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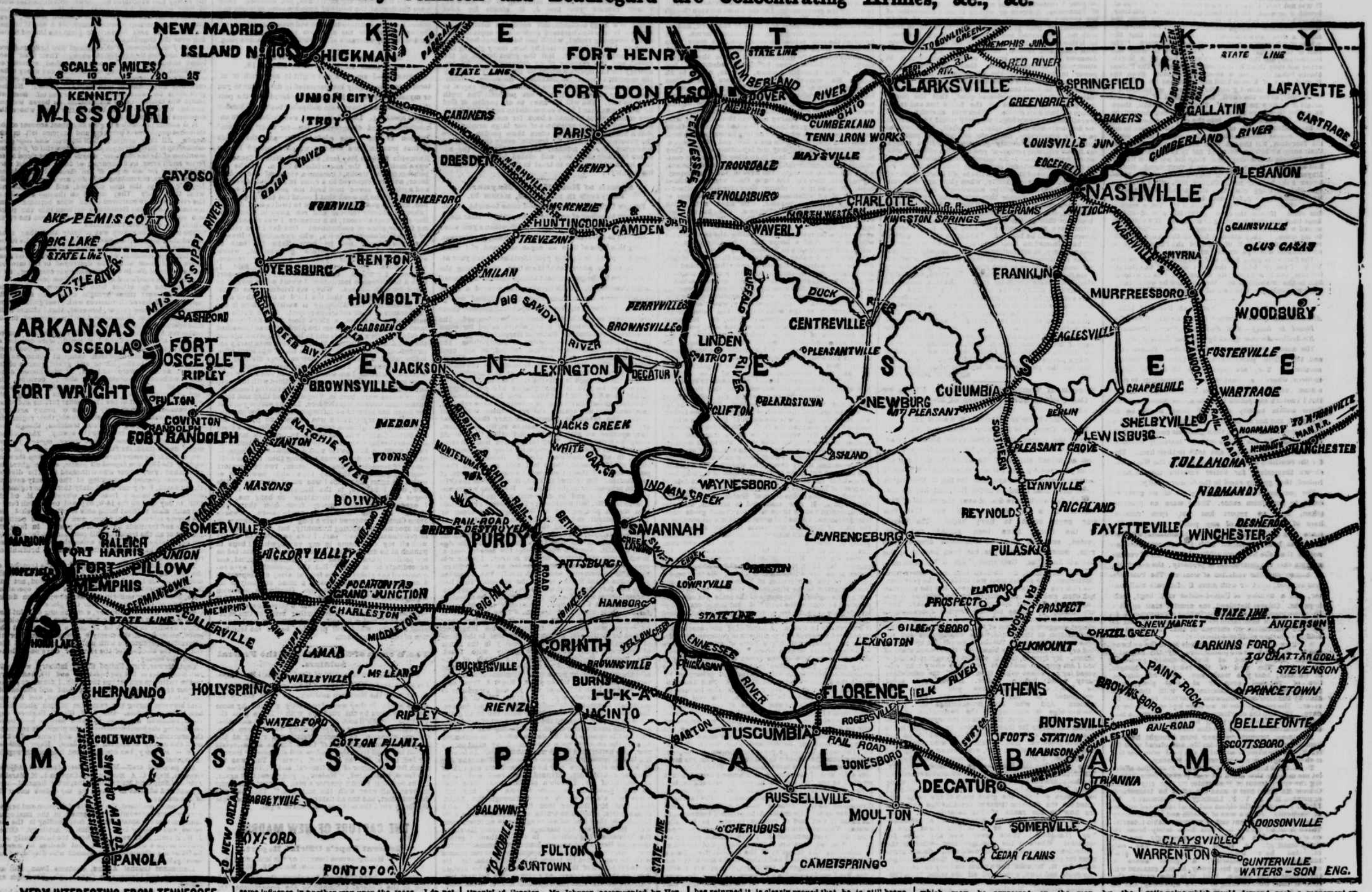
THE NEW SEAT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS.

Important Military Movements at the Southwest---The Strategical Points of Corinth and Decatur, where the Rebel Generals Albert Sidney Johnston and Beauregard are Concentrating Armies, &c., &c.



VERY INTERESTING FROM TENNESSEE.

The Union Sentiment in That State.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

Address of Governor Andrew Johnson.

Speeches of Horace Maynard, Emerson Etheridge and W. G. Brownlow.

What Brownlow Thinks of the Rebel Cause.

MOVEMENTS OF THE REBELS.

Abandonment of Columbia and Murfreesborough, &c., &c., &c.

Our Nashville Correspondence.

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 15, 1862.

Returning Loyalty in Tennessee—Extensive Defection in the Rebel Army—Movements of the New Military Governor—Enthusiastic Reception of Andy Johnson—A Convention of the People to Be Called—The State Government to Be Reorganized, and a Western Virginia—Services of "Brave John Lellyett"—The Speech of the Hon. Bailie Peyton—Movements of the Rebel Army—Strategic Importance of Decatur, &c., &c.

Tennessee went out of the Union with most unbecoming haste, immediately after having polled a heavy majority in favor of remaining in it. Treason seems to have passed over and desolated the State with the same speed and same destructiveness as the occasional tempests pass over the Western prairies. True, that treason had been plotted in her capital ten years previous; but the conclave of traitors who assembled at this point in 1851 found the result of their deliberations was but the making of asses of themselves, and their becoming the objects of denunciation for such thunder-toned orators as Haskell—"Bill Haskell," as they call him in this vicinity. But the triumph for a short period of these arch traitors—among whom, by the way, was Gideon J. Pillow—at a later period appears to have been a most incomplete one as to the destroying of all love for the Union in the hearts of the people. This fact is already apparent here. But it is not to be expected that the insanity of the people can be cured in a moment. The re-establishment of the government will be a work of time; but the reactionary movement has begun, and begun so favorably and cheeringly as to assure those who have based their hopes of a reunion of the States on the belief that there existed a strong Union sentiment at the South that they have not been deceived. The reaction in this part of the State is plainly apparent. A double influence has been brought to bear upon the people of this community, the combined force of which it will not be easy to resist. An influence is being exerted by the thousands of refugees returned from the North, and the hundreds of deserters from the rebel army tell such tales as have the same influence in another way upon the mass. I do not speak from hearsay of this. I have met many deserters. I have conversed with them; and I am satisfied the disaffection in the rebel army has not been overestimated. I have met deserters who relied on the promise of Col. Kennett as conveyed to them by one of their comrades, and they have "doffed their skin" and gone home. Sumner county is full of them, and hundreds walk the streets of Nashville to-day. An editor in this city took occasion to deny this statement as verbally made, while at his desk-set a surgeon who had taken occasion to "doff his skin," and who remained and remains in Nashville unmolested. But that hundreds of Sumner and Davidson county men have deserted from the rebel army and returned to their homes I know, and I have no doubt many others have done the same in other parts of the State.

The reactionary movement in the sentiments of the people of this section has, as I have said, set in with a strong current, which will aid, I doubt not, in strongly re-establishing the authority of the government in the State. You are aware that Andrew Johnson has been deputed as Military Governor, for the purpose of establishing a provisional government in the State until, by and with the consent of the whole people, the United States authority can be restored to its former perfectness. Governor Johnson arrived here on the evening of the 12th, and has employed the meantime in looking about him and divining the feelings of the people.

I left Louisville on the morning of the 12th, in the special train prepared for General Johnson and suite. The party consisted of the new Governor, Hon. Horace Maynard, Hon. Emerson Etheridge, C. F. Trigg, W. A. Browning, John Lellyett, U. P. Farrington, J. M. Woodward and others. These gentlemen will assist in the formation of the new government. John Lellyett is the newly appointed Postmaster of Nashville, and the firmest of all the Bell and Everett men who withstood the tempest that swept over the land in April last. At Louisville Governor Johnson was strictly reserved, refusing to make a public speech on the subject of his mission and this silence was preserved until the morning of the 12th, when it was broken at Senora station, on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Here the trains going north and south met, and Hon. Leslie Combs, of Kentucky, being on the train going north, called loudly for Governor Johnson, and the two distinguished Unionists met upon the platform of the train. Very unexpectedly to everybody, Mr. Combs turned to the crowd who had hastily assembled, and said (I report the speech verbatim):—

"Fellow citizens—When Andy Johnson and I last met four hostile armies were upon the soil of old Kentucky. Now, when we thus meet, not a damned rebel foot disgraces it. They have been driven from our State to the southern extreme of his, and already the banner he loves so well is floating over its Capitol. And Mr. Johnson will find, when he arrives at Nashville, that 100,000 men are there in arms, ready to help him rid the State of the damned scoundrels and drive them into the Gulf of Mexico."

Mr. Johnson replied:—

"Fellow citizens—I have but time in passing to say, that, as you know, I am with you in this great cause, for the restoration of our government. It is a glorious cause, which cannot fail—which must prove successful. Already I can see the end of the rebellion, and, I assure you, I candidly believe the time is not far distant when the enemies of the government will cease to strive against it. For that purpose and to that end let us all strive. I go to aid in restoring this government in my own State; and I doubt not—I have never despaired—that the old flag and the old government will be welcomed by my fellow citizens. I thank you for this attention and bid you farewell."

Loud cries for Maynard were answered by a bow from the tall East Tennesseean, and the train moved on. At Bowling Green, Ky., and Gallatin, Tenn., the distinguished visitors were warmly and enthusiastically welcomed; and a no less hearty welcome would, doubtless, have been tendered Mr. Johnson at Nashville, had it been known that the train would run through instead of lying over at Bowling Green, as usual. It was after dark when the train arrived, and the welcome of the Governor was tendered by General Buell and staff, instead of by the people, who so heartily greeted him on the following night. The Governor and suite took rooms at the St. Cloud Hotel, and, it becoming generally known throughout the day of the 13th that he had arrived, a large crowd assembled before the hotel and called lustily for the distinguished Senator. Mr. Johnson, accompanied by Hon. Horace Maynard and Emerson Etheridge, appeared on the balcony and made a short and telling speech. He was listened to with the greatest anxiety and interest. The crowd present was very large, and was composed of many of the citizens and but few soldiers. These citizens were of the more sensible class, who had not fled upon the approach of the Union army, and who had probably not allowed themselves to become involved to the same extent with the refugees in the great folly of secession. They gave the honorable gentleman a silent, earnest and anxious attention.

The speech was characteristic of the man—firm, liberal, and with a simplicity and truthfulness pervading his words, tone and manner that inspired respect and confidence, no doubt disappointing many present who, not so loyal, it would have gratified to have listened to harsh and ungentle words, which they hoped might generate a prejudice or stir the bad passions of better men than themselves, who are new disposed to give Governor Johnson a hearty welcome and a liberal support in his effort to restore order and repose to the troubled and distressed State.

It is generally understood here that a convention of the people is shortly to be called by Governor Johnson, and a system of reconstruction pursued, similar to the movements for the same purpose in Western Virginia. Governor Johnson will also attempt to raise troops in the State to the number of at least a brigade. The speech will give as clear an idea to the reader of the intention of the Governor as he has honored me with. Indeed, his actual plan is at present necessarily indefinite. I think that he has not fixed upon any scheme at present. I have no positive information to this effect; but Mr. Johnson informs me that his "purpose is to conciliate and restore;" but he is fully aware, and has so expressed himself, that an aroused public expects that in this State treason shall be punished when he administers justice. He comes, as he says, "not as an enemy, but as a friend." But Andrew Johnson, as fully as any man in the country, feels that the administration of justice in this State must be thorough and complete. He appears to have been unexpectedly mild. It was supposed that, recollecting all the indignity heaped upon him, and the cruelties practised towards himself and family, some of the bitterness of his nature—Lane, of Oregon, knows whether or not he is bitter—would creep out. But, as you will see, his speech is "more in sorrow than in anger;" and he looks so, too. There is a saddened look always on his countenance, and his movements solemn to a painful degree. It is known not to be natural to him, and people wonder alike at the absence of his bitterness, his spirit and activity. He has gone to work in a quiet manner, and not a hasty one. He has seen and conversed with many of the faithful who remained here, and has endeavored to learn "how the land lies" before pushing forward his scheme for the restoration of the State to her old position.

It appears that the announcement that John Lellyett, of this city, had been appointed Postmaster, was premature. I understand that Postmaster Blair nominated Mr. Lellyett for the place; but Mr. Lellyett assures me he has had no notice of his confirmation. He certainly deserves the position, and will doubtless be confirmed. Brave John Lellyett is a man who ought to have played a more prominent part in this struggle. In the history of the early movements of the conspirators in this State, he will stand forth in relief a fit companion for such figures as Johnson, Maynard and Brownlow in the east, and Emerson Etheridge in the west. Of all the prominent Bellmen of this city, who were looked upon as the leaders of the Union men in Middle Tennessee, John Lellyett and Allen A. Hall alone stood firm and maintained their ground. The former by words, deeds and publications, long after Bell, and Ewing, and Barrow, had surrendered to the pressure upon them, continued to evince his own patriotism and to call upon the people to proclaim theirs. His circular published just before the election in June, when the State went out, was the last appeal made to the overwhelmed Union sentiment of the State, and it was suppressed by the authorities.

The rebel organ here published the document also, with remarks intended to inflame the people, and doubtless to exasperate them to some action against Mr. Lellyett. Mr. Lellyett remained in the State but a short time after its secession. He removed to Louisville, but made occasional visits to Nashville. When about to make one in August, he received notice from one of the "Vigilance Committee" at Nashville not to return there, as Jeff. Davis had ordered his arrest and imprisonment at Richmond. This notice came from an old friend, who was once his colleague in politics, who deserted him, turned traitor to the government, and who is now an acting Major General of Tennessee Volunteers. I refer to Edwin H. Ewing. Mr. Lellyett returned to the city with Governor Johnson on Thursday, having been absent from home for seven months. Mr. Lellyett is a young man in appearance—thirty-five in reality—short of stature and strong of frame, with a kind and gentle heart and a great soul locked up in it. Brave in his opposition to the conspirators, whom he fought a year ago, he was brave in leaving all to become an exile, and by his kindness and moderation to those whom he has met since he has returned it is clearly proved that he is still brave John Lellyett, as the Louisville *Journal* has called him.

It is stated and denied that Hon. Bailie Peyton, of this State, has made a Union speech at Gallatin, and that he has aroused the whole country. It appears that he made a speech a few days since at a meeting of the citizens of the town to decide whether or not they would have a United States post office at Gallatin. They decided unanimously to allow the United States the privilege of sustaining an office for their benefit. Mr. Peyton's speech was consequently local; but I have no doubt a Union sentiment or two crept into the speech. Mr. Peyton has always been a Union man. He came into my room, at Louisville, in August last, and in a long conversation expressed himself as sympathizing with the government and his undying attachment to the flag of the Union. His son Bailie—killed at Mill Springs—was one of the staunchest of the Unionists before the secession of the State, and when at last he did go over to the rebels he was one of the few rebels who set their faces against the persecution of Union men for opinion's sake. A threat was made, in young Peyton's hearing, to drive one Robert McLeod from the State. He turned to the person making the threat and notified him that when that was to be done Bailie Peyton would have to be driven too.

The rebels are concentrating their Western forces at Decatur. I informed you in my last, on the authority of a gentleman just arrived from Memphis, that General Johnston's army had crossed the Tennessee river at the point at which it is now reported the rebels are concentrating, for, doubtless, a final struggle for the possession of the West. Although the latest Southern papers received here state that Johnston's department and that of Beauregard are distinct, it is stated and supposed that General Beauregard is the master spirit of these movements. It is argued by military men that the movements at Columbus and Bowling Green—or rather from those points—were made under orders from Beauregard, and that only he could have made these changes without totally disorganizing and demoralizing the rebel armies. His expressed opinion of the works at Bowling Green and the "slaughter pens" at Columbus show that he either has no military knowledge or that he had some purpose in thus disparaging the works of Buckner and Bishop Polk. It is not to be doubted that Beauregard is an able engineer, and it is known that in ridiculing the works at the two points named he differs in opinion from some of the best military engineers in our own army, who declare the captured works to have been most admirable in their arrangements. Was it not the purpose of Beauregard to make it appear to the rebel soldiers wisdom to abandon the works on which they had bestowed such labor, and which he pronounced slaughter pens? They had to be abandoned. Would not it have been most demoralizing to the rebels had Bishop Polk ordered the abandonment of the works which he had planned and they had built at Columbus? But along comes Beauregard—in whom they all believe and by whom they all swear—and he says the works are "slaughter pens." The Bishop is ridiculed by his men, and they abandon the works without abandoning their hopes. Beauregard turns a retrograde movement into a positive advance, and in falling back to Island No. 10 makes his deluded followers believe he is marching forward to a stronger position. Does it not seem that to Beauregard the confederacy owes its thanks for the existence of its Western army?

Decatur is said to be the point at which the forces are converging. It is known that Johnston's army is at that point. It is one of the most important points in the confederacy—much more important than Chattanooga or Murfreesboro, to which it was reported that the rebels were falling back. It is important as a point of railroad consequence, and it is looked to as the future western terminus of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, in case the road should be cut off at any point between that place and Memphis—a not unlikely result of certain movements on the part of General Grant. The Tennessee and Alabama Railroad from the north, and the Central Alabama, I think, from the south, connect with the Memphis and Charleston road at this point. If the latter mentioned road should be cut off at or near Florence, Ala., the roads running north through Mississippi would become useless to the eastern part of the confederacy. But, by holding Decatur, the confederacy retains possession of the Alabama Central, which further south connects with all the Mississippi roads and renders the connection between New Orleans and Richmond complete. But it is in great danger at Decatur, though twice the number of Johnston's army defended it. Decatur is important in another point of view. It is beyond the head of navigation of the Tennessee, and the gunboats cannot reach it. Recollecting how important a part these boats have played in the past warfare in the West, it will at once be perceived that this is an important feature to the Confederates. Southern life insurance companies owe a debt of gratitude to the gunboats. They have proved great life preservers. Rebels have an instinctive dread of them, and retire at their approach.

The information quoted above is accompanied and coupled by and with other items which indicate that the rebels are falling back to new lines which may be expressed on the map by the line of railroads running east from Memphis to Chattanooga, and thence northeast to Richmond. The evident purpose and plan of the rebels for the present is to endeavor to defend and hold the Memphis and Charleston and East Tennessee and Virginia railroads, and a full development of the results of the movements now going on on their part will, it is more than probable, establish this line of railroads as the line of rebel defence of the "South proper." The Memphis and Charleston Railroad and its connections have been the most important public thoroughfares in the Southern confederacy, connecting as they did the extremes of east and west, and affording incalculable and invaluable benefits in the way of transportation. It is plain how much the rebels depend upon it from the fact that they have most carefully guarded it in the most vulnerable points from foes within. It is not improbable that they will endeavor all in their power to defend it from those without. By foes within, I mean the Union men who have so often made themselves felt in the northern part of Alabama. They exist there in numbers, as the late gunboat expedition and the destruction of the bridge at Decatur have sufficiently proved. Among the strongest Union counties in East Tennessee are Bradley, Meigs and Hamilton, through which the railroad named passes; and in Alabama, Madison and Jackson counties have proved to be well and appropriately named.

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 18, 1862.

The Advance of the Cavalry—Their Arrival at Columbia—A Skirmish—Flight of the Rebels—Capture of a Provision Train—The Expedition Successful—The Position of Our Troops at Florence, &c.

An expedition upon Columbia having proved highly successful, I presume there is nothing wrong in giving you a brief account of the affair.

On the night of the 15th inst. the chosen troops of cavalry received orders to make a hasty march upon Columbia, in Maury county, push on through the place, and endeavor to save and hold the turnpike bridge which spans Duck river at that point. The force was notified that a strong body of infantry would follow immediately, and would expect to find them in possession of Columbia.

The cavalry began the march at nine o'clock on the evening of the 15th inst., and pushed forward to the point named. Nothing of interest or importance occurred until the two regiments dashed into the town about daybreak, and secured the bridges designated in their orders. It was discovered that the town was occupied by a small force of rebel infantry, who were there for the purpose of guarding and forwarding a train of cars filled with wheat belonging to the rebel confederacy. A skirmish of slight duration, and a flight on the part of the rebels of longer duration, ensued. The train was captured, and with it about thirty prisoners, who were brought in the next day. The purpose of the expedition was fully accomplished, and it is not improbable that a number of stores of importance will also be secured.

Columbia is the county seat of Maury county, and is situated on Duck river, a branch of the Tennessee, not navigable for steamers or gunboats, and it is distant about forty miles due south of Nashville. It is said—Parson Brownlow makes the statement—that Southern Tennesseans are being impressed into the rebel army at the point of the bayonet, and that no able bodied man dares refuse to enter it. There is an earnest desire expressed by the citizens of Central Tennessee for the advance of our troops. Nashville sent a flag of truce to Fort Donelson requesting General Grant to come and take possession of the city, to save it from the ravages of the rebels. We have had no flag of truce from Columbia, but yesterday saw several citizens from there who were here to induce the rapid advance of our troops. It is due to all whom it may concern to say that transportation has caused the delay at this point.

Another reason demands our hasty advance. Our forces, as it is well known, are at Florence, Ala., while about them, it is stated, an immense army is being concentrated by the rebels. Numerous railroads connecting with the Memphis and Charleston and with the position of the rebels at Decatur, afford them many facilities for hasty transportation of troops, which they will doubtless use to the best advantage. Two armies, each of which is said to be greater than that of General Smith, at Florence, are said to be gathering—one at Decatur, under General A. S. Johnston, and the other at Corinth, Miss., under General Beauregard. It is not improbable that two armies of 50,000 each can be gathered together at the two points named within a very short time, and any one can see, from the position of the points, the strategetic value which would demand such a movement on their part. The fate of the confederacy depends upon the success of the concentrations now going on in its confines. There is one thing certain, our troops will find as they march further South that they are coming in contact with foes not abler or more chivalric and brave, but certainly more bitter against the Yankees. At Mill Spring the Tennesseeans fought badly, but no better fighting was ever seen than that of the Mississippians and Alabamians. The same rule held good at Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, and it will find additional proofs in the future.

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 19, 1862.

Arrival of Parson Brownlow—Description of His Personal Appearance—His Trials and Troubles—His Interview With Benjamin—His Journey to Nashville—His Opinion of the Southern Confederacy—Affecting Scene Between Brownlow, Trigg and Maynard—En route for New York, &c., &c.

After an imprisonment of over three months, accompanied by innumerable and unparalleled outrages, Parson or Dr. W. G. Brownlow, reached this city on Saturday, and once more breathed in liberty the air of freedom. I had a long conversation with the old man, and hasten to send you what of interest was stated by him. Of so noted a man as the Parson, all must have formed some idea. Most persons have doubtless pictured him as a stout, dark and terrible looking person, whose frame would intimidate a mob and crush a common man. Brave and daring as he has proved himself, one would, not having seen him, picture him as a giant capable of, singly and alone, achieving the daring deeds which his mind might plot. But fancy would in this case be much at fault. Parson Brownlow is a man of perhaps fifty years and 125 pounds, not more. He is of the medium height, but his extreme spareness gives him a taller look. His arms are long and ungraceful. His countenance is far from being handsome—being as broad as it is long, and not fleshily filled out. High cheek bones, thin chin and a large mouth are the prominent features about a countenance which is strangely interesting and attractive even when it is not known whose soul looks out of the little but expressive eyes that give this life to the countenance.

The Parson informs me that his paper was seized on the 25th of November last, by order, I think he said, of General Zollicoffer. He claims that "it was the last Union newspaper published in the second hell, resulting from rebellion and secession." Before this final suppression of his paper it was known that it was excluded from the mails, though he had no notification to that effect, and also that it was thrown from the cars into the rivers and other streams in the country. He was allowed to remain at liberty but a fortnight after his press had been stopped, being arrested on the 6th of December, and thrown into prison at Knoxville. A court martial was held, and it was supposed that he would be hung. He thought so himself, and had prepared a speech to be delivered on the scaffold. He says that it was in effect that "this rebellion had been begun in fraud, theft and perjury and that it was being prosecuted in the same style. He desired to tell them that the leaders of this unholy rebellion were a set of perjured scoundrels, and that hell and the penitentiary were full of better men." But it appears that the rebels were afraid to hang him, and it was decided by one vote not to execute him. He was remanded back to jail, and the result of the court martial reported to the rebel President. Here began what the Parson sarcastically called "a learned correspondence with Judah P. Benjamin, the Liar," in which "he was pleased to call one man dangerous to the peace of this (Southern confederacy) government." The result of this correspondence was an agreement on the part of Benjamin to place the Parson at liberty, within the lines of the Union army, and on the part of Dr. Brownlow to leave the country. A long delay ensued. The Parson was placed in a jail with twenty five others. These twenty-six had one single cup from which to drink, not only water, but what else was given them at their meals. In this place the Parson became seriously ill with typhoid fever, and no one entertained hopes (or fears) of his recovery except himself. He says he told them he "would live to see the end of the rebellion. As for my part, sir, I had no intention of dying."

While we were speaking together Colonel Manson approached, and I introduced the Colonel to the Parson, remarking, as I did so, that "Colonel Manson was the man that whipped the rebels at Fishing creek, and started them for the race to Knoxville." "And I, sir," said the Parson, "am the man who saw them arrive at Knoxville. They came in 'on time,' astride of stolen horses