

If he is to be compelled to have these manufactured in the United States, let the rule hold good for other professions also. Instead of putting a duty on foreign manufactures, let us prohibit them altogether by withdrawing from such property all protection of the law.

To your list of questions I say emphatically, «No» to 1, 2, 3, 4; to No. 5 I have answered at length above.

E. A. McDowell.

The Failure of the Hampton Conference.

WITH UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM JEFFERSON DAVIS AND R. M. T. HUNTER.

ON the third of February, 1865, upon the waves of Hampton Roads, near Fort Monroe, Virginia, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States; William H. Seward of New York, his secretary of state; Alexander Hamilton Stephens of Georgia; R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia; and Judge J. A. Campbell, then of Alabama, met for informal conference on the United States transport steamer *River Queen* in a conference looking toward a cessation of hostilities in the civil war.

They were not «warriors old, with ordered spear and shield,» but men from whose faces the war-paint had been temporarily washed, and whose war-clubs had been temporarily buried. Their objective point was peace, but by predetermined paths, which could not, like «mountains, converge in a single ridge.» For four hours these great men debated great questions. Messrs. Lincoln and Seward supported one side, the remaining three gentlemen pleaded for the other. The actors in this important drama of the war are dead. It was agreed that their conversations should be confidential, and many of their utterances have been closely guarded.

Six months prior to this council of peace, Horace Greeley induced Mr. Lincoln to write a letter stating the terms upon which his soldiers would lay down their arms. In a communication dated July 18, 1864, addressed «To whom it may concern,» President Lincoln proclaimed that the «integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery,» were the corner-stones upon which to construct the temple of peace; that liberal terms would be granted on collateral points; and that any person who was armed with authority to talk on such a basis should have safe conduct inside his lines «both ways.» The South was not fighting for slavery, but to make two republics grow in this country where only one grew before. «The integrity of the whole Union,» and not «the abandonment of slavery,» was the condition which prevented a response to that communication.

Lincoln was preëminently in disposition and character kind-hearted and benevolent. War disturbed him. He recognized that though the progress of military events was slow, that of his armies was steady, and that the chances at that time of a restoration of peace upon his terms were favorable. He deeply desired what he prayed when about to take the oath of office for his second Presidential term, «that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.»

Horace Greeley's failure to bring about negotiations between the belligerents did not deter another eminent citizen from making a similar attempt. Mr. Francis Preston Blair conceived the idea that possibly commis-

sioners might meet representing their respective sides, and the armies *ad interim* stack arms; that the peace feeling would then spread, and terms of settlement be reached. Greeley had tried Mr. Lincoln; Blair sought Mr. Davis. In February, 1865, Seward wrote to Mr. Adams, minister to England: «A few days ago Francis P. Blair, Esq., of Maryland, obtained from the President a simple leave to pass through our military lines without definite views known to the Government.» However that may be, Mr. Blair made his appearance in Richmond, and persuaded Mr. Davis to write him a letter which he could show to Mr. Lincoln, in which he should state that he was willing to send commissioners to confer with the Union President, if he could be assured they would be received; or, he would receive any that might be sent to him. With this letter Blair retraced his steps to Washington, showed Lincoln Davis's note, and induced the former to write him a letter which in turn he could show Davis, in which he should say that he had read Davis's note to Blair, and that he would receive any commissioners Mr. Davis might send to confer informally with him, «with a view to the restoration of peace to the people of our one common country.»

Again Blair went to Richmond and showed Davis what Lincoln had written, whereupon Messrs. Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell were appointed the commissioners on the part of the South. Observe the diplomacy exercised. Lincoln would not write to Davis, or Davis to Lincoln, but both wrote letters to Blair, each to read that of the other. So far everything was progressing favorably. Blair was doubtless delighted, while many others had an indefinite idea that those accomplished Northern and Southern statesmen would find some means to stop a war between people who «read the same Bible and prayed to the same God.»

Lincoln's companion and colleague in the Peace Conference was an enthusiast on the slavery question. A quarter of a century before, when governor of New York, Seward had proposed to extend suffrage to the negroes of that State, and had appealed to a «higher law.» He was balanced between the integrity of the Union and the abolition of slavery, but would not have objected if the scales had tipped toward the latter. At one time, as a Whig, he was a great friend of President Taylor; afterward he became a Republican and supported Frémont. He named the coming war «an irrepressible conflict,» and was willing to let it rage if its results were the abolition of slavery. He served eleven years in the United States Senate and became the logical candidate for secretary of state, because he was Mr. Lincoln's strongest opponent for the nomination for President in 1860, securing more votes on the first ballot. Seward was in advance of his party, in 1861, in the effort to secure a peaceful solution of the questions at issue, and for policy's sake advocated the evacuation of Fort Sumter. His great knowledge of public affairs, and his commanding intellectual ability, made him a capable adviser to his President.

Mr. Davis's selection of commissioners was probably as good as could be made under the circumstances. Not one of the three was a «die-in-the-last-ditch» man; all had great public experience, and required no introduction to the Union secretary of state or to his President. Stephens was born, and was buried, in Georgia. He

had been a member of several of his State's legislatures, and was equally full of pluck and infirmities. He opposed the secession movement, and helped to construct the Georgia platform of 1850, upon a plank of which was inscribed: «We hold the American Union secondary in importance only to the rights and principles it was designed to perpetuate.» He also was a member of the Georgia peace party of 1864. Later he was in the front rank of those who advised peaceable acquiescence in Hayes's election. He was the vice-president of a confederacy of States which the armies of the South were seeking to establish, but was never wholly in touch with the revolution necessary to secure their independence.

Robert M. T. Hunter died in Essex County, Virginia, seventy-eight years after he was born there; he served in the legislature of his State and in the Federal Congress, and was Speaker of the House, and for fifteen years a United States senator from Virginia, serving with great distinction as chairman of the Finance Committee. In 1860 he was a candidate for President of the United States. At the time of the secession of the Southern States there was a plan to make him President of the Confederacy, and Mr. Davis the commander-in-chief of its armies. He became instead Davis's secretary of state.

Judge John A. Campbell, a Georgian by birth, removed to Alabama, where he practised law. In 1853 President Pierce appointed him an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, where for eighteen years he dispensed justice with an even hand. He exerted his influence against secession, though he did not believe in its unconstitutionality. After the war he resided in New Orleans.

Thus the composition of the Southern members of the conference was supposed to be acceptable to the North; but the selection of its members by the South, had such choice rested with the people's representatives, might have been different. The gentlemen were strong in intellect, but weak in war; were as honorable and able as any of the Southern crew, but not adapted to tread the deck of the ship of state when the cordage was rent and the ocean's rest broken by the hurricane.

Mr. Davis put his confidence more in Mr. Hunter than in the other two, and trusted more fully to him. Notwithstanding General Lee's army surrendered but two months afterward, no commissioners could have negotiated peace even then, except on terms which should embrace the independence of the South. Had Mr. Davis agreed with the commissioners that peace should be restored upon any other basis, the soldiers in the field would have marched over him and them to battle.

One man, and only one, could have drawn the shots from the Southern guns, and, furling the Southern flags, restored peace on the conditions demanded by the Federal authorities. But Robert E. Lee was in accord with his civil chief on that question, and was determined to fight and risk the last defiance of fortune. «I say,» exclaimed Demosthenes, «that if the event had been manifested to the whole world beforehand, not even then ought Athens to have forsaken this course, if she had any regard for her glory, or for her past, or for the ages to come.»

Five years after the war, Mr. Davis wrote to Mr. J. M. Mason of Virginia very freely on this subject. He admired Mason's sturdy qualities, his courage, force,

frankness, and dignified character, and they became firm friends. James M. Mason inherited many of the great characteristics of his distinguished grandfather George Mason. He had served his State in her legislative halls, was sent to Congress as a Jackson Democrat, and later was a United States senator for sixteen years. In that body he had been chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs when Davis was chairman of Military Affairs; and it was owing to this fact, perhaps, that he was appointed in 1861 agent of the Southern States in England. Mr. Davis wrote him as follows:

MEMPHIS, TENN., June 11, 1870.

HON. J. M. MASON.

MY DEAR FRIEND: It has been long since I have received a letter from you. Perhaps you will reply, it has been long since I wrote to you; but it is of the first only I think, because therein consists the loss. It is probable that it may be in my power to visit you this summer, and it is possible that about the end of July I may start to England. Will you go with me, in that event, for a trip, say, of sixty days? Your many friends there would be rejoiced to see you, and I would endeavor to be as little disagreeable on the way as is possible for me.

My journeys through the Southwest have given me much to remember gratefully, and not a little to make me feel as one sorrowing without hope.

Mr. Hunter promised me that he would write a full account of the sayings and doings of the commission which met Lincoln and Seward at Hampton Roads. I have not thought it well to write to him while he was subject to Military and Underwood authority;¹ now I do not know his address. Having got into the subject, I will give you a brief account of the matter. The commission had no instructions beyond their authority to negotiate for a settlement between the two governments. They agreed with Lincoln and Seward that they would regard their conversations as confidential. Their report, when they came back, was therefore, to a great extent, oral; the written report so meager as not to furnish, as it seemed to me, what was needful to a fair comprehension of their failure, and the reasons for it. I urged seriously that a fuller report should be made. Mr. Stephens tenaciously insisted that the mere statement would be more effective to rouse and convince the country.

Hunter told me he urged Lincoln to enter into some form of agreement, and endeavored to overcome his refusal by pointing out to him the example of Charles I.; and that Lincoln said he did not know much of history, but he did know that Charles I. lost his head. They reported to me that Lincoln said if we would lay down our arms and go home that he would promise all the clemency within the executive power, and that he refused to make or entertain any proposition while we retained our position as States confederated and having a government of their own. It was a demand for a surrender at discretion, so viewed at the time, and so treated by the orators who addressed the public meeting held in Richmond soon after the return of the commission and the promulgation of their views. If you see Hunter I wish you would talk to him on this subject. May God defend the right.

Present me affectionately to Mrs. Mason and the young ladies, and accept the sincere regard of your friend,
JEFFERSON DAVIS.

This letter Mason sent to his former colleague in the United States Senate, R. M. T. Hunter, and from that gentleman came the following reply:

¹ Underwood was the United States District Judge who had Hunter, General Lee, and others indicted for treason.

LLOYD, ESSEX COUNTY, VA.,
September 19, 1870.

MY DEAR MASON: I have been waiting until I supposed you had returned from the Springs to answer your letter, which, indeed, I ought to have answered before, but I have been so harassed by many things that my mind was hardly free for anything but the cares which absorbed it. I have read Davis's letter which you inclosed, and regret that I did not write out minutely my recollections of what passed at the Hampton Roads Conference whilst they were fresh in my mind. But I was imprisoned soon after the war, and my papers were either seized or dispersed, and since my release I have been engaged in hard work for a livelihood. As soon as I received this letter I sent for Stephens's account of the conference published in the «*Eclectic Review*,» which really seemed to me to be very fair (August, 1870, Vol. VII, No. 2), and from which I do not much differ except as to the report of Seward's conversation on slavery. You will see from that report I did not assent to the scheme for invading Mexico: not, I confess, from any affection for the emperor, whose whole course in regard to that matter, and toward us, seemed to me to be very weak. I was moved by considerations affecting ourselves. The whole scheme originated with F. Blair, Sr., who, as you know, visited Richmond to persuade the Confederate government to settle the controversy. Stephens was much taken with the proposition, and enforced it very warmly upon Lincoln and Seward: not as a proposition from the Confederate government, but as something to be considered. Campbell and I said nothing for a good while, to see how the other party would like it. Toward the close I disclaimed the whole thing, as Stephens reports in his published account of the conference. We all reported to Mr. Davis. I know that in our opinion no settlement was possible except upon the condition of abolishing slavery and returning to the Union. But there was a question beyond that.

Supposing these things to be inevitable, as they then seemed to be, was it not worth the effort to save as much as possible from the wreck? Upon this Mr. Davis and I differed. I thought the effort ought to be made, but I saw then, and see it still more plainly now, that there might be two sides to that question. Although I retain my first opinion, I do not censure him for thinking differently. When the concessions believed to be inevitable were made, one might well have supposed that the Federal Government would have sought to have made them as tolerable as possible to us, and to conciliate us as far as was consistent with these objects. This was only to attribute to them an ordinary stock of good sense and good feeling. But I feared the bitterness of feeling engendered by the contest, and although far from appreciating the full extent, I was not mistaken as to its existence.

Whilst I expressed this opinion both to Davis and Lee, I told them that if they thought there was hope from war I would do my best to aid them. They were to be the judges of that matter. Under these circumstances I made a speech at the African Church, which some of my friends thought was a mistake. But if the contest was to be kept up, it was necessary to animate the spirit which could alone sustain it.

We were all agreed in the government as to the policy of an armistice; we should then have obtained time either to get some settlement of the question, which

would have saved us much life and suffering, as also to recruit our armies, which were then suffering much from desertion and the want of all necessary supplies.

But it was not to be had, which I think we all regretted. I hope, however, that we may meet some of these days, when I can explain these and other matters by word of mouth, and far more fully than upon paper. The difficulties which the Confederacy encountered are not generally known. The sacrifices and gallantry of the struggle on the part of the South, and especially of Virginia, have never been surpassed, and hardly equaled, in history. The Southern side of this history ought to be written. If I owned my time it would be a labor of love to endeavor to do it.

Most truly and faithfully your friend,

R. M. T. HUNTER.

HON. JAS. M. MASON.

Mr. Hunter, it seems, did not assent to the plan, warmly urged on Messrs. Lincoln and Seward, that both the Northern and the Southern armies should invade Mexico, expel the French, and enforce the Monroe doctrine.

Generals Grant and Lee riding side by side, with the heads of their respective columns turned toward old Mexico, would have been a most extraordinary exhibition. History has never recorded anything similar to such display of temporary forgiveness on the part of two armies which for nearly four years had sought to tear each other to pieces. Foes would have been changed to comrades, who might have remained so after both North and South had vindicated the principles of the Monroe doctrine.

The conception was wild, extravagant, and delirious, whether originating with Blair or Stephens. It was conceived and urged because there was nothing else in sight. Mr. Lincoln would accept nothing but the Union, and Mr. Davis nothing but the independence of the Southern Confederacy. There could be no peace until one side became the victor, the other the vanquished. Such conditions developed numberless schemes, and from the difficulties of the situation the Mexican plan was evolved. Undoubtedly an armistice between the contending forces would have been welcomed by the men whose bodies were targets for each other's rifles, and as many from both armies as were necessary for the purpose might have been marched across the Rio Grande, bringing results which might have changed the unhappy fate of Maximilian, Mejia, and Miramon. But what then? When the last French soldier had departed from Mexican soil, who could foretell what would have been the relations between the authorities at Washington and Richmond—whether war would have been again declared, or, the passions of the contestants having abated, peace would have been enthroned on some basis?

Mr. Lincoln was well satisfied then that peace would be dictated on his own terms, and did not intend to be diverted; while Mr. Davis would have entertained such a proposition only because it was a straw that a drowning man is always authorized to seize.

Fitzhugh Lee.