Interview with Mr. Grow. December 9th, 1898.

McClellan.

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I asked Mr. Grow if he remembers the interview which Governor Fenton gives in Rice's Reminiscences. He says that it is probably true but he does not remember; that he and Fenton roomed together when the latter's family was not here; nearly always made visits on the President together; however he does remember this, that when Congress met in December the Members observed that a great many board barracks were going up around Washington, many more than were necessay for hospital purposes or for reserves. The roads at that time in Virginia were excellent ; everybody was eager for an advance. Congressmen observed the barracks with dismay; it looked as if McClellan was going into winter quarters; finally several of them came to the Speaker and stated their anxiety, asking him what it meant. He said, "Well, gentlemen, I will ask the General." Mr. Grow went to McClellan, who received him kindly, and told him how all the members were feeling. McClellan said, "No, no," he had no intention of putting the army into winter quarters; that he meant the cmapaign should be short, sharp and decisive and began explaining to Mr. Grow his plan. The speaker interrupted him, saying he did not desire to know his plans, preferred not to know them in fact. If he could assure Members of Congress that the army was going to move, it was all that was necessary. Soon after this the rains came and it was impossible to move forward. McClellan did nothing until Lincoln issued his first general orders; that then, instead of providing transports before leaving his position, he took them down around Alexandria , where they stood in the mud for ten or twelve days, without tents, waiting for transports.

I asked Mr. Grow what McClellan's difficulty was. He says it was two-fold; that he was a splendid organizer but that he had an innate disposition not to use his army until he was sure of victory; that it was never positive, while there was a good-sized force before him, that he would have victory, that consequently he never was ready to fight. His second trouble was political. He was surrounded by Democratic influences; that he believed, with them, a movement could be started before long by which some form of compromise would be arranged. Feeling this he did not desire a battle. Mr. Grow says that he thinks that McClellan never had treasonable notions; that the reports that he was going to surrender the army were the suspicions of those strongly opposed to him. I told him of the Robbins interview. He says that it is quite possible that this is true; that it was only a development of that feeling which originated the Baltimore plot and which culminatedin Lincoln's assassination.

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