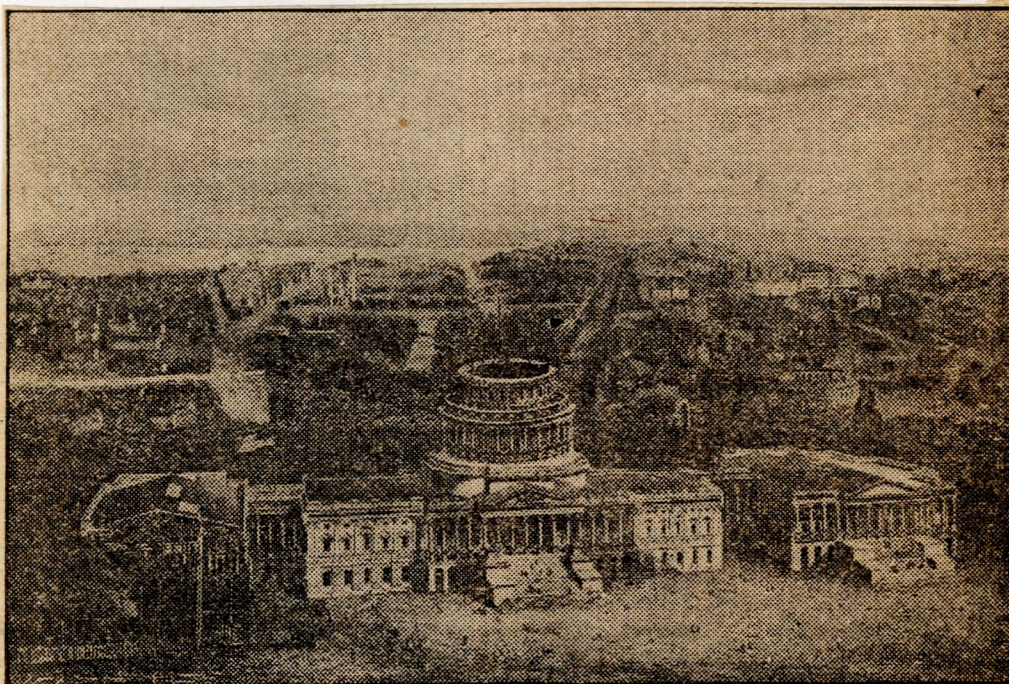


# A Nation In Triumph and In Tragedy

The Rejoicing that Came to the Heart of the Nation with the Surrender of Lee and the End of a Bitter War Had Its Epilogue of Gloom In the Assassination of President Lincoln

By JOHN I. DAVENPORT



"The Capitol Itself Was Unfinished, Although Work Was Continued Upon It During the Entire War"

The following graphic account of the reception in the national capital of the news of the surrender of Lee and the murder of Lincoln came into the hands of Samuel Gray, reporter of debates in Congress, through a friend in western Pennsylvania some years ago with the information that it was written by John I. Davenport, who died in 1903 and was the private secretary of General Benjamin F. Butler immediately after the Civil war. The manuscript was laid aside and the name of the author was forgotten until recently when a search by H. O. Bishop, of The National Republican, in the Library of Congress, revealed the name of General Butler's secretary during the period immediately following the Civil war. In this anniversary month of the surrender of Lee and the assassination of Lincoln, readers of The National Republican will doubtless be greatly interested in this description of the stirring events of 57 years ago in Washington.

**T**HE month of April, during the entire period of the rebellion, from the first gun against Fort Sumpter in 1861, to the close of the war, was filled with stirring events. It was during this month that the forward movements of the armies were begun, for the roads then became dry and pass-

able. During the four long anxious years (from 1861 to 1865) the one great object of the army of the North was to capture the rebel capital at Richmond, Va.

For the protection of our own capital, there including the District of Columbia, there were forty forts, which made a complete circle around the city; their guns being trained to sweep every road or travelled route thereto. Rifle pits were cut from point to point to make a continuous line of defense.

The city of Washington then presented a different aspect from that of today. The capitol itself was unfinished, although work was continued upon it during the entire war. Many of the streets were as grass-grown as the most typical New England town. The few streets that were paved were covered with round cobble-stones, and these—with the dust in the unpaved streets—made driving not the most desirable pleasure. Squalid negro quarters were in close proximity to fine old mansions. There were a few public buildings which were then thought to be handsome; and a few statues and works of art; but the whole aspect of the city was rural in the extreme.

**GENERAL BUTLER'S SECRETARY**

My army experience began with an appointment as a confidential clerk, or private secretary, to General Butler in December, 1863, and I continued in his personal service from that time until nearly a year after the close of the war.

Before proceeding to a narration of some of the scenes in Washington immediately following the collapse of the rebellion, a few facts concerning our enemies at that time may be of interest. From first to last, there were in the Confederate service altogether about 650,000 men, nearly all of them born on the land for which they took up arms. Their entire loss in dead, wounded, etc., was nearly 200,000, while their losses by disability and constant desertions during the last year of the war approximated 100,000 men. There were conscripts in the South, as well as in the North, during the last years of the war; but in the first year there were 350,000 Confederate volunteers—more than half the aggregate Southern army in service during the conflict—and most of these 350,000 troops were fitted out by private individuals.

It was, however, the worst organized, the worst clothed and the worst equipped army in the world. It is probable that in the first year of the war the two armies were more nearly equal in numbers than at any time afterwards. But in April, 1865, about the end of the war, the Confederates were so reduced by death, disability and desertion, that there remained only about 175,000 men who surrendered to the Union forces. The Union soldiers enrolled between the beginning and the end of the war numbered in all about two and a quarter million individuals; more than one-half of them under twenty-two years of age.

Less troops were necessary for the Confederate forces than for the Union side, because the former were hemmed in on all sides by the blockade along the Atlantic coast and the gulf, and up the Mississippi river; and by the Union army along their Northern border; so that the Confederates were actually formed in a hollow square, as it were, against the whole North.

**PAY-DAY BUT A JEST**

Desperate to the last degree in the cause for which they fought, that desperation kept up their endurance until it ceased to be a virtue. Pay day with them was but a sarcasm and jest. There was no money for the soldiers to send home to wife and children as our troops had, and none to keep themselves, for, although it was beautiful to look upon, they knew it to be as worthless as the paper on which it was printed.

In the spring of 1865 the Confederate army of Virginia appeared to be thoroughly demoralized. There was said to be more than 3,000 deserters from their ranks in and around Washington who reported that their men from Alabama, Georgia, Florida and the Carolinas could not be expected to have any heart in a fight which now seemed only for the defense of Virginia. And this was the condition of the Confederate troops when, on April 1st, 1865, General Grant turned Lee's right flank at Five Forks. The next day he assaulted and carried their lines at Petersburg, and the following day, April 3rd, our troops at last entered Petersburg and the burning city of Richmond. Five days after Richmond fell, the Northern cavalry were thrown across the line of Lee's retreat, and the following day, Sunday, April 9th, the memorable surrender of the



Grant's Soldiers Passing Through Washington After Lee's Surrender

Confederate army of northern Virginia took place, and the first act of General Grant was to furnish that starving army with food.

The latter part of March, 1865, I accompanied General Butler to Washington on one of his frequent visits there. On Monday, April 3rd, about noon, a dispatch was received at the War department in Washington from Richmond (the first for more than four years) announcing the fall of that city. At first it was doubted, but it was speedily confirmed by bulletins from the War department and the newspaper extras.

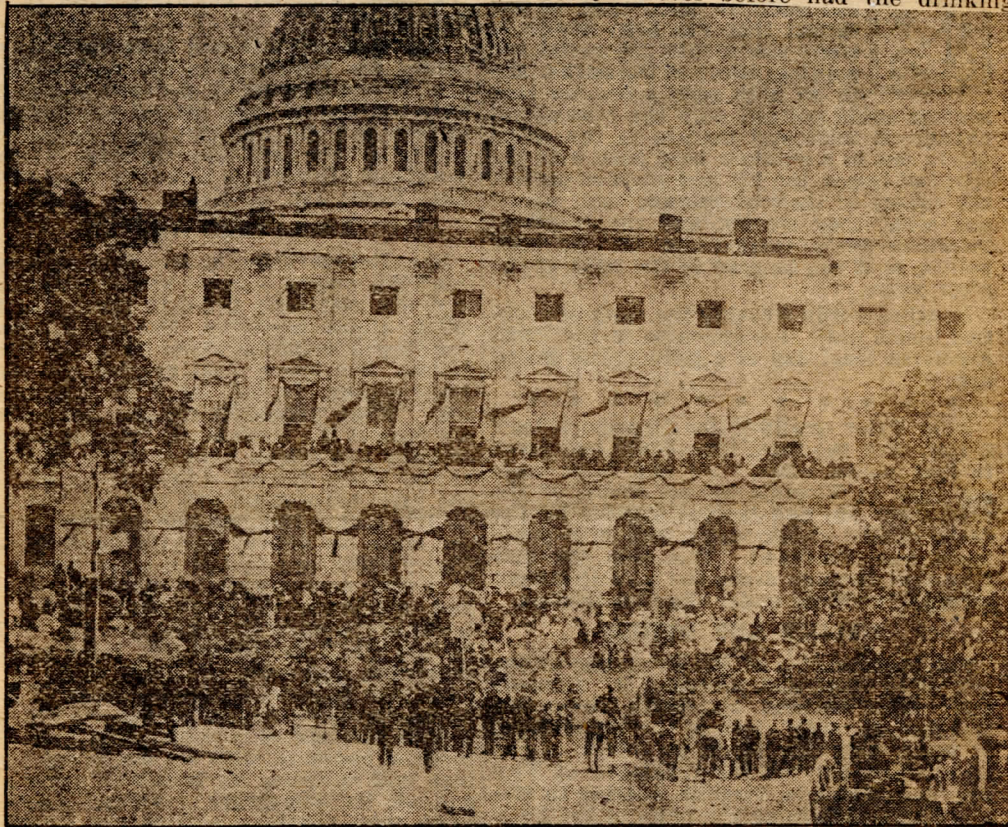
#### A MASS OF COLORS

In a moment the city was ablaze with excitement, the like of which was never seen before. Everybody who had a piece of bunting or cloth of red, white and blue colors spread it to the breeze. Pennsylvania Avenue from one end to the other was a mass of colors. The Secretary of War ordered that a salute of five hundred guns should be fired in honor of the surrender of Richmond and three hundred more for Petersburg. All the departments of the govern-

The crowds surged to the War department where Secretary Stanton was called out to give more details of the capture. For a few minutes the emotion of the great War Secretary prevented the utterance of a syllable, but he soon controlled his voice and every line of his short address was interrupted with wild applause. He introduced a young man of about fifteen years—the operator in the telegraph room of the War department who “took” the happy news on the wire that Richmond was ours. The crowd insisted that he, too, should make a speech, but the boy shook his head and returned to his telegraph key.

#### THE SURGING CROWDS

All over the city the crowds surged from one place to another; wherever a prominent man could be found at home, they insisted that he must respond to their demands for a speech. The setting of the sun did not end that day of jubilee; rejoicing and cheering were prolonged far into the night; houses were illuminated and bands marched and serenaded public men all over the city. Never before had the drinking



The Capitol In Mourning for Lincoln

ment and many stores were closed for the day, and, as if by magic, the streets were crowded with hosts of people talking, laughing, hurraing and shouting their great joy.

Men embraced and kissed each other like the typical German; treated one another very often, and marched through the streets arm in arm; singing and cheering for General Grant, President Lincoln and every prominent official whose name was mentioned; and everywhere that perfect joy in the heart of every loyal man was given free and unrestrained expression.

Bands of music without waiting for any formal call, or for compensation, paraded the streets and their music of national airs was heard on every side. Speech making was the order of the day. If it was surmised that a man could speak, he had to say something, and men who never before had spoken in public found their oratory the subject of long and profound cheers of enthusiasm.

saloons done such a thriving business; like miniature guns, corks were popping in houses and private rooms of hotels, where the previous sobriety of the occupants was supposed to preclude any such possibility, but in the exuberance of joy this fact was overlooked and condoned in the great gladness which had come to us all.

The next night a grand illumination of the whole city took place. All the government buildings and a large proportion of the private residences were ablaze; fireworks of all descriptions were set off in every direction and transparencies were everywhere to be seen.

The mail route to Richmond was open again in a few days, and the postoffice there put in charge of my old friend, Cale French, and while we were still celebrating, the first regular mail from that captured city began to arrive in Washington and the North.

Hardly had this enthusiasm begun to abate when, on that ever memorable Monday morning, everybody was startled from sleep

by the boom of great guns shaking the entire city and breaking glass around the squares, whence they were fired, until the salvo of five hundred guns called everybody out in the mist and mud, to learn that the day before, Sunday, April 9th, General Lee had surrendered his entire army to General Grant, and the great war was over forever. It was the expected which had happened, and the scenes which had taken place on the fall of Richmond were almost fully repeated. Everybody was soon out of doors singing, cheering and saluting one another again and still hungry for more speeches. A great crowd gathered in the street in front of General Butler's apartments at Willard's and demanded a speech. He responded with one of his vigorous and terse addresses, to which the crowd gave great applause.

#### BOUND FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Again all the government buildings and many stores were closed. The clerks in one of the government buildings (the Treasury, I think) assembled and sang patriotic songs, closing with Old Hundred, which was sung on that occasion in such a thrilling, heart-felt, inspiring manner as I have never heard repeated. Soon, an impromptu procession with bands of music was formed; in their lines they dragged a boat; in which was mounted small cannon; these were fired as they marched along. The crowd was augmented every rod of the way, each man hurrahing and yelling himself hoarse. By common instinct and impulse, they seemed bound for the White House. Arriving there, they filled the driveway of the semi-circle park, away out into Pennsylvania Avenue, and such a dense mass of cheering humanity has been seldom seen.

When President Lincoln came to that well known and now historic window, from which he so frequently faced his heroes, the scene was one of the wildest enthusiasm. Not one of that crowd seemed able to express his pent-up feelings. They cheered, yelled and fairly cried with delight, threw their umbrellas into the air, jammed down hats over the eyes of their neighbors without ceremony, and for a while it seemed as though they had all gone mad.

Looking out over the sea of up-turned faces, stood the President, with the never-to-be-forgotten patient expression of face. It seemed as though the applause would never cease, and although it would die away for a moment, it was taken up again and again until at last it seemed to stop from very exhaustion. His remarks were then very brief, as he announced that arrangements were being made for a more formal celebration on the following evening. At the close of his remarks he requested that the band play "Dixie," as that tune he said had been captured and was one of the spoils of war. This being done, "Yankee Doodle" followed, and at the suggestion of President Lincoln who led off, three cheers each were given for General Grant and for other officers and men of the army and navy. The happy, exultant crowd then separated.

The next night another illumination throughout the city followed; although somewhat foggy it was splendidly done. I shall never forget how beautifully the illuminated dome of the capitol looked away down at the lower end of the avenue.

#### LINCOLN'S PRAISE OF GRANT

A dense crowd gathered at the White House with bands and banners. Soon President Lincoln appeared at the well known window, and the waves of enthusiasm which greeted him are still in my ears. It was something soul-inspiring, awful and grand, to witness this outburst of popular love, almost veneration with which his heroes then saluted him. Meanwhile the President, tall, gaunt and thoughtful, stood patiently waiting until it ceased. Then eschewing all personal honor for the plan which resulted in the capture of General Lee's forces, but ascribing to General Grant and the army all the praise, he spoke to that crowd from his written manuscript for upwards of an hour.

In this memorable speech (the last one he ever delivered) he outlined the generous policy which should govern the administration of reconstructing the Union. With the festivities of that night brought to an end, the general rejoicing to which everybody had given almost exclusive attention for a week, ceased, and the city began to resume its normal condition—but amid this rejoicing, we were travelling in the valley of the shadow of death.

You will remember that this last speech of President Lincoln was delivered on the evening of Tuesday, April 11th. The next day General Grant arrived from the front and was the hero of the hour.

For some time I had been engaged in the Treasury department compiling for General Butler certain information of value to him. Finding I could not finish my work in time to return to the home of General Butler in Lowell, Mass., with him, it was decided that I should remain to complete it. On

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