Not that great German master in his dream
Of harmonies that thundered 'mongst the stars
At the creation, ever heard a theme
Nobler than "Go down, Moses." Mark its bars,
How like a mighty trumpet-call they stir
The blood. Such are the notes that men have sung,
Going to valorous deeds; such tones there were
That helped make history when Time was young.

There is a wide, wide wonder in it all,
That from degraded rest and servile toil
The fiery spirit of the seer should call
These simple children of the sun and soil.
O black slave singers, gone, forgot, unfamed,
You—you alone, of all the long, long line
Of those who 've sung untaught, unknown, unnamed,
Have stretched out upward, seeking the divine.

You sang not deeds of heroes or of kings:

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You sang a face from wood and stone to Christ.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1865

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER FROM JEFFERSON DAVIS

THERE have been various contradictory accounts of the "Peace Conference" held on board a steamer in Hampton Roads, February 3, 1865, between President Lincoln and Secretary Seward, and Hon. Alexander H. Stephens, Judge John A. Campbell, and Hon. R. M. T. Hunter, Confederate Commissioners.

It has been represented that at that Conference Mr. Lincoln proposed that if he be permitted to write "Union" at the top of a sheet of paper the Confederate Commissioners might write anything they pleased—that if the Confederates would close the war then, he would pay them $400,000,000 for their slaves, and that the most liberal terms would be granted. It has been said that these liberal terms were rejected and that the South lost the advantage of them only by the "obstinacy of Jefferson Davis."

Now, of course, the official report made by the Confederate Commissioners, the report of President Lincoln to Congress, and the letter of Mr. Seward to Minister Dayton show that no terms but unconditional surrender were offered, and that an armistice for further negotiations was refused.

Mr. Stephens in his full account of the Conference in his "War between the States," Judge Campbell in his account, published some time after the war, and Mr. Hunter, in the Southern Historical Society Papers, confirm this view. Gentlemen who, after the death of Mr. Stephens, have repeated conversations which they claim to have had with him, have either been at fault in their memory of what he said years before, or else have confounded private conversation of Mr. Lincoln with Mr. Stephens with his official utterances to the Commissioners.

The following letter, the original of which lies before me as I write, gives Mr. Davis's view of the Conference, and is of great interest and historical value. The omissions are of family matters only.

J. Wm. Jones.

MR. DAVIS'S LETTER

Beauvoir, Miss., 1st Sept. 1885.

REV'D. J. WILLIAM JONES,

My dear Sir:—

In "The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government" I believe I stated about all for which I had any official authority in regard to the Hampton Roads Conference. Beyond that I might say that the Commissioners orally gave me a long account of what transpired at their meeting but of which they declined to make an official report because they had agreed with Messrs. Lincoln and Seward that their conversation should be considered confidential. I then pointed out to them that they had probably fallen into a trap and that their conversation on the Monroe doctrine as connected with the war then progressing between France and Mexico would be so represented by Mr. Seward through the American Minister at Paris as to interfere with whatever good feeling the Emperor of the French had for us. That this was done and probably with that effect may be learned from the published dispatches of Mr. Seward to Mr. Dayton, and the subsequent conduct of Louis Napoleon towards the Confederacy.

So far from Mr. Lincoln having exceeded his authority by promising compensation for slaves, he referred to that subject as closed by the Act of Congress and his own views as set forth in his message. Mr. Hunter made an argument against taking the negro men for soldiers that it would leave the women and children destitute, to which Mr. Lincoln replied by telling an anecdote of a man in Ills. who had planted a large crop of potatoes which he said he would leave the hogs to gather, but when asked what they would do when the ground was frozen, replied it would be "Root little pig or die." Nothing could be more absurd than the story which has been of late circulated that Mr. Lincoln offered compensation for the slaves. He showed no disposition to make such promise,[1] and it would have been idle if he had made it, because he had no power to fulfil it. Unconditional submission,[2] with a general assurance of Executive clemency, was all he offered and more than this he said he could not give without recognizing the Confederate Govt.

It will be remembered that Mr. Lincoln had, through Mr. Blair, invited the sending of Commissioners to confer with him at Washington. For some reason the purpose was changed; the Commissioners were not allowed to proceed beyond Hampton Roads, and it was after some delay and correspondence that they were allowed to proceed so far. Had Mr. Lincoln proposed to come to the neutral border between the Federal and Confederate Armies, I should have chosen to meet him in person, instead of sending Commissioners whom, my letter to them shows, I expected to go to Washington, whither, of course, it was not proper for me to go, however protected by a safe conduct.

When the Commissioners returned from Hampton Roads neither the people nor the Congress were prepared for un-

[1] Stephens in his "War between the States," Vol. II, p. 617 (as quoted in Nicolay and Hay's "Abraham Lincoln," Vol. X, p. 104), says Lincoln "went on to say that he would be willing to be taxed to remunerate the Southern people for their slaves. He believed the people of the North were as responsible for slavery as the people of the South; and if the war should then cease, with the voluntary abolition of slavery by the States, he should be in favor, individually, of the Government paying a fair indemnity for the loss to the owners. He said he believed this feeling had an extensive existence at the North. . . . But, on this subject he said he could give no assurance—enter into no stipulation."—EDITOR C. M.

[2] On this point Nicolay and Hay ("Abraham Lincoln," Vol. X, pp. 126–7) record that Mr. Hunter said at the Conference "that the Confederate States and their people were by these terms forced to unconditional surrender and submission," and add "To this Mr. Seward replied with patience and dignity, that 'no words like unconditional submission had been used, or any importing, or justly implying degradation, or humiliation even, to the people of the Confederate States. . . . Nor did he think that in [*sic*] yielding to the execution of the laws under the Constitution of the United States, with all its guarantees and securities for personal and political rights, as they might be declared to be by the courts, could be properly considered as unconditional submission to conquerors, or as having anything humiliating in it. The Southern people and the Southern States would be under the Constitution of the United States, with all their rights secured thereby, in the same way, and through the same instrumentalities, as the similar rights of the people of the other States were.'" This quotation of Mr. Seward's statement is also from Mr. Stephens's "War between the States," Vol. II, pp. 616–7.—EDITOR C. M.

conditional surrender, and if they had been I could no longer have represented them. There was a powerful cabal in Congress and they held secret conversation with Mr. Blair when he came to Richmond; how low their spirit had sunk I do not know, but remember that it excited angry feeling among some of the troops and has been the subject of denunciations by many true soldiers since the war ended.

. . . . I have hopefully looked forward to your long deferred visit and if my health and circumstances had permitted it, would have gone to Richmond to confer with and if possible engage you in some further work I had contemplated for our cause, to me a sacred memory and dear as early love. . . .

Yours faithfully,
Jefferson Davis.



EVERYBODY takes his own dreams seriously, but yawns at the breakfast-table when somebody else begins to tell the adventures of the night before. I hesitate, therefore, to enter upon an account of my dreams; for it is a literary sin to bore the reader, and a scientific sin to report the facts of a far country with more regard to point and brevity than to complete the literal truth. The psychologists have trained a pack of theories and facts which they keep in leash, like so many bulldogs, and which they let loose upon us whenever we depart from the strait and narrow path of dream probability. One may not even tell an entertaining dream without being suspected of having liberally edited it, as if editing were one of the seven deadly sins, instead of a useful and honorable occupation. Be it understood, then, that I am discoursing at my own breakfast-table, and that no scientific man is present to trip the autocrat.

I used to wonder why scientific men and others were always asking me about my dreams. But I am not surprised now, since I have discovered what some of them believe to be the ordinary waking experience of one who is both deaf and blind. They think that I can know very little about objects even a few feet beyond the reach of my arms. Everything outside of myself, according to them, is a hazy blur. Trees, mountains, cities, the ocean, even the house I live in, are but fairy fabrications, misty unrealities. Therefore it is assumed that my dreams should have peculiar interest for the man of science. In some undefined way it is expected that they should reveal the world I dwell in to be flat, formless, colorless, without perspective, with little thickness and less solidity—a vast solitude of soundless space. But who shall put into words limitless, visionless, silent void? One should be a disembodied spirit indeed to make anything out of such insubstantial experiences. A world, or a dream, for that matter, to be comprehensible to us, must, I should think, have a warp of substance woven into the woof of fantasy. We cannot imagine even in dreams an object which has no counterpart in reality. Ghosts always resemble somebody, and if they do not appear themselves, their presence is indicated