

REMINISCENCES OF THE EARLY STAGES OF THE REBELLION.

IN recurring to the horrors of the war and of the few months preceding it, as experienced by us here at the capital, it has often occurred to me that, if possible, I suffered more from the dread apprehension of the impending conflict, and the shock upon shock at the seizure of the forts, arsenals, custom-houses, post-offices and other government property by the rebels in the last months of President Buchanan's administration, than at any subsequent period during the war. No sooner was the election of Mr. Lincoln announced—and it was known throughout the country on the evening of election-day, the 6th of November, 1860—than threatening signs appeared in all parts of the South, and the secessionists everywhere, urged on by the *Constitution* newspaper of this city—nominally under the editorship of William M. Brown, an Englishman, but really the mouthpiece and under the direction of the leaders of the rebellion—set to work actively to effect a withdrawal of all the slave States from the Union.

This newspaper having been regarded as the organ of the administration, still sustained this character to a greater or less extent, particularly as it was the continued recipient of the government advertisements, which furnished its principal means of support; and this naturally gave rise to doubt as to the course the administration intended to pursue in the momentous crisis now at hand. But Messrs. Cobb, Floyd and Thompson were yet members of the Cabinet, the Southern element was greatly in the ascendant here generally, and the time had not come for so decisive a step even as to withdraw from that paper the government patronage, notwithstanding I know that soon after the election it became a source of regret and mortification to many here that such a sheet should be allowed to draw its main sustenance from the government it was seeking to destroy. When this patron-

age, some weeks afterward, was finally withheld by order of the President, the paper immediately ceased to exist, but so long as it was continued it not only operated to the injury of the administration, but did great harm also to the Union cause North and South, for the reason before mentioned, that the public had come so generally to regard it as the organ of the administration.

A most remarkable fact of this period—a fact which, in making up a judgment upon President Buchanan's administration of affairs at this time, should not be forgotten—was that few persons comparatively, either in the North or West, appeared to apprehend any serious trouble, regarding the threats and movements of the secessionists as only a repetition—in an aggravated form, to be sure—of what we had seen on former occasions, and all for political effect. Nor was this feeling confined to one party: it pervaded all the free States. Hence, while the disunionists were everywhere active, and endeavoring to disseminate the idea that they were not only in favor with the administration, but with the Democratic party at large, the great body of the true friends of the administration stood aloof, never coming near the President or offering counsel. How well I recollect that all through the month of November I thought almost everybody in the free States was asleep! Here we were, a small number then of active Union men, in the very hotbed of the conspiracy, and surrounded by a host of bold and determined disunionists bent on "rule or ruin." The great mass of those here who at heart were true to the Union were passive rather than otherwise, because they did not care to expose themselves to the charge of "Black Republicanism," which was then the potent missile leveled by the secessionists against every person who dared openly to oppose them. Was it strange, therefore, that any one, seeing and feel-

ing the real danger ahead, should have reached out after help? that with such feelings one should cast around for patriotic statesmen to come to the rescue? Humble as I was, occupying then a subordinate position in the Post-office Department, so impressed was I by the appalling aspect of affairs that I seemed to be impelled by a power beyond myself to "cry aloud and spare not;" and, departing from my previous rule of appropriate modesty—to which it may be thought I have not returned—I made bold to address earnest appeals to distinguished men, far and near, to exert their influence toward averting the threatened outbreak. The following extract of a letter from a Southern member of Congress may be taken as a specimen of the encouragement I received from that quarter. It bears date November 5, 1860, the day before the Presidential election:

"To the latter part of your letter I reply frankly. On my entrance into Congress it was as a constitutional Union-loving man. From the days of my childhood I have loved the Union—during youth and manhood I still loved it. . . .

"If Lincoln be elected, as I have no doubt he will be, and the South submit to his inauguration, then are they in my judgment cowards and traitors to their own rights, unworthy of any other condition than that that awaits them—inferiors, provincialists and subjects. Lincoln will never be the President of thirty-three confederate States. Men like myself, who for a lifetime have fought the extreme ultraisms of the South and the mad fanaticism of the North, will not permit Abe Lincoln's banner, inscribed with 'higher law,' 'negro equality,' 'irrepressible conflict' and 'final emancipation,' to wave over us. We have and do deserve a more glorious destiny. . . . Three hundred thousand swords are *now* ready to leap from their scabbards in support of a Southern Confederacy. Fort Moultrie will be in the hands of the South on the morning of the fourth day of March next. . . . Our women and children are ready and eager for the

conflict, and would kick us out of our houses if we basely and tamely yield again."

The above was evidently not intended, nor was it regarded, as strictly a private letter. All such information, when received, was promptly communicated to those in authority. It was important, of course, that the President himself should not only be kept advised of the actions of the disunionists, but that he should discountenance their nefarious proceedings, and that his hands should be strengthened by support from patriotic citizens everywhere; and to this end it was the desire to have placed before him, as far as possible, the opinions and advice of citizens in whose judgment he might confide. Here is a letter from Hon. Edward Everett, who, it will be recollected, had just passed through the canvass as candidate for Vice-President on the Conservative ticket, with the Hon. John Bell for President:

"BOSTON, 27th November, 1860.

"MY DEAR SIR: I share the opinion of your correspondent as to the very critical state of public affairs, and I feel it to be the duty of every good citizen, by word and deed, to contribute his mite, however small, to rescue the country from impending peril—by far the greatest that ever threatened it.

"The cause assigned by your correspondent as that which prevents Union men from affording the President their support and counsel in this crisis, will not prevent my doing it, but ordinary self-respect under the notorious circumstances of the case requires that my views should not be obtruded upon him unasked. Whenever they are specially invited by the President himself or any one in his confidence, they will be cheerfully and respectfully given.

"I remain, my dear sir, with much regard, very truly yours,

"EDWARD EVERETT."

The following letter is from ex-President Pierce. Immediately on its receipt I called on Mr. Secretary Thompson, who with his own pen prepared a preface agreeably to General Pierce's

suggestion, and the letter to the Secretary appeared in the *Constitution* of the next morning :

“ANDOVER, Mass., November 28, 1860.

“MY DEAR SIR: I have received your kind, earnest letter, and participate strongly in your apprehensions. To my vision the political horizon shuts down close and darkly. It may be that light is to break through somewhere, but I do not discern the quarter whence it is to come. I had occasion to write a friendly letter to Secretary Thompson (Interior) a day or two since, and expressed to him briefly my convictions and fears and hopes in relation to the present state of public affairs. I did not expect that letter to be published, but the blackness is gathering so fast that if anything can be done to save our glorious Union it must be done speedily, and, in my judgment, at the North chiefly. If you call on the Secretary, he will show you that letter, and if he thinks the publication of it would be useful, he can use it as he pleases. The truth must appear that it was written in the course of friendly correspondence, and not with a view to publication. Among intelligent, reflecting men, alarm is evidently increasing here daily. One decisive step in the way of *coercion* will drive out all the slave-labor States. Of that I entertain no doubt. My suggestion about the tone and temper of Congress, and the importance of temperate words and actions, might possibly have some degree of good influence, and there is perhaps more hope that the letter might be serviceable just at this juncture at the North; but it was hastily written, and my friend the Secretary must judge. If you call on him, show him this note.

“In haste, your friend,

“FRANKLIN PIERCE.”

It was all to no purpose: the tide rolled on. Congress soon assembled, and became the arena of the fiercest declamation and conflict. Everything like coercion on the part of the general government was denounced and resisted. Mr. Hindman of Arkansas said in the House, “I am willing to give gentlemen

a chance to try steel if they prefer it.” This was in debate on the bill to amend the acts of 1795 and 1807, so as to authorize the President to accept the services of volunteers, etc., called a “force bill.” “This bill,” said the chairman having it in charge, “only comes up in the morning hour.” Mr. Cochrane of New York replied, “If you pass this bill, it will be the mourning hour to this republic.” “A most ill-timed, unwise and iniquitous measure,” said Mr. Boetler—not an extreme man—from Virginia. “If there be any hope of a restoration of peace,” said Mr. Babcock from the same State, “it must be in the defeat of these force bills.” And they were finally all defeated. Treason was openly proclaimed in the Senate, if not in the House: State after State “seceded,” and the members and Senators thereof, with mock solemnity, resigned their seats and withdrew from the halls. The Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb, resigned on the 10th December, the Secretary of State, General Cass (though for a directly opposite reason), on the 14th, and the Secretary of War, J. B. Floyd, on the 29th of that month, followed by the Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson, on the 8th of January.

Alarm continued to increase, and on the 26th of January, 1861, the following resolution was referred to the select committee of five appointed by the House of Representatives on the 9th of that month, Hon. W. A. Howard of Michigan being its chairman: “*Resolved*, That the select committee of five be instructed to inquire whether any secret organization hostile to the government of the United States exists in the District of Columbia; and if so, whether any official or employé of the city of Washington, or any employés or officers of the Federal government in the executive or judicial departments, are members thereof.”

The committee say that they entered upon the investigation under a deep sense of the importance and the intrinsic difficulty of the inquiry. They took the testimony of a good many persons, including that of General Scott, ex-Secretary Jacob Thompson, Colonel Berret,

mayor, Dr. Blake, Commissioner of Public Buildings, and Governor Hicks and ex-Governor Lowe of Maryland. I had occasion several years ago to prepare for one of the public journals a synopsis of the report and testimony. It is a curious book, especially when viewed in the light of subsequent events. The mayor was the first witness called to the stand. He said he had not "been able to ascertain the slightest ground for any apprehension of any foray or raid upon the city of Washington." He knew about an organization called the "National Volunteers," which he said was not "a political organization" — that it was composed of citizens whom he knew to be "not only respectable," but a great many of them "stakeholding citizens, who would scorn to do anything that would bring reproach upon the city." Nevertheless, if I am not mistaken, the larger part of them, including their "senior officer," left Washington and joined the rebellion.

The Commissioner of Public Buildings also said he "could see no real ground to apprehend danger," but that he had taken care to see that the Capitol was not blown up—that examinations were made every night, "by going through it, up and down, all through the cellar and every place," and that in the daytime he had his men placed about all the main doors, "so that they might know what came in and what went out."

Ex-Governor Lowe, who afterward, I think, left his State to assist in the rebellion, denied any knowledge of an organization in the District of Columbia "having for its object the taking or holding any of the public property here, as against the United States;" but he said, "I have not the slightest doubt that if Maryland does secede, she will claim her rights here, and I will advocate them." "So far as the possession of the District is concerned?" a member inquired. He answered, "Yes, sir—peaceably, if possible—forcibly only as a last resort; that is, provided Maryland shall resume her State sovereignty."

Mr. Jacob Thompson said, "Soon after the presidential election it was a question

frequently discussed by individuals in my presence, in which discussions I participated, as to the mode by which the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln could be defeated, or, in other words, how the rights of the South could be maintained in the Union. I heard some discussion as to organizing a force by which his inauguration could be prevented," but he believed this was now given up.

Dr. Cornelius Boyle, "senior officer" of the "National Volunteers," said he knew there was no unlawful purpose whatever entertained by that organization—that it was nothing more or less than a military company, numbering between two hundred and fifty and two hundred and eighty names, and that it was not a secret organization. He admitted that he drafted and presented a set of resolutions, the first of which declared that "we will stand by and defend the South, and that under no circumstances will we assume a position of hostility to her interests;" and the fourth, that "we will act, in the event of the withdrawal of Maryland and Virginia from the Union, in such manner as shall best secure ourselves and those States from the evils of a foreign and hostile government within and near their borders."

Cypriani Fernandini and O. K. Hillard of Baltimore testified that there were military organizations in that city, numbering, the latter believed, not less than six thousand, whose object was to prevent armed bodies of men from passing through Maryland to the capital. Philip P. Dawson of Baltimore stated that he had it from good authority that it was their object also to make an attack upon the capital and prevent the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln.

General Scott's testimony tended to show that there was great concern for the capital in almost every part of the country. Many letters were received by him daily, warning him to put the city in a state of defence. Some of these professed to give the plans of the conspirators, and pointed out means of detection. He said: "These letters, from the broad surface whence they come,

either prove or seem to indicate a conspiracy for one of two purposes at least—either for mischief or creating alarm." One writer, signing "Union," from South Carolina, concluded his letter, "Would give my name, but if found out would have to *swing*."

Governor Hicks on the 3d of January issued an address to the people of Maryland, in which he said: "I have been repeatedly warned by persons having the opportunity to know, and who are entitled to the highest confidence, that the secession leaders in Washington have resolved that the Border States, and especially Maryland, shall be precipitated into secession with the Cotton States before the 4th of March. They have resolved to seize the Federal capital and public archives, so that they may be in a position to be acknowledged by foreign governments as the United States; and the assent of Maryland is necessary, as the District of Columbia would revert to her in case of a dissolution of the Union. . . . The plan contemplates forcible opposition to Mr. Lincoln's inauguration, and consequently civil war upon Maryland soil, and a transfer of its horrors from the States which are to provoke it." Again, there had been some interviews as well as correspondence between the commissioners of some of the Southern States and himself; and Governor Hicks said that much of the opinion he had formed in regard to a contemplated movement such as he had apprehended had grown out of these interviews and other corroborative circumstances. One of these commissioners, Judge Handy from Mississippi, had said, among other things, that Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Hamlin would never be installed in office. He had also received letters from several gentlemen, and verbal statements from others in whom he had the fullest confidence, all going to convince him that he was not mistaken in his apprehensions, although he now thought that the hostile organization referred to had probably been disbanded. On the 14th of February the committee made their report, in which they said: "If the purpose was

at any time entertained of forming an organization, secret or open, to seize the District of Columbia, attack the capital or prevent the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, it seems to have been rendered contingent upon the secession of either Maryland or Virginia, or both, and the sanction of those States." They also declared it as their unanimous opinion that the evidence produced before them did not prove the existence of a *secret* organization, here or elsewhere, hostile to the government, having for its object, upon its own responsibility, an attack upon the capital or any of the public property here, or an interruption of any of the functions of the government. I nevertheless believe that it was the determination of the conspirators, if possible, to take possession of the capital—a determination depending, it is quite probable, on the secession of Virginia and Maryland, both of which States they hoped to see unite their fortunes with the "Southern Confederacy." But Maryland did not come up to time: the flying artillery was brought here, and it was then too late to attempt a *coup d'état* for the possession of the capital and the public archives. Inasmuch as Mr. Buchanan refers to this subject in one of his letters, which, with the exception of a few words, I propose to give entire, I will introduce it in this place. It will be observed that he did not apprehend any serious danger to the city, although he acted wisely in ordering the troops here:

"WHEATLAND, 21st April, 1861.

"MY DEAR SIR: . . . I presume, from your letter to the —, we shall not agree as to the existence of any serious danger to the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln on the 4th of March, 1861. The truth is, when I first heard the reports circulated in the early part of the previous session, I kept my eye upon the subject and had my own means of information. I had no apprehensions of danger for some time before the report of the committee, but the stake was so vast I yielded to the members of the Cabinet, and ordered the troops to Washington. Virginia was at the time

as loyal a State as any in the Union, and the Peace Convention which she originated was still in session. But we need not discuss this question. . . . Whilst, with you, I should be very unwilling to fall into line under ——— as a leader of the Democratic party, yet I know I shall never be condemned to such an ordeal. I am as firm and as true a Democrat of the Jefferson and Jackson school as I have ever been in my life. The principles of Democracy grew out of the Constitution of the United States, and must endure as long as that sacred instrument. I firmly believe that the Federal government can only be successfully administered on these principles; and although I may not live to see it, yet I shall live and die in the hope that the party, purified and refined by severe experience, will yet be triumphant. Whilst these are my opinions, I obtrude them on no person, but, like yourself, have withdrawn from party politics. . . .

"Very respectfully, your friend,
"JAMES BUCHANAN."

But to return to the winter of 1861. The contest in both houses was continued daily, but I do not propose to recite further what occurred there, except in reference to a resolution which called forth a report from the committee on military affairs of the House, of which the Hon. Benjamin Stanton of Ohio was chairman; and I notice this report because of the reference to it in the following letter from Mr. Buchanan:

"WHEATLAND, near Lancaster, 12th November, 1861.

"MY DEAR SIR: You will confer a great favor upon me if you can obtain a half dozen copies of Mr. Stanton's report from the committee on military affairs, made on the 18th of February, 1861 (No. 85), relative to the arms alleged to have been stolen and sent to the South by Floyd. This report, with the remarks of Mr. Stanton when presenting it, ought to have put this matter at rest, and it did so, I believe, so far as Congress was concerned. It has, however, been recently repeated by Cameron and Reverdy Johnson and others, and I

desire these copies to send to different parts of the Union, so that the falsehood may be refuted by the record. I am no further interested in the matter than that if the charge were true it might argue a want of care on my part. . . .

"I learn from those who read Forney's *Press* that Stanton [Edwin M.] is the counsel and friend of McClellan, who is, I trust and hope, 'the coming man.' . . .

"I have materials put together which will constitute, unless I am greatly mistaken, not merely a good defence, but a triumphant vindication, of my administration. You must not be astonished some day to find in print portraits drawn by myself of all those who ever served in my Cabinet. I think I know them all perfectly, unless it may be Stanton.

"From your friend, very respectfully,
"JAMES BUCHANAN."

A letter of somewhat earlier date refers to a controversy between Mr. Holt and Mr. Thompson:

"WHEATLAND, 18th September, 1861.

"MY DEAR SIR: . . . You recollect the correspondence between Mr. Holt and Mr. Thompson. The last letter of Mr. Thompson to Mr. Holt was published in the tri-weekly *National Intelligencer* of March 19, 1861, and was dated at Oxford on March 11th. I should be much obliged to you if you could procure me a copy of this reply. . . .

"How Mr. Holt came to be so far mistaken in his letter of May 3rd to Kentucky as to state that the revolutionary leaders greeted me with all-hails to my face, I do not know. The truth is, that after the message of the 3d of December they were alienated from me, and after I had returned the insolent letter of the first South Carolina commissioners to them I was attacked by Jefferson Davis and his followers on the floor of the Senate, and all political and social intercourse between us ceased. Had the Senate confirmed my nomination of the 2d of January of a collector for the port of Charleston, the war would probably have commenced in January instead of May.

"I am collecting materials for history,

and I cannot find a note from Mr. Slidell to myself, and my answer, on the very proper removal of Beauregard from West Point. I think I must have given them to Mr. Holt. He was much pleased with my answer at the time. If they are in his possession, I should be glad if you would procure me copies. They are very brief. The ladies of Mr. S.'s family never after looked near the White House.

"From your friend, very respectfully,
"JAMES BUCHANAN."

Some time in the latter part of February or beginning of March, 1861, Mr. Thompson had made a speech in Mississippi, in which he said, "As I was writing my resignation I sent a despatch to Judge Longstreet that the 'Star of the West' was coming with reinforcements. The troops were thus put on their guard, and when the 'Star of the West' arrived she received a warm welcome from booming cannon, and soon beat a retreat. I was rejoiced that the vessel was not sunk, but I was still more rejoiced that the concealed trick, first conceived by General Scott and adopted by Secretary Holt, but countermanded by the President when too late, proved a failure."

Mr. Holt, quoting the above, wrote under the date of March 5th a scathing letter to the editors of the *Intelligencer*, saying, "We have here a distinct and exultant avowal, on the part of the honorable Secretary, that while yet a member of the Cabinet he disclosed to those in open rebellion against the United States, information which he held under the seals of a confidence that from the beginning of our history as a nation had never been violated."

He went on to show, by correspondence between Mr. Thompson and the President, that the sending of the "Star of the West" was done with the President's sanction and after full consultation in the Cabinet—that the "countermand" spoken of was not more cordially sanctioned by the President than it was by General Scott and himself; and the order countermanding the sailing of that vessel was given, not because of

any dissent from the order on the part of the President, but because of a letter received that day from Major Anderson, stating in effect that he regarded himself as secure in his position, and yet more because of intelligence which late on Saturday evening reached the Department that a heavy battery had been erected among the sand-hills at the entrance of Charleston harbor, which would probably destroy any unarmed vessel (and such was the "Star of the West") which might attempt to make its way up to Fort Sumter. This important information satisfied the government that there was no present necessity for sending reinforcements, and that when sent they should go not in a vessel of commerce, but of war.

Mr. Thompson responded March 11th, indignantly denying, not that he sent the despatch, but that he acted on official information, or that he had divulged any Cabinet secret. He said, "On the morning of the 8th [of January] the *Constitution* newspaper contained a telegraphic despatch from New York that the 'Star of the West' had sailed from that port with two hundred and fifty soldiers on board, bound for Fort Sumter. This was the very first intimation I had received from any quarter that additional troops had been ordered to be sent. This information to me was not 'official:' it was a fact conveyed with electric speed to every part of the confederacy, known to be true by every well-informed man in the city of Washington as soon as known by me."

In his letter of resignation he had intimated that the "Star of the West" expedition had been fitted out without his knowledge, in violation of an express understanding; but the President in his reply denied this, saying that on Monday, 31st December, he had suspended orders which had been issued by the War and Navy Departments to send the "Brooklyn" with reinforcements to Fort Sumter, at the same time promising that these orders should not be renewed without being previously considered and decided in Cabinet. He proceeds: "I called a special Cabinet meeting on

Wednesday, 2d January, 1861, in which the question of sending reinforcements to Fort Sumter was amply discussed both by yourself and others. The decided majority was against you. At this moment the answer of the South Carolina 'commissioners' to my communication of 31st December was received and read. It produced much indignation among the members of the Cabinet. After a further brief conversation I employed the following language: 'It is now all over, and reinforcements must be sent.' Judge Black said, at the moment of my decision, that after this letter the Cabinet would be unanimous, and I heard no dissenting voice. . . . You are certainly mistaken in saying that 'no conclusion was reached.' In this your recollection is entirely different from that of your oldest colleagues in the Cabinet. Indeed, my language was so unmistakable that the Secretaries of War and the Navy proceeded to act upon it without any further intercourse with myself than what you heard or might have heard me say."

Finally, in Mr. Holt's rejoinder to Mr. Thompson's, under date of 25th March, he spoke of the absurdity of his (Mr. T.'s) resigning his commission simply on an anonymous telegraphic report, adding that "such undoubted proofs [of the correctness of the report] could have been had on the 8th of January at Washington only from the President, members of the Cabinet, or others having confidential relations with the government. . . . So far as the moral aspects of the question are concerned, I deem it wholly unimportant whether the information was derived from official or private sources. In either case it was alike his (Mr. T.'s) duty, as a faithful officer, to have withheld it from those who sought it at his hands for purposes of hostile action against the government of the United States."

It is but fair toward Mr. Thompson to say that personally he and the President parted on perfectly friendly terms, although in the matter of this controversy it is equally true that Mr. Buchanan did not sustain him.

Next, as to the bearing of the secessionists toward President Buchanan. In his stirring and patriotic letter of 31st May, 1861, to J. F. Speed, Esq., of Kentucky, Mr. Holt held the following language: "The atrocious acts enumerated' [the seizure of forts, arsenals, etc., and the surrender of an entire military department by a general to the keeping of whose honor it had been confided—meaning General Twiggs in Texas, who was summarily dismissed by the order of President Buchanan "for treachery to the flag of his country"] "were acts of war, and might all have been treated as such by the late administration; but the President patriotically cultivated peace—how anxiously and how patiently the country well knows. While, however, the revolutionary leaders greeted him with all-hails to his face, they did not the less diligently continue to whet their swords behind his back. Immense military preparations were made, so that when the moment for striking at the government of the United States arrived, the revolutionary States leaped into the contest clad in full armor."

One thing is certain: if the leaders in the rebellion did not greet the President "with all-hails to his face," they beset him, many of them, to the last. Undoubtedly there was less of perfect freedom of communication between them after his annual message of the 3d of December, but they followed him up, and sought to control his action to the extent of their power, until his term expired.

And now about the removal of Major Beauregard from West Point. I wish I had the notes which passed between Mr. Slidell and the President on the subject, to insert here; but as it appeared that Mr. Holt could not find them among his papers, it is to be feared they are lost. It is amusing to observe that while the Secretary of War was arranging to ship some of his "big guns" to the South, Mr. Senator Slidell was equally diligent in having one at least transferred to a most important position at the North; and both came to grief much in the same way—by running against "Old Buck." If I am not mistaken, Major Beauregard,

whose rank did not entitle him to the appointment, had hardly more than reached West Point before the order for his removal was made by Secretary Holt, then recently placed at the head of the War Department, and Senator Slidell doubtless thought, when he wrote the President—as he did, I have reason to believe, in an imperious manner—that the latter would disavow the act of removal and reinstate Major Beauregard, so that he could have the opportunity of teaching the cadets at West Point not only how to shoot, “but where to shoot.” Instead, however, of disavowing it, he no doubt gave the Senator to understand, in no equivocal language, that he as President was responsible for it, probably without saying whether the Secretary brought the matter to his attention before the order was made or not. This of course was a fatal offence.

The same spirit was also manifested in reference to the postal service. Before speaking of this, however, I will refer to one other fact connected with the administration of the War Department. A short time before the withdrawal of the Florida Senators, they made a communication, either to the President or Secretary of War, requesting to be advised as to the particulars and extent of the armament of the government fortifications in that State! It is hardly necessary to say that Secretary Holt declined to furnish this information.

The ordinance of secession was passed in Florida on the 11th of January, and her Senators withdrew about the 21st of that month; on which day the Postmaster-General made an order abolishing the post-office at Pensacola. As soon as this became known, Mr. Yulee, late Senator from that State, but now a citizen of “the Southern Confederacy,” called at the Post-office Department and requested to see or be served with a copy of the order of discontinuance. His request was politely refused. I do not remember whether it was on this occasion or previously that he jocosely intimated to the officer thus unmindful of his wishes that a rope might some day not far distant be serviceable to him; but I well

recollect that officer replied that he would esteem it a great favor then to be elevated in some position sufficiently commanding to enable him to proclaim to the whole country his opinion of secession and its wicked abettors.*

There was another instance of like character which occurs to me. A route-agent, by the name of West, on one of the railroads in Virginia, having been removed, the Hon. Albert G. Jenkins, member of Congress from that State, who was afterward killed at the head of guerrillas in Western Virginia, demanded in writing to know distinctly and specifically the grounds of his removal. In this case the Postmaster-General was more accommodating, and under date of 22d February replied that “Mr. West was removed for leaving his route without permission from the Department, and actively engaging in a movement the avowed object of which is to induce the withdrawal of Virginia from the Union. In other words, he was discharged for undertaking to destroy the government from whose treasury he was drawing the means of daily subsistence, and whose Constitution he had solemnly sworn to support.”

The postal service generally through-

* This order may still possess interest as an item of history, and it is now for the first time brought to light, as follows :

“Whereas, an armed body of men from the State of Alabama, acting under authority of its governor and upon the invitation of the governor of Florida, have taken possession of the navy-yard and of parts of the forts of the harbor of Pensacola in the State of Florida, and still retain them in defiance of the rights of the government of the United States; and whereas, the officers and troops constituting the garrison of Fort Pickens in said harbor, and who are citizens of the United States and in the service of its government, are by said armed body of men prevented from communicating with the shore and with the post-office of Pensacola; and whereas, the Department has reliable information that attempts on the part of said garrison to correspond with the government at Washington have been defeated by the intervention of said armed force and by their lawless power over said post-office, whereby its freedom and integrity have been destroyed; and whereas, it is neither just nor proper that a post-office or postal service should be supported by the government of the United States from the use of which its own citizens, and those in its employment and obeying its commands, are excluded by the usurpations of the said governors, or by any other cause whatever:—It is ordered that said post-office at Pensacola, in the State of Florida, be and the same is hereby abolished.”

out the South was continued under the direction of the government of the United States up to the 31st May, 1861, when it was suspended by a general order of the Department. Meantime, all through the winter the leaders of the rebellion were making use of the mails, and those of them in Congress of their franking privilege also, to "fire up the Southern heart" and force the States into passing ordinances of secession, seizing the government property, etc. One Senator, whose letter fell into loyal hands some time during the war, wrote to his State under date of January 5, 1861: "I think by the 4th of March all the Southern States will be out, except, perhaps, Kentucky and Missouri, and they will soon have to follow. . . . A strong government of eight States, promptly organized, with Jeff. Davis for general-in-chief, will bring them to a realizing sense of the gravity of the crisis. . . . I shall give the enemy a shot next week, before retiring. I say enemy. Yes, I am theirs, and they are mine. I am willing to be their master, but not their brother."

This is a fair representation of the spirit manifested by the leading secessionists congregated in Washington during the winter and spring of 1861; and when, on the 15th of April, the President issued his call for seventy-five thousand men, his demand was met by the governors of several of the Southern States in the same spirit of bravado and defiance.

I have vivid recollections of the doubt and gloom which pervaded the city for days preceding the arrival of the first troops called for by the President. Such, at least, was the feeling among all those here who had resolved to stand by the government. Reports were rife that rebel soldiers were moving on the Virginia side of the river—that arms had been sent forward for them; and as the passenger-boats were plying every hour between Alexandria and Washington, there was great fear that this means of

communication might be seized upon to place a hostile military force suddenly in our midst. Late one night I found myself at the telegraph-office with my friend, Ginery Twichell, now a representative in Congress from Massachusetts, and so alarming were the reports in reference to the movements of troops near us in Virginia (who, it afterward appeared, were on their way to take Harper's Ferry) that we sent to General Scott an urgent request to stop the running of the Alexandria boats. It was, I think, on the following night that, being again at the telegraph-office, Mr. Twichell received a despatch that another Massachusetts regiment had reached Havre de Grace; and we immediately proceeded to communicate this information to General Scott. It was midnight or after when we arrived at his lodgings, and we were told that he had retired for the night. Our message, however, was conveyed to him, and in a few minutes, clothed in his dressing-gown, he received us in his office. Calm and commanding, "he looked every inch a soldier," yet it was evident that he felt the deepest concern in view of the then threatening aspect of affairs. His greatest anxiety at that moment was for troops to protect Fortress Monroe and Harper's Ferry; and having called upon Massachusetts for these, he requested Mr. Twichell to urge Governor Andrew to hasten forward two regiments for the purpose—the one for the former place to be sent by the fastest steamer possible direct to Old Point Comfort. This request was complied with, and the Massachusetts regiments for Fortress Monroe happily arrived there on the 20th of April, just in time to save that important post. Six hours later, and it is believed it would have been captured. As General Scott apprehended, Harper's Ferry fell into the hands of the insurgents before the Union troops could reach that point.

HORATIO KING.