

CEASE FIRING

Mr. Davis, about to descend the steps, drew a little back. Between his brows were two fine, parallel lines. "You think, General Johnston, that the lines are too extensive?"

"Under the circumstances — yes, your Excellency."

"Then what is in your mind? Pray, speak out!"

"I think, sir, that one strong work should be constructed above the town, at the bend in the river. It should be made very strong. I would provision it to the best of our ability, and I would put there a garrison, say of three thousand. The remainder of General Pemberton's forces I would keep in the field, adding to them —"

"Yes? Pray, be frank, sir."

"It is my custom, your Excellency. I hesitated because I have already so strongly made this representation that I cannot conceive . . . Adding to them the Army of the Trans-Mississippi."

"I cannot consent to rob Peter, sir, to pay Paul."

"I conceive, sir, that it is neither Peter nor Paul that is in question, but the success of our arms. The enemy's forces are uniting to invade. Equally ours should unite to repel. General Holmes and his army are doing little in Arkansas. Here they might do much. — If we had the strong works and garrison I speak of —"

"You would abandon all the batteries up and down the river?"

"A giant properly posted will guard the Mississippi better than will your long line of dwarfs."

"Pray, sir, do not say *my* line of batteries. They are not mine."

"I will say, then, your Excellency, General Pemberton's."

"You, sir, and not General Pemberton, are in command of the Department of the West."

"So, when it is convenient, it is said. I have, then, sir, authority to concentrate batteries and a certain proportion of troops at the bend of the river?"

"We will take, sir, your ideas under consideration."

The President moved to the steps, the others following. The line was still between Mr. Davis's brows. All mounted, wheeled their horses, moved into the street. The aides came after, the escort closed in behind. With jingle and tramp and music, to salutes and cheering, the party bent on inspection of the Vicksburg defences moved toward its object.

The words upon the portico had not of course floated to the ears