

MEMORANDA ON THE CIVIL WAR.

A Missing Confederate Cipher Dispatch.

ON the 6th of April, 1887, a statue of General A. S. Johnston, who fell at Shiloh twenty-five years before, was unveiled in the Metarie Cemetery at New Orleans. Among those present at that interesting ceremony was the Confederate ex-President, Mr. Jefferson Davis. Being called upon, he spoke in his usual controversial vein, including these words: "On the field of Shiloh he [Johnston] made but one mistake. He had planned that battle and had sent me a telegram,—which was lost,—which described it just as it was fought—the only battle in the world's history that was fought as the general expected."

In effect this is but a re-avertment of a story first broached in his "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," and repeated orally in one or more public addresses. In his book (Vol. II., p. 57) Mr. Davis gives the full text of a telegram from General Johnston to himself dated April 3d, 1862, which he describes as explaining the proposed Confederate "order of movement" upon Pittsburg Landing, and the concluding paragraph of which is in these words: "Hope engagement before Buell can form junction." This was immediately followed, on the same page, with a telegram which he says he sent on the 5th of April, to wit, "General A. S. Johnston: Your dispatch of yesterday received. I hope you will be able to close with enemy before his two columns meet."

This is presented, however, by Mr. Davis not as the answer to the telegram of the 3d of April, but to "one in cipher" of the 4th of April, which he declares is lost, thus strangely overlooking the fact that the closing words of his own dispatch are too clearly the echo of those of Johnston's telegram of April 3d not to be his answer thereto, as is made indisputable by the history of that telegram.

As after the 29th of March, 1862, General Johnston really exercised no active command over the army at Corinth, he either had not found it necessary to provide himself with the means of cipher communication with the Richmond authorities or had mislaid them. Be this as it may, after the conference with Beauregard and the corps commanders at the quarters of the former, on the morning of April 3d, when Beauregard explained his plan of battle, which General Johnston approved, the latter, wishing to inform Mr. Davis of the forward movement, wrote the dispatch of that date. To secure the transmission of it with essential secrecy he sent it to Beauregard for translation into a dictionary cipher (based upon Webster's school dictionary, three columns to the page) which that general had for such communications with his government. That translation I give as it exists in General Beauregard's official telegram book in its regular order of date as follows:

"CORINTH, April 3d, 1862, 3 P. M.

"TO THE PRESIDENT, RICHMOND, VA.

"General Buell 132. R. 5—166 L 26—250. M 20—250 Rg—239 M 32—111 M 28—Columbia 43 M 6—Clifton 252 M 6.—218 M. 26. Mitchell 32. R. 22—124. R. 32.—276 R 27—248 M, 1—250 R. 9—59 R. 17—108—M. 20—109. R. 16—175 R 6 ed—109 R. 18—252. M 6—174 L. 28—31 M. 10—69. L. 12—Pittsburg—84 M. 4—111. M. 28—Bethel—156 M. 4—37 M. 20—111. M 28

Corinth—210 M. 16 111 M. 28—Burnsville—63 R. 25—252 R. 11—169. L 12—Monterey—174. R. 14—Pittsburg. Beauregard, 221 R. 10—132 R. 5—56, M. 14—Polk 150. M. 7—Hardee, 48. M: 3—Bragg 213 M. 6—276. M. 22. Breckinridge 210 M. 16—126 M. 4—92. R. 18—32. M. 28—Buell 44. M. 13—109 M. 6—146. L. 20—

(Signed)

"A. S. JOHNSTON,
"General C. S. A."

After translation the original was returned to General Johnston, among whose papers it was found and published by Mr. William Preston Johnston, in the biography of his father, as well as by Mr. Davis, but on the part of the son, altogether unwittingly of the fact that it was the translation of the very cipher dispatch whose loss Mr. Davis had deplored, for the reason, as he imagined, that it was not only the plan of battle as Johnston had devised, but as he had fought it. On the other hand, the son adduces it as "clearly" showing that *it was the plan of battle as his father had originally devised*, but not as he had fought it; "doubtless," as he naively suggests, "in deference to General Beauregard's opinion in the matter, and for reasons which seemed sufficient at the time." In that biography this dispatch appears without the evidence of the hour of its transmission, and is thus and otherwise made to do duty inconsistent with the fact of that hour, to wit, 3 P. M. Here is the text of it as printed both by Mr. Davis and by Mr. W. P. Johnston:

"CORINTH, April 3d, 1862.

"General Buell in motion 30,000 strong, rapidly from Columbia by Clifton to Savannah. Mitchell behind him with 10,000. Confederate forces—40,000—ordered forward to offer battle near Pittsburg. Division from Bethel, main body from Corinth, reserve from Burnsville, converging to-morrow near Monterey on Pittsburg. Beauregard second in command, Polk the left, Bragg the center, Hardee the right wing, Breckinridge the reserve. Hope engagement before Buell can form junction.

"TO THE PRESIDENT, RICHMOND."

Mr. Davis admits that he has vainly sought to resurrect the alleged missing cipher dispatch of the 4th of April. In other words, the original of no such paper was among the very full files of official papers left by General Johnston; though it is a fact that they were so full as to be worth ten thousand dollars after the war to the United States government. But Johnston's papers did contain the telegram of the 3d of April—really the only cipher dispatch that was transmitted. The alleged tenor of the telegram of April 4th makes it improbable, I may add, that any dispatch revealing the plan of battle was sent.

The text of the cipher telegram of the 3d of April disposes of two myths: the one born of the bad memory of Mr. Davis as to its scope and tenor; the other, begotten in the brain of the son by an ill-grounded criticism on the part of the Comte de Paris, to the effect that the attack should not have been made, as it was, in three deployed lines parallel with the line of the enemy, but with the three corps moving in columns of attack perpendicularly to the Federal line, each corps having its own reserve. Turning his back square upon the fact that he had just been laboriously seeking to show that his father, not Beauregard, had planned the manner of the battle as well as of the march, Colonel

Johnston here claimed that his father had originally ordered the attack just as the Comte de Paris fancied it should have been ordered, but "doubtless" had been persuaded out of it by Beauregard — thus, *inops consilii*, contradicting the very claim he had just put forth that his father had designed the tactics of the battle, which therefore was unachieved because of his death.

Should there be a shred of doubt left in regard to the true history of General Beauregard's controlling influence and part in bringing about the Shiloh campaign, that, it seems to me, must disappear before the following telegraphic dispatch, which was sent while General Johnston was marching toward Corinth for the concentration urged by Beauregard:

"DECATUR, March 15th, 1862.

"TO GENERAL G. T. BEAUREGARD:

"Have you had the south bank of the Hatchee examined near Bolivar? I recommend it your attention. It has, besides other advantages, that of being farther from enemy's base.

"A. S. JOHNSTON."

That is to say, as near to the date of the battle of Shiloh as three weeks, General Johnston had regarded it as most advantageous that the Confederate concentration should take place not so near to the enemy's base as Corinth, but fully fifty miles away to the north-westward, behind the Hatchee River, and covering Memphis, according to his Bowling Green memorandum of February 7th, 1862, ready in case of defeat to retire into that town and there await a siege and capture. These are not the views, I submit, of a general who within a week thereafter would repair to Corinth with the plan of an offensive campaign fully rounded in his mind ready for execution within a fortnight, but of one bent solely upon the defensive; views precisely consonant with his proffer of the command to Beauregard, and to withdraw his headquarters from the immediate vicinage of Confederate forces.

Thomas Jordan.

Union Sentiment among Confederate Veterans.

THE ovation to Mr. Henry W. Grady on his return to Atlanta proved how truly he expressed the feelings of his people in his New England Society speech. This feeling is not confined to the new generation who were too young to take part in the war, but it is also the well-nigh universal sentiment of the veterans who fought for the "Lost Cause." For my part, it is now several years since I became convinced that it is an inestimable blessing, not only to the whole country, but especially to us of the South, that the war ended in the removal of the incubus of slavery and the consolidation of the entire nation under one flag and one

government. We can hardly doubt that if the Union had been broken up into three or four confederacies (as it would have been after its prestige was once destroyed), they would have felt toward each other as France, Germany, Austria, and Russia feel at this day. The result would have been vain attempts to maintain a durable balance of power, continual wars, conscription, standing armies, fortifications and custom-houses on every frontier, and burdens far more grievous than those under which all Europe is now groaning. The Southern Confederacy (or confederacies), being inferior in population and resources, would have felt these burdens far more than the others. None of these new nationalities would have been strong enough to command the respect of the great European powers, which would have made America the field of their intrigues and conquests, as was attempted in Mexico under Maximilian. Instead of that, we have the grandest country and the most magnificent destinies ever vouchsafed to any people. We could not realize this while the bitterness of defeat was still fresh in our hearts, but a quarter of a century has produced a vast change in the Southern mind. An old adage says: Wise men change their opinions sometimes — fools never; and the great popular heart is almost always wise.

One thing especially should make us proud — it always gave me pleasure to boast of it when in Europe — and it is this: After passing through the most gigantic struggle that any country ever underwent, not a drop of blood was shed after the heat of conflict had ceased. Not even banishment was inflicted upon any of the vanquished, the result being that instead of creating an Ireland in the South we are now one people, united as one man for the defense and the honor of our whole country.

These opinions, formed even before I left America to follow a military career abroad, were confirmed and intensified by seeing the condition of the European masses, taxed without mercy and made "food for powder" to maintain or modify the "balance of power." Yet if they were only my individual ideas, I would hardly feel justified in proclaiming them; but I will state that in the last few years I have expressed these views to *hundreds* of my former brother-soldiers, and that of all those, *only one* failed to give them the most hearty approval — and he had been a very prominent political leader, but not much of a soldier. I have therefore good grounds for asserting that the Southern veterans who fought the war are a unit in their desire for peace and harmony and the maintenance of the restored Union, now and forever.

R. E. Colston,

Formerly Brigadier-General, C. S. A.

WASHINGTON, February 17th, 1887.

