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February 5, 1865

The New York Herald

THE PEACE MISSION.

Mr. N. Davidson Despatches. STEAMER THOMAS COLYER, FORTRESS MONROE, << Feb >> . 8, 1865. Secretary Seward and Secretary Stanton left Washington on

January 31 to attend the lecture of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher at Baltimore that evening. Mr. Seward swung around to Annapolis the next day, and, stepping on board the despatch boat River Queen, proceeded to City Point, where he met R.M.T. Hunter, Alexander H. Stephens and John A. Campbell, distinguished citizens of the South, who have been sent by Jeff. Davis to have a talk with the representatives of the United States government about the settlement of the difficulties between the North and South. He found the distinguished rebels on board of the steamer M. Martin, and the River Queen and Martin at once proceeded to Fortress Monroe. Everybody supposed they were safe on their way to Annapolis and Washington; but they were mistaken. President Lincoln determined to join Mr. Seward at Fortress

Monroe, and see whether these Southern gentlemen would turkey' or not. He, therefore, left Washington yesterday, arriving at Annapolis at one oP.M. He immediately proceeded on board the steamer Thomas Colyer, supposed to be

the fastest in the world, and she was ordered to run to Fortress Monroe as soon as possible. The illustrious passenger was entirely unexpected, and was only accompanied by two personal attendants, Messrs. Smith and Forbes. Neither of his secretaries were with him, and he walked from the depot to the boat, something over half a mile, being guided by Captain Blodgett, Post Quartermaster. Arriving on board, he met Captain Samuel Colyer, and simple said:- 'I suppose you know where you are going?' 'To Fortress Monroe,'replied the Captain. 'Thatright,'said the President. 'Are you ready?'asked the Captain. 'Quite,'said Mr. Lincoln. The boat at once threw off her lines, and started on a

mission which every one hoped might be peace, provided it came in an honorable shape; and those who know our President are full in the faith that we shall have no other while he is at the helm. While he is scrupulously careful that he shall not be accused of leaving any chance of an honorable peace to go unrecognized, he will never consent to make terms which shall divided the country. He feels that we have expended too many lives and too much treasure to consent to a division now. The Colyer sailed from Annapolis at twenty minutes to two P.M., February 2, with the President and attendants, Mr. George Colyer, of New York; Captain Samuel Colyer, Captain P. Elmendorf, Mr. Edward Fields, clerk, your correspondent, who accidentally happened to be on board, and the usual crew. Upon getting out of the bay we encountered large fields of ice, through which we passed slowly, and in which we met the steamer Herman Livingston off Thomas'Point Shoals at twenty-five minutes past two P.M. We soon got clear of the ice, and passed Point Lookout at forty-five minutes past five P.M., Smith Point Lightship at thirty-five minutes past six, Wolf Trap Lightship at forty minutes past eight, Guard ship at twenty minutes past ten, and arrived at Fortress Monroe at twenty-two minutes past ten. The President at once communicated with Secretary Seward,

who was in conference with Messrs. Hunter, Stephens and Campbell. They were greatly surprised to see him, not having expected him till morning. He undoubtedly made the quickest trip on record from Annapolis to Fortress Monroe. Secretary Seward desiring to confer with him, and having accommodations for him on board the River Queen, the President went on board of her, to remain while the Colyer was taking in wood, coal and water. The conference still lasts, at half-past twelve P.M., and how long it may still continue no one knows; but one thing is certain, and the country may rest assured of the fact, no peace will be agreed to which can reflect dishonor upon the country. STEAMER THOMAS COLYER, << Feb >> . 3 - 8 P.M. What unmeasurable interest just now centres in the steamer

River Queen. All eyes are upon her. The tugs Silas O. Pierce and George J. Loane are constantly plying between her and the shore. Now the men are heaving at the anchor, and now the Pierce goes over to the M. Martin. Did she carry the rebel agents over? Quien sabe? They all - the special boats, the Colyer, River Queen and

Martin - lie out in the harbor. There is no communication with the shore or each other, except by tug. Sixteen hours already has the conference lasted. What the result is no one knows. It is inferred that reunion, as a basis, must have been agreed to, or the interview would have terminated long since.

Napoleon and Francis Joseph settled the terms of the Italian peace in a few moments, comparatively; but this is a more complicated affair. Questions of emancipation, confiscation, amnesty, Monroe doctrine, finance, debt, &c., &c., are all under discussion. But these can all be arranged now if reunion is determined upon. I believe it is. Let the country take courage. WASHINGTON, << Feb >> . 4, 1865. When I closed my last letter at Fortress Monroe I was very strongly in the hope that the preliminaries of peace had been

agreed upon. I am now satisfied that my statement was somewhat premature. While Hunter, Stephens and Campbell did not feel that they had the power to lay down the arms of the insurgents, they were made fully aware of the position of President Lincoln. He would not, and did not, budge an inch from his point of submission as the initial proposition of peace. His skirts are now clean. He has done all he could do for peace consistent with the dignity of his position. The rebels, having received Mr. Lincoln's ultimatum, have returned to Richmond. They left on the steamer M. Martin, at four o'clock on Friday. The President and Mr. Seward parted with them on the best of terms, and came up to Annapolis on the steamer River Queen, she having left Fortress Monroe at five o'clock P.M. The distinguished party did not go on shore at the fortress at all. The Thomas Colyer steamed up to the dock and took on board General Ingalls and General Seth Williams, and left at six o'clock for Annapolis, passing the River Queen, Charlotte, Vanderbilt and Adelaide on the way. All arrived at Annapolis at daylight, and the Presidential party arrived in Washington at ten o'clock A.M. The Cabinet was at once summoned, and the budget laid before it. The President's course was endorsed, and all parties now feel that he has done his whole duty. In his efforts for peace he discarded all squeamishness and punctiliousness, and said to the rebels that he had no personal purpose to subserve. There is only one road to peace, so far as he is concerned. It lies in submission. He was willing to throw to the winds all minor questions to stop bloodshed. His oath required him to preserve the integrity of the Union. That point settled, he would not stickle at collateral issues. The agents of Jeff. Davis have gone to Richmond to report, and will be heard from again soon. The interview was of the most cordial and hopeful nature, and the country has reason to be proud of the occurrence. Good will result from it, and a

few days will tell if it be peace or a continuance of the war. Let us hope that the former proposition will prevail in the councils of Jeff. Davis.

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