

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

He Gives His Views on the Battle  
Flag Question.

BALTIMORE, June 30.—The Sun has the following letter from Jefferson Davis in reference to the return of the Southern battle flags:

If the object now be to unite the people of the North and South as brethren in the Union, as a means to that end every sign of past conflict should as far as practicable be obliterated. To retain as a point of pride a flag "captured in battle by either the Union or Confederate soldiers would be equivalent to renewed exultation of triumph by the one or the other and surely not a step toward the restoration of peace. Flags captured from a foreign enemy may be retained as trophies after peace but here a cessation of hostilities is not pretended to be the equivalent to fraternizing, and I have heard of various instances in which Southern soldiers having retained flags captured in battle did after the war send them back to the organization from which they were captured, and I have heard of no instance when such a trophy has been displayed at a reunion of Southern soldiers to manifest their success in battle over their Northern brethren. Our men fought for a principle, and that they have not surrendered, but rather hopelessly lived to see the good sense of the Northern men revert to the teachings of their sires and re-establish the government according to the constitution on which it was

founded. That is the only victory which would be to them and their children a thing they prized and glorified. When the Confederate government evacuated Richmond many flags captured in battle were deposited in the war office in Richmond. So far as I know they were all left there and found by the United States troops when they entered the city. This would at least exhibit proof of the fact that the South did not wish to treasure up such evidence of any triumphs it ever had over the North. When Washington received the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown he required the British colors to be delivered to him in cases. The United States government presented those flags to Gen. Washington, and he left them to George Washington Parke Curtis, by whom they were entrusted to me when I was secretary of war, and left in the war office at Washington. Though these were foreign flags, and signs of a very memorable occasion, the then United States government didn't deem them of sufficient importance to be entitled as trophies of victory over a former enemy, but presented them to the soldier to whom they had been presented. The South has manifested no desire to have possession of the flags lost in battle. Their value departed when they were surrendered and the excitement which has been created over the disposition to return both to the North and the South the flags they had lost in battle seems very like a tempest in a teapot. Whether they should lie and be consumed by moths in boxes in the United States war office or be returned to their former owners has one element of value, which is that the restoration would be a declaration, such as the old Romans made that there should be no triumph for a victory won in civil war, and so far as it should express the feeling of restored fraternity it would be an advance towards that condition which all reasonable men will recognize as desirable among those who are to live together.