The Century Magazine
Vol XXXIX No 2
December, 1889

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A HISTORY.[1]

THE FALL OF THE REBEL CAPITAL—LINCOLN IN RICHMOND.

BY JOHN G. NICOLAY AND JOHN HAY, PRIVATE SECRETARIES TO THE PRESIDENT.

THE FALL OF THE REBEL CAPITAL.

SINCE the visit of Blair and the return of the rebel commissioners from the Hampton Roads conference, no event of special significance had excited the authorities or people of Richmond. February and March passed away in the routine of war and politics, which at the end of four years had become familiar and dull. To shrewd observers in that city things were going from bad to worse. Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President, had abandoned the capital and the cause and retired to Georgia to await the end. Judge John A. Campbell, though performing the duties of Assistant Secretary of War, made, among his intimate friends, no concealment of his opinion that the last days of the Confederacy had come.[2] The members of the rebel Congress, adjourning after their long and fruitless winter session, gave many indications that they never expected to reassemble. A large part of their winter's work had been to demonstrate without direct accusation that it was the Confederate mal-Administration which was wrecking the Southern cause. On his part Jefferson Davis prolonged their session a week to send them his last message—a dry lecture to prove that the blame rested entirely on their own shoulders. The last desperate measure of rebel statesmanship, the law to permit masters to put their slaves into the Southern armies to fight for the rebellion, was so palpably illogical and impracticable that both the rebel Congress and the rebel President appear to have treated it as the merest legislative rubbish; or else the latter would scarcely have written in the same message, after stating that "much benefit is anticipated from this measure," that

> The people of the Confederacy can be but little known to him who supposes it possible they would ever consent to purchase, at the cost of degradation and slavery, permission to live in a country garrisoned by their own negroes, and governed by officers sent by the conqueror to rule over them.[3]

Jefferson Davis was strongly addicted to political contradictions, but we must suppose even his cross-eyed philosophy capable of detecting that a negro willing to fight in slavery in preference to fighting in freedom was not a very safe reliance for Southern independence. The language as he employs it here fitly closes the continuous official Confederate wail about Northern subjugation, Northern despotism, Northern barbarity, Northern atrocity, and Northern inhumanity which rings through his letters, speeches, orders, messages, and proclamations with monotonous dissonance during his whole four years of authority.

Of all the Southern people none were quite so blinded as those of Richmond. Their little bubble of pride at being the Confederate capital was ever iridescent with the brightest hopes. They had no dream that the visible symbols of Confederate government and glory upon which their eyes had nourished their faith would disappear almost as suddenly as if an earthquake had swallowed them. Poverty, distress, and desolation had indeed crept into their homes, but the approach had been slow, and so mitigated by the exaltations of a heroic self-sacrifice that they welcomed the change rather than suffered by it. For the moment nature was their helper. The cheering, healing, revivifying influences of the springtime were at hand. The warm sunshine lay on the hills, the songs of birds were in the air, buds and blossoms filled the gardens.

All accounts agree that when on Sunday morning, April 2, 1865, the people of Richmond went forth to their places of worship, they had no thought of impending change or public calamity. The ominous signs of such a possibility had escaped their attention. A few days before, Mrs. Jefferson Davis, with her children, had left Richmond for the South and sent some of her furniture to auction. So also some weeks before, the horses remaining in the city had been impressed to collect the tobacco into convenient warehouses where it

[2] Jones, "A Rebel War Clerk's Diary," Vol. II., p. 450.

[3] Davis, Message, March 13, 1865. "American Annual Cyclopædia," 1865, pp. 718, 719.

[1] Copyright by J. G. Nicolay and John Hay, 1886. All rights reserved.

could be readily burned to prevent its falling into Yankee hands.[1]

But the significance of these and perhaps other indications could not be measured by the general populace. In fact for some days a rather unusual quiet had prevailed. That morning Jefferson Davis was in his pew in St. Paul's Church when before the sermon was ended an officer walked up the aisle and handed him a telegram from General Lee at Petersburg, dated at half-past ten that morning, in which he read, "My lines are broken in three places; Richmond must be evacuated this evening." He rose and walked out of church; whereupon the officer handed the telegram to the rector, who as speedily as possible brought the services to a close, making the announcement that General Ewell, the commander at Richmond, desired the military forces to assemble at three o'clock in the afternoon. The news seems also to have reached in some form one or two of the other churches, so that though no announcement of the fact was made, the city little by little became aware of the harrowing necessity.

The fact of its being Sunday, with no business going on and rest pervading every household, doubtless served to moderate the shock to the public. Yet very soon the scene was greatly transformed. From the Sabbath stillness of the morning the streets became alive with bustle and activity. Jefferson Davis had called his Cabinet and officials together, and the hurried packing of the Confederate archives for shipment was soon in progress. Citizens who had the means made hasty preparations for flight; the far greater number who were compelled to stay were in a flutter to devise measures of protection or concealment. The banks were opened and depositors flocked thither to withdraw their money and valuables. A remnant of the Virginia legislature gathered in the Representatives' Hall at the Capitol to debate a question of greater urgency than had ever before taxed their wisdom or eloquence. In another room sat the municipal council, for once impressed with the full weight of its responsibility. Meanwhile the streets were full of hurrying people, of loaded wagons, of galloping military officers conveying orders. One striking sketch of that wild hurry-skurry deserves to be recorded.

Lumpkin, who for many years had kept a slave-trader's jail, also had a work of necessity on hand — fifty men, women, and children, who must be saved to the missionary institution for the future enlightenment of Africa. Although it was the Lord's day (perhaps he was comforted by the thought that "the better the day the better the deed") the coffle-gang was made up in the jail yard, within pistol shot of Davis's parlor window, within a stone's throw of the Monumental Church, and a sad and weeping throng, chained two and two, the last slave-coffle that shall ever tread the streets of Richmond, were hurried to the Danville depot.[2]

But the "institution," like the Confederacy, was already *in extremis*. The account adds that the departing trains could afford no transportation for this last slave cargo, and the gang probably went to pieces like every other Richmond organization, military and political.

Evening had come, and the confusion of the streets found its culmination at the railroad depots. Military authority made room for the fleeing President and his Cabinet, and department officials and their boxes of more important papers. The cars were overcrowded and overloaded long before the clamoring multitude and piles of miscellaneous baggage could be got aboard, and by the occasional light of lanterns flitting hither and thither the wheezing and coughing trains moved out into the darkness. The legislature of Virginia and the governor of the State departed in a canal boat towards Lynchburg. All available vehicles carrying fugitives were leaving the city by various country roads, but the great mass of the population, unable to get away, had to confront the dread certainty that only one night remained before the appearance of a hostile army with the power of death and destruction over them and their homes.

How this power might be exercised, present signs were none too reassuring. Since noon, when the fact of evacuation had become certain, the whole fabric of society seemed to be crumbling to pieces. Military authority was concentrating its energy on only two objects, destruction and departure. The civil authority was lending a hand, for the single hasty precaution which the city council could ordain was, that all the liquors in the city should be emptied out. To order this was one thing, to have it rigorously executed would be asking quite too much of the lower human appetites, and while some of the street gutters ran with alcohol, enough was surreptitiously consumed to produce a frightful state of excitement and drunkenness. No picture need be drawn of the possibilities of violence and crime which must have haunted the timid watchers in Richmond who listened all night to the shouts, the blasphemy, the disorder that rose and fell in the streets, or who furtively noted the signs of pillage already begun. And how shall we follow their imagination, passing from these visible acts of the friends of yesterday to what they might look for from the enemies expected to-morrow? For had not their President offi-

[1] Jones, "A Rebel War Clerk's Diary," Vol. II., p. 438.

[2] "Atlantic Monthly," June, 1865.

cially, their statesmen, and their newspapers with frantic rhetoric, warned them against the fanatical, penny-worshiping Yankee invader? And that final horror of horrors, the negro soldiers held up to their dread by the solemn presidential message of Jefferson Davis only two weeks before. What now of the fear of servile insurrection, the terrible specter they had secretly nursed from their very childhood? It is scarcely possible they can have escaped such meditations even though already weary and exhausted with the surprises and labors of the day, with the startling anxieties of the evening, with the absorbing care of burying their household silver and secreting their yet more precious personal ornaments and tokens of affection. In Europe, a thousand wars have rendered such experiences historically commonplace; in America, let us hope that a thousand years of peace may render their repetition impossible.

Full of dangerous portent as had been the night, the morning became yet more ominous. Long before day sleepers and watchers alike were startled by a succession of explosions which shook every building. The military authorities were blowing up the vessels in construction at the river. These were nine in number, three of them iron-clads of four guns each, the others small wooden ships.[1] Next, the arsenal was fired; and, as many thousands of loaded shells were stored here, there succeeded for a period the sounds of a continuous cannonade. Already fire had been set to the warehouses containing the collected tobacco and cotton, among which loaded shells had also been scattered to insure more complete destruction.

There is a conflict of testimony as to who is responsible for the deplorable public calamity which ensued. The rebel Congress had passed a law ordering the Government tobacco and other public property to be burned, and Jefferson Davis states that the general commanding had advised with the mayor and city authorities about precautions against a conflagration.[2] On the other hand, Lieutenant-General Ewell, the military commander, has authorized the statement that he not only earnestly warned the city authorities of the certain consequences of the measure, but that he took the responsibility of disobeying the law and military orders. "I left the city about seven o'clock in the morning," he writes, "and as yet nothing had been fired by my orders; yet the buildings and depot near the railway bridge were on fire, and the flames were so close as to be disagreeable as I rode by them."[3] By this time the spirit of lawlessness and hunger for pillage had gained full headway. The rearguard of the retreating Confederates set the three great bridges in flames, and while the fire started at the four immense warehouses and various points, and soon uniting in an uncontrollable conflagration was beginning to eat out the heart of the city, a miscellaneous mob went from store to store, and with a beam for a battering ram smashed in the doors so that the crowd might freely enter and plunder the contents. This rapacity, first directed towards bread and provision stores, gradually extended itself to all other objects until mere greed of booty rather than need or usefulness became the ruling instinct, and promoted the waste and destruction of that which had been stolen. Into this pandemonium of fire and license there came one additional terror to fill up its dramatic completeness.

> About ten o'clock [writes an eye-witness], just before the entrance of the Federal army, a cry of dismay rang all along the streets, which were out of the track of the fire, and I saw a crowd of leaping, shouting demons, in parti-colored clothes, and with heads half shaven. It was the convicts from the penitentiary, who had overcome the guard, set fire to the prison, and were now at liberty. Many a heart which had kept its courage to this point quailed at the sight. Fortunately, they were too intent upon securing their freedom to do much damage.[4]

It is quite probable that the magnitude and

1 "The following is a list of the vessels destroyed: *Virginia*, flag-ship, four guns, iron-clad; *Richmond*, four guns, iron-clad; *Fredericksburg*, four guns, iron-clad; *Nansemond*, two guns, wooden; *Hampton*, two guns, wooden; *Roanoke*, one gun, wooden; *Torpedo*, tender; *Shrapnel; Patrick Henry*, school-ship." [Porter, Report, April 5, 1865. Report Sec. Navy, 1865–66.]

2 Davis, "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," Vol. II., p. 666.

3 Ewell to Lossing, November, 1866. "The Independent," March 11, 1886.

Lossing, writing from both the written statement and verbal explanations of General Ewell, says: "Now General Ewell earnestly warned the city authorities of the danger of acting according to the letter of that resolution; for a brisk wind was blowing from the south which would send the flames of the burning warehouses into the town and imperil the whole city. Early in the evening a deputation of citizens called upon President Davis and remonstrated against carrying out that order of Congress, because the safety of the city would be jeopardized. He was then in an unamiable state of mind, and curtly replied, 'Your statement that the burning of the warehouses will endanger the city is only a cowardly pretext to save your property for the Yankees!' After Davis's departure a committee of the city council, at the suggestion of General Ewell, went to the War Office to remonstrate with whomsoever might represent the department, against the execution of the perilous order. Major Melton rudely replied in language which was almost an echo of that of his superior, and General Ewell, in spite of his earnest remonstrances, was ordered to cause the four warehouses near the river to be set on fire at three o'clock in the morning." [Lossing, in "The Independent" (New York), March 11, 1886.]

4 Mary Tucker Magill, in "The Independent" (New York), Jan. 7, 1886.

rapidity of the disaster served in a measure to mitigate its evil results. The burning of seven hundred buildings comprising the entire business portion of Richmond, warehouses, manufactories, mills, depots, and stores, all within the brief space of a day, was a visitation so sudden, so unexpected, so stupefying as to overawe and terrorize even wrong-doers, and made the harvest of plunder so abundant as to serve to scatter the mob and satisfy its rapacity to quick repletion.

Before a new hunger could arise, assistance, protection, and relief were at hand. The citizens' committee which went forth to surrender Richmond met the vanguard of the Union army under General Weitzel outside the limits of the city in the early forenoon, and after a formal ceremony of submission, a small detachment of white Union cavalry galloped into the late rebel capital, and proceeding directly to the State House raised the national flag over it.[1] Soon afterward there occurred what was to the inhabitants the central incident of the day — the event which engrossed their solicitude even more than the vanished rebel Government, the destroyed city, or the lost cause. This was the arrival of the colored soldiers, the, to them, visible realization of the new political and social heavens and earth to which four years of rebellion and war had brought them. The prejudices of a lifetime cannot be instantly overcome, and the rebels of Richmond doubtless felt that this was the final drop in their cup of misery and that their "subjugation" was complete. General Weitzel had arrived with the first detachment of Union cavalry; and seeing the conflagration and disorder, he sent back an aide in haste to bring into the city the first brigade he could find, to act as a provost guard.

At length they came — a brigade of colored cavalry from the division of General Devens.[2] It is related that about this time, as by a common impulse, the white people of Richmond disappeared from the streets, and the black population streamed forth with an apparently instinctive recognition that their day of jubilee had at last arrived. To see this compact, organized body of men of their own color, on horseback, in neat uniforms, with flashing sabers, with the gleam of confidence and triumph in their eyes, was a palpable living reality to which their hope and pride, long repressed, gave instant response. They greeted them with expressions of welcome in every form — cheers, shouts, laughter, and a rattle of exclamations as they rushed along the sides of the street to keep pace with the advancing column and feast their eyes on the incredible sight; while the black Union soldiers rose high in their stirrups and with waving swords and deafening huzzas acknowledged the fraternal reception.

But there was little time for holiday enjoyment. The conflagration was roaring, destruction was advancing; fury of fire, blackness of smoke, crash of falling walls, obstruction of débris, confusion, helplessness, danger, seemed everywhere. The great Capitol Square on the hill had become the refuge of women and children and the temporary storing-place of the few household effects they had saved from the burning. From this center, where the Stars and Stripes were first hoisted, there now flowed back upon the stricken city, not the doom and devastation for which its people looked, but the friendly help and protection of a generous army bringing them peace, and the spirit of a benevolent Government tendering them forgiveness and reconciliation. Up to this time it would seem that not an organization had been proposed nor a hand raised to stay the ravages of the flames. The public spirit of Richmond was dead even to that commonest of human impulses, the willingness to help a neighbor in affliction. The advent of the Union army breathed a new life into this social paralysis. The first care of the officers was to organize resistance to fire; and instead of the blood and rapine which the deluded Virginians feared from the Yankee officers and "niggers" in Federal uniforms, they beheld them reëstablish order and personal security, and convert the unrestrained mob of whites and blacks into a regulated energy, to save what remained of their city from the needless fire and pillage to which their own friends had devoted it, against remonstrance and against humanity. And this was not all. Beginning that afternoon and continuing many days, these "Yankee invaders" fed the poor of Richmond, and saved them from the starvation to which the law of the Confederate Congress, relentlessly executed by the Confederate President and some of his subordinates, exposed them.

LINCOLN IN RICHMOND.

A LITTLE more than two months before these events, President Lincoln had written the following letter to General Grant:

Please read and answer this letter as though I was not President, but only a friend. My son, now in his twenty-second year, having graduated at Harvard, wishes to see something of the war before it ends. I do not wish to put him in the ranks,

[1] The flag was raised by a young officer named Johnston Livingston de Peyster, who had carried it at his saddle-bow for a week with this purpose.

[2] Weitzel, testimony; Report of Committee on Conduct of the War. Supplement, Part I., p. 523.

nor yet to give him a commission, to which those who have already served long are better entitled, and better qualified to hold. Could he, without embarrassment to you, or detriment to the service, go into your military family with some nominal rank, I, and not the public, furnishing his necessary means? If no, say so without the least hesitation, because I am as anxious and as deeply interested that you shall not be encumbered as you can be yourself.[1]

Grant replied as follows:

Your favor of this date in relation to your son serving in some military capacity is received. I will be most happy to have him in my military family in the manner you propose. The nominal rank given him is immaterial, but I would suggest that of captain, as I have three staff-officers now, of considerable service, in no higher grade. Indeed, I have one officer with only the rank of lieutenant who has been in the service from the beginning of the war. This, however, will make no difference, and I would still say give the rank of captain.—Please excuse my writing on a half-sheet. I have no resource but to take the blank half of your letter.[2]

The President's son therefore became a member of Grant's staff with the rank of captain, and acquitted himself of the duties of that station with fidelity and honor.

We may assume that it was the anticipated important military events rather than the presence of Captain Robert T. Lincoln at Grant's headquarters which induced the general on the 20th of March, 1865, to invite the President and Mrs. Lincoln to make a visit to his camp near Richmond; and on the 22d they and their younger son Thomas, nicknamed "Tad," proceeded in the steamer *River Queen* from Washington to City Point, where General Grant with his family and staff were "occupying a pretty group of huts on the bank of the James River, overlooking the harbor, which was full of vessels of all classes, both war and merchant, with wharves and warehouses on an extensive scale."[3] Here, making his home on the steamer which brought him, the President remained about ten days, enjoying what was probably the most satisfactory relaxation in which he had been able to indulge during his whole presidential service. It was springtime and the weather was moderately steady; his days were occupied visiting the various camps of the great army in company with the general.

"He was a good horseman," records a member of the general's staff, "and made his way through swamps and over corduroy roads as well as the best trooper in the command. The soldiers invariably recognized him and greeted him, wherever he appeared amongst them, with cheers that were no lip service, but came from the depth of their hearts."[4] Many evening hours were passed with groups of officers before roaring camp-fires, where Mr. Lincoln was always the magnetic center of genial conversation and lively anecdote. The interest of the visit was further enhanced by the arrival at City Point, on the evening of March 27, of General Sherman, who, having left General Schofield to command in his absence, made a hasty trip to confer with Grant. He was able to gratify the President with a narrative of the leading incidents of his great march from Atlanta to Savannah and from Savannah to Goldsboro', North Carolina. In one or two informal interviews in the after cabin of the *River Queen*, Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, and Rear-Admiral Porter enjoyed a frank interchange of opinion about the favorable prospects of early and final victory, and of the speedy realization of the long-hoped-for peace. Sherman and Porter affirm that the President confided to them certain liberal views on the subject of reconstructing State governments in the conquered States which do not seem compatible with the very guarded language of Mr. Lincoln elsewhere used or recorded by him. It is fair to presume that their own enthusiasm colored their recollection of the President's expressions, though it is no doubt true that he spoke of his willingness to be liberal to the verge of prudence, and that he even gave them to understand that he would not be displeased at the escape from the country of Jefferson Davis and other principal rebel leaders.

On the 29th of March the party separated, Sherman returning to North Carolina, and Grant starting on his final campaign to Appomattox. Five days later Grant informed Mr. Lincoln of the fall of Petersburg, and the President made a flying visit to that town for another brief conference with the general. The capture of Richmond was hourly expected, and that welcome information reached Lincoln soon after his return to City Point.

Between the receipt of this news and the following forenoon, but before any information about the great fire had been received, a visit to Richmond was arranged between President Lincoln and Admiral Porter. Accounts differ as to who suggested it or extended the invitation, and there is great vagueness and even contradiction about the details of the trip. Admiral Porter states[5] that he carried the President in his flag-ship, the *Malvern*, until she grounded, when he transferred the party to his barge with a tugboat to tow it and a small detachment of marines on board. Another account states that the President proceeded in

[1] Lincoln to Grant, Jan. 19, 1865. Unpublished MS.
[2] Grant to Lincoln, Jan. 21, 1865. Unpublished MS.
[3] Sherman, "Memoirs," Vol. II., p. 324.
[4] Gen. Horace Porter, in THE CENTURY, Oct., 1885.
[5] "New York Tribune."

the steamer *River Queen* until the transfer to the barge; also that another transport, having a four-horse field wagon and a squadron of cavalry, followed for the service of the President. Still a third account states[1] that the party went in the admiral's barge the whole distance, as affording greater safety against danger from any torpedoes which might not yet have been removed. The various accounts agree that obstructions, consisting of rows of piling, sunken hulks, and the débris of the destroyed Confederate vessels, were encountered, which only the tug and barge were able to pass.

The result therefore was that the party were compelled to make a landing at some distance below the proper place, at the suburb called Rockett's, and that there was neither sentry nor officer nor wagon nor escort to meet and receive them. One cannot help wondering at the manifest imprudence of both Mr. Lincoln and Admiral Porter in the whole proceeding.

Never in the history of the world did the ruler of a mighty nation and the conqueror of a great rebellion enter the captured chief city of the insurgents in such humbleness and simplicity. As they stepped from the barge the street along the river front seemed deserted, and they sent out to find some chance person of whom to inquire their way. The unusual group soon attracted the attention of idlers, and a crowd gathered. Admiral Porter ordered twelve of the marines to fix bayonets to their rifles and to form six in front and six behind the party, which consisted of President Lincoln, holding his son "Tad" by the hand, Admiral Porter, and three officers, all being on foot; and in this order they walked from the landing at Rockett's to the center of Richmond, a distance of nearly two miles. It was a long and fatiguing march, evidently not expected by the President, who during his ten-days' stay with the army had probably always had an officer at his elbow to anticipate his slightest wish for horses or vehicles. There remains no trustworthy account of this strange presidential entry; the printed narratives of it written from memory, after the lapse of years, are so evidently colored by fancy that they do not invite credence. Admiral Porter, writing on the following day, says:

> On the 4th of April I accompanied the President up to Richmond, where he was received with the strongest demonstrations of joy.[2]

This is perhaps the most perfect historical record we shall ever have of the event, and the imagination may easily fill up the picture of a gradually increasing crowd, principally of negroes, following the little group of marines and officers with the tall form of the President in its center; and, having learned that it was indeed Mr. Lincoln, giving expression to wonder, joy, and gratitude in a variety of picturesque emotional ejaculations peculiar to the colored race, and for which there was ample time while the little procession made its tiresome march, whose route cannot now be traced.

At length the party reached the headquarters of General Weitzel, established in the very house occupied by Jefferson Davis as the presidential mansion of the rebel Confederacy, and from which he had fled ess than two days before. Here Mr. Lincoln was glad of a chance to sit down and rest, and a little later to partake of a lunch which the general provided. An informal reception, chiefly of Union officers, naturally followed, and later in the afternoon General Weitzel went with the President and Admiral Porter in a carriage, guarded by an escort of cavalry, to visit the Capitol, the burnt district, Libby Prison, Castle Thunder, and other points of interest about the city; and of this afternoon drive also no trustworthy narrative in detail by an eye-witness appears to have been written at the time.

It was probably before the President went on this drive that there occurred an interview on political topics which forms one of the chief points of interest connected with his visit. Judge John A. Campbell, rebel Assistant Secretary of War, remained in Richmond when on Sunday night the other members of the rebel Government fled, and on Tuesday morning he reported to the Union military governor, General G. F. Shepley, and informed him of his "submission to the military authorities."[3] Learning from General Shepley that Mr. Lincoln was at City Point, he asked permission to see him. This application was evidently communicated to Mr. Lincoln, for shortly after his arrival a staff-officer informed Campbell that the requested interview would be granted, and conducted him to the President at the general's headquarters, where it took place. The rebel General J. R. Anderson and others were present as friends of the judge, and General Weitzel as the witness of Mr. Lincoln. Campbell, as spokesman, "told the President that the war was over," and made inquiries about the measures and conditions necessary to secure peace. Speaking for Virginia, he "urged him to consult and counsel with her public men, and her citizens, as to the restoration of peace, civil order, and the renewal of her relations as a member of the Union."[4]

1 Manuscript narrative of Colonel W. H. Crook.
2 Porter, Report, April 5, 1865.
3 Campbell, pamphlet.
4 Ibid.

In his pamphlet, written from memory long afterwards, Campbell states that Mr. Lincoln replied "that my general principles were right, the trouble was how to apply them"; and no conclusion was reached except to appoint another interview for the following day on board the *Malvern*. This second interview was accordingly held on Wednesday, April 5, Campbell taking with him only a single citizen of Richmond, as the others to whom he sent invitations were either absent from the city or declined to accompany him. General Weitzel was again present as a witness. The conversation apparently took a wide range on the general topic of restoring local governments in the South, in the course of which the President gave Judge Campbell a written memorandum,[1] embracing an outline of conditions of peace which repeated in substance the terms he had proffered the rebel commissioners (of whom Campbell was one) at the Hampton Roads conference on the 3d of February, 1865. The only practical suggestion which was made has been summarized as follows by General Weitzel in a statement written from memory, as the result of the two interviews:

Mr. Campbell and the other gentleman assured Mr. Lincoln that if he would allow the Virginia legislature to meet, it would at once repeal the ordinance of secession, and that then General Robert E. Lee and every other Virginian would submit; that this would amount to the virtual destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia, and eventually to the surrender of all the other rebel armies, and would insure perfect peace in the shortest possible time.[2]

Out of this second conference, which also ended without result, President Lincoln thought he saw an opportunity to draw an immediate and substantial military benefit. On the next day (April 6) he wrote from City Point, where he had returned, the following letter to General Weitzel, which he immediately transmitted to the general by the hand of Senator Wilkinson, in whose presence he wrote it and who was on his way from City Point to Richmond:

It has been intimated to me that the gentlemen who have acted as the legislature of Virginia in support of the rebellion may now desire to assemble at Richmond, and take measures to withdraw the Virginia troops and other support from resistance to the General Government. If they attempt it, give them permission and protection, until, if at all, they attempt some action hostile to the United States, in which case you will notify them, give them reasonable time to leave, and at the end of which time arrest any who remain. Allow Judge Campbell to see this, but do not make it public.[3]

This document bears upon its face the distinct military object which the President had in view in permitting the rebel legislature to assemble, namely, to withdraw immediately the Virginia troops from the army of Lee, then on his retreat towards Lynchburg. It could not be foreseen that Lee would surrender the whole of that army within the next three days, though it was evident that the withdrawal of the Virginia forces from it, under whatever pretended State authority, would contribute to the ending of the war quite as effectually as the reduction of that army to an equal number by battle or capture. The ground upon which Lincoln believed the rebel legislature might take this action is set forth in his dispatch to Grant of the same date, in which he wrote:

Secretary Seward was thrown from his carriage yesterday and seriously injured. This with other matters will take me to Washington soon. I was at Richmond yesterday and the day before, when and where Judge Campbell, who was with Messrs. Hunter and Stephens in February, called on me, and made such representations as induced me to put in his hands an informal paper repeating the propositions in my letter of instructions to Mr. Seward, which you remember, and adding "that if the war be now further persisted in by the rebels,

1 "As to peace, I have said before, and now repeat, that three things are indispensable:

"1. The restoration of the national authority throughout the United States.

"2. No receding by the Executive of the United States on the slavery question from the position assumed thereon in the late annual message, and in preceding documents.

"3. No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war, and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the Government. That all propositions coming from those now in hostility to the Government, not inconsistent with the foregoing, will be respectfully considered and passed upon in a spirit of sincere liberality.

"I now add that it seems useless to me to be more specific with those who will not say that they are ready for the indispensable terms, even on conditions to be named by themselves. If there be any who are ready for these indispensable terms, on any conditions whatever, let them say so, and state their conditions, so that the conditions can be known and considered. It is further added, that the remission of confiscation being within the executive power, if the war be now further persisted in by those opposing the Government, the making of confiscated property at the least to bear the additional cost will be insisted on, but that confiscations (except in case of third party intervening interests) will be remitted to the people of any State which shall now promptly and in good faith withdraw its troops from further resistance to the Government. What is now said as to remission of confiscation has no reference to supposed property in slaves." [President Lincoln's memorandum printed in Campbell, pamphlet, pp. 9, 10.]

2 Weitzel, in "Philadelphia Times."

3 Lincoln to Weitzel, April 6, 1865. Weitzel, testimony; Report of Committee on Conduct of the War. Supplement, Part I., p. 521.

confiscated property shall at the least bear the additional cost, and that confiscation shall be remitted to the people of any State which will now promptly and in good faith withdraw its troops and other support from the resistance to the Government." Judge Campbell thought it not impossible that the rebel legislature of Virginia would do the latter, if permitted, and accordingly I addressed a private letter to General Weitzel, with permission for Judge Campbell to see it, telling him (General W.) that if they attempt this to permit and protect them, unless they attempt something hostile to the United States, in which case to give them notice and time to leave, and to arrest any remaining after such time. I do not think it very probable that anything will come of this, but I have thought best to notify you, so that if you should see signs you may understand them. From your recent dispatches, it seems that you are pretty effectually withdrawing the Virginia troops from opposition to the Government. Nothing that I have done, or probably shall do, is to delay, hinder, or interfere with your work.[1]

That Mr. Lincoln well understood the temper of leading Virginians when he wrote that he had little hope of any result from the permission he had given is shown by what followed. When, on the morning of April 7, General Weitzel received the President's letter of the 6th, he showed it confidentially to Judge Campbell, who thereupon called together a committee, apparently five in number, of the Virginia rebel legislature, and instead of informing them precisely what Lincoln had authorized, namely, a meeting to "take measures to withdraw the Virginia troops and other support from resistance to the General Government," the judge in a letter to the committee (dated April 7) formulated quite a different line of action.

I have had [he wrote], since the evacuation of Richmond, two conversations with Mr. Lincoln, President of the United States. . . . The conversations had relation to the establishment of a government for Virginia, the requirement of oaths of allegiance from the citizens, and the terms of settlement with the United States. With the concurrence and sanction of General Weitzel, he assented to the application not to require oaths of allegiance from the citizens. He stated that he would send to General Weitzel his decision upon the question of a government for Virginia. This letter was received on Thursday, and was read by me. . . . The object of the invitation is for the government of Virginia to determine whether they will administer the laws in connection with the authorities of the United States. I understand from Mr. Lincoln, if this condition be fulfilled, that no attempt would be made to establish or sustain any other authority.[2]

The rest of Campbell's long letter relates to safe-conducts, to transportation, and to the contents of the written memorandum handed by Lincoln to him at the interview on the *Malvern* about general conditions of peace. But this memorandum contained no syllable of reference to the "government of Virginia," and bore no relation of any kind to the President's permission to "take measures to withdraw the Virginia troops," except its promise "that confiscations (except in case of third party intervening interests) will be remitted to the people of any State which shall now promptly and in good faith withdraw its troops from further resistance to the Government." Going a step further, the committee next prepared a call inviting a meeting of the General Assembly, announcing the consent of "the military authorities of the United States to the session of the legislature in Richmond," and stating that "The matters to be submitted to the legislature are the restoration of peace to the State of Virginia, and the adjustment of questions involving life, liberty, and property that have arisen in the States as a consequence of the war."[3] When General Weitzel indorsed his approval on the call "for publication in the 'Whig' and in hand-bill form," he does not seem to have read, or if he read to have realized, how completely President Lincoln's permission had been changed and his authority perverted. Instead of permitting them to recall Virginia soldiers, Weitzel was about to allow them authoritatively to sit in judgment on all the political consequences of the war "in the States."

General Weitzel's approval was signed to the call on April 11, and it was published in the "Richmond Whig" on the morning of the 12th. On that day the President, having returned to Washington, was at the War Department writing an answer to a dispatch from General Weitzel, in which the general defended himself against the Secretary's censure for having neglected to require from the churches in Richmond prayers for the President of the United States, similar to those which prior to the fall of the city had been offered up in their religious services in behalf of "the rebel chief, Jefferson Davis, before he was driven from the Capitol." Weitzel contended that the tone of President Lincoln's conversations with him justified the omission. Mr. Lincoln was never punctilious about social or official etiquette towards himself, and he doubtless felt in this instance that neither his moral nor political well-being was seriously dependent upon the prayers of the Richmond rebel churches. To this part of the general's dispatch he therefore answered:

I have seen your dispatches to Colonel Hardie about the matter of prayers. I do not remember hearing prayer spoken of while I was in Richmond,

1 Lincoln to Grant, April 6, 1865.
2 Campbell, pamphlet.
3 Ibid.

but I have no doubt you acted in what appeared to you to be the spirit and temper manifested by me while there.[1]

Having thus generously assumed responsibility for Weitzel's alleged neglect, the President's next thought was about what the Virginia rebel legislature was doing, of which he had heard nothing since his return from City Point. He therefore included in this same telegram of April 12 the following inquiry and direction:

Is there any sign of the rebel legislature coming together on the understanding of my letter to you? If there is any such sign, inform me what it is. If there is no sign, you may withdraw the offer.

To this question General Weitzel answered briefly, "The passports have gone out for the legislature, and it is common talk that they will come together." It is probable that Mr. Lincoln thought that if after the lapse of five days the proposed meeting had progressed no farther than "common talk," nothing could be expected from it. It would also seem that at this time he must have received, either by telegraph or by mail, copies of the correspondence and call which Weitzel had authorized, and which had been published that morning. The President therefore immediately wrote and sent to General Weitzel a long telegram, in which he explained his course with such clearness that its mere perusal sets at rest all controversy respecting either his original intention of policy or the legal effect of his action and orders, and by a final revocation of the permission he had given brought the incident to its natural and appropriate termination:

I have just seen Judge Campbell's letter to you of the 7th. He assumes, it appears to me, that I have called the insurgent legislature of Virginia together, as the rightful legislature of the State, to settle all differences with the United States. I have done no such thing.[2] I spoke of them not as a legislature, but as "the gentlemen who have acted as the legislature of Virginia in support of the rebellion." I did this on purpose to exclude the assumption that I was recognizing them as a rightful body. I dealt with them as men having power *de facto* to do a specific thing, to wit: "to withdraw the Virginia troops and other support from resistance to the General Government," for which, in the paper handed to Judge Campbell, I promised a special equivalent, to wit: a remission to the people of the State, except in certain cases, of the confiscation of their property. I meant this and no more. Inasmuch, however, as Judge Campbell misconstrues this, and is still pressing for an armistice, contrary to the explicit statement of the paper I gave him, and particularly as General Grant has since captured the Virginia troops, so that giving a consideration for their withdrawal is no longer applicable, let my letter to you and the paper to Judge Campbell both be withdrawn or countermanded, and he be notified of it. Do not now allow them to assemble, but if any have come allow them safe return to their homes.[3]

1 Lincoln to Weitzel, April 12, 1865.

2 The account given by Admiral Porter of this transaction, in his "Naval History," p. 799, is evidently written from memory, without consultation of dates or documents, and is wholly inaccurate.

3 Campbell, pamphlet.

WITH A COPY OF SHELLEY.

BEHOLD I send thee to the heights of song,
My brother! Let thine eyes awake as clear
As morning dew, within whose glowing sphere
Is mirrored half a world; and listen long,
Till in thine ears, famished to keenness, throng
The bugles of the soul, till far and near
Silence grows populous, and wind and mere
Are phantom-choked with voices. Then be strong—
Then halt not till thou seest the beacons flare
Souls mad for truth have lit from peak to peak.
Haste on to breathe the intoxicating air—
Wine to the brave and poison to the weak—
Far in the blue where angels' feet have trod,
Where earth is one with heaven and man with God.

Harriet Monroe.