NOTES OF INTERVIEW WITH ABRAHAM S. HEWITT, March 8, 1901.

Saw Mr. Hewitt at his house in regard to letter said to have been written by Abraham Lincoln to Queen Victoria. He is very positive that no such letter could have been written, but tells me of one of his own experiences with Mr. Lincoln. He says that one evening in January of 1862 he was sitting in the dining room of his house on Lexington Avenue, with a company of friends, when a telegram was brought to him. It was from Mr. Lincoln and read "They tell me that you are a man that can do some things. General Grant is trying to take Fort Donaldson he cannot advance without thirty mortar beds. The Ordinance Department say that these mortar beds cannot be furnished under ninety days. If General Grant is to take Fort Donaldson he must have the mortar beds in thirty days. Can you furnish thirty mortar beds in thirty days." Signed, A. Lincoln.

Mr. Hewitt at that time had never met Mr. Lincoln. He did not know that Mr. Lincoln knew of his existence. He also knew nothing about mortar beds, but after a moment's thought remembered that a friend of his at the Watertown Arsenal had recently told him that he had invented a mortar bed which was a great improvement over anything at that time existing. He immediately telegraphed to this friend asking him if he had a finished mortar bed at Watertown, which he could ship immediately to New York. He answered that he had. Mr. Hewitt requested him to send it at once. The mortar bed was immediately shipped and arrived in New York on the morning following the sending of the order. Mr. Hewitt was at the dock to meet the boat by which it came. He had with him workmen and drays for transporting the machine, and it was at once carried to the largest machine shop in the city. Here he had collected several of the best machinists to be had in New York. He immediately ordered the mortar bed to be taken apart. Fortunately, it was put together

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with bolts and not rivets, so that it was quickly separated. He then consigned to each of the machinists one or more parts, ordering that they be immediately duplicated. He discovered, however, that there was one thing necessary to the working of the mortar bed that could not be had in New York. That was the wheels upon which it was mounted. There was but one place in the United States where these wheels were made, that was at Phoenixville, Pa. Now, the owner and director of the Phoenixville works was a friend of Mr. Hewitt's and he at once telegraphed him asking if he could make the 30 rails of the peculiar rail needed, within ten days. The man answered that he could.

Mr. Hewitt replied asking him to put his whole force at the work, and at once. As an answer he received from his friend, word that it was impossible to do the work at once, that he had work on hand which must be finished before he could undertake the rails.

Mr. Hewitt immediately telegraphed the President in Washington, saying that in order to provide the thirty mortar beds in thirty days the rails must be made at the Phoenixville works, that the owner refused to do it, and he asked Mr. Lincoln to send an officer to take possession of the factory, stop the work on hand, and set the force at making the required rails. Mr. Lincoln replied that the officer was on the way to Phoenixville. Mr. Hewitt then telegraphed his friend, saying that he did not want to make him trouble, but that it was absolutely necessary for the sake of the country, that those rails be made at once, and unless he consented to suspend the other work, and to do them, his factory would be seized by the government. The gentleman yielded gracefully to necessity, and wired Mr. Hewitt that the officer need not come on, that the rails would be made.

At the end of ten days the first complete set of parts for a mortar bed was ready. It was immediately mounted, placed on a car which was waiting for it, and sent to General Grant at Cairo, Illinois, by way of Chicago. Mr. Hewitt, in sending the car put upon the adress, "This car must not be delayed on penalty of death",

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by order of the President of the United States."

In thirteen days from the time that Mr. Hewitt had received the telegram, the first mortar bed was in Cairo. In 36 days, the entire thirty were there. The guns were immediately mounted upon them, and the expedition proceeded against Fort Donaldson. At the first shot from the great cannon, carrying the largest shot which had been used in the world, up to that time, Fort Donaldson surrendered. They knew that it was impossible to stand against the guns which had been brought against them.

Mr. Hewitt had paid himself for the entire work of preparing the mortar beds, and after a time sent the bills to the Ordinance Department of Washington. He was informed by the department that as they had not ordered the mortar beds, they could not pay for them. Four or five months had passed when Mr. Hewitt decided to go to Washington, and see the President about the bills. Going to the White House, he passed into the vestibule outside of Mr. Lincoln's office. Here he found thirty or forty people waiting to see the President. He gave his card to the negro attendant, asking him to pass it to the President, when he had an opportunity. He was told that in all probability the President could not see him, as he was very busy. The card was passed in, however, and immediately the porter returned, saying that the President would see Mr. Hewitt at once. As he entered, the tall awkward figure of the President approached. He was smiling, and held out his hand. "Why, you're not such a hell of a fellow after all!" Mr. Hewitt laughed, and said, "What kind of a fellow did you think I was?"

"From what they told me of you, and from the fact that you furnished those mortar beds in thirty days when everybody else said it would take ninety, I thought you must be at least seven feet tall."

After a little conversation Mr. Hewitt told Mr. Lincoln that he had come to Washington to see about the pay for the mortar beds.

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"You should go to the Ordinance Department," said Mr. Lincoln.

"But I have been there," said Mr. Hewitt, "and they say that as they did not order them, they cannot pay for them."

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "Do you suppose if I should put my name to the bills, they would pay you?"

Mr. Hewitt said he thought they would.

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "let's send for Stanton."

In a few moments the Secretary of War appeared.

"Stanton," said Mr. Lincoln, "Mr. Hewitt has not been paid for his mortar beds, what can we do about it?"

"Well," said Mr. Stanton, "we can do nothing about it, we did not order them."

"Well, do you suppose," said the President, "that if I should approve the bills, the Treasury department would pay them?"

"I think they would, Mr. President," the Secretary replied.

"Have you got the bills, Mr. Hewitt?" asked Mr. Lincoln.

"Yes," said Mr. Hewitt, "here they are."

The President looked them over, and then wrote on the outside, "Correct A. Lincoln."

"Now, Mr. Secretary," he said, "you go with Mr. Hewitt, and see if you cannot get these bills paid this afternoon."

"It is pretty late," said the Secretary, "but we will do what we can," and he went himself to the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Chase, who, taking the matter in hand himself, put the bills through, and Mr. Hewitt received his money.

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