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"The Rights of the States, and the Union of the States."

TERMS.

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COMMUNICATION.

FOR THE VIRGINIAN.

THE CRISIS, No 4.—*Military Fame.*

One would be induced to believe from the *great length* and *boldness* of the "reply to Cassius," by the Editors of the Virginian, that they intended to "break the butterfly on the wheel," although they had formally disclaimed having any such intention. The notice which they have been pleased to give to Cassius has drawn public attention to him, and given him an *importance* which he never expected nor designed. He never designed to act as a "*public instructor*"—having neither the capacity or time to do so; but only intended to throw out some *reflections* for his countrymen, upon the *military, civil* and *political* character of Gen. Harrison; and if he shall have drawn public attention to these qualifications, he will think himself amply compensated. He will not be deterred from pursuing these enquiries if he should think the public mind will be informed, or the public interest promoted, although he may be exposed to the liability of being "*broken* on the *wheel*."

I had intended, in my last number, to have given Gen. Harrison the *benefit* of my *silence* so far as his *military character is concerned*, but such is the *ignorance* of some of his friends, and their great desire to give him *military fame*, and thereby to make a favorable impression upon the people, that I feel it my duty not to leave this subject, until I submit some further remarks to the *public*, and expose the extraordinary efforts making on the part of the *Federalists* to deceive and impose upon the people, by presenting Gen. Harrison to them, as a *great military man*. The more I examine into Gen. Harrison's military life, the more reason I have to disapprove of it, and the greater cause I find, for withholding from him the title of a great *military hero*. I have diligently examined to find the many battles he has fought and the great *victories* he has won; but I find them to exist only on paper, and like "Angel's visits, few and far between"—and it would be much better for Gen. Harrison, if his friends would permit his military name to rest undisturbed—for like a celebrated character, described by Junius, he can only expect to escape without *imputation* by allowing him to go unnoticed—and I have no doubt, if the old man's voice could be heard, without the limits of his *special committee*, it would be sounding in the ears of David Gwynne, J. C. Wright, and O. M. Spencer, his three conscience-keepers, entreating them to urge upon his friends not to present his military achievements to the public; that such a course would lead to a strict examination of these achievements, and that the scrutiny would be unfavorable to his military genius & operations. "*Save me from my friends, and I will take care of my enemies;*" is a maxim which Gen. Harrison, of all other men in the world, has cause, at this time, to have the benefit of. They are making him play a part, which *nature* never designed him to act; and like all other *plays* in which the *person* is not suited to the *character*, it must appear awkward and ridiculous; and before this Presidential election is over, Gen. Harrison will be glad to throw aside these *false decorations* which his friends have thrown around him; to retire from the character which he has assumed, & settle down once more in peace and quietude at the North Bend on the Ohio banks.

I have already said Gen. Harrison had no *military fame* when his achievements were fresh in the memory of his countrymen. If he had none then, his friends cannot give it to him now; that man who has to resort to the *certificates* of his *friends* to establish a *military name* is *poor indeed* in *military fame*, and the public will look upon it with suspicion and distrust. No, my countrymen, military fame rises spontaneously with the deed itself, and plants itself deep in the human bosom; it flies upon the wings of the morning, and cannot be suppressed by the tongue of calumny or detraction—Like the mountain torrent, it bears down opposition, and the more you attempt to smother it, the greater will be the flame! Not so with Gen. Harrison's military fame; it has been *rebuked* in the bud, and it can never bloom again. You may throw around it the refreshing dews of heaven, and the smiles of friendship—but all will not do. The worm has commenced its work of death, and it must wither and die!

Had Gen. Harrison possessed any true military fame or genius, he never would have resorted to *certificates* and *affidavits* to prop and sustain a falling military name. He never would have abandoned the army in disgust nearly two years, before the enemies of his country had been conquered. He never would have sent an order to Major Croghan to abandon an important military post, and to turn it, leaving the defenceless inhabitants of 500 miles exposed to the Indians and savages. He never would have remained in the "*rear*" at the battle of the Thames, while Richard M. Johnson and his brother James M. Johnson were battling with the enemy shoulder to shoulder, and heart to heart. He never would have remained *so long* in Fort Meigs without permitting his gallant *volunteers* to engage the enemy. And finally he would not have allowed his *enemy* to have selected his own camp and battle ground at Tippecanoe, and his men to be *surprised* and *murdered*, at the dead hour of the night, without any breast works to defend them. All these show that Gen. Harrison was peculiarly deficient in conducting military operations; and when his military movements are closely scrutinized, they will be any thing than favorable to his military name.

I have already said, and still believe, that Gen. Harrison acted in all his military movements as well as his skill and ability would permit him—but he wanted military genius. Nature had not given it to him; and without it no man can be a great General. The version which I gave in my last number in relation to the order from Harrison to Croghan to abandon Fort Stevenson, and burn it, and of his intention to *retreat*, and leave the country, the shipping, and all the munitions exposed to the *enemy*, is substantially true; and as the editors, in their "reply to Cassius," have introduced sundry letters as evidence, I will follow their example, and introduce a letter written by a *good modern Whig*, and one opposed to the present administration, and will no doubt be good authority with them; and especially so, when they learn he was once a Governor, and is now a General, and was one of the brave defenders in Fort Sandusky. The letter reads thus:

Letter of General Duncan, Governor of Illinois.

"WASHINGTON CITY, March 25, 1836.

Dear Sir:—Your letter of the 20th has been received, and I most cheerfully comply with your request, in giving such an account of the transactions at Sandusky as my memory at this period, and my time, will enable me to do. About the 20th July, 1813, Gen. Harrison, then at Lower Sandusky, hearing that the British army had crossed Lake Erie to Fort Meigs, being about 5,000 strong, immediately changed his head quarters to Seneca, seven or eight miles up the Sandusky river, where he assembled his forces, then on the march from the interior, leaving Maj. Croghan with about 150 men to defend Fort Stephenson, with an understanding at the time, that the Fort, then in a weak and wretched condition, was to be abandoned should the enemy advance with artillery, but if not, to be defended to the last extremity. Harrison, with his force, then small, had scarcely left us, before Croghan commenced putting the fort (which was only a stockading of small round logs, and a few log store houses) in a proper state of defence, in which he evinced the most admirable judgment, and most untiring perseverance. During the last ten or twelve days that intervened between the time that Gen. Harrison left us, and the appearance of the enemy, a ditch was dug, four feet deep and six feet wide, entirely round the fort, outside of the stockading, the ground for 200 yards round the fort was cleared of timber and wash, and many other preparations made for the enemy. About this time, Gen. Harrison received information that the enemy had raised the seige at Fort Meigs, and had started in the direction of Sandusky and camp Seneca. On receiving this information he determined to retreat from his position, and immediately sent an express to Fort Stephenson, which arrived about sun rise, ordering Major Croghan to burn the fort with all the munitions and stores, and *retreat without delay* to head quarters, giving also some precautionary instructions about the route, &c.

On receiving his orders, Croghan instantly placed it in the hands of the officers, who were all present; and required them to consider it, and express an opinion of the propriety of obeying or disobeying it. The board was formed, and on putting the question, beginning as usual with the youngest officer, it was ascertained that a majority of us *were for disobeying* the order. Croghan returned to the room, and being informed of our directions, said, "I am glad of it; *I had resolved to disobey at all hazards.*" and immediately despatched an express to Gen. Harrison, giving him that information. Immediately on the arrival of this express, Gen. Harrison despatched Lieut. Col. Ball, with his squadron of dragoons, with orders to *arrest Croghan*, and bring him to head quarters, (which was done,) and sent another officer to take command. By this time, in consequence of his not arriving agreeably to his expectations and orders, the General abandoned all idea of a retreat, although his munitions and stores were piled up ready to be set on fire, as soon as Croghan should reach Seneca; and *it is not to be doubted*, that if Croghan had arrived, according to orders, ☞ Gen. Harrison would have retreated instantly, leaving the whole frontier, our fleet at Erie, and the stores at Cleveland—the destruction of which was the object of the invasion and movements down the Lake—*at the mercy of the enemy.* After being detained one night, Croghan, returned to Sandusky, and was reinstated in his command, an occasion which gave an indescribable joy to the officers and soldiers in the fort, and which only could be equalled, in intensity of feeling, by the chagrin and mortification felt at his arrest. Especially was the event pleasing to those officers, who had sustained him in disobeying the order, resolved as they were when he was arrested to share his fate, be it good or evil.

Soon after his return, the enemy, so long expected, made his appearance, and demanded a surrender. Croghan answered by directing ensign Skipp, to assure General Proctor that it would be blown to —— first.

I need hardly say, after what has been related that their appearance, relieving us from our long suspense, was hailed with seeming joy, by the Major, and most, if not all, of his command. The excitement produced by what had occurred, and his return just in time to meet the enemy, inspired his command with an enthusiasm rarely, if ever, surpassed, and which alone renders man invincible. The fort was forthwith besieged, cannonaded, and bombarded from the gunboats and the batteries on land for nearly four hours, without cessation; during all which time every officer and soldier appeared to be animated by the cool and manly bearing of the commander. I well remember his expression at the first sound of the bugle given by the enemy as the signal for the charging upon the works. We were sitting together, he sprung upon his feet, saying "Duncan, every man to his post, for in twenty minutes they will attempt to take us by storm. Recollect, when you hear my voice, crying relief, come to me, with all the men that can be spared from your part of the line." He instantly passed up the line, repeating to every officer, and had scarcely got the men in place before the whole British army, divided into three columns, marched upon the fort, and made a desperate assault, continuing it for near an hour, when they were repulsed, with the killed and wounded, estimated at that time to be near double the number in the fort, and is stated by English writers to be about ninety. During the engagement I saw Croghan often, and witnessed with delight his intrepid and gallant conduct, which I firmly believe never has been surpassed at any time, on any occasion. In the heat of the action I frequently heard him exclaim, "huzza, my brave fellows, we are hewing them to pieces; five minutes more and we'll blow them to——. By H—n, every officer and soldier has immortalized himself," &c. And throughout the whole affair he evinced the greatest solicitude for the safety of every one but himself. The sagacity displayed in arranging the cannon, so as to open a mask embrasure, to rake the enemy in the ditch, at a point evidently selected by them for the breach—in placing the logs on pins, near the top of the picket, which could be tilted off by one man, and from twenty to thirty feet long, of heavy timber, swept every thing before them—his activity, in piling bags of sand against the pickets, when the enemy attempted to make a breach with their cannon, by which means each point of attack grew stronger from the moment it was assailed, are worthy of any General in any age. You are right, sir, in my judgment in saying that the government has not done justice to Col. Croghan, for his conduct in that affair, *which is without a parallel in the military annals of our country.* As to myself, having acted a very subordinate part, I never did, nor do I now set up any claims for distinction. To know that I did my duty to my country, though not hardened into manhood, was then, and is now enough for me. But of him, I feel no hesitation in saying injustice has been done to him, in being overlooked by the government, and the erroneous statements of *historians.* McAfee, the historian of the late War, and Dawson, the Biographer of Gen Harrison, have studiously kept out of view that the object of the invasion was the destruction of our ships under Com. Perry, at Presque Isle, and boats and stores at Cleveland. These were looked upon by the British with solicitude; were reconnoitered, and on one or two occasions, were attempted to be destroyed, by landing on board their fleet. They have also failed to account for the movement of the whole British forces down the Lake, in the direction of Cleveland and Erie, before their defeat at Sandusky, which was attacked to satisfy their Indian allies, who demanded the *scalps* and *plunder* of the place. They have kept out of view the fact, that Gen. Harrison had determined to retreat to the interior, after burning all the supplies which had been collected; ☞ that he ordered Maj. Croghan to abandon and burn Fort Stephenson; that his refusal to obey, and failure to arrive at head quarters, prevented this retreat, and consequent destruction of our fleet—authors of public stores—& exposure of 500 miles of frontier to the combined enemy. Both have stated that Gen. Harrison *never doubted* that Major Croghan would be able to repulse an enemy of near two thousand, and which they say he understood to be five thousand, with one hundred and thirty men, his effective force on the day of battle, one six pounder with ammunition for only seven shots, and about forty rounds for the small arms, when the fact was notorious that Gen. Harrison *was heard to say during the seige*, when the firing could be heard in his camp, speaking of Croghan, "*the blood be on their own heads; I wash my hands of it*;" not doubting for a moment, nor did any one with him, that the garrison would be cut off.

With great respect your obedient servant,

JOSEPH DUNCAN.

C. I. PRESTON, MILITARY COMMITTEE, SENATE."

Such is the language of Gen. Joseph Duncan, in relation to this affair—a good Whig,—an opposer of the present administration, and one of the brave companions of the gallant Croghan, when he disobeyed Gen. Harrison's orders, and defended Fort Sandusky *at all hazards.* His description of the transactions in the fort at the time, is minute and explicit; and in the same proportion as it is calculated to raise the gallant Croghan in the estimation of all military men, it is calculated to to *degrade* and *destroy* the military character of Gen. Harrison.—No wonder the *public mind* was poisoned at the time against Gen. Harrison's conduct. No wonder that the breath of suspicion hung around his military movements—and no wonder that he had to resort to the *certificates* and *affidavits* of his officers, to save from utter ruin his tottering military name—Nothing but the refusal of Croghan and his officers to evacuate Fort Sandusky, saved the "*millions of public stores at Cleveland: the whole shipping on lake Erie—and the innocent women and children on the frontier, extending for upwards of 500 miles.*"—That gallant defence changed the tide of war, and the wave began to roll back upon the invaders.—They were taught by that memorable conflict to respect, and even to *fear our arms.*

It has been gravely said, that Gen. Harrison's military character never was assailed until he became a candidate for the Presidency. How utterly false and untrue the assertion. The whole history of the events of the last war, shows that clouds and darkness were constantly thrown around his movements, and nothing but his *prudent resignation* in 1813 saved him that small portion of military character, which he has retained. I have already said that Gen. Harrison's operations in Fort Meigs were slow, inactive and inefficient, and did not show any military skill and ardor, and that his brave and gallant volunteers (some of whom are from Virginia, and I personally knew some of them,) were panting for an opportunity of meeting the enemy, and that opportunity never was afforded them. In support of this declaration, and to shew the state of Gen. Harrison's military fame at that time, I will introduce certain Resolutions, which followed a *public protestation* drawn up and signed by many of the officers of that day, of both political parties, and published in the public papers of that day, in which they charge Gen. Harrison's conduct as being *mysterious and inexplicable:* But to the Resolutions and names signed to this document—which issued from *Grand Camp, Ohio Militia, Aug. 29, 1813.*

"Therefore, Resolved, That we place the most implicit confidence in his Excellency, Return J. Meigs, as commander-in-chief of the militia of this State, and that we view him as a wise and judicious chief magistrate.

"Resolved, That after the various requisitions and complicated demands from his Excellency Maj. Gen. Harrison, we highly approve of his Excellency the Governor's conduct on the occasion, and fully coincide with him on the propriety of leaving a force sufficient to answer any emergency.

"Resolved, That we regret the backward state of the preparations was such as to exclude the troops called to the relief of Fort Meigs, as well those who returned, as the proportion retained, from participating in the present campaign, for *which they discovered so great an anxiety.*

☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

"Resolved, That the conduct of his Excellency, the commander-in-chief, William H. Harrison, of the Northwestern army, on this occasion is *shrouded in mystery, and to us perfectly inexplicable.*

"Resolved, That the foregoing preamble and resolutions be signed by the general and field officers, and commandants of independent corps, approving the same, in their own and in behalf of their respective commands, and that a copy of the proceedings be delivered by the Secretary, to his Excellency the Governor, and a copy to the printer, at Frankinton, and each of the printers in Chillicothe, with a request that all the printers in the State would give publicity to the same; also that the same be signed by the President and attested by the Secretary.

JAMES MAMARY, Brig. Gen. President.
ROBERT LUCAS, Brig. Gen.
JOHN MCDONALD, Colonel.
JAMES DENNY, Colonel,
WILLIAM KEYS, Colonel.
JOHN FERGUSON, Colonel.
ISAAC BONSER, Colonel.
JAMES KILGORE, Major.
JOHN WILLET, Major.
ALLEN TRIMBLE, Major.
N. BEASLEY, Capt. Com't.
JAMES WILSON, Major.
PRESLEY MORRIS, Brig. Major.
JOHN BOGGS, Major.
WILLIAM RUTLEDGE, Brig. Major.
RICHARD HOCKER, Captain Com't.
EDEN FENNIMORE, Brig. Q. M.
WILLIAM KEY BOND, Judge Advocate.

Attest,—EZRA OSBURN, Brig. Qr. Mast., &c."

This production, my countrymen, presents Gen. Harrison in a most *unenviable* situation, so far as his military character is concerned; it is a stain and an imputation which has rested upon his name from Aug. 29, 1813, down to the present day; and the author of the "Resolutions," William Key Bond, who is a member of Congress from Ohio, never offered any recantation until the other day, and never would unless Gen. Harrison had been a candidate for the Presidency, and he in favor of him. This recantation comes too late, and will be traced to interested motives—after having rested upon his head for 27 years, the people of this country will say, *the act of limitations will be a complete bar, and their verdict will be against the Hero.*

Gen. Harrison has been called the *Hero of Tippecanoe*, and the *Federalists* are actually getting up Tippecanoe Clubs, to impose upon the ignorant and unsuspecting and to make them believe Gen. Harrison was *really a Hero.* I would respectfully ask if he showed in that engagement, *any quality* which could give him the appellation of Hero? Is it not generally known that he exhibited upon that occasion an utter ignorance of those rules which should have governed a good General; and nothing but the *glorious light of day* saved him and his brave companions from being entirely cut to pieces. Can this be called a victory, and the commander a Hero, in which 500 Indians attack a body of 1000 or 1500 volunteers, and make good their retreat with only 40 killed and wounded; while their enemy sustains a loss of from 180 to 200 men, as brave as ever fought, and they the choicest sons of Kentucky and Indiana, and among the number the brave Davies of Kentucky, who lost his life? I would call this a surprise and a defeat—the Indians, according to their own mode of war, surprise the enemy while they are asleep, kill and wound nearly 200 of them, before day light comes, and then retreat, with only 40 men killed and wounded, and for this Gen. Harrison is to be made a great *Hero*, and one of the ladders by which he is to reach the Presidency. This is a transaction which can add nothing to Gen. Harrison's military name; and when the people of this country shall have heard the particulars of it, and see the want of judgment displayed by Gen. Harrison, they will laugh at the trick attempted to be played, and repudiate the *Hero of Tippecanoe.* He has been very justly censured for three important errors in this engagement; first, in allowing the enemy to select his own battle ground, and to draw him, as it were, into a defile;—second to selecting ground so totally unfit for a battle and calculated to cut off a retreat in case of a surprise—and thirdly, in not throwing up some sort of defence for the protection of his men at night, from a surprise. The skill and ingenuity of a great General is more effectually shown in preparing his battle ground and going into a battle, than in actual fighting; and in this, the great Hannibal was distinguished over all his competitors—and to this he was indebted for the signal victory he obtained over the Roman army at Trebia, commanded by Sempronius."

Where do we next find Gen. Harrison? At the battle of the Thames, and in the rear, where he ought to have been, says his friend from Ohio (Mr. Corwin.) If, then, he was in the "rear," he was not in the "heat and midst" of the battle, as some of the *demagogues* of the day, would make us believe. The history of the battle of the Thames is not more familiar to the people of this country