

SWORDS OF GENERAL TWIGGS.

M E S S A G E

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

Placing at the disposal of Congress swords formerly the property of Major General David E. Twiggs.

DECEMBER 16, 1862.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

Fellow-citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I have in my possession three valuable swords, formerly the property of General David E. Twiggs, which I now place at the disposal of Congress. They were forwarded to me from New Orleans by Major General Benjamin F. Butler. If they, or any of them, shall be by Congress disposed of, in reward or compliment of military service, I think General Butler is entitled to the first consideration. A copy of the general's letter to me, accompanying the swords, is herewith transmitted.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

DECEMBER 12, 1862.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF,
New Orleans, July 1, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to send you with this note three swords, with their equipments, formerly belonging to David E. Twiggs, late brevet major general in the army of the United States. They are each presentation swords; one given him by resolution of Congress, which bears the following legend:

“Presented by the President of the United States, agreeable to a resolution of Congress, to Brigadier General David E. Twiggs, in testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of his gallantry and good conduct in storming Monterey.—*Resolution approved March 2, 1847.*”

Another, by the State of Georgia, and bears the following legend and inscriptions:

“Constitution.

“The State of Georgia to Major General Twiggs, U. S. A., as a tribute to his gallantry in Mexico, 1847; Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Chepultepec, Molino del Rey, Mexico.”

The third, by his native city, Augusta, Georgia, and has the following legend:

"Texas, 8th and 9th of May, 1846; Monterey, Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo. To General David E. Twiggs, from the citizens of Augusta, Georgia."

General Twiggs left these swords with a young woman on the evening before he fled from New Orleans, and in his flight, on the day of the approach of the fleet, he wrote in his carriage, while *en route*, this extraordinary paper:

"I leave my swords to Miss Rowena Florence, and box of silver.

"D. E. TWIGGS.

"N. O., 25th April, 1862."

The paper was claimed as a deed of gift of those very valuable weapons by the young woman named, but as she had neglected to inform her father of this singular donation, *causa fugæ*, and as the girl's mother caused them to be given to a negro, to be sent back to General Twiggs's house, I ventured to interfere with this testamentary disposition.

A more lamentable instance of the degradation to which this rebellion has reduced its votaries can hardly be imagined. Swords given to a general for courage and good conduct in the armies of the Union, as tokens of admiration by his fellow-citizens and the gratitude of a State and nation, voluntarily bequeathed for safekeeping to a woman, as a more proper custodian than himself, by that same general when flying at the approach of the armies of that country which he had renounced and betrayed, at last find a depository with a negro, for the sake of enslaving whose race the double crime of treachery and rebellion has been consummated.

Now that the weapon, given by the United States, is returned to the Executive, and the others placed at his disposal, might I take leave to suggest a possible disposition of them.

Might not the first be presented to some officer as a token of appreciation of loyalty and devotion to the country? The qualities of courage and good conduct in the battle-field have never been found wanting in our armies, but loyalty and entire devotion to the country have failed in so many examples, of which General Twiggs is a shining one, that some token of respect for those qualities, bestowed in this manner, might not be inappropriate.

The sword from the State of Georgia might be deposited in the library at West Point, with an appropriate inscription, as a perpetual memento to the youth there, how worse than useless are all education and military training, even when allied to gallantry and courage, if heartfelt patriotism and undying fealty to the Constitution and the flag is wanting.

That given by the city of Augusta might be deposited in the Patent Office, as a warning against the folly and uselessness of such an invention as "secession."

Pardon the freedom of these suggestions, and believe me, most faithfully, your obedient servant.

BENJAMIN F. BUTLER.

The PRESIDENT