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THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S MESSAGE.

A Statement of the Whole Matter

A Letter from Mr. Seward to Mr. Adams

The following message was received by the House yesterday, in answer to the call of that body upon the President for information concerning the late peace conference at Fortress Monroe:

To the Honorable the House of Representatives:

In response to your resolutions of the 6th inst., requesting information in relation to a conference recently held in Hampton Roads, I have the honor to state that on the day of that date, I gave Francis P. Blair, senior, a card, written as follows, to wit:

"Allow the bearer, F. P. Blair, senior, to pass our lines, go South and return.

"Feb. 28, 1864. A. LINCOLN."

That at the time I was informed that Mr. Blair sought the card as a means of getting to Richmond, Virginia, but he was given no authority to act or speak for the government, nor was I informed of anything he would say or do on his own account or otherwise. Afterwards Mr. Blair told me that he had been to Richmond, and had seen Mr. Jefferson Davis, and he (Mr. B.) at the same time left with me a manuscript letter, as follows, to wit:

Richmond, Va., January 12, 1865.—F. P. Blair, Esq.—Sir: I have deemed it proper, and probably desirable to you, to give you, in this form, the substance of remarks made by me to be repeated by you to President Lincoln, &c.

I have no disposition to find obstacles in forms, and am willing, now as heretofore, to enter into negotiations for the restoration of peace; am ready to send a commission whenever I have reason to suppose it will be received, or to receive a commission if the United States Government shall choose to send one.

That, notwithstanding the rejection of our former offer as I would, if you could promise that a commissioner, minister or other agent would be received, at point one immediately, and renew the effort to enter into conference, with a view to secure peace to the two countries.

Yours, &c., JEFFERSON DAVIS.

(Signed)

Afterwards, and with the view that it should be shown to Mr. Davis, I wrote and delivered to Mr. Blair a letter, as follows, to wit:—

Washington, Jan 12, 1865.—F. P. Blair, Esq.—Sir: Your having shown me Mr. Davis' letter to you of the 11th inst., you may say to him that that I have constantly been, am now, and shall continue, ready to receive any agent whom he or any other influential person now resisting the national authority may informally send to me, with the view of securing peace to the people of our one common country.

Yours, &c., A. LINCOLN.

Afterwards Mr. Blair dictated for, and authorized me, to make an entry on the back of my retained copy of the letter last above received, which entry is as follows:

"[MEMORANDUM.]—January 28, 1865.—To-day Mr. Blair tells me that on the 21st instant he delivered to Mr. Davis the original of which the within is a copy, and left it with him; that the time of delivering it Mr. Davis read it over twice in Mr. Blair's presence, at the close of which he (Mr. Blair) remarked the part about 'our one common country.' Davis replied that he so understood it.

A. LINCOLN."

Afterwards the Secretary of War placed in my hands the following telegram, endorsed by him, as appears:

Office U. S. Military Telegraph, War Department.—[Cipher.]—The following telegram received at Washington, January 29, 1865, from Headquarters Army of James, 6.30 P. M., January 29, 1865:

Hon. Edward M. Stanton Secretary of War:

The following dispatch just received from Major General Parke, who refers it to me for instruction. I refer it to you for instruction in General Grant's absence. E. O. C. ORD,

Major General Commanding.

"Headquarters Army of Potomac, P. M., Jan. 29, 1865.—Major General E. O. C. Ord, Head quarters Army of James: The following dispatch is forwarded to you for your action. Since I have no knowledge of Gen. Grant's having had any understanding of this kind, I refer the matter to you as the ranking officer present in the two armies.

"JOHN G. PARKE,

"Major-General Commanding."

"From Headquarters Ninth Army Corps, 29th—Major-general John G. Parke, Headquarters Army Potomac: Alex. H. Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter, and W. J. A. Campbell desire to cross my lines in accordance with an understanding claimed to exist with Lieut. General Grant, on their way to Washington as Peace Commissioners. Shall they be admitted? They desire an early answer to come through immediately. Would like to reach City Point to-night if they can. If they cannot do that, they would like to come through at 10 a. m. to-morrow morning.

"O. B. WILCOX,

"Maj. Gen. Com'd'g Ninth Corps."

Respectfully referred to the President for such instructions as he may please to give.

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

9.30 p. m. January 29, 1865.

It appears that about the time of placing the foregoing telegram in my hands, the Secretary of War dispatched General Ord as follows, to wit:

"War Department, Washington City, Jan. 29, 1865—10 P. M.—Major General Ord: This Department has no knowledge of any understanding by General Grant to allow any person to come within his lines as commissioners of any sort. You will therefore allow no one to come into your lines under such character or professions until you receive the President's instructions, to whom your telegram will be submitted for his direction.

"EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War."

[Sent in cipher at 11 a. m., 30th.]

Afterwards, by my directions, the Secretary of War telegraphed General Ord as follows, to wit:

"War Department, Washington, D. C., 10 A. M., Jan'y 30, 1865.—Major General E. O. C. Ord, Headquarters Army James.—By direction of the President you are instructed to inform the three gentlemen, Messrs. Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell, that a messenger will be dispatched to them at or near where they now are without unnecessary delay.

"EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War."

Afterwards I prepared and put into the hands of Major Thomas T. Eckert the following instructions and message:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, *Washington*, Jan. 30, 1865.—Major T. T. Eckert—Sir: You will proceed with the documents placed in your hands, and on reaching Gen. Ord, will deliver him the letter addressed to him by the Secretary of War, then by Gen Ord's assistance procure an interview with Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell, or any of them, deliver to him or them the paper on which your own letter is written, not on the copy which you retain the time of delivery and to whom delivered; receive their answer in writing, waiting a reasonable time for it, and which, if it contain their decision to come through without further conditions, will be your warrant to ask Gen. Ord to pass them through as directed in the letter of the Secretary of War to him. If, by their answer, they decline to come, or propose other terms, do not have them passed through. And this being your whole duty, return and report to me.

Yours truly, A. LINCOLN.

"Messrs. Alex. H. Stephens, J. A. Campbell and R. M. T. Hunter—Gentlemen: I am instructed by the President of the United States to place this paper in your hands, with the information that if you pass through the United States military lines it will be understood that you do so for the purpose of an informal conference on the basis of the letter, a copy of which is on the reverse side of this sheet, and that if you choose to pass on such understanding, and so notify me in writing, I will procure the Commanding General to pass you through the lines and to Fortress Monroe, under such military precautions as he may deem prudent, and at which place you will be met in due time by some person or persons, for the purpose of such informal conference; and further, that you shall have protection, safe conduct and safe return in all events.

"Major and A. D. C.,

THOS. T. ECKERT.

"CITY POINT, VA., Feb. 1, 1865—*Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War:*

Sir: Herewith I return the paper you gave me yesterday, with the report of my proceedings thereon, in the late annual message to Congress, and in preceding documents. No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war, and the dissolving of all the forces hostile to the Government. You will inform them that all propositions of theirs not inconsistent with the above will be considered and passed upon in a spirit of extreme liberality. You will hear all they may choose to say, and report it to me.—You will not assume to definitely consummate anything. Yours, &c.,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

On the day of its date the following telegram was sent to General Grant:

"War Department Washington, D. C., February 1st, 1865.—Lieutenant General Grant, City Point, Va.—Let nothing which is transpiring change, hinder, or delay your military movements or plans.

A. LINCOLN."

[Sent in cipher at 9.30 A. M.]

Afterwards the following was received from General Grant:

"Office United States Military Telegraph, War Department.—[In cipher.]—The following telegram received at Washington 2.30 P. M., Feb. 1, 12.30 P. M.:

"His Excellency A. Lincoln, President of the United States. Your despatch received. There will be no change in our relations in consequence of the presence of Mr. Stephens and others, within our lines. The troops are kept in readiness to move at the shortest notice, if occasion should justify it.

U. S. GRANT,

"Lieutenant General."

To notify Major Eckert that the Secretary of State would be at Fortress Monroe, and to put them in communication, the following dispatch was sent:

"War Department, Washington, D. C., Feb'y 1st, 1865.—Major T. T. Eckert, care Genl Grant, City Point, Va.: Call at Fortress Monroe and put yourself under the direction of Mr. S., whom you will find there.

"A. LINCOLN."

On the morning of the 3d instant the following telegrams were received by me, respectively from the Secretary of State and Major Eckert:

"Fortress Monroe, Va., 11.30 P. M., Feb. 1, 1865.—The President of the United States: Arrived at ten this evening. Richmond party not here. Will wait here.

WM. H. SEWARD

"City Point, Va., 10 P. M., Feb 1, 1865—His Excellency A. Lincoln, President United States: I have the honor to report the delivery of your letter at 4.15 this afternoon, to which I received a reply at 6 p. m., but Lost satisfactory.

At 8 P. M. the following note, addressed to Gen. Grant, was received:

"City Point, Va., February 1, 1865—To Lieut. General Grant—Sir:—We desire to go to Washington city to confer informally with the President personally in reference to the matters mentioned in his letter to Mr. Blair of the 19th January ultimo, without any personal compromise on any question in the letter.

We have the permission to do so from the authorities at Richmond.

Very respectfully yours,

ALEX. H. STEPHENS,
R. M. T. HUNTER,
J. A. CAMPBELL.

At 9.30 p. m., I notified them that they could not proceed further unless they complied with the terms expressed in my letter. The point of meeting designated in above note would not, in my opinion, be insisted upon. Think Fortress Monroe would be acceptable. Having complied with my instructions, I will return to Washington to-morrow, unless otherwise ordered.

THOS. T. ECKERT, Major, &c.

In reading this dispatch of Major Eckert, I was about to recall him and the Secretary of State, when the following telegram of Gen. Grant to the Secretary of War was shown me:

"Office U. S. Military Telegraph, [in cipher] *War Department*—The following telegram received at Washington 4.25 a. m., Feb. 2, 1865, from City Point, Va., Feb. 1, 1865:

"Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War—Now that the interview between Major Eckert, under his written instructions and Mr. Stephens and party, has ended, I will state confidentially, applying for leave to pass through the lines to Washington as peace commissioners to confer with the President.

They were permitted by the Lieutenant General to come to his headquarters to await there the decision of the President. Major Eckert was sent down to meet the party from Richmond, at Gen. Grant's headquarters. The Major was directed to deliver to them a copy of the President's letter to Mr. Blair, with a note to one addressed to them, and signed by the Major, in which they were directly informed that if they should be allowed to pass for an informal conference, upon as nearly as I could judge from the tenor of the above-named letter of the 18th of January, to Mr. Blair. If they should express their assent to this condition in writing then Major Eckert was granted to give them safe conduct to Fortress Monroe, where a person coming from the President would meet them.

Judging thought probable from a report of their conversation with Lieutenant General Grant, that the Richmond party would, in the manner prescribed, accept the condition mentioned, the Secretary of State was charged by the President with the duty of representing the Government in the expected Conference. The Secretary arrived at Fortress Monroe on the night of the first day of February. Major Eckert met him on the morning of the second of February, with the information that the persons who had come from Richmond had not accepted, in writing, the condition upon which he was allowed to give them conduct to Fortress Monroe. The Major had given to the same information by telegraph to the President at Washington.

On receiving this information the President prepared a telegram directing the Secretary to return to Washington. The Secretary was preparing at the same moment to so return, without waiting for instructions from the President. But at this injuncture Lieutenant General Grant telegraphed to the Secretary of War, as well as to the Secretary of State, that the party from Richmond had reconsidered and accepted the conditions tendered them through Major Eckert, and General Grant urgently advised the President to confer in person with the Richmond party, under these circumstances, the Secretary, by the President's direction, remained at Fortress Monroe, and the President joined him there on the night of the 2d of February. The Richmond party was brought down the James River in an United States steam transport during the day, and the transport was anchored in Hampton roads.

On the morning of the 3d, the President, attended by the Secretary, received Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell, on board the United States steam transport River Queen, in Hampton Roads. The conference was altogether informal. There was no attendance of secretaries, clerks, or other witnesses.—Nothing was written or read. The conversation, although earnest and free, was calm and courteous, and kept within both sides. The Richmond party seemed to approached the discussion rather indirectly, and at no time did they either make categorical demands or tender formal stipulations, or absolute proposals; nevertheless, during the conference, which lasted four hours, the several points at issue between the Government and the insurgents, were distinctly raised and discussed fully, intelligently, and in an amicable spirit.

What the insurgent party seemed chiefly to favor was a postponement of the question of separation, upon which the war is waged, and a mutual direction of efforts of the government, as well as those of the insurgents, to some extensive policy or scheme for a season, during which ramors might be expected to subside, and the armies reduced and trade and intercourse between the people of both sections resumed. It was suggested by them that through such postponement we might now have immediate peace, with some not very certain prospect of an ultimate satisfactory adjustment of political relations between this government and the States, section or people now engaged in conflict with it.

This suggestion, though deliberately considered, was nevertheless regarded by the President as one of armistice or truce, and he not allow you to alter the conditions upon which a passport could be given to us, we say that we are willing to proceed to Fortress Monroe and there to have an informal conference with any person or persons that President Lincoln may appoint on the basis of his letter to Francis P. Blair, of the 18th of January ultimo, or upon any other terms or conditions that he may hereafter propose, not inconsistent with the principles of self-government and popular rights, on which our institutions are founded.

It is our earnest wish to ascertain, after a free interchange of ideas and information, upon what principles and terms, if any, a just and honorable peace can be established without the further effusion of blood, and to contribute our utmost efforts to accomplish such a result.

We think it better to add that in accepting your passport we are not to be understood as committing ourselves to anything, but to carry to this informal conference the views and feelings above mentioned.

Very respectfully yours, &c.,

ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS,
(Signed) J. A. CAMPBELL,
R. M. T. HUNTER.

Note.—The above communication was delivered to me at Fortress Monroe at 4.30 P. M., Feb. 3d, by Lieut. Col. Babcock, of General Grant's staff.

THOS. T. ECKERT,
Major and A. D. C.

On the morning of the 3d the gentlemen, Messrs Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell, came aboard of our steamer, and had an interview with the Secretary of State and myself of several hours' duration. No question of preliminaries to the meeting was then and there made or even mooted. No other person was present; no papers were exchanged or produced; and it was understood, agreed that the conversation was to be informal, and verbal merely.

On our part, the whole substance of the instructions to the Secretary of State, herein before recited, stated and insisted upon and nothing was said inconsistently therewith; while by the other party it was not said that in any event, or on any condition, they ever would consent to reunion, and yet they equally omitted to declare that they never would so consent. They seemed to desire a postponement of that question, and upon question of some other course being taken, some of them seemed to argue, might or might not lead to reunion, but which course, we thought, would amount to an indefinite postponement. The conference ended without any result. The foregoing, containing, as is believed, all the information sought, is respectfully submitted.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

LETTER FROM MR. SEWARD TO MR. ADAMS.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
WASHINGTON, Feb. 9, 1865.

Sir:—It is a truism that in times of peace there are always instigators of war. So soon as a war begins there are citizens who impatiently demand negotiations for peace. The advocates for war, after an agitation, longer or shorter, generally gain their peaceful end, though the one war declared is not unfrequently unnecessary and unwise. So peace agitators in time of war ultimately bring about an abandonment of the conflict, sometimes securing the advantages which were originally expected from the conflict.

The agitators for war in times of peace, and for peace in time of war, are not necessarily or perhaps ordinarily unpatriotic in their purposes or motives. Results alone determine whether they are wise or unwise. The treaty of peace concluded at Gandalupe Hidalgo was secured by an irregular negotiation under the ban of the Government. Some of the efforts which have been made to bring negotiation into play now to end our civil war, are known to the whole world, because they have employed foreign as well as domestic agents. Others, with whom you have had to deal confidentially, are known to yourself, although they have not publicly transpired. Such efforts have occurred heretofore, and are known only to the parties actually moving in them and to this Government. I am now to give, for your information, an account of an affair of the same general character, which recently received much attention here, and which doubtless will excite legality abroad.

A few days ago, Francis P. Blair, Esq., of Maryland, obtained from the President a simple letter to a person in our military lines, without definite views known to the Government. Mr. Blair visited Richmond, and on his return he showed to the President a letter which Jefferson Davis had written to Mr. Blair, in which Davis wrote that Mr. Blair was at liberty to say to President Lincoln that Davis was ready, as he had always been, willing to send commissioners, if assured they would be received, or to receive any that should be sent; that he was not disposed to find obstacles in forms. He would send commissioners to confer with the President with a view to a restoration of peace between the two countries, if he could be assured they would be received.

The President, therefore, on the 18th of January, addressed a note to Mr. Blair, in which the President, after acknowledging that he had read the note of Mr. Davis, said that he was, is, and always should be willing to receive any agents that Mr. Davis or any other influential person now actually resisting the authority of the Government, might send to confer informally with the President, with a view to the restoration of peace to our once common country. Mr. Blair visited Richmond with this letter, and then again came back to Washington. On the 28th of January, we were advised from the camp of Lieutenant General Grant that Alexander H. Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter and John A. Campbell were by flag of truce, on their way to Washington as peace commissioners to confer with the President.

They were permitted by the Lieutenant General to come to his headquarters to await there the decision of the President. Major Eckert was sent down to meet the party from Richmond, at Gen. Grant's headquarters. The Major was directed to deliver to them a copy of the President's letter to Mr. Blair, with a note to one addressed to them, and signed by the Major, in which they were directly informed that if they should be allowed to pass for an informal conference, upon as nearly as I could judge from the tenor of the above-named letter of the 18th of January, to Mr. Blair. If they should express their assent to this condition in writing then Major Eckert was granted to give them safe conduct to Fortress Monroe, where a person coming from the President would meet them.

Judging thought probable from a report of their conversation with Lieutenant General Grant, that the Richmond party would, in the manner prescribed, accept the condition mentioned, the Secretary of State was charged by the President with the duty of representing the Government in the expected Conference. The Secretary arrived at Fortress Monroe on the night of the first day of February. Major Eckert met him on the morning of the second of February, with the information that the persons who had come from Richmond had not accepted, in writing, the condition upon which he was allowed to give them conduct to Fortress Monroe. The Major had given to the same information by telegraph to the President at Washington.

On receiving this information the President prepared a telegram directing the Secretary to return to Washington. The Secretary was preparing at the same moment to so return, without waiting for instructions from the President. But at this injuncture Lieutenant General Grant telegraphed to the Secretary of War, as well as to the Secretary of State, that the party from Richmond had reconsidered and accepted the conditions tendered them through Major Eckert, and General Grant urgently advised the President to confer in person with the Richmond party, under these circumstances, the Secretary, by the President's direction, remained at Fortress Monroe, and the President joined him there on the night of the 2d of February. The Richmond party was brought down the James River in an United States steam transport during the day, and the transport was anchored in Hampton roads.

On the morning of the 3d, the President, attended by the Secretary, received Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell, on board the United States steam transport River Queen, in Hampton Roads. The conference was altogether informal. There was no attendance of secretaries, clerks, or other witnesses.—Nothing was written or read. The conversation, although earnest and free, was calm and courteous, and kept within both sides. The Richmond party seemed to approached the discussion rather indirectly, and at no time did they either make categorical demands or tender formal stipulations, or absolute proposals; nevertheless, during the conference, which lasted four hours, the several points at issue between the Government and the insurgents, were distinctly raised and discussed fully, intelligently, and in an amicable spirit.

What the insurgent party seemed chiefly to favor was a postponement of the question of separation, upon which the war is waged, and a mutual direction of efforts of the government, as well as those of the insurgents, to some extensive policy or scheme for a season, during which rumors might be expected to subside, and the armies reduced and trade and intercourse between the people of both sections resumed. It was suggested by them that through such postponement we might now have immediate peace, with some not very certain prospect of an ultimate satisfactory adjustment of political relations between this government and the States, section or people now engaged in conflict with it.

This suggestion, though deliberately considered, was nevertheless regarded by the President as one of armistice or truce, and he announced 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.—Unilaterally, and in subordination to the proposition which was then 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 heretofore assumed in his proclamation of emancipation and other documents, as those positions were reiterated in his annual message. It was further declared by the President that the complete restoration of the National authority everywhere was an indispensable condition of 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 propositions, he would be prepared, so far as power is lodged with the Executive, to exercise liberality. Its power, however, is limited by the Constitution, and when peace should be made Congress must necessarily act in regard to appropriations of money, and to the admission of Representatives from the insurrectionary States. The Richmond party were then informed that Congress had, on the 31st ult., adopted by a constitutional majority, a joint resolution submitting to the several States the proposition to abolish slavery throughout the Union, and there is every reason to expect that it will soon be accepted by three-fourths of the States, so as to become a part of the national organic law.

The conference came to an end by mutual acquiescence, without producing an agreement of views upon the several matters discussed, or any of them. Nevertheless it is perhaps of some importance that we have been able to submit our opinions and views directly to prominent insurgents, and to hear them in answer in a courteous and not unfriendly manner.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WM. H. SEWARD.

BOY LOST.

He had black eyes, with long lashes, red cheeks, and hair almost black and curly. He wore a trimson plaid jacket, with full trowsers buttoned on; had a habit of whistling, and liked to ask questions: was accompanied by a small black dog. It is a long while now since he disappeared. I have a very pleasant house, and much company. My guests say, "Ah! it is pleasant to be here. Everything has such an orderly, put-away look—nothing about under foot—no dirt." But my eyes are aching for the sight of whittlings and cut paper on the floor; of tumbled down card-houses; of wooden sheep and cattle; of pop guns, bows and arrows, whips, tops, go carts, blocks, and trumpery. I want to see crumbles on the carpet, and paste spilt on the kitchen table. I want to see the chairs and the tables turned the wrong way about. I want to see candy-making and corn-popping, and to find jack-knives and fishhooks among my muslins. Yet these things used to fret me once. They say, "How quiet you are here! Ah! one may settle his brains, and be at peace."—But my ears are aching for the pattering of little feet; for a hearty shout, a shrill whistle, a gay tra la la; for the crack of little whips; for the noise of drums, fifes and tin trumpets. Yet, these things made me nervous once.

They say, "Ah! you have leisure—nothing to disturb you. What heaps of sewing you have time for!" But I long to be disturbed. I want to be asked for a bit of string or an old newspaper—for a cent to buy a slate-pencil or peanuts. I want to be coaxed for a piece of new cloth for jibs and mainsails, and then to hem the same. I want to make little flags and tugs to hold marbles. I want to be followed by little feet all over the house, teased for a bit of dough for a little cake, or to bake a pie in a saucer. Yet, these things used to fidget me once. They say: "Ah! you are not tied at home. How delightful to be always at liberty for concerts, lectures, and parties! No confinement for you." But I want confinement. I want to listen to the school-bell mornings, to give the last hasty wash and brush, and then to watch from the window nimble feet bounding away to school. I want frequent rents to mend, and to replace lost buttons. I want to obliterate mud stains, molasses stains, and paints of all colors.

A manly figure stands before me now. He is taller than I, has thick whiskers, wears a frock coat, a bosomed shirt, and a hat. He has just come from college.—He brings Latin and Greek in his countenance, and busts of the old philosophers for the sitting room. He calls me mother, but I am rather unwilling to own him.—He avers that he is my boy, and says that he can prove it. He brings his little boat to show the red stripe on the sail (it was the end of the piece) and the name on the stern, Lucy Lowe, a little girl of our neighbor, who because of her long curls and pretty round face, was the chosen favorite of my boy. The curls were long since cut off, and she has grown to a tall, handsome girl. How his face reddens as he shows me the name on the boat. Oh! I see it all as plain as if it were written in a book. My little boy is lost, and my big boy will soon be. Oh, I wish he were a little tired boy in a long white night gown, lying in his crib, with me sitting by, holding his hand in mine, pushing the curls back from his forehead, watching his eyelids droop, and listening to his deep breathing.

If I only had my little boy again, how patient I would be! How much I would bear, and how little I would fret and scold. I can never have him back again; but there are still many mothers who have not yet lost their little boys. I wonder if they know they are living their very best days; that now is the time to really enjoy their children! I think if I had been more to my little boy, I might now be more to my grown up one.—*Home Magazine.*

PROSPERITY OF TAHITI.—Advices from Tahiti, dated 5th of October last, report the agricultural development of the island so rapidly increasing, and the commercial relations are extending to such a degree that it is contemplated to establish a regular line of steamers between that point and San Francisco. The coffee and orange crops have been somewhat injured by a peculiar disease.—*Paris Pays, Jan. 19.*

☞ Admiral Elliott, of the British Navy, reports to his government the total loss of the British steamer Bombay by fire at Montevideo, on the 14th December. Mr. Smallbone, assistant surgeon, is the only one of the crew missing, but ninety three of the crew are supposed to be lost. The Bombay was an 1000 gun screw steamer, of 400 horse power.

☞ A report has been made by an efficient and experienced engineer upon the insecurity of War and Navy Departments for the preservation of the public records from fire.—The erection of are proof granite buildings for the use of those Departments is recommended.

☞ The Richmond Examiner congratulates the country that the cold fit of depression and despondency which lately made the people shiver and chatter their teeth is over, and that Congress has stopped discussing peace propositions and gone to work in preparing for a vigorous spring campaign.

☞ The Washington Republican says:—"One of our friends got sitting on the brass yesterday. He went out with a pair of borrowed skates and came back with a contusion on his manly brow, swollen to the size of a hen's egg. He has returned said skates to their owner."

☞ Senator Sherman authorizes a direct denial of the report that the Senate finance committee had discovered any loss of bonds in the office of the Register of the Treasury during last year, other than that mentioned in Secretary Fessenden's report.

☞ In one of the processes of steel-pen making, done by females at Birmingham, a quick worker will cut out in one day of ten working hours 250 gross, or 36,000 pens, which involves 72,000 distinct motions of the arm, two in every second.

☞ A certain Herr Tolmsque has been dolling in London at private houses all the feats which have rendered the Davenport brothers so famous.

☞ Those who have no settled occupation themselves are most prone to find fault with the work of others.

HIGHLY IMPORTANT.

FROM THE SOUTH

Return of the Rebel Peace Commissioners.

NO HOPES OF PEACE.

"Independence" the Ultimatum.

DIXIE TO BE "STUMPED."

Stephens Especially Indignant.

THE SOUTH HAS BEEN INSULTED.

[From the Richmond Whig.]

OUR PEACE COMMISSIONERS

Have returned. They were not allowed to enter the enemy's capital. No commissioners on the part of the enemy were appointed to meet them; but Lincoln, after the manner of the ancient Pontiac, himself gave them an audience in person, and listened to their errand in his own backwoods style. He was civil, and as he never fails to be jocose and *anecdotal*, he assured our commissioners that he had no terms to offer or listen to that did not rest upon our submission to the Federal authority, and the return of our States to the Union.

Such, we have reason to believe, was the result of the interview between Lincoln and Seward on the one side, and Stephens, Hunter and Campbell on the other, at Fortress Monroe last week. Thus ends the interlude, and the tragedy goes on again.

The readers of the Whig have not been encouraged to look for any other result.—For our own part, we derive no little satisfaction from the fact that the matter has been so promptly disposed of.

Hoping next to nothing of good from the embassy, we feared seriously that the tricky Seward might bring some devilish device into play to prolong negotiations, deceive our Commissioners, mislead our people, and drive our authorities from those indispensable preparations for the coming campaign that will enable us once more to meet the shock of the enemy's onset.—This great peril the sagacity of our Commissioners, and the unusual frankness of Seward, has saved us from.

We now see where we stand, and what is before us, and every man knows his duty. A liberal, and open, and honorable effort has been made to terminate the bloody strife in which we are engaged.

The most anxious advocate for negotiations cannot object that the Commissioners selected did not fitly represent the sentiments of our people. Neither were they objectionable on any personal or other ground to the Washington authorities. The experiment has been fairly made, and has completely and signally failed. What these gentlemen could not obtain no one could obtain, whether they represented the Confederate States in a body or any one of them singly. Submission is the only condition on which we can have peace. The man who is not satisfied with this effort at negotiation is a factionist, and will be held by all as an enemy of the cause.

To talk now of any other arbitrament than that of the sword is to betray cowardice or treason. We must beat back this enemy thirsting for our blood, or be destroyed by him. There is no alternative. We must make good our independence, defend our institutions and maintain our rights, or give up the houses we have built, the lands we have tilled, the slaves we have owned, the institutions we have inherited, the religion, the civilization and the traditions in which we have been reared, the laws, customs and habits to which we have been used, the hope we have cherished, the name we have aspired to attain, all that makes existence valuable, and go forth with nothing left but a worthless life, as vagabonds and mendicants.

Here, then, our people bid adieu to all thoughts of peace, except a peace to be wrung from vainglorious and insolence by the sword. The might of a universal and all powerful resolve to conquer or die.

THE EDGE OF THE SWORD.

From the Richmond Examiner.

An editorial concludes as follows:—Did it ever before befall in the history of mankind, that the power which had in the field three unconquered armies, such as ours, with a government firmly seated in his metropolitan city, and a territory scarcely yet touched by an enemy, four times as great as that of some first-rate European Kingdoms, was asked for an unconditional surrender of its armies, its government and lives, liberties and fortunes of all its inhabitants, men, women and children, to the absolute discretion of an invading enemy, with a certainty besides, that this discretion would be exercised for the extraction of its present race of inhabitants, and the resettlement of the country by strangers!

There is no record of such demand, and the very monstrousness of it in the present case indicates that our enemy has purposely made his demands so incredibly preposterous in order to make all forms of reconstruction or reconciliation impossible; and has made up his mind to go for conquest and the rights of conquest.—Herein be it so. This is indeed throwing away the scabbard. There is at least stern satisfaction in knowing that the parly is at end, and that the fate and fortune of ourselves, our country and our children lies in the edge of the sword.

REBEL CONGRESS, FEB. 6TH—THE PEACE COMMISSION.

A message was received from the President, transmitting the official report of the Confederate Commissioners.

On motion of Mr. Henry (Tenn.) five thousand copies of the message and report were ordered to be printed.

The Senate then resolved itself into secret session.

INVITATION TO STEPHENS & CO.

On Monday, in the rebel House of Representatives, Mr. Bell (Ga.) offered a resolution inviting Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell, our returned Peace Commissioners, to address the members of Congress, and the people generally, on the subject of the state of the country, and of the duties of the State and of the hour, in Capitol Square, at such time as they may select. Adopted.

VIRGINIA WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT PEACE.

In the Virginia House of Delegates Mr. McCue, of Augusta, introduced a preamble and resolution inviting Messrs. Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell, the returned Commissioners, to address the House of Delegates in their representative capacity on the result of their mission to Fortress Monroe and their interview with Lincoln and Seward, and inviting the members of the State Senate and the House and Senate of the Confederate Congress to privileged seats on the floor of the hall. The resolution met with some opposition on the ground of its exclusiveness, and it was laid upon the table.

A PUBLIC MEETING AT THE AFRICAN CHURCH.

From the Richmond Dispatch of Tuesday.

In response to the call of Gov. Smith, of Virginia, to meet him at the African of Virginia, to meet the greatest concourse of people Church, the greatest concourse of people assembled in that building last evening that ever before were at one time collected under its roof. The meeting was advertised to be held at half-past 7 o'clock. Before five o'clock every seat and position where man could stand was occupied, and with each moment the crowd became greater b... additional arrivals, until at last what had been a crowd became a jam. The galleries were so closely packed that serious fears were entertained that they would give way under this weight and crush all beneath them.

It was gratifying to see this immense attendance at a meeting whose object was to hurl back into Lincoln's teeth the insult put upon the Southern people by his answer to the Confederate Commissioners sent to confer with him on the subject of peace between the two countries. Standing in that immense assemblage, and hearing the patriotic expressions of the citizens and soldiers gathered together, one was involuntarily carried back, by the sight and by the eager spirit that animated all present, to the first days of Secession. Never before has the war spirit burned so fiercely and steadily. The firm resolve to resist to the very death the demands of the Northern tyrant that now animates the whole Southern people was plainly visible in that meeting.

About 7 o'clock Governor Smith, attended by President Davis and several distinguished citizens, came upon the stand. The proceedings were opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Burrows, of the Baptist Church. The Governor addressed the multitude in a patriotic and soul-stirring speech, during which he was frequently interrupted by thunders of applause. He was followed by President Davis, in an address of about three-quarters of an hour in length, during which he was frequently interrupted by the wildest outburts of applause. Upon the subject of the recent peace commission, President Davis said that he himself had never entertained much hope of effecting honorable terms so long as our cause was meeting with reverses; but under the circumstances, when semi-official representatives had so frequently visited our Government, intimating that negotiations might result in a satisfactory adjustment of our difficulties, and when it was plain that the sufferings of our people dictated that every effort on his part should be made to bring about a cessation of hostilities.

He felt it his duty as he had always done, to appoint those whom he regarded among the best men we had, who were most calculated to heal the existing troubles which severed us, and obtain that independence for the Confederacy from the Federal Government which no other nation on the face of the earth but the Yankees would think of denying. As to the conditions of peace, President Davis emphatically asserted that nothing save the independence of the Confederacy could ever receive his sanction. He had embarked in this cause with a full knowledge of the tremendous odds against us; but with the approval of a just Providence, which he conscientiously believed was on our side, and the united resolve of our people, he doubted not that victory would yet crown our labors.

In his correspondence with Lincoln, that functionary had always spoken of the United States and Confederacy as our afflicted country; but in his replies, he (the speaker) had never failed to refer to them as separate and distinct Governments, and sooner than we should ever be united again, he would be willing to yield up everything he has on earth, and if it were possible, would sacrifice thousands of lives before he would succumb. It was impossible, at the late hour when President Davis concluded, to give anything like an accurate summary of his remarks; suffice it to say that it was everything which might have been expected from so distinguished a patriot, and no one of the vast concourse present failed to be enthusiastically gratified. He concluded by authorizing those at home, who are able to bear arms, to unite with those already in the army in repelling the foe, believing that thereby we would compel the Yankees in less than twelve months to petition us for peace upon our own terms.

At the conclusion of President Davis' speech, Governor Smith arose and read the following preamble and resolutions *seriatim*, which were unanimously adopted as the sentiment of the meeting:

Whereas, The commonwealth of Virginia, in concert with other American States, did, in the year 1776, solemnly set forth that when any form of government becomes destructive of the happiness or dangerous to the liberties of the people, it is the right and the duty of the people to alter or abolish it, in pursuance where of they did declare themselves independent States:

And whereas, her separate independence, and that of the co acting States, was afterwards acknowledged by the world;

And whereas, Virginia did subsequently form with other States a common Government or agency for the management of their foreign affairs, and other specified general purposes, which said common Government, or agency, received no other or further recognition by foreign powers than as representatives of the several State sovereignties already recognized; *and whereas*, Virginia in entering into this association of federal States did expressly reserve for herself, and therefore for her co-States, co States' rights which attached to the act itself, of resuming the powers whensoever the same might be perverted to their injury or oppression; *and whereas*, the Commonwealth of Virginia did in sovereign convention, in 1861, decide and determine that circumstances had arrived which made it her imperative duty, as it was her indisputable right, to withdraw from the association known as the United States of America, and resume her separate sovereignty; *and whereas*, this legitimate act has been followed by an atrocious war upon her and upon the States with which she subsequently formed a new confederation, by the States from which she and they withdrew, for the purpose of subjecting her and them to the absolute and tyrannical domination of the United States; *and whereas*, after four years of hostilities, conducted on the part of our enemies with a barbarity equaled only by the wickedness of their designs, their authorities did invite a conference with a view to the establishment of peace, which invitation was responded to by the Confederate authorities; *and whereas*, it appears from the report of the Confederate Commissioners to said conference, that it was declared on the part of our enemy that nothing short of the total and unconditional submission of our people, and the acknowledgement of their absolute authority, that their laws for the confiscation of our property and execution of our citizens should be enforced by the Judges and other officers whom they would appoint for that purpose; that the only palliation of our wretchedness should be the voluntary mercy of those who for four years have murdered our people and ravished our homes; that our social system shall be immediately upturned and hereafter regulated at their will; that the uniform which our soldiers have made so honorable must be stripped from their persons, and the flag under which they have so often marched to victory must be trailed in the dust and thrown away forever; therefore be it

Resolved, That we, the citizens here assembled, do spurn with the indignation due to so gross an insult, the terms on which the President of the United States has proffered peace to the people of the Confederate States.

Resolved, That the circumstances under which that proffer has been made add to the outrage, and stamp it as a designed and premeditated indignity to our people.

Resolved, That our profoundest gratitude is due to the soldiers who for four years have maintained our liberties against the utmost efforts of our enemies, and that, while we look to them to illustrate in future feats of the past, we will sustain their efforts by every means and resource at our command.

Resolved, That in His presence, and in the face of the world, reverently invoking thereto the aid of Almighty God, we renew our resolve to maintain our liberties and independence; and to this we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honors.

After the adoption of the foregoing preamble and resolutions, loud calls were made for Vice President A. H. Stephens, Hons. G. A. Henry, of Tennessee, R. M. T. Hunter, of Virginia, Oldham, of Texas, and Rev. Dr. Duncan, of Richmond. The two latter responded in appropriate spee