

The Peace Negotiations.

Greeley Believed by Rebels to be in Favor of Peace with Separation—The Correspondence with Mr. Greeley Promotes Their Wishes."

ST. CATHERINES, C. W.
August 11, 1864.
Hon. J. P. Beviorin, Secretary of State,
Richmond, Va., C. S. A.:

SIR: I deem it due to Mr. Holcombe and myself to address you an explanation of the circumstances leading to and attending our correspondence with Hon. Horace Greeley, which has been the subject of so much misrepresentation in the United States, and, if they are correctly copied, of at least two newspapers in the Confederate States. We addressed a joint and informal note to the President on this subject, but, as it was sent by a messenger under peculiar embarrassments, it was couched in very guarded terms, and was not so full or explicit as we originally intended or desired to make it. I hope he has already delivered it, and explained its purpose, and supplied what was wanting to do us full justice.

THE REBEL COMMISSIONERS RECEIVE COMPANY.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. Holcombe, Mr. Thompson and myself in Canada West, it was known in the United States, and was the subject of much speculation there as to the object of our visit. Some politicians, of more or less fame, representing all parties in the United States, came to see Mr. Holcombe and myself. Mr. Thompson being at Toronto was less accessible than we were at the Falls; either through curiosity or some better or worse motive. They found that our conversation was mainly directed to the mutual injury we were inflicting on each other by the war, the necessity for peace in order to preserve whatever was valuable to both sections, and the probability of foreign intervention, when we were thoroughly exhausted and unable to injure others, and the dictation of a peace less advantageous to both belligerents than they might now make, if there was an armistice of sufficient duration to allow passion to subside and reason to resume its sway.

WHY SAUNDERS SOUGHT OUT GREELEY.

In the meantime Mr. Geo. N. Saunders—who had preceded us to the Falls—was addressing, either directly or indirectly, his ancient and intimate party friends, and others in the United States supposed to be favorably inclined, assuring them that a peace mutually advantageous to the North and the South might be made, and inviting them to visit us, that we might consider and discuss the subject. He informed us that Mr. Greeley would visit us if we would be pleased to see him.—Believing from his antecedents that he was a sincere friend of peace, even with separation if necessary, we authorized Mr. Saunders to say that we would be glad to see him. Mr. Greeley reported, as we were told through Mr. Jewett—who had been an active and useful agent for communicating with citizens of the United States—that he would prefer to accompany us to Washington City to talk of peace, and would do so if we would go. We did not then believe that Mr. Greeley had authorized this proposal in his name, for neither me nor Mr. Saunders had seen it in any telegram or letter from Mr. Greeley, but had it only from the lips of Mr. Jewett, who is reported to be a man of fervid and fruitful imagination and very credulous of what he wishes to be true. Notwithstanding, after calm deliberation and consultation, we thought that we could not in duty to the Confederate States decline the invitation, and directed Mr. Saunders to say that we would go to Washington if complete and unqualified protection was given us. We did not feel authorized to speak for Mr. Thompson, who was absent, and we, moreover, deemed it necessary that he or I should remain here to promote the objects that the Secretaries of War had given us and another in charge.

GREELEY MORE SERVABLE THAN HAD BEEN HOPED.

We did not expect to hear from Mr. Greeley again upon the subject, and were greatly surprised by his note from the United States side of the Falls, addressed to us as "duly accredited from Richmond as the bearers of propositions looking to the establishment of peace."

How or by whom that character was imparted to us, we do not know. We suspect, however, that we are indebted for the attribution of the high and responsible office to Mr. Jewett, or to that yet more credulous and inventive personage, Dame Rumor. Certainly, we are not justly chargeable with having assumed or affected that character, or with having given any one sufficient grounds to infer that we came clothed with any such powers. We never sought or desired a safe conduct to Washington, or an interview with Mr. Lincoln. We never proposed, suggested or intimated any terms of peace to any person, that did not embrace the independence of the Confederate States. We have been as jealous of the rights, interest and honor of our government, as any other citizens can be, and have never wittingly compromised them in any act, word or sign. We have not felt it our duty to declare to all who have approached us upon the subject, that re-union was impossible under any change of the Constitution, or abridgment of the powers of the Federal Government. We have not dispensed the fond delusion of most of those with whom we have conversed, that some kind of common government might at some time hereafter be re-established. But we have not induced or encouraged this idea. On the contrary, when obliged to answer the question—"Will the Southern States consent to reunion?"—I have answered, "Not now; you have shed so much of their best blood, have desolated so many homes, inflicted so much injury, caused so much physical and mental agony, and have threatened and attempted such irreparable wrongs—without justification or excuse, as they believe—that they would now prefer extermination to your embraces as friends and fellow-citizens of the same government. You must wait till the blood of our slaughtered people has exhaled from the soil, till the homes which you have destroyed have been rebuilt, till our badges of mourning have been laid aside and the memorials of our wrongs are no longer visible on every hand, before you propose to rebuild a joint and common government. But I think the South will agree to an armistice of six or more months, and to a treaty of amity and commerce, securing peculiar and exclusive privileges to both sections, and possibly to an alliance defensive,

or even, for some purposes, both defensive and offensive.

GREELEY HELPING THE REBEL PLANS

If we can credit the asseverations of both Peace and War Democrats, uttered to us in person or through the presses of the United States, our correspondence with Mr. Greeley has been promotive of our wishes. It has impressed all but fanatical Abolitionists with the opinion that there can be no peace while Mr. Lincoln presides over the Government of the United States. All concede that we will not accept his terms, and scarcely any Democrat, and not all the Republicans will insist on them. They are not willing to pay the price of his terms exact of the North.—They see that he can reach peace only through subjugation of the South which but few think practical, through universal bankruptcy of the North through seas of their own blood as well as of ours, through the utter demoralization of their people and destruction of their republican governments, thro' anarchy and moral chaos—all of which is more repulsive and intolerable than even the separation and independence of the South.

GREELEY'S ORGAN ON THE REBEL SIDE.

All the Democratic presses denounce Mr. Lincoln's manifesto in strong terms, and many Republican presses (and among them *The New York Tribune*) admit it was a blunder. Mr. Greeley has been chagrined and incensed by it, as his articles clearly show. I am told by those who profess to have heard his private expressions of opinion and feeling, that he curses all fools in high places, and regards himself as deceived and maltreated by the administration. From all that I can see or hear, I am satisfied that the correspondence has tended strongly toward consolidating the Democracy and dividing the Republicans, and encouraging the desire for peace. Many prominent politicians of the United States assure us that it is the most opportune and efficient moral instrumental for stopping the war that could have been conceived or exerted, and beg us to refrain from any vindication of our course or explanation of our purposes.

REPORTER—You look as though your trip out West had in no way disagreed with you, Senator.

Senator WILSON—Well, taking into account the way we have been working out in Indiana. I am in splendid health; a little hoarse, perhaps, but that is all. In twelve days I have made twenty-one speeches, and twelve of them were from an hour to an hour and a half in length.

REPORTER—You are stripping for the fight with your old enthusiasm, sir.

Senator WILSON—The enthusiasm of the people out there makes every one a little more earnest than usual, I can assure you. I never saw anything like it. In Indiana the republicans have begun the struggle with an energy that is sweeping the State from one end to the other for the good cause. I spoke in Richmond, Muncy, Indianapolis, Brazil, Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Goshenport, Laporte, South Bend, Kendallville, Fort Wayne and Warsaw, and everywhere the meetings were attended by immense crowds of people, and the conference was, as I tell you, such as I have never witnessed before, though my political experience has been pretty extensive.

REPORTER—The republican party, then, mean to win?

Senator WILSON—They certainly mean not only not to let the election go against them by default, but to carry the country by heavier majorities than ever. In Indiana there have already been a thousand meetings held, and Tom Brown, our treasurer for Governor, has himself spoken sixteen times.

REPORTER—How was it you went to Indiana so early in the struggle, Senator?

Senator WILSON—Because I had made a promise to go there, and I was not sure of being able to fulfil it at a later date.

REPORTER—Had you promised to go there before the Philadelphia Convention?

Senator WILSON—I promised to go there immediately after the Convention.

You remember that my nomination was made unanimous on the motion of the Indiana delegation, and as their favorite candidate had of course been Mr. Cox, the Massachusetts delegation were very grateful for the kindly spirit manifested, and called upon the Indiana men the same calling to thank them. A great many expressions of good feeling were made on both sides, and finally, when Massachusetts asked what she could do in return for the compliment paid her, Indiana said, "Send Henry Wilson to us for a week to stamp our State." Of course some one else ought to tell that story than myself, but it shows that the loyalty and unselfishness which kept the republican party together during the dark days of the war are still its most conspicuous characteristics.

REPORTER—What are the prospects of the campaign?

Senator WILSON—Our ticket will carry every free State but two, I am sure, and in those two there are strong, very strong hopes of victory.

REPORTER—And those two are—

Senator WILSON—New York and New Hampshire. New York you know all about, probably, better than I do, and though the result is doubtful, I think all the signs of the times point to the success of the republicans even here. And I may say the same of New Hampshire, where the fight is always a very close one.

REPORTER—And does this hopeful view of the situation prevail generally in the party?

• Senator WILSON—Out west, as I have told you, the enthusiasm and earnestness are such as I have never seen. I find one very cheering sign, too, everywhere, and that is that the vast majority of our young men are republicans. In Indiana there are electing regiments, with a regular Grant uniform and mounted, who are doing splendid service in maintaining and rousing all loyal men and friends of good government to a sense of their duty. All of those organizations are composed of young men, most of whom served in the war and helped to save the Union.

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