

Campbell and Hunter pressed me earnestly yesterday to send them to Washington to see the President. Would they have done so if guilty? Please answer.
E. O. C. ORD, *Major General*.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, }
WASHINGTON, April 15, 1865, 8 P.M. }

Maj. Gen. Ord, Richmond, Va.

On reflection I will withdraw my dispatch of this date directing the arrest of Campbell, Mayo, and others, and leave it in the light of a suggestion, to be executed only so far as you may judge the good of the service demands.
U. S. GRANT, *Lieutenant General*.

RICHMOND, VA., April 15, 1865, 9:30 P.M.

[Received at 10:20 P.M.]

Lieut. Gen. U. S. Grant.

Second telegram, leaving the subject of arrests in my hands, is received.
E. O. C. ORD, *Major General*.*

It was after this date that Grant, on reflection, turned around and informed the President that the paroles he gave at Appomattox should not be broken; that he would defend them. All honor to him for this! And greater honor to Gen. Ord, who pledged *his life* for the honor of the Southern men who were paroled!

The first matter to claim consideration was money. I had in gold a five-dollar piece and in Confederate notes a few thousand dollars. The purchasing power of the latter may be ascertained from a bill made by Miss Abercrombie, now my wife, of which the following is a true copy:

Miss Abercrombie,

		To Goodrich & Co.	
September 23.	½ yd. Crape.....	\$	20 00
October 7.	1 Hoop Skirt.....		100 00
" 7.	14 yds. French Merino (Blk.) @ \$87.50.....		1,225 00
" 7.	14 yds. Blk. Rep @ \$25.....		350 00
" 14.	20 Blk. Calico @ \$10.....		200 00
	1 Blk. Crape.....		40 00
Total.....		\$	1,935 00

Columbus, Ga., October 14, 1864.

As I had no means to purchase tickets over the railroads, I applied to the Quartermaster, U. S. A., for transportation for myself, two servants, and two horses, which was furnished me.

It was sometime in May that we started for home via Mont-

*See War Records, Vol. XLVI., Series 1, pages 762, 763, Part 3.

gomery, Mobile, and New Orleans. As I had to call at the headquarters of the commanders in these cities for passes and permits, I will here remark in regard to my reception by these my late enemies: Gen. A. J. Smith was crabbed and petulant when I showed him the order for transportation for the negroes. Gen. Sturgis was kind and did all that was desirable for our comfort. In New Orleans Gen. Canby was very polite to us, as he was to every one. He sent me up the Mississippi river on a chartered steamer. The trip up the river was pleasant. There were only two other passengers—Father Livingston, a priest, and a sick boy. Livingston—may God bless him!—had but one change of linen, and he gave that to the sick boy, who was a stranger to him, and nursed the lad attentively.

I was forcibly struck with the amount of the most costly second-hand *furniture* sent by express to small towns in Illinois and Ohio, put up in oat sacks.* But furniture in New Orleans, you know, like "Butler's" spoons, belonged to the victors. The captain of the steamer put me on shore at Argyle Landing, near my home. I mounted my horse, and the first man I saw was "Tom Shelby" sitting on the fence looking at some negro men plowing a large field of corn. He hailed me, but I paid no attention to him. He was a "rampant" war man before the war began, but he stayed at home. Indeed, every one of my immediate neighbors—ten in number—were not in the army; and all, except one, able-bodied men and younger than I was. The

*Col. Augustus Choate Hamlin, U. S. A., in his "Battle of Chancellorsville" (Bangor, Me., published by the author), says (page 27), speaking of Blenker's Division: "The men justly complained of their treatment, and also of the abuse bestowed upon them during the march across the Shenandoah Valley for alleged acts of pillage on the way. From what the inspector saw he was of the opinion that the stories had been overestimated, and he has thought since that the Second Corps put in the breastworks at North Anna more valuables, in the shape of pianos, scientific apparatus, and choice furniture, than Blenker's Division stole or destroyed during their march over the mountains to Northern Virginia. Their booty and destruction, even as exaggerated, was infinitesimal as compared to that of the army of the Potomac at the capture of Fredericksburg."

After Gen. Payne, U. S. A., who was stationed at Paducah, Ky., had been court-martialed, he was relieved, and among the papers left behind him was one saying: "Don't send any more pianos, or plated silver, or pictures: all the kin are supplied; but you can send bed linen and solid silverware."

Scott boys and Calhoun Hale and his brother were good and faithful soldiers, living outside the belt around me.

When I dismounted at my door, God only knows my agony of heart. None to welcome me, none to greet me!

"Desolate the hearth,
And wild weeds gathering on the wall."

Where were the laurels that were to crown my brow? Willows! Fences burned, bridges destroyed; the plantation a forest of tall weeds; horses, mules, cattle, sheep, poultry, provisions, wagons, implements of every kind—all gone; wealth, servants, comforts—all means of support for my family gone; all lost save honor. I sat down and surveyed the desolation around me. Fortunately my house was not burned, and I had a shelter for my family, should they come here. I knew the noble women of the South, who for years had labored hard and cheerfully, trusting in God and the justice of their cause, would not despond. Lord Byron makes the beautiful daughters of

The tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast

sit down by the rivers of Babylon and weep, but never would they string a harp for their foe. The beautiful daughters of the South had wept no bitter tears of repentance, nor sung pæans for their foe; they had proved themselves equal to adversity in war, and would they not help build up lost fortunes in peace? So resolve took the place of despondency, and I returned to Columbus for my family.

Sherman—the fell destroyer—had burned the city of Jackson, Miss., and the ruins reminded me of Pompeii. In walking one of the streets I passed a canvas shanty, from which I was hailed by an Israelite with "Good morning, General; come in." He had been in the army and knew me; he had some goods and groceries for sale. When I was leaving, he asked: "General, can't I do something for you? Here are fifty dollars, just take them; maybe you can pay me back sometime." I thought the angel of mercy was looking down on us, and I thought of Portia's address to Shylock on the quality of mercy. I thanked him kindly, and the day came when I had the pleasure of repaying the debt. In a few days I arrived in Columbus, and there I found a letter from my cousin, Clayton French, of Philadelphia, Pa., containing a check for a thousand dollars. I had written

to him to send me some money, and this was his liberal response.

The servants I had in Columbus had been nominally "confiscated" and set free; so they came to me, almost daily, begging me to take them back to the plantation in Mississippi. As I was not able to do this, I applied to some "bureau," that had charge of "refugees," for transportation for these negroes, and to my surprise it was granted. As soon as possible they were put on the cars and started for the plantation.*

On the 17th of September, 1865, Mrs. French and I left Gen. Abercrombie's for Greenville, Miss., via Montgomery, Mobile, and New Orleans, on some box cars, furnished with wooden benches for seats—such was the condition of the railroads at that time.

When we reached home we found most of my old servants there awaiting our arrival. To feed and clothe about a hundred of these people, and to plant a crop of cotton in the spring, clothing, provisions, mules, wagons, farming implements, harness, etc., had to be procured.

To obtain funds to purchase the articles enumerated—to com-

* When Maj. Wiley Abercrombie, Mrs. French's brother, left college to join the Confederate army, his father sent Rica, his carriage driver, to wait on him—Wiley being a youth.

Now Rica had never worked on the plantation; from childhood he had assisted in taking care of the family horses and carriages, and in due time became the driver of the family carriage.

At the battle of Gettysburg Rica was captured and carried nearly to Philadelphia, Pa. One night, however, he made his escape, traveled on foot to the Potomac, crossed that river, and finally reached Richmond, Va. Thence the authorities gave him transportation to Columbus, Ga. When Wiley became a member of my staff Rica came with him, and continued with us till the war ended. He and his wife remained in my family in Columbus; thence they went with us to Winter Park, Fla.

In 1884 Rica made a visit to Columbus, and on his journey home, becoming short of money to purchase a ticket from Jacksonville to Winter Park, he obtained work on a railroad. While thus employed he was accidentally killed by a tree felled on him by one of the hands.

Poor Rica! His fate was a sad one. A slave in name, he fled from freedom given him at Gettysburg, and wandered back to be a bondsman; and next when freedom was imposed on him by legislative enactment he spurned it, desiring only a home for life with the family that had treated him almost as one of their own children. I had almost similar experience with my own servants before and after the war.

mence again—I went to Philadelphia and New York (by special permission of the government) in November.

My clothing was not very tidy; it had seen service; and I concluded after I left St. Louis to travel through the enemy's country incognito so as to avoid war talks. I got along very well until I reached Philadelphia. I had been advised to go to the Lafayette Hotel; and, too proud to present myself there in my present garb, I entered a large clothing establishment and arrayed myself in a suit of black broadcloth, and told the attendant to wrap the old suit up. When I paid the bill, judge of my astonishment to have him say: "To what hotel, General, shall I send the package?" "Why do you call me general?" I asked. "Because I saw your rank and name in full written on the inside of your vest; that is all right; call and see us again." Next I entered the hotel, and went to register my name. As the clerk threw the book around, he exclaimed: "How do you do, Gen. French!" I was surprised; he replied: "I was in the Confederate army, and knew you in Virginia; I am employed here because we want Southern patronage." Here was my incognito discovered twice in one hour. But that is not all. The next day I took the train from Camden, N. J., for Woodbury, where my mother, sister, and daughter had been refugeeing since they left Mississippi until they joined me at the plantation in November, 1865. I knew many people in the city, and had the honor to have been *hung* there once in effigy by its fanatical people in the beginning of the war, for some reason, or no reason, save they did a foolish thing and repented of it; and as the "bitter war feeling" raged there yet, like the billows of the ocean after the storm has passed, I took the last seat in the rear car as a quiet place. Now it so happened that the seat opposite me was occupied by a genteel-looking fellow, who evidently had been indulging too freely in whisky and wanted to make himself companionable. I answered his questions briefly, but he persisted in talking, desirous to know who I was. Finally I told him my name was French, at which he exclaimed, "Are you Gen. French?" in such a loud voice as to draw the attention of many of the passengers to me; and, rising, he proffered his hand and said: "Going to your mother's, I reckon; I am a Union soldier, and when we reach Woodbury I will get my musket and be your escort." He walked up the street with me to the corner, where

we parted; and his parting words were: "If any one troubles you, send for me. My name is Paul."* Such was my experience in trying to travel incognito. I gave it up, and, when necessary, fought square out for Confederate rights. As I went North on business, I avoided all controversy about the war as far as possible.

I must now make a digression. In the autumn of 1864 my mother, sister, and child, owing to illness, engaged passage on a steamer at Greenville, Miss., and started for our summer home in Woodbury, N. J. On arriving at the Girard House, in Philadelphia, Mr. Edward Cooper, a relation of mother's, called on her and asked her where she was going, and she said: "Down home." He then informed her that the property had been *confiscated* and *sold*, and that he had bought it, and rented it. He asked her also about funds, and, finding she had near a thousand dollars in Confederate money (valueless), under the pretense of exchange he replaced it with "greenbacks"—a kind act delicately done. Besides, a few years later he voluntarily deeded the property back to me. This was in striking contrast with others who bought my personal property, valuable mainly as *mementos*. It is always pleasant to find a gentleman. They are seldom found to the manor born,

"Where commerce long prevails."

Mother went down to Woodbury and engaged board there, and returned to the hotel. Next day when they arrived by train in that town, the baggage wagon, the express, the porters—no one would take their trunks to the house; nothing could induce these *loyal* people to *touch* the trunks of a Rebel—unless to confiscate them. And so my mother—an old woman, alone, in the town in sight of which she was born and where she lived, among her kindred—had to walk away and leave the baggage. Now, happily, a man—a Quaker—heard of their *loyal* proceedings, and went to my mother and said, "Well, Aunt Rebecca, if no one will bring thy trunks from the depot for thee, I will do it;" and in his own wagon this Friend came with the baggage. Gommorrah would have been saved had it contained ten men like this one. The new dispensation saved Woodbury. The family

*How noble the conduct of this man who had been in the army contrasted with the citizens who remained at home crying for vengeance!

lived in exile until autumn, when they went down to the plantation.

I will refer to the main object of my visit to the North. I made a visit to New York and failed to obtain funds, returned to Philadelphia, and there made the best contract I could; and the spirit of liberality shown by my friend will commend itself to you by the terms of the contract, which I now have:

PHILADELPHIA, PA., December 9, 1865.

Borrowed of ——— eight thousand dollars (\$8,000), payable within one year from the date of this instrument. In consideration of this money being furnished me without interest, I agree to furnish or ship him, at such point as he may direct, thirty commercial bales of cotton of four hundred pounds each, of average quality, out of the crop raised by me on my plantation during the year eighteen hundred and sixty-six (1866). The cotton thus shipped to be the *sole property* of ———.

[Signed]

S. G. FRENCH.

As cotton was selling at, or over, forty cents per pound, the bonus was (in lieu of legal interest— $30 \times 400 \times 40 = \$4,800$) at least four thousand eight hundred dollars, which is only sixty per cent interest.

When in Venice, I visited the Rialto a number of times, and curiosity prompted me to seek the shop near by where Shylock studied finance and made that loan to Antonio; and you will remember that when "Tom Walker sold himself to the devil he agreed to use the money in the *service* of the devil by turning *usurer*."* My friend obtained his knowledge of thrift, I know not where. But which of these three was the most benevolent I will leave you to decide. I only care to observe that they all knew that "the poor man's necessity was the rich man's opportunity." With me it was Hobson's choice.

While North I met in New York City and Washington many Federal army officers, with whom I had been associated in years gone by, and they were kind, especially Gens. Ingalls, Quinby, Grant, Steele, Wright, and others. I could not but observe about Philadelphia that people were distrustful of each other, as though under surveillance. Gen. Robert P. invited me to come to his house after dark, and evidently, from what he said, did not wish it known that I had been there. Mr. Bayard, whose son, Gen. G. D. Bayard, was killed at Fredericksburg,

* Washington Irving.

sent me a message that he would like to meet me, but that it would not be prudent for him to have me visit him at his home. These and other friends were timid about their loyalty being challenged if seen with a so-called "Rebel."

To this general timidity so prevalent Clayton French was an exception. He took me to church, theaters, clubs, and wherever inclination led, in contempt of the crowd that were afraid their loyalty might not be above suspicion. Samuel H. French, his brother, forgot his intense prejudice against the South, for he was one of the best men that ever lived, and forgave *all* the "Rebels" except Jeff Davis. In evidence of the purity of his character he told me just before his death that he had never been guilty of an act or said anything that he desired to conceal from his family. There will be no charges against him when the judgment book is opened.

I arrived in St. Louis on my way home on the 16th of December, and saw the floe of ice crush the steamers at the landing like eggshells. The next morning I walked across the river on the ice, and got home on Christmas day and found the weather balmy and warm. And now I longed for rest, but the curse of the freedmen's bureau was here, to instruct even the cooks when to prepare meals and regulate household affairs, and approve all contracts for labor on the plantation.

In connection with my visit North in 1865 it will not perhaps be out of place to give here an account of a conversation that related to an important contemplated movement. Now, whilst I was in Philadelphia, a friend of mine, and late member of the United States Senate, called to see me. During a long conversation on matters pertaining to the war, he asked me "if in 1862 there was any feeling among the Confederate troops that there would be an armistice, and peace made during the truce by the fraternization of the opposing forces." I told him that in the summer of 1862, when I was in Petersburg, Va., there was a vague idea floating around relating to a peace being near at hand, and, although it could not be explained, it was felt to be more than a fairy tale, and yet could be traced to no source. He then informed me that "a few prominent men in the North desired the war should be stopped, and to obtain this end, soon after the battle of Antietam, I think it was, a particular friend and relation of Gen. McClellan's was sent to him to obtain his

views, and ascertain if he would *agree to the proposed plan.*" When the agent had unfolded the plan, McClellan denounced it. Soon after he was removed, and Burnside put in command of the army, which looks as if there was something that they could *feel* in the air there too.

It is useless to speculate on the results of such a bold undertaking. The actors of the movement are all dead, and I pause in silence at the brink of their graves. They wished to end the war, and restore the Union in that way. Of course McClellan would have been made dictator for the time. He would not betray his trust.

This incident induces me to remark that war is the most uncertain of all undertakings of a nation, and, like the tempest, cannot be controlled, and seldom or never ends as predicted. The North proclaimed that this "little rebellion" would end in sixty days! It lasted four years, and ended as no one had foreseen. It had to suppress rebellions caused by people who entertained Southern opinions in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, and other cities; muzzle the press, prohibit freedom of speech, banish prominent individuals, arrest men without warrant, and imprison them without charges made known to them; and violated nearly every resolution and pledge made in the beginning relating to the South; they cast aside constitutional law, and substituted martial law, under which the South became a scene of desolation and starvation.

Much has been said about firing the first gun, "firing on the flag." The crime rests on them who made it obligatory to fire the first gun. Northern writers are in error when they state that "firing on the flag" fired the Northern hearts with unanimity of purpose. On the contrary, as I have stated, it produced dissension, even to rebellion, until suppressed by arms and intimidation from suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*.

This firing the first gun is made a veritable "humbug." It reminds me of an occurrence in the grand jury room in Greenville, Miss., in reconstruction days. A man, whom I will call "A," sent a message to "B," giving him notice that he intended to kill him on sight should he meet him. Warned in this way, "B" armed himself with a shotgun. They met. "A" raised his gun to his shoulder, and aimed at "B." Seeing this, "B" fired instantly, and killed "A." The grand jury investigated the mat-

ter, and only one member voted to find a true bill against "B," and he did it on the grounds that "B" should have waited to see if "A" was really going to kill him.

Now the government of the United States was in the position of "A," only it was not honest enough to inform the Confederate States that it was going to reënforce Fort Sumter; but really made false statements about it, for it secretly sent eight warships for that very purpose, which were then at the bar off the harbor of Charleston.

The Confederate government was in the position of "B," and was it to wait to see what the eight ships of war would do, to see if "A" would reënforce the garrison, which it pledged itself not to do, or fire to prevent it? This is all well known now.

My own opinion is that the *first gun* was fired, at the instigation of a number of prominent men North, by John Brown at Harper's Ferry, and for which he was apotheosized and numbered among the saints.

Mr. Lincoln said: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. Our case is new. We must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save the country." (Joel Parker Lecture at Harvard College.)

These words indicate that the powers of the Constitution were inadequate to the conduct of the war, and henceforth the war must be conducted as occasion deemed expedient. In other words, the executive power must be declared greater than the power that made it, or the creature greater than the Creator, and with dictatorial methods the war was conducted. Avaunt, Constitution, avaunt! We are fighting for the Union, for dominion over the Southern territory again, and so the Constitution was folded up, etc.