

(Excerpt, Chap. 2):

Another of the proverbial straws that contributed to the breaking of the camel's back was, without a doubt, the incomprehensible scheme of deploying a small *army* of CSA personnel ('confidential' or 'secret-agents') to Europe in search of weapons, small arms, ammunition, and supplies lending to war matériel. Every governing entity, from state level down to municipal level (in all-consuming totalitarian states' rights mentality), had only self-preservation in mind as they flooded the European market with *their* individual "representatives." As was painfully evident throughout the various command groups fighting on different fronts and theaters, the special agents dispatched to Europe with one goal in mind, secure logistical support for the Confederacy, experienced (or contributed to) the problem of total incompatibility and in-rank feuding. This resulted in irreconcilable differences between the different entities—to the detriment and ultimate failure of the Confederate States of America.

Leaving Charleston, Major Huse traveled to Norfolk, where he boarded one of the Bay Line steamers bound for Baltimore. He arrived Sunday morning. Men, who had been killed the previous Friday at Manassas, were being prepared for burial. According to Huse, there was intense excitement in the air, but the entire city was unusually quiet. No one seemed to know what the Southerner's next move would be. Huse, however, was more concerned about getting to New York. No trains were running, since the bridges and trestles had been burned between Baltimore and New York. Furthermore, no one seemed to even *know* when the trains would be able to resume their daily schedules.

As Huse looked anxiously about, he noticed two other travelers also concerned about continuing their travels northward. The two men, purportedly from Charleston as well, approached Huse with the proposal that among the three of them, they should hire a stage coach that could take them as far as York, Pennsylvania. The deal was struck, and the coach was arranged for. Just as they were making preparations to depart, a heavy-set older gentleman requested to join the small traveling party. His daughter was lying at death's door in Philadelphia, and he was anxious to be by her side as quickly as possible. Although Huse was concerned about the severity that the newcomer would add to the weight of their coach, he and his new companions obliged the elder stranger.

Once they got started on the trip northward, it was decided that the coach would travel to Havre de Grace as opposed to York. Why the decision was made or who made it was difficult for Huse to discern. Upon arriving in Havre de Grace, they found that the ferry had departed to transport federal troops to Annapolis. There was nothing else the travelers could do but wait until the next ferry. As evening descended, they all took lodging at a small local hotel. The following morning, they hired a flat boat to take them across the river to Perryville. Some of the passengers aboard the flatboat were decidedly staunch Union sympathizers. For no sooner had the boat docked that numerous men and women gathered near a small hotel near the landing and began to sing patriotic songs—apparently overcome with joy that they had been successful in escaping the "horrors of the South."

Also, in Perryville, there was a large wood-frame shed that was serving as a railroad depot. Railroad employees milled about with the other passengers, but no one could tell anything about the train schedules. The reason, they claimed, was that the U.S. government

had “acquired” (*commandeered*) all the trains. However, a little before noon, a rather lengthy train came huffing into the Perryville station. As the train came to a stop, men and boys in the Union, in blue uniform, poured from the cars and raced one another to wash their faces and hands in the rain barrel. This was the end of the line for them. They would be going to the front. Soon enough, the train was switched about and ready to make the return journey to Philadelphia. All those desirous to travel were beckoned onboard. Travelers would be disappointed, however, as the train went no further than Philadelphia. No other trains were scheduled for departure until the following day.

When daybreak arrived, Huse returned to the train station and acquired a seat on the first train to New York. The route would also include stops in Camden and South Amboy. From there, Huse would need to take another water taxi into the city. As he took his seat on the train, Huse recognized a distinguished-looking gentleman in the seat directly behind his. The Hon. Caleb Cushing had *also* been born in his hometown of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and had gone on to become a very public man. Not wanting to disturb the gentleman, Huse declined his urge to strike up a conversation. Furthermore, the gentleman would probably not know Huse, since he was already in the public light when Huse was still but a boy in Newburyport.

As they neared New York, Huse began to feel nervous of meeting acquaintances who might expose him for who he really was: a Confederate spy. He raised himself from his seat and wandered down to the lower deck, where he came face to face with Mr. Cushing. Oddly enough, the latter was also passing his time on the lower deck for the same reasons. Huse doffed his hat and rendered the greeting of the day, much as he would with any superior officer. Cushing abruptly stopped and stated matter-of-factly,

*“Good morning, Mr. Huse. You are with the South, I understand.”*

Huse was rather taken aback. Then he recalled that Cushing was the chairman of the Charleston Democratic Convention responsible for nominating John C. Breckenridge as a presidential candidate. Huse replied,

*“Yes, sir. What chances do you think the South has?”*

*“What chances can they have?”* Cushing retorted indignantly. *“The money is all in the North, the manufactories are all in the North, the ships are all in the North, the arms and arsenals are all in the North, the arsenalsof Europe are within ten days of New York, and they will be open to the United States government and closed to the South, and the Southernports will be blockaded. What possible chances can the South have?”*

Huse was stunned at the bluntness of the gentleman and the obvious time that had been given to the arguments in the topic. Under the circumstances, he looked Cushing square in the eye, lifted his hat again, and declared, *“Good morning, Mr. Cushing.”* According to Major Huse, he never saw Cushing again. (4)

Upon arriving at the pier, Huse gave his baggage tickets to a porter, received a receipt, and instructed him to hold the baggage until it was called for. Not wanting to attract anymore undue attention by dragging a lot of baggage through the streets, Huse obtained the employment of one of his traveling companions from Baltimore to take his baggage the rest of the way to

Liverpool. Then as he had been instructed in Richmond, Huse made his way to the Bank of the Republic, where allegedly it had been stipulated, he was to obtain letters enabling him to obtain the funds necessary for the mission to Europe.

However, when he asked for the letters from the specified cashier at the window, the latter blanched. Opening a side door, the cashier beckoned Huse to enter, and he found himself in a small parlor. Locking the door, the cashier swiftly moved across the room and pulled down the window shade.

*“Okay, now what was it you were asking for?”*

Huse, in the time it took the cashier to cross the room to lower the window shades, decided on his next course of action.

*“I see that you are much agitated by my visit. I shall not further compromise you by providing my name, but if you have the letters from Montgomery, which you do not recognize, will you be good enough to send them around to the Trenholm Brothers, on Pine Street?”*

The cashier assured Huse that he would do just that, and Huse bade him a good day. However, as he was exiting the bank, the cashier stated that there was intense excitement on the city’s street, as Union Colonel Anderson’s command (from Fort Sumter) had just arrived in the city and marched up Broadway, garnering for themselves much praise and adulation and at the same time arousing a patriotic excitement among the citizens of the city. Huse noticed a small U.S. flag by the bank’s entrance, and the cashier noticed him looking at it.

*“I believe that had that flag not been near the door,” he said, “the mob would have attacked the bank!” (5)*

From the bank, Huse went over to Pine Street to inquire for Mr. Wellman at the offices of the Trenholm Brothers. He was shown into an inner room where he met a distinguished heavy-set middle-aged gentleman with white hair, bearing an uncanny resemblance to the last party who obtained passage on their coach from Baltimore to Havre de Grace on Sunday.

Huse introduced himself to the gentleman, stating that Captain Wellman had been his traveling companion.

*“He is my father,”* replied the man standing in front of him.

Huse then recounted for the younger Wellman that he had bumped into the senior Wellman again at the Philadelphia station only that morning and that he had requested Huse to say that his daughter was much better off than had been expected and that everyone had high hopes of her recovery. Huse then quickly got down to business and explained to Wellman that he was a Confederate states army officer enroute to Europe to purchase arms and other miscellaneous army supplies. He told how he was to be provided funds to obtain these provisions by the Liverpool offices of Fraser, Trenholm & Co. and expected as well to obtain funds from the Trenholm Brothers in New York to cover the expenses of the journey.

However, Wellman dejectedly informed Huse that he *also* did not possess any letters for the latter, nor had he received any information from Montgomery concerning the alleged Confederate agent. Huse began to understand the gravity of his situation. With no funds for the journey, it would be unlikely that he could travel to Europe.

Excusing himself, Wellman left Huse in the small room for approximately a half hour. When he returned, he seemed more agitated than the bank cashier. Reiterating that the excitement in the street was at its zenith, Wellman speculated that if the crowds milling about in the street would catch wind of the Confederate in their midst, or of his secret mission to Europe, they would most likely hang him from the nearest light post. He could not leave the office until he departed to catch his train.

*“What do you propose to do?”* asked Wellman.

*“I ought not to think of sailing from New York,”* Huse told him. *“I could go to Canada and take the steamer from Montreal. But I cannot sail from anywhere without money.”*

*“You will have the money,”* Wellman told him. *“How much do you want?”*

*“Five hundred dollars.”*

*“And you want that in gold?”*

Huse answered in the affirmative.

Wellman produced \$500 of gold and ordered that lunch be brought in. It was almost 1500 hrs. when Huse started for the Erie Railroad station. Ten years after the cruel war was at an end, Huse had the opportunity of discussing his mission in New York with a friend (who, at the time, was no friend at all). He assured Huse that had *he* been aware of what Huse’s true intentions were while in New York, he *himself* would have summoned the constabulary and had him arrested. (6)

After departing the Trenholm Brothers’ offices, Huse noticed a man on the sidewalk that apparently passed a signal to another man on the opposite side of the street. Once he arrived at the ferry, Huse noticed that this second man had also booked passage on the ferry and took a seat opposite him. Based on current information and records, we can be assured that these tails were placed on Huse to observe his actions while in the city. However, according to Huse, after he departed the boat, he saw no more of the two shady characters. After boarding the train, Huse seemed to breathe a little easier until the scheduled stop at Turner’s Restaurant, where scheduled trains stopped for the passengers to alight and purchase their evening meal. Huse recognized several of his old acquaintances in the restaurant and opted to seek his dinner elsewhere to avoid a possible public showdown.

Having been separated from his baggage at the docks, Huse began to feel the cold of the northeastern corner of the United States and Canada. Driving through the night in an “ordinary day coach” without a coat, he began to ponder the prudence of leaving his bags in the care of another. Arriving in Buffalo, he had a layover while waiting for the next train. Deciding to see the “retired part of the city,” Huse took to walking the streets. He barely escaped

recognition by quickly turning down an alley when an old U.S. Army officer came toward him.

Arriving in Hamilton, Ontario, Huse was able to purchase clothing for the journey. However, he was further disappointed to learn that the steamer for Europe had just departed and he would have to wait another few days for the next steamer from Montreal. Huse decided that instead of waiting, he would travel to Portland instead to catch the next steamer from that location. But he delayed in purchasing a ticket until the last minute when the last train would arrive in Portland in time for him to board the steamer. The last train that Huse boarded in Hamilton only traveled to the state line, where it stopped for the night. Huse later recalled, with not much fondness, the accommodations in state line, when he was required to break the ice in his water pitcher before setting out on his mission to Europe. As the train traveled toward Portland, at almost every stop, men and boys, in U.S. Army uniform, clambered into the train cars. A regiment had been ordered to the front.

When the train pulled into the Portland station, Huse could see his ship anchored in the harbor. Purchasing a ticket for the crossing at the last moment, Huse boarded a tug which took him to the waiting ship. He sighed with relief as he stepped from the tug and on to the heavy timbered deck of the steamer. Shortly thereafter, the anchor was weighed, and they began to move out into the neutral waters of the Atlantic.

Given the time of the year (April), there were very few passengers booked for the transatlantic voyage. As such, there were no incidents of any significance to report. Except one. While sitting around the dinner table one day, one of the passengers, a sea captain from Maine, enroute to be reunited with his ship that he'd left in Liverpool, without so much as an introduction or any words having previously passed between the men, bluntly blurted out,

*"I believe you are going to Europe to purchase arms for Jeff Davis."*

In order to delay as much as possible, while he thought of an appropriate response, Huse toyed with his food for a while.

*"If Jeff Davis wanted arms,"* he drawled, *"he would be likely to select a man who knew something about arms."*

*"Sometimes those fellows that know the most say the least,"* the captain shot back.

Without knowing what else could be said to his advantage, or to extricate himself from a touchy situation, Huse said nothing. The matter was dropped and never came up in conversation again. (7)

Upon arriving in London, Huse went directly to a favorite hotel that Americans frequented when traveling to Great Britain: Morley's Hotel on Trafalgar Square. However, the comments of the sea captain continued to bother Huse, so he called on one of the passengers with whom he had spent considerable time conversing during the course of the voyage. A lawyer from

Portland, he spent his younger years teaching school in Mississippi. On meeting him at the Strand Hotel, Huse inquired if he was aware of the purpose of the Southerner's mission to Europe. The attorney assured him that he did not. Huse then told the man about the sea captain's abrupt remark and added that his hunch was correct: He had been sent to Europe to acquire arms and supplies for the Confederate states army, but there was not a word uttered during the voyage that could have been inferred or implied as to the true nature of Huse's business endeavors abroad. Furthermore, no documentation supporting the sea captain's surmise had ever been generated by Montgomery. (8)