Executive Department, Montgomery, Dec. 14, 1864.

His Excellency President Davis:

Dear Sir: The legislature of this State, which has just adjourned, has passed an act requiring the Governor to supply the Alabama soldiers now in the United States with clothing, blankets, provisions and money. The first act required me to first correspond with the Confederate authorities before appointing an agent to ascertain what provision the Confederate authorities had made to supply the wants of our soldiers now imprisoned. But a subsequent and supplemental act dispensed with the necessity of the preliminary correspondence and required the appointment of the agent at once. I send herewith copies of these two acts, so that you may see what is contemplated. You will discover that $500,000 were appropriated and placed at my disposal to accomplish the purpose of the legislature. I have the alternative of making a contract to have furnished these articles to our imprisoned soldiers, or to send cotton or other Southern commodities, and out of the proceeds to make purchases, through the agent appointed. I can do nothing toward carrying out the benevolent and co-operation of the Confederate authorities.

I learn through the newspapers that some arrangement has been perfected between the Confederate and the U.S. authorities by which the prisoners held by each may be supplied with articles of comfort and that cotton or tobacco, or other Southern commodities may be shipped to the United States or to Europe for the purpose of providing the means. The precise terms of such an arrangement I do not know; indeed, I do not know certainly that any arrangement has been made.
Now, Alabama proposes to furnish her own soldiers in the U.S. prisons with the articles of clothing, blankets, and such provisions as they may need. Acting under the discretion in me vested by the Legislature, I have determined to send cotton rather than make contract to have the supplies furnished otherwise. The cost to the State will be trifling by adopting this mode.

I have appointed Mr. Meyer Lehman as the agent of the State, under this act, with instructions to proceed immediately to Richmond to have, if possible, the contemplated arrangements made. I have furnished him with instructions. He will call on you and present this letter. He is a business man of established character and one of the best Southern patriots. He is a foreigner, but has been here fifteen years and is thoroughly identified with us. It will be necessary for him to go through the lines. I ask that he be furnished with proper passports and indorsed by you as the agent of the State of Alabama, to comply with the act of the Legislature to visit the Northern prisons, and to provide for the Alabama soldiers there in prison.

I ask also the privilege for the State of Alabama of shipping 1,500 bales of cotton (or whatever amount of cotton the appropriation made by Legislature for this purpose will purchase) through Mobile or New Orleans either to Europe or the ports of the United States. I can see no objection in allowing Alabama to do this. It will relieve the Confederate States to this extent of the burden imposed of furnishing our unfortunate soldiers with necessary comforts. Of course in shipping the cotton from our ports the consent of the U.S. authorities must be had also. I presume if the arrangements
between the commissioners of exchange of the respective Governments before alluded to has not been made that it will be an easy matter to have this done. The State of Alabama will be obliged for any privilege or facilities afforded her agent in getting the consent of the U.S. authorities to the shipment of cotton.

Nothing could tend more to preserve the kind relations between this State and the Confederate authorities than allowing the purposes of the act to be promptly and successfully effected. When so much good could thus be done to our noble soldiers and no harm will result to the Confederate authorities or our cause, I feel confident not only no objection will be interposed, but cordial assistance and co-operation will be given.

Rev. I. T. Tichenor, of this city, will accompany Mr. Lehman as assistant. I ask the same passport and facilities for him which may be given Mr. Lehman.

I have the honor to remain, with great regard, your friend and obedient servant,

T. H. Watts,
Governor of Alabama.