

# THE FAIRFIELD COURIER.

VOLUME I.

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## THE FAIRFIELD COURIER.

BY J. E. BRITTON.

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ADVERTISEMENTS:

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### CORRESPONDENCE.

The following are copies of letters written by Gen. Sherman and Gen. Hampton in regard to the killing of some of Sherman's plunderers on the march through South Carolina:

Sherman's letter to Gen. Hampton.

Headq's Military Division of the

Mississippi.

In the Field, Feb. 23, 1865.

Lieut. Gen. Wade Hampton, Commanding Cavalry Forces, C. S. A.

General: It is officially reported to me that our foraging parties are murdered after capture, and labelled "Death to all Foragers." One instance of a Lieutenant and seven men near Chesterville, and another of twenty "near a ravine, 80 rods from the main road," about three miles from Fenesterville. I have ordered a similar number of prisoners in our hands to be disposed of in like manner.

I hold about 4,000 prisoners captured in various ways, and can stand it as long as you, but I hardly think these murders are committed with your knowledge, and would suggest that you give notice to the people at large that every life taken by them simply results in the death of one of your Confederates.

Of course you cannot question my right to forage on the country. It is a war right as old as history. The manner of exercising it varies with circumstances, and if the civil authorities will supply requisitions, I will forbid all foraging. But I find no civil authorities who can respond to calls for forage or provisions, and therefore must collect directly from the people. I have no doubt this is the occasion of much misbehaviour on the part of our men, but I cannot permit an enemy to judge or punish with wholesale murder.

Personally I regret the bitter feelings engendered by this war; but they were to be expected, and I simply allege that those who struck the first blow, and made war inevitable, ought not in fairness to reproach us for the natural consequences. I merely assert our war right to forage, and my resolve to protect my foragers to the extent of life for life.

I am, with respect, your obedient servant.

[Signed] W. T. SHERMAN,

Major General U. S. Army.

Official: Jno. M. Otey, A. A. Gen'l.

Gen. Hampton's Reply.

Headquarters in the Field,  
February 27, 1865.

Major Gen. W. T. Sherman, U. S. Army.

General: Your communication of the 24th inst. reached me to-day. In it you state that it has been officially reported that your foraging parties were "murdered" after capture, and you go on to say, you had "ordered a similar number of prisoners in our hands to be disposed of in like manner." That is to say you have ordered a number of Confederate soldiers to be "murdered."

You characterize your order in proper terms for the public voice, even in your own country, where it seldom dares to express itself in vindication of truth, honor or justice, will surely agree with you in pronouncing you guilty of murder, if your order is carried out.

Before dismissing this portion of your letter, I beg to assure you that for every soldier of mine "murdered" by you, I shall have executed at once two of yours, giving in all cases, preference to any officers who may be in my hands.

In reference to the statement you make regarding the death of your foragers, I have only to say that I know nothing of it, that no orders given by me authorize the killing of prisoners after capture, and that I do not believe that my men killed any of yours except under circumstances in which it was perfectly legitimate and proper they should kill them.

It is a part of the system of the thieves whom you designate as your foragers to fire the dwellings of those citizens they have robbed.

To check this inhuman system, which is justly execrated by every civilized nation, I have directed my men to shoot down all of your men who are caught

burning houses. This order shall remain in force, as long as you disgrace the profession of arms by allowing your men to destroy private dwellings.

You say that I cannot, of course, question your right to forage on the country. "It is a right as old as history," I do not, sir, question this right. But there is a right older even than this, and one more inalienable—the right that every man has to defend his home, and to protect those who are dependent upon him. And from my heart, I wish that every old man and boy in my country, who can fire a gun, would shoot down, as he would a wild beast, the men who are desolating their land, burning their houses, and insulting their women.

You are particular in defining and claiming "war rights." May I ask if you enumerate among them the right to fire upon a defenceless city without notice; to burn that city to the ground after it had been surrendered by the authorities, who claimed, though in vain, that protection which is always accorded in civilized warfare to non-combatants; to fire the dwelling-houses of citizens, after robbing them, and to perpetrate even darker crimes than these—crimes too black to be mentioned?

You have permitted, if you have not ordered, the commission of those offences against humanity and the rules of war. You fired into the city of Columbia without a word of warning. After its surrender by the Mayor, who demanded protection to private property, you laid the whole city in ashes, leaving amid its ruins, thousands of old men and helpless women and children, who are likely to perish of starvation and exposure. Your line of march can be traced by the lurid light of burning houses, and in more than one household there is an agony far more bitter than that of death.

The Indian scalped his victim regardless of sex or age, but with all his barbarity, he always respected the person of his female captives. Your soldiers, more savage than the Indian, insult those whose natural protectors are absent.

In conclusion, I have only to request that whenever you have any of my men "disposed of" or "murdered," for the terms appear to be synonymous with you, you will let me hear of it, in order that I may know what action to take in the matter. In the meantime I shall hold fifty-six of your men as hostages of those whom you have ordered to be executed.

I am yours, &c.

[Signed] WADE HAMPTON,

Lieut. General.

Official: Jno. M. Otey, A. A. Gen'l.

### PUTTING NEGROES IN THE ARMY.

The Senate of Virginia having removed the injunction of secrecy from some of their proceedings, we are enabled to give the following report of the action taken by that body on Saturday, the 25th February, on the bill to raise a volunteer force of slaves and free negroes.

The following is a copy of the bill as it was passed by the Senate and sent to the House of Delegates:

"Be it enacted by the General Assembly, That the Governor of this Commonwealth be, and he is hereby authorized and empowered to call for volunteers from among the slaves and free negroes of the State, to aid in defence of the capital, and such other points as are or may be threatened by the public enemy.

"2. That it shall be the duty of the Governor to equip all slaves who may volunteer with the consent of their masters, and all free negroes who shall tender their services, to be organized into infantry companies of not less than sixty-four, rank and file, under white officers, to be appointed by himself, and shall place the same as fast as so organized, to the disposal of the General in Chief of the Confederate armies; or he may order all such volunteers to report immediately to the General in Chief to be organized and officered by him, if thereby time can be saved and the interests of the service promoted.

"3. All laws and parts of laws now in force prohibiting the carrying of arms by slaves or free negroes, are hereby suspended during their terms of service in favor of such volunteers as may be called to the field under this act.

"4. The forces raised and organized under this act shall be enlisted for one year from the date of being mustered into the service of the Confederate States.

"5. This act shall be in force from its passage.

Spring is upon us, with its balmy and pleasant weather.

### LIEUTENANT McNEILL'S EXPLOIT—THE CAPTURE OF GENERALS CROOK AND KELLY—GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE TRIP TO CUMBERLAND, MD., &c.

We are indebted, says the Richmond *Whig*, for the following interesting particulars of the capture of the Yankee Major-Generals Crook and Kelly, to one of the participants in that gallant affair.

After the surprise and capture of New Creek by General Rosser, Major-General Crook, of the Yankee army, was assigned to the command of the department in which that station is embraced. Major-General Kelly, who previously commanded the department, still remained in Cumberland, Md., about 21 miles below, having his headquarters at one of the hotels in the town. Gen. Crook established his headquarters in the same town at the other principal hotel. As soon as this state of affairs became known to Lieut. Jesse C. McNeill, upon whom has devolved the command of McNeill's Rangers, since the death of his father, the lamented old captain, he resolved to risk an attempt to surprise and bring off those two Generals.

Having posted himself thoroughly in regard to the situation of affairs in and around Cumberland, the night of Monday, 20th instant, he, with sixty trusty men, crossed Knobby Mountain to the North branch of the Potomac. Reaching this stream at a point below the first picket post that overlooked the selected route of ingress into Cumberland, he crossed, and a few minutes the Yankees on duty were relieved. "Your countersign," demanded Lieut. McNeill to a burly Dutchman, with such accompaniments as seemed to impress the fellow with the notion that to divulge it was a matter of self-preservation. "Boo! Kaah" (meaning "Bull's Gap") was his quick response.

Then on briskly down the county road towards town, near five miles distant, he moved. As the little band struck what is known as the old pike, soon, "halt, who comes there," rings out on the air. "Friends, with countersign," is the response. "Dismount one, advance and give the countersign," is the pickets' next order to the Lieutenant. Having lately had his ankle crushed, the Lieutenant was not in a condition to obey, and so urging his horse forward, he quickly heard from the astonished picket, "Don't shoot, I surrender."

On they rushed, and the reserves were gathered in. The first picket captured was cavalry, the next infantry. The former were brought along the latter were disarmed, their guns smashed, and they were paroled to remain where they were until morning; were told that the town was surrounded, and it would be impossible for them to escape.

Entering town on the West side, they passed another picket on the right bank of the North Branch. By this picket they were not halted. Crossing Will's Creek (which flows through the town) at the Iron Bridge, coolly and deliberately up Baltimore street, they ride, some whistling, some laughing and talking as if they were Yankees, at home among friends. To and fro on the street by the gas light are seen walking Yankee guards. "Hollo, boys, whose command is that?" "Scouts from New Creek," is the response. Presently here they are, between two and three o'clock in the morning, in front of the St. Nicholas Hotel; Kelly's headquarters. Down spring, quietly, and calmly, the men who, by previous arrangement, are to visit Kelly's room. They enter the hall, and having procured a light, they enter the General's room. The General, aroused by the knock, wrestling on one elbow. "You know me, General, I suppose," says Joseph W. Kuykendall, who had charge of this party. "I do," said the General. "You are—giving his name, General."

"You had me once, it is my honor to have you now. You are a prisoner." "But," says the General, "whom am I surrendering to?" "To me, sir," was the emphatic response. "No place or time for ceremony, so you will dress quickly." The order was obeyed.

While this was going on at the St. Nicholas, another scene was transpiring at the Rovers House. Thither went promptly a portion of the men, as per arrangement, under Lieut. Weston. Reaching it, they halt—five men, in charge of Joseph L. Vandiver dismount and "halt" is the greeting of the sentinel standing in front of the entrance. "Friends with countersign, bearing important dispatches for Gen. Crook," is Vandiver's answer. "Advance, one," &c. In a moment Vandiver had the sentinel's gun,

and ordered him to stand aside under guard. The door is rapped at—a voice from within asks, "Who is you?—I don't know you." "Open the door, I must see Gen. Crook." The door is opened, and there stands a small darkey. "Is Gen. Crook in?" "Yes, sir." "Show me his room." "I'm afraid to; but I will if you don't tell on me." Crook's room is reached; rap is given. "Come in." In obedience to the invitation, a tall and stalwart form, with light in one hand and pistol undisplayed in the other, stands erect, cool and deliberate, before the General. "Gen. Crook, I presume," says Vandiver. "I am, sir." "I am Gen. Rosser, sir; you are in my power; you have two minutes to dress in." Then the General rubbed his eyes, as if he thought he dreamed. "Come, General; there are your clothes—you can either put them on or go as you are." The General quickly arose and dressed.

The prisoner and his captors make their exit to their vigilant comrades without. The General is made to mount behind Vandiver. Off they start, soon rejoin the St. Nicholas party with their prize, and then they all commence to "evacuate" the city quietly, coolly and in good order. With Crook bridge, they turned to the left and proceeded down the tow path. On the opposite side of the canal, encamped on the hills around the town, are many of Crook's soldiers, who dream not of the surprise the morning shall bring them; the sentinel too as unconscious as their slumbering comrades of the proximity of a foe. A few are awake, and with curiosity aroused by the sound of horsemen moving, as it were in mid-night review before them, inquire "whose command?" "Scouts going out" is the careless response.

At length they are about five miles below the town, where they intend to re-cross to "old Virginia." A "halt" greets the advance. "Friends with countersign." The picket gives the usual command "Bull's Gap," says McNeill, "no time to dismount; are in a hurry, the enemy are reported close, we are sent out by Gen. Crook to watch his movements." "Go on, then—cold night boys to be out." "Yes, pretty cold." "Give the Johannes—boys." "Oh, yes, we are the boys to do that," are some of the words interchanged as McNeill and his boys file past the unsuspecting Yankees. A moment or two more, and McNeill is in Virginia.

McGregor is on his native heath. With McGregor's clans around him.

On he pushes briskly. Without any report of Yankees pursuing in the rear, to which a strict watch is kept; Romney, twenty-seven miles from Cumberland, is reached; the rear guard report about 60 Yankees in sight, with some of whom they exchanged a few shots, but the Yankees exhibited no disposition to push on very fast. At about 2 o'clock in the day, McNeill is seen near Moorefield, moving up the South Branch of the Potomac; while up the pike on the opposite side move the Yankees, about two hundred strong, their horses the worse for having loped from New Creek Station, some thirty-five miles off, from which point they started about 8 o'clock in the morning, as we afterwards learned. Tuesday night McNeill camped on the South Fork of the South Branch, with his prisoners all safe, but like their captors, all tired. The next morning five hundred Yankee cavalry entered Moorefield, a large force was also reliably reported to Lieut. McNeill going up Lost River to intercept him, but they didn't, as the General reached this city Sunday morning, about 2 o'clock in charge of Lieut. J. S. Weston, who rendered prompt, active and efficient service in effecting the capture.

It is proper to say that the entrance into General Kelly's room was through his Adjutant General's apartment. An eye was kept to this gentleman and he was brought off with four headquarter colors. His name is Major Melvin.

To have entered Cumberland, a city of 8 or 9,000 inhabitants, (a majority of whom are bitterly hostile,) with, according to our best information, 7 or 8,000 troops encamped in and around, is very strong evidence that Lieut. Jesse C. McNeill is a chip of the old block, a worthy son of his gallant old sire, Capt. John Hanson McNeill, who, with his eldest son has already laid their lives upon their country's altar.

We understand that General Early immediately on the receipt of the news of his exploit, advanced the gallant young officer to the rank of captain in McNeill's Rangers.

### SHERMAN'S INTENTIONS.

The Lynchburg *Virginian* of Tuesday, Feb. 28, says:

There was a rumor here yesterday, to the effect that Sherman had turned aside from his apparent march hither. We know not what measures of importance to attach to this report, but the following from the New York *Tribune* of a late date, would, if that paper speaks advisedly, indicate that Sherman did not intend to march directly for Virginia. The *Tribune* says:

"It is not to be supposed, however, that Gen. Sherman contemplated an interrupted march from Savannah to Richmond. He is likely to touch the seacoast in the course of it, or some point near enough to the sea to be a convenient halting place. Were he to move directly toward Richmond, he has a choice of two lines after leaving Columbia; either by way of Charlotte, or by way of Fayetteville. The nearness of the latter to the coast, and the already ascertained presence of Sherman's cavalry at Florence, indicate a choice of the Fayetteville route. Even if Lee, therefore, had resolved upon abandoning Richmond and delivering battle with all his forces in North Carolina, he might well enough wait till the direction of Sherman's march from Columbia had been finally determined. If to Raleigh, the battle will be south of it. If to the sea, it is impossible to fix the probable scene of the decisive struggle."

Fayetteville, the point indicated by the *Tribune* as that to which Sherman will direct his march, is at the head of Cape Fear river, where we have an important armory. There was an arsenal there before the war, and all the machinery belonging to the Rifle Works at Harper's Ferry, was removed thither, where it has been in operation. If Wilmington is evacuated, of which there is little doubt, the enemy could transport reinforcements, provisions and ammunition for Sherman's army up the river to Fayetteville, from whence he could start again taking Raleigh in his route to Virginia, entering our State about Clarksville, in Mecklenburg county, thus leaving Danville to the west. We are strongly inclined to the opinion that the *Tribune's* theory is correct, and that Sherman will not attempt to come to Virginia at present. He will receive reinforcements at the point indicated where Schofield and Terry's troops, that have been engaged before Wilmington, can join him, as also those from Thomas that have been reported moving for some time past. When he concludes to make another start, it will be with a large army, sufficient in his judgment to sweep away all opposition. The Gordon is tightening around us, but as Johnston is once more to command, he will treat Sherman to some of his old tactics—kill five Yankees for every Confederate soldier that may be slain. There is another theory, that Sherman will take water at Wilmington, and move his whole force to Grant, with the view of attacking Gen. Lee in front. But this is not probable. He will be much more likely to attempt a march through North Carolina and attack Lee in rear while Grant operates with him in front.

### IMPORTANT MOVEMENT REPORTED.

We have reason to believe, says the *Examiner* of the 21st, that the expedition, which was reported yesterday to have certainly moved from Knoxville, are not upon Southwestern Virginia, but that it is intended to penetrate North Carolina, and probably to strike the railroad between Salisbury and Charlotte. This force, consisting of several thousand cavalry, and supposed to be under the command of Averill, was, as we reported yesterday, at Greenville, from which point the main stage road into North Carolina branches off, passing through Warm Spring gap. This appears to be the obvious direction of the expedition. From all we can learn there is nothing to tempt them in Southwestern Virginia, as they have already damaged the Salt Works and railroad there, and plundered the country to such an extent that it is doubtful whether any considerable number of troops could be subsisted there.

Gen. G. W. Smith, who commanded the Georgia State forces at Atlanta, in his report of operations about the city, says that if General Hood's orders had been properly executed, Sherman would have been foiled and Atlanta saved. Also, Governor Harris of Tennessee, who accompanied the army in its operations in that State, asserts that he does not even now see anything that General Hood did that he should not have done, nor anything that he neglected to do.