

2-21-1862

## Letter from John W.A. Gillespie to Editor

John W.A. Gillespie

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[From our own Correspondent.]

From the 78th Regiment.

DOVER, NEAR FORT DONELSON, TENN. } Friday night, Feb. 21, 1862. }

EDITOR COURIER:

This night one week ago, the rebels were in possession of this place, confident in their strength to hold it against any Federal force that might be brought against them; but their fond and cherished hopes have ended in disappointment. Their stronghold has been taken. Their forces have been scattered in every direction, (especially to the North,) and to-night the "flag of our Union," floats proudly to the breeze from Fort Donelson, while our own brave boys rest in perfect security within her entrenchments.

Our Regiment is encamped near the town, and one mile from the main Fort. Our tents were pitched in mud, half knee deep, and since last Tuesday evening we have had a dreadful time to get about.

On Sunday morning we left the steamers *Tecumseh* and *Neptune*, at an early hour, formed in line on the river bank, and started for the scene of action. Just here let me say, that our beloved Major was very sick during Saturday and Sunday night. When Sunday morning came, he was but little better, scarcely able to stand, but before our line was formed, to the surprise and delight of all, the Major appeared on his spirited horse, ready to accompany us to the battle field, and share with us the fate of the day, whatever it might be.

After marching eight miles over a circuitous route, we reached the outer entrenchments of the Fort, and there learned that the rebels had surrendered unconditionally. After remaining on the road an hour, we were ordered back a few hundred yards to a piece of bottom land, where we took supper on one cracker to the man, with creek water for dessert. After supper we made our beds of rye cornstalks, leaves and weeds, and the most of us slept comfortably until near daybreak, notwithstanding rain commenced falling at midnight. When morning dawned our blankets and clothes were wet, our fires nearly extinguished, and the prospect for breakfast anything but flattering. Some had whole crackers, while others had none, but all concluded to make the best of circumstances, and soon a general division (of the provender on hand) was made. Our breakfast was finished, and then each man settled himself down to await further orders. After waiting an hour or two, Col. Leggett, (who had gone to Gen. Grant's Head Quarters for orders) returned with the information that the boats with our baggage had gone up to Dover, and that the regiment would march a few rods into the woods, and remain until our tents and provision reached us. About this time a disinterested spectator might have discovered, without the aid of a glass, a few long, wry faces. Empty stomachs were numerous, and crackers scarce as melons in April. But to finish my story as brief as possible, I will just state, that forty men were detailed to go to Dover, and unship our goods. Next day, (Tuesday,) the job was completed, and at night, according to new orders, the regiment marched into town and pitched tents by candle-light. On the same day Col. Leggett was appointed Provost Marshal of the town; since that time his duties have been arduous, so much so, that his whole time has been occupied. He has already brought order out of confusion, and while his administration thus far has been gratifying to the General in command, he has convinced all with whom he comes in contact, that his agility and perseverance are equal to any emergency.

You have already received the particulars of the late bloody and desperate fight at this place. I shall only add a few things which have come under our notice. The Fort with its entrenchments, extends over a space of several miles. To simply hear of the place, you can form no correct idea of its magnitude, nor the immense amount of labor it has cost the (so called) Confederate States, and for me to attempt to give a correct description in writing, is more of a task than I feel disposed to undertake, therefore, I shall leave it for some one else to do.

When I came over the battle field on Monday morning, the ground was covered in many places with dead men, dead horses, wagons, guns, cartridge boxes, belts, cannon balls, shells, gun-carriages, caissons, flour barrels, meat barrels, harness of every description, and in fact everything ever seen in a military camp, had its representative in some shape, lying over the field.

Sixty-six pieces of artillery, 20,000 stand of arms, a large number of wagons, horses and mules, and a great amount of forage and provisions fell into our hands. Fifteen thousand prisoners, with Generals Buckner and Johnson, have already been shipped to Cairo, and other points North. Two or three hundred prisoners are still here, taking care of their sick and wounded. Several of their medical staff officers are also here, doing all they can for the relief of their suffering soldiers.

I saw Gen. Buckner and staff, and conversed with the General a half hour, on Monday last. He entered very freely into conversation, and here let me use a little of his own language. "Your men fight well, your resources are greater than ours. Your army is better clothed, better fed and better armed than ours. You can furnish three men to our one, and though this defeat has been a disastrous one to us, you can never conquer the South until you have killed our last man." When I got up to take leave, he shook my hand with the following remark. "Young man go and reform." I returned the compliment by saying, "General, go, and sin no more." The old traitor and treacherous thief, John B. Floyd, made his escape with nearly all of his command. One Company which he left is still here, I have talked with a number of the men, and all declare that Floyd deserves hanging if ever a man did. Gen. Pillow escaped with a cavalry Regiment of eight hundred men and horses.

The most of our wounded have been taken to Paducah, Cairo, Louisville and Cincinnati. The City of Memphis is still here with 150 of our wounded on board. The *Allen Collier*, left last night for Cincinnati with the same number of sick and wounded. The last named boat was sent here by the citizens of the "Queen City," on an errand of mercy. She was loaded with twenty-one Surgeons, three hundred nurses and a large amount of Hospital stores and clothing. The stores and clothing have been appropriated to their intended use, and while here the Surgeons and nurses labored untiringly with our poor fellows, who had for days and nights been suffering from their wounds. The Sanitary Committee, go back to their homes with the blessings of a grateful soldiery resting upon them. For the benefit of his friends I will just say here, that Wilbur F. Armstrong of Co. G. has gone back to Cincinnati, on board the *Allen Collier*. He has been very sick during the past eight days with Lung fever. Last night our string band went aboard the *Allen Collier* to serenade the Surgeons and nurses, I accompanied them, and had a pleas-

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12 o'clock, M. Feb. 22.—A salute is being fired from the Fort in honor of Washington's birth day. We have just learned that Gen. Grant has been made a Major-General. Col. M. D. Leggett has been appointed Provost Marshal, over the State of Tennessee. The rain has been falling in perfect torrents since last night. The river is rising very rapidly. The water is backing up toward our camp, and is now in very close proximity to several of our tents. We will doubtless have to pull up stakes and move to some higher point.

I will close this lengthy letter by saying that Lieut. Col. Hawkes is daily becoming more popular with officers and men of the 78th. Major Carnahan's health is improving and I hope he will soon be entirely well. If you think this letter is too lengthy for the interest it contains, I will write a little more the next time.

Yours JOHN W. A. GILLISPIE, Company G, 78th Reg't O. V. M.

FROM RICHMOND.

Anaugural Address of Jeff. Davis The Profranity of his Appeal.

[From the Richmond Examiner, Extra Feb. 22.]

FELLOW-CITIZENS—On this the birthday of the man most identified with the establishment of American Independence, and beneath the monument erected to commemorate his heroic virtues and those of his compatriots, we have assembled to usher into existence the permanent government of the Confederate States. Through this instrumentality, and by the favor of Divine Providence, we hope to perpetuate the principles of our Revolutionary fathers. The day, the memory and the purpose, seem fitly associated. It is with mingled feelings of humility and pride that I appear to take, in the presence of the people and before high Heaven, the oath prescribed as a qualification for the exalted station to which the unanimous voice of the people has called me. Deeply sensible of all that is implied by this manifestation of the people's confidence, I am yet more profoundly impressed by the vast responsibility of the office, and humbly feel my own unworthiness.

In return for their kindness I can only offer assurances of the gratitude with which it is received, and can but pledge a zealous devotion of every faculty to the service of those who have chosen me as their Chief Magistrate.

When a long course of class legislation, directed not to the general welfare, but to the aggrandizement of the Northern section of the Union, culminated in a warfare on the domestic institutions of the Southern States—when the dogmas of a sectional party, substituted for the provisions of the constitutional compact, threatened to destroy the sovereign rights of the States, six of those States withdrawing from the Union, considered together to exercise the right and perform the duty of instituting a government which would better secure the liberties for the preservation of which that Union was established.

Whatever of hope some may have entertained that a returning sense of justice would remove the danger with which our rights were threatened, and render it possible to preserve the Union or the constitution, must have been dispelled by the malignity and barbarity of the Northern States in the prosecution of the existing war. The confidence of the most hopeful among us have been destroyed by the disregard they have recently exhibited for all time honored bulwarks of civil and religious liberty. Bastilles filled with prisoners, arrested without civil process or indictment duly found; the writ of habeas corpus suspended by Executive mandate; a State Legislature controlled by the imprisonment of members whose avowed principles suggested to the Federal Executive that there might be another added to the list of seceded States; elections held under threats of a military power; civil officers, peaceful citizens and gentle women incarcerated for opinion's sake, proclaimed the incapacity of our late associates to administer a government as free liberal and humane as that established for our common use.

For proof of the sincerity of our purpose to maintain our ancient institutions, we may point to the constitution of the Confederacy and the laws enacted under it, as well as to the fact that through all the necessities of an unequal struggle there has been no act on our part to impair personal liberty or the freedom of speech, of thought or of the press. The Courts have been open, the judicial functions fully executed, and every right of the peaceful citizen maintained as securely as if a war of invasion had not disturbed the land.

The people of the States now confederated became convinced that the government of the United States had fallen into the hands of a sectional majority, who would pervert that most sacred of all trusts to the destruction of the rights which it was pledged to protect. They believe that to remain longer in the Union would subject them to a continuance of a disparaging discrimination, submission to which would be inconsistent with their welfare, and intolerable to a proud people. They therefore determined to sever its bonds and establish a new confederacy for themselves.

The experiment instituted by our Revolutionary fathers, of a voluntary union of Sovereign States for the purposes specified in a solemn compact, had been perverted by those who, feeling power and forgetting right, were determined to respect no law but their own will. The government had ceased to answer the ends for which it was ordained and established. To save ourselves from a revolution which, in its silent but rapid progress, was about to place us under the despotism of numbers and to preserve in spirit, as well as in form, a system of government we believe to be peculiarly fitted to our condition, and full of promise for mankind, we determined to make a new association, composed of States homogeneous in interest, in policy and in feeling.

True to our traditions of peace and our love of justice, we sent commissioners to the United States to propose a fair and amicable settlement of all questions of public debt or property which might be in dispute. But the government at Washington denying our right to self government, refused even to listen to any proposals for a peaceful separation. Nothing was then left to us but to prepare for war.

The first year in our history has been the most eventful in the annals of this continent. A new government has been established and its machinery put in operation over an area exceeding seven hundred thousand square miles. The great principles upon which we have been willing to hazard everything that is dear to man have been achieved for us which could never have been achieved by the sword. Our confederacy has grown from six to thirteen States; and Maryland already united to us by hallowed memories and material interests, to all I believe, when able to speak with unobscured voice, connect her destiny with the South. Our people have rallied with unexampled unanimity to the support of the principles of constitutional government with firm resolve to perpetuate by arms the rights which they could not peacefully secure. A million of men, it is estimated, are now standing in hostile array, and waging war along a frontier of thousands of miles. Battles have been fought, sieges have been conducted, and, although the contest is not ended, and the tide for the moment is against us, the final result in our favor is not doubtful.

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February 21, 1862

From the 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daily Zanesville Courier, March 1, 1862, p. 2

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Company G, 78<sup>th</sup> Reg't O. V. M.