

*This is an extremely rare pamphlet,
known of no other copy.* A.C.G. 1920

John Baldwin

INTERVIEW

BETWEEN

PRESIDENT LINCOLN

AND

COL. JOHN B. BALDWIN,

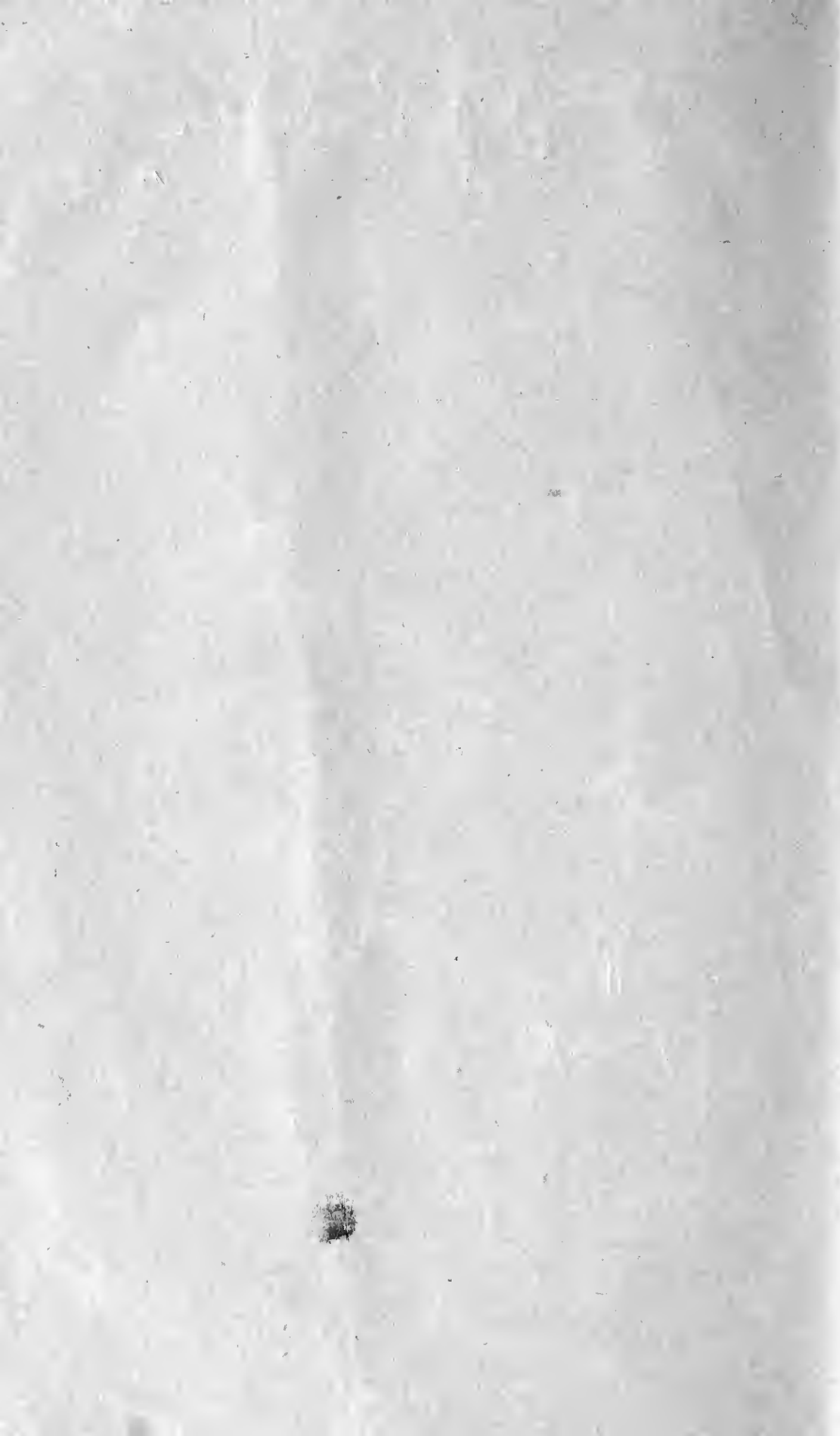
April 4th, 1861.

STATEMENTS & EVIDENCE.

—STAUNTON, VA.:—

"SPECTATOR" JOB OFFICE—D. E. ASBURG, PRINTER.

1866.





INTERVIEW

BETWEEN

PRESIDENT LINCOLN

A N D

COL. JOHN B. BALDWIN,

APRIL 4th, 1861.

STATEMENTS & EVIDENCE.

—STAUNTON, VA.:—

“SPECTATOR” JOB OFFICE—D. E. STRASBURG, PRINTER.

1866.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
State of Indiana through the Indiana State Library

COL. BALDWIN'S STATEMENT.

I regret very much that circumstances beyond my control have prevented an earlier notice from me of the testimony given before the Reconstruction Committee by John F. Lewis, John M. Botts and myself in relation to my interview with President Lincoln on the 4th of April, 1861.

I regarded it as just to all parties to await the publication of the testimony in full, and when, by the kindness of friends and the courtesy of public officers, I was furnished with it in advance of the regular publication, I found it necessary to submit it to the examination of the gentlemen to whose testimony I desired to appeal in support of my statement.

I publish herewith so much of the testimony as relates to the subject.

I find the report of my testimony to be substantially correct, and I refer to the account therein given as in accordance with my distinct recollection of what passed, and with what I have uniformly and invariably stated to every one, without exception, with whom I have, at any time, conversed fully on the subject.

My memory is fully and strikingly sustained by the statements herewith published from Allen B. Magruder, Esq., the special messenger with whom I went to Washington and to whom I gave a hurried account of the interview immediately after it terminated; and from Messrs. George W. Summers, John Janney, Alex. H. H. Stuart and Samuel Price, members of the Convention, who, with Robert E. Scott, Esq., of Fauquier, had concurred in sending me to Washington, and to whom I reported fully on my return to Richmond next day.

I think it probable I have made the same statement to at least fifty different persons.

No witness was present at the conversation between Mr. Lincoln and myself, and no opportunity afterward occurred to compare our recollections of what passed. If, therefore, any substantial discrepancy shall be found between my account and any *well authenticated* statement given by Mr. Lincoln, I can only say, that, claiming what I have said to be correct and true, I have yet no disposition to question that he had the same belief as to what he stated.

I use the term "WELL AUTHENTICATED," intending thereby to exclude any such account as that reported by Mr. Botts, which, though given as "due to history and due to the memory of Mr. Lincoln," would cast upon him the reproach of a statement inaccurate in its details and impossible in its substance.

The very first sentence attributed by Mr. Botts to Mr. Lincoln misstates the manner in which the interview was brought about, and the time at which it took place.

He is represented as saying, "*that he had about a week or ten days before that, possibly a fortnight, written to Mr. Summers, asking him to come to Washington, without delay, as he had a most important proposition to make to him,*" and as making no allusion whatever to having sent a special messenger. Judge Summers says he "*received no letter from Mr. Lincoln,*"

but that *on one day* he received a note from Mr. Seward, stating that the President desired to see him, and suggesting that he should come to Washington for that purpose *in a few days*, if practicable, and that *on the next day* Mr. Magruder arrived as a special messenger. Mr. Magruder fixes his arrival as on *Wednesday, April 3*, and says that *on Tuesday the 2d* Mr. Lincoln told him "he desired to see Mr. Summers on matters of the highest importance; that *he did not wish to trust to the mail or the telegraph*, but preferred to send a special messenger to communicate with him confidentially."

Mr. Lincoln is made to fix the time of the interview as on "*the Friday preceding, which was the 5th.*" Mr. Magruder fixes it distinctly as having occurred on *Thursday the 4th*; he says, "on Wednesday night we left Richmond, and, reaching Washington early next morning, Thursday, I called about 10 o'clock on Mr. Seward and introduced Col. Baldwin." He also mentions the fact that I "was to speak that evening in Alexandria," and the Alexandria papers of the 5th contain notices of the fact that I did speak there on the night of the 4th of April. The Journal of the Virginia Convention shows that I was not present on the 4th of April, and that I was present and voting before the adjournment on the 5th. (See Journal of the Committee of the Whole, pp. 21 and 47.)

It will naturally suggest itself that while such inaccuracies would hardly have been committed by Mr. Lincoln in a statement made within a few days and while the matter was fresh in his memory, they might well happen in an account given by any one of a conversation five years after it took place. Mr. Botts, however, wholly rejects any such idea, for when asked if he had taken any memorandum of his conversation with Mr. Lincoln, he says he did not; that there was no necessity for it, and that it was impressed so strongly on his mind that it could never be obliterated. He even undertakes to give in Mr. Lincoln's own words, the proposition which I am supposed to have rejected, and for the rejection of which Mr. Botts records himself as "very much incensed," viz: "*You have recently taken a vote in the Virginia Convention on the right of secession which was rejected by ninety to forty-five, a majority of two-thirds, showing the strength of the Union party in that Convention; and if you will go back to Richmond and get that Union majority to adjourn and go home without passing the ordinance of secession, so anxious am I for the preservation of the peace of this country, and to save Virginia and the other border States from going out, that I will take the responsibility of evacuating Fort Sumter and take the chance of negotiating with the cotton States which have already gone out.*"

According to Mr. Botts, this is Mr. Lincoln's proposition, as made to me, in Mr. Lincoln's own words. In answer to a question whether he felt sure of it, he replied: "I know it as well as I know you are standing before me and that I am answering your question." If any part of his statement is worth anything, it must be this.

The vote of the Convention thus referred to is one which attracted much attention at the time, and which is no doubt well remembered by members of the Convention and by others. It was the vote on Harvie's resolution, which was as follows:

"*Resolved*, That an ordinance resuming the powers delegated by Virginia to the Federal Government, and provision for submitting the same to the qualified voters of the Commonwealth, for their adoption or rejection at the polls in the spring elections in May next, should be adopted by this Convention."

It was upon this resolution that the Convention for the first time drew the line between the Union men and the Secessionists, the vote being *ninety*

to *forty-five* against the resolution. After this vote the Secessionists in the Convention were known as "*the forty-five*," and it was for them that an enthusiastic secessionist provided an Eagle's quill with which to sign the Ordinance of Secession. (See the Resolution and vote in the Journal of the Committee of the Whole, page 31.) The subject of this vote and the numbers on the division identify it beyond doubt as the one referred to—there was no other at all like it.

The only difficulty in the matter is to understand how Mr. Lincoln could have mentioned this vote in the conversation between us, and could have founded upon it so important a proposition as that stated by Mr. Botts, *when the stubborn fact outstands that no such vote had then been taken!*

It will be remembered that Mr. Magruder introduced me to Mr. Seward on Thursday, the 4th of April, 1861, about 10 o'clock, and that the interview with the President began about 11 o'clock of that day—it was certainly concluded by half past twelve o'clock at the President's house in Washington. The Journal of the Virginia Convention already referred to shows (page 21) that on Thursday, April 4th, 1861, "Mr. Wise, at 20 minutes past 12 o'clock, M., moved that the Committee rise." The motion failed, and the Committee proceeded with business, the report of which occupies ten pages of the Journal, including the record of six different votes by yeas and nays, *after which* Harvie's resolution was offered, considered, and voted upon, it being the last business of an unusually protracted sitting.

It is as clear then as any fact can be that my interview with the President at Washington was over at least two or three hours before the vote on Harvie's resolution was taken at Richmond.

It is, of course, impossible then, that Mr. Lincoln could have made to me the statement which Mr. Botts reports. Whether he told Mr. Botts he had done so is an inquiry which may be "due to history and due to the memory of Mr. Lincoln," but with which I have no personal concern. It would seem, however, that if Mr. Botts desires, in this connection, "to elevate Mr. Lincoln in the eyes of all good men," he will find it necessary to lower, somewhat, his own claims to infallible memory.

Until Mr. Botts finds out the name of the gentleman who spoke to him at Willard's last winter, and untangles him from Gov. Pierpont and Fortress Monroe, it would perhaps be premature, if not intrusive, to offer any comment upon the remark of Mr. Botts that "Mr. Lincoln has made the same statement to others whose names I will give you before I conclude." It must, however, be taken as rather a striking fact, bearing upon the reliance to be placed upon the memory of Mr. Botts, that he should have allowed himself to fall into such a muddle in regard to disclosures so recent about a matter which he has deemed of sufficient importance for a chapter in his "work," as the following:

"I want to mention further, that there was some other gentleman whom I met here during the winter, whose name I blame myself very much for forgetting, (names and figures I never can recollect, but circumstances and conversations that come under my observation, if they leave an impression upon my mind at all, are very distinct, and are as fresh in my memory, I believe, for forty years past, as they would have been had they occurred yesterday,) and who told me that Mr. Lincoln had mentioned the same thing to him. Within the last four weeks, in conversation with Governor Peirpoint on this subject, expressing my surprise at having it intimated that Mr. Baldwin denied it, Governor Peirpoint remarked to me that Mr. Lincoln made the same statement to him. I may have confounded the conversation of Governor Peirpoint with that of the gentleman who spoke to me at Willard's; but it was one or the other of them, and I think Governor Peirpoint, who said that Mr. Lincoln communicated the same facts to him, with this addition, that Mr. Baldwin also demanded the surrender of Fortress Monroe; to which I replied, 'Mr. Lincoln made no such communication as that to me.'"

What passed between Mr. Lincoln and myself, at the interview in question, must at last be determined by the testimony of two persons only. 'If Mr. Lincoln were living, I should anticipate no difficulty in agreeing with him in all substantial particulars as to what occurred. I should expect to find my recollection of the conversation more full and accurate than his.—The interview was to me of primary importance—the only business for which I went to Washington—while to him it was but one of the many important matters which, at that eventful time, pressed upon his consideration. It was my duty and my purpose to observe and to remember every word that passed in order to make a fair report on my return to the friends who had sent me, and it appears that I did make a very full and minute report which served to fix the whole interview in my memory and in that of those friends. Mr. Lincoln had no such report to make, and it appears from Mr. Botts' interview with Mr. Chase that Mr. Lincoln had not regarded the matter as of sufficient importance to be communicated to his cabinet. I doubt very much whether Mr. Lincoln ever took the trouble to make to any one a detailed statement of our conversation, with a view to have it clearly understood and distinctly remembered.

However that may be, I have given my statement with all the care and deliberation due to the subject, and upon all the responsibilities that belong to me. When it shall appear that Mr. Lincoln has done the same, if any conflict shall be found in our statements, I shall be prepared to deal with it as may be proper, but I will not anticipate it.

A striking illustration of the uncertainty attending all conclusions founded upon partial statements or incomplete conversations is furnished by the accounts given by Messrs. Botts and Lewis of what occurred at the house of Mr. Botts on the morning of the 17th of April, 1861. I remember the visit, and all the circumstances attending it, as well as I do any matter which happened five years ago, to which I attributed no special importance at the time, and to which I have had no occasion since to recur. It was the only time I was ever at the house of Mr. Botts, with whom I had a very slight acquaintance, and between whom and myself there had never been much sympathy. I went at the request of Mr. Lewis, who procured a hack for the purpose, and under the impression that Mr. Botts had expressed a desire to see me. I do not remember that I was told why Mr. Botts wished to see me, though I probably was informed that it was on the subject of my recent visit to Washington. I well remember being under the impression that it was regarded as of importance that I should see Mr. Botts before the assembling of the Convention that day, and my hope that he might have something to suggest having a practical bearing upon the momentous issue which impended for that day. The Convention had adjourned to meet at 10 o'clock that morning, and the business under consideration was the Ordinance of Secession, which was passed that day. I remember that we both considered it important for us to return with certainty by the meeting of the Convention.

When we arrived at the house of Mr. Botts, we were shown into the parlor, and, after the ordinary salutations, Mr. Botts opened the conversation by asking me if I had reported to the Convention what had passed between Mr. Lincoln and myself on my recent visit to Washington. I replied that I had not. He asked, why not? and I told him the Convention had nothing to do with the matter, and that I had gone to see the President at the instance of some of the Union men of the Convention, to whom I had reported fully all that occurred. Taking hold of my remark, that the Convention had nothing to do with the matter, he became somewhat excited, and told me that I had taken upon myself a very grave responsibility in

withholding the knowledge of such an interview from the Convention. He did not, according to my recollection, undertake to give me any account of the interview as derived from Mr. Lincoln, but pressed questions upon me as to whether the Convention had nothing to do with the question of its own adjournment; nothing to do with the evacuation of Fort Sumter. I remember telling him that both of those subjects had been discussed between Mr. Lincoln and myself, and he again inquired how I could withhold such a conversation from the Convention, to which I again replied, that I had reported to those who sent me, and that it was not reported to the Convention, for the reason that there was nothing in the conversation upon which the Convention could act, or upon which I, as a member of the Convention, would have been willing to act. I soon found that I was undergoing a species of reproof to which I was not accustomed, and that the conversation was likely to be a long and not a very pleasant one; so I put an end to it by telling him that if he desired to know all that had passed between Mr. Lincoln and myself I had no objection to tell him, or to discuss the matter fully with him, but that I could not do so then, as the Convention was about to meet, and I felt bound to be present at an important vote expected that morning.

My experience in my profession has satisfied me that there is hardly any limit to the capacity of men to misunderstand a conversation, especially on a subject about which the parties have not equal information. So far as I know, neither Mr. Botts nor Mr. Lewis knew anything of the account given by me of my interview with Mr. Lincoln, and I do not know under what previous impressions they listened to what I said. I cannot, of course, account for any construction they, or either of them, may have placed upon what passed between us.

There are some things, however, about which a man of integrity cannot be mistaken, and in regard to which no lapse of time or change of circumstances can create a doubt in his mind, and one of these is the consistency of his statements at any given time or place with the requirements of known truth.

Mr. Botts says that at his house, on the occasion referred to, the following conversation occurred between us:

"Well, Mr. Baldwin, is it true that Mr. Lincoln did propose to you that if the Convention would adjourn, and go home without passing the ordinance of secession, he would evacuate Fort Sumter?" "Yes," said Baldwin, "he did." "My God," said I, "Mr. Baldwin, why did you reject such a proposition as that?"—The only answer he made, was by taking out his watch and saying, "it wants only twenty minutes of the hour of meeting of the Convention when a most important vote is to be taken. I am obliged to be there punctually at the hour, and I have not time to make the explanation I desire, but I will avail myself of the earliest opportunity to make a full explanation of it."

At the time of my conversation with Mr. Botts, it was fresh and clear in my memory that Mr. Lincoln had made me no such proposition, or anything like it, or indeed any offer of any kind, and I am enabled, therefore, upon my independent recollection of the conversation, and upon my knowledge of what was due to the truth of the matter, to oppose to this statement of Mr. Botts my distinct, emphatic and unqualified denial and contradiction. I could not and did not, then and there, or at any other time or place, admit directly, or by any just implication, the truth of any such statement, or of any equivalent for it.

It seems from the testimony of Mr. Botts, that he has written this whole affair in his book, and that he has been very anxious to bring the memory of Mr. Lewis to vindicate the truth of his history. For this purpose he has

time and again appealed to Mr. Lewis by letter, and in person, to write "a letter giving him substantially all that he recollected about it." At last Mr. Lewis satisfied him by telling him, "There is no occasion for it. I have put it all down in my testimony before the Reconstruction Committee on oath."

Mr. Lewis' whole recollection of the matter as thus given is as follows:—"I took Colonel Baldwin to the house of Mr. Botts who told him he was informed that such an interview had taken place. Col. Baldwin did not deny it. In answer to Mr. Botts' question of how, in the name of God, he could take the responsibility of withholding the knowledge of such an interview from the Convention, Col. Baldwin remarked that it was then near the hour for the meeting of the Convention, and that he was compelled to be there, but would see him again." This statement is claimed by Mr. Botts as applying to and confirming his account. I do not so regard it; but to avoid all misunderstanding, I deem it proper to say that I make no distinction between a direct admission of such a statement as that which Mr. Botts claims to have made to me, and a failure to deny it whenever brought to my attention; and that, for the reasons I have given, I am able to speak with equal clearness and confidence as to both.

The journal of the Convention shows that on that day I voted for the substitute offered by Mr. Scott for the ordinance of secession, and then against the ordinance; and it appears from the secret debates, which were afterward published, that I spoke against the ordinance just before the final vote was taken.

It is true, as Mr. Botts has stated, that when Virginia seceded I determined, without one moment of doubt or hesitation, to follow her fortunes; and that from that time forward I devoted every energy of mind and body to make good the position she had taken. But it is equally true, and was equally well known to Mr. Botts, though for some reason he has failed to state it, that I was as active and determined in my opposition to secession as any man in Virginia, and that the ordinance was passed against my most earnest advice and remonstrance. I have not, therefore, been able to understand upon what motive it is supposed that I could have undertaken without authority to reject, or, in violation of good faith, to suppress any proposition or suggestion coming from the President, and having for its object the preservation of peace and the restoration of the Union.

The gentlemen at whose instance I went to Washington, and to whom I reported on my return, were my intimate, personal and political friends and associates. It was my habit, and, on the occasion referred to, it was my duty to communicate with them without reserve; and I presume they must have been greatly surprised to hear that so important a part of what happened at Washington had been withheld from them, to be told to Mr. Botts, with whom I had no such relations, and to whom I owed no such duty.

My failure to report the proposition, supposed to have been made by Mr. Lincoln, is fully accounted for by the fact already stated that he made me no such offer; but Mr. Botts had no such reason for delaying ten days to make known the friendly dispositions of the President; and his failure is the more remarkable in view of the strong confidence expressed by him in the readiness of the Convention to accede to the proposition. His account of the matter suggests a doubt whether he was more anxious to save the Union or to make a point upon the "Southern Demagogues."

Concluding his account of my visit to his house, Mr. Botts says: "From that day to this I have not laid my eyes upon Mr. Baldwin, nor have I heard any explanation from him, nor have I had directly any communica-

tion from him. I have been informed that Mr. Baldwin gets very much excited whenever the subject is mentioned in his presence."

When I offered to tell Mr. Botts all about my interview with Mr. Lincoln, I did not undertake or expect to seek him for the purpose, but, it appears from his own statement, that he very clearly understood that he had not yet heard my account of the affair. I did not know that he proposed to make the occurrence historical, and, if I had, I would not have suspected him of so reckless a disregard of the duty of fair authorship as to omit or suppress the testimony of the only living witness, nor could I have attributed to him in advance the outrage of an attempt to impeach the truth of my statement by the testimony of a witness who does not profess to have ever heard it.

I have not lived in a corner for the last five years, and Mr. Botts well knows that when it suited his purposes to seek me, he had no trouble in finding me. That there was nothing in our relations to prevent him from communicating with me, is manifest from the fact that when he was arrested by the Confederate authorities in 1862, he selected me as counsel for his defence.

The position I had taken in the Confederate Congress in opposition to martial law and the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus*, rendered it proper, in my opinion, that I should decline acting as his counsel. Upon learning my reasons, Mr. Botts and his family approved my refusal; and the unprofessional service which I was enabled to render was accepted and acknowledged as equally satisfactory, and possibly more efficient.

If what passed between us in this connection has been forgotten by Mr. Botts, I certainly have no disposition to remind him of it; but I must admit that it was brought freshly to my mind when I heard, pending my application for pardon, that Mr. Botts had declared in Washington and elsewhere, that "if the President knew me as well as he did, he would not pardon me at all, as I was more responsible than any other man for all the blood that had been shed in the war."

I certainly denounced this statement and its author in terms which, if accurately reported to Mr. Botts, would naturally have impressed him with the belief that I was "very much excited."

JOHN B. BALDWIN.

Testimony of John F. Lewis.

February 7th, 1866.

* * * * *

Question.—Was George W. Summers, from the Kanawha district, a member of that Convention?

Answer.—Yes, sir.

Question.—How did he vote?

Answer.—He voted against the ordinance. He did not return to the Convention, and I am not able to say whether he signed the ordinance or not. He took no part in the war, I believe. I heard him roundly abused for not taking the Southern side. While the Convention was still in session, I went to the house of John Minor Botts, in Richmond, on the 16th of April, 1861, and he informed me that he had been to Washington a few days before, and had had an interview with Mr. Lincoln, in which interview Mr. Lincoln informed him that he had sent a special messenger to Richmond for George W. Summers to come to Washington; and, in the event of his not being able to come, to send some reliable Union man to consult with him on important matters. Mr. Summers, from some cause or other, did not go, but sent Colonel John B. Baldwin, of Augusta county, Virginia. Mr. Lincoln informed Mr. Botts that he had made this proposition to Colonel Baldwin: that if that Convention would adjourn without passing an ordinance of secession, he (Mr. Lincoln) would take the responsibility of withdrawing the troops from

Fort Sumter. Colonel Baldwin declined to accede to it, and no such proposition was ever made or communicated to the Convention. Next morning I took Col. Baldwin to the house of Mr. Botts, who told him he was informed that such an interview had taken place. Colonel Baldwin did not deny it. In answer to Mr. Botts' question of how, in the name of God, he could take the responsibility of withholding the knowledge of such an interview from the Convention, Colonel Baldwin remarked that it was then near the hour for the meeting of the Convention, and that he was compelled to be there, but would see him again. No such communication was ever made, to the best of my knowledge and belief, to any large portion even of the members of the Convention, and a large number of them are to this day ignorant of the fact.

Testimony of Col. John B. Baldwin.

February 10th, 1866.

* * * * *

Question.—Did you make a journey to Washington before the firing on Fort Sumter?

Answer.—I did. I came here on the night of the 3d of April, 1861; I was here on the 4th day of April, 1861.

Question.—Did you have an interview with President Lincoln?

Answer.—I did have a private interview with him, lasting perhaps an hour.

Question.—Do you feel at liberty to state what transpired at that interview?

Answer.—I do, sir; I know of no reason why I should not.

Question.—Have the goodness to state it.

Answer.—On the 3d of April, 1861, I was in the Convention. I was called out by Judge Summers, a member of the Convention, who informed me that there was a messenger in Richmond, sent by Mr. Seward, asking him (Summers) to come on to Washington, as the President wanted to have an interview with him, and stating that if for any reason he was unable to come, he would be glad if the Union men of the Convention would select and send on some one of their number who enjoyed their confidence, and who would be regarded as a representative man, competent to speak their sentiments, as the President wished to have some communication with them. Mr. Summers told me that he and a number of other members of the Convention, Union men, (calling their names over), had concurred in the opinion that I was the proper man to go, and that he wanted me immediately to get ready and return with the special messenger. I consented to come. Mr. Allen B. Magruder, who was at that time a lawyer in the city of Washington, turned out to be the messenger. We came to Washington, and arrived here about breakfast time. I went to Mr. Magruder's house. About 10 or 11 o'clock we called at the Department of State, and I was introduced to Mr. Seward. Mr. Magruder informed him that I was the gentleman selected by the members of the Virginia Convention—the Union men—in accordance with his request, and that I came indorsed by them as a person authorized to speak their sentiments. Mr. Seward said he would not anticipate at all what the President desired to say to me, but would take me immediately to his house. We went to the President's house, and I was taken to the audience chamber. The President was engaged for some time; and at last Mr. Seward, when the President became disengaged, took me up and introduced me to him in a whisper, indicating, as I thought, that it was a perfectly confidential affair. As nearly as I can recollect, the language he used was—"Mr. Baldwin, of the Virginia Convention." Mr. Lincoln received me very cordially, and almost immediately arose and said that he desired to have some private conversation with me; he started through into the back room, opening into the other room; but on getting in there, we found two gentlemen sitting there engaged in writing, and he seemed to think that that would not do, and passed across the hall into a corresponding small room opposite, and through that into a large front room—immediately corresponding with the private audience hall—in which there was a bed; he locked the door, and stepping around into a space behind the bed, drew up two chairs, and asked me to take a seat. Mr. Seward did not go in with us. As I was about sitting down, said he, "Mr. Baldwin, I am afraid you have come too late." "Too late for what?" said I. Said he, "I am

afraid you have come too late ; I wish you could have been here three or four days ago." "Why," said I, "Mr. President, allow me to say I do not understand your remark ; you sent a special messenger to Richmond"—

Question.—You got the request to Mr. Summers on the 3d of April?

Answer.—Yes, sir.

Question.—And you started—

Answer.—Within three hours.

Question.—And you arrived on the morning of the 4th?

Answer.—Yes ; and my interview with Mr. Lincoln was about 11 o'clock that day. Said I, "I do not understand you ; you sent a special messenger to Richmond, who arrived there yesterday ; I returned with him by the shortest and most expeditious mode of travel known ; it was physically impossible that I or any one else, answering to your summons, could have got here sooner than I have arrived ; I do not understand what you mean by saying that I have come too late." Said he, "Why do you not all adjourn the Virginia Convention?" Said I, "Adjourn it!—how? do you mean *sine die*?" "Yes," said he, "*sine die*; why do you not adjourn it ; it is a standing menace to me, which embarrasses me very much."—Of course you will understand that I do not pretend to recollect the language at all, but this is about the substance of it. Said I, "Sir, I am very much surprised to hear you express that opinion ; the Virginia Convention is in the hands of Union men ; we have in it a clear and controlling majority of nearly three to one ; we are controlling it for conservative results ; we can do it with perfect certainty, if you will uphold our hands by a conservative policy here. I do not understand why you want a body thus in the hands of Union men to be dispersed, or why you should look upon their sessions as in any respect a menace to you ; we regard ourselves as co-operating with you in the objects which you profess to seek ; besides," said I, "I would call your attention to this view : If we were to adjourn that Convention *sine die*, leaving these questions unsettled in the midst of all the trouble that is on us, it would place the Union men of Virginia in the attitude of confessing an inability to meet the occasion ; the result would be, that another Convention would be called as soon as legislation could be put through for the purpose."

Question.—Was the Legislature of Virginia then in session in the same city, Richmond?

Answer.—Yes, sir ; that is my impression. Said I, "As soon as the necessary legislation can be gotten through, another Convention would be called, and the Union men of Virginia could not, with a proper self-respect, offer themselves as members of that Convention, having had the full control of one, and having adjourned without having brought about any sort of settlement of the troubles upon us. The result would be that the next Convention would be exclusively under the control of secessionists, and that an ordinance of secession would be passed in less than six weeks. Now, said I, sir, it seems to me that our true policy is to hold the position that we have, and for you to uphold our hands by a conservative, conciliatory, national course. We can control the matter, and will control it if you help us. And, sir, it is but right for me to say another thing to you, that the Union men of Virginia, of whom I am one, would not be willing to adjourn that Convention until we either effect some settlement of this matter or ascertain that it cannot be done. As an original proposition, the Union men of Virginia did not desire amendments to the Constitution of the United States ; we were perfectly satisfied with the constitutional guarantees that we had, and thought our rights and interests perfectly safe. But circumstances have changed ; seven States of the South, the cotton States, have withdrawn from us and have left us in an extremely altered condition in reference to the safe-guards of the Constitution. As things stand now, we are helpless in the hands of the North. The balance of power which we had before for our protection against constitutional amendment is gone. And we think now that we of the border States who have adhered to you against all the obligations of association and sympathy with the Southern States have a claim on the States of the North which is of a high and very peculiar character. You all say that you do not mean to injure us in our peculiar rights. If you are in earnest about it there can be no objection to your saying so in such an authentic form as will give us constitutional protection. And we think you ought to do it, not grudgingly, not reluctantly, but in such a way as that it would be a fitting recognition of our fidelity in standing by you under all circumstances—fully, and

generously, and promptly. If you will do it in accordance with what we regard as due to our position, it will give us a stand-point from which we can bring back the seceded States." I cannot follow the conversation through; but he asked me the question. "What is your plan?" Said I, "Mr. President, if I had the control of your thumb and forefinger five minutes I could settle the whole question."—"Well," said he, "that would seem to be a simple process." Said I, "I can settle it as surely as there is a God in heaven, if you just give me the control of your thumb and forefinger five minutes. To let you understand how earnestly I believe it, as God is my Judge, if I could get the control of that thumb and forefinger for five minutes, I would be willing, unless my weak flesh would fail me, that you should take me out within the next five minutes and knock me on the head on Pennsylvania avenue." "Well," said he, "what is your plan?" Said I, "Sir, if I were in your place I would issue a proclamation to the American people, somewhat after this style: I would state the fact that you had become President of the United States as the result of a partisan struggle partaking of more bitterness than had usually marked such struggles; that, in the progress of that struggle, there had naturally arisen a great deal of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the motives and intentions of both sides; that you had no doubt you had been represented, and to a large extent believed, to be inimical to the institutions, and interests and rights of a large portion of the United States, but that, however you might, in the midst of a partisan struggle, have been more or less (as all men) excited at times, occupying the position of President of the United States, you had determined to take your stand on the broad platform of the general Constitution, and to do equal and exact justice to all, without regard to party or section; and that, recognizing the fact without admitting the right, but protesting against the right, that seven States had undertaken to withdraw themselves from the Union, you had determined to appeal to the American people to settle the question in the spirit in which the Constitution was made—American fashion—by consultation and votes instead of by appeal to arms. And I would call a national convention of the people of the United States and urge upon them to come together and settle this thing. And in order to prevent the possibility of any collision or clash of arms interfering with this effort at a pacific settlement, I would declare the purpose (not in any admission of want of right at all, but with a distinct protest of the right, to place the forces of the United States wherever in her territory you choose) to withdraw the forces from Sumter and Pickens, declaring that it was done for the sake of peace, in the effort to settle this thing; and that you were determined, if the seceded States chose to make a collision, that they should come clear out of their way and do it. Sir, said I, if you take that position there is national feeling enough in the seceded States themselves and all over the country to rally to your support, and you would gather more friends than any man in the country has ever had." He said something or other, I do not recollect what, but it created the impression upon me that he was looking with some apprehension to the idea that his friends would not be pleased with such a step, and I said to him, "Mr. President, for every one of your friends whom you would lose by such a policy you would gain ten who would rally to you and to the national standard of peace and Union." Said he, rather impatiently, "That is not what I am thinking about. If I could be satisfied that I am right, and that I do what is right, I do not care whether people stand by me or not." Said I, "Sir, I beg your pardon, for I only know of you as a politician, a successful politician; and possibly I have fallen into the error of addressing you by the motives which are generally potent with politicians, the motive of gaining friends. I thank you that you have recalled to me the higher and better motive, the motive of being right; and I assure you that, from now out, I will address you only by the motives that ought to influence a gentleman."

Question.—You drew a distinction between a politician and a gentleman?

Answer.—Yes, sir; he laughed a little at that. He said something about the withdrawal of the troops from Sumter on the ground of military necessity. Said I, "that will never do, under heaven. You have been President a month to-day, and if you intended to hold that position you ought to have strengthened it, so as to make it impregnable. To hold it in the present condition of force there is an invitation to assault. Go upon higher ground than that. The better ground than that is to make a concession of an asserted right in the interest of peace."—"Well," said he, "what about the revenue? What would I do about the collec-

tion of duties?" Said I, "Sir, how much do you expect to collect in a year?"—Said he, "Fifty or sixty millions." "Why, sir," said I, "four times sixty is two hundred and forty. Say \$250,000,000 would be the revenue of your term of the presidency; what is that but a drop in the bucket compared with the cost of such a war as we are threatened with? Let it all go, if necessary; but I do not believe that it will be necessary, because I believe that you can settle it on the basis I suggest." He said something or other about feeding the troops at Sumter. I told him that would not do. Said I, "You know perfectly well that the people of Charleston have been feeding them already. That is not what they are at. They are asserting a right. They will feed the troops, and fight them while they are feeding them. They are after the assertion of a right. Now, the only way that you can manage them is to withdraw from them the means of making a blow until time for reflection, time for influence which can be brought to bear, can be gained, and settle the matter. If you do not take this course, if there is a gun fired at Sumter—I do not care on which side it is fired—the thing is gone." "Oh," said he, "sir, that is impossible." Said I, "Sir, if there is a gun fired at Sumter, as sure as there is a God in heaven the thing is gone. Virginia herself, strong as the Union majority in the Convention is now, will be out in forty-eight hours." "Oh," said he, "sir, that is impossible." Said I, "Mr. President, I did not come here to argue with you; I am here as a witness. I know the sentiments of the people of Virginia, and you do not. I understood that I was to come here to give you information of the sentiments of the people, and especially of the sentiments of the Union men of the Convention. I wish to know before we go any further in this matter, for it is of too grave importance to have any doubt of it, whether I am accredited to you in such a way as that what I tell you is worthy of credence."—Said he, "You come to me introduced as a gentleman of high standing and talent in your State." Said I, "That is not the point I am on. Do I come to you vouched for as an honest man, who will tell you the truth?" Said he, "You do." "Then," said I, "sir, I tell you, before God and man, that if there is a gun fired at Sumter this thing is gone. And I wish to say to you, Mr. President, with all the solemnity that I can possibly summon, that if you intend to do anything to settle this matter you must do it promptly. I think another fortnight will be too late. You have the power now to settle it. You have the choice to make, and you have got to make it very soon. You have, I believe, the power to place yourself up by the side of Washington himself, as the savior of your country, or, by taking a different course of policy, to send down your name on the page of history notorious forever as a man so odious to the American people that, rather than submit to his dominations, they would overthrow the best government that God ever allowed to exist. You have the choice to make, and you have, in my judgment, no more than a fortnight to make it in." That is about as much as I can gather out of the conversation now. I went to Alexandria that night, where I had telegraphed an acceptance of an invitation to make a Union speech, and made a speech to a large audience, which, I believe, was the last Union speech made in Virginia before the war; and I went on to Richmond and reported to those gentlemen.

Question.—You received from Mr. Lincoln no letter or memorandum in writing?

Answer.—Nothing whatever.

Question.—No pledge? no undertaking?

Answer.—No pledge; no undertaking; no offer; no promise of any sort. I went back to Mr. Seward's from the President's house that afternoon and had a long talk with him. I found Mr. Seward extremely earnest, as far as mortal man could judge from this manifestations, in the desire to settle the matter. He seemed to have a shrinking from the idea of a clash of arms, and the impression that he made upon me was, that he thought the days of philosophic statesmanship about to give way to the mailed glove of the warrior, and that he was earnestly engaged in the effort to secure peace and union, as the means of averting the military era which he thought he saw dawning upon the country. I had a good deal of interesting conversation with him that evening. I was about to state that I have reason to believe that Mr. Lincoln himself has given an account of this conversation, which has been understood—but, I am sure, misunderstood—by the persons to whom he talked, as giving the representation of it that he had offered to me, that if the Virginia Convention would adjourn *sine die* he would withdraw the troops from Sumter and Pickens. I am as clear in my recollection as it is pos-

sible under the circumstances that he made no such suggestion, as I understood it, and said nothing from which I could infer it, for I was so earnest and so excited—the matter involving what I thought would give a promise of settlement to the country—that I am sure no opening of that sort, (although I would not have thought it a practical scheme,) no overture of any sort could have escaped me.—I am sure that I would have made it the foundation, if not of direct negotiation, at least of temporizing, in connexion with others. But I have reason to believe that persons have derived that impression from conversation with Mr. Lincoln.—Whether Mr. Lincoln intended to convey that impression to them or not, of course I have no means of judging.

Question.—Did Mr. Seward send by you any letter or memorandum in writing?

Answer.—None whatever—no letter or memorandum in writing, nor any message to anybody, except his respects and compliments to Judge Summers.

Question.—One object of your visit to the President was to obtain from him some assurance that he would take some step in the interest of peace, or to prevent a collision of arms?

Answer.—No, sir. That was one of the objects of the interview; but my visit there was at the instance of the President himself, who, without at all indicating the purpose of conference, expressed a desire to have a conference with some gentleman who would be a recognized exponent of the Union sentiment in the Virginia Convention.

Question.—You entertained the hope, at that interview, of getting from him some assurance, some encouragement, by which the collision of arms might be prevented?

Answer.—That was my object and purpose earnestly.

Question.—Was it not your main object and purpose?

Answer.—It was the only object that I had. The object I had in going on was to meet what I regarded, and what our friends in the Convention regarded, as an overture to what we had long desired—an understanding with Mr. Lincoln. We thought that if we could get into communication with him, and could convey to him a clear and honest exposition of the sentiments prevailing in Virginia, we could influence his policy in such a way as to enable us to bring about a settlement of the affair. At the time I was here I saw, and was introduced to, in the President's room, a number of governors of States. It was at the time the nine governors had the talk here with the President—the time when there was an immense outside pressure brought to bear upon the President. We thought in Virginia that if we could only present fairly to the mind of Mr. Lincoln the necessities of our situation, the difficulties with which we were surrounded, and the prospect of success on the line of policy which we could suggest, that we could accomplish something towards settling the question. I came on to Washington, not with any defined purpose at all, but with the general purpose of trying to establish a good understanding with him, and inducing him, as far as possible, to take the views which universally prevailed among Union men in the Richmond Convention.

Question.—Do you possess a good memory?

Answer.—My literal memory is not good. I cannot say that it is peculiarly bad; but, in reference to results, as bearing on a line of policy or argument which I pursued, I think my memory is unusually good.

Question.—You are by profession a counsellor-at-law?

Answer.—Yes.

Question.—Accustomed to listen to the details of testimony?

Answer.—I am, sir. My habit is to take no notes of testimony at all; and I habitually conduct cases with forty or fifty witnesses, taking no minute whatever except of the name of the witness. My memory is sufficiently accurate, and is so recognized by my associates at the bar, that when a bill of exceptions in regard to facts developed on the trial is to be made, they very often call upon me to write the testimony from my memory in preference to writing it from such notes as were taken by the bar. But I do not recollect it in the way the witnesses gave it. I recollect it as it clusters around the course of argument which I am preparing in my own mind during the case as it fits upon the line of my own thought. I recollect all that a number of witnesses said on the same subject, and not a continuous recollection of what each witness said.

Question.—You recollect the substance and the result?

Answer.—Yes, sir; the substance and result.

Question.—Is it, in your opinion, in any degree likely that in this narrative you are mistaken as to any material fact that transpired in the conversation?

Answer.—I think not. I may have omitted entire branches of what occurred. It may be that entire subjects which I have not mentioned at all might be brought to my mind; but as to the subjects which I have touched I have as much confidence in the recollection which I have of them as I can have in my recollection of anything transpiring that far off. It was a subject of more interest to me than anything that ever happened to me, and when I returned I repeated it over and over again to the gentlemen who had concurred in sending me, and it impressed itself deeply on my mind.

Question.—You think you cannot be mistaken when you say that Mr. Lincoln did not assure you, in any form, that it was his purpose to withdraw the garrison from Sumter and Pickens at that time?

Answer.—Of course I would not be willing to say, if I heard that Mr. Lincoln had given a different representation of it, that it was impossible he should have done so. I have no reason to believe that Mr. Lincoln was a man capable of intentional misrepresentation in a matter of that sort; therefore I would not, of course, undertake to say that it was impossible he could have intended to convey that impression. If I were certified that Mr. Lincoln had said he intended to give me that impression I should be bound to concede it, although at the same time I should be bound to say that the idea never occurred to me, and that when I first heard that such an idea had been suggested I was as much surprised as I was ever in my life.

Testimony of John M. Botts.

February 15th, 1866.

* * * * *

Question.—Have you any recollection of John B. Baldwin, of Virginia, who was a member of that convention, paying a visit to President Lincoln just before the firing on Fort Sumter?

Answer.—I know nothing of it except what I derived from Mr. Lincoln himself, and from a subsequent interview with, and admission on the part of, Mr. Baldwin, of the material portions of Mr. Lincoln's statement to me.

Question.—Go on and state the substance of Mr. Lincoln's statement to you.

Answer.—I arrived in Washington on the 5th day of April, 1861. On Sunday afternoon, the 7th, I received a note from Mr. Lincoln, saying he would be glad to see me during the evening. I went up to his house and spent from 7 o'clock until 11 o'clock in company with Mr. Lincoln, during which time we had a great deal of conversation upon the general affairs of the country, and especially in reference to the condition of things in Virginia. During the conversation Mr. Lincoln said to me that he had, about a week or ten days before that, possibly a fortnight, written to Mr. Summers, with whom we had both served in Congress together, asking him to come to Washington without delay, as he had a most important proposition to make to him, and that if he could not come himself he would send some other prominent influential Union man of the convention to him; that he had not heard from Mr. Summers until the Friday preceding, which was the 5th; that on that day Mr. John B. Baldwin, a member of the convention, had presented himself to him as having been sent up by Mr. Summers on the invitation of Mr. Lincoln; that when he made this announcement Mr. Lincoln said to him:—“Ah, Mr. Baldwin, why did you not come sooner? I have been waiting and expecting some of you gentlemen of that convention to come to me for more than a week past. I had a most important proposition to make to you. I am afraid you have come too late. However, I will make the proposition now.” Said he, “Mr. Baldwin, we have in Fort Sumter with Major Anderson about eighty men, and I learn from Major Anderson that his provisions are nearly exhausted—that he has so much beef, so much pork, so many bushels of beans, potatoes, &c., but that his bread will not last longer than a particular day. I forget whether he said the next Wednesday or Wednesday after, but at that time his bread would give out. I have not only written to Governor Pickens, but I have sent a special messenger to him to say that if he will allow Major Anderson to obtain his marketing

at the Charleston market, or if he objects to allowing our people to land at Charleston, if he will have it sent to him, that I will make no effort to provision the fort; but that if he does not do that, I will not permit these people to starve, and that I shall send provisions down—that I shall send a vessel loaded with bread," (that was his expression, by which, of course, I understood provisions generally,) "and that if he fires on that vessel he will fire upon an unarmed vessel loaded with nothing but bread; but I shall at the same time send a fleet along with her, with instructions not to enter the harbor of Charleston unless that vessel is fired into; and if she is, then the fleet is to enter the harbor and protect her. Now," said he, "Mr. Baldwin, that fleet is now lying in the harbor of New York, and will be ready to sail this afternoon at five o'clock; and although I fear it is almost too late, yet I will submit, anyway, the proposition which I intended when I sent for Mr. Summers. Your convention in Richmond, Mr. Baldwin, has been sitting now nearly two months, and all that they have done has been to shake the rod over my head. You have recently taken a vote in the Virginia convention on the right of secession, which was rejected by ninety to forty-five, a majority of two-thirds, showing the strength of the Union party in that convention; and if you will go back to Richmond and get that Union majority to adjourn and go home without passing the ordinance of secession, so anxious am I for the preservation of the peace of this country, and to save Virginia and the other border States from going out, that I will take the responsibility of evacuating Fort Sumter, and take the chance of negotiating with the cotton States which have already gone out."—"Well," said I, "Mr. Lincoln, how did Mr. Baldwin receive that proposition!" Raising his hands up in this way, (illustrating,) he said: "Sir, he would not listen to it for a moment; he hardly treated me with civility. He asked me what I meant by an adjournment; did I mean an adjournment *sine die*. 'Why, of course, Mr. Baldwin,' said I, 'I mean an adjournment *sine die*. I do not mean to assume such a responsibility as that of surrendering that fort to the people of Charleston upon your adjournment, and then for you to return in a week or ten days and pass your ordinance of secession after I have given up the fort.'

As a matter of course I felt very much incensed that Mr. Baldwin should have rejected a proposition which, it was manifest, as I thought at that time, would be the only means of saving the country from the calamities through which it has passed; and I said at once: "Mr. Lincoln, will you authorize me to make that proposition to the Union men of the Convention? I will take the steamboat to-morrow morning and have a meeting of the Union men to-morrow night, and I will guarantee, with my head, that they will adopt your proposition, and adopt it willingly and cheerfully." "Oh," said Mr. Lincoln, "it is too late; the fleet has sailed, and I have no means of communicating with it." "Well," said I, "will you authorize me to mention this circumstance for your own benefit? because the attempt will be made by all the demagogues in the Southern country to impose the responsibilities of this war upon your shoulders; and they will say that you have come here for the purpose of making war upon the institutions of the South, and that you cannot be driven from it." His reply was: "Well, not just now, Botts; after awhile you may." The inference I drew from it was this: that Mr. Lincoln was assuming a responsibility which would, at that day, have been extremely distasteful to those who had elevated him to the presidency, but which I think it is due now to history and to the character of Mr. Lincoln to make known, for it should elevate him in the minds of all men, to see how anxious he was, and what personal sacrifices he was prepared to make, in order to save the country from that ruinous and destructive war which he foresaw.

Question.—Did you take any memorandum of that conversation?

Answer.—I did not. There was no necessity for it. It was impressed so strongly upon my mind that it could never be obliterated.

Question.—Was anybody else present at that conversation?

Answer.—There was not; but Mr. Lincoln has made the same statement to others, whose names I will give you before I conclude.

Question.—Did Mr. Lincoln say anything about issuing a proclamation, calling a Convention of the States, with a view to settle these difficulties?

Answer.—He did not.

Question.—Are you quite sure of that?

Answer.—I am quite sure he did not.

Question.—Are you perfectly sure, according to your best recollection, that Mr. Lincoln told you that he had made that proposition to Mr. Baldwin to evacuate Fort Sumter on this condition?

Answer.—I know it as well as I know you are standing before me, and that I am answering your question.

Question.—Are you blessed with a good, retentive memory?

Answer.—I think that is pretty generally conceded by those who know me best; but it needs no distinct recollection on that subject, for I will proceed to show that the truth of this conversation was admitted to me in the presence of another gentleman. Although there was no person present when Mr. Lincoln made this communication to me, there was another gentleman present when Mr. Baldwin admitted it.

Question.—Go on with your narrative.

Answer.—Of course, as Mr. Lincoln had declined to give me authority—

Question.—He did not wish you to mention the conversation just then?

Answer.—Just at that time; after awhile I might. —I was very much surprised that, after we got into the war, he did not make it known. I thought Mr. Lincoln would introduce the subject, and make that representation in his first communication to Congress. I thought it was due to himself that he should. Inasmuch as Mr. Lincoln expressed a desire that I should not say anything about it at that time, of course I did not, in a general way. I remained in Washington until Monday morning, the 15th day of April, which was the day his proclamation was issued. The next evening—my house in Richmond being, as it were, something like the headquarters of the Union party when I was at home—quite a number of gentlemen called upon me. In the course of conversation, I mentioned it in rather a private way, because I did not feel myself at liberty then to make it a general communication to the gentlemen in the room. I mentioned, in a private way, to Mr. J. F. Lewis, of Rockingham county, who was a very warm and zealous friend of Mr. Baldwin, and who had the most unlimited confidence in his loyalty and patriotism, this conversation that I had with Mr. Lincoln, and I asked Mr. Lewis if he had heard anything of it. He said he had not heard a word of it, and “moreover,” said he, “I do not believe it. I would not believe any man that I was not entirely familiar with, who would charge that John Baldwin had taken upon himself such a responsibility as to have rejected the proposition, or to have withheld it from his Union colleagues in the Convention, who would most gladly have adopted it. And,” said he, “if you do not object to it, I would like to ask Mr. Baldwin about it.” Said I, “so far from my objecting to it, I prefer that you would ask him, as you have intimated a doubt of the veracity of Mr. Lincoln.”—Mr. Lewis left my house at the usual bed hour, and I think he visited Mr. Baldwin that night; whether it was that night or the next morning, I am not prepared to say: but before I was out of bed the next morning Mr. Lewis came to my room and told me that he had seen Mr. Baldwin, and that Mr. Baldwin had acknowledged to him that the proposition was made, and that, upon his telling him that I felt very much concerned about his having taken such a responsibility upon himself, Mr. Baldwin said he would like to see Mr. Botts and make an explanation on the subject, and of the reason why he had rejected it. “And,” said Mr. Lewis, “he has consented to come up with me immediately after breakfast, and, as soon as I can have breakfast, I shall bring him up here in a hack.” Shortly after I had finished my breakfast, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Baldwin were announced. I went into the front room, and Mr. Lewis, Mr. Baldwin being present, said to me, after the exchange of salutations, “Well, Mr. Botts, Mr. Baldwin has come up here to make some explanation to you about the circumstances connected with the conversation with Mr. Lincoln, and why he declined to accept the proposition.”—“Well,” said I, “Mr. Baldwin, is it true that Mr. Lincoln did propose to you that if the Convention would adjourn and go home without passing the ordinance of secession, he would evacuate Fort Sumter?” “Yes,” said Mr. Baldwin, “he did.” “My God,” said I, “Mr. Baldwin, why did you reject such a proposition as that?” The only answer he made me was by taking out his watch and saying, “it only wants twenty minutes of the hour of meeting of the Convention, when a most important vote is to be taken,” (which I knew to be the vote on the ordinance of secession;) “I am obliged to be there punctually at the hour, and I have not time to make the explanation I desire, but I will avail myself of the earliest opportunity to make a full explanation of the whole of it.” From that day to

this I have not laid my eyes on Mr. Baldwin, nor have I heard any explanation from him, nor have I had directly any communication from him. I have been informed that Mr. Baldwin gets very much excited whenever the subject is mentioned in his presence; and I have also been told that his brother-in-law, Mr. Robert Gray, of Rockingham county, has said that, on one occasion, when he spoke to Mr. Baldwin about it, he became very much excited indeed, and threatened what he would do towards Mr. Botts if Mr. Botts should attempt to use that against him. It was not until about two or three weeks that I ever heard of any denial on the part of Mr. Baldwin. Mr. Alexander Rives was at my house and communicated the fact to me that Mr. Baldwin's friends, in his neighborhood, (Charlottesville,) were saying that Mr. Baldwin denied this conversation between Mr. Lincoln and himself, when I replied, "I do not believe it. I believe that John Baldwin is too honorable a man to make a denial of anything so palpable and so true, and which he knows could be proved upon him." But on hearing this from Mr. Rives, I immediately wrote to Mr. Lewis, saying to him, in substance, "You know, Lewis, that I have written a history of this war for thirty years before it broke out, and that I have given this circumstance as an incident connected with the war, as due to history and due to the memory of Mr. Lincoln, which I think will go to elevate him in the eyes of all good men for the sacrifice he was willing to make for the good of his country; and you are the only person by whom I can prove Mr. Baldwin's admission; therefore I want to fortify myself with the proof in the event that hereafter Mr. Baldwin may deny it. You must write me a letter giving me substantially everything that you recollect about it." Mr. Lewis promised me to do it; but he has never done it. I have met with him once or twice since, and have said to him, "You have forgotten to write me that letter, and I must be fortified with proof." One day during last week I met with Mr. Lewis at Willard's hotel, and in the course of our conversation I said, "Lewis, you have never written me that letter yet, and, as life is very uncertain, I do not mean to let you die without leaving it behind you, and I do not mean to leave you now until you give me that letter." To which he replied, "There is no occasion for it. I have put it all down in my testimony before the Reconstruction Committee on oath;" so that instead of Mr. Lewis coming to sustain me, I am now coming here to sustain Mr. Lewis. I want to mention further, that there was some other gentleman whom I met here during the winter, whose name I blame myself very much for forgetting, (names and figures I never can recollect, but circumstances and conversations that come under my observation, if they leave an impression upon my mind at all, are very distinct, and are as fresh in my memory, I believe, for forty years past, as they would have been had they occurred yesterday,) and who told me that Mr. Lincoln had mentioned the same thing to him.—Within the last four weeks, in conversation with Governor Peirpoint on this subject, expressing my surprise at having it intimated that Mr. Baldwin denied it, Governor Peirpoint remarked to me that Mr. Lincoln made the same statement to him. I may have confounded the conversation of Governor Peirpoint with that of the gentleman who spoke to me at Willard's; but it was one or the other of them, and I think Governor Peirpoint, who said that Mr. Lincoln communicated the same facts to him, with this addition, that Mr. Baldwin also demanded the surrender of Fortress Monroe; to which I replied, 'Mr. Lincoln made no such communication as that to me.'

Question.—There are two circumstances, then, tending to corroborate your statement—that made by the gentleman at the hotel, and that made by Governor Peirpoint. Is there any other circumstance of a corroborative nature? Did Mr. Lincoln repeat this conversation to anybody else?

Answer.—Not that I am aware of. I have talked very little about this thing. There was no occasion for it during the existence of the rebellion. I always intended—for the book which I have written was written in 1861—communicating it in that history of the war, or the antecedents of the war, and there has been little opportunity to do it since. I have conversed with very few persons on the subject.

Question.—If there be any other circumstance connected with that particular transaction going to corroborate the statement which you have made, will you relate it?

Answer.—I do not recollect any, except I believe that the fleet did sail about that time, and it can be readily ascertained whether Mr. Lincoln did send a mes-

messenger to Governor Pickens with that communication, which would be a corroborating circumstance.

Question.—Have you ever heard of the existence of such a communication?

Answer.—I think I have seen some mention of it in the papers; but I do not recollect exactly when or by whom. There is another circumstance which is partially corroborative. In an interview which I had with Mr. Chase, then Secretary of the Treasury, now Chief Justice of the United States, I made some allusion to Mr. Lincoln's proposition, and Mr. Chase asked me what proposition I alluded to. I said, "his proposition relative to the action of the Virginia Convention." Said he, "I do not know what that is; what is it?" To which I replied, "Well, Mr. Chase, if you don't know it, it is not for me to communicate it." I had taken it for granted that it had been mentioned; but I suppose that Mr. Lincoln had forbore to mention it to his cabinet until he ascertained whether it would be successful or not. Another circumstance presents itself at this moment to my mind which does serve to corroborate this statement. Mr. John Lewis was the colleague in the Convention of Mr. Algernon S. Gray, and they occupied the same room. Mr. Lewis told me that when he mentioned to Mr. Gray the conversation which had passed between him and myself in reference to Mr. Lincoln's proposition to Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Gray exhibited the most extraordinary surprise, that he sprang out of bed and said, "Where in the world did you get that from?" Mr. Lewis told him that Mr. Botts had just returned from Washington, and had communicated it to him that night, to which Mr. Gray replied, "I did not suppose there were more than three men in the city of Richmond who knew it." Mr. Gray has informed me that he has been summoned to appear before this committee, and that would be a very proper subject of interrogation. You asked me if I were certain that Mr. Lincoln said nothing about a proclamation calling a National Convention. I am sure of it, because it was a proposition which I had myself submitted to Mr. Lincoln at an earlier day. I came here—I do not recollect the date—during the agony under which we were laboring everywhere, and I submitted to Mr. Bates, the Attorney General, with whom I was very intimate, a proposition which he requested me to submit at once to Mr. Seward. I submitted it to Mr. Seward, and Mr. Seward requested me at once to lay it before the President, and he gave me a note to the President, saying that I had a most important suggestion to make to him. I went at once to Mr. Lincoln and I made the suggestion. It was this: that he should issue his proclamation calling a National Convention so to amend the Constitution as to give to the cotton States that had already seceded leave to go out, and thereby to save the question of the right of secession; and the object of which was, as I explained to Mr. Lincoln, to make this a *foreign* and not a *civil* war, to save Virginia, and the other border States which would be influenced by her action, to the Union, and that if they did not come to their senses and ask for re-admission within a certain limited time, it would be a capital occasion to apply the principle of the Monroe doctrine or the doctrine of the Ostend manifesto to them, to give them a little of their own physic, to conquer them and hold them as conquered provinces until they were fit to come in again as States. This I afterwards submitted in a correspondence to Mr. Bates. Therefore, if Mr. Lincoln had said anything about the proclamation, it would have been so entirely in accordance with the proposition submitted by me to him that I could not have forgotten it. When I mentioned the matter to Mr. Lincoln he said that it was a proposition worthy of the highest consideration, and that it should have his attention.

[The testimony of John B. Baldwin, hitherto taken before this committee, in reference to his interview with President Lincoln, was here read to the witness.]

Question.—Do you wish to say anything in reference to the statement of Mr. Baldwin?

Answer.—I cannot undertake to account for the discrepancy between Mr. Baldwin's recollection and Mr. Lincoln's, or between Mr. Baldwin's recollection and that of Mr. Lewis and myself; nor will I undertake to express an opinion on the question of veracity which would be raised between Mr. Lincoln's statement and Mr. Baldwin's admission, about which I do not think it is possible that either Mr. Lewis or myself can be mistaken. I have had so little disposition to do Mr. Baldwin an injury by making a public statement of this terrible responsibility, which I have always felt rested on his shoulders, that in the historical account I have given of it I had left the name of Mr. Baldwin in blank, and should not have given the

name, as it was not material to the truth of history that the name should be given, until I heard that Mr. Baldwin had denied it, and then I determined to give Mr. Baldwin the benefit of a public denial by inserting his name, which I have done.

Question.—You then resided in Richmond?

Answer.—Yes, sir.

Question.—You were personally known, perhaps, to every member of the Convention; they were your acquaintances, were they not?

Answer.—I was living in Richmond, and I suppose that, either personally or politically, I was known to every member of the body, although I think that there were perhaps some members in the Convention with whom I had formed no particular personal acquaintance, but my acquaintance with both parties was very general.

Question.—If Mr. Baldwin had returned to Richmond, and, as he remarks in his testimony, had reported the interview which he had with President Lincoln to many persons, members of the Convention, is it not likely you would have known of that report?

Answer.—If he had reported it as Mr. Lincoln had reported it to me, I unquestionably should have known it; and I think there is no doubt whatever that if it had been mentioned to those gentlemen with whom I had communication, the Union men of the Convention, it is scarcely possible it would have been withheld from me. But Mr. Gray's declaration, who was on terms of as close intimacy with Mr. Baldwin as any gentleman in the Convention, shows, I think, that it could not have been mentioned, as Mr. Gray expressed the supposition that it had not been known to more than three persons in the city of Richmond.

Question.—And if the report of that interview of Mr. Baldwin with President Lincoln had been made, as he has given it here in his testimony, would you not have been just as likely to have known it?

Answer.—I think that in the event of any communication of that kind being made to the Union men I was obliged to have heard it, because they came to my house every night to consult and confer together as to the condition of things in the Convention, and as to the course to be pursued in reference to the various questions constantly arising. It is hardly possible to suppose that some one or more of them would not have mentioned the interview. But I never have heard any member of that Convention speak of the interview, except Mr. Lewis, Mr. Gray, and Mr. Baldwin himself, that I recollect.

Question.—Can you fix the date on which you first heard of Mr. Baldwin having had an interview with President Lincoln?

Answer.—Most distinctly; it was on Sunday night, the 7th of April, 1861.

Question.—Then you first heard of it?

Answer.—Then I first heard of it.

Question.—From Mr. Lincoln?

Answer.—Yes.

Question.—You had not heard of it before?

Answer.—I had not heard of it before. I knew that Mr. Baldwin was here to see Mr. Lincoln, but under what circumstances and for what purpose I did not know.

Question.—You heard it on the 7th?

Answer.—Yes.

Question.—Mr. Baldwin testified that the interview took place on the 4th of April; where were you on the 5th and 6th?

Answer.—I reached the city of Washington on the morning of the 5th or the evening of the 5th, I cannot recollect which; but my impression is that I left home on the night of the 4th, and reached here on the morning of the 5th.

Question.—Suppose that proposition had been made fairly and openly to the Unionists of the Virginia Convention, what effect would it have had—I mean Mr. Lincoln's proposition as stated to you?

Answer.—I have no hesitation in saying that it would have met with, in my opinion, the very general concurrence of the Union men, with whom I was in constant association; and that the democratic members themselves, not knowing the cause of the movement to adjourn, would all have voted for an adjournment, for the very reason that they had just been beaten so very badly on the resolution touching the right of secession that they were themselves anxious for an adjourn-

ment, having despaired of being able to carry an ordinance of secession through the Convention.

Question.—Do you apprehend that the adjournment of that Convention would have prevented the State of Virginia from going out of the Union and joining the Southern Confederacy?

Answer.—Most unquestionably. I have no idea that a majority, or anything approximating a majority, of the people of Virginia, were, at the time of the passage of the ordinance of secession in Convention, in favor of it.

Question.—Suppose that proposition had been made, and suppose the Convention had adjourned *sine die*, do you think that the calling of a National Convention by the President would have prevented war?

Answer.—I do, sir. I do not know that it would have prevented it ultimately between the United States and the States which had already seceded; but I think it would have prevented Virginia from going out, and I think that the action of North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Missouri all depended in a very material degree on the action of Virginia.

Question.—If this whole proposition had been communicated to the Unionists of the Virginia Convention, together with a call for a National Convention, would that have prevented the breaking out of civil war?

Answer.—I think it would, for the reason that, although the democracy, which never meant to be satisfied with anything but war, despairing of being able to carry the ordinance, would have voted for the adjournment; whilst the Union men, who wanted peace, would also have voted for an adjournment.

Question.—You are well acquainted with Mr. Baldwin?

Answer.—I never had any personal intimacy with Mr. Baldwin. I have known him for a number of years, but we have had no particular personal intimacy.

Question.—How did he vote in the Convention upon the final question of secession?

Answer.—On the first vote on the ordinance of secession he voted against it.

Question.—State what his general course was?

Answer.—Mr. Baldwin voted against the ordinance of secession on the 17th of April, 1861. Within some two or three days after the passage of the ordinance, and before the ordinance had been submitted to the people, (who had reserved to themselves the right to pass upon any ordinance of the Convention touching the organic law of the land, by a vote of 56,000 majority,) which did not take place till some five weeks afterwards, Mr. Baldwin, as I always understood, accepted a military commission in the service of the Confederate government, which he retained till the close of the war. He subsequently signed his name to the ordinance of secession, which was characterized at that day as a second Declaration of Independence, and which I had always characterized as a declaration of war against the United States. He also, I believe, voted for the ordinance when it was submitted to the people, and he was then elected to the Confederate Congress, and was, as I learned, by a special act of the Confederate Congress, permitted to occupy that seat without surrendering his military commission.

Question.—Did he serve in the Congress during the war?

Answer.—Throughout the war, from that time until the close of it. I think he was elected in 1861 a member of Congress, and occupied that position until the end of the war.

Question.—What post did he occupy on committees in Congress?

Answer.—I did not pay sufficient attention to the matter to know.

Question.—Do you know what his general course was as a member of that Congress?

Answer.—As far as I saw or heard anything about it, I always considered him as being as ultra in his hostility to a restoration of peace without its being accompanied by a recognition of the independence of the Southern States, as any gentleman in the body.

Question.—Such was his reputation?

Answer.—That was the position he occupied, so far as I could draw an inference from the proceedings in Congress when I saw them; and I think it was his general reputation among the loyal and disloyal men in Virginia.

STATEMENT OF ALLEN B. MAGRUDER, Esq.

On the second day of April, 1861, I was requested by a gentleman, connected with the State Department, who was sent, as he said, by the Secretary of State, to have an interview with Mr. Seward. On repairing to the State Department, Mr. Seward said the President wished to send some gentleman to Richmond to communicate confidentially with Mr. Summers, a member of the Virginia Convention then in session, that I had been mentioned to him as a Whig, a Union man and a Virginian, and a suitable person; and he enquired whether I would go. I replied, that would depend on the nature and object of the errand. He asked, what I meant by that reply. I said, I meant that, as I was a Virginian, I would not undertake any errand or agency which would be injurious, or offensive to my native State.

Mr. Seward then said he could assure me that what the President desired was entirely in harmony with my sense of duty to my own State, that he wished to preserve the Union, and defend and maintain the public peace and safety; and, on his invitation, I accompanied him to the President. On being introduced, after some preliminary conversation, the President asked me if I knew Mr. Geo. W. Summers, of the Virginia Convention. On my answering in the affirmative, he said he desired to see Mr. Summers on matters of the highest importance, that he did not wish to trust to the mail or the telegraph, but preferred to send a special messenger to communicate with him confidentially, that he knew Mr. Summers and that he thought him a wise man—that he had great confidence in him—that indeed he had “confidence in all those Virginians”—that, although they might differ with him about secession, he believed they were men who could be depended on in any matter in which they pledged their honor or gave their word that they would always keep their pledges. He then said, “Tell Mr. Summers, I want to see him *at once*, for there is no time to be lost. What is to be done, must be done quickly.” On my suggesting that he had better fix some time within which Mr. Summers should come, and that it was possible he might not be able to come at all, as I knew that an important vote in the Convention was about to be taken; he said, after a moment’s reflection, “This is Tuesday.—I will give him three days. Let him come by Friday next,” and he added, “If Mr. Summers cannot come himself, let him send some friend of his, some Union man in whom he has confidence who can confer freely with him.”

Having received these instructions, I retired with Mr. Seward. On our way to the State Department, I expressed to him my hope that the step taken by the President in seeking the counsel of one so able, patriotic and conservative as Mr. Summers, would lead to the adjustment of our unhappy sectional strife and to the pacification of the country. He said he did not doubt it, and seemed very buoyant and hopeful, remarking: “These troubles will all blow over. The Union will be preserved. It only requires time and moderation to bring all things right.” I told him that whilst *time* was a remedy for some maladies, it exasperated others, and that I thought the President was right in saying that there was no time to be lost. I added, “I hope the President will withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter, and relieve the Southern people from the *menace* which their presence created, that I was sure such a step would prevent the secession of Virginia and the border States, and that the cotton States would not persevere in their mad schemes without the aid and co-operation of the border States.” Without directly responding to this remark, he wished me a pleasant journey, bade me a courteous adieu and we separated.

That night I went to Richmond, and on delivering my message to Mr. Summers, it turned out, as I had anticipated, that he could not come, owing to the business of the Convention; after private consultation with some few friends, as he informed me, he prevailed upon Colonel JOHN B. BALDWIN, a member of the Convention from Augusta county, to go. Accordingly, on Wednesday night, we left Richmond, and reaching Washington early next morning (Thursday,) I called, about 10 o’clock, on Mr. Seward, and introduced Col. Baldwin as the gentleman whom Mr. Summers had requested to come in his stead, to see the President.

What passed at the subsequent interview with Mr. Lincoln, of course, I only know from Col. Baldwin’s version of it given to me subsequently. Col. B. was my guest while he remained here. He dined on that day at my house with some other gentlemen at a somewhat early hour, as he was to speak that evening in

Alexandria, and, in consequence, I had no opportunity to learn the particulars of the conference, beyond a brief statement, when he first came in, to the effect that nothing was accomplished—that the President seemed embarrassed by his coming, and was reserved as to his future proceedings and course—that the President asked him, “Why don’t you adjourn that Convention?” adding, “I can take care of the Union”—that Baldwin replied, “Adjourn the Convention? Do you want to drive Virginia into secession?” and on the President’s replying, “No,” Baldwin rejoined, “The people of Virginia have delegated to us the duty of fixing the *status* of Virginia—of defining her position in this crisis, and should they adjourn and go home without doing so, another Convention would be assembled in a few weeks, and the State would inevitably be precipitated into the secession movement.” He said that Mr. Lincoln said to him more than once, “*You came too late.*”

Col. Baldwin, who had gone to the interview full of hope and confidence as to its results, was obviously much depressed and disappointed by the unfavorable turn of affairs. He expressed to me his fears for the country—said that the President’s reserve, after having invited him to an interview and sent a special messenger to him, convinced him that he had changed his mind, and that he refused to make any explanation of his remark, oft-repeated—“*You came too late.*” I remember his saying that he told the President, if he only had his power, he would save the country from the yawning gulf before it. The President asked what he would do. He replied, he would withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter, and issue a proclamation to the American people, declaring his determination not to inaugurate civil war—that he would not be the aggressor, but would throw himself on the sober second thought, and the moderation and wisdom of the *people* as opposed to the *politicians*—that thus the border States would be saved from the vortex of disunion, and *all* would ultimately be brought back into the Union.” To all this, Mr. Lincoln only replied, “*It is now too late.*” Mr. Baldwin reminded him that he had said, on sending for Mr. Summers, that he must get here by *Friday*—that it was now only *Thursday*, and Mr. Baldwin asked, “*Too late for what?*” to which he received no reply.

I learned afterwards that while I was absent on my errand to Richmond, the seven Northern Governors arrived in the city on their mission to the President.—How much it was due to their presence and counsel that the President abandoned the pacific policy he had evidently contemplated in taking Mr. Summers, of Virginia, into his confidence, and that he immediately dispatched “the Star of the West” to Charleston for the ostensible purpose of relieving the “starving garrison of Fort Sumter,” a step which immediately precipitated hostilities, and became “the direful spring of all our woes,” let impartial history answer.

ALLEN B. MAGRUDER,

LETTER OF JUDGE THOMAS.

The following letter from Judge HENRY W. THOMAS has been received since my statement was printed. It refers to a conversation I had with him at Alexandria, on the evening of the fourth of April, in which, at his request, I gave him a detailed account of what had passed between Mr. Lincoln and myself on that day:

ALEXANDRIA, JUNE 2, 1866.

JOHN B. BALDWIN, ESQ.—*Dear Sir:*—Your letter of the 17th ult. was received, after some delay, upon the eve of my setting out for the Circuit Court of Alexandria, in which my time has been so constantly occupied, that my answer has been unavoidably deferred. Referring to your testimony before the Congressional Committee on Reconstruction, touching the conversation in the spring of 1861, between President Lincoln and yourself, as a member of the Virginia Convention, a copy of which you enclosed to me, and to the version of that conversation given by you to me on the evening of the day you had your interview with him, upon my informing you that I had been deputed by a portion of the Union members of the Legislature to see the President on the same subject, and that I would be glad to know the subject matter of your conversation. You request me to state fully and distinctly what that version was, and whether there is any dif-

ference between that version and your testimony before the Committee on Reconstruction.

According to the best of my recollection, that version and the testimony are substantially the same. A few days afterwards, I proceeded to Washington, where, in company with Hon. Joseph Segar, I had an interview with President Lincoln on the condition of the country, and the means of averting impending dangers to the Union. In this conference, which was free and protracted, President Lincoln neither said nor intimated anything inconsistent with the version you had previously given of the conversation between him and yourself. In this conference some allusion being made to Fort Sumter, the President indicated no purpose to evacuate that Fort, but my impression is, that it was rather to the contrary.

Since I received your letter, I have seen Mr. Segar. While his recollection of what occurred at that time, and of the expression of President Lincoln in our conference is not very distinct, he had no remembrance of any intimation to evacuate that point, Fort Sumter, and thinks the expression of such a purpose by the President would not have escaped his memory.

Respectfully,

H. W. THOMAS.

LETTER OF HON. GEO. W. SUMMERS.

WASHINGTON, MAY 18, 1866.

JOHN B. BALDWIN, ESQ.—At your request, I have examined the testimony given by you before the Reconstruction Committee of Congress. My recollection of the circumstances under which you visited President Lincoln, in April, 1861, is substantially in accordance with your statement of them, as given in your evidence before the Committee. Like yourself, I was a member of the Virginia Convention, then in session at Richmond, and ardently opposed to any attempt to withdraw the State from the Union. Early in April, (I have not the means at hand to fix certainly the date,) I received a note from Mr. Seward, stating that the President desired to see and confer with me, and suggesting that I should come over to Washington for that purpose in a few days if practicable. The next day after the receipt of this note, Mr. Allen B. Magruder, of the firm of Chilton and Magruder, attorneys-at-law in Washington, came to me in the Convention, and informed me that he came to Richmond to see me, at the request of Mr. Seward—that Mr. Seward had instructed him to say to me that the President wished to see me immediately, but, if from any cause, I could not come over myself, to send some intelligent Union member of the Convention, well-informed of the true state of things in that body, and for whose Union sentiments and loyalty I could vouch.—I mentioned these facts to a few tried Union members of the Convention, who expressed some unwillingness that I should be absent from the Convention in the state of things then existing. The Committee of Twenty-one, on Federal relations, had just made their report, and the same was then under consideration and open to amendment. After talking the matter over, it was either suggested by myself or some of the gentlemen in the Convention, that you would be a proper person in every respect to go over. This was at once agreed to, and I immediately communicated the whole matter to yourself, and put you in communication with Mr. Magruder. You readily consented to go, and left for Washington in that night's train with Mr. Magruder.

On your return, I well remember how intensely those of us, who were privy to your going, listened to your report of the interview between the President and yourself, and how, after you had finished your statement, we cross-examined you as to all the details and incidents of the conversation, the manner, emphasis, &c. Your report to us was substantially the same as that given in your evidence before the Committee of Congress. I am very certain, that in your statement to us, you did not mention that the President had proposed or suggested to you that if the Convention would adjourn *sine die*, he would withdraw the United States troops from Forts Sumter and Pickens or either of them, or anything equivalent to such a proposition. That would have made too deep an impression to have been forgotten by any of us. I received no letter from Mr. Lincoln himself, but have no doubt that Mr. Seward's note and message were both at his instance and request,

Your obt servt,

GEO. W. SUMMERS,

LETTER OF HON. JOHN JANNEY.

LEESBURG, MAY 25, 1866.

MY DEAR SIR.—I received to-day a copy of your evidence before the Reconstruction Committee of Congress, and, after examining it, I say, in reply to your letter of the 15th inst., that I well remember that upon hearing in the spring of 1861, that the President of the United States desired an interview with Mr. Summers, or some other member of the Convention who would be likely to understand the opinion of the body, and that, as Mr. Summers could not leave Richmond at that time, I earnestly recommended that you should be substituted for him.

Upon your return from Washington, I heard your report of the interview you had with the President, and, although I have taxed my memory, I have no recollection of having heard you say that any specific terms had been proposed by him, or that he would order the evacuation of Fort Sumter, if the Virginia Convention would adjourn *sine die*.

I had several interviews with you, alone, and in company with other gentlemen who united in the propriety of sending you, but in none of them did I ever hear from you that such a proposition, or any one to that effect, had been made by the President to you.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN B. BALDWIN, ESQ.

JOHN JANNEY.

LETTER OF HON. A. H. H. STUART.

STAUNTON, VA., MAY 29, 1866.

COL. JOHN B. BALDWIN.—*Dear Sir*:—In compliance with your request, I will proceed to state my recollection of the circumstances under which you held your interview with Mr. Lincoln, in April, 1861, and of your report of it on your return.

My recollection of the occurrences of that eventful period is vivid and distinct. It was a time of great excitement. The Union men had a large nominal majority in the Convention, but many of them were wavering. A powerful outside pressure was brought to bear on them, and we were fearful that a sufficient number would yield to it, to turn the scale against us.

It was in this condition of things that Mr. Allen B. Magruder came to Richmond, as a confidential messenger from Mr. Lincoln, with the request that Mr. Summers would immediately repair to Washington, to confer with Mr. Lincoln on matters of grave public interest, and that in the event Mr. Summers could not go, some other gentleman, who possessed the confidence of the Union party, should be sent in his place.

For reasons, which it is unnecessary to mention, you were selected for the mission. Mr. Magruder held interviews with Mr. Summers and myself, and the object of his visit was known to Mr. Janney, Messrs. R. E. Scott and Samuel Price, and probably other Union men.

We looked to the results of your mission with the deepest interest. We felt that the issue of peace or war depended on its success. During your absence, we conferred together, and speculated as to the probable benefits that might accrue from it. On your return, we assembled to hear your report, and I well remember your minute detail of all the particulars of the interview. You described your introduction to the President—your withdrawal to a bed-room to hold the conference—the locking of the door, and the excited manner of Mr. Lincoln at different periods of the interview. Your purpose seemed to be to give a full, accurate and minute description of every thing that occurred, and of every word that was uttered, either by Mr. Lincoln or yourself, on the occasion. We cross-questioned you closely, with a view to refresh your memory, and draw from you all the information as to the President's probable intentions and policy, which you had been enabled to gain.

I have read your deposition before the Reconstruction Committee with great care, and am satisfied that, in every substantial particular, it corresponds with the report which you made to us on your return from Washington. I am certain I heard from you no intimation of a proposition on the part of Mr. Lincoln to withdraw the United States troops from Fort Sumter, if the Convention would adjourn.

Such an important fact could not have escaped my notice, or faded from my memory.

I will add that we are intimately connected by blood and marriage—we were colleagues in the Convention, and have for twenty years been in the habit of interchanging, unreservedly, opinions on all subjects, and I am sure you never intimated to me, directly or indirectly, that Mr. Lincoln had made any such suggestion to you.

Some two or three years ago, I heard it reported that Mr. Lincoln had given to some other party a different version of the interview, and had said he had proposed to you to withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter, if the Convention would adjourn *sine die*. You were as emphatic then as now, in your denial that such was the fact.

Very truly yours, &c.,

ALEXANDER H. H. STUART.

LETTER OF EX LIEUT. GOV. SAMUEL PRICE.

LEWISBURG, MAY 29, 1866.

HON. JOHN B. BALDWIN.—*My Dear Sir*:—I received, by last night's mail, your letter of the 24th inst., with a printed copy of your testimony given before the Reconstruction Committee of Congress. In the letter, you ask me to "examine your testimony as published, and write you how far I find it in substantial accordance with the account you then [when you returned from Washington] gave."

I have accordingly examined it, and find it in substantial accordance with my recollection of what you stated upon your return. There are a few discrepancies between your statement before the Committee and your narrative, according to my recollection, at the time, arising pretty much, if not entirely, from a transposition, either by you or myself, of the order of conversation which you had with Mr. Lincoln. I will state my recollection of it.

On the evening of your departure for Washington, I was informed by Judge Summers that Mr. Seward had sent a messenger to him with a request that he would go to Washington immediately; that the President wanted to see him; that if he could not go himself, to select and send some other representative Union man of the Convention; that he had not found it convenient to go, and had selected you; that you had consented to go, and that you were gone or were going that evening. This was my first information upon the subject of your visit to Washington.

Upon your return, I was intensely anxious to learn the result of your visit. I accordingly met Judge Summers again, and asked him what report you had made. He repeated to me in detail what you had said. In a day or two after, you and myself were walking together, and you gave me a detailed account of your interview with the President. It accorded substantially, if not literally, with what I had previously heard from Judge Summers. I remember that, upon reaching Washington, you were first introduced to Mr. Seward who expressed his gratification at seeing you, and said the President wanted to see you. You and he accordingly appointed an hour of that day to meet at his office for him to go and introduce you to the President. When you went to the President's house, you found some one in conversation with the President about some postal matter. You stood in the rear until that conversation closed, and were then taken up and introduced. Mr. Lincoln received you kindly, and asked you to walk with him that he wanted to talk with you. He took you through one, if not two rooms, one of the rooms seemed to be a bed-room. When you were seated, the conversation, according to my recollection, flowed from this enquiry made by Mr. Lincoln: "Mr. Baldwin, why do not you adjourn that Convention?" You, in your narrative, introduce the conversation with the question from him of, "Mr. Baldwin, I am afraid you have come too late." This remark, I place at another point in the conversation. After the conversation was commenced, it proceeded substantially as you have detailed it in your narrative; you became urgent upon him to do something to avert the impending calamity. You told him that it was in his power to avert it, and proceeded to point out the means, and, that if he would settle this difficulty, he would make his administration the most illustrious since Washington's. He then said he was looking rather to the line of his duty than to any course to make his

administration illustrious. You then said that you were glad that he took that view; it was the true view for a patriot and statesman, and appealed to him to say whether it was not his duty as President of the United States to preserve the integrity of the Union if he could, and he then stated, "I wish you had come sooner." When this remark of his was repeated to me, I remember that it chilled the very blood in my veins. I was, as you know, an intense Union man, and thought I saw that unless the Union party was upheld by the National Administration, that Virginia would inevitably take position with her Southern sisters; and, I inferred, from this remark of Mr. Lincoln, that he had taken a step, which he could not retrace, inconsistent with the views you were urging upon him, and which would result in war and bloodshed.

Your narration of the conversation between Mr. Lincoln and yourself was circumstantial and minute. You seemed to give the language of each, and sometimes you described Mr. Lincoln's manner and gestures; but you did not say to me nor to any one else whom I heard speak of it that Mr. Lincoln proposed evacuating Fort Sumter upon any terms. If any such thing was said, I have not the slightest recollection of it.

Very truly and respectfully,

SAMUEL PRICE.

LETTER OF ROBERT WHITEHEAD, ESQ.

LOVINGSTON, MAY 1, 1866.

COL. JOHN B. BALDWIN.—*Dear Sir*:—Yours of the 25th ult. has been duly received in answer to one from me dated a few days before.

You say, "I have not noticed Mr. Botts as yet, for the reason that I have not been able to get the full report of his testimony, and I am not willing to fire at an extract. As soon as I get the official report, you and the public shall hear from me."

You will remember that I called your attention last year to the fact that it had reached me, under circumstances forbidding the use of my informant's name, that Botts had made some such statement as that contained in his reported evidence, and under circumstances evincing some *special* feeling, and advising you to anticipate its *posthumous* publication.

I was induced to do so, not only on account of my friendship for you, but because of another fact. In August, 1862, you were in attendance at our (Nelson) County Court, as counsel for a prisoner charged with murder, and spent a night at my house, in the neighborhood of the village, and I remembered distinctly a conversation, in which, for the first time, I was informed that you had visited Mr. Lincoln, and of what was said. I distinctly remember the main statements in that conversation.

You informed me that a special messenger, (Mr. A. B. Magruder, of Washington,) had reached Richmond with a message from Mr. Lincoln to Mr. Summers—that Mr. S. could not go to the Capitol, and that you had gone in his stead at his instance, and that of other gentlemen—that you left that day, called on Mr. Seward and the President on the next—went to Alexandria that night and made a speech, and returned from that place to Richmond.

I was struck with your report of the interview with Mr. Lincoln, and have on several occasions repeated what was said. I remember his repeated remark, that he feared you had come too late, and your answer that you could not have arrived sooner, under any circumstances—that when the conversation reached a certain point, you remarked, that if he would give you the use of his thumb and forefinger, you believed you could settle the matter in a few minutes; your proposition being that he should issue a proclamation to the people of the States, announcing the evacuation of Sumter and Pickens, avowedly in the interests of peace, and upon no other ground, either of expediency or military necessity, but to prevent and remove any pretext or occasion for a collision, and calling upon the people to meet in Convention and settle the difficulty without a resort to arms, apprehending daily danger of a collision at Sumter, and predicting a fatal result, no matter who fired first, or under what circumstances—that he urged, among other objections, the abandonment of the right and power to collect the revenue; and your empha-

tic answer, let it go, or something equivalent—that you appealed to his ambition as a politician on the score of popularity—his prompt disclaimer of being governed by any consideration merely affecting his standing as a party man or politician, and your appeal to his patriotism to make himself the saviour of his country and the Government, and second only to Washington in the affections of the people; and his reply that he feared you had come too late. I well remember your account of his earnest, excited, and serious manner. Your decided opinion that he was a man of conviction, and of talent and ability—the almost entire absence of some peculiarities of manner, and conversation reported by others who had had interviews with him, and your regret that such an interview could not have been had at an earlier period.

I well remember his asking you why the Convention did not adjourn, and that *sine die*; and your answer, among other things, that an adjournment would endanger the very objects the Union men had in view; would lead to trouble, and a new Convention, composed mainly of secessionists, and prevent all exercise of influence on your part to restore the Union, and to prevent war and dissolution.

I believe, if I had been called upon at any time, since 1862, to detail the conversation between yourself and Mr. Lincoln, as reported to me by you, I could have done so, as minutely and accurately as you have done yourself in your testimony before the Reconstruction Committee. It made a decided impression on my mind at the time, and has been repeated by me on several occasions since. It modified my opinions in some respects of Mr. Lincoln, favorably towards him, and informed me of influences and efforts which had been used on both sides, of which I was not aware. And, I needed not to be told, that if you could have been the bearer of any message to the Union men in the Convention, which would have enabled them to make any effort to postpone even the evil day that gave any hope of time for cooling and reconciliation, you would have been the prompt and delighted organ of such a communication.

We had been acquainted and friends for years, with some causes to make us specially so. We had been alike ardent, consistent and life-long Whigs, neither yielding to Democracy on the one hand, nor seduced into Know-Nothingism on the other; believers in the conservative character of the principles, policy, and men of that party, and looking to it, though out of power, as the only party which would or could save the country. As the dangers accumulated and threatened, you looked hopefully and anxiously in one direction for escape and safety, and I, with feeling and confidence in another; but I never swerved in an unshaken confidence in your honesty, truth, patriotism, nor in your earnest, open, and manly intention to save the Government, if you could, by all fair and proper means, consistent with your views of duty to the whole country; in a word, to defeat the purposes of the secessionists, to prevent dissolution and consequent war, and ultimately to restore the Union, and, at least, harmonious action among the States, though there might be conflict of parties and factions, trusting to time and other influences for new and less dangerous party issues.

There was no root of bitterness between us, proceeding from anything which occurred during the months of trial and anxiety in the winter of '60-'61, and the spring of 1861. And I take pleasure in assuring you that I have not seen or heard of any man, whose good opinion is worth wishing for, who differs with me about the evidence of John Minor Botts before the Committee in Washington.

It has struck me that, if you should deem it worth the labor to go farther than give your own evidence to the public, it might be of some use to refer to my recollections of our conversations in 1862, and you are at liberty to refer to me in any manner you may deem best.

Yours truly,

RO. WHITEHEAD.

From the Alexandria Gazette of Friday, April 5, 1861.

“COL. BALDWIN'S GREAT SPEECH LAST NIGHT.—One of the most powerful and convincing speeches ever delivered in Alexandria—a speech full of sound reasoning, moving pathos and true eloquence, was made last night by Col. John B. Baldwin, who has won the proud title of ‘the Champion of the Union,’ at Liberty Hall, to one of the largest, if not the largest audience that ever assembled in ‘Old Liberty,’ who listened with the most eager attention.”

