

Sheffield

Wrote on July 13 '7863.

Gen. E. Cowan.

My dear Sir,

Vicksburg has been taken.

The rebel force has been driven out of Pennsylvania with great loss. We have reason to hope that Port Hudson will soon be captured and that the army of Lee will be either captured or driven back into Virginia. ~~With these successes~~ Rosecrans, has already driven the army of Bragg far into the South, & Foster, has met with some additional success in North Carolina, in this condition of things, is it not proper for us to consider whether there is anything which could be done by those who administer the government to restore peace to our beloved country? I see numerous

in the newspapers of what is going on
in the Cabinet though, I cannot believe that
they are true. for it is said that Andrew
has some proposition which involves
the entire abolition of Slavery, and an
Amendment of the Constitution, both
of which conditions I regard as imprac-
ticable, because, they involve an encroach-
ment upon State rights, ~~which~~ by the Feder-
al government, which the smaller
States can hardly be expected to accede
to, and then, with the aid they would receive
from those States who are opposed to any
amendment of the Constitution, such
as is proposed, would defeat the Scheme.
When the rebels lay down their arms,
and send their representatives to Congress
the war is at an end. No man who
has read history to any purpose, and who
has a knowledge of the whole of the

in any district where any of the leading
intelligents reside, believe that it will ever
be possible to convict & punish any
of them for treason. The Confiscation Bill
is in my opinion, as you well know, un-
constitutional because it forfeits a man's
property, not involved in the guilt of the
war, for crimes of which the owner may
not have been convicted. The Emancipa-
tion Scheme is equally futile, for upon
the return of peace the Statute quo ante
bellum obtains in the absence of a treaty
& here we cannot treat, because, we
do not recognize that the rebels have
a Statute which entitles them to treat with
us. We deny that they are a part of our
people, bound to us by the Constitution & that
we are bound to them by the same Consti-
tution & that the only mode by which we
can change the terms of our Union is by
an alteration of the Constitution a
thing which it is impracticable to do. If

This is the case, by the operation of the local law all slaves upon the return of peace will be remitted to their former servitude. Now the slaves that have supported the Union Cause have the faith of the government pledged to them that they shall be made free. - To carry out this faith these slaves, upon the return of peace must be taken out of the operation of the local law. If I am right in these conclusions, and your better judgment will correct me if I am not, what is ^{it} the duty of the President to do, upon the success of our arms over the army of Lee, & upon the capture of Port. Hudson? I humbly submit that he should issue a Proclamation setting forth that the ~~same~~ ^{these} slaves which have aided the Union Cause, should be returned with the army, and that they should be made free, and that otherwise a universal amnesty, (saving vested rights in captures) should be granted to all rebels who should return to them.

alligiance within a given period. If
you approve of this course, as you are
in place and have influence, why will
you not write to Seward and to the
President, and keep this subject before
their attention. If the interest of the coun-
try is what the gentlemen at Washington
desire to promote, I think that this plan
will commend itself to the administra-
tion. If they wish only to promote the
interest of a party, I think that this
plan will insure them the election
in Ohio and Kentucky.

Why will you not take hold of
this matter? S. Ewing, Browning, Holt,
and Andy Johnston after the President
had he many overrule Chase.

I should be glad to see you in New-
Port. I cannot afford to lose you again.

tance. You must come and see me
in my own home, bring some of your
family with you. Tell Frank & "Lizzie" to
come. I should be glad to see any or
all of you. I am out of Congress
as you know. I would not enter into
a political scramble for place in
the present condition of the country. I
had a nomination & could probably
have been elected upon a Seces-
sional, but I have no taste now
for these contests. I am at work in
my old calling & find myself quite
at home there.

Believe me very dear friend
Yours always

W. M. Sheffield
William Paine Sheffield