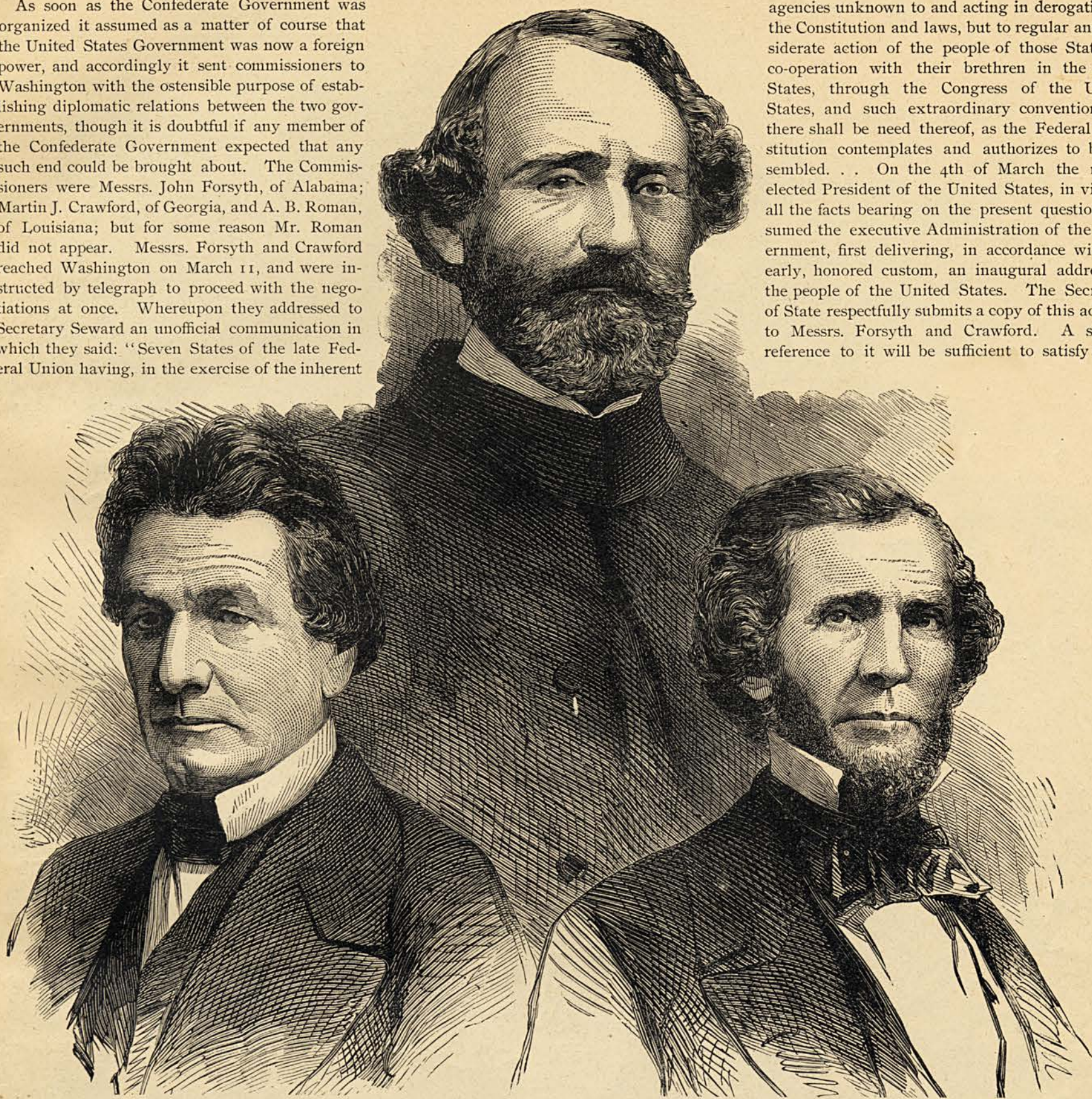


THE COMMISSIONERS TO WASHINGTON FROM THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY.

As soon as the Confederate Government was organized it assumed as a matter of course that the United States Government was now a foreign power, and accordingly it sent commissioners to Washington with the ostensible purpose of establishing diplomatic relations between the two governments, though it is doubtful if any member of the Confederate Government expected that any such end could be brought about. The Commissioners were Messrs. John Forsyth, of Alabama; Martin J. Crawford, of Georgia, and A. B. Roman, of Louisiana; but for some reason Mr. Roman did not appear. Messrs. Forsyth and Crawford reached Washington on March 11, and were instructed by telegraph to proceed with the negotiations at once. Whereupon they addressed to Secretary Seward an unofficial communication in which they said: "Seven States of the late Federal Union having, in the exercise of the inherent

agencies unknown to and acting in derogation of the Constitution and laws, but to regular and considerate action of the people of those States, in co-operation with their brethren in the other States, through the Congress of the United States, and such extraordinary conventions, if there shall be need thereof, as the Federal Constitution contemplates and authorizes to be assembled. . . . On the 4th of March the newly elected President of the United States, in view of all the facts bearing on the present question, assumed the executive Administration of the Government, first delivering, in accordance with an early, honored custom, an inaugural address to the people of the United States. The Secretary of State respectfully submits a copy of this address to Messrs. Forsyth and Crawford. A simple reference to it will be sufficient to satisfy those



A. B. ROMAN, of Louisiana.

JOHN FORSYTH, of Alabama.

MARTIN J. CRAWFORD, of Georgia.

right of every free people to change or reform their political institutions, and, through conventions of their people, withdrawn from the United States and reassumed the attributes of sovereign power delegated to it, have formed a government of their own. The Confederate States constitute an independent nation, *de jure* and *de facto*, and possess a government perfect in all its parts, and endowed with all the means of self-support. With a view to a speedy adjustment of all questions growing out of this political separation, upon such terms of amity and good-will as the respective interests, geographical contiguity and future welfare of the two nations may render necessary, the undersigned are instructed to make to the Government of the United States overtures for the opening of negotiations, assuring the Government of the United States that the President, Congress and people of the Confederate States earnestly desire a peaceful solution of these great questions; that it is neither their interests nor their wish to make any demand which is not founded in the strictest justice, nor do any act to injure their late confederates."

To this communication Secretary Seward replied three days later with an unofficial memo-

randum, in which he said: "The Secretary of State frankly confesses that he understands the events which have recently occurred, and the condition of political affairs which actually exists in the part of the Union to which his attention has thus been directed, very differently from the aspect in which they are presented by Messrs. Forsyth and Crawford. He sees in them, not a rightful and accomplished revolution and an independent nation with an established government, but rather a perversion of a temporary and partisan excitement to the inconsiderate purposes of an unjustifiable and unconstitutional aggression upon the rights and the authority vested in the Federal Government, and hitherto benignly exercised, as from their very nature they always must so be exercised, for the maintenance of the Union, the preservation of liberty, and the security, peace, welfare, happiness and aggrandizement of the American people. The Secretary of State, therefore, avows to Messrs. Forsyth and Crawford that he looks patiently but confidently for the cure of evils which have resulted from proceedings so unnecessary, so unwise, so unusual and so unnatural, not to irregular negotiations, having in view new and untried relations with

gentlemen that the Secretary of State, guided by the principles therein announced, is prevented altogether from admitting or assuming that the States referred to by them have in law or in fact withdrawn from the Federal Union, or that they could do so in the manner described by Messrs. Forsyth and Crawford, or in any other manner than with the consent and concert of the people of the United States, to be given through a national convention, to be assembled in conformity with the provisions of the Constitution of the United States. Of course, the Secretary of State cannot act upon the assumption, or in any way admit, that the so-called Confederate States constitute a foreign power, with whom diplomatic relations ought to be established."

This put an end to any hope that President Lincoln's Administration would recognize the Confederacy. Yet the Commissioners lingered in Washington, and put off until April 8 the formal receipt of Secretary Seward's memorandum. On that date its contents were telegraphed to Charleston and Montgomery, and were used by the secessionists to increase the public excitement and the determination to go out of the Union at all hazards.