

A SUPPRESSED CHAPTER OF HISTORY.

AMONG the many disclosures which are now being made in regard to the men and events of our recent civil war, none are more interesting than those which relate to the eminent man who guided the country through that great crisis. Every one of them exhibits him in some new aspect, and they all deepen the impression that he was a "providential man," peculiarly adapted and specially commissioned to do the vast work which he performed in American history. It was my good fortune to know him well, and to be, at an early period, the depositary of his confidential views as to the terms of peace to be accorded to the revolted States.¹ These terms were at the time kept secret, at his special request, but there is now no reason why they should be denied publicity. They disclose his kindly feeling towards the South, and I think that nothing related of him more fully reveals the genuine magnanimity, rectitude, and goodness of his character. In order to make my narrative clear, it is necessary to relate the circumstances which led Mr. Lincoln to communicate to me his views on this momentous subject.

In May, 1863, I had been on a visit of several weeks at the headquarters of General Rosecrans, at Murfreesboro, Tenn., when the general one day informed me that one of his officers had applied to him for a furlough, with permission to go into the Confederate lines. The officer was Colonel James F. Jaquess, of the 73d Illinois Infantry, known as the "Fighting Parson," from his bravery, and the fact that before the war he had been a prominent clergyman of the

Methodist Church. He believed that by acting on the Methodist element at the South he could bring about a peace that would be honorable and acceptable to both sections, and General Rosecrans sympathized enough with his views to ask the President to grant him the desired furlough. Mr. Lincoln promptly telegraphed, declining the request, but asking a fuller statement of the colonel's project by letter. Then General Rosecrans suggested that I should visit the President, with a letter from himself, and by personal representations endeavor to secure the furlough. I consented, and set out on the following day with the proposed letter from the general, and another from Colonel Jaquess to Mr. Lincoln, with whom he had been on terms of considerable intimacy for many years.

I was already well acquainted with Mr. Lincoln, and knowing the demands upon his time, and supposing that my interview would be of some length, I sent the two letters to him by a messenger, on my arrival in Washington, with a request that he would name an hour when he could conveniently give me an interview. The answer which came to me, scrawled upon a small card, was, "Come at half past seven this evening, and I'll be glad to see you. A. L."

The letter from Jaquess to the President he had given to me open, asking that I would read it. Having done so, I hesitated about delivering it, lest what struck me as its half-fanatical tone, of which there was not a trace in the colonel's conversation, should prejudice Mr. Lincoln against his request. How-

¹ This article is properly a supplement to one entitled Our Visit to Richmond, which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly for September, 1864. The present paper relates some circumstances that could not then be made public;

and it recounts the terms to be offered the Confederacy, which were written and put into type for the 1864 article, but were suppressed by Mr. Lincoln, on his revising the proof of it on the eve of its publication.—E. K.

ever, as frankness seemed to demand that the President should know exactly of what "manner of spirit" Jaquess was, I dispatched it with the other letter. It read as follows:—

MURFREESBORO, TENN., May 23, 1863.

HON. A. LINCOLN, President U. S. A.:

MY DEAR SIR,—This, with other papers, will be handed you by Mr. Gilmore, who has been introduced to me by General Rosecrans. Mr. G. will explain to you in full what I propose to do. Meanwhile, should you feel that my proposition is *too strong*, and cannot be realized, I would say, I may not be able to reach the specific object stated in the proposition, but the mission cannot fail to accomplish great good.

It is a fact well known to me and others, perhaps to yourself, that much sympathy exists in the minds of many good people, both in this country and England, for the South, on the ground of their professed piety. They say, "Mr. Davis is a praying man," "Many of his people are devotedly pious," etc., etc. Now, you will admit that, if they hear me, I have gained the point. On the other hand, if Mr. Davis and his associates in rebellion refuse me, coming to them in the name of the Lord on a mission of peace, the question of their piety is settled at once and forever. Should I be treated with violence, and cast into prison, shot, or hanged,—which may be part of my mission,—then the doom of the Southern Confederacy is sealed on earth and in heaven forever. My dear Mr. Lincoln will excuse me when I say that I am ready for either emergency, and though not Samson, I should, like him, slay more at my death than in all my life at the head of my regiment. No, the mission cannot fail. God's hand is in it. I am not seeking a martyr's crown, but simply to meet the duty that has been laid upon me.

I have talked freely with Mr. Gilmore, and he will explain to you more

fully if you desire. To him I would refer you, and with my best wishes and prayers, I am, dear sir,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES F. JAQUESS,
Colonel Com'dg 73d Illinois Infantry.

At the appointed time I found Mr. Lincoln closeted with Reverdy Johnson, and, my name being sent in by Mr. Nicolay, I took a seat in his room, and waited the President's leisure. Soon Mr. Johnson passed out, and then Mr. Lincoln appeared in the doorway. Extending his hand to me, he said, "Sorry to have kept you waiting. Come in." Then, as I entered his room, he added, "Do you know, I can't talk with you about that Jaquess matter?"

"Why not, sir?" I asked, somewhat surprised.

"Because," he answered, "I happen to be President of the United States. We can make no overtures to the Rebels. If they want peace, all they have to do is to lay down their arms. But never mind about that; you've been to Tennessee, and I want to see you. So, sit down, and tell me all you know,—it won't take you long."

It did take me fully three hours. As I rose to go, he inquired, "When do you return home?"

"In the morning, sir," I replied.

"Can't you stay another day," he said, "and come to see me to-morrow evening? I want to think more of that Jaquess matter."

I assented, and called on him again at the time named. He was in a more anxious mood than I had ever seen him. He wore a fagged, dejected look, and for a time indulged in none of his accustomed raillery and jocoseness. His concern was for Grant, who was before Vicksburg with numbers inferior to Pemberton and Johnston. His fear was that Johnston had cut Grant's communications, for he had not heard from him for more than twenty-four hours. As

dispatch after dispatch came in from the War Department, he opened and glanced over them, then laid them down, saying, in a weary way, "Nothing from Grant yet! Why don't we hear from Grant?" Had the life of one of his sons been trembling in the balance, he could not have shown greater anxiety. I felt too much sympathy with him to attempt to divert his mind to the business I had come about, and it was a full hour before he alluded to the subject. Then suddenly he said, "Well, I've kept you over to consider about that Jaquess matter. I've about concluded to let him go. My only fear is that he may compromise me; but I don't see how he can if I refuse to see him, and he goes altogether on his own responsibility. But he must understand distinctly that I have nothing to do with his project, either directly or indirectly. If the impression should go abroad that I had, it might complicate matters badly."

"I understand, sir," I remarked. "It might be construed into a *quasi*-acknowledgment of the Rebel government, and give France and England the pretext they want for recognizing the Confederacy."

"Partly that," he answered, "and partly its effect on the North. The Copperheads would be sure to say I had shown the white feather, and resorted to back-door diplomacy to get out of a bad scrape. This, whether true or not, would discourage loyal people. You see, I don't want to be like the dog that crossed the brook with a piece of meat in his mouth, and dropped it to catch its enlarged shadow in the water. I want peace; I want to stop this terrible waste of life and property; and I know Jaquess well, and see that, working in the way he proposes, he may be able to bring influences to bear upon Davis that he cannot well resist, and thus pave the way for an honorable settlement; but I can't afford to discourage our friends and encourage our enemies, and so, per-

haps, make it more difficult to save the Union."

"I appreciate your position, sir," I said; "but what weight will Jaquess have, if he goes without some, at least implied, authority from you?"

"He may have much," he replied, drawing from his side pocket the letter to him from Jaquess, and glancing over it. "He proposes here to speak to them in the name of the Lord, and he says he feels God's hand is in it, and He has laid the duty upon him. Now, if he feels that he has that kind of authority, he can't fail to affect the element on which he expects to operate, and that Methodist element is very powerful at the South."

"Why, sir!" I remarked. "I hesitated about delivering you that letter. I feared you would think Jaquess fanatical."

"If you had not delivered it," he answered, "I would not let him go. Such talk in you or me might sound fanatical; but in Jaquess it is simply natural and sincere. And I am not at all sure he is n't right. God selects his own instruments, and sometimes they are queer ones; for instance, He chose me to steer the ship through a great crisis."

I was glad to see him relapsing into his usual badinage, but, desiring to keep him to the subject, I said: "Then, sir, you decide to give Jaquess the furlough, but refuse to grant him an interview. He will need to know your views about peace. What shall I write him are the terms you will grant the Rebels?"

"Don't write him at all,—write to Rosecrans. I've been thinking what had better be said. My views are peace on any terms consistent with the abolition of slavery and the restoration of the Union. Is not that enough to say to Jaquess? He can do no more than open the door for further negotiations, which would have to be conducted with me here, in a regular way. Let Rose-

trans tell him that we shall be liberal on collateral points ; that the country will do everything for safety, nothing for revenge."

" Do you mean, sir," I asked, " that as soon as the Rebels lay down their arms you will grant a general amnesty ? "

" I do ; and I will say to you that, individually, I should be disposed to make compensation for the slaves ; but I doubt if my cabinet or the country would favor that. What do you think public opinion would be about it ? Nicolay tells me you have recently lectured all over the North ; you must have heard people talk."

" I have, sir, almost everywhere ; and my opinion is that not one voter in ten would pay the South a dollar. Still, I have observed very little hatred or bitterness in any quarter."

" No," he answered ; " the feeling is against slavery, not against the South. The war has educated our people into abolition, and they now deny that slaves can be property. But there are two sides to that question : one is ours, the other the Southern side ; and those people are just as honest and conscientious in their opinion as we are in ours. They think they have a moral and legal right to their slaves, and until very recently the North has been of the same opinion ; for two hundred years the whole country has admitted it, and regarded and treated the slaves as property. Now, does the mere fact that the country has come suddenly to a contrary opinion give it the right to take the slaves from their owners without compensation ? The blacks must be freed. Slavery is the bone we are fighting over. It must be got out of the way, to give us permanent peace ; and if we have to fight this war till the South is subjugated, then I think we shall be justified in freeing the slaves without compensation. But in any settlement arrived at before they force things to that extrem-

ity, is it not right and fair that we should make payment for the slaves ? "

" If I were a slaveholder," I answered, " I should probably say that it was : but you, sir, have to deal with things as they are, and I think that if you were to sound public sentiment at the North you would find it utterly opposed to any compromise with the South. A vast majority would regard any compensation as a price paid for peace, and not for the slaves."

" So I think," he said, " and therefore I fear we can come to no adjustment. I fear the war must go on till North and South have both drunk of the cup to the very dregs, — till both have worked out in pain, and grief, and bitter humiliation the sin of two hundred years. It has seemed to me that God so wills it ; and the first gleam I have had of a hope to the contrary is in this letter of Jaquess. This thing, irregular as it is, may mean that the higher powers are about to take a hand in this business, and bring about a settlement. I know if I were to say this out loud, nine men in ten would think I had gone crazy. But — you are a thinking man — just consider it. Here is a man, cool, deliberate, God-fearing, of exceptional sagacity and worldly wisdom, who undertakes a project that strikes you and me as utterly chimerical : he attempts to bring about, single-handed and on his own hook, a peace between two great sections. Moreover, he gets it into his head that God has laid this work upon him, and he is willing to stake his life upon that conviction. The impulse upon him is overpowering, as it was upon Luther, when he said, ' God help me. I can do no otherwise.' Now, how do you account for this ? What produces this feeling in him ? "

" An easy answer would be to say that Jaquess is a fanatic."

" But," he replied, " he is very far from being a fanatic. He is remarkably level-headed ; I never knew a man more

so. Can you account for it except on his own supposition, that God is in it? And, if that is so, something will come out of it; perhaps not what Jaquess expects, but what will be of service to the right. So, though there is risk about it, I shall let him go."

"There certainly, sir, is risk to Jaquess. He will go without a safe-conduct, and so will be technically a spy. The Rebel leaders may choose to regard him in that light. If they don't like his terms of peace, they may think that the easiest way to be rid of the subject. In that event, could n't you in some way interfere to protect him?"

"I don't see how I could," he replied, "without appearing to have a hand in the business. And if Jaquess has his duties, I have mine. What you suggest reminds me of a man out West, who was not over-pious, but rich, and built a church for the poor people of his neighborhood. When the church was finished, the people took it into their heads that it needed a lightning-rod, and they went to the rich man, and asked him for money to help pay for it. 'Money for a lightning-rod!' he said. 'Not a red cent! If the Lord wants to thunder down his own house, let him thunder it down, and be d——d.'"

"So," I said, laughing, "you propose to let the Lord take care of Jaquess?"

"I do," he answered. "His evident sincerity will protect him. I have no fear for him whatever. But I shall be anxious to hear of him, and I wish you would send me the first word you get. In writing to Rosecrans, omit what I have said about paying for the slaves. The time has not come to talk about that. Let him say what he thinks best to Colonel Jaquess; but the colonel must not understand he has the terms from me. We want peace, but we can make no overtures to the Rebels. They already know that the country would welcome them back, and treat them generously and magnanimously."

"To avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, sir," I remarked, "would it not be well for you to write to Rosecrans also?"

"Perhaps it would," he answered. "I think I will."

It was near midnight when I rose to go. As I did so, he said, "Don't go yet. I shall stay here until I get something from Grant."

I resumed my seat, and half an hour later the dispatch came in. Then the worn, weary man took my hand, saying, "Good-by. God bless you," and I went to my quarters.

I wrote at once to Generals Rosecrans and Garfield, and soon afterwards had a response from Major Frank S. Bond, aid to Rosecrans, dated Murfreesboro, June 4, 1863. A portion of it was as follows: "Your letter to the general and inclosure to Garfield & Co. were both duly received, and will probably be acknowledged by the parties to whom they were addressed. A letter has also been received [the one promised by Mr. Lincoln] as to the matter of Dr. J., of similar import to that stated in your letter. On receipt of this letter I sent for Colonel J., and had a talk with him. He says he does not wish to start at once, if the army is to move. He also asks, would he be warranted in saying that the government would, under certain circumstances, be willing to pay a *fair price* to the smaller slave-owners—say, to the owners of five slaves and under; also, would they allow the leaders to leave the country without molestation, or would they make it compulsory. Please write me your views on these points."

All letters and conversations which are quoted in the course of this article, I copy from the originals, or from minutes made by me at the time, but of my reply to this letter I either did not keep a copy, or have mislaid it. To the best of my recollection, the substance of my answer, addressed to Major Bond, or direct to General Rosecrans, was that

Jaquess had better not go into details in his proffers to the Rebels; that, conceding union and emancipation, they would find Mr. Lincoln most liberal on all collateral matters; also, that Colonel Jaquess, on his return, had better report to General Rosecrans, and not attempt to communicate direct with Mr. Lincoln, there being strong reasons why the President should have, at the time, no intercourse with him.

The next tidings I had of Colonel Jaquess were in a letter to me from General Garfield, dated Murfreesboro, June 17, 1863. He said, "Colonel Jaquess has gone on his mission. The President approved it, though, of course, did not make it an official matter. There are some very curious facts relating to his mission, which would particularly interest your friend Judge Edmonds, and which I hope to tell you of some day. It will be sufficient for me to say that enough of the mysterious is in it to give me almost a superstitious feeling of half faith, and certainly a very great interest in his work. He is most solemnly in earnest, and has great confidence in the result of his mission."

I had no further tidings of Colonel Jaquess until the following November, though I was in frequent correspondence with General Garfield, and would have heard of him had Jaquess reported, as was expected, to General Rosecrans. Nor did Mr. Lincoln hear from him. I was twice in Washington during the summer, and on each occasion saw the President, who, at our last interview, expressed much concern about Jaquess. He feared some evil had befallen him, and regretted having let him go, for just then such men could be poorly spared by the country. My own opinion was that Jaquess had been detained by the Confederates; but about the middle of November I received a letter from him which showed that he had returned in safety. He subsequently told me that, on leaving Murfreesboro, he went direct to Baltimore,

where he reported to General Schenck, who, on learning his purpose, forwarded him on to Fortress Monroe. There he explained to General Dix his object in going into the Confederacy, and he, after some delay (probably to secure instructions from Washington), allowed him to go on board a flag-of-truce boat, which was about to start for the Confederate lines. He was in his uniform, but was courteously treated, and a message from him to General Longstreet was promptly conveyed to that officer. Before the return of the boat General Longstreet came down to meet him, received him cordially, and invited him to his own quarters. There he met many of the Confederate leaders, with all of whom he discussed the situation frankly and freely. To all of them he said, "Lay down your arms, go back to your allegiance, and the country will deal kindly and generously by you." He could not say more, for he was restricted from going into details. From all he had, in effect, the same answer: "We are tired of the war. We are willing to give up slavery. We know it is gone; but so long as our government holds out, we must stand by it. We cannot betray it and each other." It was this sentiment of loyalty to their government which made the Southern people follow so blindly the lead of Jefferson Davis; and it throws upon him the responsibility of the two years of carnage that followed. It will also appear, farther on in this paper, that it was altogether owing to the blind obstinacy and insane ambition of that man that the Southern people came out of the war, stripped, without payment, of their slaves, and with scarcely more than the ground they trod upon.

Colonel Jaquess failed to gain audience of Mr. Davis, and was told that it would be useless to approach him without having distinct proposals from Mr. Lincoln. But if he brought those, and

they were on a liberal basis, they would, without doubt, be accepted. To obtain more definite proposals Jaquess returned to the North. His subsequent movements are related in his letter to me, which I have mentioned as being received about the middle of November. It was as follows : —

CHATTANOOGA, TENN., November 4, 1863.

J. R. GILMORE, Esq. :

MY VERY DEAR SIR, — I entered upon my mission, passed into the Confederate lines, met a most cordial reception, was received by those to whom my mission was directed as a visitant from the other world, and was strongly urged not to cease my efforts till the end was accomplished. I obtained some very valuable information, which appears more so to me now, since events have transpired to which I need not now refer.

I returned to Baltimore, with a view to communicating with President Lincoln. I wrote him — without stating that I had been within the enemy's lines — "that I had valuable information. Can I have permission to communicate it? If so, how, — by telegraph, mail, or in person? I await an answer at Barnum's Hotel, Baltimore, Md."

I waited there two weeks; no answer came. General Schenck, to whom I had made known my business when outward bound, was absent. I did not feel at liberty to report to any one else.

At this time I learned from parties here that a battle, at or near this place, would be fought soon, and that my regiment very much desired me to be with them. I hastened to join them, which I did just in time to be in the most desperate and bloody battle of the war. I lost over two hundred of my men, nineteen commissioned officers in killed and wounded, and I had two horses shot under me. I was not touched.

I cannot perceive why President L. should decline any communication with me. I can give him some *most valuable*

information; no one else need know it, and he be uncommitted.

Generals Rosecrans and Garfield are gone, and there are no others here with whom I feel free to communicate. I would be most thankful for the privilege of prosecuting this work further, — feel that I ought to do it, that great good would result from it. I find my way perfectly clear on the other side of the line. My only trouble is on this side. I can do our cause more good in one month, in my own way, than I can here in twelve. More anon.

Yours truly, J. F. JAQUESS,
Colonel 73d Reg. Ill. Vols.

This letter I received as I was about to set out on a lecturing tour, which would not leave three consecutive days at my disposal until the following April. Consequently, I could not go to Washington; and writing to Mr. Lincoln seemed to be useless, for if he had not answered Jaquess, it was to be presumed he would not correspond with any one on that subject. Besides, I could tell him nothing till I had seen the colonel. This I wrote to Jaquess, suggesting that he should apply to General Thomas, who knew and approved of his first visit, and would, no doubt, depute some trusty person to go to Mr. Lincoln, report what Jaquess had to communicate, and obtain a new furlough. I suggested also that he should not again attempt direct access to Mr. Lincoln, unless he could bring to him definite proposals of surrender from the Rebel leaders.

To this letter Jaquess replied that he would wait until I could go to Washington, as it was necessary he should know more definitely Mr. Lincoln's views before he went again into the Confederacy; and the extreme caution the President had shown convinced him that he would not talk to any stranger as freely as he had talked, and probably would again talk, to me.

I was not able to visit Washington till

[April,

early in the following May. Then, about the first question I asked of Mr. Lincoln was, why he had not replied to Colonel Jaquess's letter.

"I never received his letter," was the unexpected answer. The person to whom it had come had not thought it of sufficient importance to bring it to the notice of the President. I then handed him Jaquess's letter to me of November 4, 1863. He read it carefully, and then said, "He's got something worth hearing. What a pity it is they did n't give me that letter!"

"It's not too late, sir," I remarked. "Those people are ripe for peace. Let Jaquess go again. There is no telling what he may accomplish."

Without a word, he turned about on his chair, and on a small card wrote as follows: —

To whom it may concern:

The bearer, Colonel James F. Jaquess, 73d Illinois, has leave of absence until further orders. A. LINCOLN.

When he handed this card to me I said, "I will send this at once to General Thomas, and write to Jaquess to come to me at my home in Boston. Then I will send to you, through General Garfield, a full report of Jaquess's doings within the Rebel lines."

"All right," he answered. "Garfield will be discreet. Have you seen him?"

"Not yet, sir; but he is here, and I can see him to-day. However, it seems to me, it would be vastly better for you to talk with Jaquess. Would it not do for me to bring him here in citizen's clothes? It could be managed with absolute secrecy."

"No doubt," he answered, "but the fact would exist; and I could n't deny it, if it should prove inconvenient."

"Do you desire I should name any more definite terms to Jaquess?"

"What did you tell me, some time

ago, that Rosecrans wrote to you about pay to the small slave-owners?"

"His aid, Major Bond, wrote to me that Jaquess asked if you would pay the owners of five slaves and under, and if the leaders would be allowed to leave the country without molestation."

"Let him tell them all to stay at home; and I think I could manage the five slaves, — perhaps more. You see, Chickamauga has taught the country something. People don't talk so much about the Confederacy being a shell; perhaps it is, but it's an awful hard shell to crack. You can say to Jaquess that you are satisfied we will grant such terms, but don't say I distinctly offer them. He might construe that into some sort of authority."

It was not till the 13th of June that I heard from Colonel Jaquess. Then I received a torn sheet, written by him in pencil on the 10th of the same month, from one of the battle-fields about Kenesaw Mountain, in which he said that he was ready to go again, and would see me in Boston about the first of July. I at once wrote to Mr. Lincoln, apprising him of this, and adding that the more I thought of it, the more it seemed to me important that Jaquess should have fuller and more definite instructions. I hoped also that he would change his mind about giving him a personal interview. Should I not bring Jaquess on to Washington, and he then decide what to do in the premises?

This letter I sent open, to General Garfield, with a note requesting him to read it, and urge my views upon the President. Answer came from Garfield in an appendix to a letter of five pages, which he had written me on other subjects (June 19, 1863). The appendix was as follows: —

"I have delayed sending this till I could see the President in reference to Jaquess; and after two ineffectual attempts, I saw him, and talked with him. There were other persons in the room,

and we could not talk freely, so he summed it all up by saying, ‘Tell Gilmore to bring Jaquess here, and I will see him. Of course it should be done very quietly.’”

My next communication on this subject was a telegram from Colonel Jaquess, dated “Barnum’s Hotel, Baltimore, June 30th,” which was as follows : “Can you come to Baltimore and Washington ? It is important.”

As soon thereafter as possible I went to Baltimore, and met Colonel Jaquess. He informed me that he had brought dispatches from General Sherman to Washington, and, being there, had sent in his name to Mr. Lincoln, who had declined to see him, but advised his seeing me in Boston. He had telegraphed to me to come on, he said, because he was fearful that some unforeseen difficulty had arisen in the way of his return into the Confederacy. This apprehension I quieted by assuring him that Mr. Lincoln was more anxious for peace than any one in the country.

We took the next train for Washington, and I called at once upon Mr. Lincoln. About his first remark was that on the very day he had told Garfield to write me that he would see Jaquess, General Schenck had called upon him with some volunteer advice as to the terms he should offer the Rebels through Colonel Jaquess. On subsequent inquiry he had learned that Schenck had spoken of the subject freely and everywhere. “This,” he said, “may greatly embarrass me. I therefore refused to see Jaquess, and shall countermand his furlough, and send him back to his regiment.”

“I am very sure, sir,” I said, “that Jaquess has never disclosed his business, except, perhaps, when it was necessary in order to get through the lines.”

“No doubt,” he said. “I don’t question his discretion ; but the fact that he has had to mention it at all shows the thing should not go any further. The

whole business is irregular, and had better not be proceeded with.”

“That is, of course, for you to decide, sir ; but will you allow me five minutes by a slow watch ?”

“Yes,” he answered, “ten ; and if you are very entertaining, I’ll give you twenty.”

Then, as briefly as I could, I spoke of the universal impression existing at the North that some honorable peace could be made with the South ; and I said that if liberal terms were offered to the Confederacy, and were refused, it would remove that impression, kill the peace party, and secure his reëlection to the presidency. The country was so thoroughly tired of the war that it would welcome any peace that would preserve the Union. The Democrats would promise such a peace, and the result would be that their candidate would be elected, and the Union would go to pieces. On the other hand, if Jaquess went, and Davis should refuse to negotiate — as he probably would — except on the basis of Southern independence, that fact alone would unite the North, reëlect him, and thus save the Union.

“Then,” he said, “you would fight the devil with fire ? You would get that declaration from Davis, and use it against him ?”

“I would, sir,” I answered. “I would spread it wherever the English language is spoken ; and in thirty days there would not be a peace man at the North, except in the Copperhead party. But I would deal squarely with Davis. I would offer him terms so liberal that, if he rejected them, he would stand condemned before the civilized world.”

Until this time Mr. Lincoln had sat with one of his long legs upon the corner of the table, but now he drew the leg down, and leaned slightly forward, looking directly into my eyes, but with an absent, far-away gaze, as if unconscious of my presence. Thus he sat for fully a couple of minutes, in absolute

silence. Then, relapsing into his usual manner, he said, "There is something in what you say. But Jaquess could n't do it, — he could n't draw Davis's fire; he is too honest. You are the man for that business."

Not stopping to be amused by his equivocal compliment, I replied, "Excuse me, sir, if I differ with you. His very honesty and sincerity exactly fit him for the business. Davis is astute and wary, but the colonel's transparent honesty would disarm him completely."

"Have you suggested this to Jaquess?"

"No, sir."

"Well, if you propose it to him, he will tell you he won't have anything to do with the business. He feels that he is acting as God's servant and messenger, and he would recoil from anything like political finesse. But if Davis should make such a declaration, the country should know of it; and I can see that, coming from him now, when everybody is tired of the war, and so many think some honorable settlement can be made, it might be of vital importance to us. But I tell you that not Jaquess, but *you*, are the man for that business."

"Ah! I see, sir," I remarked. "You propose that I shall go upon this mission."

"No, I do not," he answered. "I do not propose anything. I can't propose anything about such a business. I can only say that I will give you a pass into the Rebel lines, and then — ask Jaquess to pray for you."

"When I might be past praying for!" I rejoined. "This is a new and unexpected thought to me, Mr. Lincoln. Will you allow me to consider it, and talk it over with Mr. Chase and General Garfield?"

"Certainly," he answered. "Talk with them, and bring them both here with you this evening. I should like to confer with them myself, — with Chase particularly. Tell him so."

After explaining the position of things to Colonel Jaquess, I called upon General Garfield, and explained the subject to him fully. His opinion upon it may be condensed into a very few words: "I never had much faith in the power of the 'Methodist Church South' to control Davis; but I tell you, you've got the idea now that will dethrone him. Let him make that declaration, and there won't be an honest peace man at the North. Come, I will go with you to see Mr. Chase."

With Mr. Chase we went over the whole ground, and he expressed the decided opinion that, in view of the state of feeling in the North, it was of the first importance that liberal terms should be at once offered to Davis, and, if he declined them, that the country should know the fact. Garfield had an important engagement that evening, but, after I had dined with Mr. Chase, the latter went with me to the White House. This he did without hesitation, though, only a few days before, he had resigned from the Treasury Department, and it was currently reported that relations between him and Mr. Lincoln were somewhat strained. I judged, however, that if any feeling existed, it was entirely on the side of Mr. Chase, for Mr. Lincoln's manner to him was most cordial, — had the frank trustfulness that he showed only to those who had his entire confidence. Before we were seated he said, "Ah, Chase, I am glad you've come; but where is Garfield?"

"He had an engagement with a client," said Mr. Chase. "He is eking out his income with a little practice in the Supreme Court."

"Well, I wanted *you* particularly," said Mr. Lincoln. "This is a delicate and important business, and I don't want to stir in it without your advice."

"I know you are sincere in that expression, Mr. Lincoln," said Mr. Chase, "and I feel honored by it."

"Well, sit down, both of you," said

Mr. Lincoln, "and let us get to business. Now, Mr. Gilmore, have you decided to ask me for a pass into the Rebel lines?"

"I have, sir," I answered, "on the condition that you allow me to make such overtures to Davis as will put him entirely in the wrong if he rejects them."

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "Mr. Chase and I will talk about that in a moment. But, first, another question: Do you understand that I neither suggest, nor request, nor direct you to take this journey?"

"I do."

"And will you say so, if it should seem to me to be necessary?"

"I will, whether you should ask it or not."

"And if those people should hold on to you,—should give you free lodgings till our election is over, or in any other manner treat you unlike gentlemen,—do you understand that I shall be absolutely powerless to help you?"

"I understand that, sir, fully."

"And you are willing to go entirely upon your own muscle?"

"No, sir, not upon my muscle. I suspect it will be more a matter of nerve than of muscle."

"Do you hear that, Mr. Chase?" said Mr. Lincoln, with an indescribable look of comic gravity. "He criticises my English at the very moment that I am giving him an office. Well, now that we have arranged the preliminaries, Mr. Chase, what terms shall we offer the Rebels? Draw your chair up to the table, Mr. Gilmore, and take down what Mr. Chase says."

"You had better name them, Mr. Lincoln," answered Mr. Chase. "I will make any suggestions that may seem necessary."

"Well, either way," replied Mr. Lincoln.

He then went on to dictate to me, without interruption from Mr. Chase, the following:—

"First. The immediate dissolution of the Southern government, and disbandment of its armies; and the acknowledgment by all the States in rebellion of the supremacy of the Union.

"Second. The total and absolute abolition of slavery in every one of the late slave States and throughout the Union. This to be perpetual.

"Third. Full amnesty to all who have been in any way engaged in the Rebellion, and their restoration to all the rights of citizenship.

"Fourth. All acts of secession to be regarded as nullities; and the late rebellious States to be, and be regarded, as if they had never attempted to secede from the Union. Representation in the House from the recent slave States to be on the basis of their voting population."

Here Mr. Chase remarked, "About that I may want to say something, Mr. Lincoln; but please to go on now, and I will suggest some points afterwards."

"Very well," said Mr. Lincoln.

"Fifth. The sum of five hundred millions, in United States stock, to be issued and divided between the late slave States, to be used by them in payment to slave-owners, loyal and disloyal, for the slaves emancipated by my proclamation. This sum to be divided among the late slave-owners, equally and equitably, at the rate of one half the value of the slaves in the year 1860; and if any surplus should remain, it to be returned to the United States treasury.

"Sixth. A national convention to be convened as soon as practicable, to ratify this settlement, and make such changes in the Constitution as may be in accord with the new order of things.

"Seventh. The intent and meaning of all the foregoing is that the Union shall be fully restored, as it was before the Rebellion, with the exception that all slaves within its borders are, and shall forever be, freemen."

As he finished the dictation, Mr. Lincoln turned to Mr. Chase, saying, "All

of which, Mr. Chase, is respectfully submitted ; and now I am open to amendments."

A two hours' discussion followed upon the fourth and fifth clauses. The fourth clause Mr. Chase desired should be modified, so as to provide expressly for negro suffrage. Mr. Lincoln replied that it did, in effect, secure it, because it based representation upon the *voting* population. It would be unadvisable to embarrass a negotiation like this with such a question.

To the fifth clause Mr. Chase objected altogether, contending that it would be regarded as "buying a peace," and in its present mood the North would not submit to such a measure. Mr. Lincoln must bear in mind that no peace could be lasting that was not based upon principles of eternal justice ; and by those principles the black was entitled to both freedom and suffrage, without payment or thanks to any one. To this Mr. Lincoln replied that the sum named was less than would be the cost of another year of war, to say nothing of the bloodshed ; and it was also right to pay for property we had destroyed, — repeating much the same arguments he had used to me fully a year previously. The clause was finally modified by restricting payment to owners of fifty slaves and under, and reducing the amount named to an absolute sum of four hundred millions. To this Mr. Chase finally assented, with the remark, "I conceive that it makes but very little difference. Mr. Davis is not likely to accept the offer. Mr. Gilmore is confident that he will not accept of peace without separation. To get his declaration to that effect is why you send Mr. Gilmore."

"True," said Mr. Lincoln, "but peace may possibly come out of this ; and I don't want to say a word that is not in good faith. We want to draw Davis's fire ; but we must do it fairly. What I think of most is the risk Mr. Gilmore will run. The case is not the same with

him as with Jaquess. There is something about that man, a kind of 'thus saith the Lord,' that would protect him anywhere. But Gilmore is not Jaquess. He will go in with my pass, and the Rebels won't talk with him five minutes before they ascertain that he is fully possessed of my views. He will say he does n't represent me ; but they will think they know better. Now, as the thing they want most is our recognition of them, may they not hold on to him, to force me to some step for his protection that shall recognize them ? And if they decline the overtures, as they probably will, is it not likely they will refuse to let him out before our election, because of the damage he may do their friends by publishing the facts to the country ? Now, Mr. Chase, can you see any way by which I can protect him ?"

"I cannot," replied Mr. Chase, "unless you should copy the proposals into a letter addressed to Mr. Gilmore, sign it, and in it request him to read it to Mr. Davis. That would give him a semi-official character, and they would not dare to molest him."

"That I can't do," said Mr. Lincoln. "It would be making direct overtures. I don't see, Gilmore, but you will have to trust in the Lord ; only be sure to keep your powder dry, for they are wily and unscrupulous fellows."

I then informed him that Colonel Jaquess had agreed to go with me. To this he assented, and, turning to his table, he wrote a couple of passes. They were on small cards, one of which said simply, —

Will General Grant allow J. R. Gilmore and friend to pass our lines, with ordinary baggage, and go South.

A. LINCOLN.

July 6, 1864.

This I delivered to General Grant ; the other I was able to retain. It read as follows : —

Allow J. R. Gilmore and friend to pass, with ordinary baggage, to General Grant, at his headquarters.

A. LINCOLN.

July 6, 1864.

As I glanced at the cards he remarked, "Tell Colonel Jaquess that I omit his name on account of the talk about his previous trip ; and I wish you would explain to him my refusal to see him. I want him to feel kindly to me."

As Mr. Chase and I rose to go, he rose also, and, bidding "Good-night" to Mr. Chase, he took me by the hand, and held it while he said, "God bless and prosper you. My best wishes will be with you. Good-by."

It was after midnight when I recounted the interview to Colonel Jaquess, and told him that we would take the City Point boat on the following afternoon.

In about a fortnight we arrived in Richmond, and were admitted to an interview with Mr. Davis and the Confederate Secretary of State, Mr. Judah P. Benjamin. What passed on that occasion I soon afterwards recounted in an article in this magazine,¹ and it need not be here repeated. The sum of it all was that the Confederate government would negotiate upon no other basis than Southern independence. Mr. Davis said, "We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for independence, and that, or extermination, we *will* have." Again, when we rose to take our leave of him, he added, "Say to Mr. Lincoln from me that I shall at any time be pleased to receive proposals on the basis of our independence. It will be useless to approach me with any other." This was my report of Mr. Davis's language, but in a manifesto which Secretary Benjamin addressed to the "Minister to the Continent," he put this declaration of Mr. Davis in even stronger terms. He represented him as saying to us "that the separation of the States was an accom-

plished fact; that he had no authority to receive proposals for negotiation except by virtue of his office as President of an independent Confederacy, and on this basis alone must proposals be made to him."

These declarations were sufficiently explicit to convince the most hopeful of peace advocates that negotiations with Mr. Davis could be conducted only with the bayonet. It only remained to scatter his words far and wide over the North, to enable every voter to cast an intelligent ballot at the approaching election, which was to decide the fate of the Union.

At General Grant's invitation, Colonel Jaquess remained a few days at City Point, but I took the first boat for Washington. On the way down the river, and while the facts were fresh in my mind, I wrote out the interview with Davis and Benjamin, which I proposed to read to Mr. Lincoln, to avoid the omissions and inaccuracies that might occur in a verbal recital. Arrived in Washington, I hurried to the White House. Mr. Sumner was closeted with the President, but my name was no sooner announced than a kindly voice said, "Come in. Bring him in." As I entered his room he rose, and, grasping my hand, said, "I'm glad you're back. I heard of your return two nights ago; but they said you were non-committal. What is it, — as we expected ?"

"Exactly, sir," I answered. "There is no peace without separation. Coming down on the boat, I wrote out the interview, to read to you when you are at leisure."

"I am at leisure now," he replied. "Sumner, too, would be glad to hear it."

When I had finished the reading, he said, "What do you propose to do with this ?"

"Put a beginning and an end to it, sir, on my way home, and hand it to the Tribune."

"Can't you get it into The Atlantic ?"

¹ Atlantic Monthly for September, 1864.

he asked. "It would have less of a partisan look there."

"No doubt I can, sir," I replied; "but there will be some delay about it."

"And it is important that Davis's position should be known at once," said Mr. Lincoln. "It will show the country that I did n't fight shy of Greeley's Niagara business without a reason; and everybody is agog to hear your report. Let it go into the Tribune."

"Permit me to suggest," said Mr. Sumner, "that Mr. Gilmore put at once a short card, with the separation declaration of Davis, into one of the Boston papers, and then, as soon as he can, the fuller report into The Atlantic."

"That is it," said Mr. Lincoln. "Put Davis's 'We are not fighting for slavery, we are fighting for independence,' into the card,—that is enough; and send me the proof of what goes into The Atlantic. Don't let it appear till I return the proof. Some day all this will come out, but just now we must use discretion."

As I rose to leave, Mr. Lincoln took my hand, and while he held it in his said, "Jaquess was right,—God's hand is in it. This may be worth as much to us as half a dozen battles. Get the thing out as soon as you can; but don't forget to send me the proof of what you write for The Atlantic. Good-by. God bless you."

The "card" appeared in the Boston

Evening Transcript of July 22, 1864, and two or three days afterwards Mr. James T. Fields handed to me the proof of The Atlantic article, which I at once forwarded to Mr. Lincoln. He retained it seven days, and thereby delayed the issue of the magazine considerably beyond the usual period; and when the proof came back it was curtailed a full page and a half of its original proportions. He had stricken out the terms he was willing to grant to the Rebellion, and all reference which I had made to compensation for the slaves. I had intended the article not only as a declaration of Mr. Davis's position, but also as a manifesto to the Southern people of the liberal conditions on which they could return to the Union. I thought a knowledge of those conditions would create a rebellion within a rebellion, and so much deplete the Southern armies as to shorten the war materially.

Mr. Lincoln told me subsequently that he held the proof under consideration for a few days because he was at first tempted to let the article stand as I had written it; but that fuller reflection convinced him that the publication of his terms would sow dissension in the South, and he was unwilling that his words should have any such effect. Had these terms been accepted, the South would have come out of the war in a better financial position than the North, and the revolted States would have been saved the long agony of reconstruction.

Edmund Kirke.

SONG.

THE very stars will rise and swing
More radiant censers in the air,
No shadow fall on anything,
The red rose paint itself more fair,
So brief the hours, divine their sum,
When Love is come, when Love is come.

Copyright of Atlantic Magazine Archive is the property of Atlantic Monthly Group LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.