman being telegraphically advised of the movements of the rebels, started with a large force from Chattanooga in pursuit of them.

The latest heard from Dalton was just at nightfall on the 14th, when cannonading was going on.

Rumor says that as the trains were leaving Resaca fourteen of our men were captured by the rebel force that captured the cattle. This raid had been anticipated by Gen. Sherman, and he was prepared to meet the rebels at important points.

On Saturday three hundred guerrillas attacked Selma, Livingston County, Ky., garrisoned by thirty men of the Fourth Kentucky, and after a sharp fight were repulsed with the loss of eight killed, fifteen badly wounded, and several captured.

The Federal loss was three killed, one mortally wounded and several slightly, and four captured.

Several horses on each side were killed.

Twenty-five guerrillas, under Martin, were in Trumble county on Sunday night, near the Ohio river. They had been raiding down the road to West Point and making depredations on the people there. They plundered West Point of $1,000 in goods and money.

Henderson, Ky., still continues to be greatly excited. The rebel Col. Johnson is camped in the Fair grounds, and threatens the town.

About seventy-three guerrillas are in Brownsboro, under Hall, plundering the town and causing great excitement.

Further of the Attack on Dalton, Ga.

LOUISVILLE, August 17.

Three hundred and fifty head of cattle, captured by Wheeler, have been recovered.

The damage to the railroad near Calhoun has been repaired. Four trains were at Dalton when last heard from.

On the refusal of Col. Lieboldt to surrender, Wheeler attacked Dalton, and gained some buildings in the town, where they kept up a harassing fire, driving Lieboldt's men from their position to the station, where they checked the rebels. The enemy was on both sides of the railroad, trying to cut the road.

Steadman will probably reinforce Lieboldt in time. A down train is reported captured at Altona Pass. Wheeler's force is probably divided, and separating at different points. That portion at Dalton is aiming to destroy the tunnel at Tunnel Hill.

Telegraphic communication with Dalton has ceased by the cutting of the wire.

Operations of July 28th—Official Report of Gen. Logan—Guerilla Attack on Dalton—Rebel Repulse at Selma.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17.

The following report from Gen. Logan has been received at headquarters:

Headquarters Fifteenth Army Corps,
Before Atlanta, Ga., July 29th, 1864.

COLONEL: I have the honor to report that in pursuance of orders I moved my command in position on the right of the Seventeenth Army Corps, which was the extreme right of the army in the field on the night and morning of the 27th and 28th inst., and during my advance in line of battle to a more desirable position, we were met by the Rebel infantry from Hardee's and Lee's Corps, who made a desperate and determined attack at half past eleven o'clock, A.M., on the 28th. My lines were only protected by logs and rails hastily thrown in front of them. The first onset was received and checked, and the battle commenced and lasted until about three o'clock in the afternoon. During that time six successive charges were made, which were six times gallantly repulsed, each time with fearful loss to the enemy.

Later in the evening my lines were several times assaulted vigorously, but each time with like result. The most of the fighting occurred on Gens. Harrow's and Smith's front, which formed the centre and right of the command. The troops could not have displayed more courage nor greater determination not to yield. Had they shown less, they would have been driven from their position. Brig.-Gens. Woods, Harrow, and Smith's division commands are entiled to equal credit for gallant conduct and skill in repelling the assault.

My thanks are due to Maj.-Gens. Blair and Dodge for sending me reinforcements at a time when they were much needed.

My losses are 50 killed, 439 wounded, and 63 missing; aggregate 572. The division of Gen. Harrow captured five battle flags. There were about 1500 or 2000 muskets captured. One hundred and six prisoners were captured, exclusive of 73 wounded, who have been removed to hospitals and are being taken care of by our Surgeons.

Five hundred and sixty-five rebels up to this time have been buried, and about two hundred are supposed to be yet unburied.

Large numbers were undoubtedly carried away during the night, as the enemy did not withdraw until nearly daylight.

The enemy's loss could not have been, in my judgment, less than six thousand or seven thousand.

I am very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
JOHN A. LOGAN,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding 15th Army Corps.

Lieut.-Col. WM. T. CLARK,
Assistant Adjutant General.

ENDORSEMENT.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE.
Before Atlanta, Ga., July 29, 1864.

In forwarding the within report I wish to express my high gratification with the conduct of the troops engaged. I never saw better conduct in battle. The General commanding the 15th Army Corps, though ill and much worn was indefatigable, and the success of the day is as much attributable to him as to any one man. His officers and in fact all the officers of this Army that commanded my observation co-operated promptly and heartily with him. O. O. HOWARD, Major General.

FROM THE POTOMAC ARMY.

Operations North of the James—Birney within Six Miles of Richmond—Courage of the Colored Troops—A Fresh Water Freshet and Salt Water Joke.

Our Correspondent at Gen. Butler's head-quarters sends the following:

GEN. BUTLER'S HEAD-QUARTERS,
Aug. 16, 1864—7 p. m.

The operations of to-day on the north bank of the James require but few paragraphs. During the night Birney with the Tenth Corps left his line of the day before and assumed Hankock's, from which he advanced a line early in the morning without opposition, Hancock taking the reserves and left flank. Foster's old position at Deep Bottom was left with a few negro troops. Nearly all day was occupied in skirmishing and learning the ground. Gregg's cavalry, on the extreme right, rested its right on the Charles City Road, seven miles from Richmond. One brigade of the Second Corps connected it with Gen. Wm. Birney's provisional division of the Tenth Corps, consisting of the colored brigade lately from Florida, and two brigades of Turner's division of the Tenth Corps.

General Burnside was left in command of Butler's line from the Appomattox to the James. Terry's Division was next to the left, and Barlow's Second Corps on the refused flank. This line extended from the Charles City Road to the New Market Road, the Central Road being midway, at which point we were but six miles from Richmond. The line more nearly faces the river than it does Richmond, extending at an obtuse angle from the right of the line the day before.

The country is very thickly wooded; all woods save narrow cleared patches. The day was by the thermometer the warmest known this summer, and no air was stirring, hence little could be done in the middle of the day.

About noon the Rebels attacked Gregg's cavalry and bore it back, whereupon Birney sent a Brigade square out to his right in charge of Capt. Briscoe of his Staff, which struck the Rebel force on its right flank and forced it to slide out from between this brigade and Gregg. This however, measured by the losses, was little more than skirmishing.

At five o'clock Gen. Wm. Birney's and a part of Gen. Terry's Divisions advanced the line, in order to preserve itself for the final charge, pushed through the dense growth but slowly, and it was after six before it became actively engaged. The negro troops, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth U. S., and Twenty-Ninth Conn., heroes of Olustee, went in magnificently with the heartiest cheer I have heard since the earlier battles of the campaign. By dark considerable distance had been gained, and work for the day ceased.

The losses are very small, between one and two hundred, and perhaps as many more sick from the excessive heat.

At one time in the day, Gen. Birney's Headquarters were under a very bitter fire of case shot and musketry. The chair upon which the General was sitting was struck.

There was just a little sprinkle of rain near night, and there was the same at these Headquarters and at City Point, while in the trenches in front of Petersburgh, a tremendous freshet fell in one half hour from one great cloud. The ravine in front of the Eighteenth Corps rose so rapidly outside its banks as to wash away hundreds of tents. Fourteen soldiers who were asleep are known to have been drowned. The water in the valley was ten feet deep and more, and rushed like ocean surf. One man, noted as a wit, was rescued when nearly drowned. At last, heaving a groan, he opened his eyes and gasped out, a word at a time, "I--am--Capt. Semmes--where--is--the--Greyhound?"

Rebel Movements on Our Front—Expulsion of Telegraph Operators—Arrival of Deserters—General Park in Command of the Ninth Corps—Details of Sunday's Action.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
AUGUST 16, 1864.

Everything remains quiet in front of Petersburg.

The rebels for the past two nights have been feeling our line on the left, but nothing more than skirmishing between the pickets has taken place.

The two telegraph operators, Messrs. Flynn and Hambright, on duty at General Burnside's Headquarters, who have been on trial during the past week, charged with making known the substance of despatches to others than those to whom they were adressed, were found "Not Guilty" by the Court.

General Meade, however, deeming them to have been guilty of disobedience of orders and breach of trust, has ordered them to be sent beyond the limits of the army and forbidden to return.

Deserters continue to arrive in small squads. A lieutenant and twelve men reached here yesterday. They tell the usual stories of the demoralization and speedy destruction of the Rebel army. Thousands they say are leaving on account of not receiving any pay, while their families are starving; and they are determined to stay in the Rebel service no longer under any circumstances.

Gen. Park is now in command of the 9th Army Corps.

Additional particulars have been received of the action of Sunday. Part of the 2d Corps and part of the 10th Corps were engaged with the enemy in the afternoon near Deep Bottom. The 10th Corps under General Birney took part of a line of works with four 8-inch brass guns and a number of prisoners with small loss. The enemy fell back to a strong position. The 2d Division of the 2d Corps was drawn up in line of battle and advanced about a mile beyond where Hancock captured the four guns two weeks ago.

Here the First Brigade, Col. Macy, commanding, took the lead and charged across a corn-field over a hill and down into a ravine, where they came to a stream with a swamp on the other side, the ground being covered with impenetrable brush on the margins of it.

During all this time they were exposed to a very heavy fire from the Rebel Artillery, which did a good deal of damage.

It was found impossible to cross the ravine, and our men were halted and lay concealed as well as possible until dark, when they were withdrawn.

Col. Macy had his horse shot under him, and, mounting Gen. Barlow's horse, the animal became unmanageable, and finally fell on the Colonel, bruising him badly.

Col. Macy was wounded in the Wilderness and had returned to the field only a day or two before.

The Second Division lost at least 300 men in the engagement.

The First and Third Divisions, which were in support, lost about 250, from the effects of the rebel artillery.

The wounded were all brought off and are nearly all being cared for at City Point.

Lieut. Col. Warren, of the Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, lost his left arm, while gallantly leading his regiment in the charge.

Major W. H. Hamilton, of the Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, was severely wounded in the face.

Capt. Lindley, of the same regiment, was killed.

Sergeant Ball, of the same regiment was also killed, and there are about twelve wounded in the regiment.

Sergeant Fuchs, the Color Bearer of the 36th Wisconsin, was badly wounded. This is the third time this gallant soldier has been wounded in the present campaign.

Lieut Feely, of the 125th New York Artillery, was wounded.

Our troops still hold their position in front of the rebel works, which are very strong and well defended, owing to the nature of the country in the vicinity.

FROM THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

Special Correspondent of the Tribune,
Hdqrs. Army of the Potomac
August 11, 1864.

Nothing new occurred yesterday of any importance that is not contraband. The siege operations in front of Petersburg are being crowded forward vigorously. Important changes in the organization of the army are talked of, and may be made public in a day or two. The weather is quite endurable.

H. E. W.

HEADQTLS. ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, (8 a.m.) Aug. 12, 1864.

The line in front of Petersburg is being made perfectly impregnable to any attack, and there is no evidence of an intention to "fight it out" on any other line.

Gen. Wright, of Burnside's Staff, is in command of the Division. This was told me last night, by a chaplain from the front; and I intended to go down to get the facts but my (borrowed) horse was stolen last night, and no other one is available. I have been dismounted, except as I have been able to borrow a horse, since my return. I shall make it my first business today, to find and purchase one. Yesterday and last night were, as usual, quiet; but a heavy artillery duel has been going on this morning, upon our right wing.

H. E. W.

Casualties in the Artillery Fights—Another Cannonade.

From our Special Correspondent.

IN FRONT OF PETERSBURG, VA.,
SUNDAY MORNING, Aug. 14, 1864.

The few casualties occurring from the little artillery duel mentioned by me yesterday as having taken place early in the morning between the 18th corps and their immediate antagonists, are as follows:

Sanford O. Babbitt, 148th N. Y., right thigh, flesh; Joseph H. Sanford, 3d N. Y., artery contusion, right thigh; Edwin Sanford, 8th Maine, back; George F. Wheeler, 8th Maine, left lung, will recover, with care; John Pfingfolder, 2d Pa. H. A., left thigh, flesh; Patrick Kilduff, 139th N. Y., contusion right ankle; John Tauhay, 98th N. Y., 2 fingers left hand amputated.

Geo. Barrington, 8th Connecticut, was stabbed in the breast and abdomen, a little later in the day, by a comrade, as the finale to a social little game of poker. (Where was the chaplain?) One man had a shell explode under his coffee kettle hanging over the fire, scalding him pretty badly with his own coffee, though not otherwise injuring him; while another had his knife shivered in his hand by a minnie ball, as he was turning a piece of meat in his frying-pan. But such as these are every day and every hour occurrences, considered hardly worth mentioning.

Another very lively little spat of cannonading took place betwen the same opposing forces last evening, continuing until sometime after dark. The Yankees, by some little carelessness, perhaps, had very much disgruntled the rebels, and how spitefully they did blaze away for a while Their sharpshooters, who probably wanted to go to sleep, lay ready, and whenever they saw the flash of one of our guns, poured in a volley of minnie balls. But not a single casualty on our side has been reported up to the present time, so complete now, as I said yesterday are our works.

Within the last twenty-four hours we have heard considerable growling of the bull-dogs of war up on our extreme right, in Gen. Butler's Department. But your indefatigable "C. A. P.". will of course take care of anything of importance that transpires in that quarter. We merely hear, this way, that there is some dispute up there between the Yankees and Rebs about some sort of a proposed "kernell," or something of that kind—something about rip-away-arian rights, I believe they call them. Well, they say Gen. Butler is a good lawyer, as well as soldier, and as he is on our side, our interests in the case will no doubt be taken care of.

ILLINOIEN.

P. S.—Gen. Burnside goes North this morning, on leave of absence, Gen. Wilcox being assigned to the temporary command of his Corps.

A DESERTER SENTENCED.

Frank McElheny, Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, was sentenced to be shot for desertion to the enemy. The sentence has been approved by Gen. Butler. The order is to be carried into execution within 48 hours after it shall have been read to him.

HEALTH IN THE ARMY.

It is estimated that there is now not more than 10,000 patients in the hospitals of that depot, fewer deaths occurring than at any time during this year.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR SWIFT.

Surgeon Ebenezer Swift has been appointed Medical Director of the Department of the Northwest.

THE PAYMASTER APPEARS.

Five millions and a half, were sent off to day to pay off troops in the Army of the Potomac and in the South West.

THE INTERVIEW WITH JEFF. DAVIS.

Col. Jaques and "Edmund Kirke" in Richmond.

The following narration makes a part of an article in the September number of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and of a closing chapter of a new volume entitled "Down in Tennessee," by Edmund Kirke, about to be published by Sheldon

IN RICHMOND.

The next morning, after breakfast, which we took in our room with Mr. Javins, we indited a note—of which the following is a copy—to the Confederate Secretary of State:

SPOTTSWOOD HOUSE, RICHMOND, VA.,
July 17, 1864.

"Hon. J. P. BENJAMIN, *Secretary of State, etc.*

"DEAR SIR;—The undersigned respectfully solicit an interview with President Davis.

They visit Richmond only as private citizens, and have no official character or authority; but they are acquainted with the views of the United States Government, and with the sentiments of the Northern people, relative to an adjustment of the differences existing between the North and South, and earnestly hope that a free interchange of views between President Davis and themselves may open the way to such *official* negotiations as will result in restoring PEACE to the two sections of our distracted country.

"They therefore ask an interview with the President and, awaiting your reply, are

"Truly and respectfully yours."

This was signed by both of us; and when the Judge called, as he had appointed, we sent it—together with a commendatory letter I had received on setting out, from a near relative of Mr. Davis—to the Rebel Secretary. In half an hour Judge Ould returned, saying: "Mr. Benjamin sends you his compliments, and will be happy to see you at the State Department."

We found the Secretary—a short, plump, oily little man in black, with a keen black eye, a Jew face, a yellow skin, curly black hair, closely-trimmed black whiskers, and a ponderous gold watch-chain—in the northwest room of the "United States" Custom-House. Over the door of this room were the words, "State Department," and about its walls were hung a few maps and battle-plans. In one corner was a tier of shelves filled with books,—among which I noticed Headley's "History," Lossing's "Pictorial," Parton's "Butler," Greeley's "American Conflict," a complete set of the "Rebellion Record," and a dozen numbers and several bound volumes of the "Atlantic Monthly,"—and in the center of the apartment was a black-walnut table, covered with green cloth, and filled with a multitude of "State Papers." At this table sat the Secretary. He rose as we entered, and, as Judge Ould introduced us, took our hands and said:

"I am glad, very glad, to meet you, gentlemen. I have read your note, and"—bowing to me—"the letter you bring from ——. Your errand commands my respect and sympathy. Pray be seated.

As we took the proffered seats, the Colonel, drawing off his "duster," and displaying his uniform, said:

"We thank you for this cordial reception, Mr. Benjamin. We trust you will be as glad to hear as you are to see us."

"No doubt I shall be, for you come to talk of peace. Peace is what we all want."

"It is, indeed; and for that reason we have come to see Mr. Davis. Can we see him, Sir?"

"Do you bring any overtures to him from your Government?"

"No, Sir. We bring no overtures and have no authority from our Government. We state that in our note. We would be glad, however, to know what terms will be acceptable to Mr. Davis. If they at all harmonize with Mr. Lincoln's views, we will report them to him, and so open the door for official negotiations."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Lincoln's views?"

"One of us is, fully."

"Did Mr. Lincoln, *in any way*, authorize you to come here?"

"No, Sir. We came with his pass, but not by his request. We say distinctly, we have no official, or unofficial authority. We come as men and Christians, not as diplomatists, hoping, in a frank talk with Mr. Davis, to discover some way by which this war may be stopped."

"Well, gentlemen, I will repeat what you say to the President, and if he follows my advice,—and I think he will,—he will meet you. He will be at church this afternoon; so, suppose you call here at nine this evening. If any thing should occur in the mean time to prevent his seeing you; I will let you know through Judge Ould."

Throughout this interview the manner of the Secretary was cordial; but with this cordiality was a strange constraint and diffidence, almost amounting to timidity, which struck both my companion and myself. Contrasting his manner with the quiet dignity of the Colonel, I almost fancied our positions reversed,—that, instead of our being in his power, the Secretary was in ours, and momently expected to hear some unwelcome sentence from our lips. There is something, after all, in moral power. Mr. Benjamin does not possess it, nor is he a great man. He has a keen, shrewd, ready intellect, but not the *stamina* to originate, or even to execute any great good or great wickedness.

After a day spent in our room, conversing with the Judge, or watching the passers-by in the street,—I would like to tell who they were, and how they looked; but such information is, just now, contraband,—we called again, at nine o'clock, at the State Department.

Mr. Benjamin occupied his previous seat at the table, and at his right sat a spare, thin-featured man, with iron-gray hair and beard, and a clear, gray eye, full of life and vigor. He had a broad, massive forehead, and a mouth and chin denoting great energy and strength of will. His face was emaciated, and much wrinkled, but his features were good, especially his eyes,—though one of them bore a scar, apparently made by some sharp instrument. He wore a suit of grayish-brown, evidently of foreign manufacture, and, as he rose, I saw that he was about five feet ten inches high, with a slight stoop in the shoulders. His manners were simple, easy, and most fascinating; and there was an indescribable charm in his voice, as he extended his hand and said to us:

"I am glad to see you, gentlemen. You are very welcome to Richmond."

And this was the man who was President of the United States, under Franklin Pierce, and who is now the heart, soul, and brains of the Southern Confederacy!

His manner put me entirely at my ease,—the Colonel would be at his if he stood before Cæsar,—and I replied:

"We thank you, Mr. Davis. It is not often that you meet men of our clothes and our principles in Richmond."

"Not often,—not so often as I could wish; and I trust your coming may lead to a more frequent and a more friendly intercourse between the North and the South."

"We sincerely hope it may."

"Mr. Benjamin tells me that you have asked to see me to—"

And he paused, as if desiring we should finish the sentence. The Colonel replied:

"Yes, Sir. We have asked this interview, in the hope that you may suggest some way by which this war may be stopped. Our people want peace,—your people do, and your Congress has recently said that *you* do. We have come to ask how it can be brought about."

"In a very simple way. Withdraw your armies from our territory, and peace will come of itself. We do not seek to subjugate you. We are not waging an offensive war, except so far as it is offensive-defensive,—that is, so far as we are forced to invade you to prevent your invading us. Let us alone, and peace will come at once.

"But we cannot let you alone so long as you repudiate the Union. That is the one thing the Northern people will not surrender."

"I know. You would deny to us what you exact for yourselves—the right of self-government."

"No, sir," I remarked. We would deny you no natural right. But we think Union essential to peace; and, Mr. Davis, *could* two people, with the same language, separated by only an imaginary line, live at peace with each other? Would not disputes constantly arise, and cause almost constant war between them?"

"Undoubtedly,—with this generation. You have sown such bitterness at the South; you have put skch an ocean of blood between the two sections, that I despair of seeing any harmony in my time. Our children may forget this war, but *we* cannot."

"I think the bitterness you speak of, sir," said the Colonel, "does not really exist. *We* meet and talk here as friends; our soldiers meet and fraternize with each other; and I feel sure that if the Union were restored, a more friendly feeling would arise between us than has ever existed. The war has made us know and respect each other better than before. This is the view of very many Southern men; I have had it from many of them,—your leading citizens."

"They are mistaken," replied Mr. Davis. "They do not understand Southern sentiment. How can we feel any thing but bitterness towards men who deny us our rights? If you enter my house and drive me out of it, am I not your natural enemy?"

"You put the case too strongly. But we cannot fight for ever; the war must end at some time; we must finally agree upon something; can we not agree now, and stop this frightful carnage? We are both Christian men, Mr. Davis. Can *you*, as a Christian man, leave untried any means that may lead to peace?"

"No, I cannot. I desire peace as much as you do. I deplore bloodshed as much as you do; but I feel that not one drop of the blood shed in this war is on *my* hands,—I can look up to my God and say this. I tried all in my power to avert this war. I saw it coming, and for twelve years I worked night and day to prevent it, but I could not. The North was mad and blind; it would not let us govern ourselves, and so the war came, and now it must go on till the last man of this generation falls in his tracks, and his children seize his musket and fight our battle, *unless you acknowledge our right to self-government*. We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for Independence, and that, or extermination, we *will* have."

"And there are, at least, four and a-half millions of us left; so you see you have a work before you," said Mr. Benjamin, with a decided sneer.

"We have no wish to exterminate you," answered the Colonel. "I believe what I have said—that there is no bitterness between the Northern and Southern people. The North, I know, loves the South. When peace comes, it will pour money and means into your hands to repair the waste caused by the war; and it would now welcome you back, and forgive you all the loss and bloodshed you have caused. But we *must* crush your armies and exterminate your government. And is not that already nearly done? You are wholly without money, and at the end of your resources. Grant has shut you up in Richmond. Sherman is before Atlanta. Had you not, then, better accept honorable terms while you can retain your prestige, and save the pride of the Southern people?"

Mr. Davis smiled.

"I respect your earnestness, Colonel, but you do not seem to understand the situation. We are not exactly shut up in Richmond. If your papers tell the truth, it is your capital that is in danger, not ours. Some weeks ago, Grant crossed the Rapidan to whip Lee, and take Richmond. Lee drove him in the first battle, and then Grant executed what your people call a 'brilliant flank movement,' and fought Lee again. Lee drove him a second time, and then Grant made another 'flank movement;' and so they kept on,—Lee whipping, and Grant flanking,—until Grant got where he is now. And what is the net result? Grant has lost seventy-five or eighty thousand men—*more than Lee had at the outset*,—and is no nearer taking Richmond than at the first; and Lee, whose front has never been broken, holds him completely in check, and has men enough to spare to invade Maryland and threaten Washington! Sherman, to be sure, is before Atlanta; but suppose he is, and suppose he takes it? You know that the farther he goes from his base of supplies, the weaker he grows, and the more disastrous defeat will be to him. And defeat may come. So, in a military view, I should certainly say our position was better than yours.

"As to money; we are richer than you are. You smile; but, admit that our paper is worth nothing,—it answers as a circulating medium, and we hold it all ourselves. If every dollar of it were lost, we should, as we have no foreign debt, be none the poorer. But, it *is* worth something; it has the solid basis of a large cotton-crop, while yours rests on nothing, and you owe all the world. As to resources: we do not lack for arms or ammunition, and we have still a wide territory from which to gather supplies. So, you see, we are not in extremities. But, if we were,—if we were without money, without food, without weapons,—if our whole country were desolated, and our armies crushed and disbanded,—could we, without giving up our manhood, give up our right to govern ourselves? Would *you* not rather die, and feel yourself a man, than live, and be subject to a foreign power?"

"From your stand-point there is force in what you say," replied the Colonel. "But we did not come here to argue with you, Mr. Davis. We came, hoping to find some honorable way to peace, and I am grieved to hear you say what you do. When I have seen your young men dying on the battle-field, and your old men, women and children starving in in their homes, I have felt I could risk my life to save them. For that reason I am here; and I am grieved,—grieved,—that there is no hope."

"I know your motives, Colonel Jacques, and I honor you for them; but what can I do more than I am doing? I would give my poor life, gladly if it would bring peace and good-will to the two countries; but it would not. It is with your own people you should labor. It is they who desolate our homes, burn our wheat-fields, break the wheels of wagons carrying away our women and children, and destroy supplies meant for our sick and wounded. At your door lies all the misery and the crime of this war, and it is a fearful,—fearful account."

"Not all of it, Mr. Davis. I admit a fearful account, but it is not *all* at our door. The passions of both sides are aroused. Unarmed men are hanged, prisoners are shot down in cold blood, by yourselves. Elements of barbarism are entering the war from both sides, that should make us—you and me, as Christian men—shudder to think of. In God's name, then, let us stop it. Let us do something, concede something, to bring about peace. You cannot expect with only four and a half millions, as Mr. Benjamin says you have, to hold out forever against twenty millions."

Again Mr. Davis smiled.

"Do you suppose there are twenty millions at the North determined to crush us?

"I do,—to crush your *Government*. A small number of our people, a very small number, are your friends,—Secessionists. The rest differ about measures and candidates, but are united in the determination to sustain the Union. Whoever is elected in November, he *must* be committed to a vigorous prosecution of the war."

Mr. Davis still looking incredulous, I remarked—

"It is so, Sir. Whoever tells you otherwise, deceives you. I think I know Northern sentiment, and I assure you it is so. You know we have a system of lyceum-lecturing in our large towns. At the close of these lectures, it is the custom of the people to come upon the platform and talk with the lecturer. This gives him an excellent opportunity of learning public sentiment. Last winter I lectured before nearly a hundred of such associations, all over the North,—from Dubuque to Bangor,—and I took pains to ascertain the feeling of the people. I found a unanimous determination to crush the rebellion and save the Union at every sacrifice. The majority are in favor of Mr. Lincoln, and nearly all of those opposed to him are opposed to him because they think he does not fight you with enough vigor. The radical Republicans, who go for slave-suffrage and thorough confiscation, are those who will defeat him if he is defeated. But if he is defeated before the people, the House will elect a worse man—worse I mean for you. It is more radical than he is,—you can see that from Mr. Ashley's reconstruction bill,—and the people are more radical than the House. Mr. Lincoln, I know, is about to call out five hundred thousand more men, and I don't see how you *can* resist much longer; but if you do, you will only deepen the radical feeling of the Northern people. They would now give you fair, honorable, *generous* terms; but let them suffer much more, let there be a dead man in every house as there is now in every village, and they will give you *no* terms,—they will insist on hanging every rebel south of—Pardon my terms. I mean no offence."

"You give no offence," he replied, smiling very pleasantly. "I would't have you pick your words. This is a frank, free talk, and I like you the better for saying what you think. Go on."

"I was merely going to add, that let the Northern people once really feel the war—they do not feel it yet—and they will insist on hanging every one of your leaders."

"Well, admitting all you say, I can't see how it affects our position. There are some things worse than hanging or extermination. We reckon giving up the right of self-government one of those things."

"By self-government you mean disunion—Southern Independence."

"Yes."

"And slavery, you say, is no longer an element in the contest?"

"No, it is not. It never was an essential element. It was only a means of bringing other conflicting elements to an earlier culmination. It fired the musket which was already capped and loaded. There are essential differences between the North and the South, that will, however this war may end, make them two nations."

"You ask me to say what I think. Will you allow me to say that I know the South pretty well, and never observed those differences?"

"Then you have not used your eyes. My sight is poorer than yours, but I have seen them for years."

The laugh was upon me, and Mr. Benjamin enjoyed it.

"Well, Sir, be that as it may, if I understand you, the dispute between your government and ours is narrowed down to this: Union or Disunion."

"Yes; or, to put it in other words, Independence or Subjugation."

"Then the two governments are irreconcilably apart. They have no alternative but to fight it out. But, it is not so with the people. They are tired of fighting and want peace; and, as they bear all the burden and suffering of the war, is it not right they should have peace, and have it on such terms as they like?"

"I don't understand you; be a little more explicit."

"Well. Suppose the two governments should agree to something like this: To go to the people with two propositions; say: Peace, with Disunion and Southern Independence, as your proposition; and: Peace, with Union, Emancipation, No Confiscation, and Universal Amnesty as ours. Let the citizens of all the United States (as they existed before the war) vote 'Yes,' or 'No,' on these two propositions, at a special election within sixty days. If a majority vote Disunion, our government to be bound by it, and to let you go in peace. If a majority vote Union, yours to be bound by it, and to stay in peace. The two governments can contract in this way, and the people, though constitutionally unable to decide on peace or war, can elect which of any two propositions shall govern their rulers. Let Lee and Grant, meanwhile, agree to an armistice. This would sheathe the sword; and, if once sheathed, it would never again be drawn by this generation."

"The plan is altogether impracticable. If the South were only one State, it might work; but, as it is, if one Southern State objected to emancipation, it would nullify the whole thing, for you are aware the people of Virginia cannot vote slavery out of South Carolina, or the people of South Carolina vote it out of Virginia."

"But three-fourths of the States can amend the Constitution. Let it be done in that way—in *any* way, so that it be done by the people. I am not a statesman or a politician, and I do not just know how such a plan could be carried out; but you get the idea—that the PEOPLE shall decide the question."

"That the *majority* shall decide it you mean. We seceded to rid ourselves of the rule of the majority, and this would subject us to it again."

"But the majority must rule finally, either with bullets or ballots."

"I am not so sure of that. Neither current events nor history shows that the majority rules, or ever did rule. The contrary, I think, is true. Why, sir, the man who shall go before the Southern people with such a proposition—with *any* proposition which implied that the North was to have a voice in determining the domestic relations of the South—could not live here a day! He would be hanged to the first tree, without judge or jury."

"Allow me to doubt that. I think it more likely he would be hanged if he let the Southern people know the majority could not rule," I replied, smiling.

"I have no fear of that," rejoined Mr. Davis, also smiling most good-humoredly. "I give you leave to proclaim it from every house-top in the South."

"But, seriously, Sir, you let the majority rule in a single State; why not let it rule in the whole country?"

"Because the States are independent and sovereign. The country is not. It is only a confederation of States; or rather it *was*: it is now *two* confederations."

"Then we are not a *people*—we are only a political partnership?"

"That is all."

"Your Very name, Sir, '*United* States,' implies that," said Mr. Benjamin. "But, tell me, are the terms you have named—Emancipation, No Confiscation, and Universal Amnesty—the terms which Mr. Lincoln authorized you to offer us?"

"No, Sir. Mr Lincoln did not authorize me to offer you any terms. But I *think* both he and the Northern people, for the sake of peace, would assent to some such conditions."

"They are *very* generous," replied Mr. Davis, for the first time during the interview showing some angry feeling. "But Amnesty, Sir, applies to criminals. We have committed no crime. Confiscation is of no account unless you can enforce it; and Emancipation! You have already emancipated nearly two millions of our slaves, and if you take care of them, you may emancipate the rest. I had a few when the war began. I was of some use to them; they never were of any to me. Against their will you 'emancipated them; and you may 'emancipate' every negro in the Confederacy, but we will be free! We will govern ourselves! We *will* do it, if we have to see every plantation sacked, and every Southern city in flames!"

"I see, Mr. Davis, it is useless to continue this conversation," I replied; "and you will pardon us if we have seemed to press our views with too much pertinacity. We love the old flag, and that must be our apology for intruding upon you at all."

"You have not intruded upon me," he replied, resuming his usual manner. "I am glad to have met you, both. I once loved the old flag as well as you do. I would have died for it: but now it is to me only the emblem of oppression."

"I hope the day may never come, Mr. Davis, when *I* say that," said the Colonel.

A half-hour's conversation on other topics—not of public interest—ensued, and then we rose to go. As we did so the Rebel President gave me his hand, and, bidding me a kindly "good-bye," expressed the hope of seeing me again in Richmond in happier times—when peace should have returned—but with the Colonel his parting was particularly cordial. Taking his hand in both of his, he said to him:

"Colonel, I respect your character and your motives, and I wish you well—I wish you every good wish I can wish you consistently with the interests of the Confederacy."

The quiet, straightforward bearing, and magnificent moral courage of our "fighting parson" had evidently impressed Mr. Davis very favorably.

As we were leaving the room he added:

"Say to Mr. Lincoln from me, that I shall at any time be pleased to receive proposals for peace on the basis of our independence. It will be useless to approach me with any other."

Chase of a Blockade-runner.

Sch. Elk, Capt. Allen, from Port Royal, S. C., 5 days, with stores to B. P. Sherman, arrived yesterday, reports: 11th inst., 10 a. m., lat 32.48, long. 78.32, saw a blockade-runner steering S. and a U. S. gunboat in chase. 12th was spoken by U. S. gunboat Monticello, who reported having chased a steamer the day before—did not succeed in catching her, but picked up 40 bales of cotton which was thrown overboard from her.

Troops for the Front.

BOSTON, August 17.

The United States transport Constitution has arrived from New York to embark troops for the South.

Hotel Destroyed by Fire.

TOLEDO, August 17.

The McKinster House, in this city, was destroyed by fire this morning. Loss not yet ascertained.