A conspiracy in the Army of the Potomac, in the early part of 1863, to capture Washington, make prisoners of President Lincoln and his Cabinet, and place General McClellan at the head of the Government; and how it was frustrated.

Early in February 1863, an esteemed friend of mine who came to Washington as the Chaplain of a New York regiment that was then stationed near the Virginia end of the Long Bridge, called at my house early one morning and informed me that he had resigned his position as chaplain in the army; and in reply to my inquiry as to the cause of his doing so, he read to me a paper whose contents filled me with the greatest alarm and apprehension. It set forth the following facts: First. That at least three regiments then performing provost duty in Washington were commanded by disloyal democrats; and furthermore, that the regiment to which he had been attached, had received orders to march into Washington the following day and report for duty to the Provost Marshal.

Second: Knowing that his chaplain had been a Breckenridge democrat, his Colonel had frankly confided to him the following important information, namely: That the Colonels of the above mentioned four regiments were members of a wide spread conspiracy in the army of the Potomac to capture Washington, make prisoners of Mr. Lincoln, and his Cabinet, and place General McClellan at the head of the government. The ex-chaplain further informed me that his former Colonel, who was an able lawyer, had exerted all his logical skill in his efforts to persuade him to approve of and join in the afore-mentioned conspiracy; declaring that Mr. Lincoln had violated his oath of office by the issue of his proclamation of freedom to the slaves, and had thereby absolved every officer and every private in the United States armies of all obligation to obey his orders under their respective oaths of allegiance. That General

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McClellan would fearlessly and conscientiously perform all the duties that Mr. Lincoln had pledged himself to perform when he solemnly repeated the words of his official oath; and that by so doing, General McClellan would restore peace and harmony to our bleeding and bankrupted country. The Colonel utterly failed to bring his chaplain to his way of thinking, and he also failed to persuade him to any longer serve in the capacity of chaplain of his regiment. The chaplain at once handed in his resignation, and immediately after its acceptance, he called to ask my advice as to what it was his duty to do under the circumstances. I promptly advised him to lay the whole matter before Mr. Lincoln at the earliest possible moment. He assented to that suggestion, and as an imperative business engagement that morning prevented my accompanying him to the Executive Mansion, I gave him a letter of introduction to the President in which I requested an immediate interview on business of vital importance. Afterwards, the ex-Chaplain informed me that he was promptly and kindly received by the President whom he found looking pathetically sad and weary. As soon as the President comprehended the full meaning of the paper that the ex-chaplain had placed in his hands, he appeared greatly troubled and at once said that the grave information of which he was the bearer, must be so wisely handled as to prevent the possibility of any hint of the conspiracy reaching the country or the armies in the field. Thereupon the ex-chaplain suggested that so far as his former Colonel was concerned, he could be quickly and quietly disposed of. If, said he, an order should be promptly issued commanding the Colonel to immediately appear before his commanding General for examination as to his capacity to command a regiment in time of war,- a duty that he had long neglected to perform - he would forthwith

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resign his commission. That suggestion was promptly acted upon, and the next morning - the 11th of February 1863 - the disloyal Colonel sent in his resignation, which was promptly accepted, and he was allowed to return to his home in Elmira, N. Y., probably in not the happiest frame of mind, and fully believing that the war for the preservation of the Union was a failure and that the only way by which the Union of the States could be restored would be by the elevation of General McClellan to the presidency, and again placing the government under the control of Southern Statesmen and Northern pro-slavery democrats.

The four regiments that were to be the first actors in this treasonable conspiracy, were quietly ordered to rejoin their respective commands and reliable regiments took their places. And thus the atrocious conspiracy to make a prisoner of Mr. Lincoln and place General McClellan at the head of the Government, was squelched without producing a ripple of excitement. Not a member of his Cabinet, save the Secretary of War, private and neither of his Secretaries had a hint from the President as to the existance of that conspiracy; and so perfect was his confidence in the character and veracity of his informant, that as soon as he had mastered the contents of the paper that had been placed in his hands by him, he committed it to the flames. The Secretary of War was the President's only confidant in all that matter, and the conspirators never knew who had conveyed to him the information that caused so sudden a termination of all their treasonable plottings.

As to what would have been the final result had Washington been captured by traitors in February 1863, there will doubtless be a great variety of opinions. Unquestionably the army of the Potomac would have enthusiastically supported General McClellan. So also

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would all the copperheads which comprised fully one half of the democrats in all the Free States. So also would all the Confederate armies and Confederate Statesmen. It was the confident opinion of my friend, the ex-Chaplain, that General Lee was fully informed as to the existance of that conspiracy in the army of the Potomac, and had promised to aid in carrying out the plans of the conspirators. A careful reading of General McClellan's own book on the war of the rebellion, will satisfy any unprejudiced person that he was fully informed as to the hopes and plans of the disloyal conspirators in the army of the Potomac in 1863, and that they met with his full approval. This may perhaps be regarded as one of the many special Providences that prevented the triumph of the rebellion and the destruction of our great American Republic. But the high and mighty Ruler of the Universe had ordered otherwise.

ZENAS C. ROBBINS

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