

ROBERT TOOMBS.

His Views on the Men and Measures of the Confederacy.

A Characteristic and Merciless Criticism of Jeff Davis and His Book.

The Southern General—Why Mr. Toombs is Still Unreconstructed.

Correspondence of the Philadelphia Press. WASHINGTON, Ga., June 27.—This is a charming little place of about 2,000 inhabitants, situated in the midst of a fertile country eighteen miles from the Georgia railroad running from Augusta to Atlanta. It was founded in 1775 by the father of General Robert Toombs, and was the first town in America to bear Washington's name. It is the spot where the confederate army collapsed and where the last conference between Jeff Davis and his cabinet took place, when the flight began. A part of the confederate gold was thrown into Toombs' door-yard and by his orders taken away and divided among General Joe Johnston's soldiers. So far as Georgia is concerned this is the place where secession was born. It came from the brains and eloquence of the one man who still lives here and persists in adherence to principles which the war tested.

The stories that are told of the last days of the confederacy here are numerous and marvelous. A photograph of Jeff Davis and his cabinet when the decision was reached that they must abandon their people and cause and flee the country would, if reports are true, make a far greater sensation, and be as great an addition to the history of the war, and nearly as great a financial success, as The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, by the man who hurriedly left this beautiful little southern town in the spring of 1865, and nine days afterward, some hundred miles to the south of this, was overtaken by the federal troops and secured.

Washington is an interesting place, not more for the reminiscences of the late conflict which can be gathered here, than for the present contribution to its war history which can be heard where it actually ended. THE HOME OF GENERAL ROBERT TOOMBS, the first secretary of the state in Mr. Davis' cabinet, is here. He resides on a charming estate of 320 acres, in an old-fashioned house built a hundred years ago in a yard filled with original oak of dignified pretensions, which still stand like guards about the ancestral home. Toombs' ancestors were English, descendants of the best Saxon stock. His mother was a Miss Eughlin, from Jamaica county, Pennsylvania, and noted as the brightest and most beautiful of women. His father was a revolutionary soldier, and obtained the land upon which Toombs now lives as a grant from the governor of Georgia in those early times, and it has never been sold. His present proprietor prides himself upon the old place, the home of his ancestors, and welcomes his visitors with a princely hospitality and unexcelled gentility. It is his boast that a hotel cannot live in Washington. He says: "A gentleman able to pay his bill and fit for a companion is always welcomed at his house, and therefore a good hotel is useless."

His wife, who was a Miss DuBois of South Carolina, a Huguenot descendant, is still living, and vies with her husband in lavish hospitality, and the kindly welcome a stranger is sure to receive at the Toombs' mansion. She is even a beauty at seventy. "We have been fifty years married," said General Toombs to me to-day, "and have celebrated our golden wedding here in this beautiful town and in this charming old home. My wife has traveled with me all over the world, to every land where civilization has yet planted its feet." General Toombs has the reputation of being a bluff, blunt and, by some, a vindictive man, but I read underneath all the apparent rudeness good, generous impulses and great mental force. THE LAST DITCH. "Washington was where the Confederacy died, I believe," said to-day as I was chatting with this interesting man upon the war and its results.

"Yes, this was the place where it finally gave official notice to the world that it was dead. The Confederacy died when Richmond was evacuated. The conflict ended even before Lee surrendered. It is a wonder that it lived as long as it did, considering the manner in which it was managed and the men and policy which controlled its affairs."

"Have you read Mr. Davis' book?" "No, sir; I never intend to. I do not recognize Mr. Davis' history. It would have been a great deal better for him and the world if it had never been written. Most of the people in this country regret that it was ever written. The truth is, the bulk of the people of the south pity Davis rather than admire him. The trouble with Davis was and is that he has an exalted idea of his own importance. He has some ability, but no nerve, and has not the slightest capacity for managing men. I have not a thing against him except his follies. He wanted my photograph to put in his book, but I declined to give it. I didn't want my picture to go down to posterity in the engraving showing his original cabinet which makes me look about 19 years old."

"Were you present when Mr. Davis held his last cabinet consultation here in your beautiful town?" "No, sir; I did not even invite Mr. Davis to my house when here. I never spoke to him after I left the service. Breckinridge and Reagan of his cabinet were my guests during their stay in Washington. Davis stayed at Mr. Robinson's. I offered to send my carriage for his use and do any other act of kindness I could, but I could not receive him at my house. When the thing had finally burst I told Breckinridge and Reagan to say to Mr. Davis that I would get him out of the country without trouble, and any member of his cabinet who desired to go. I said it would only take five days to reach the Florida coast, and I

would have a vessel there to take them to some foreign country. I do not know whether they ever told him or not, but I did assist all the members except Mr. Reagan, who decided to stay with Mr. Davis, and Mr. Benjamin, who left the party some twenty miles before they reached this point. It was a sorry party, indeed, but what else could you expect?"

THE FIRST CABINET. "You were his first secretary of state?" "Yes, sir, I was in his first cabinet, but it was not a very enviable position. I do not believe that there was a man in the cabinet that had a thousand dollars' worth of credit or money when the war broke out. I had both. In Europe I had almost unlimited credit, and used to endorse the drafts of the confederacy to get funds, and I had to pay \$20,000 of the confederate debt after the war in the shape of a draft I had endorsed when secretary of state. They had a queer way of running the confederate government. Memminger, the secretary of the treasury, was of an economical turn, and I understand he used to hire niggers to print the confederate money, and instead of paying them for their labor he gave them the use of the presses at night to print for themselves. No one had any official authority. Somebody said I was a general, and I went and took command, but I never knew it officially, and I think no one else ever did."

"The first cabinet was a queer crowd and had a queer history. I remember that when the government was moved to Richmond and we got in five or six more states than we had when the cabinet was originally organized, I told Davis that I would not stay with such a crowd as he had around him then. I placed my peremptory resignation in his hands unless he would dismiss the whole of them. He told me he did not like to do that arbitrarily, but said he should deeply regret my retirement, and asked me to say to every member of the cabinet that as more states had been added to the confederacy since the cabinet was created, he thought that all ought to resign and give him a chance to make a new one. I did as Davis told me, and told every one of them exactly what Davis said, and told them that he told me to do. But all of them stuck and insisted that Davis himself must bring the word. The trouble was, none of them had a place to go if they got out of the cabinet. It was ground hog or no dinner with them."

WHY TOOMBS LEFT. "What were the differences that took you out of the cabinet?" "I could not get along with Davis or with the other members of the cabinet. I was vindictively hostile to his conceptions and impressions. My policy was to support the cause by direct contributions. There was no trouble about that. Our people would have given their last dollar, and what I wanted to do was to ship all the cotton to Europe and draw against it. It would have given us unlimited means. Contributions and impressions kept our people dissatisfied. There was no trouble about getting recruits for the army but to drag a man away from home and put him in a strange regiment with strange officers over him, made him a prisoner rather than a soldier. When I took a command in the army I sent every cussed conscript Davis sent me back home. They put me under arrest for disobeying orders, but that didn't worry me. I went on duty the same."

"Were there any other differences between you, the cabinet and President Davis?" "Yes, sir, a very serious one. I was the secretary of state, and as such was endeavoring to secure recognition by foreign powers, and it was I that sent Yancyo to Europe for that purpose. Both France and England were ready to recognize us, but they objected to slavery. I replied that slavery should not stand in the way of our recognition. I then demanded the right to issue a proclamation of emancipation, freeing every slave by the stroke of the pen, as it was finally done. Davis and the cabinet neither had the sense nor the nerve to take such a course. It would have made the success of our cause as certain as the sun will rise on another day. Davis hadn't the courage. The proclamation could have been for gradual emancipation and then repudiated, as Washington did the neutrality treaty, if necessary. We had plenty of precedents for such action. I would have taken the responsibility, and ought, as secretary of state, to have been allowed to, but Davis wasn't a diplomat, neither was he a statesman or a soldier."

"There are many queer things about the confederacy which have never been told. These so-called historians don't touch the bone. One of these days I may conclude to write the interesting facts. No, not I, but I will leave the facts and documents for some one else to write after I am gone."

PREPARING FOR WAR. "In 1865 I had talked over this question of the abolition of slavery with Napoleon III, and with Gladstone and with Palmerston. I foresaw the war then and was for preparing for it. Both Napoleon and the English government would have recognized us in a moment but for slavery and I knew it, but Davis stood in my way of meeting the objections of the foreign powers as expressed to me, therefore I resigned. I knew that our success depended upon such recognition. When I went to Europe after the war I was more than ever confirmed in the wisdom of the policy I would have adopted."

"Yes, we had a queer government." I remember one day a secret agent of the English government stepped up to me and said: "Mr. secretary, where will I find the state department?" "In my hat, sir, and the archives in my coat pocket."

charitable thing for the author or out of curiosity. I do not want to say anything unkind about Mr. Davis because he has never done me any harm. It is fair, however, to say that Mr. Davis' book is a very able disquisition on the rights of the states. I agree with him.

UPON A LOT OF OLD MAIDS. "What is your judgment about the controversy between Davis and Gen. Johnston?"

"Johnston is right. He is as petulant as an old maid, but he has got the right of the differences between Mr. Davis and himself. The trouble is that Davis was constantly interfering with his military commanders and rewarding his pets at the expense of his men. A real ground of the difficulty between Johnston and Davis grew out of the question of rank. Why, after the government was moved to Richmond I had a great time getting Lee into the confederate service. He was a major-general of Virginia troops, and Davis had a pet by the name of Cooper that he wanted to make the ranking general of the confederacy. The commission appointed by Virginia insisted that Lee be made the ranking officer, and I had to go to Davis to fix it up. I told Davis that we had a hard time getting Virginia out of the Union and we had to make some concessions to keep her out. Davis finally consented and that fixed Lee's position in the army, but it was not until the fall of 1861, after we had been at war more than six months. Settling Lee's rank offered Johnston a very good thing. I remember that when the government was moved to Richmond and we got in five or six more states than we had when the cabinet was originally organized, I told Davis that I would not stay with such a crowd as he had around him then. I placed my peremptory resignation in his hands unless he would dismiss the whole of them. He told me he did not like to do that arbitrarily, but said he should deeply regret my retirement, and asked me to say to every member of the cabinet that as more states had been added to the confederacy since the cabinet was created, he thought that all ought to resign and give him a chance to make a new one. I did as Davis told me, and told every one of them exactly what Davis said, and told them that he told me to do. But all of them stuck and insisted that Davis himself must bring the word. The trouble was, none of them had a place to go if they got out of the cabinet. It was ground hog or no dinner with them."

THE BEST SOLDIERS. "Which were your best generals?" "Lee, Joe Johnston and Longstreet. He is a radical now, but was a good soldier and a gentleman. Stonewall Jackson, he was the best of them all. Jackson was the greatest soldier since Napoleon. He was a military genius and had no equal in his day, yet few men ever possessed, and which, do you know, if it had not been for me Davis would have got rid of Stonewall Jackson the first year of the war. During the campaign in western Virginia he put one of his pets over Jackson and he resigned and Davis accepted it. When I heard of it I went and made him recall it, else the greatest soldier of the confederacy would have been virtually set aside at the very beginning of the conflict. There was a funny story about this. The man whom he put over General Jackson, which caused the resignation, had been a member of congress from Arkansas and once challenged Bob Johnston. Davis was his second, and he was Johnston's second. Davis had one merit, that was of sticking to his friends."

UNRECONSTRUCTED. "Senator Hill says the war changed this government." "That is the sheerest nonsense. The character of the government has not changed. It cannot be changed. I deny even that the constitution has been changed. I say that the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments are not parts of the constitution of the United States and I have no respect for the government as now organized and administered, and if I were in politics I would go before the people upon that issue. That is the reason why I have never accepted amnesty. I do not recognize the government in its present shape as having the power to grant amnesty. Of course I am only speaking for myself, but this is my position. I have committed no crime and shall never ask forgiveness."

"Georgia seems prosperous now, general?" "Oh! Yes, we are getting along first rate. You are now in the greatest section of Georgia though. This is Wilkes county, old Wilkes, that has sent a greater number of men into business and political life who have made their mark than any other county in the United States. Why, sir, it is almost a title of nobility to come from Wilkes county."

And so this queer character went on to show his devotion to the place of his nativity. He is 71 years old on Saturday, a full figured, round-faced man, with a tuft of gray whiskers far down upon his throat. He has a blue eye and kindly expression. It is said to have been the handsomest as well as one of the ablest men Georgia ever produced. He is recognized here as a great lawyer and is still retained in large causes, especially where the state is interested. He is a man of great wealth and almost unlimited credit in financial circles. Since the war, when the state was in trouble, he loaned it his credit for nearly \$300,000, and during the constitution convention, held at his place since the appropriation failed, and he paid each of the members with his personal check for their services, relying on the legislature to reimburse him. He is everywhere in Georgia recognized as a sharp, shrewd financier. Despite his erratic manner and sometimes violent expressions, he is still recognized as a man of force, of pure personal character, and great social qualities. No man, the Georgians say, ever questioned his honesty, the purity of his private life, or his hospitality."

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