THE CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCES OF
GENERAL M. JEFF THOMPSON
IN 1861

edited by

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M. JEFF THOMPSON

This picture of 1860 shows Thompson as a colonel in the Missouri Volunteer Militia.

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The editor is indebted to a number of people for their help in collecting material for this study. From the Thompson family manuscript materials were received from Charles A. Bailey, of St. Joseph, Missouri, Eleanor P. Thompson, New Orleans, and Mrs. Jesse V. Boswell, Springfield, Missouri.

Louise Platte Hauck, of St. Joseph, a friend of the Thompsons, was generous in her assistance, as was Luther Crocker, who submitted his entire study of General Thompson. An eye-witness to the battle of Fredericktown, R. C. Arnett, assisted in a reconnaissance of the battlefield.

The greatest amount of research materials used were from the State Historical Society of Missouri; and its staff gave a considerable amount of assistance.

(Mrs. J. G. Westover)

Miss Eloise Green assisted in the collection of materials and in putting this study in its final form. Professor Lewis E. Atherton, who advised and sponsored this study, is responsible for its existence. Without his initiative, this study would never have been made.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: WORKING ON THE MILITARY BILL	23
CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZING THE MILITIA	38
CHAPTER THREE: RIOTING IN ST. JOSEPH	51
CHAPTER FOUR: LEADING THE RIPLEY COUNTY BATTALION	65
CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL M. JEFF THOMPSON	81
CHAPTER SIX: "SWAMP FOX OF THE CONFEDERACY"	93
CHAPTER SEVEN: RAIDING A BANK	107
CHAPTER EIGHT: FIGHTING THE GUNBOATS	123
CHAPTER NINE: BIG RIVER BRIDGE	140
CHAPTER TEN: BATTLE OF FREDERICKTOWN	160
CHAPTER ELEVEN: DISBANDING	186
BIBLIOGRAPHY	210

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Portrait of General Thompson	Frontispiece
	Between Pages
Map of Southeast Missouri.	83-84
The River Gunboats	126-127
Map of Fredericktown Battlefield	169-170
Mural of Battle of Fredericktown	179-180

INTRODUCTION

Only the first year of Jeff Thompson's account of his Civil War experiences is included in this study. His reminiscences, however, run from January 1, 1861, to June 6, 1865, covering his military career in considerable detail.

The year 1861 was selected for detailed study because by checking the accuracy of one section against the official record, the validity of the whole document can likely be determined. Also by close study of a part, an estimate can be made of the value of the whole document as an instrument of historical research. While Thompson's reminiscences check very well with the official records, they still contribute material which cannot be located in the official records. The official records concentrate on operations, orders, and correspondence but usually omit organization, discipline of troops, elections of officers, and "off the record" material of various types.

The entire manuscript is divided into five parts, each covering a single year of the war. 1861 is the one best suited for a detailed study because it is the most self-contained unit, includes more material on the organization and administration of irregular Confederate troops, and is the year when Thompson was most active from a military standpoint.

The manuscript was written at different times. Thompson's experiences from 1861 until he was captured and imprisoned in 1863 were written during his imprisonment. The later prison experiences and his final participation in the war were written in 1868.¹

The original manuscript is probably in existence but the editor has not definitely located it.² A typewritten copy of the original, placed in the State Historical Society of Missouri at Columbia, was used in this study. This copy formerly belonged to Marcie A. Bailey, daughter of Jeff Thompson, and was given to the Society through the courtesy of Charles A. Bailey, of St. Joseph, Missouri, and the attention of Professor Lewis E. Atherton, of the University of Missouri.

There are several other typed copies of the manuscript in existence, two of which the editor has personal knowledge of.³ The manuscript used was contained in a loose-leaf notebook cover, typed on plain white paper, and

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1. This is told by Mrs. Marcie A. Bailey, Jeff Thompson's daughter, in an introduction she wrote to the original manuscript of Thompson's War Experiences. The fact is also quite apparent in the body of the document.
 2. It is believed that the original of Thompson's Civil War Experiences is now in the possession of Miss Eleanor P. Thompson of New Orleans, a granddaughter of General Thompson. She included this information in a letter to the editor.
 3. One copy is in the possession of Mrs. Louise Platte Hauck, of St. Joseph, and the other copy is owned by Miss Eleanor Thompson of New Orleans.

was very ordinary in appearance. The typing, evidently done on an old and worn-out machine, was of very poor quality. The typists were inexperienced and careless, and little proof-reading was done.

That many errors were introduced into the manuscript as the result of poor typing is strikingly apparent, and one can almost pick out the various typists by their errors. One of the most glaring mistakes is the misspelling of certain common words in one section of the manuscript only. Governor, for example, is spelled correctly except in the third chapter where it is consistently wrong. Belmont and brigadier are other examples of the same error.

A second type of error made by the typists, although not quite so apparent, is the misspelling or incorrect recording of proper names. McCann for McCown and Hannibal for Hamilton are examples. This type of error has been carefully footnoted whenever found.

The absence of a perfect copy determined the editor against perpetuating the errors of a poor typist. Thompson had a habit of making long, disjointed sentences connected with a "but", "and", comma, or semicolon which made them hard to read and often hard to understand. The editor, therefore, became convinced that some corrections would not seriously impair the value of the document. The study would have been better had the original manuscript been

used, but since this was not possible and the responsibility for errors in this copy was divided, there was no reason to preserve any error. There was, likewise, no reason why a certain class of errors should be corrected when others were allowed to remain.

Five main types of corrections were made. The first, errors in spelling, resulted from Thompson's mistakes as well as those made by the typists. Words were corrected only if positively wrong, and remained unchanged where the spelling was old or not preferred.

Many sentences were long and so involved that the meaning was not immediately clear. In these cases the sentences were recast or broken into two sentences, but due care was used to retain the original meaning in all cases.

The punctuation was frequently corrected. The most common change was to leave out the one or more unnecessary commas in every sentence.

The logical development in Chapter Nine required the addition of the first few pages of Chapter Ten. The chapters were also given titles so that the reader would have a guide to the content of each section.

Despite these changes, there was no instance where the meaning was impaired or changed, and the total effect

of these changes does not detract from the value of the document.

* * * * *

There are numerous short biographical sketches of General M. Jeff Thompson, but the basic material was usually furnished by his daughter, Marcie A. Bailey.¹ Mrs. Bailey received her information from papers which Thompson left, most of which are now scattered and hard to locate.² For this reason the sketches vary little.

Merriweather Thompson was born at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, January 22, 1826. He was a son of Captain Merriweather Thompson of the paymaster's department of the United States Army.

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1. Sketches of Thompson can be found in Union Historical Publishing Company, [pub.], History of Buchanan County, Missouri, 912; Chris L. Rutt, [comp.], History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, Missouri, 281; Luther Crocker, "Studies in the Early History of St. Joseph, Missouri," 38; Louise Platte Hauck, Missouri's Yesterdays, 167; biographical sketch of Jeff Thompson by Mrs. Marcie A. Bailey in the "Civil War Experiences of General M. Jeff Thompson," in the State Historical Society of Missouri.

The following account of Thompson's pre-Civil War life will be based on the above sources.

2. The most important of these papers was a diary of Thompson's pre-Civil War years. It is believed to be still in existence but has not been located by the editor. Other papers which are yet in existence are owned by Mrs. Hauck, Miss Thompson, the State Historical Society of Missouri, and Mrs. Jesse Boswell of Springfield, Missouri.

His given name was the same as that of his father, but a boyhood nickname, "Jeff", became so firmly established that he later had it legalized by the Missouri legislature.

After leaving home in 1846, he stopped in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri, and clerked in a store for about a year. He then moved to St. Joseph where he became a clerk in the firm of Middleton & Riley until 1852, when he went to Salt Lake City in their interest. Returning in the fall, he started a grocery store in partnership with Major Bogle, but he subsequently closed this out to accompany a party of surveyors of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad. Thompson paid such close attention to the work of the surveyors that, although he had started on the trip as commissary, he returned as the leader of the party. It was as surveyor for a railroad that Mark Twain mentions Thompson in The Gilded Age, "You ought to know Jeff; he's one of the most enthusiastic engineers in this Western country, and one of the best fellows that ever looked through the bottom of a glass."

The survey Mark Twain writes about was of a preliminary nature to raise interest and capital along the way. "Mr. Jeff Thompson was the most popular engineer who could be found for this work. He did not bother himself about details or practicibilities of location, but ran merrily along, sighting from the top of one divide to the top of another, and striking 'plumb' every town-site and big

plantation within twenty or thirty miles of his route. In his own language he 'just went booming.'¹

Thompson was intrusted with the construction of the western division of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad and continued in this capacity until its completion in 1859.

In 1858 he was appointed to the office of city engineer and in 1859 was elected mayor of St. Joseph. Reasons for his election may be found in his personal magnetism, and the fact that he was interested in river improvement.² In spite of this popularity with most groups, there were some people who disliked Thompson and his policies, because they thought his interest in river improvement was too closely linked with his railroad connections. One such person wrote this article:

To His Majesty, M. Jeff Thompson, by the
Grace of God, King of St. Joseph, Etc. Etc.

May it please your Majesty: As the River Improvement is to be commenced on Monday next, I would suggest to your Majesty the propriety of first securing the warehouse of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad Co. and then continue the improvement upstream as far as the said company's property extends. Many of your Majesty's old subjects, who have placed you in the position you now occupy, are anxious to know if the propriety of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad is entitled to more protection than that of the

1. Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain, [pseud.], and Charles D. Warner, The Gilded Age, I, 158, 167. Thompson is prominently mentioned throughout Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen of this book.

2. Crocker, 39.

heavy taxpayers . . . your subjects fear there is 'something rotten in Denmark.'¹

While Thompson was mayor he drove the first locomotive into St. Joseph, and his last official act was to start the first trip of the Pony Express.

His engineering works include construction work on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad and the placing of piles in the east bank of the Missouri River at St. Joseph to keep the bank from being washed away. So thorough was this latter work that later engineers found the bank in excellent condition.² His inventions included a pistol,³ a mitre gauge,⁴ and a hemp break.⁵

In 1859 Thompson was mayor of St. Joseph, president of the gas works, president of the St. Joseph & Maryville Railroad, agent of the Platte County Railroad, colonel in the Missouri Volunteer Militia, county surveyor, president of the Catholic Benevolent Association, member of the Elwood Town Company, and engaged in a lively real estate business in the firm of Harbine and Thompson.

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1. Weekly West, Jan. 7, 1860, in Crocker, 39-40.
 2. St. Joseph Gazette, Oct. 16, 1871, in Crocker, 39.
 3. Mrs. Bailey's sketch of Thompson.
 4. Patent No. 21,784.
 5. Receipt from M. Jeff Thompson, St. Joseph, Mo., to John A. Dolman, June 16, 1855, in collection at State Historical Society of Missouri at Columbia.

One of his real estate advertisements ran as follows:

M. Jeff Thompson
Real Estate Agent and Surveyor
St. Joseph, Missouri

Will buy and sell Improved and Unimproved
City Lots, Examine and Value Lands, and Pay Taxes
for non-residents, in Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, and
Nebraska.¹

In 1860 Thompson was not a candidate for reelection, but spent his time working for the Southern cause by writing a pamphlet.² He was a Whig and a non-slave owner, but while he could see many evils in slavery, yet he feared emancipation even more. He said, "There is but one great question now before the American people. It is the slavery question." He believed that if every friend of slavery would stand up for his rights and state his mind, then secession could be avoided, but if it could not be avoided, then Missouri should go with the South.³

As soon as the Civil War was over, Thompson accepted the situation and was one of the first Southern leaders to be reconstructed. He immediately set up a commission house in Memphis, Tennessee, but this proved to be a failure. Through the influence of General A. L. Lee, officer

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1. Weekly West, June 5, 1859, in Crocker, 39.
 2. M. Jeff Thompson, An Address to the Citizens of the State of Missouri.
 3. M. Jeff Thompson, An Address to the Citizens of the State of Missouri.

in the United States Army and former banker in St. Joseph, Thompson obtained the appointment of chief engineer of the Board of Public Works of the State of Louisiana. He held this position for eight years, and worked so hard that his health failed him.

In an attempt to regain it, Thompson travelled for a short period, but soon returned to St. Joseph. He soon became bedfast, and died at the Pacific House on September 5, 1876.

* * * * *

The problem of secession in Missouri began a long-drawn-out struggle between the conflicting forces and ended in favor of the Unionists.¹ Governor Claiborne F. Jackson, who was inaugurated early in 1861, stated that Missouri should stand with the slave states because she was one of them, implying that should the Union be destroyed, Missouri ought also to leave. This was possibly the sentiment of the majority of the people of Missouri, and certainly was that of Jeff Thompson. He went to Jefferson City with the opening of the legislature to lend his political influence for secession.

1. The following statements will not be footnoted, as they are given in detail in the body of the manuscript.

He immediately became active in working on bills to build a strong militia for Missouri and to call a state convention to consider secession, for the people felt that this latter issue should be decided by representatives elected specifically for this purpose. The military bill failed to pass in the regular session of the legislature, and when it became apparent that the convention would not take Missouri out of the Union, Thompson returned to St. Joseph to resume his normal business activities.

Shortly after the convention had adjourned, the state administration, which had been planning secretly to obtain possession of the St. Louis arsenal, found that this could not be done without a struggle. The capture was being planned when the firing on Fort Sumter and President Lincoln's call for troops opened the Civil War. Jackson refused to send troops to coerce the South, called the legislature into special session, and the militia into camps of instruction--the secret mission of which was to capture the St. Louis arsenal.

Thompson, as head of the militia in northwest Missouri, brought the militia into the field. After the organization was completed, however, he had little to do. The St. Louis militia were considered a menace to the arsenal and were captured by General Lyon, then commanding the Federal troops in St. Louis. The capture of Camp

Jackson caused such an immediate furor in all Missouri that the legislature in fifteen minutes passed the militia bill that had failed before.

Following the capture of Camp Jackson, the state officials realized that they would have to go slowly. Though they disbanded the militia, they planned to reorganize it under the new bill. Thompson did not know of these plans, apparently, for believing that the state was being "sold", he made plans to go to Virginia and fight for his native state. He tore down the United States' flag flying over the St. Joseph postoffice in anger over some trickery which had been used on him.

Enroute to Virginia, Thompson stopped in Jefferson City and was informed by Governor Jackson and Sterling Price, commander of the Missouri State Guard, that plans were being made to take Missouri out of the Union. Thompson then remained several weeks to assist in the preparations, but he became disgusted with Jackson and Price and decided to continue his earlier plan.

Thompson travelled from Jefferson City to St. Louis and on to Memphis, where he tried to secure a commission in a Missouri regiment which Colonel Bowen was forming. He failed, but hearing of Jackson's call for fifty thousand volunteers, elected to return and raise a command of his own. Because he realized that it was too

late to reach St. Joseph to raise a command, he went to northeast Arkansas and sent for Missourians to rendezvous at Pocahontas. This brought no response, but he was soon invited by the citizens of Ripley County to lead the battalion they had formed. This command he held a short time when he received news that General Watkins, of the First Military District, had resigned his commission and that the officers of the district had decided to elect a successor. Confident of the election, Thompson went to Bloomfield and was duly elected to command the district.

The first task confronting him was to organize and equip his brigade--which was done as well as the country could afford. Then numerous skirmishes with the Federal troops in the area followed.

Located in southeastern Missouri, the First Military District had three strong Federal posts--Ironton, Cape Girardeau, and Bird's Point--within it, and had St. Louis, a Federal city, on its northern border. Although this area was strongly Southern, it was so poor and swampy that it was virtually impossible for a regularly organized and equipped army to exist or operate in the district.

Thompson soon realized that in the open the Federal troops were too strong for his small force but he could disguise his weakness by rapid operations, and harass and worry the Federals, even if he could not conquer them.

Several small skirmishes took place which were of little consequence except as they forced the Federals to guard carefully their movements, and dissipate their strength protecting the railroads and other property in the area.

General Price had had considerable success with his troops, having defeated the Union forces at Wilson Creek, but was forced to retreat before the grand army assembled by General John C. Fremont. To relieve Price, Thompson was ordered to threaten St. Louis by making a foray near Farmington. This he did in October, 1861, capturing and destroying part of the Iron Mountain railroad which served as the Ironton garrison's supply line. Thompson worried both the Ironton troops and the officers in St. Louis by cleverly magnifying the number of his men and of the reinforcements near at hand. General Grant, at Cairo, had previously attempted to capture Jeff Thompson without success, and now sent a force from Cape Girardeau to meet at Fredericktown with one from Ironton and with this aid defeat Thompson. Thompson, becoming aware of these forces and their intention, retreated to mislead the enemy. Then drawing them into ambush, he gave battle until the enemy was able to concentrate its superior force. At this point, Thompson withdrew to the swamps, having worried the enemy and collected considerable supplies.

He passed the remainder of the year in small skirmishes and in solving administrative problems, the greatest of which was the payment of his troops and those who had supplied them. He attempted to keep a force together despite the end of the enlistment period for the majority of his men.

The opening of 1862 saw Thompson with a miserably poor force which had already spent itself.¹ Thompson went to Richmond to see Jefferson Davis about securing a new command, but as the President of the Confederacy was ill at the time, he had no success. He returned to southeast Missouri for a brief period--just long enough to see the regular Confederate troops forced from Missouri because they attempted to meet the Federal army in the open, a thing which Thompson had advised against. He then crossed to Memphis with his few remaining troops, and General Van Doren gave him a free hand to do all the mischief he could. Soon afterward he took his men aboard the Mississippi River rams, built to sink the Union gunboats by colliding and crushing in their sides. These operations were successful for a period but the enemy attacked the peculiar little fleet at a time when Thompson and his men were not

1. The story of Thompson's activities after 1861 are contained in his own memoirs. For this reason they will not be footnoted.

aboard and it was sunk. Thompson and his men were the last to flee Memphis, and only escaped when Thompson took the throttle of a halted railroad engine and ran it out himself.

On July 4, 1862, Thompson could hear Grant's salute fired in honor of the day. Since he had received news of a Confederate victory before Grant, he wrote a letter, "telling him that I could hear his guns and hoped he was having a good time, but as I had neither powder to waste, nor whisky, nor ice, that I had sat down in a mint patch, and was getting drunk on the news from Richmond."

Later in 1862, Thompson was charged with keeping the Federal troops in New Orleans from flanking certain Confederate operations. With one company of men he threatened New Orleans, planning to use a mob uprising to take over the city. He advertised his plans sufficiently to cause the Federal troops to withdraw forces from Baton Rouge and closely guard New Orleans--thus accomplishing his mission.

While outside New Orleans he observed a great deal of trading going on between the Confederates and Unionists. The Confederates exchanged cotton for salt and much-needed medical supplies. The exchange was successfully pursued by both sides until a Confederate general officer halted it.

After New Orleans, Thompson again went to Richmond to obtain a Confederate commission, and was informed that he could receive a Confederate commission in place of his state commission, if he could get a congressman to recommend it or if he could assemble a brigade. Since there was no congressman in the First Military District of Missouri, he decided on the latter course. While enroute to Missouri, he spoke to the Arkansas legislature and assembled citizens, but made the mistake of criticising the administration of the Western Department. Friends of the commander were in the crowd and as a result Thompson was not allowed to gather any men in either Arkansas or Missouri. He, therefore, spent his next eight months accompanying small expeditions in Missouri and Arkansas as an advisor and observer.

In 1863 Thompson had just gained permission to raise a brigade when, through the carelessness of his friends, he was captured by Union soldiers at Pocahontas, Arkansas. He was taken under guard to St. Louis, where his great number of influential friends in the Union army gained him special privileges.

At first he was held captive at Alton, Illinois, but was later transferred to Johnson's Island Prison, near Sandusky, Ohio. He remained there for a considerable time, but was not idle. He planned an escape which did

not materialize, compiled a roster of the prisoners present, plotted and built a Confederate cemetery, obtained the privilege of lengthy correspondence for the prisoners, and wrote his war experiences up to that time. He complained of the thieving contractors rather than of the treatment of the guards, and when winter came on, he wrote of the bitter cold. A heavy snow gave the men a chance for a big snow battle which lasted three days. Though it caused at least a dozen deaths, the needed exercise and recreation made it worthwhile.

In 1864 while yet in prison, he was transferred to a prison ship outside Charleston. With many others as hostages he was held for the safe-keeping of Union officers submitted to similar treatment by the Confederates. The heat was almost unbearable but eventually he was exchanged for a Union general.

It was now the summer of 1864, and Thompson once more went back to southeast Missouri, arriving just in time to start on Price's last raid in Missouri. He received the command which was formerly Van Doren's, and periodically was given orders or left entirely independent. Thompson, who had always insisted that only contraband or absolutely essential materials should be taken, found that it was almost impossible to keep the men from stealing everything which they saw. He criticized the

officers who allowed this, and had a great deal of trouble convincing the men that he was in earnest about their ceasing to steal. After capturing one town, he made his men remain in line and only allowed the ordnance and quartermaster men to select what was needed.

"This was something so new to most of the soldiers that their officers could not control them by ordinary means. Not until I had spanked some plunderers with my sabre, and shot at, and killed the mule under a robber, could they be brought to know that I was in earnest."

Another important problem for the General was to obtain and keep a suitable horse. Most horses were not strong enough to keep up with his hard riding, and when he did obtain a good horse, it was often stolen by someone in his own force.

Thompson's command was not demoralized in the Confederate defeat at Westport Landing, but the exposure and lack of provisions in the retreat caused serious suffering. The wagons filled with provisions were burned, but certain rich slave owners had sent wagons filled with slaves and their provision to the South. The slaves rode and had both bread and meat at times when the army was starving. This, naturally, caused much resentment.

The army eventually reached Texas, where many of the officers found excuses to leave their commands. Although

Thompson was only a brigadier-general in the Missouri State Guard, a practically non-existent organization by now, he was at times in command of an entire Confederate division.

Early in 1865, Thompson was ordered north to command the Northern Sub-District of Arkansas, which included not only northern Arkansas but his old Missouri district as well. It was a long, hard journey, but he felt as if at last he were returning home.

The orders he received gave him dictatorial powers over the persons in his district--even to death. Realizing that the area was overrun with bushwhackers, jayhawkers, and other independent or marauding bands, he accepted his new position with the understanding that he could shoot a general each year, a field officer the first of each month, an officer each Sunday, and a private every day until order was restored.

He arrived and assumed command on March 20, 1865, and immediately outlawed all guerrillas. On April 18, following Lee's surrender and the assassination of Lincoln, the Federal authorities called for Thompson's surrender, but he declined because he still had faith in the ultimate victory of the Confederate cause. He was forced to surrender on June 5th for he realized that the Federal army would devastate the entire area if he

failed to do so, and also because he could gather together only a few of his 8000 men.

In his farewell speech to his men, he hoped that his men would be better citizens than they were soldiers, and that they would get their reward for stealing and plundering--which he knew they would.

On June 6th, the General applied for citizenship in the United States and took an oath in New Orleans, but this application was never heard from again.

Thompson is a difficult man to evaluate because he accomplished much, despite his eccentric manner. He appeared almost as a comic opera character, for he delighted in haranguing his men or writing high sounding proclamations when he was not on a campaign. However, his force was respected and even General Grant admitted he could not capture Thompson--although his army was far superior.¹

Thompson was not a non-entity, for his raids accomplished some definite purpose beside causing alarm. Major John M. Scholfield, who was later to command the United States Army, said in his biography:

The latter [Jeff Thompson] had already made a raid in Carlin's rear, destroyed the railroad bridge across the Big River, and interfered seriously with the communications to St. Louis. In the nervous condition of the military as well as the

1. U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, I, 263.

public mind at that time, even St. Louis was regarded as in danger.¹

Innumerable newspaper accounts show that the general military and civil population held Thompson to be a clever man, commanding a fast moving force, but his bragging and tall stories were often the medium by which he accomplished his best results.

Despite all his braggadocio, Thompson seems to have given here an accurate account of his activities. He claims that his records were taken from him at the time of his capture, yet his statements are so nearly correct that the editor was often amazed. Thompson frequently played "talent" but this story is as accurate as it was possible for Thompson to make it.

1. General John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years In The Army, 51.

CHAPTER ONE

WORKING ON THE MILITARY BILL

The first of January, 1861, found me in Jefferson City, Mo.,¹ whither I had gone that I might be near at hand to witness the struggle that would be made by the Southern people and the Union element for the possession of the State.² I felt that I could use my little influence to bolster up such weak-kneed and timid Southerners as might be frightened from doing right for fear that a war would be

1. There is no record of Jeff Thompson's arrival in the Daily Jefferson Inquirer, but the incompleteness of the files prior to Jan. 1, 1861, and the arrival of the Legislature with all its officials, will probably explain why it is not noted. An official report to Adjutant General George A. Parsons establishes Jeff Thompson's presence in Jefferson City as early as Jan. 12, 1861. Journal Of The House Of Representatives Of The State Of Missouri At The First Session Of The Twenty-First General Assembly, Appendix, 654.
2. Jeff Thompson was only one of a large number of individuals who swarmed to Jefferson City to influence the decision of the Legislature. These men were generally self-charged with taking Missouri into secession. Lieut. Gov. Thomas C. Reynolds, an outspoken secessionist, carefully organized the Senate committees with radical secessionists at their heads. The committees then promptly reported several bills.

One of these provided for calling a state convention, a means of taking the state into secession. A second provided for the organization of the militia of the state, which would be done by officers favoring secession. A third provided for taking away much of the police power of the Republican mayor of St. Louis. John McElroy, The Struggle For Missouri, 24-32.

forced upon them, and I believe that I did my country some service in this way, for I had constant intercourse with the members of the Legislature;¹ and advanced the interests of the South on all occasions.² I was permitted by the librarian, Samuel Knott,³ to occupy a table in the library, and soon became acquainted with all of the members of the Senate and House.

After the organization and appointment of the committees, the Senate Military committee, of which Brig. Gen. Monroe Parsons was chairman,⁴ and the Military committee of the House, of which Brig. Gen. T. A. Harris was chairman,⁵ each appointed me clerk, and the whole of my time

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1. "My country" refers to the Confederacy, which was in existence when this was written.
 2. Thompson's former position as mayor of St. Joseph, his numerous railroad connections, militia commission, and his great number of friends in the Legislature undoubtedly gave him considerable influence.
 3. The records of the Legislative Library no longer exist.
 4. Gen. Monroe Parsons, a state senator from Cole County, was appointed and released from the position of chairman of the Militia Committee on Jan. 7, 1861. Journal Of The Senate Of Missouri At The First Session Of The Twenty-First General Assembly, 58, 61. Despite this release he seems to have continued in charge of this committee throughout the regular session.

For a short biography of Gen. Parsons, see W. V. N. Bay, Reminiscences of the Bench and Bar of Missouri, 590.
 5. Gen. T. A. Harris was chairman of the Militia Committee of the House by appointment on Jan. 7, 1861. House Journal, 1861, 61.

was now devoted to the preparation of the Military Bill.¹

Brigadier Generals D. M. Frost² and Bela M. Hughes³ volunteered their experience and talents in the preparation of the bill. We met at the City Hotel, and there, day after day, debated and composed the various sections of the bill. Parsons and Harris would come in daily, and the changes, alterations, arguments, and disputes, would have worn out anyone with less patience than myself. Anyone who knows the characters of these four gentlemen can appreciate the difficulties in the way of an agreement on any subject, however trivial, for neither of them has ever been known to yield his opinion on any point. My position was one of great delicacy, as they were all my friends and had a jealous eye on each other. My

1. The clerk of the Senate committee on Militia was paid the usual clerk's fee by a resolution passed March 23, 1861, but the clerk was not named. Senate Journal, 1861, 516.
2. Gen. Daniel Marsh Frost had recently returned to Jefferson City from the Kansas border with his brigade. He sent a report of his activities to Gov. R. M. Stewart on Dec. 26, 1860, and was considered an outstanding military leader of Missouri. His experiences put him in demand. House Journal, 1861, Appendix, 10-13.

A short biography of this soldier is found in James Cox, Old And New St. Louis, 227.

3. Gen. Bela M. Hughes was a Democratic politician from St. Joseph. He held no known political position at this time but perhaps he was lobbying for political groups.

A brief biography of Gen. Hughes may be found in National Historical Company, [pub.], Missouri History Of Clinton County, 446.

stratagems to make each believe in the morning that the corrected copy which I produced was the exact copy of the sections and substitutes that were given me by each, required much tact. I had the military laws from every state in the library. I constantly consulted each, and after weeks of hard work two bills were prepared, one known as the Harris Bill, and the other as the Senate Bill. General Parsons was shrewd enough not to let his name be attached to any bill.¹

In all of the minor sections and details these bills were substantially the same, but the Harris Bill made the commanding officer of each military district of the same grade, (he proposed major generals) without a commanding general. The machinery was to fit the plan, and converge in the governor, aided by the Military Board.

The "Senate Bill" provided for a major general for the state, with brigadier generals for the districts.

For want of agreement between the military men neither bill was passed, as might have been expected. The whole labor would have been thrown away had it not been for

1. The Harris Bill and the Senate Bill were each entitled, "AN ACT to provide for the organization, government, and support of the military forces of the State of Missouri." Harris introduced his bill into the House on Feb. 6, 1861. House Journal, 1861, 451. Parsons introduced his bill one day earlier, but neither was successful. Senate Journal, 1861, 201.

subsequent events. I may as well mention here the history of the Military Bill, under which the Missouri State Guard was organized, so it might be known.¹

Each of the bills had been garbled and amended at the regular session before they were rejected, so that the system of each was destroyed.² At the called session, in the hurry incident to the capture of Camp Jackson, the Harris Bill was passed just as it then was. Immediately afterwards the Legislature passed an amendment without arranging the connection with the original bill. The present

1. The fight in the Legislature over the Military bills was not a matter of systems, but rather of powers. The bills put every able-bodied man in the militia, under officers appointed by the governor, and described as "treason to the state," words spoken in derogation of the governor or the Legislature. It relieved the people of a superior allegiance to the national government and all punishments were to be made by courts-martial. McElroy, 88; House Journal, 1861, 353; James Peckham, General Nathaniel Lyon, And Missouri In 1861, 24.
2. The Missouri Constitutional Convention, which had been called to settle federal relations, adjourned on March 22, 1861, and the Legislature on March 28th. The regular session of the Legislature had not armed the state and events moved rapidly in the following month--Sumter, Lincoln's call for volunteers, Gov. Jackson's refusal to supply men to coerce the South, and plans to capture the Federal arsenal in St. Louis--so a special session of the Legislature was called for May 2, 1861. While it was in session, Gen. Lyon, leading the United States forces at St. Louis, captured a state militia encampment at Camp Jackson. In the excitement which followed the news of this attack, the long debated Harris Bill was passed in fifteen minutes by both houses. McElroy, 88-90; Eugene Morrow Violette, A History Of Missouri, 333, 348-350.

law, with its serious defects, was the consequence.

Either of the original bills would have preserved harmony and true system.¹

I will here relate an incident that may be interesting to some who know the party. Frank C. Hagan,² the member from Jefferson County was on the committee, and

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1. The two bills passed in the called session were, "AN ACT to provide for the Organization, Government, and Support of the Military Forces of the State of Missouri," approved May 14, 1861; and "AN ACT to authorize the appointment of one Major General for the Missouri Militia," approved May 15, 1861.

The first document is of considerable length, running forty-three printed pages, covering every subject from appointment of officers to the Articles of War. The bill appears to be a well constructed one, in most respects, and one that could work well. The second bill is less than a page long. Laws Of The State Of Missouri, Passed At The Called Session Of The Twenty-First General Assembly, 3ff.

There is no confusion apparent. The first bill provided for the governor to command the militia, giving him a military board of advisors and nine brigadier generals to carry out the orders. The second bill coordinated the militia better by allowing the governor to appoint a man actually to exercise his command. Since the governor was not a military man, it gave him an opportunity to select someone better suited to this task than himself.

Thompson disliked Jackson and Price, who headed this system, and this perhaps influenced his opinion of the law.

2. Frank C. Hagan was Francis Hagan, representative from Jefferson County. House Journal, 1861, 4. No record of Hagan's appointment to the Militia Committee can be found.

when censored for his inattention remarked that he felt no interest in the bill, as it was only to put gold lace on certain interested parties, for when the abolitionists would show themselves in Jefferson County, his constituents would turn out en masse with their squirrel rifles and drive them away without any fuss or feathers. Yet, strange to say, Frank Hagan was the first man driven from his home in the whole state, his office and library were destroyed, his family insulted by the Dutch soldiers, and yet not a squirrel rifle cracked in his county.¹

Many months afterwards we were in the swamps together, surrounded by a vindictive enemy, and feeling anxious about the discipline and vigilance of our pickets and guards. I laughed at him for his mistake in not knowing that "in peace you should prepare for war."²

1. Hagan, a Southern sympathizer, was driven from his home on May 16, 1861. A meeting was called at DeSoto to raise a secession flag, but when the crowd arrived, so did Federal troops from St. Louis. Goodspeed Publishing Company, [pub], History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford & Gasconade Counties, Missouri, 413-415.

"Dutch soldiers" means Federal troops in the language of the secessionists. The German immigrant soldier was singled out, and the "secesh" vented their spite on him.

2. Mere passage of a military bill would have been of little avail, but had the state prepared by securing arms, and organized its men in a strong army, the story would have been much different.

I was also clerk of the Apportionment Committee,¹ and made the maps and calculations for apportioning the representatives in the Legislature, and here took my first lesson in true "pipe laying," for the Committee desired the districts made into any size or shape that would secure the election of the partizans of their political faith. The members of the Committee were as much divided as the Houses were upon the subject, and, if I remember rightly, there was no apportionment bill passed.²

Upon the bill calling the Convention, I worked all that I could, and for the bill calling into life the State Journal, I did no little service.³

My Southern proclivities were well known, yet I was not, nor am I now, a secessionist "per se," as the Fire Eaters were called. I was then, and I am now, an

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1. This cannot be verified. Thompson's ability at constructing maps would have been very useful here.
 2. By resolution passed Feb. 5, 1861, in the House, a committee of nine members was appointed "to apportion representatives, for the ensuing four years, and to divide the State into Senatorial Districts"; but no bill to carry this into effect was ever passed. House Journal, 1861, 243.
 3. The secessionists called this convention as a means of taking Missouri out of the Union.

There is no explanation why the State Journal, a St. Louis newspaper, should require any legislation.

In neither case can Thompson's services be determined.

"irrepressible conflict" man, and believed that a united action on the part of the South would coerce the North into such an interpretation or amendment to the Constitution that a Southern man could travel, even if he could not live, anywhere in the Union with his slaves. If this could not be done, then I was satisfied the united South could obtain a peaceable separation from the North.

Each hour, however, developed new necessities for action; the apathy and opposition by so many that should have been true to the South, and then afterwards, the actions and resolutions of the Convention, confirmed me in my revolutionary tendencies, for I saw no honor, nor safety, save in armed rebellion. I am, however, anticipating.¹

I was an earnest advocate of the Military Bill, as a peace as well as war measure, and had an opportunity one evening of addressing the members and citizens of Jefferson City upon the subject.²

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1. Compromise was the keynote of the Convention, for resolutions calling upon Missouri to secede if the Union was broken, and to refuse to furnish men or money to the Federal government to coerce the South, were rejected. Violette, 333.
 2. Jeff Thompson spoke on the same platform with Col. G. W. Hough, Gen. J. Proctor Knott, Hon. George F. Houston, and Gov. C. F. Jackson on April 20th. Tri-Weekly Missouri Republican, April 23, 1861.

When the Convention assembled I had a fair opportunity to judge the "status" of the state. I kept a register of the reported proclivities of the various members, and it was evident that the temper was against us; unless some leading man should at once take the helm. I had been well aware of the influences that had been brought to bear throughout the state. I knew the plans of the Eastern capitalists, for their fifty millions invested in Missouri bonds and railroads were in jeopardy, so they had boldly seized upon the pocket-nerve of many of our prominent men and made fair bids for all that were in the market.

To relate a history of these operations would be a history of Missouri¹ instead of my individual history, and

1. It is unfortunate that no study has been made of the railroad influence on the Missouri Constitutional Convention of 1861. On railroads, however, Thompson was one of the best informed men of the state.

In spite of local and state aid, Eastern capital was necessary to the railroads. In 1856 many financiers were aware of the fact that the Missouri-Kansas border troubles made it almost hopeless to talk about railroad securities. During the actual progress of the Constitutional Convention, Missouri railroad securities were declining. The Liberty Tribune, March 8, 1861, said, "The New York papers notice a decline in these [Hannibal & St. Joseph] railroad bonds, said to be owing to doubt about the payment for the next installment." Robert E. Riegel, The Story Of The Western Railroads, 48-64; S. B. Harding, Life Of George R. Smith, 233.

After the Convention was over, ex-Gov. Robert M. Stewart, an outstanding railroad man, said, "If secession succeeds in this State, our public credit is a myth If this State joins the Southern Confederacy, every hope of a Pacific Railroad is killed." Missouri Republican, May 15, 1861.

therefore I will proceed with the Convention.¹

Ex-Gov., Gen. Sterling Price, who was revered over the whole state for his honesty and impartiality, had been called from the quiet walks of private life to be a member of the Convention, for it was felt by everybody that there was a storm brooding. Gen. Price had been a Douglas Democrat, he was known to be conservative and devoted to the Union, and he was elected president of the Convention.²

Upon the election for secretary being called up, I was nominated by my friend, Willard P. Hall. I had been asked

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1. The state Convention met at Jefferson City on Feb. 28, 1861, and was composed of 99 members, of which 53 were natives either of Virginia or Kentucky, and all but 17 had been born in slave states. Only 13 were natives of the North. There was one Irishman, and three Germans. The organization was a victory for the Union men and, as soon as it was possible, the Convention adjourned to St. Louis to avoid the pressure being brought to bear on it.

In St. Louis, Hamilton R. Gamble, the Union leader and chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, made a report which favored the Union and called for a reconciliation of the North and South. This was known as the Crittenden proposal. Shortly after this the Convention adjourned, subject to call by a committee. McElroy, 49-50.

2. The Hon. Sterling Price of Charitan County was elected president of the Convention on the first ballot by an overwhelming majority. In appreciation of his services, he was thanked on the last day for "his able, impartial, and courteous discharge of his arduous duties." Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City and St. Louis, March, 1861, 14, 62.

plainly if I was a secessionist, and I plainly answered, "No," for I was not a secessionist in the then understanding of the term, and all of these delegates, except some members from St. Louis, professed to be friends of the South. There were several other candidates, and I was flattered by receiving the vote of every personal friend in the Convention, but not enough to elect. I believe I was third on the count. On the second ballot I received the same vote, but, some having dropped off, the strong candidates were increased in strength, and my name was withdrawn. Among those who voted for me were W. P. Hall, now member of Congress from Missouri, R. M. Stewart, ex-Gov. of Missouri, and others who are prominent Union men.¹ An unconditional Union man was elected, and then the complexion of the

1. In the election Thompson ran fourth in the first two ballots and was withdrawn before the third. Samuel A. Lowe was elected on the fourth ballot.

Thompson received 12 votes [of 99] on the first ballot and 11 on the second. Those voting for him on the second ballot were Chenault of Jasper; Crawford of Lawrence; Donnell, Stewart, Wilson, and Hall of Buchanan; Hall of Randolph; Hudgins of Andrews; Matson of Ralls; Norton of Platte; and Vanbusker of Holt. All of these men came from communities in which Thompson was well known. Journal of the Missouri Convention, 14-15.

Willard P. Hall, who nominated Thompson, was also a resident of St. Joseph, but these men fought on opposite sides during the Civil War. Thompson became a leader of Confederate troops while Hall was lieutenant governor, then governor of Missouri.

Convention was known. In these elections, had the true Southern men boldly proclaimed the danger to the country, probably the uncommitted might have been brought over.¹ The Convention drifted away upon a current which they knew not of, and when the patriotic Price saw the breakers ahead, he tried "to put down the helm to save the ship, but the rudder ropes were foul,"² and his crew in-subordinate, so Missouri was cast upon the rocks of fanaticism, where still she flounders in the blood of her children.

Gen. Price's leaving the Convention, and assuming the guidance of brave and patriotic men, will be found in his history.³ Having now completed my labors as clerk to the Committee on Militia, and having been beaten for the secretaryship of the Convention, I answered the oft repeated calls to my home and started to St. Joseph.

When I left Jefferson City, I started as a pilgrim to preach, like John in the wilderness, crying "prepare

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1. There were only about twenty pro-Southern men in the Convention and they did not favor immediate secession, but regarded it as justifiable revolution. Jonas Viles, A History Of Missouri For High Schools, 174.
 2. Price drifted toward the South during the Convention. McElroy, 50-51.
 3. The sentence construction here is such as to confuse Price's actions. He did not leave the Convention until it had adjourned.

ye the way", for I saw the battle cloud approaching, and having purchased the accoutrements of the famous 7th Regiment of New York that had been sent to Jefferson City as a sample, I filled the knapsack and blanket cloth with Harris' and Parsons' speeches on the Military Bill, and taking my arms full, I strewed them around like a tract distributor until I reached St. Joseph, warning all to "Be Ready."

Shortly after I returned home, I heard of some condemned arms that had been sold at the Liberty Arsenal, and wrote to Quartermaster General Harding to know if the state would purchase them from me, if I should hunt them up. Upon receiving his answer, I went to Kansas City and there purchased nearly two hundred sabres. I then went to the Liberty Arsenal, where my old personal friend was in charge, to trace up the other articles that were sold. I spent the day with my old friend, waiting for the boat, and while there, my boyhood fondness for roaming through the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, induced me to make a pretty fair inventory of the material stored at the depot. The boat came and I went to Jefferson City with my sabres.

I here met John S. Bowen, afterwards Major General
P.A.C.S., for the first time.¹

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1. John S. Bowen was born in Georgia in 1829 and appointed to his rank from Missouri in 1863. He died at Raymond, Mississippi on July 16, 1863. He was especially conspicuous for his work in the battle of Vicksburg. Gen. Marcus J. Wright, General Officers Of The Confederate Army, 34.

P.A.C.S.--Provisional Army of the Confederate States.

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANIZING THE MILITIA

The coming storm was now casting such dark shadows before it,¹ that patriots and other military men had met at Jefferson City to consult with Governor Jackson² about the preparations to meet the storm. It was now determined to order the Missouri militia into camp according to the

1. The events which had just transpired were the surrender of Fort Sumter, Lincoln's call for troops, and Gov. Jackson's refusal to furnish Missouri troops to coerce the South.

Thompson wrote Jeff Davis at this time, asking whether the Confederacy would accept soldiers from the border states if Missouri did not secede. He said he wished to fight for the South and would bring several companies of troops with him.

John Tyler, Jr., of the Confederate War Department, answered this letter and advised holding men in readiness. U. S. War Department, The War Of The Rebellion: A Compilation Of The Official Records Of The Union And Confederate Armies, series I, volume I, 684, 689. (Hereinafter quoted as R.R., and series I unless otherwise noted.)

2. Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson was born in Kentucky in 1806 and came to Missouri before he was twenty. He was a merchant, lawyer, and a politician--belonging to the Democratic party but a member of the "Central Clique" which opposed Benton. The Benton fight almost broke the Democratic party in Missouri and Jackson suffered politically by the fight. In 1861 Jackson became governor, urging compromise to avoid civil war. His inaugural address made it clear, however, that if the Union was broken, then Missouri as a slave state, must go with the South. Jonas Viles, "Claiborne Fox Jackson," in Buel Leopard and Floyd Shoemaker, [comp.], The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, III, 317-327.

existing law, and to call an extra session as speedily as possible.¹

I started for home with the news of the calling of the Legislature and the order calling the militia of northwest Missouri into camp at St. Joseph, as I was the inspector of that military district, and the ranking officer, though not in the line.²

Upon reaching St. Joseph, I learned that several of our hotspurs, not considering the injury of too hasty and unadvised action and not content to await the current of event, had seized upon the Liberty Arsenal and had carried away the arms and munitions of war that were there, placing them in the hands of the militia.³

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1. Gen. D. M. Frost was a leader of the partisan group assembled. On April 15th he asked the Governor to convene the General Assembly, send to the South for munitions with which to capture the St. Louis arsenal, prevent the garrisoning of the Liberty arsenal, refuse President Lincoln's call for men, and set up military camps of instruction. McElroy, 62.

These things were soon carried out, for on April 22nd Gov. Jackson sent out a proclamation calling the Legislature into session on May 2nd, and Warwick Hough, adjutant general, called the militia into camp on May 3d. Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.

2. House Journal, 1861, Appendix, 654.
3. The Liberty arsenal was opened on April 20, 1861. A receipt was given for the articles taken. Missouri Republican, April 23, 1861.

As the tocsin was now sounding, some method had to be adopted. I immediately put on my uniform and started for Liberty to find out who had the arms and make a proper report of them.¹

When I reached Liberty I found a mass meeting of the people, which was being addressed by General A. W. Doniphan, of Mexican War celebrity.² I immediately entered the throng and listened to his eloquent words, which were rich in their praise of the South and condemnation of the aggressive spirit of abolitionism, and he said, "In a few days you will hear that our Legislature has been called in extra session, and the militia will be ordered into camp." I spoke out, "General, each of these things has been done already." He looked around, recognized me in my uniform, and said in a jocular way, "You hear! Then the war has commenced!" (or something to that effect.) He continued his speech, and made a powerful appeal to the people to stand by their Southern brethren. When he had finished, amid prolonged applause, the resolutions were offered by

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1. The Liberty Tribune of April 26, 1861, notes that Col. M. Jeff Thompson, inspector of the militia in the Fourth District, was in Liberty "the other day" on official business.
 2. The main speakers for this meeting, which was held in Liberty, April 23d, were Col. James H. Moss and Col. A. W. Doniphan. Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.

Mr. McCarty, and they breathed such a submissive spirit and such devotion to the Union that I was astonished that they should follow Doniphan's speech;¹ and when they were nearly unanimously adopted, I was shocked at the apathy of the people that I knew to be Southern in their sentiments. I was now called upon for a speech, and got up and asked what they meant by passing resolutions in direct opposition to the whole tenor of General Doniphan's speech, and insisted that the person who had written the resolutions had not heard the speech, and those who voted for it had not heard the resolutions. McCarty followed me, and after the strongest Union sentiments, tried to ridicule me for "coming here with a swallow-tailed coat to talk of war, when such a thing is not to be thought of."²

Yet strange to tell, in a few weeks, when the odor of sulphur could be smelled upon the air and the booming of guns first wakened the echoes in St. Louis, McCarty was among the foremost to strike for Southern right, and General Doniphan, who had spoken with so much fire, quietly

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1. The resolutions applauded Gov. Jackson's refusal to furnish troops to the Federal government, called for an immediate recognition of the Confederacy--with an offensive-defensive alliance, and called on Missouri to remain neutral as long as this was possible. Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.
 2. These speakers "called out" were not mentioned in the newspaper accounts of the meeting.

folded the comforts of his home around him, and has been an idle spectator of one of the mightiest revolutions that ever crowned the earth with the honors of civil war, while every right, every principle, and every vestige of his honor has been swept from him.¹

I organized Routt's² and Duncan's companies³ and returned to St. Joseph to prepare for going into camp.

In the organization of the militia, the senior officer in the line in St. Joseph was Major F. W. Smith, the mayor of the city.⁴ Although Major Smith was not a warm politician, yet he was fond of soldiering and as soon as he appointed a staff I took charge to see that everything needful was supplied. The military companies took a lively interest in the coming encampment, except the German Rifle Company which we did not want in camp, for the blood was now getting to a high temperature.

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1. Shortly after the passage of the Military Bill, Col. Doniphan was offered a generalship by Gov. Jackson. He declined to accept this. Liberty Tribune, May 24, 1861; June 7, 1861.
 2. Ibid., April 26, 1861.
 3. This cannot be verified.
 4. Col. Thompson, "General Order, No. 1, of Division No. IV," in Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.

It was now May,¹ and we went into camp with the "Jackson Guards," Captain Cundiff; the "Emmett Guards," Captain Raftery, (Quick commanding); the "Zouaves," Captain Kay; the "Stewartville Rifles," Captain Clark; "Thompson's Artillery"; the "Easton Cavalry," Captain Ranch; the "Buchanan Guards," Captain Boyd at the magazine; and the "DeKalb Cavalry."²

We had a beautiful ground near the Patee Hotel, and went regularly to work at camp duty and drilling.

I had been so careful up to this time to preserve the independence of Missouri from awkward entanglements by my actions, that I had a flag with coat of arms of Missouri painted on it in black, by which it could be said that we were nothing more than an encampment of Missouri militia--but the Southern blood that was known to flow in our veins, was a sure indication of our proclivities.³

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1. The militia encampment began May 3, 1861. "General Order, No. 7, Adjutant Generals Office," in Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.
 2. Division No. IV of the militia was made up of Nodaway, Worth, Gentry, Harrison, Davis, DeKalb, Andrew, Holt, Buchanan, Clinton, Caldwell, Ray, Clay, and Platte Counties. Col. Thompson, "General Order No. I, Division No. IV," in Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.
 3. "It is requested that your colors be, for the present, a plain white flag, with the coat of arms of Missouri emblazoned thereon, and we can hereafter paint as many stripes as we please with the blood of our invaders." Col. Thompson, "General Order No. I, District No. IV,"

On Friday, the 10th day of May (ever memorable in the state of Missouri),¹ an excursion left St. Joseph for Savannah, in Andrew County, to have Union speeches and to hoist a Union flag by the side of the Confederate flag that was flying from the cupola of the Court House. I had made arrangements to organize some military companies the same day, and I went on the train with the others. Savannah was filled with people, and suppressed rage was seen on every man's face; however, everybody endeavored to control himself. Matters proceeded until afternoon. The flag had been hoisted on a pole in the Court House yard, for there was a guard of Southerners in the cupola to prevent their flag from being taken down, or the other hoisted by it.²

in Liberty Tribune, April 26, 1861.

At this time Thompson wrote Pres. Davis that northwest Missouri held the key to Kansas, New Mexico, Jefferson, and Utah, and should the Missouri leaders sell out, the Missouri militia would lay down their lives to save this land for the South. R.R., I, 690.

1. On this day Gen. Lyon's troops captured the Missouri militia forces at Camp Jackson.
2. 2500 people were said to have attended the Union speeches. The flag pole erected was 150 feet high--higher than the Confederate--and young ladies sang the "Star Spangled Banner" as the flag was raised. Ex-Gov. Stewart and Willard P. Hall gave strong Union speeches. Missouri Republican, May 15, 1861.

Hall and Stewart were apparently "stumping" the area together for they spoke at DeKalb shortly before. Liberty Tribune, May 17, 1861.

The Union orators were speaking in the Court House and the Southern orators were speaking in the church not far away.

I had organized two companies and we had nearly all gone to the church to hear P.L.H., Esq., speak.¹ Suddenly a pistol shot was heard and a person rushed in with the information that one of our soldiers had been shot, and instantly the greatest excitement and confusion arose. The men leaped out of the church windows to get into the fight, and many rushed to their homes for their guns.

I dreaded the blood that might now flow, and made all my soldiers "fall in," that I might use them to advantage, if necessary, knowing that the Union men were leaving as fast as possible.²

The prominent Union speakers were W. P. Hall and R. M. Stewart, two esteemed personal friends, and I did not desire that ill should befall them where I had the command.³

1. This was P. L. Hudgens, Esq. At the end of Stewart's speech, "--a certain Reverend mounted a fence, and called on all the lambs of his flock to repair to the church and listen to the Gospel according to PRINCE HUDGENS." Some one hundred people did so. Missouri Republican, May 15, 1861.

2. This incident is not recorded.

3. Stewart, Hall, and Thompson were all from St. Joseph, and Stewart and Thompson were both connected with the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, Stewart as president.

But, had I the power to have seen the massacre that was at that very instant being enacted in St. Louis, it would have been "woe to the Dutch!" for we had the power, and all but I had the will to slay all that were there.¹

Hall and Stewart escaped while I was forming the companies, each leaving in great haste, and when the leaders had escaped, I persuaded the men to let the others go back to St. Joseph. I returned with them to St. Joseph on the same train.

We were being threatened by rumor that the U.S. troops were coming from Leavenworth to break up our camp, and the greatest vigilance was observed. On Saturday² we were horrified by the report from St. Louis. I would not believe it until Sunday, when it was confirmed.

I will here remark that though Major Smith was ostensibly at the head of the camp, yet I directed everything. On Sunday it was evident that we were in danger, and it was determined that every precautionary step should be taken.³

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1. The story of this disorder is nowhere recorded but Thompson has undoubtedly magnified his part in the incident. It is very doubtful if newly organized troops could have been so well held in check, or if used, been so effective.
 2. May 11, 1861.
 3. Troops from Leavenworth did not move into St. Joseph until June 10th, nearly a month later. Missouri Statesman, June 21, 1861.

On Sunday afternoon I determined to remove the powder that there was in the magazine of the city of St. Joseph, that we might have it if necessary, and to prevent the abolitionists from getting it; so during the afternoon I obtained some fifteen or twenty wagons, and sent them to the magazines. I asked the agent of the powder company for the keys but he gave me the key to one building and refused me the other. I then went to the magazines, where we had been keeping a guard for several days, and unlocked the one. To relieve my soldiers of the responsibility, I took a pick and dug through the brick wall of the other. Then I ordered them to pass out the powder.¹

It was now night, and a thundershower was raging. Our first taste of the hardships of war was had that night as we marched beside those powder wagons, with the rain pouring in torrents, the thunder reverberating among the clouds, and the lightning sparkling and flashing upon the bright bayonets of the escort.

We marched through the principal streets of St. Joseph with not less than twenty-five thousand pounds of

1. About 300 kegs of powder were removed and hidden. Long after Jeff Thompson had moved away from St. Joseph, the kegs began to turn up. On Nov. 29, 1861, for example, fifty-five kegs of powder were found in the hay stack on Mrs. Leonard's farm. At that time, over a hundred kegs had been recovered. Missouri Republican, Dec. 2, 1861.

powder, which a stray flash of lightning might have ignited and blown the escort to atoms. We reached our camp in safety.

On Monday morning we struck our tents, and fell back three miles, to Cargill's Hill. Believing that we would be attacked by the troops from Fort Leavenworth, I sent runners through the country to call the people to my assistance. They came from everywhere, old men, young men, boys; with rifles, shot guns, and pistols; on foot and on horseback.

Then, had Governor Jackson called on us, I could have joined the forces that were marching to Jefferson City with a small army of my own.¹ Now was a leader wanted. The ball was too big for Major Smith even to pretend to handle, and the organization of the regiment was called so that he, Smith, might be ranked legally, as he had been all this time in fact, by myself.² This night while lying in my tent asleep, the officer of the day came and said, "Colonel, there is a body of men approaching, what must I do?" I

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1. About a thousand men were gathered at Jefferson City by May 18th, to be taken into the militia under the new Military Bill. Most of these were soon sent home. Thomas L. Sneed, The Fight For Missouri, 185.
 2. The battalion was required by law to reorganize as a regiment when it had eight companies. Laws Of The State Of Missouri, Passed At The Adjourned Session Of The Twentieth General Assembly, 68.

answered, "If they are friends, feed them; if they are foes, fight them," and went asleep again.

They were friends, and the next day my answer was reported around camp, and has been mentioned often since, which is the reason I put it here. It was now determined to elect a colonel, and I, as inspector, ordered the election. I was anxious for the office myself, but soon found that I could not be elected, for the minds of many of the officers, who alone vote,¹ were not fully made up and many thought I was too rash. In fact, I had been exercising the command and had done it rigidly, and that was enough to prevent me being elected. I was, therefore, not a candidate, and Richard Lykins, a young lawyer, a secessionist, and one who had been awhile at West Point, was elected.

He had visited our camp daily previous to this and had expressed a desire for the office, but we never saw him again after the election, so I still retained actual command.²

We remained in this camp for several days, to have our powder taken away and secreted, and as soon as it was gone

1. Laws of Missouri, 1859, 68.

2. There is no record of Richard Lykins being elected to this position. He was apparently ineligible, because he was not enrolled in the battalion prior to the election. Ibid., 68.

we fell back, during the night, to Platt bridge on the Platt Long Road. Here we selected a strong position and determined to await events.

Nearly all our soldiers had left us by this time, upon one pretext or another, but those that were left were as true as steel.

CHAPTER THREE

RIOTING IN ST. JOSEPH

We now heard that the State Guard Law had been passed and that General Price had been made major general. Having only the newspaper account of this matter, we were in considerable doubt about our position, for General Price was looked upon as a Union man,¹ and about this time an order was received ordering me to disband immediately.² The same day, hearing of the treaty with General Harney,³ we

1. Sterling Price had been elected to the Constitutional Convention as a Union man but rapidly moved to a secessionist point of view. Immediately after the capture of Camp Jackson in St. Louis, he offered his services to Gov. Jackson, and was appointed major general--commanding all the state forces.
2. The militia, under the 1859 law, could only be called for six days. By an act passed while they were in camp, however, it was arranged for them to be held longer. "AN ACT to govern and regulate the Volunteer Militia of Missouri," in Laws of Missouri, Called Session, 1861, 83.
3. Gen. William S. Harney was one of the important men in the struggle for Missouri. He was the fourth ranking officer of the United States Army and commander of the Department of the West, commanding an area extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. A Southerner by birth, and a man with considerable property in St. Louis, the Southern element thought he would yield to their cause.

Gen. Harney did his best to preserve order and prevent bloodshed in Missouri. Such an attempt was the Price-Harney agreement. Unfortunately, Harney put too much

concluded that we were "sold," and must make the best arrangements to leave the country that we could. The cannon were dismounted and secreted.

The "Border Guards," under Boyd, determined to find their way to Arkansas; and there was a general scatteration.

I went to town to make arrangements to leave.

There had been considerable excitement in St. Joseph at different times about flags that had been hoisted and the city fathers had ordered that no more flags should be hoisted, but our newly appointed postmaster, who had been allowed to take his office only through my exertions,¹ determined to hoist a flag over the post office, knowing that the city authorities would not order it down. There was great excitement about it when I returned to town and, as I was then considered to be a head devil of all mischief,²

faith in the sincerity of Price and Jackson who used it to tie his hands while they went about their preparations for war. This proclamation caused Harney to be relieved from duty and he took no active part for the remainder of the war. R.R., III, 375; McElroy, 29-31; Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, From Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903, I, 502.

1. The newly appointed postmaster was J. L. Bittinger. R.R., I, 678. Thompson's efforts in Bittinger's behalf are unknown, but perhaps he kept down the "hot heads" who might have desired to make an example of this Republican official.
2. Some of the wild rumors, then circulating, even said that Thompson's forces stopped the Hannibal & St.

I was consulted by a Union man to know if I would interfere in putting it up. I told him, "No, put it up. It is none of my business, our flags are flying." I did not know of the order of the city fathers, as it had been made while I was in camp. It was now rumored through the town that we might have trouble at any moment, as the Dutch thought that General Price had sold us, and were disposed to take possession. I purchased a brass horn to blow signals, and I roamed the town the balance of the morning something like the Western man who was "spoiling for a fight" or the Irishman who begged someone "to tread on the tail of his coat." No one crossed me except a drunken Dutchman who was riding a buggy up one street and down another, with a U.S. flag waving in his hands.¹ He was beneath my notice, however, for I knew that some of the boys would soon provide for him. I was not mistaken, for presently he was knocked out with a stone, well pounded, and sent home.

In the afternoon as the hour approached to hoist the flag over the post office, the people of all parties began to collect.

Joseph railroad and detained government supplies.
Missouri Republican, May 23, 1861.

1. This incident is also reported in the Missouri Republican of May 25, 1861.

One of the employees of the post office asked me to go and drink with him--I went. Another asked me to go with him--again I went. As I returned, another met me and invited me, but at this time I discovered that the flag was hoisted, and that they had been endeavoring to keep me away, and get me drunk. They had gone just exactly too far, for when I discovered their intentions, I had enough whisky in me to make me reckless, without intoxication. So without consulting a soul, or intimating my intention, I drew my knife and pistol, ascended their rope ladder to the roof of the building, and amid cheers, groans, shouts, and threats, I severed the halyards with my bowie. The flag flew off into the street and in an instant was torn into a thousand pieces.¹

Then commenced a scene which might possibly be conceived but cannot be described. Hundreds rushed for the roof and every other way, all intent upon mischief; but my resolution now conquered the liquor that I had just drunk, I was perfectly cool, and descended the ladder and walked away as if I was not an actor in the scene. The pole, upon which the flag had been, was torn down and brought to me.

1. This incident is described in a letter by an unknown author, St. Joseph, Mo., to Col. F. P. Blair, May 22, 1861, in R.R., III, 378.

I ordered it thrown into the river, and away it went.¹

The Union men had now all fled to their homes,² and several hundred terribly excited men were clamoring for mischief and insisted that all other United States flags that were that day put out must be taken down. I had to lead them to control them,³ so marching towards the Turner's Hall, I halted the crowd at Eighth and Messanie Streets, and sent word to the Turner and German Rifle Company that had the Armory there, to take down their flag, or I would come for it.

The flag was taken down and so were all the others in the city.⁴ I now ordered the men to their homes to await the signal on my horn.

Night had now fallen over the excited people, and all was quiet. I had gone too far now to recede for I had cut down the flag that I had once loved. I had, as yet, drawn no blood from its defenders, but I was now determined to

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1. This is described in the Missouri Statesman, May 31, 1861.
 2. "We are not frightened, but have no arms to resist." Letter from unknown author, St. Joseph, Mo., to Col. F. P. Blair, May 22, 1861, R.R., III, 378.
 3. After the United States flag was torn down, a state of Missouri flag was raised. This Thompson ordered down. Missouri Statesman, May 31, 1861.
 4. This is fully described in the Missouri Statesman of May 31, 1861.

strike it down wherever I found it, and to cast my lot with my Southern brethren, who were building a new nation.

Being still of the opinion that Missouri had been "sold", I determined to try to get to Virginia, that I might stand shoulder to shoulder with the friends of my youth, and strike for freedom upon my native soil, where, should I fall, I could lie with my revolutionary ancestors who followed the great rebel, Washington, beneath the sacred soil of "The Old Dominion."

The next morning I left St. Joseph, and have not seen it since.¹

I left St. Joseph by the Hannibal & St. Joseph railroad, and went as far as Hannibal, from thence to Lexington, from Lexington to Jefferson City.² When I reached Jefferson City I found that the troops, that had assembled there to defend the capital, were just leaving for their homes, and the two companies that I had mustered in at Liberty were preparing to start. In a few days all were gone, except Captain Kelly's Company, which was engaged in guarding

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1. Jeff Thompson wrote this portion of his story while he was in a military prison. He did return to St. Joseph in 1876--and died there.
 2. This is a clear mistake in route. Undoubtedly the typist wrote Hannibal instead of Hamilton. Hamilton is a small town in Caldwell County, on the railroad, and connected with Lexington by a road running due south for thirty miles. Fiala and Haren's, New Sectional Map of the State of Missouri, 1861.

the gunpowder at the Fair Ground.¹

I saw Governor Jackson and General Price, and I was assured that they were making preparations to place the state on a war footing.² They said that I must not go to Virginia, but wait here to help them. I at once entered into the spirit of the work.

General Price requested me to write a circular letter which would explain the Military Bill, and answer the various questions that were propounded to him from various parts of the state. I complied.³

The penitentiary was being improved that it might be made useful in the repair or construction of materials of war,⁴ and I spent much of my time experimenting with balls for smooth-bore guns, so I could obtain a projectile for double-barreled shot guns that could cope with

1. R.R., III, 379; Sneed, 188.

2. Sneed, 196.

3. This request cannot be verified.

4. "AN ACT to raise money to arm the State, repel invasion, and protect lives and property of the people of Missouri," "AN ACT to authorize the Inspectors of the Penitentiary to call in the proposition to lease the same," in Laws of Missouri, 1861, Called Session, 54, 58.

the Minie ball.¹ I spent several hours each day at the Governor's house, and at General Price's headquarters, discussing with the staff officers the means to be employed to outfit an army.

Communications were passing daily between the authorities at Jefferson City, and the Federal authorities at St. Louis,² and each day I expected some definite determination, but Governor Jackson still vacillated and General Price appeared to my impetuous judgment to be callous.³

General M. M. Parsons continued his preparations for equipping his brigade, and he seemed to be the only one whose mind was made up.⁴ Thomas M. Sneed⁵ and William M. Cocke, of St. Louis, were with the Governor and they did all they could to bolster him up, and Basil Duke and Colton

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1. The standard small-arm of the Union army was the percussion-lock rifled musket of 1854. "This was a muzzle-loader, for the metallic cartridge was not yet in use and breech-loaders were therefore unreliable; its caliber was 0.58", and it was sighted to 300 yards. Maximum range was 1000 yards. The loading difficulty had been eliminated by the introduction of the Minie ball--an elongated lead bullet, with a conical iron plug in the base; upon firing, the plug set forward, expanding the lead into the grooves." Col. Oliver L. Spaulding, The United States Army In War And Peace, 254.
 2. Many of these documents can be found in R.R., III, 378-81.
 3. Jackson and Price pursued a careful course until after Gen. Harney was removed. Even then, all orders dealing with their preparations were secret. Sneed, 196-200.
 4. Sneed, 186.
 5. Col. Sneed was an aide-de-camp to Governor Jackson. Sneed, 198; McElroy, 110.

Green were also anxious for action.¹ Warwick Hough, the adjutant general,² and James Harding, the quartermaster general,³ were active in their respective departments, but the prominent men and politicians over the whole state were either coming or writing to the Governor, and he changed his opinions, or rather wavered, every hour of the day.

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1. Basil Duke and Colton Green were two of the original founders of the "Minute Men," a militant group of Southern men in St. Louis. Gov. Jackson sent these men to Jeff Davis to secure guns for the capture of the Arsenal at St. Louis. They were in Jefferson City at the time of the capture of Camp Jackson. Both men rose to the rank of general.

General Duke recalls that, "Among the numerous visitors attracted to Jefferson City at that period and who thronged the hotel lobbies, opinion was divided as to which of the two, General Harris or General Thompson, was the more brilliant and instructive conversationalist or greater man.

"General Thompson was inclined to believe that he was. General Harris did not agree with him." Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.A., 32-58; Wright, 122.

2. General Hough served as adjutant general from Gov. Jackson's assumption of office until the Governor's death. At that time he became secretary of state of Missouri. Missouri Statesman, Jan. 25, 1861; American Biographical Company, [pub.], The Bench And Bar Of St. Louis, Kansas City, And Other Missouri Cities, 14.
3. James Harding was appointed quartermaster general in the Missouri militia in January, 1861, and held this position until March, 1862, when he resigned to become a division quartermaster in the Confederate Service. Goodspeed Publishing Company, [pub.], History of Cole, Moniteau, Morgan, Benton, Miller, Maries, and Osage Counties, Missouri, 854.

Two weeks passed in this unpleasant state of uncertainty. Some of the prominent states rights men failed us entirely, the position of many men was not determined, and many who were now most zealous were suspected because of previous proclivities, our Major General among the number.

The commission of brigadier general of my district was sent to General A. W. Doniphan, of Liberty, whose speeches had been so sound. He was looked up to by all the military men of our district as the commander we would prefer to follow. His popularity and fame were extended over the whole country, and he was looked upon as one of our bulwarks. His acceptance of the commission was hourly looked for, and I expected to return to the district as inspector the moment his acceptance was received. What change could have passed "over the spirit of his dream" cannot yet be discovered, whether his pocket-nerve had been touched, whether irresistible arguments had been used upon him, or whether his natural indolence (which he said it was) prompted the step or not, is not known, and probably may never be discovered. But so it was that this brave and talented man, who should then have stood forth to wield his influence for one of the two great interests or parties, wrote to Governor Jackson that, "Now, as there seems to be no probability of active service in the

field,¹ and as the emoluments are not sufficient to justify that labor and attention that will be necessary, even on a peace establishment, I decline the commission, expecting some younger and more ambitious man can be found to accept it."²

This letter from such a man, at such a time, fell like a shower bath upon Governor Jackson and everybody who read it, for at that instant it was known that every Southern man in the state, from the Iowa line to Arkansas was picking his flint, cleaning his gun, and sharpening his knife to be ready for the coming storm. The apathy of General Doniphan was like a wet blanket upon my hopes for northwest Missouri.

The next most popular man in the northwest was General Bela M. Hughes. He had not the reputation abroad that General Doniphan had, but at home he was known and loved by all the soldiers, for he had been one of us and had displayed a lively interest in our organizations. He was an open and avowed Breckinridge Democrat and should now have been tendered the commission, but Governor Jackson, from some prejudice, would not appoint him.

1. Gen. Doniphan was referring to the Price-Harney agreement.

2. A copy of this letter is contained in the Journal Of The Senate, Called Together By A Proclamation Of C. F. Jackson, Appendix, 31.

One morning I learned that he had appointed a Mr. Jesse Morin as brigadier general of the Fifth or Northwest Missouri District,¹ a gentleman that probably not five soldiers in the district had ever heard of--a very clever old man 'tis true, but one about as fit for a generalship in such a war as that threatening, as I am for the pastor of a country church.

When this appointment was made and I was not even informed of the fact for several days, I became disgusted with the temporizing and vacillating spirit exhibited by Governor Jackson, and determined to pursue my original intention to start for Virginia.

I went to bid the Governor goodbye, for I was quite intimate with him, and I said to him, "Governor, before I leave, I wish to tell you the two qualities of a soldier. One he must have, although he needs both. The first is common sense and the other is courage--, and By God! you have neither." He did not reply.

A few days before I left Jefferson City the Honorable Willard Hall and the Honorable James Craig arrived with special communications for Governor Jackson. These gentlemen were good friends of mine. Their business at

1. In the final arrangement of divisions, the Fifth District was commanded by Gen. A. E. Steen. McElroy, 95.

Jefferson City is not a part of my history, although acquainted with it, and it would be interesting to the public. Their missions were entirely different, yet both failed in accomplishing their object from the undecided and vacillating course of the Governor.¹ As we went down to St. Louis together and stopped at the same hotel, I found that neither of them, no more than I, could tell the course the Governor would pursue.

Both of these gentlemen tried to induce me to abandon my Virginia project, but their arguments were unavailing, and the next day I started for Memphis.

I was fearful that if I went to Cairo that I might be arrested by the U.S. troops at that post, so I concluded to get off the boat at Cape Girardeau and go through by land to New Madrid.²

1. Willard Hall and James Craig were both Union men of Buchanan County. Hall became governor of Missouri during the Civil War, and Craig became a Union general.

Their business in Jefferson City cannot be determined, but perhaps they were trying to urge Gov. Jackson to avoid civil war by stopping his preparations.

A brief biography can be found of Craig in Union Historical Company, [pub.] , History of Buchanan County, 714.

2. For the route of this trip, see map, opposite 84.

It was well that I did, for General Prentiss, then in command at Cairo, had received a telegram that I was coming, and he was prepared to arrest me. He was sorely disappointed when he found that I had evaded him. We were personal acquaintances, and he was anxious to get me.¹

1. General Prentiss was in command of Illinois troops at Cairo. Cairo, at this time, was the point at which the Mississippi was being blockaded. Missouri Republican, June 11, 1861.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEADING THE RIPLEY COUNTY BATTALION

I reached Cape Girardeau Saturday night. The next day I went to Jackson with Mr. Luce, the member of the legislature from that county, for the double purpose of conversing with General Watkins,¹ who commanded the First District, and to inquire into the case of a free negro who was then in jail--about whom the Hon. Noah H. Swain, of Ohio, had written me. I had a long talk with General Watkins, and he seemed determined to take the field whenever ordered.

I found the negro boy and attended to his case. I returned to Cape Girardeau. I here met Col. Richardson and Henry E. Clark, who had come up to get the cannon that were then at the Cape and take them to the plank road. These cannon had formerly belonged to Dr. McDowell

1. General Nathaniel W. Watkins, a half-brother of Henry Clay, was a prominent lawyer and politician in southeast Missouri. He was appointed brigadier general by Gov. Jackson on May 17th, but he was 64 years of age and found the position uncongenial to him. In less than two months he resigned. Robert Sidney Douglas, History of Southeast Missouri, I, 156; Howard L. Conard, [ed.], Encyclopedia Of The History Of Missouri, VI, 406.

of St. Louis.¹ That night I stayed in Benton, Scott County, and here made the acquaintance of A. Waugh and James Parrott,² who were afterwards my friends and comrades in arms.

On Tuesday I reached New Madrid, and met Luke Byrne and made the acquaintance of several other gentlemen. The people from Cape Girardeau to New Madrid were awakening to the condition of the country, and the young men were leaving for Memphis to join the army. Many had also gone from St. Louis, and when I reached Memphis, I found many Missourians who were awaiting the return of Col. John E. Bowen, who had

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1. The story of Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell is one of the most colorful in Missouri history. Dr. McDowell operated the McDowell Medical College in St. Louis and was the leading surgeon of the Mississippi Valley--but quite eccentric. In the political topics of the day he was always an extremist and on the outbreak of the Civil War he became surgeon general of Missouri. His services to the Confederacy were great and at one time he was sent as an emissary of the Confederacy to Europe.

Dr. McDowell as early as January, 1861, had two cannons belonging to Missouri and when he went south, he took with him six cannons and 750 muskets. Where these articles came from is not certain, but the Federal authorities believed that he received a large portion of the arms brought from Baton Rouge to be used to capture the St. Louis arsenal. Federal troops searched the College property on April 30th, but found nothing.

One of Dr. McDowell's sons, Dr. Drake McDowell, became a surgeon in Thompson's brigade and is mentioned later. Max A. Goldstein, [ed.], One Hundred Years Of Medicine And Surgery In Missouri, 49; House Journal, 1861, Appendix, 332; Missouri Republican, June 1, 1861.

2. A. Waugh became colonel of the 4th Infantry of Thompson's brigade. Parrott's services are unknown.

gone to Richmond to get a commission to raise a regiment of Missourians for the Confederate States service.¹

I now determined to await his return, and if he got the permit, to raise a company to serve under him, or try to get a staff office in the regiment.²

He returned, but brought his lieutenant colonel and major with him. Just at this time the Proclamation of Governor Jackson, calling for fifty thousand volunteers, reached Memphis, and I determined to return to the state at once.³ I knew that I would not be able to reach my old district in time to do much good, so I concluded to

1. Col. Bowen's regiment, known as the First Missouri Infantry, was organized at Memphis on June 22, 1861, and was mustered into the Confederate service for a year. U.S. Record and Pension Office, Missouri Troops In Service During The Civil War, 286.
2. The Confederate regulations allowed the regimental commander to appoint his own adjutant and sergeant major. Upon the commander's recommendation, the president of the Confederacy appointed an assistant quartermaster, assistant commissary, a surgeon, and an assistant surgeon. R.R., III, 695.
3. Governor Jackson and General Lyon met in St. Louis on June 11th at the request of the governor. The outcome of this meeting was a breaking of the strained relations and the beginning of the war in Missouri. The following morning the proclamation of Gov. Jackson appeared. It named all of the grievances of the people of Missouri and called out fifty thousand militia. It carefully pointed out that Missouri was still in the United States but intimated that the adjourned Constitutional Convention might soon change this. Sneed, 196-206.

strike the state at the nearest point, and raise as many men as I could.

I saw the advantage of Pocahontas as a rallying point, and telegraphed to Governor Rector of Arkansas¹ to know if he would subsist the men I should assemble there, until our own state could provide for us. He answered promptly that Arkansas would extend her hospitality to all Missourians who would come, and that orders would be sent to Pocahontas to furnish us with everything needful.

I immediately had hand bills printed, calling Missourians to the rendezvous, for I could not hear what General Watkins was doing. These hand bills were taken up to Missouri and circulated by J. R. Purvis and T. P. Hoy.²

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1. Gov. Henry Massey Rector, elected in 1860 and forced from office in 1862, was a strong secessionist from the beginning. It was he who persuaded a reluctant legislature to call a convention which voted for secession with but one negative vote. David Y. Thomas, "Henry Massey Rector", in Dumas Malone, [ed.], Dictionary of American Biography, XV, 436.
 2. T. P. Hoy was a Missouri lawyer who became a specialist in recruiting men for the Confederacy. He was assigned to Thompson's command in the latter half of 1861, but continued throughout most of the war to work in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. He gained the rank of colonel. Chapman Publishing Company, [pub.], Portrait and Biographical Record of Johnson and Pettis Counties, Missouri, 612.

J. R. Purvis could not be identified.

APPEAL TO MISSOURIANS

Missouri! Missouri! awake from thy slumber,
Hear'st thou not the hammer that rivets thy chains?
Can't the death shriek of fathers, the wail of thy
 mothers
The tears of thy daughters, arouse thee again?

Oh! rise in thy strength, shake the dew-drops of
 slumber
From thy limbs, and walk forth as a lion to war,
For Fanatics are forging bonds stronger than iron
To bind thee forever to a conqueror's car.

Can thy slumbering sense be so callous and dead
That, even in dreams, thou can hear not nor see,
That the chains they are striking from Africa's
 black sons
Will be welded again, and placed upon thee?

Can'st thou see, through the world that the finger
 of scorn
Is pointed at those who submissively stand
Beneath the foul yoke, while your brothers are
 striking
For the freedom and honor of our dearly beloved
 land?

Come! rise in thy might, drive the Huns from thy
 borders,
And stand by thy Southern sons in the fight,
Pour forth all thy men, to help them to battle
For Freedom, for Glory, for Justice, for Right.

Let thy watchfires glow, and thy bugles blast high
O'er thy mountains and valleys, o'er the prairies
 and lea,
Then the glad shout shall ring o'er the prairies
 and streams,
Hail! brothers Hail! Missouri is Free!

Written by M. Jeff Thompson.¹

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1. It is not clear whether this was part of the hand bill Thompson sent to Missouri or whether it is just one of Thompson's poems which his daughter inserted when she had his notes typed.

While in Memphis I had the pleasure to make the acquaintance of General Pillow¹ and many of his staff. I also met Col. Snow, Colonel now General Hindman,² Colonel and now General Cleburn,³ and many other prominent gentlemen of Tennessee and Arkansas.

I here met Col. Clarence Prentice with whom I afterward became so intimately connected, and Col. James F. White⁴ whom I had known in Nebraska.

About the time that I got ready to start for Pochontas and while I was looking for a White River steamboat, I was introduced to Brig. Gen. G. W. McCann of Arkansas,⁵ who was then engaged in organizing an artillery company at Jacksonport.

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1. Gen. Gideon J. Pillow was appointed brigadier general in the Confederate Army from Tennessee on July 9, 1861. Wright, 55.
 2. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman was appointed major general from Arkansas on April 18, 1862. There is no record of his final capture, and records indicate that he went to Mexico at the close of the war. He was assassinated in Helena, Arkansas in 1868. Wright, 26.
 3. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne was born in Cork County, Ireland, and was appointed major general from the state of Arkansas, Dec. 20, 1862. He was killed in action at Franklin, Tennessee, in 1864. Wright, 31.
 4. Col. White was later to command Jeff Thompson's cavalry.
 5. No record can be found of any Gen. G. W. McCann; however, there was a George W. McCown, of military note, who operated in this Western Division. This undoubtedly was the error of a poor typist.

He had come from Jacksonport on the steamboat "Dan'l Morgan," and was to return on her in a few days. He invited me to accompany him, stating that the boat was chartered by the government to transport his munitions of war. This suited me exactly, for I was nearly out of money. Clarence Prentice, Jas. N. White, and Mr. Moore determined to go with me. We had to wait several days, and in this time I spent all my money, and borrowed forty dollars from Captain D. DeHaven of the steamboat "Alonzo Childs", who was an old friend of mine in Missouri.

While waiting, I became quite intimate with McCann, and he introduced me to his brother Col. John C. McCann, afterwards major general.¹ He proposed that we should have our pictures taken in a group, but as I was then an humble and modest individual, I stood behind the chairs of the group, holding a sabre in hand to guard their heads. The picture, if extant, will show the two McCanns and Lieut. Thrall of Jacksonport, sitting in a row, and I standing guard for them.²

1. This was Gen. John McCown instead of McCann. For a brief description of his military career, see Wright, 62.

2. This picture has never been found, although a considerable effort was made.

After several days' delay we started down the river. I had found that McCann had no control whatever over the boat, but the captain, a whole-souled fellow whose name I cannot now remember, invited us to travel with him and only pay for our meals. After an amusing trip, on which Clarence Prentice played the fife, I beat the kettle-drum, and Charlie Lang beat the bass drum at every landing, we reached Jacksonport. We remained here a day, were treated kindly by the citizens, and had some target shooting with McCann's battery. We now started for Black River and Pocahontas, on the steamboat "Cadet", leaving Charlie Lang at Jacksonport.

The funds now of the whole party amounted to ten dollars and seventy-five cents, and we gave the ten to Captain Dougherty to take us up, and we landed at Pocahontas, as the guests of the state of Arkansas, with seventy-five cents in the military chest.

We immediately reported to the quartermaster and commissary, and were billeted at Snyder's Hotel.

Pocahontas was also the rendezvous for the Arkansas troops, and several regiments were being formed in the neighborhood. As we did not know how long we would have to remain, we determined to make ourselves useful by drilling recruits. Clarence and I were experts, so we well repaid Arkansas for the kindness extended to us. Several times

since I have met the troops that were there, and received thanks for my instruction.¹

The first of July found me at Pocahontas,² and one half of this eventful year had passed. I was far away from home, a stranger depending upon the liberality of another state, and had but "six-bits" for capital. No Missourians had come, no news from my hand bills, nothing to cheer me but my abiding faith and hope, and a determination to do my duty. Little did I then dream of the preferment that awaited me, little could I anticipate the stirring events of the balance of the year, and the notoriety that the next six months would bring me. 'Tis well that we cannot see the future, for many that were then prominent and filled with hope and ambition, proved entire failures, and many slept in bloody graves.

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1. Thompson's military services were not limited to Missouri, for he saw action in Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. At the close of the war, Thompson was commanding a military district in Arkansas.
 2. Thompson wrote a very respectful and humble letter to Jefferson Davis on July 2nd, mentioning the coming rendezvous of Missourians. He advised Davis that Missouri needed a good leader, that Price and Doniphan were not capable and Gov. Jackson sick. R.R., III, 601.

Seemingly on the basis of this letter, McElroy states that Thompson was trying to get the position for himself. This is hardly a fair conclusion. McElroy, 244.

About the 1st of July, Cyrus Black¹ and Miles Ponder of Ripley County, Missouri, came down to Pocahontas to inform me that the citizens of Ripley and Carter Counties were meeting at Martinsburg² to organize a battalion, and desired me to come up and take command.

There had been a difficulty among the officers of the companies, and they could not agree upon a commander from among themselves.

When I was convinced of this fact, I agreed to go to their camp, and on the 4th of July we started in an ambulance furnished by the quartermaster at Pocahontas. We pushed on to Pitman Ferry, at which point the ambulance or stage had to stop for fear the laws of Missouri might interfere with the stage, as part of the owners of the line lived in Missouri and the owners in Arkansas had seceded with the whole concern when the state seceded.

I tried to obtain a horse to proceed to Martinsburg, and after much delay, a horse was procured with an old saddle, but no bridle, and thus I entered the state of Missouri, on July 4, 1861, with an old rope for a bridle, and seventy-five cents in my pocket, for I had spent nothing while at Pocahontas.

1. Cyrus Black became quartermaster in the Ripley County battalion.

2. See map, opposite 84.

At dark I reached Mr. Martin's, which was in a few hundred yards of the camp, and was introduced to Capt. Aden Lowe¹ and Lieut. Hodgpath, and other officers of four companies.

It had been determined to move camp that morning to a place four miles south so I marched back with the command, letting someone take the horse. We soon reached the new grounds and I took the direction of matters into my hands, as if I had been with them all the time. I showed them how to form camp, had the ground cleared, and those who had no tents, constructed brush tents, and in two or three hours we were more comfortably fixed than the men had been before. That afternoon I drilled the men in company drill and had regular guards detailed and mounted. That night our camp looked like a camp.

The next day it was determined to form a battalion with the four companies, and elect a lieutenant colonel and major. The log-rolling was all performed before the election was commenced, and I was unanimously elected

1. Aden Lowe was a young lawyer and politician who became interested in the Southern cause. He succeeded Thompson in the command of the Ripley County battalion, which was subsequently expanded into the 3d Infantry Regiment of the 1st Military District. Col. Lowe was killed in action during the battle of Fredericktown, Missouri, Oct. 22, 1861.

lieutenant colonel, and Miles Ponder was elected major.¹ Lowe was not a candidate from the fact that he was just then unpopular with the officers from the strict discipline he had enforced as senior captain, and from some private quarrels that had been between him and some of the officers.

I appointed Hedgpath adjutant, and Cyrus Black quartermaster, and Gen. Waugh, I think, commissary. Clarence Prentice, not having been elected, concluded to return to Pocahontas, but James F. White remained with me. I now went to work in earnest, and kept the men at squad, company, or battalion drill, from reveille to retreat.

Two days after the election, a delegation reached me from the camp of Gen. Watkins to inform me that he would resign. The election was to be on July 25th and it was desired that I come over and be elected. I felt under obligation to the battalion that had just elected me, and I did not feel competent to command a brigade, so I

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1. Selection of line officers under the Military Bill was by election. Company officers (captains and lieutenants) were elected by the men of each company. Field officers (majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels) were elected by the officers of the unit. "AN ACT to provide for the Organization, Government, and Support of the Military Forces of the State of Missouri," Laws of Missouri, 1861, Called Session, 3 ff.

The officers elected were required already to belong in the unit in which they received their commission. This was frequently ignored.

respectfully declined, and suggested that they should send for Col. Bowen, who was then trying to raise a regiment of Missourians at Memphis.

I saw at this time the necessity of mounted troops, even for my small command, and I authorized James F. White to raise as many men to act as partizans and flankers¹ as he could. He immediately raised ten men and started picketing.²

On Sunday we had preaching by a good old-fashioned, hard-shell Baptist, and he poured the "arras" into the men for some time. When he finished, I read and explained the Articles of War.³

Just at this time an order came from Gen. McBride, who commanded this district,⁴ for us to come to him at Mammoth

1. Partizans are members of a body of detached light troops engaged in making forays and harassing an enemy.

Flankers are men so posted as to protect their unit from a surprise attack. They were sometimes placed in such a manner as to do scouting duty also.

2. Outpost guard duty.
3. The Articles of War are the laws of the army. By law each commander was required to read them to his men once every six months.

The Articles of War for the Missouri State Guard were contained in "AN ACT to provide for the Organization, Government, and Support of the Military Forces of the State of Missouri," in Laws of Missouri, 1861, 38-43.

4. This was the 7th Military District, Gen. McBride was appointed to command on May 31, 1861. Missouri Statesman, May 31, 1861.

Springs--so that we could go over to General Price. On Monday we started. We reached Current River at Doniphan, and when we reached the divide we heard of Gen. Price's advance, so I concluded to turn my course northward and get as near the enemy as I could, and to recruit and outfit my command.¹ We advanced to Van Buren, in Carter County, and camped at Kennards.² On my way up I found, and purchased my white horse, that afterward became so renowned, from Mr. Simons, who had two sons in my command.³

When I reached Van Buren, I immediately started my blacksmith shops, commenced drilling, and sent out partizans and flankers.

I here received a letter from General Yell, who had taken command at Pocahontas, and he advised me to fall back to his lines, as I was too much exposed where I was.⁴

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1. On July 5th, the Confederates under Gen. Rains, 2nd Division, forced the Union troops under Gen. Sigel to retreat from Carthage to Springfield. On the same day, troops under Gen. McCulloch, moved north to capture about 80 Union soldiers at Neosho, Mo. The Arkansans and Missourians soon joined together.
 2. For the route of this march, see map, opposite 84.
 3. The name of the horse was Sardanapalus.
 4. On July 16th, Jeff Thompson wrote the editor of the State Journal that he was soon to act as the advance party of Gen. Yell's force of 5000 men and take a position between Rolla and Ironton. Gen. Watkins, sustained by Gen. Pillow of Tennessee, would move up on the right, and then, with the use of the combined forces, St. Louis would be free in thirty days. R.R., III, 608.

I had been joined by several hundred more men, and could hear of many more that were coming, so I concluded to remain where I was. I had sent couriers to General McBride to let him know which way I had gone, and my reason for it.

My partizans were busily employed bringing in arms, ammunition, and supplies, and I was constantly instructing my officers and men. On the 23d of July, while I was busy drilling my officers in company drill, Cyrus Black, who had been to Greenville for supplies, returned to inform me that I was fully expected at the election of general in the First Military District; that he had seen Captain Sol. G. Kitchen¹ and others, who assured me of the election if I would come.

I submitted the matter to the officers of my battalion, and left it to them whether I should go or not. They insisted upon my going, and promised to come over to my district and join the brigade if I was elected.² I concluded to go, and mounting the white horse, I started with Major Thomas P. Hoy for a companion.

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1. Capt. Kitchens, under Thompson's command, rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel--commanding a battalion of the 2nd Cavalry.
 2. There is no provision in the Military Bill for troops to move from one district to another. Due to lack of organization this was probably done many times.

That night we reached Slocum, the next day we followed the Arkansas Hills where every man was said to be a Union man, and for fear of interruption we followed by-roads, striking the St. Francois River above Mingo Swamp. We swam our horses over, and pushed over to St. Francisville, where we found Captain Kitchen, Captain Burnes, and a body of cavalry. After dark we rode into Bloomfield, and on July 25th I started for the camp which was some ten miles south of Bloomfield.

On the way down I made the acquaintance of Dick Seckles, who was afterwards my engineer.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL M. JEFF THOMPSON

I reached the camp just before noon and found the election progressing. I had never seen but a few of the persons in the camp, and the only ones whom I could claim to know were the members of the legislature whom I had met at Jefferson City. Many looked upon me as an interloper, and many did not believe that I would come at all, and therefore I was receiving no votes.¹

The candidates were Mathew H. Moore, of Cape Girardeau,² and Henry E. Clark, of Clarkton.

When I rode into camp I was dressed in a gray flannel shirt outside my pants, gray pants stuck into boot tops, a wool hat with a white plume in it, red sash, and a very large iron scabbard, sabre, pistol, and a bowie knife in my belt. My overcoat was tied behind my saddle, and a few books and other things in my saddle bags, and the same

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1. Generalships are appointive, not elective, positions; yet when the regularly appointed general resigned, this command elected his successor. There is no provision for this in any military code of the day which could be found.

Thompson received full recognition of his rank as general, yet it was always a de facto recognition. Only Heitman lists his rank in an official manner.

2. Moore was later appointed quartermaster with the rank of lieutenant colonel. R.R., III, 224.

"six-bits" in my pocket. I made altogether a rather rough appearance, but it seems that my style took the fancy of all who had not voted, and of all who had waited for me--for these voted for me, and many changed their votes.

When all had voted, the ballots were counted and it was no election, no one having received a majority of all votes. Another ballot was ordered, and as Col. Mathew H. Moore withdrew his name, I was elected over Col. Clark by a handsome majority. Some question now arose as to when I was to take command, but I decided it by saying, "Tomorrow morning at guard mount, or not at all." It was concluded to turn the command over to me, and I was called upon for a speech.

I mounted a wagon, and if the persons there had never been talked to before plainly, they heard it then.

SOLDIERS OF SOUTHEAST MISSOURI

You have elected me to command this district. I have no time to thank you. We have no time for idle words. I want the competent officers to drill others less competent, and if there is any man here who can't drill or be drilled, let him go to cleaning the guns of those who can.

I understand that you want a fight. By God! you shall have it. I am a rip-squealer and my name is Fight.

Get ready to march to Bloomfield in the morning. We are too far from the enemy.

It was now less than a month from the time that I had left Memphis. With but faint hope of raising a company, and no hope of a regiment, I had been promoted to command a military district reaching from St. Louis to Cairo. I had several thousand men under arms, with such weapons as the country afforded,¹ and in this district were the three strong posts of Ironton, Cape Girardeau, and Bird's Point--with St. Louis on the northern border.²

The war was now fully inaugurated, and several battles had been fought. Realizing the responsibility that I had assumed, I determined that no effort on my part should be left unmade to deserve the confidence that had been placed in me.

Faint heart ne'er won battles or woman, and I determined to move toward the enemy and try to recruit, organize, and outfit.

On the 26th of July, I assumed command and although Walker's regiment, the 1st Infantry, had been ordered to proceed to New Madrid, I did not countermand the order but let them go.³

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1. Just before Thompson took over Watkin's command, it was estimated to be 2000 men, poorly armed, and with no field pieces. Missouri Republican, July 24, 1861.
 2. These places were all in the hands of the enemy.
 3. Col. James A. Walker kept his command at New Madrid until Aug. 11th, when Gov. Jackson ordered him to join Gen. Hardee. R.R., III, 643.

FIRST MILITARY DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

Taken from J.H. Colton, Colton's New Sectional Map of Missouri, (1861).

Shows the counties in 1st Military Area.

— Additions and corrections to the map are made from Fiala & Haren, New Sectional Map of the State of Missouri, (1861).

I had every tent struck and when the equipage was loaded on the wagons, I placed the men in line of battle and explained to them the principles of a camp. I then had the ground thoroughly cleansed and the tents pitched again. Those who had no tent, and they were the majority, were shown how to build brush tents,¹ until in a few hours, a change had so come over everything that the very walk and appearance of the men was more soldierly. That afternoon I had out the officers for company drill and in the presence of the men, I explained the movements.

This was kept up for a few days before I moved forward to Bloomfield.² After I established my headquarters in town, I placed the different commands around where they could get water and then I turned my attention to the organization and equipment.

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1. No less a person than Gen. Thompson was without a tent. Here is how he expressed his need, some three weeks after assuming command:

"I herewith send you a requisition for a tent for my own use. I have been sleeping about more like a stray dog than a general, and the State of Missouri has not a yard of material suitable for tents nor money to buy it with. I do not care about a regular marquee, unless you have a surplus, but anything that answers the purpose." R.R., III, 659.

2. Bloomfield is in the heart of the swamp area and can be easily approached only from the south. Anyone attacking this point had to disregard surprise--as the Union troops were to learn.

I now wrote my first proclamation which caused so much sport for the newspapers--in which I claimed the cattle on ten thousand hills. I can now remark for the benefit of the suffering, stay-at-home Missourians, that the proclamation was a prophecy, for had they turned out as I asked, the evils I pointed out and which have come to pass, would have been avoided.¹ The tide of war still ebbs and flows with the seasons, and may continue for years to desolate our loved Missouri.

TO THE PEOPLE OF MISSOURI-----MISSOURIANS²

Strike for your firesides and your homes.

Headquarters, 1st Military District
Missouri State Guard
Bloomfield, Missouri

Having been elected to command the gallant
sons of the 1st Military District of Missouri, in

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1. The papers of the period made much sport of this proclamation. Here is one of the incidents related:

A short time after the publication of this proclamation, Gen. Thompson, being in great need of beef cattle for his troops and not one on the "ten thousand hills" coming at his call, seized upon the only cow of a widow in the vicinity and was in the act of driving her into his camp. The widow went to him and protested. "Why General, is it possible you intend to rob a widow of the only cow she has in the world, when as you said in your proclamation, the cattle on ten thousand hills are yours?" The General, who always enjoyed a joke, retreated from the widow and the cow.

William F. Switzler, Switzler's Illustrated History of Missouri, From 1541 to 1877, 372.

2. Issued Aug. 1, 1861. Ibid., 372.

the second war for independence, I appeal to all those whose hearts are with us, immediately to take the field. By a speedy and simultaneous assault upon our foes we can, like a hurricane, scatter them to the winds, while tardy action, like the gentle south wind, will only meet the northern frosts, and advance and retreat like the seasons, will be the history of the war, and it will last forever.

Come now! Strike while the iron is hot! Our enemies are whipped in Virginia.¹ They will be whipped in Missouri. Gen. Hardee advances in the center; General Pillow on the right; and General McCulloch, with twenty thousand Southern hearts comes to aid on the left.²

So leave your plows in the furrows, your oxen in the yoke, and rush like a tornado upon our foes, to sweep them from the face of the earth, or force them from the soil of our state. Brave sons of the First District, come and join with us. We have plenty of ammunition, and the cattle on ten thousand hills are ours. We have forty thousand Belgian muskets coming; but bring your muskets with you, if you have them; if not, come without them.

We will strike our foes, like a Southern thunderbolt, and soon our camp fires will illuminate the Merrimac and the Missouri.

Come! Turn out!

M. Jeff Thompson
Brigadier General,
Commanding.

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1. The battle of Bull Run was fought just a week before, July 21, 1861. James Ford Rhodes, History of the Civil War, 39.
 2. Gen. Hardee advanced to Greenville, Mo., reaching there on Aug. 4th. R.R., III, 629. He advanced no farther.

Gen. Pillow with his "Army of Liberation" occupied New Madrid, Mo., on July 30th. Ibid., 620.

Gen. McCulloch joined Gen. Price after the battle of Carthage, Mo. Violette, 359.

My staff was now organized, and I will tell how it was done, for none have improved upon it yet, and many fine armies are below it still.

My adjutant was Colonel Logan and afterwards others. My quartermaster was Lieut. Col. W. H. Moore; commissary, Lieut. Col. Abernathy; aide-de-camp, William Chappell,¹ afterwards W. J. Preston, Drake McDowell, and Price.²

My judge advocate was Lieut. Col. Homer Parr, and it was his duty to visit the guardhouse every morning to visit with the prisoners and examine the officer's report, so that it could be known what the charges and proofs were, and whether cases could be made out. He was also to put his notes into the officer's report.

My engineer was Lieut. Col. Richard Seckles, with an assistant, Major Hill. They were charged to make maps for me of every county and of every locality of importance, of every camp that we made, and all the useful information relative to the country. We had the understanding that if I found a road on the ground that was not on the map, or

1. Lieut. Col. Wm. Chappell was perhaps Thompson's closest friend during this early period of his command. He was intrusted with the most important missions and his stories about Thompson have been of considerable aid in this study.

2. This was Captain Charles Price.

one on the map that was not on the ground---, I would hang one of them.

My brigade surgeon was Dr. Smith; ordinance officer, Capt. Albin Crowe; chaplin, Dr. R. P. Paramore, who afterwards made the paymaster. The inspector that had been appointed by General Watkins, had gone into Cape Girardeau,¹ and I afterwards appointed Col. W. Waugh.

I ordered my quartermaster to furnish transportation immediately, of which the country was full, and to use every effort to obtain everything else needed, even by impressment, if necessary.²

It was well known that many persons in Stoddard County were Union men, but I gave positive orders that they should be treated like the other citizens. I believe that the

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1. When Gen. Watkins resigned, it was said that he advised his men to turn their allegiance to the United States. Missouri Statesman, Aug. 2, 1861.

Cape Girardeau was under Union control which would probably indicate that the inspector had followed Gen. Watkins' advice.

2. Gen. Thompson wrote a commissary thus:

----you must send us some more goods and transportation from the neighborhood of Charlestown and the country stores around that part of the country. We need clothes, boots, shoes, candles, soap, and many of the other articles, which your judgement will prompt. Prevent private stealing and personal revenge, but remember we are at war, and must be provided with certain necessities.

R.R., III, 655.

order was obeyed, for I have never heard that any of the Union men said that I treated them differently.¹

There were many persons who came to me to have their wagons or horses returned to them, not liking my certificate of indebtedness which was given them in payment.² One day an old Kentuckian came in to tell me that my quartermaster had taken a wagon and two horses from him. I had heard of the old fellow, and knew that he had several wagons, both for oxen and horses, and also had a carriage and a kind of ambulance. The old gentleman professed to be a sound Southern man, but I had learned that he was planning to return to Kentucky to get away from the war. He stated his complaints and necessities. I tried my art of persuasion on him, and in a short time convinced him that we needed the wagon and horses worse than he did, and he cheerfully agreed that we might keep them.

I now commenced telling him of the horrors of war and the suffering of wounded soldiers and, after exciting the old gentleman's sympathies, I asked him if he could not spare me the ambulance and a pair of mules, and he

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1. There seems not to have been any real discrimination in the gathering of supplies.
 2. These certificates were merely a receipt for the value of the property taken. They were redeemed in Confederate money and Missouri Defense Bonds early in 1862.

instantly said, "Yes, you shall have them. I will send them up to you," and there, by being kind and polite, I not only got the team, but also the ambulance and mules. However, the old gentleman knew the persuasion that had been brought to bear on him, for as he went from my quarters he met others that were waiting to bring their complaints, and told them not to go in, for I would coax them out of everything they had.

We soon procured all the material that could be made useful to the command, and were prepared for movement.¹

At this time I heard that General Hardee had arrived at Pocohontas, and was about to move on Ironton.² I concluded to go over to see General Pillow, to report, and learn the programme. I crossed Negro Wool Swamp for the first time, on the road from Bloomfield to Sikeston, and went down to New Madrid.³

I was here met by General Warwick Hough, the adjutant general of Missouri, and learned that Governor Jackson was

1. Thompson's command was always poorly armed and equipped. The country in which he operated was poor and he received little help from outside. His salvation was due to his cleverly concealing his strength from the enemy and adopting tactics suitable to the swampy terrain in which he moved. R.R., III, 626.

2. R.R., III, 626.

3. R.R., III, 628.

expected daily.¹

I called upon General Pillow. He was camped in the Park and had the Logwood Cavalry for a guard.²

Among the gay and brilliant uniforms that surrounded headquarters, I must have looked rather wild and strange in my uncouth dress, for I had on the same gray flannel shirt, hat and feather, sash, sabre, bowie knife, and pistol in which I had appeared before my own men on the day of the election. I was treated kindly by General Pillow, and he seemed pleased at my earnestness and desire for service.

The next day Governor Jackson arrived.³ It was determined that I should go to General Hardee, who was supposed to be advancing; and my orders were issued by Governor Jackson to that effect.⁴ On the next morning I started for Bloomfield, reaching there at four o'clock P.M. I gave all the necessary orders for the march, designating routes and

1. Gov. Jackson was returning from Richmond, Va. Switzler, 370.

2. R.R., III, 620.

3. Gov. Jackson arrived in New Madrid about Aug. 4th, and on Aug. 5, 1861, issued a "Declaration of Independence of the State of Missouri." Switzler, 373.

This declaration was issued in order to get the support of certain Confederate leaders whose armies could not enter Union territory.

4. It seems apparent that the orders were issued by Gen. Hardee rather than Gov. Jackson. R.R., III, 631.

camps, and at dark started for Greenville, where General Hardee was reported to be. I rode all night and at breakfast time I reached Greenville, having ridden from New Madrid in twenty-four hours, and made ninety miles, crossed Negro Wool and Mingo Swamps, and transacted the business at Bloomfield.

I here met, for the first time, General W. J. Hardee, and was more than pleased with his plain, unassuming and social manners.¹ Having just come from General Pillow's headquarters, with the pomp and gay uniforms that were there to be seen, the plainness of Gen. Hardee was really refreshing to a man who had but two gray flannel shirts in the world, for a uniform.

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1. Gen. William J. Hardee was an outstanding officer of the United States Army but resigned to accept a Confederate post. On Oct. 7, 1861, he was given a commission as major general from the state of Georgia, and in a year was promoted to the grade of lieutenant general. Wright, 22; U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant, I, 252.

Gen. Hardee's purpose in entering Missouri was to destroy the Iron Mountain Railroad and defeat the Union forces at Pilot Knob. He might have done this if he had raised the expected number of recruits. Missouri Republican, Oct. 22, 1861.

CHAPTER SIX

"SWAMP FOX OF THE CONFEDERACY"

I reported to General Hardee and we went to the court house, where his headquarters were, to talk over our business. My old regiment, now under the command of Col. Aden Lowe, was with this command, but they were up at Stony Battery,¹ and Capt. J. F. White, who had swelled his partizans up to a respectable command, had been sent to burn the bridges on the Iron Mountain railroad. While I was with General Hardee a courier arrived from White to inform him that he had attacked the enemy at Potosi, and had not gone to burn the bridges.²

The general asked me if I would undertake to burn the bridges. I was delighted with the proposition and agreed at once.³

I ordered my cavalry to march by the Castor route and to meet me at Buchanan or Hog-eye, on the Castor. That afternoon I rode over to Hog-eye and met the cavalry, and immediately commenced making arrangements for a forced

1. R.R., III, 679, 680.

2. Ibid., 130, 131, 632, 633.

3. Ibid., 632, 679.

march. I started off reliable couriers to let our reliable friends know that I would pass through their country, and to have provisions for us.

I gave orders for a start at daybreak, but about midnight a courier arrived with an order from Governor Jackson for me to return immediately and report to General Pillow.¹ I sent a courier with a copy of the order to General Hardee, and the next morning, instead of starting northward, I turned southward and pushed for New Madrid. Just before night I met my infantry and wagon train near Mingo Swamp, and stopped to go into camp.

It soon began to cloud up and rain, and as it would be impossible to cross the swamp after the rain, I determined to cross it that night. We actually performed that night what I conceive to be the most original and brilliant thing which we did during the campaign.

I put the men to gathering hickory bark and material for torches. I had a strong detail prepare the road, assigned men for every wagon, and at dark we entered Mingo Swamp. The road detail was ordered to build a fire at every bend of the road, and every man who could was ordered to carry a torch. The rain was falling pretty freely, and beneath the shade of the thick timber of the swamp, it was

1. R.R., III, 632.

as dark as Erebus.¹ The men, however, seemed to enter into the spirit of the novelty, and no torchlight procession in the highest political excitement ever surpassed our night march through Mingo Swamp.

I had about eighteen hundred men, some on foot, some on the wagons, and some on horseback; very many had torches, but they were continually burning out or going out. The noise of shouting and calling from one to another for light or assistance out of the mud, made those forests echo in such style that the coons, the minks, and the owls, who are the only inhabitants of the swamps, will hand down the accounts of their fright to the latest generation.

At midnight we reached Strong's Mill and struck dry ground, or high ground, for the rain continued to pour down.

We had been six hours in making but little over three miles, but now a solid road lay before us for tomorrow. The men laid down in the rain and rested until morning. This was their first taste of the hardships of war, for heretofore they had been at camp or on short marches.

I was glad to find them cheerful in the morning; which they would probably not have been, had I not shared all the labors and exposures of the previous night with them, for I had never ceased waving my torch, to keep it burning, and I

1. Erebus in Greek mythology is the gloomy space through which the souls pass to Hades.

assisted at all of the "stalls", from the entering of the swamp to reaching the mill.¹

I here met Wm. J. Preston who became one of my aides-de-camp with the rank of lieutenant colonel. It cleared off early in the morning, and we started on our march; we reached Spring Hill and camped. The next day we crossed Negro Wool Swamp and camped at Jones' Ferry.

This night a courier reached me with an order from Governor Jackson, informing me that General Pillow had evacuated New Madrid, and ordering me to return at once to General Hardee--even if I had to follow him into Arkansas. This implied that Missouri was to be abandoned.²

I said nothing of this order to my command, but determined to rest them for a few days before I started back, and at the same time to have some scouting done to let the people know that we were in the country. I ordered Major Sol. G. Kitchen to take part of the cavalry and go to the town of Hamburg, in Scott County, to get

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1. This incident gained for Jeff Thompson the title of the "Swamp Fox of the Confederacy." In most accounts this title and incident are mentioned.
 2. Gen. Hardee and Gen. Pillow were both promised large commands, to be used in moving on St. Louis. Gen. Polk could not decide which should command and finally Gen. Pillow retired to Tennessee. While enroute he received an order from Gen. Polk to return to New Madrid and prepare to join Hardee in an expedition on St. Louis, via Ironton. R.R., III, 641-644.

some arms that we heard had been collected there, and to destroy a certain fortification that was reported to be there.

He started early in the morning and reached Hamburg without the people hearing of his approach. He dashed into town, and the frightened people began to run in all directions. The men fired upon them, and some were wounded and probably some killed.

This was the first brush and the first blood, and the scouting party returned, having effected their object, and highly elated with their success.¹

On this day Captain Drake McDowell and Lieut. O'Reardon joined me with two pieces of cannon, a twelve pounder and a six pounder.² As many of the men had never

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1. "The temptation to have a brush before leaving was too great, and they [the scouting party] charged into the town of Hamburg, scattering the Dutch in all directions. My men fired at them as they ran through the fields, although unarmed, and killed 1, mortally wounded 5, seriously wounded several others, and brought away 13 prisoners and 25 horses. These men were the Federal Home Guard, but the attack was so unexpected, that they did not find their guns to fight, but as they kept them secreted, our men only got five." R.R., III, 131.
 2. Capt. Drake McDowell's father had two cannon issued him by the state of Missouri. These were described as one six pounder and one eight pounder. House Journal, 1861, Appendix, 322.

seen a cannon before, they now thought that we could whip the devil if he came our way.

This night another courier arrived with the information that General Pillow had returned to New Madrid, and an order to proceed to join him.¹ My command had never heard of the order sending us back, so when we loaded up and started for Sikeston, they thought it was part of the original programme. We crossed the little river of White Water, and after a hard day's march through the swamp, we reached Sikeston.

I now fixed to remain several days, and after I started the blacksmiths and other artisans to work, I began to drill the men again myself.

From Sikeston I sent an expedition to Charlestown, in Mississippi County, to collect supplies. (My chief commissary and quartermaster had been left in Bloomfield, which place I called my permanent headquarters.) This expedition was under the command of Lieut. Col. Jeffers with some cavalry, and Lieut. Col. Thomas Brown who had his

1. Gen. Thompson's troops reached Sikeston on Aug. 12th. Sikeston was about ten miles from the western end of the completed portion of the Cairo and Fulton Railroad. Gen. Thompson wrote Gen. Hardee that he would destroy the railroad, which was of value to the Federal soldiers in southeastern Missouri. The president and chief engineer of the railroad helped destroy it. R.R., III, 644, 646.

battalion.¹ My aide, Lieut. Col. Preston, was sent along as advisor, as he had graduated from the Virginia Military Institute.

This expedition reached the town and took peaceable possession. It should be here remarked that Charlestown is but twelve miles from Bird's Point, opposite Cairo, and that a large Federal army was at Cairo and Bird's Point, so that scouts were continually coming out through the country. Arrangements were made to obtain such things as we wanted, and the command remained all night in town.

The next morning the rush of horses was heard, and presently from the southwest came a crowd of fugitives, which our men supposed to be friends pursued by the Yankees. They did not discover until it was too late that they were Federals being pursued by our friends from New Madrid under Captain White. A few shots were fired, but no one was hurt.²

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1. Lieut. Col. Wm. Jeffers was in the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and Major Thomas Brown in the 1st Infantry battalion. Claud Estes, [comp.], List of Field Officers, Regiments And Battalions In The Confederate States Army, 1861-1865, 36-37.
 2. In the charge several Federal soldiers were thrown from their horses, and captured. When the expedition returned, the officers were censured by Gen. Thompson for their carelessness in remaining all night so near the enemy. R.R., III, 648-649.

This was our second brush, and the command returned, having had considerable success.

We had been at Sikeston several days when I was ordered to proceed to Benton, in Scott County.¹

Walker's regiment, the 1st, had now rejoined me, and I went to Benton with Walker's and Aker's Regiments, and Brown's Battalion of infantry; the cavalry battalion of Lieut. Col. Jeffers with several additional companies; and the two guns of Captain McDowell; making about fifteen hundred men. I left Hunter's Battalion, and Jennings' Battalion of infantry, and some odd companies of cavalry at Sikeston.²

I should here explain that under our State Guard law, to keep the troops from each particular county to themselves, these regiments and battalions were at their minimum. Walker's, or the First, was composed of men from

1. The move was made on Aug. 17th. The rumor of Lyon's defeat at Wilson Creek, Aug. 10th, was verified and the Confederates believed that all Union troops would be withdrawn to St. Louis. Pillow and Thompson wished immediate action. Thompson was to move to Benton, from which point he intended to take Commerce and cut off the river retreat of the Federals. The next move was to take Cape Girardeau and with a combined attack of all Confederates, move on St. Louis.

The Union forces did not return to St. Louis and Gen. Polk kept the Confederates from advancing. R.R., III, 655-660; Missouri Republican, Aug. 16, 1861.

2. On Aug. 17th, Thompson gave his total strength as two thousand men. He left five hundred infantry and cavalry at Sikeston when he moved on Benton. R.R., III, 658.

Dunklin County; Eaker's, or the Second, was from Stoddard; Lowe's, or the Third, was from Ripley; Waugh's, or the Fourth, was from Scott; Hunter's Battalion, afterwards part of Waugh's, was from Bollinger; Jennings' was from Wayne, and Rapley was also from Wayne; Jeffer's Cavalry, afterwards Smith's, or the Second, was from Stoddard and northwest; Jones' Cavalry, or the First, was from the swamp counties, or Mississippi, New Madrid, and Dunklin; and White's Battalion of cavalry was from the neighborhood of Ironton and the railroad.¹

Thus, with four regiments and three battalions of infantry; and two regiments and one battalion of cavalry; and two companies of artillery, which was the organization of my command on the 1st of October, 1861, when it was at its highest, I could not muster more than four thousand men.² It was the names of my regiments and the ignorance of my own men as to the numbers of each command, that confused the enemy and made them always give me

1. These names and units can be checked in Estes, 37-40.

2. R.R., III, 680.

credit for more men than I had.¹

Therefore, when I marched to Benton with the before mentioned commands, I had but fifteen hundred men.

The enemy were at Cape Girardeau and Cairo in large force, with the river communication between,² and Commerce, which was but eight miles away from Benton, could be reached with any number of men at any time. Colonel, now Major General McCann, with seven regiments, was sent up to support me, and they came as near as Watkin's farm, four miles from Benton. Before Col. McCann came up, I was informed that a party of the enemy had landed at Commerce and I determined to go down and make a night attack on them with my cavalry.³ Major Mills, of Mississippi,

1. It was difficult to determine how many Confederate soldiers were in southeast Missouri and almost impossible to tell whose command they were from. The newspaper estimates of Thompson's forces give a picture of complete confusion. The Missouri Republican, for example, gave these figures: Aug. 5th, 8000 men; Aug. 7th, 5000; Aug. 30th, 1700; Sept. 20th, 22,300; Sept. 28th, 25,000; and Oct. 8th, 4000.
2. Gen. John C. Fremont took eight boat loads of troops to southern Missouri and Illinois because he feared an attack. By so doing he deprived Lyon of needed support, thereby causing the Union defeat at Wilson Creek and the death of Lyon. Switzler, 374.
3. Gen. Thompson's moves of Aug. 18-19, were to worry the Union forces about their river communications, and to cover Pillow's advance around New Madrid. R.R., III, 661.

had two companies of cavalry at Watkin's farm, and I invited him to join the expedition.¹

We started from Benton about 10 o'clock P.M., taking the six-pound gun along. We got to within about half a mile of Commerce, and were informed that the enemy was positively there, but usually slept in a brick church. Preston, who commanded the advance guard, sent back for instructions. I ordered a charge, and away we rushed, striking fire at every jump with our horses' shoes, and making a noise which, to our unaccustomed ears, sounded like a whirlwind.

We dashed through the town and found no enemy, and we had a bloodless victory. I distributed the men throughout the town and waited for day break. We found that not only the soldiers who had been there, but the entire male population had left the night before and none were left but women and children.

At daybreak I ordered the men to keep out of sight, hoping the refugees would return. I had placed the gun to command the river, and we patiently waited. Presently the people on the Illinois shore began to move about, and before long a party of five or six men came down to the

1. The officer's name was Major J. H. Miller, not Miles. R.R., III, 661.

river and started over. I had a picket near the spot where they were to land, but thought I would strengthen it, and ordered some of the Mississippians to go carefully to the spot. Instead of obeying the order, they jumped on their horses and galloped up, making sufficient noise to attract the attention of the men in the boat. They immediately turned back for we were now discovered. As it was useless to remain hidden any longer, I threw down the mask in front of the gun and blazed away at the boat. This was the first cannon in the neighborhood, and it awakened echoes that have hardly died away yet.

It was the first gun that I had ever fired with an evil intent, but the feelings of a sportsman overcame all my feelings of humanity, and we banged away at the boat until it landed on the Illinois shore, and then from a spirit of defiance and devilment, I fired a solid shot across at the state of Illinois. This was in August, 1861. We now went to the stores and found some corn, dried apples and whisky, and some other things that we wanted and needed, so I sent for wagons and had them taken to Benton.¹

1. Gen. Thompson's report to Gen. Pillow of this foray of Aug. 18th agrees in detail with this account. R.R., III, 663.

The same night that I had gone to Benton, I ordered Col. Hunter, then at Sikeston, to take the men he had then, including the cavalry, and make another expedition to Charlestown. This was for the double purpose of obtaining supplies, making the enemy at Cairo know that we had troops at Sikeston, and to cover McCann's march to join me.¹

Col. Hunter reached the town, and placing one picket on the main road to Bird's Point, he let the balance of the men go into a church and go to sleep. He did not even place a single sentinel about his cannon--and at early dawn he was attacked by the enemy. After a few volleys both parties ran; my men westward, and the Yankees eastward. The entire picket, about forty men and horses, with the exception of a few men, were captured.²

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1. The order was made to the officer in command at Sikeston, and not specifically in Jones' name. Thompson was not quite sure who had arrived and was in charge.

The movement was to cover Pillow and McCown's (McCann's) advances. R.R., III, 661.

2. The Union soldiers claimed a victory in this skirmish as they caused the Confederates to retreat and inflicted casualties to the extent of 13 killed and 15 captured, while losing only 1 killed and 7 wounded.

The picket functioned poorly and did not know of the approach of the enemy until captured. R.R., III, 135-140.

This picket was under the charge of Lieut. Albert Woodward,¹ who afterwards proved himself to be a brave and efficient officer.

Major Thomas P. May had a finger shot off in this brush, and several acts of personal bravery were noticed.

An instance occurred here which was noticed by many citizens, and which may be worth relating. A youth, belonging to my men, who was barefooted and without a coat, deliberately stopped when the retreat was ordered, and said: "Come back boys! don't run! I'm old Beauregard, and I'll show you how to whip them." When they would not stop, he turned and deliberately walked up toward the enemy, and discharged his double-barreled shot gun at them. He then ran, laughing, to join his comrades.

1. R.R., III, 137.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RAIDING A BANK

About the time of these expeditions, Lieutenant Governor Thomas C. Reynolds and Dr. Joseph McDowell came to Benton to join the command.¹

It was well known that a majority of the people in Scott County were Union people,² so many, thinking that this would be a good time for retaliation, desired to capture all the citizens and compel them to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate States government.³ It was also thought to be a good time to take property and I found that this spirit had to be stopped at once or the country would be desolated, as other counties later were by our enemies. I now issued two of my famous orders which I would most proudly insert here if I could. I hope sometime to get a copy of them, that they may be an evidence of the spirit

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1. Reynolds joined Thompson at this time but Joseph McDowell's presence cannot be verified. R.R., III, 680.
 2. This point cannot be verified by the use of specific examples. It is interesting to note, however, that the male inhabitants of Commerce, Mo., preferred to spend their nights in Illinois.
 3. Gov. Jackson's "Declaration of Independence of the State of Missouri" was of doubtful legality, yet the military leaders of Missouri worked closely with those of the Confederacy.

with which I conducted my campaign, and it may be contrasted with the conduct of others.¹

One of those orders was addressed to the citizens and it was simply that they should stay at home. There should be sufficient evidence that those who were "sworn in" by my officers were simply sworn in to stay home and attend to their private business. No one's politics was inquired

1. The Missouri Republican of Aug. 30th pointed out that a great deal of looting was going on. Gen. Thompson did his best to keep it down as general orders 17 and 23 (not found) would indicate. The following letters written to his subordinates clearly indicate his position.

SIR: I am instructed by Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson to call your earnest attention to the enclosed [sic] general orders. He has heard with much indignation that you are carrying on an indiscriminate course of impressment, and that friends suffer as often as foes by your actions. He desires me to assure you, on his word of honor, that he will hold you strictly accountable for your action in these matters; or, to use his own words, "Tell Captain Talbot, by God, I'll hang the first man, be he private or officer, be sworn in the service or not, who transgresses the inclosed general orders. R.R., III, 682.

SIR: I am rather astonished that you should encourage the idea that the war in which we are engaged is one to revenge private losses, by giving your sergeant an order for a watch, which he claims because he lost one. If I understand the purpose of the war, it is for the liberty of my State; that she may have the right to regulate her own affairs and control her own citizens and property. Ibid., 669.

into or interfered with, although every man was well known to my officers and men and many of these persons were then members of Aby's or Hawkins' companies.¹

The other order was that, "any one who should 'press' property, who was not a regular quartermaster, or whoever should be caught stealing horses, etc., would be hung to the nearest tree."

How the order operated will be seen presently. McCann had now reached Watkin's farm² with some seven regiments of splendid troops, and each hour we expected orders to march on Cape Girardeau.³ I was constantly engaged instructing my men and working on all of the details of my command, and at last I became so completely worndown, that the physicians insisted I should remain in my room and try to sleep. The earnest anxiety which constantly preyed on my mind, and the weighty responsibility of leading an attack with my limited military knowledge, completely exhausted me and still kept me wakeful and watchful. The physicians gave me an opiate and made me go to bed.

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1. These were evidently loyal militia companies.
 2. McCown had moved forward by Aug. 20th. R.R., III, 666.
 3. Thompson's expectation and anxiety over the lack of orders is shown in a large number of official letters. Ibid., 650, 656, 680, 681.

It was soon reported around the camp that I was very sick, and so indispensable had I become to my men that the greatest uneasiness prevailed among them and exhibited itself so plainly that Dr. McDowell came to me and urged me to get on my white horse and ride around the camps and return to my bed, or the men would all desert. I complied, and was greeted with cheers, although I had been off duty only fifteen hours.¹

During the time we were staying at Benton, couriers were passing daily between Generals Polk, Pillow, and Hardee, trying to arrange the plan of the campaign. It seemed that it was the first intention to move directly on St. Louis by the way of Ironton and Fredericktown, and General Pillow's forces were to join General Hardee at or near Fredericktown. It had become evident that this movement could not be made across Negro Wool Swamp except by the Plank Road, which would have exposed the whole plan and also left the rear exposed; or by way of Cape Girardeau.

Cape Girardeau was an important point on the Mississippi River, and would require a large force to hold it and the enemy would use all their powers to regain it, if lost. In fact, it was nearly impossible for the two columns, one depending upon the White River and the other depending upon

1. R.R., III, 680.

the Mississippi River for their supplies, to cooperate with each other, even though the Negro Wool and Mingo Swamps had not been between them.

It took time for these facts to be known, as neither of the officers commanding were acquainted with the peculiarities of the country, previous to their arrival on the ground. Then probably the personal jealousy, which has so often injured our cause, may have had something to do with it, for either General Hardee would have had to come to Cape Girardeau and trust to the Mississippi for his supplies, or General Pillow would have had to go to General Hardee, and trust to the White River for his supplies.

Each officer advocated his route, but General Polk, who had been commissioned major general, decided against the Army of Tennessee advancing further northward with the rear exposed.¹

These questions would not have arisen had it not been for the neutrality of Kentucky, which the South was not disposed to violate, for the importance of Columbus was well known. At last, when it became evident that the first proposed plans could not be carried out, it was determined to fall back from threatening Cape Girardeau, and make

1. Gen. Pillow's army was from Tennessee while Gen. Hardee's was from Arkansas.

arrangements to secure Hickman and Columbus.¹

We were now ordered to fall back and we retired to Hunter's farm where we were protected by the swamp called on the map, St. John's Lake.² McCann fell back to Sikeston.

In a few days after reaching Hunter's farm, a man was caught with a stolen horse, and brought to me.

I asked him: "Did you steal the horse?" He said, "Yes."

"Had you not seen my order on the subject?" "Yes."

"Did you not know that I would hang you, if you were caught?" "I thought you might."

"Are you a married man?" "Yes, but I do not live with my wife."

"Which party do you belong to?" "I am a Southern man, Sir."

"Well, Sir, I am glad to hear it, but nevertheless, I will hang you at three o'clock this afternoon, so get ready."

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1. The plans could not be carried out because Gen. Polk would not allow an advance. The material in the Rebellion Records and other sources indicate that Thompson's analysis of the situation was sound, and therefore does not need to be amplified. Thompson remained within twenty miles of a well armed enemy, but could receive no real assistance.
 2. Gen. Thompson requested this move because he received no aid to move forward, nor orders to leave this dangerous position. R.R., III, 681.

He said, "General, it is damned hard to hang a man for what everybody is doing." I answered, "Yes, it is hard, but it is fair. The practice must be stopped, and somebody must be hung to stop it, and I might as well hang you as anybody else." Then he said, "Well, give me 'till morning, as I have an uncle near here, and would like to see him."

I told him certainly, the morning would do as well and that I would send for anybody that he wanted to see. This was all that passed between us, and the next morning at nine o'clock he was hung.

The brigade was formed in a square around the gallows to witness the execution, and the man was so brave, or so hardened, that he did not seem to care anything more about the matter than the by standers did. In fact, not as much, for many of us felt the awfulness of the act, and I felt the responsibility that I was taking, whereas the prisoner conducted himself as if he were not interested in the proceedings. He cursed the officer who had to officiate at the execution several times about matters not suiting him. Had he acted or died differently my conscience might have troubled me about it, but up to this time I still give myself congratulations for having been lucky enough to

obtain so hardened a rascal to make an example of.¹ This and an execution at Bloomfield by Lowe, under my orders, not long after of three men for the same offense, stopped horse-stealing until I had no longer authority to punish for it.

The same day of this execution I went to Sikeston to meet General Pillow, and other officers in council. I had not quite recovered my strength, and I went down alone in an ambulance with a convalescent for a driver and no escort or guard. When General Pillow came up from New Madrid, he had a regiment of cavalry for an escort. The contrast was noted by all, but then I have no doubt he was right.

Governor Reynolds, who was still with me, had not waited for the execution but had ridden down alone. When the council adjourned I invited the Governor to ride back with me in the ambulance and let my man ride his horse. The Governor and I started for the front, I driving, as

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1. Lieut. Col. Chappell, aide-de-camp to Gen. Thompson, gave the following description of this incident:

"Two executions took place in his [Thompson's] army during the month of October. The first was a noted horse thief, who was hung. He was sentenced by a court martial, and was driven out in the woods, after an hour's time, in a wagon. A barrel was placed in the wagon, on which the victim stood. Before being swung off, he was asked if he had anything to say. He replied that he had nothing to say except that he hoped to meet all of Jeff Thompson's command in hell before long, and then sprang off the barrel into eternity." Missouri Republican, Dec. 7, 1861.

General Pillow, with his regiment of escort, started for New Madrid. This was rather unmilitary of me, but then it did not tire so many horses.

It had been determined to fall back and move into Kentucky, so the orders were issued.¹

There was a rather tempting morsel within my reach that I had been longing for, for some time and had only been prevented from pouncing on it by a greater temptation elsewhere. I had fully determined to seize the money in the bank at Cape Girardeau, had we taken that place, and had kept my hands off the small affair at Charlestown for fear of startling the larger game. But now I knew that I had to leave, so acting upon the doctrine that "half a loaf is better than no bread", I determined to pounce upon the Charlestown Bank.²

About this time the Fremont Proclamation was issued in which threats were made to punish all men found away from home, and various other threats against the Missouri soldiers and people. The moment I saw it, I determined to

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1. Gen. U. S. Grant was ordered to the district of south-east Missouri and assumed command on Aug. 30th. His assigned objective was to capture or destroy Jeff Thompson's force, but the refusal of Gen. Prentiss to follow Grant's orders, postponed the movement. The expedition was so delayed that when the Confederate troops headed for Paducah, Grant was in a position to beat them to the goal. R.R., III, 143; Grant, 261-267.
 2. Thompson mentions that \$700,000 was taken from the Cape Girardeau bank. R.R., III, 154.

answer it with a counter proclamation. In a few minutes I wrote my proclamation against Fremont. I immediately had many copies of it written, and the next day I sent over several copies by a flag of truce to Charlestown, to the enemy.¹

Within a week from the time of the publication of Fremont's Proclamation in the St. Louis newspapers, mine appeared in the same papers. I was in earnest in my threats, and would certainly have carried them out, for

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1. This became one of Jeff Thompson's most famous proclamations. Another copy is in R.R., III, 154.

To a certain extent its fame was due to the original proclamation issued by Fremont, Aug. 30th. In this proclamation Fremont declared Missouri in a state of martial law and drew the lines of the army of occupation from Leavenworth to Jefferson City, Rolla, Iron-ton, and Cape Girardeau. Persons caught within this limit who had arms in their hands or who destroyed public or private property were to be shot. Property, real and personal, of persons fighting the United States should be confiscated and their slaves freed. Persons engaged in treasonable practices were to be severely punished.

The section dealing with shooting men caught with arms in their hands was voided by President Lincoln, to obviate retaliation, on the very day that Thompson issued his proclamation. Lincoln also ordered that the section on emancipation be modified to conform with the first and fourth sections of the act of Congress entitled, "AN ACT to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes," approved Aug. 6, 1861. Ibid., 466, 469, 485.

The ruthlessness of Thompson's proclamation did gain considerable editorial comment both pro and con. The editor of the Missouri Statesman delivered a bitter denunciation in two columns on this proclamation. "What a disgrace to the age in which we live! A document more replete with the fiendish spirit of hell was never issued in the United States or in any civilized land. Missouri Republican, Oct. 4, 1861.

while I depreciate and condemn the practice of unnecessary cruelty, yet I know that an occasional well-directed violent punishment has a beneficial effect and actually saves suffering in the long run.

THE PROCLAMATION AGAINST FREMONT

To all whom it may concern:

Whereas Major General John C. Fremont, commanding the minions of Abraham Lincoln in the State of Missouri, has seen fit to declare martial law throughout the whole state, and has threatened to shoot any citizen soldier found in arms within certain limits; also to confiscate the property, and free the negroes belonging to the members of the Missouri State Guard:

Therefore know ye, that I, M. Jeff Thompson, Brigadier General, 1st Military District of Missouri, having not only the military authority of brigadier general, but certain police powers granted by acting Governor Thomas C. Reynolds, and confirmed after by Governor Jackson, do most solemnly swear that for every member of the Missouri State Guard or soldier of our allies, the armies of the Confederate States, who shall be put to death in pursuance of the said order of Gen. J. C. Fremont, I will HANG, DRAW, AND QUARTER a minion of said Abraham Lincoln.

While I am anxious that this unfortunate war shall be conducted, if possible, upon the most liberal principles of civilized warfare--and every order that I have yet issued has been with that object--yet, if this rule is to be adopted, and it must first be done by our enemies, I intend to exceed Gen. Fremont in his excesses, and will make all Tories that come within my reach, rue the day that a different policy was adopted by their leaders.

Already mills, barns and warehouses and other private property have been wastefully and wantonly destroyed by the enemy in this district while we have taken nothing, except articles strictly contraband or absolutely necessary. Should these things be repeated, I will retaliate tenfold, so help me God!

M. Jeff Thompson
Brigadier General
Commanding

At this time I ordered a detail of two hundred and fifty picked cavalry, one cannon and three wagons, for a night expedition. At nine o'clock at night the detail was reported as ready.

We started for Charleston, but not a man of the command knew where we were going. We traveled all night crossing the swamp and lakes which in some places were half saddle-skirt deep for a mile at a time. We worried on through, and at day-break were on the dry ground, north of Charleston. I went with the advance guard myself to watch out for danger, but found none. Just at sunrise we dashed into the town and in a few moments had every avenue of approach or escape closely guarded, and my cannon in front of the bank, but pointing down the railroad toward Cairo.

I now rode to the house of Mr. Moore, the cashier, and calling him out informed him that I had come for the money in the bank, and desired that he should unlock the vaults, to avoid the necessity of breaking them open. He seemed to be much concerned about the matter, and asked me to have the directors called together, that he might not have the responsibility of complying with my demand. He said they could be assembled in an hour. As he was a very courteous gentleman, I agreed to wait for them, and issued the proper orders for passing his messengers. Within the hour a quorum was assembled, the president of the bank, Mr. Handy, being

present, I stated my object to them and told them that I had not come to argue the propriety of the act, as that was fully determined upon, but that I would give them fifteen minutes to determine whether they would give me the money, or whether I should take it; and then I left them to their deliberations.

At the expiration of the fifteen minutes I knocked at the door and told them that the time was up, and I must be let in.

The door was opened and they informed me that they had concluded that if I would have it, I must take it--and take it under formal protest because they would not be personally liable to the stockholders and depositors. They hoped, however, they could convince me of the impropriety of taking it at all.

I told them that I had fully considered the matter before I started, and I could not see that it was any worse to take a rich man's gold than a poor man's horse or corn, for I would give them the same kind of receipt or certificate of indebtedness for it that we gave the poor men for what we took from them. I, therefore, formally demanded the keys to the vault, else I would blow it open with my gun.

I do not know which part of the argument was considered the strongest but the vaults were instantly opened and the specie was brought out and piled up on the floor. It was

nearly all in bags, and contained gold and some silver. I took the bags at what they were marked, and gave a receipt for fifty-seven thousand dollars (\$57,000) which an after count proved to be only fifty-six thousand.

I had this money taken out and placed in one of my wagons. I did not take any paper money, and none of the small change as I had not come to do a small business. After bidding the directors good-bye, I called in my pickets and started for camp.

I am sure that every one of the directors will testify that the whole affair was conducted with dignity and politeness, and that had I been having a personal note negotiated by them for the amount instead of having a cannon and a battalion of men at the door, I could not have conducted myself with more courtesy and respect toward them.

I may as well here remark that Governor Reynolds was at my headquarter when the expedition was determined upon, and that he approved it; and the money was first taken possession of by my paymaster, R. P. Parismore. It was afterwards taken to Memphis, and placed in a bank as a specie deposit, subject to the check of the commanding officer of the 1st Military District, or of that of the governor of Missouri. Nearly all of it was used by my quartermaster, M. H. Moore, upon my orders, in the purchase of cannon, harness, salt, and other necessities for the army; and some five or six

thousand dollars of it passed through my hands for the expenses of the trip to Big River Bridge and Fredericktown, the expenses of my hospital, etc., all of which has been properly reported to the quartermaster general of Missouri.¹

There is a good joke about some of the money that may be worth relating. When Governor Jackson came to Memphis, he seemed to think that I should not have used this money and censured me for it.

He wished to know how much was left. I told him about thirty-two thousand dollars. He said he would take that and keep it safe. I objected, but at last we compromised the matter in this way.

There were four boxes of money left in the bank; the boxes were only numbered, but I knew the exact amount in each box. Three of the boxes were full of silver, each containing twelve hundred dollars, and one was full of gold containing over twenty-seven thousand dollars.

The governor told me that I could have one box to pay for my harness and outstanding small contracts, but that

1. Few of the details of this episode are to be found. The newspapers first suggested that \$100,000. had been taken, but this figure was reduced to \$57,000. Missouri Statesman, Sept. 6, 1861; Missouri Republican, Sept. 3, 1861, Oct. 17, 1861.

the Confederacy must pay my large debts.¹ I took him at his word and checked for the box containing the gold and my quartermaster removed it to another bank. The governor took his three boxes to Des Arc, supposing that he had about twenty-five thousand dollars, but lo! When he called in his staff to open the boxes and count the money, he found but thirty-six hundred dollars in all. The old gentleman swore terribly about my cheating him but his staff soon laughed him into a good humor about it and the next time we met, he was as cordial as ever.

1. A million dollars was voted "to supply clothing, subsistence, arms, and ammunition to the troops of Missouri..." by the Confederate States Congress on Aug. 6, 1861. R.R., LIII, 721.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIGHTING THE GUNBOATS

A few days after the Charleston Bank affair, we fell back to Sikeston.¹ In a few more days the whole of General Pillow's force moved into Kentucky and I was invited to join in the expedition.²

As the possession of Columbus was expected to be disputed, I concluded to call upon my men to volunteer to go. We went down to New Madrid by a forced march; when we reached New Madrid I called for volunteers, for I had no power to order the Missouri State Guards to go beyond the borders of the state. Every officer, and nearly all the men agreed to go, and we went on board steamboats and started for Columbus. We reached Columbus about daybreak and went ashore.³

Just as the men were preparing their breakfasts, the report came that the gunboats were coming, and that troops were being landed at Lucius Bend.⁴ I immediately went to

1. R.R., III, 144, 149, 154.

2. Ibid., 155.

3. Ibid., 155.

4. This is Lucus, not Lucius Bend. This correction will be made throughout.

General Polk, and asked permission to go over and drive them away.¹ He consented and I galloped down to my men and told them what was wanted to be done. They threw away their breakfasts and started at a run for the river, to cross over.

We went over as fast as the boats could cross us, and as soon as we struck the Missouri shore the men started for the woods. I galloped up the road for the gunboats. When I reached Lucas Bend, I found that no troops had been landed and the boats were returning toward Cairo. I had hardly finished my observations when the men began to arrive, having double quicked four miles.

I now determined to camp at Lucas Bend and sent orders to the cavalry, artillery, and train to come up as I was now in Missouri and had the right to order.

For the information of those who have never traveled the Mississippi River, I will remark that Lucas Bend is the first bend above Columbus, Kentucky, and the second or third below Cairo, Illinois. The river comes down from the north, turns at this bend toward the east, and runs to

1. R.R., III, 698. The permission was probably requested of Gen. Pillow rather than Polk, because Pillow was Thompson's immediate commander, and Polk's headquarters were in Memphis.

strike the bluff at Columbus, then turns southward again. This east and west stretch is about four miles. I camped about three and a half miles above Belmont.

I had just collected my men together and made our camp comfortable, when it got into the Yankees' heads that they could try their new gunboats on me, and they concluded to come down and practice their guns at shelling my camp.

Down they came, and taking a convenient position about a half a mile away, they let fly their big guns. This was the first time we had ever heard anything larger than a 12 pounder--and that with the muzzle the other way. The crashing through the timber and terrific explosion of an eight inch shell in the camp was not a very pleasant introduction to the gunboats.

I happened to be out of camp when the first few shots were fired, but I returned as fast as my horse could carry me and found that the men were in line, and the guns limbered up when I arrived.

We immediately started up the river at a sufficient distance back not to be seen, and left the camp to be shelled with no one in it. In a few minutes two of my guns approached the river bank through the corn, and unlimbered within a few hundred yards of the gunboats.

The water was low and the banks high, and while the boats were still watching our camp and throwing shells at

it, we let fly into them at only about two hundred yards.

These boats were the "Conestoga" and the "Lexington", and were wooden boats built after the fashion of the old men of war--consequently our shot hit them hard.

We were too near and too high for their guns to play on us, and they ran up stream for range. They had scarcely gotten a position and fired when another section of my battery let fly into them out of the corn again. Again they ran up stream, and the same thing was enacted again, so they ran clear away, having been driven off by my six-pounders. This fight was witnessed by tens of thousands who had gathered on the bluffs at Columbus, and was most encouraging to all. Everybody had seemed to dread the gunboats and big guns, but now the terror was gone forever from my men and all who witnessed the fight.

I had two men badly wounded and two horses killed, but it was reported that one of our small shot had entered a port and cut a steam pipe by which five men were scalded to death.¹

1. This is the Union report of the engagement:

I, however, discovered the enemy in force on the Missouri side, at Lucas Bend, and at once proceeded down and opened fire upon their artillery and cavalry. The enemy had about sixteen pieces of field artillery and it is believed one heavy piece in battery. Several of their pieces were rifled and ranged to and beyond this vessel, striking all about her. In

THE LEXINGTON

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THE ADVENTUROUS GUNBOAT CONESTOGA

Lying at anchor in the Ohio River this little wooden gunboat is having the finishing touches put to her equipment while her officers and men are impatiently waiting for the opportunity to bring her into action. A side-wheel river steamer originally, she was purchased at Cincinnati by Commander John Rodgers in the spring of 1861 and speedily converted into a gunboat. Her boilers and steam pipes were lowered into the hold and the oaken bulwarks five inches thick which we see were put on her and pierced for guns. She got her first taste of fighting when, at Lucas Bend, she engaged the land batteries and a Confederate gunboat, September 10, 1861. She was present at Fort Henry in the second division of the attacking fleet, and also at Fort Donelson.

This affair, slight as it was in some respects, had the most beneficial effects, especially on myself. This was my first time "under fire", and I found that I could stand it. I had begun to dread that I could not preserve the coolness necessary for a commander. I knew that I was not a coward for what man is who has either ambition or pride? But, although I knew I could and would fight with a sabre, I feared that I could not fight with a spy

a short time Commander Stembel, hearing our guns, came down with the Lexington and joined in the fight.

The rebels moved their batteries from point to point while we availed ourselves of our motive power to move upstream as the enemy would attempt to move up, back from the banks and bring their several batteries in at different places to fire a few rounds and gallop to some other point. Their force of cavalry was considerable, and I fired several shells among them with great apparent effect.

The shell and shot of both our vessels were lodged among their batteries. Both the Lexington and this vessel retired out of range for a short time, about 1 o'clock, hoping to lead the enemy up higher where our land forces were Our boats again opened fire upon the enemies' batteries, and before 5 o'clock we had silenced them entirely, or driven their force out of reach, and without injury to ourselves. I am satisfied we did great injury to the enemy. While retiring, the boat was fired upon with musketry by an enemy concealed in a thicket and small outhouse, and one man, Nelson Castle, quartermaster, was shot through the arm and forehead

U.S. Navy Department, Official Records Of The Union And Confederate Navies In The War Of The Rebellion, series I, volume XXII, 324, 323, 326; R.R., III, 168.

glass. Now I had been "under fire" and my soldiers and officers, whom I knew were brave, were loud in their expressions of admiration of my coolness and skill. I felt that a load had been lifted off my heart, and I was now prepared to do my whole duty.

My men were equally benefited, for they had kept their lines when the huge shells went screaming over them, or through the corn and forests around them; the great "bug bear" was discovered. The gunboats were voted to be a "humbug", for the shells killed nobody and the boats could not come ashore to catch any prisoners.

After repeated shellings at Lucus Bend, General Pillow ordered me to move back to Bellemont,¹ which is just opposite Columbus, remarking that "the place you are now is not safe." I remarked, "I am not hunting safe places now." But I had to come back. I was now safer from a land attack, but the gunboats continued to pay me their respects every few days; but they did no damage and we let them blaze away.²

While camped at Belmont, several incidents occurred which may be worth relating.

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1. Belmont is misspelled throughout. Hereafter it will be corrected without note.
 2. One such attack is reported by Commander H. Walke, U.S. N., Cairo, Ill., to Gen. Grant, Oct. 7, 1861. R.R., III, 200.

It may not be out of place to remark that there was no good feeling existing between Generals Polk and Pillow.¹ The fact was well known to the whole army. None had a better opportunity of judging of the diversity of their opinions on various matters than I had, for, as I had a quasi-independent command, I was on a more familiar footing with each of these gentlemen, than those who were strictly their subordinates.² I really had, and still have, the greatest respect for each of them; they both appreciate my regard, and were very kind and considerate to me.

But sometimes when General Polk would be sick, or something else would take him off duty, General Pillow would be in command. Whenever this would happen General Pillow invariably made preparations for an attack on the enemy and I would receive instructions accordingly.

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1. Proof of the ill feeling is contained in the correspondence between Generals Polk and Pillow. One example of this is in R.R., III, 668.
 2. Gen. Thompson's troops were state militia, not Confederate troops. Their supreme allegiance was to Gov. Jackson, who paid little attention to southeast Missouri. Common cause brought Confederate and Missouri troops together, until after the legislature seceded, then Confederate officers legally gave orders.

Thompson worked more closely with Pillow than Polk, but he was clearly independent until Missouri's secession. R.R., III, 632, 691, 701; Grant, I, 261.

Before any movements could be made General Polk would resume command and the orders would be countermanded. This happened several times while I was opposite Columbus.

At one time General Pillow determined to set a trap and catch the enemy and have a fight--even if Bird's Point or Cairo could not be captured by the stratagem.

I was ordered to send my cavalry to burn the large "Pile Bridge", on the Cairo and Fulton Railroad, some six or seven miles back of Bird's Point. I was to have my infantry prepared to move to the support of my cavalry, which was to fall back in a southwestern direction after burning the bridge. We supposed the enemy would come out after me, and I was to fall back toward New Madrid, but keep the enemy engaged. General Pillow had his troops and transports ready to cross over or run up to Norfolk, as might be necessary, to attack the enemy in the rear, cutting him off from Cairo. I had an accurate detail map of the locality of the bridge.

The first, and most important, movement was the burning of the bridge so I made a detail of five hundred cavalry for the expedition. The matter had been fully talked over with Col. Jones of the 1st Regiment of Cavalry, who was to command the party, and he seemed to appreciate the importance of the undertaking and enter into the spirit of the enterprise. After dark the men were ordered into

line, and I had all the field officers to come into my tent.

The matter had been a profound secret up to this time, except to Jones and myself, but as the column would reach the bridge before a spy could, I thought it no longer necessary to keep it secret from the officers. When they were assembled I explained the whole movement that they had to perform to them, and spoke of the importance of accomplishing the destruction of the bridge. We knew there was a guard of about one hundred men there and they had to be whipped or captured. There would be losses on our side, in proportion to their resistance; therefore, I explained to these field officers their exact relative rank so that there should be no confusion on the ground after the fight commenced.

So earnest was I in my charges that I spoke plainly, thus, "When Jones is killed, Smith will take command; when Smith is killed, Lewis will take command; when Lewis is killed, Ralfus will take command; and so on, but gentlemen, if there is but one man left at the end of the fight, he must burn the bridge. I now bade them all good-bye, and they started away.

The line of couriers was established as they passed on, and I awaited the report. They were to reach the

bridge by day break, and I expected to hear the result by ten o'clock A.M.

I anxiously waited the next morning for information. Hours passed away and no report, even though it was now noon. Several more hours passed and I was getting so anxious that I went out in the camp to see if any rumors had come in through the country people.

I soon saw some of the men that I knew had started with the expedition and I inquired when they had returned. They said they had just come in and that the column was just behind. I asked if they had burned the bridge, they asked, "What bridge? We have heard nothing about a bridge. We went up to Bird's Point, scouted all night, and started back this morning, but heard nothing about any bridge."

I now saw that the expedition had been a failure, and waited for Colonel Jones to hear the reason, supposing, of course, that he had heard that the enemy had anticipated our plan and had sent a strong force to defend the bridge. I also supposed he was at the rear of the army, next to the enemy, to bring in the stragglers and the latest information; but when I was satisfied that all were in, I sent to his quarters and found that he was one of the first to arrive in camp and had gone over to Columbus to see his wife.

I immediately sent a squad over to arrest him, which was done. When he came, I said, "Why did you not report when you returned, Sir?" He answered, "I had nothing to report."

"Did you burn the bridge that I sent you to burn?"

"No, Sir."

"Why not, Sir?"

"Because, Sir, when I got up to about five miles of the bridge I asked an old lady about it, and she said she had been down to the bridge and that there was a guard there, and it would be dangerous to go there."

Those who have heard what emphatic language I use when I am excited may know what a cursing the valiant colonel got, but those who have never heard me swear can hardly appreciate it. I could not find words enough to express my indignation and condemnation and I only stopped when exhausted in language and breath.

Thus had this whole plan failed from the disgraceful cowardice of one man, for he deceived the other officers by an intimation of private orders, and brought the whole party back when almost within charging distance.¹

1. This incident cannot be verified. This bridge, however, was destroyed shortly after. R.R., III, 709, 712; Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

The next day I ordered a court martial to try Col. Jones, but by some mistaken leniency they merely suspended him for twenty days without breaking him; but he never appeared in my camp again. In the fall of 1862 he raised a company for the Confederate service, and I found him on Holcomb's Island when I returned to Missouri. A few days after this there occurred a difficulty between him and some of Captain Ward's company about the division of some captured property, of which, it is said, Jones took the lion's share; and in the fracas which occurred Jones was killed in his own door-yard by some of the men. Two others were killed at the same time, yet so lawless had the people become that there was neither military nor civil inquiry into the matter.

About this time I applied for a furlough of four days, to go to Memphis. General Pillow refused to give me the furlough but General Polk granted the request, so taking my aides, Col. Preston, and my Indian orderly, I went down on the cars.¹

This was my first trip to Memphis since I had left there the June previous, and in this interval I had

1. The Memphis Daily Avalanche of September 25, 1861, carried a notice of Jeff Thompson's arrival in the city. He was presented with a sword and a pair of revolvers. This information is through the courtesy of the Cossitt Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

acquired a "notoriety" which made many persons in Memphis anxious to see me, and many were anxious to extend honors and compliments to me. From the first of August up to this time I had been doing outpost duty for the Army of the Tennessee under General Pillow, and we had had several skirmishes beside those mentioned in this paper, while the Army had not fired a shot.¹ The consequence had been that every letter that had been written from the Army to their friends at home had mentioned me, and some had anecdotes and jokes that were current in camp about me,² so when I reached Memphis I found that I was the "observed of all observers."

1. The neutrality of Kentucky had kept the Union troops away from Tennessee and the most aggressive of the Tennessee moves before the occupation of Columbus, Ky., had been the occupation of New Madrid, Mo.
2. One of these anecdotes was related by Gen. Duke, who tried to recruit two cavalry companies from Thompson's command, for a particular piece of dangerous work. The men would have had to leave the Missouri for the Confederate service. When approached, Gen. Thompson is reported as saying:

Now there was a fellow here the other day from Arkansas, on the same mission. He also was ignorant of the prejudice the men feel against quitting the service of the state and entering that of the Confederacy, and he wasn't with me, but went to work his own way. The result was that he hadn't been talking more than half an hour when the whole camp rose on him and ran him into the swamp. He got away by the skin of his teeth, but they fired at him by platoons, and chased him God

This was unfortunate for me in some respects, for I had only run down to Memphis for a little recreation, and was on a frolic all the time that I was there. This gave the staid citizens, who would not otherwise have noticed me, a bad opinion of my morals and habits.

The most amusing thing that happened on this visit to Memphis was my visit to the "Tableau", which the ladies and gentlemen were giving for the benefit of the soldiers. I was formally invited by the managers and dressed myself in my best to appear to the best advantage, for I knew I would be stared at; but I had something much better in

knows how far. I don't know what's become of him. I haven't heard from him for two days, but from the report of the rate at which he was going I'm inclined to think that if he hasn't been killed he must be somewhere in Texas by this time.

However, I wouldn't discourage you for the world. I like your patriotic spirit and want to help you if I can. Let me beg you, however, to be discreet. When you get ready to talk to these fellows have your horse where you can reach him handy.

And, by the way, I'll tell you what I'll do. On some pretext or another I'll get the men down to one end of the camp, so that after you have made your proposition they'll have to go some distance for their guns, and you can get a good start. Keep a close watch out for the camp guards, however, and steer clear of the pickets. Then, if your horse don't fail you, it's possible you may get away. When would you like to make your speech? Will tomorrow be soon enough?

Duke, 80-81.

store for them than to look at me. My Indian, whose name is Simon Martin but called by me Ajax, is a splendid specimen of the "genus homo" and has more wit and fun in him than any Indian I ever knew. He had attracted a great deal of attention during the day, and I determined to fix him up for this occasion. I told him to paint himself up in his gaudiest colors and dress with his finest and gayest feathers and hunting shirt. I gave him a letter and told him to wait until he thought the performance was commenced and rush into the theatre and give it to me.

He understood perfectly what I wanted done, for he had been the proprietor of a show boat on the Mississippi River when the war began, and with brothers and sisters had been giving "Tableaus of Ancient History"--Ajax delivering the lectures and explanations.

I went to the theatre at a proper hour with several gentlemen accompanying me. Seats had been reserved for us in the center of the parquette where we could see and be seen. I was received with a welcome cheer and conducted to my place. Many had heard of the Indian, and I was amused at the expressions of disappointment and inquiries concerning his absence. Presently the curtain rose and some beautiful tableau drew all attention to the stage--a minute passed in breathless silence--the curtain began to

descend. A confusion was heard toward the door which drew all eyes that way when in stalked Ajax with long strides. He stood for a moment, throwing his bright eyes over the crowd until they rested on me, and with his most theatrical air, handed me the letter.

I rose to receive it and he stood in the position of a Turkish Salaam while I read it.

The whole audience waited with breathless anxiety, so when I finished the letter I remarked to Ajax, "It needs no answer, you may sit down." As he straightened himself up to look around, apparently for the first time, the shouts and hurrahs which greeted him were really deafening. He made a polite bow, and sat down.

Little did that audience know that I had arranged this little "by show" for their entertainment in return for their kindness in inviting me to their entertainment, and they thought this was a military way of delivering and receiving dispatches. There are hundreds who remember his war whoop in the Indian scene which came on soon afterward. Although I was delighted with the kind reception that I had received, and the beautiful exhibition which I had witnessed, yet I am sure that I returned the pleasure

with interest to those who saw my Indian.¹ I remained in Memphis three days, and returned to my camp.

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1. Thompson used this stunt a number of times after his headquarters had been established in Memphis in 1862. Here is Gen. Duke's description of it:

Attended by a numerous and very gay staff . . . with a gigantic and truculent-looking Canadian Indian who answered to the name of Ajax, for his orderly, General Thompson and his train were always in evidence and the objects of ever-curious observation. Ajax habitually wore a gorgeous suit of black velvet, a headdress of eagle feathers, and a belt with imitation scalp locks dangling from it. It was a favorite trick of the general to have Ajax enter the theatre, when it happened to be especially crowded, and, with hurried mien, hand him a dispatch. Then the general would spring to his feet and dash for the door, followed by his staff. On two or three such occasions the audience became greatly excited, thinking that General Thompson had received stirring news from "the front" and expecting to hear of immediate battle. After frequent repetition, however, people placed another construction upon his conduct, and actually came to the conclusion that it was a device by which general and staff could conveniently get out for "another drink;" and quite often irreverent voices would shout: "General, take one for me."

Duke, 79.

CHAPTER NINE

BIG RIVER BRIDGE

It was now getting late in September and Gen. Albert Sydney Johnston had arrived to direct military affairs;¹ also General Fremont had equipped his splendid army, and had started down for General Price. There was a large army at Columbus, and the fortifications were being completed so there was no longer any use for me. It was ordered that I should take my brigade back to Missouri to make such demonstrations as would attract the attention of Fremont, and either divert some of his forces or delay their march.

My orders were general and very complimentary, my plans and management being left entirely to myself.² I immediately prepared to carry out my instructions and broke

1. Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston was in command of the Pacific Department of the United States Army but he resigned when his state, Texas, left the Union. It was necessary for him to return by way of the overland route to escape capture, causing him to assume command of the Western Department very late. After building extensive fortifications in this area, he was killed in the open battle field at Shiloh, dying in the arms of Col. William Preston, a member of his staff--formerly an aide-de-camp to Gen. Thompson. Francis T. Miller, [ed.], The Photographic History Of The Civil War, X, 260; William Parker Snow, Southern Generals, Who They Are, And What They Have Done, 400-408.

2. A copy of these orders can be found in R.R., III, 709.

up camp at Belmont.¹ My infantry was taken to New Madrid on boats, but the cavalry, supply train, and artillery pushed through by land. I left Col. James Walker and put part of the 1st Regiment to garrison New Madrid, and pushed up to Sikeston, across Negro Wool Swamp, and halted for a few days at Spring Hill. Here Lowe's regiment and White's battalion joined the brigade for the first time.²

We remained several days at Spring Hill, preparing for our movement toward Ironton. While here couriers arrived from Governor Jackson, requesting me to notify the senators and members of the Legislature of the called session at Neosho, and to try to send in and get out the St. Louis members to make up a quorum. I immediately started two men into St. Louis and Johnson and Saxton were thereby induced to come out.³

1. R.R., III, 712.

2. Ibid., 712-714.

3. The Missouri Legislature assembled at Neosho, Mo., Oct. 21st, at the call of Governor Jackson. It is doubtful if a quorum was present but the Legislature declared that Missouri had seceded from the Union and then elected two senators and eight representatives to the Confederate Congress. The illegality of this action is based on the lack of a quorum and legislating on a matter already settled by a constitutional convention. Violette, 369.

On Oct. 23d, the Senate passed the following resolution: "Resolved, That the President be requested to appoint suitable messengers to notify and bring to the Senate the absent members thereof." Journal Of The Senate, Extra Session Of The Rebel Legislature, Called Together By A Proclamation Of C. F. Jackson, 5.

While I was at Belmont my men got into a bad habit of leaving without permission, some to return again, and some to desert.¹ The habit had become general and injurious, and as all mild remedies had failed to stop it, I was determined to make an example of someone that would deter others from the pernicious habit. This was especially necessary when I was about to start upon an expedition on which the strictest discipline would have to be enforced, and I would have to have confidence in my men to make any plans successful. About this time an old offender, named Smith, was brought into camp. He had deserted several times, and was said to have induced others to do the same. I ordered a court martial and they brought in some slight punishment. I disapproved the sentence and ordered another court.² This court was not more severe than the other; I disapproved their sentence and ordered another, and

That Gen. Thompson was requested to contact members of the Legislature near his district is quite probable, but his success cannot be determined because no roll call was recorded.

These men were Thomas C. Johnson and John Sexton, of St. Louis.

1. The great amount of desertion in Thompson's command was frequently reported in the newspapers. Missouri Republican, Oct. 9, 1861.
2. This is legal and proper under "AN ACT to provide for the Organization, Government, and Support of the Military Forces of the State of Missouri", in Laws of Missouri, Called Session, 1861, 28.

remarked that I intended to have every commissioned officer in the brigade on the court; and if some of them did not sentence him to be shot and all were opposed to shooting him, that I would either resign or shoot the man myself.

I hope it will not be thought from this that I am either heartless or bloodthirsty, for my whole life has proved otherwise, but I saw that an example must be made. It was absolutely necessary that it should be made before we started on this expedition, for I well knew the hardships and dangers that were ahead of us. If I started without letting my men know that they had to stick to me, I would be simply taking the brave, good men into danger, while the rascals and cowards would all run away and leave us to our fate.

I do not remember whether it was the third or fourth court that sentenced the deserter to be shot, but it was done. I approved the sentence and ordered him shot the next morning at 9 o'clock, with the march to be commenced immediately afterward.

Every effort was made to induce me to pardon him, but I had fully made up my mind to the justice as well as the necessity of the act before I had ordered the second court, and I was deaf to all entreaties--although my heart was severely tried at the responsibility that I was taking. I

conceived that I was doing my duty to my own good and true men--as well as to my country, and I still believe that I was right.

On the morning of the execution I was entreated by several of my staff not to go out to witness it, for it was more than probable that some of Smith's relatives and friends would shoot me. It was also said that it had been intimated that the men were going to release him on the ground, which, of course, would get up a fight in which I would be the first killed. This confirmed me in my intention of superintending the whole arrangements. Some did not wish to witness the execution, but I made the whole brigade turn out. The infantry and artillery formed three sides of a square, the place of execution being the fourth side. The cavalry that were already prepared for the march were on one side overlooking the infantry; the cavalry that were to remain were on the other side with the infantry. I rode into the center of the square and addressed the brigade. I told them of the necessity of the example and also what I had heard of their threats, but said that I was simply doing my duty as I conceived it to be, and that I was as ready to do it there as any place else in the performance of my duty, and that if this man were my own brother, that he would be shot. I spoke to

the shooting detail and told them if they had any mercy on the man, to show it by shooting him dead, for if they missed or crippled him it would only prolong the misery, because he had to be shot to death.

All now took their positions. The poor prisoner shouted for mercy most pitifully, but my heart was shut; the signal was given, and the volley fired as accurately as on dress parade. The nine balls passed through his heart, and he never moved when he struck the ground. In an instant the whole brigade gave three cheers for General Thompson. They were given with a will, and while the approbation of the act by my infantry was still ringing in my ears, I placed myself at the head of my cavalry, and started toward St. Louis.¹

I have thus dwelt on the subject for I felt it was really a great assumption of authority and a most terrible responsibility, but I thought, and still think that it was right; and the thousands still living who heard the shout of approbation given by the brigade just at the tragic act, must know that there was considered to be a great necessity

1. The story of this execution was given some little time later by Lieut. Col. William Chappell, an aide-de-camp to Gen. Thompson. Chappell says, however, that Thompson ordered the execution after the first trial. This may have meant exactly that or he may have meant that he forced a court to a decision. Missouri Republican, Dec. 7, 1861.

for an example--even by the men themselves. The result proved the benefit derived from it, for in the long and hard march from this camp until we returned to Bloomfield, nearly a month later, not one deserter was reported.¹

This was in October 1861, and I started with five hundred picked cavalry, intending to go to Big River Bridge and burn it, and then return along the Iron Mountain Railroad, destroying all the bridges. Then I would join Lowe, who was to bring on the infantry, artillery, and cavalry at or near Fredericktown. We would then attack Ironton, if possible, take it, and then make such demonstrations as would stop and probably turn back Fremont, who was now approaching General Price.²

The first night we stopped near Dallas, the next night at another place, the third night we travelled all night. Before day we were making our dispositions around the Big River Bridge.³

1. This cannot be verified.

2. R.R., III, 223, 224.

3. This trip was roughly 110 miles. R.R., III, 224.

While on this trip Thompson wrote a proclamation, two copies of which still exist. One is in the Missouri Republican, and the other is in the Historical Collections in the Missouri State Capital Building at Jefferson City. The copy below is from the Missouri Republican, Oct. 26, 1861.

We took with us but three wagons which had ammunition in them and some bread pans in case we should find some meal. Every man had been cautioned to fill his pockets with salt, and during these three days, with the exception of some bread and pies that the citizens near Farmington had cooked for us, we lived on flesh meat alone.

We would stop at a corn field to feed our horses--there were beeves around every field then--one would be selected, shot down, skinned, cut up, issued to the men, cooked on the coals, and eaten, before the horses were done with their feed. This was done repeatedly and although it

Headquarters First Military District,
Missouri State Guard,
Camp St. Francois County,
Monday, Oct. 14, 1861.

PATRIOTS, of Washington, Jefferson, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois and Iron Counties: I have thrown myself into your midst, to offer you an opportunity to cast off the yoke you have unwillingly worn so long. Come to me and I will assist you, and drive the invaders from your soil, or die with you among your native hills.

Soldiers from IOWA, NEBRASKA, AND ILLINOIS, Go Home!--We want you not here and we thirst not for your blood. We have not invaded your States, we have not polluted your hearth stones, therefore leave us; and after we have wiped out the Hessians and Tories, we will be your friendly neighbors, if we cannot be your brothers.

M. Jeff Thompson
Brig. Gen. Commanding

may be common now to all soldiers, it was new then.¹ Fastidious people at home, even now, can hardly believe that I have eaten beef that I am sure thirty minutes before was on its feet. Thirty or forty miles on a hard trotting horse between meals gives a man a wondrous appetite, and but few boarders at the Fifth Avenue Hotel enjoy their dinners as well we would that beef.

Just before daybreak on Tuesday, the 15th of October, we reached the Big River at Blackwell's Station on the Iron Mountain Railroad.² A party was sent over to see if there was a telegraph office there and if so to capture the operator in bed. It was discovered that none was there. I had had a full description of the force at the Big River Bridge, and I knew that they were on the St. Louis side of the river.

I sent Col. Smith and Lieut. Col. Kitchen with the men belonging to the 2nd Cavalry, and Gen. Acer and his party,³ to cross the river and attack the camp in the fort from the high ground behind it.

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1. Living off the country was a new experience even to Grant--until the Vicksburg campaign. Grant, I, 435.
 2. This and other details mentioned by Thompson are according to the official reports written by Thompson immediately after the skirmish. R.R., III, 224.
 3. Gen. Acer and his party seem to be unofficial observers on this trip. Gen. Thompson frequently speaks of "amateurs" going on a trip. This does not mean that they are guerrillas but instead soldiers not assigned to these troops, going along for the adventure.

The detachment of the 1st Regiment, under Captain Lewis, I sent up the railroad to intercept any force that might come from the next bridge above. Lieut. Col. White, with the men from his battalion, were to approach on the south side of the bridge and cross over, if possible, or burn the bridge while Col. Smith engaged the enemy, if it was impossible to cross.¹ I had at this time about four hundred men, for I had left pickets and scouts at or near all of the cross roads in the rear.²

Col. Smith and his party rode away to his post, the balance of us dismounted and moved off to our positions. we cut down the telegraph as we proceeded. It was now fairly daybreak, and I began to feel uneasy about Smith getting to his position in time for a surprise; but suddenly a shout, then a rattling volley which had scarcely ended when a loud long shout indicated we had won. We on our side of the bridge sprang from cover at the first shot, and in a few minutes joined the other party in the enemy's little fort.

1. R.R., III, 224.

2. Ibid., 202.

It seems that Smith's party had advanced to within a few yards of the stone wall which enclosed the enemy's camp, before they were discovered. When the guard discovered and challenged them, they fired a volley and rushed into the enclosure before the startled Yankees could get out of their tents to form.¹

Several shots were fired at close quarters and two of our men were killed and one Federal.² The captain of the company, whose name was Elliott,³ was shot through the arm in the first volley and he surrendered as soon as he could make himself heard. We were all soon in the fort or enclosure and every man seemed beside himself at this, our first fruitful victory.

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1. The Union troops declared that they made a stout defensive fight but were too closely pushed. Jeff Thompson says the skirmish lasted ten minutes and the enemy accounts double this. R.R., III, 224; Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.
 2. The casualties in this skirmish are hard to estimate. The Union forces claimed they had one killed to the enemy's twenty or twenty-two. The Confederates claim three of their own men killed and from one to six of the enemy killed. R.R., III, 224, 231; Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861; Miller, I, 352; Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium Of The War Of The Rebellion, 799.
 3. Capt. Isaac Hughes Elliott, of the 33d Illinois Volunteers, was advanced during the war to the grade of brevet brigadier general. This was for gallant and meritorious service. Heitman, I, 401.

Capt. Elliott was one of six Union soldiers who were wounded in this battle. Dyer, 799; Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

Here were more tents than any regiment I had possessed; and then the nice overcoats, blankets, cartridge boxes, etc., delighted my men. While everything was in confusion I observed that Lewis, with his party, had left his post and was coming down the railroad at double quick to get their share of the spoils. I had left my Indian orderly with my horse to bring him to me as soon as the fight was over--and he was riding at their head. I began to call to them to go back to their places when it occurred to me to pass them all off as Indians. I had discovered that all of the prisoners that I had captured were schoolmasters and I wanted to give them a scare.¹

I now shouted: "Take back those Indians! They will murder these prisoners, take them back!" I spoke to one of my aides to go and stop the Indians. He caught my cue in a moment and so did my other officers. We immediately formed our prisoners in line, and placed a guard around them to keep the Indians off.

The matter was played out so well, that when they reached St. Louis that night, some of them swore to having seen fifteen hundred Indians.²

1. The 33d Illinois Volunteers were known as the Normal regiment. Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861. This would probably indicate that they were recruited from an educational institution.

2. Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

We now commenced quietly taking care of our plunder. All of the private property of the officers was returned to them, except their arms.¹ The men were ordered to give up their overcoats but several complained of being sick, and I let them retain their coats. Just afterward an incident occurred that should be told.

One of my aides, Dr. Drake McDowell of St. Louis, who happened to be busy when the overcoats were delivered up, did not get one, but when he saw a Federal with one still on, he asked him what he was doing with the coat on. The man said: "I am sick, and General Thompson said I might keep my coat." Drake McDowell said: "Let me see your tongue." When the man showed it to him Drake said, "You damned liar, you ain't sick at all. Give me that coat; the General don't know anything at all about sick men," and he made the poor devil come out of that coat.

It was nearly impossible to make Captain Elliott believe that it was actually I who was present, and he showed me the Republican of the day before, which stated that I was at New Madrid. I had to give him my autograph to show in St. Louis so he could convince the people that

1. It was said that Capt. Elliott had a pair of pantaloons taken as well as his arms. Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

it was really me.¹ When the men found that I intended to parole them, they got in a good humor and for the next few minutes that we were together we were as social and talkative as old friends.

1. It is quite true that the St. Louis papers believed Thompson to be in southeast Missouri. The Missouri Republican of Oct. 16, 1861, said he was in Belmont, Mo. As a matter of fact, the burning of the Big River Bridge was not credited to Thompson until after the Fredericktown battle. Numerous editorials were written on this subject, the one given here but an example.

As to GEN. JEFF. THOMPSON, he has been cruelly slandered, and I am here today to ascertain the facts and do justice to this modern Marion, as he calls himself. The fact is, JEFF. is as innocent of the incendiarism on the Iron Mountain road as a child unborn. He has done nothing but send out a few scouts to look up some of those 'cattle on ten thousand hills' which he indicated in his proclamation he had contracted for from the Lord...

* * * * *

It is now fairly settled that JEFF. THOMPSON had nothing to do with the burning of the Big River bridge. This work of infamy belongs to a set of scoundrels lower down in the social scale than any JEFF. ever saw, except when he acted as Mayor of St. Joseph. The company who made the attack and committed the arson and robbery at the bridge, and in its neighborhood were collected from the woods and hills of the adjoining counties, and probably separated as widely and rapidly as they gathered. Numbers from the immediate vicinity disguised themselves as Indians, to avoid recognition. Missouri Republican, Oct. 23, 1861.

Other such editorials are in Ibid., Oct. 21, 22, 1861.

I issued many orders to my staff officers in their hearing, and inquired about the positions of regiments and brigades. It was all swallowed as gospel truth and in due time was repeated and reported in St. Louis.¹

General Acer, with his twenty amateur fighters from Mississippi, was with me and asked the honor of burning the bridge so I gave him the order. Never did the Eastern fire worshipers look with more pleasure upon his sacred altar than did General Acer upon the blaze that soon enveloped the splendid bridge.²

I will here remark that this is the only instance big or little, public or private, useful or useless thing that had been burned by my order since the war began. The Cold Water Bridge was burned by my men and much cotton was burned by soldiers under me, but the orders were positively from higher headquarters.³

Several hours after the capture of the party at the bridge we were still at Blackwell Station preparing the captured property for transportation. Nearly all of White's men were still with him near the bridge, and

1. Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

2. The best description of the bridge burning is that found in the court martial of William Hearst, a soldier from Thompson's command, who was arrested late in 1861, by the Union forces. R.R., series II, volume I, 284-292.

3. This cannot be verified.

before Smith's men had returned across the river with their horses, a boy dashed up to me and informed me that the Federals were coming down the railroad close at hand. I told him he was mistaken, that Lewis and his men were up the railroad on picket duty, and he would fight them.

An instant later an old man came rushing his horse toward me shouting, "Here they come! Here they come!" and he presented the most terrible sight that I had ever seen in my life. It seems that he had been riding up the railroad to meet Lewis when suddenly at a turn he met the Yankees. They fired at him and a ball struck his horse near the star in his forehead; his nose being forward the ball glanced from the skull bone, but had thrown the scalp back in the rider's face. The horse fell but recovered again. The old man had turned and rushed back without his hat, his frightened face, bespattered with the horse's blood, and the horse's bloody and frightened looks, gave as complete a picture of terror as any artist can possibly conceive.

Sure enough, down they came and I had hardly time to tell the few men who were with me to drop their loads and seize their guns, before the firing commenced. Fortunately, the enemy were as much surprised as we were, or they could have taken advantage of our not being formed and driven us out. Their hesitation saved us, for I ordered my men to

each fight on his own hook.¹ There was no time to form so the brave fellows dashed in with the butts of their guns, shot from behind stumps, and any and every way. I was the only one on horseback, and several bullets whistled rather close to my ears. Captain Valle of White's regiment had rushed in on the enemy and a ball struck him in the breast and passed through him. Captain Burke, of the same regiment, rushed on the captain of the Federals with a small revolver; the pistol snapped, and a Federal struck him over the head with his sword and knocked him down; a soldier stepped up and ran his bayonet through him, pulled it out and ran it through him again, when one of my men knocked the soldier down with a gun and captured him.

Strange to say that, although the surgeons said that neither of these gentlemen could possibly live and I made arrangements for their burial when we left them, yet Burke reported for duty in less than two months and Valle is living yet.

The fight lasted thus for ten or fifteen minutes when my men, who had heard the firing, began to arrive and the woods were filled with their shouts. The Yankees turned and ran like good fellows and took to the hills.

1. The details given here of the battle follow closely Thompson's report of the skirmish. R.R., III, 224.

After chasing the enemy for a sufficient distance, we returned. I found that Captain Lewis with the forty men who were up the railroad on picket, had hid in ambush to stop the enemy, but allowed them to pass within a few yards of their guns. They then waded Big River and came down on the opposite side when the fight was over.

Had he done his duty we would never have been surprised as we were, and had he taken advantage of his ambush, he could have slain half of the force that passed him. I thought I would let his conscience punish him and I did not say a word to him about it, for I had become disgusted with court martial after Jones' case.¹

The excitement now being over, we collected the dead, wounded, and prisoners, and began to arrange to leave.²

Lieut. Col. Dick Seckles had charged upon the enemy with the butt of his gun and was met by a lieutenant. Dick knocked his sword out of his hand with the gun, the next

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1. Capt. Lewis' guilt in this matter cannot be determined.
 2. Capt. Charles Elliott Lippincott of the 33d Illinois Volunteers led the company which attacked Thompson. Missouri Republican, Oct. 17, 1861.

Capt. Lippincott rose to the rank of brevet brigadier general before the war closed. Heitman, I, 634.

Thompson reported that he had four killed and several wounded but said, "We killed another lot of the enemy and took ten prisoners." R.R., III, 224.

There is no official Union account of this skirmish.

blow brought him down, and he was captured. When the fight was over they went together to hunt the sword, found it, and the lieutenant placed it in the scabbard.

When we were getting ready to start, Dick asked this officer for this sword and he declined to give it up. I was called to the spot to investigate the matter. I asked the officer why he declined to give up the sword. He said he did not consider us soldiers, that we were nothing but guerrillas, dashing over the country, burning bridges and murdering people, and that he did not choose to give up his sword to such people. I remarked very quietly, "My dear Sir, I am sorry to differ with you. I think that we are soldiers and damned good ones at that; but you are entitled to your opinion and shall certainly have your choice of the kind of men you wish us to be." I now called my Indian and said, "Ajax, that gentleman wishes to be treated as guerrillas treat their prisoners. Accommodate him."

Ajax immediately dismounted, drew his tomahawk, and advanced on him in a theatrical and rather tragic manner as if he was hunting a fair blow, but he also wanted to see if I was in earnest. I fully intended to let him kill him as the other prisoners had heard the whole conversation, but the lieutenant saw the intention, and hastily unbuckling his belt he ran to me, tendering the sword. I quietly told

him to hand it to Colonel Seckels, and told Ajax to put up the tomahawk. Ajax did, although apparently very reluctant, and as he walked off, he looked back occasionally, as if he were still inclined to act the guerrilla.¹

We again had conversations and issued orders in the hearing of the prisoners, as if we had large bodies of troops. I made arrangements for the care of the wounded and burial of the dead, and we mounted and turned our horses' heads southward.

My intention had been to go to the upper Big River bridge, but as we had cut off St. Louis and did not fear the force at Ironton, we moved slowly away.

This night we slept at the house of Col. Jack Smith,² intending next morning to proceed down the railroad, destroying such culverts and bridges as we could.

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1. Thompson was right when he said that his force was not a guerrilla band. A guerrilla force is one not recognized by either side. This was not the case with Thompson for he was legally organized and recognized by Missouri and then the Confederacy.
 2. Col. John J. Smith commanded the 2nd Cavalry which was fighting in this expedition. Estes, 37.

CHAPTER TEN

BATTLE OF FREDERICKTOWN

We started next day but soon met information that there were twelve hundred cavalry at Potosi, which was exactly the route I had determined upon.¹ This changed my programme, and I doubled on my track, as a sportsman would say, and rode back toward Farmington. We passed through Farmington and went out to the crossroads where I had left a strong picket, and camped.² When I speak of camping, I do not want it understood that we had tents or anything to make a regular camp of. We stopped probably would be the better term, for every man would hunt himself a tree, fence, big log, or bush and lie down under it, with a saddle for a pillow.

I heard that Lowe had reached Fredericktown with the infantry, and I felt comparatively safe, but the next morning, just as we were preparing to march, a courier came to me to hurry down as the enemy were coming out from Iron-ton. We started and soon another courier was met, stating that the enemy had reached a certain spot. We

1. This is verified in the Union reports. R.R., III, 202.

2. Ibid., 204.

increased our gait. Another was met who reported them much nearer still.

I now told the column to come on as fast as it could and I started at full gallop with my staff. The men were so anxious to get down to the fight that they nearly kept up with me.

As I passed through Fredericktown I found our trains all in line ready for a move, and understood that the enemy were on the opposite side of the St. Francois River, which is here fordable at any place.

As I approached the teamsters and citizens commenced shouting, and the shout continued as I passed my men in their positions. By the time the head of the cavalry column had reached the town and was also received with a cheer, the enemy were deceived as to our numbers and intentions and beat a hasty retreat.¹ Not long before I arrived they had approached quite close down to the river and a picket in charge of Captain Holmes had fired into them, killing and wounding several.²

I soon found Lowe who stated to me his impression of the force of the enemy, and showed me the dispositions of the men for battle.

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1. This is mentioned in one of Thompson's official reports. R.R., III, 225.
 2. It was reported at that time that five men were killed, and eight were severely wounded. R.R., III, 225, 232.

I asked to borrow a fresh horse as my white horse was very tired. A gentleman present tendered me a fine horse, which I immediately mounted, and I started to reconnoiter. I ordered the cavalry to be sent over as soon as it arrived.

The bridge over the river at this place is one of those high, flimsy, rattling bridges which are found over such streams as this, where they are only needed a few weeks each year, and as five hundred came over it as fast as was deemed safe, the noise could be heard for miles. As they had to come in open order, it sounded as if ten thousand instead of five hundred were crossing.

The enemy left at double quick, and never stopped until they were safe in their fort at Iron-ton, being sure that a large army was after them. We followed for several miles, but my horses were tired from our long trip so I returned to town.¹ I had the camp moved to a better position, and determined to rest my horses and await events.

I established my headquarters at the hotel in town, and commenced "playing talent", to create the impression that I had a large force. I let it be known that Hardee,

1. These small incidents were all reported officially by Gen. Thompson at the time of their occurrence. R.R., III, 225.

Cheatham,¹ and other generals were following me, so that these reports would reach the enemy and have a grand effect, for the whole reason of the expedition was to delay Fremont in his advance after General Price. I succeeded admirably in all this, as the correspondence between Fremont, Curtis, and others to whom credit of the battle of Fredericktown is due, will sufficiently prove.

I wrote dispatches which I sent to be captured, and I had rumors circulated of our grand intentions.² I had all the supplies that could be collected and transported secured to remove them, and was preparing to retreat the moment that I had effected my object;³ but, I was rather hurried in this, and came near not leaving in time.

A spy that had been in my camp for more than a month, representing himself as a deserter from the Federal army, had left the camp the night after we left Spring Hill, and had returned to Cape Girardeau with exact information as

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1. This was Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham, an officer in the Tennessee forces. Wright, 55. His location at this time is unknown.
 2. Major Schofield, later a commander of the entire United States Army, said that Thompson worried the commanders in St. Louis about their safety. John McAlister Schofield, Forty-Six Years In The Army, 51-53.
 3. Thompson secured from sixteen to eighteen thousand pounds of lead among other commodities, R.R., III, 226, 231.

to our numbers and also the object of my march. The information thus received was instantaneously sent to St. Louis and to Ironton, and a plan was concocted to capture my whole brigade. The spy had been serving in the commissary department and knew everything as well as my adjutant did.¹

A messenger and dispatch bearer had been sent across to Ironton from Cape Girardeau, and my scouts captured him on Sunday morning, the 20th. Every portion of my force was described and the plans proposed.² I scarcely knew whether to move or not. Soon a courier of my own arrived to inform me that the troops corresponding with the despatches had started from Cape Girardeau. I now immediately determined to fall back, and in a few minutes my whole command was in motion.³

I had to leave my sick, but I left gold in the surgeon's hands to provide for them.⁴

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1. This would seem to be the case, for while other officers greatly over-estimated the forces of Thompson, Gen. Grant said, "I have reliable information that Thompson and Lowe have less than 3,000 men." R.R., III, 204, 205.
 2. This error of judgment on the part of the Union commander in sending a messenger through the Confederate lines is mentioned in both Union and Confederate reports. Ibid., 226, 227, 232, 219.
 3. Ibid., 227.
 4. Thompson mentioned this in his official report. Ibid., 231.

I became fully convinced that the enemy were marching from different points to concentrate upon me at Fredericktown and in numbers that would make it impossible for me to successfully resist.¹

At noon my men were ordered to strike their tents and prepare to march so that in an hour we were in motion. I followed the Greenville road and each company and mess bivouaced its own wagon.

Shortly after midnight the men were reformed and we marched back to the neighborhood of Fredericktown, intending to surprise the Federals. We had a position on the road from Cape Girardeau to Fredericktown just after day break.

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1. Col. J. B. Plummer marched from Cape Girardeau with 1500 men from the 17th Illinois Volunteers, 20th Illinois Volunteers, 11th Missouri Volunteers, a section of artillery, and two companies of cavalry. His line of march was to Jackson, then to Dallas and north to Fredericktown. R.R., III, 206.

Col. W. P. Carlin marched from Ironton with 3000 men from the 8th Wisconsin Volunteers, 21st Illinois Volunteers, 33d Illinois Volunteers, 38th Illinois Volunteers, part of the 1st Indiana Cavalry, a company of Missouri cavalry, and several batteries of artillery. Ibid., 218.

They convened at Fredericktown, but Col. Plummer should have gone to Greenville and cut off Thompson's escape. This would allow an attack on two fronts. Ibid., 206, 227, 231.

See map, 84.

By some accident the enemy passed along another road a little north of the main road, and reached the town without their coming into contact or discovering us.

I now moved my men back to the Greenville road to ambush the column if it attempted to follow my route. My men were placed in position, and we waited patiently for several hours. No evidence of pursuit was visible although we had heard two other bodies of troops arrive, one from Ironton and one from Farmington. We knew that there were four or five times as many troops in the town as I had, for the shouts and cheers as each column arrived could be distinctly heard.¹

When we waited until nearly noon and there was no evidence that the enemy would follow us, I thought of quietly withdrawing and continuing my retreat to the St. Francois River at Greenville, or to Mingo Swamp, and there await an attack which I was sure would be made if I could be

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1. It is interesting to note that both sides misjudged the other's strength because of the noisy bridge and the shouts they heard. R.R., III, 231.

To get information about the enemy, Thompson sent a twelve-year-old boy into town, but the information was received very late and was very poor. This boy was Robert Caruthers Arnett, who is living today in Fredericktown, Mo. The editor received an interesting personal account of these Fredericktown activities from Arnett. Arnett has written a pamphlet on this battle entitled The Battle Of Fredericktown.

overtaken. But the infantry colonels all objected to leaving without a fight, for up to this time my cavalry alone had had all the skirmishes, and the infantry had never fired a gun. My artillery had had repeated brushes with gunboats on the Mississippi, while I was camped at Lucas Bend and Belmont.

Finding that the men were also full of the right kind of spirit, and upon them promising me not to stampede when we fell back, which I assured them we would have to do, I determined to draw the enemy out and try the metal of the men.¹ I made my arrangements slightly different from that in which I had waited for the enemy and I threw Lowe's regiment forward into the small valley or depression which was in our front, giving him the advantage of a fence and the rows of corn, secreted the men, and cautioned each man to "take care of his own corn row, and keep it clean."

The road makes two turns at right angles in this valley to pass around a dwelling house belonging to the farm--the offset being some sixty or eighty yards. I placed a twelve pounder under the charge of Captain Sam Harris, so

1. Many of the men were from the neighborhood of Fredericktown and they told their officers and Gen. Thompson that if they could not fight for their homes and sweethearts, they did not want to fight at all. Gen. Thompson replied, "If it's fight you want, damned if I won't give it to you." Interview with R. C. Arnett, Fredericktown, Mo.

as to command the road coming out of town, and three six-pounders, under Captain Richardson,¹ to command the other portion of the road from the house to the hill on which we were.²

My other infantry were placed in such positions as the ground afforded, but were in echelon with each other so that either regiment could advance or retreat without interfering with the others, for I had no idea of standing a close fight, in which my line would have to be perfect.³ I should here remark that I had only skeletons of the regiments present, for I had only started from New Madrid and Bloomfield with such men as were fully able to stand a hard campaign of a few weeks. Many were already worn out

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1. This arrangement is described by J. R. Purvis, adjutant, in a report to Lieut. Gov. Reynolds. R.R., III, 231.
 2. Here is a description of Thompson's artillery from the Missouri Republican of Oct. 23, 1861.

When THOMPSON left Belmont, to come further up into the State, he brought his artillery with him. It was an iron battery, innocent of trunnions, ignorant of quadrants, destitute of caisson tumbrels. When ranges were to be taken it was necessary to elevate the pieces by means of forked-tree limbs, and when they were fired the guns invariably executed a series of back somersaults . . .

3. Echelon is an arrangement of a body of troops with its units drawn up in parallel lines, but each somewhat to the right of the one in its rear, like a series of steps.

and were now with the train twelve miles away, so I had but 1176 men upon the ground.¹

Col. Walker, with most of the 1st Regiment, had been left at New Madrid,² and Col. Pheelan, with many of the 2nd Regiment, were left at Bloomfield.

My dispositions were as follows: Col. Jack Smith and Lieut. Col. Sol. Kitchen, with the 2nd Regiment of Cavalry, had the extreme right, but were not to show themselves until the fire opened. Lieut. Col. Alex Lewis, with the 1st Cavalry, had the extreme left, with the same instructions. Lieut. Col. James White, with the 3rd Cavalry, was held in reserve behind the center.

Lowe's Infantry, the 3rd, which was my regiment before I was elected general, was in front. Waugh's Infantry, the 4th, had the left and second front. Lieut. Col. Farmer, with the 2nd Infantry, was to the right and rear of Waugh's. Col. Brown's Battalion of Infantry, and Major Birthright, with a few of the 1st Regiment, were still to the right and

1. The number of men which Gen. Thompson had was subject to a great deal of discussion. The Union forces variously estimated him to have from four to ten thousand men, except Grant, who said he had less than three thousand. The Confederates hold their force was twelve to fifteen hundred men, which seems about correct. R.R., III, 204-206, 224, 231, 712, 728.

2. Ibid., 714.

BATTLE OF FREDERICKTOWN

Compiled from official reports, Thompson's account, and a personal reconnaissance of the editor under the direction of R.C. Arnett, a participant in the battle.

rear, and behind them were the cannon.¹

These dispositions having all been made and the rallying point for each regiment assigned, each man knew exactly where to go when his regiment would fall back. I was sure we would have to do this when we prepared for the fight.

A surprise was all important, but we could not wait for it as each moment might betray our proximity. All of this time we had been less than three-fourths of a mile from the enemy and were they aware of our location, we might have been flanked and probably routed without inflicting any serious loss upon them.² Then our trains would have been captured, for the load that we had secured from Fredericktown was being drawn by oxen, and could not evade the cavalry if they pushed us.

I now sent in a few men to fire on the sentinels and drew them out. This was done, and in a short time a company of cavalry, as I supposed it to be, came out toward us. It passed over the ridge and rode directly down into the valley, then halted, countermarched, and rode slowly

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1. This deployment made it difficult for the enemy to locate Thompson's forces or determine his number. R.R., III, 207.
 2. Had Thompson's force been located, it could easily have been forced to withdraw.

back over the hill. They halted and turned within forty yards of Lowe's men and every one could have been killed by his excellent marksmanship, or they could have been scattered by Harris' twelve pounder, but I would not yet give the signal because I thought it was merely a patrol or picket sent out to inquire about the few shots. They returned so quietly I thought we were not discovered. This was a great mistake.

This party was the colonels and other field officers of nearly every regiment of the enemy and had ridden out to look at the country. They had seen Harris' gun, by the merest accident, and quietly passing the word, had returned over the hill. They had not seen Lowe's men at all. As soon as they were over the hill, they broke for their commands, while some remained to reconnoiter and watch our movements.¹ I immediately sent a man named Cranford to the top of a tree, near Harris' gun, to watch over the hill and tell me the movements of the enemy. He could see into the town and his reports were very amusing as he called down to me at the foot of the tree. He said, "General, here they come, may I come down now?" "There

1. This group of men who rode out to the front, were Captain Stewart's cavalry company. They were the advance guard of Col. Ross's force which had decided to follow Thompson. This was not a group of field officers. R.R., III, 210.

comes the cavalry! May I come down now?" General, they are unlimbering the cannon, may I come down now?"

I told him, "Yes," for they were plainly in sight from where I stood, and I bade Harris "open the ball."¹ Boom! went the old twelve pounder, and a solid shot, just grazing the hill, went down the road into the very town. Boom! then, Boom! again sounded the old gun, but the enemy's battery was now in position, commanded by General Schofield,² and the percussion shells from his guns soon made the matter interesting.³ Cranford had hardly reached the ground when the balls commenced cutting limbs off the tree

1. The Union forces opened fire in advance of Thompson. R.R., III, 222, 227.

2. Gen. John McAllister Schofield was at this time a major in the First Missouri Light Artillery. Next to General Grant, Schofield is the outstanding Union officer mentioned by General Thompson.

Gen. Schofield graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1853 and entered the regular army as a brevet second lieutenant. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was but a first lieutenant, but he emerged as a brigadier general in the regular army.

He was secretary of war during the Johnson-Stanton controversy, major general in 1869, and commander-in-chief of the army from 1888 to 1895. He was made a lieutenant general in 1895.

During the Civil War he was several times cited for gallant and meritorious service. Heitman, I, 865.

3. A percussion shell is one which is filled with an explosive and detonates on impact.

on which he had been, and it was soon topped.

My mind now became so engrossed with the management of my men that I forgot all about personal danger and rode about as thoughtlessly as if we were conducting a sham fight¹ and, thank God, my men displayed the same spirit of forgetfulness, for from innate bravery they behaved like veterans, though it was the first fight they had ever been in.

Boom! and Bang! went the opposing cannon for some minutes, then the enemy ceased with the guns on the east side of the road to let the infantry pass.

Down through the corn they came, seemingly as if they would come for our guns, but presently Lowe's Regiment rose in their front, and a volley from the old flint lock rifles and double barrelled shot guns in the hands of the old hunters, (there was not a single musket in his regiment), cleaned the corn rows, and those who did not fall,

1. It was reported that Gen. Thompson's horse was shot from under him during the battle, but this was very unlikely. Missouri Statesman, Nov. 1, 1861.

rushed in confusion back over the hill.¹

Again the cannon banged away for some time when the reformed line advanced. They commenced firing the moment they crossed the summit of the hill, but Lowe's men laid behind the fence until not forty yards intervened; again each corn row was cleared and pell-mell, over the hill the survivors went.

Up to this time Lowe had not lost a man, though the blue coats covered the ground in his front, but a percussion shell from Schofield's Battery, the right section of which continued to play, had struck down a brave captain of the 2nd Regiment named Neville, and a noble and chivalrous youth, named Hall Flourney, who was a captain and drill-master of the 2nd Regiment. My staff and I were in.

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1. The Union accounts of the battle minimized the resistance of the Confederates, but it cannot be ignored. Col. Ross, who commanded the leading Union regiment, returned to look over the ground some thirty-five years later and he was shown around by the ex-spy, Arnett.

And I must say that his memory [Col. Ross'] in every detail, was the most complete, as he could tell me within five feet of where his cannon was located, and as we walked on down through the field to the valley, he suddenly stopped and remarked that right about here stood a large apple tree, to which I owe my life, for, said he, just as I got to that tree they fired on my brigade and the bark was literally torn off the tree, but I did not get a scratch. And I lost no time in getting back, as I thought sure I would not have a man left . . . Although he did not get a scratch, the tree succumbed to its death. Arnett, [unpaged.]

Company A, of the 17th Illinois Volunteers suffered most heavily in this movement. R.R., III, 210.

their immediate front and to the left of Richardson's guns, which were now playing upon the enemy's right that was coming over the hill, and Schofield's guns were turned on us. The 2nd Regiment were lying down; Flourney remarked to Neville, "If the General can sit there on his horse, we can certainly stand up and look at the fight," and both rose up.

A shell struck and burst near them. Neville, placing his hand on Flourney's shoulder, stooped to pick up a piece of it. When his head was behind Flourney's back, a shell struck him in the breast, and passing through tore away his heart and Neville's head.¹

They sank without a quiver and I turned in my saddle and saw Flourney's face, smiling as in life. They were not thirty feet from me. My aide, the brave William Chappell, who has since fallen at Prairie Grove, remarked, "General, those men fell like saddle blankets."

By this time the enemy had found my positions, had made their deployments and dispositions, and the whole line advanced, firing as if they were trying to waste

1. The death of these two men is noted in several accounts of the battle. R.R., III, 227.

their powder.¹

Now was the time for Lowe to retire, according to our plan of battle which was well understood, for Waugh's men were still lying down and would have surprised the enemy's right as badly as Lowe had the left, but this brave man wanted closer work and did not obey the dictates of prudence.

I told Col. Chappell, my aide, to gallop down and order Lowe back. He said, "General, it would be impossible to ride through that fire and live, may I go on foot?" I told him, "Yes," and he sprang off his horse, and started forward; but he was too late, for at this instant Col. Lowe was shot through the head and instantly killed² and his men broke and ran for their next rallying point.³

Col. Lowe had emptied his revolver, sat down and reloaded every chamber, and then walked forward to get a

1. By this time, the entire enemy force of the enemy was concentrated on Thompson and the odds were about three-to-one, with the advantage of guns on the side of the Union forces also.

The tremendous fire power, for that day, which was brought to bear on the Confederate force can only be realized as one reads the reports of the commanders.

The Union officers said they met little resistance, yet they mention that the struggle lasted two or three hours.

2. Lowe's death is mentioned in almost every account of the battle.
3. It was while retreating over three hundred yards of open land that Lowe's Regiment suffered its heaviest loss--said to have been sixteen in all. R.R., III, 231.

fairer shot when he was stricken down.¹ About this time a shell passed rather close to the heads of the drivers of the team belonging to the twelve pounder, they dismounted and left the team. The next shot started the horses, and they ran away with the limber and smashed it up.

Having lost time by Lowe's bravery and as the vastly superior force of the enemy was now apparent, and moving forward, we now commenced falling back. I sent Brown's Battalion to ambush the next bend of the road. I took Richardson's three guns and placed them on the next hill in the road, near Brown's ambush.² Lowe's men now passed to the rear.

Waugh turned in with Brown; the cavalry fell back on the flanks;³ the twelve pounder had to be left, though it grieved the men when I ordered them away.⁴ One man refused to leave and was killed by the enemy at the gun.

I had hardly made my second disposition and masked the guns of Richardson when the head of a column of cavalry appeared. We were supposed to be completely routed

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1. This account is verified by both Union and Confederate official reports. R.R., III, 210.
 2. Ibid., 227, 231.
 3. The cavalry retreated too soon and Thompson's troops were exposed to a flanking movement. Ibid., 231.
 4. Ibid., 227.

from the manner in which we had fallen back, but my men were still as cool as veterans and took their positions quietly. This cavalry, sent to cut us up, charged the instant I was discovered, for I was well known, and I was in full uniform with the old white felt hat and white feather plainly in view.¹

Down came the column at charge, with the brave Major Gavitt at the head. When within pistol shot of the head of the column, I unmasked the guns and raising my hat shouted, "Now! Give 'em Hell!"

But horror! Every friction tube refused to fire from the hurried manner in which the lanyards were jerked. My guns and I would have been captured in another moment, but the same signal was for Brown's men lying behind the fence, and quick as lightning, they were on their feet, and pouring in their volley, the longest shot not being over sixty

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1. Uniforms in Thompson's command were scarce and he was easily recognized. This fact came out during the trial of William Hearst, accused of bridge burning.

Question. Were the secessionists in uniform, or part of them only, and what proportion would you judge?

Answer. I did not see any persons in uniform except the person who called himself Jeff. Thompson and the Captain I have alluded to. The best part of them had overcoats on of different colors, and may have had uniforms on under them for all I know.

feet. A dense thicket was on one side of the road, and the high fence behind which they lay, was on the other; and lo! the enemy was gone.

Many--very many--were killed outright, and all of the balance fell from their horses. Major Gavitt, pierced by eleven bullets, fell dead, and his horse with pistols in the holsters came on into our lines.¹

One of Brown's men jumped the fence and got his sabre, but the infantry having opened again, he had not time to get the scabbard.²

We now quietly marched away, the enemy following us little further on the main road; but their extreme left, which I suppose had been trying to flank us, struck the road some two miles below and came near getting me again.

I had joined the 2nd Cavalry and had halted it in a lane to wait for the infantry and stragglers to pass. I had just begged a piece of corn bread and meat from an old lady and was sitting on my horse talking to Col. Kitchen and eating. We saw a body of men approaching from the eastward, and Kitchen said it was the enemy. I concluded

1. This assault of the 1st Indiana Cavalry is mentioned in all the accounts of the battle. According to the Union reports, two officers and two men were killed. The Confederates said they killed six officers and thirty men. R.R., III, 221, 231.

2. The man's name was Prophet. Ibid., 231.

Mural by George Gray

American Military History Foundation

Mural Unveiled . Army Day . April 6, 1939

Hotel Robidoux . St. Joseph . Missouri

that it was Brown's Battalion, as many were in their shirt sleeves and there seemed to be no uniformity of dress.

They continued to approach, some of us thinking one way and some another. They were knocking apples off the trees as they came along, and evidently did not know that we were their enemy--if they were Federals. They approached to within sixty yards and we simultaneously discovered who each other was. Kitchen had drawn his revolver and in an instant fired. It required a moment for the word of command to reach them as they were halted before commanded to fire, and at that moment one of those noble acts was performed which should cover the actor with glory but which, unfortunately, cannot be done, for I have never been able to find out the noble fellow's name. Most probably he fell there, for I have made inquiries for him and have never found him.

Just as the command was given by the enemy to fire, one of my men caught my horse by the bridle, jerking him back and spurring him, exclaiming, "Get behind me, General, they are going to shoot!" and tried to interpose himself between me and the enemy. I jerked back his horse and said, "Let them shoot and be damned!" and sure enough it came, a rolling volley amongst us.¹ We were where

1. A rolling volley indicates that the men did not all get off their shots with the command.

cavalry could not fight, and in an instant we had a perfect stampede out of that lane.

I drew one of my revolvers, but soon dropped it to manage my horse; each man and horse seemed to strive to get out of reach before the enemy could load, and it was done--but terrible was the rush. There was a tree in the lane and a man immediately in my front was struck against it and killed instantly, and I feel he was the noble fellow who tried to interpose his body to save me.

The moment the end of the lane was reached, which was not exceeding two or three hundred yards, each man reined up and at the command, "On right into line," they turned as promptly as if on parade.

The enemy, finding themselves unsupported, retreated nearly as fast as we had and we saw nothing more of them.¹

I now let the whole command pass me, and placing White's Cavalry for a rear guard, we passed on--the men shouting and singing as if we had gained a great victory.²

I had left Major Rapley as officer of the day, in charge of the trains, in conjunction with Major Cyrus

1. These men who came upon Thompson were from the Twentieth Illinois Regiment. Their commander mentioned this incident but said that the man killed was shot. R.R., III, 212.

2. Confederate reports said that the men remained in high spirits. Ibid., 231.

Black, my quartermaster. I had given orders that they were to be constantly ready, but not to move until they got a note from me, or heard that I was killed; that I would not send a verbal message under any circumstances.

'Twas lucky these were the orders, for the stragglers, citizens, and camp followers had carried all kinds of rumors, some saying all were dead. Had the officers not had confidence in me, the train might have stampeded.

Just before we fell back I wrote a quiet note telling them that I would soon fall back, and to start the trains for Greenville, but not to frighten the teamsters as there was no danger. The trains were quietly moved off at 12 o'clock, our cattle and sheep were driven along, and although I did not leave the battlefield until afternoon, we overtook the train in about thirty miles, by 9 o'clock, and bivouacked for the night. Here we left our sheep, for we started before day break and pushed on until we crossed the river at Greenville.¹

1. The Union forces did not follow up their victory as night was approaching. On the next day they sent the infantry ten miles down the Greenville road and the cavalry went twelve miles beyond that before returning. This failure to pursue was severely condemned by Col. Carlin, one of the Union officers of the battle, as he said half of Thompson's men could have been captured. R.R., III, 206, 218.

We remained at Greenville about thirty hours to collect stragglers, and then moved on for Stoddard County where I made headquarters at Bloomfield. It is almost incredible, yet true, that my men, many of them barefooted, marched from noon Sunday to 9 o'clock P.M. on Monday, which is 33 hours. They marched 54 miles, including the fight and the time passed on Sunday night before the counter-march, and yet they were cheering and shouting all Monday night and all day Tuesday. I lost but sixty men in the fight, killed, wounded, and missing, and if the numbers were buried on the field which the Federals report, they must have been their men, for they most assuredly were not mine. The cannon killed but the two men mentioned and not one man was lost, except out of Lowe's regiment and a few in the lane where we were fired on so closely. We lost Harris' gun.¹

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1. The facts of the Battle of Fredericktown, although at times glossed over, are fairly apparent. Thompson's force was outnumbered about three to one and the advantage of equipment was on the Union side. The fight lasted between two and two and a half hours, when the Missouri forces retired hastily, although not in complete disorder, from the field. The Union troops did not immediately follow up this advantage.

The claims and counterclaims of each side in the matter of casualties were confusing. The Union admit six killed, the Confederates twenty--with numerous accounts of wounded and captured. Both sides in the heat of battle multiplied the enemy's misfortune through inexperience. The number killed is probably

Many men, comprising nearly two companies in Lowe's Regiment, did not fire off their guns at all, though nearly two hours under fire; and upon my asking why, they said: "Nobody got in our corn rows."

This shows the coolness and precision with which these men shot; and when one of those old hunters took time to set a trigger and draw a bead, they were sure to hit a man somewhere. Lieut. Col. Hedgpath and Major Ponder commended the gallant regiment the balance of the term of service, and nearly every man of them went into the Confederate States service in 1862.¹

The enemy claimed Fredericktown as a great victory for them, but they are welcome to all such victories, for I, with 1176 poorly equipped men, had fought 9000 of their best men commanded by Plummer,² Schofield, Marsh,³

some higher on each side but the greatest number of casualties is due to the number of captured Confederates (50-75), and the Union wounded. The Confederate shotguns must have inflicted many wounds--few fatal.

1. Hedgpath and Ponder were the next senior officers. Estes, 38.
2. Col. Joseph Plummer was a graduate of the United States Military Academy and an officer in the regular army since 1841. He was made a brigadier general on the day following the battle of Fredericktown, but he died in less than a year. Heitman, I, 795.
3. Col. C. C. Marsh commanded the 20th Illinois Volunteers. His record does not appear in Heitman, however.

Hovey,¹ and six or seven more who have since become their favorite generals.² They captured but one gun, which was recaptured years later, and a few sheep.

There were probably twenty men of Lowe's killed as they fell back through the field, and some twenty-five or thirty captured. The others of the sixty missing straggled, and some of them returned.

This is the first report of the battle of Fredericktown that I have ever written. In my official report to General Polk, I simply mentioned that I had had the fight as part of the campaign from leaving New Madrid until my return to it.³

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1. Col. Charles Hovey was the commanding officer of the 33d Illinois Volunteers. He became a brigadier general in 1862, and in 1865 was breveted major general for gallant and meritorious service. Heitman, I, 545.
 2. Col. William Carlin and Col. L. F. Ross both became general officers before the end of the war.
 3. This report is contained in R.R., III, 227.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISBANDING

Having reached Bloomfield in the retreat from Fredericktown, I established headquarters there and disposed of my troops in such a way that they could guard all approaches yet be subsisted easily.

I left White's Battalion of Cavalry at St. Francoisville; the First Regiment of Cavalry at Castorville under Lieut. Col. Alex Lewis; and Second Regiment of Cavalry at Castorville under Lieut. Col. Alex Lewis; and Second Regiment of Cavalry at Spring Hill. I made a flying trip to Columbus and back.¹

Everything was progressing quietly and my men were getting rested, when a courier arrived to inform me that a considerable force had started from Cape Girardeau for Bloomfield; other couriers confirmed the report. In the afternoon another courier arrived to inform me that a column was advancing across Negro Wool Swamp from Commerce.²

I soon saw that it was another combined attack so I concluded to give them another Fredericktown, if they

1. R.R., III, 728.

2. Ibid., 260, 261.

were pleased with such victories.¹ The trains were all ordered back by different roads to concentrate on St. Luke, and I massed my men on the road north from Bloomfield.² My cavalry was ordered to delay the march of the enemy as much as possible, to give the trains time enough to get a start, and the service was well performed.³

I instructed them to ambush every practicable point but not to kill anyone until they got into the grand ambush that I had prepared. The column coming through the swamp was served in the same way. The enemy was compelled to march in line of battle for miles at a time, which was necessarily slow, and every once in a while my skirmishers would commence on them and make them deploy. This lasted for several hours and several miles until at last evening was drawing near and we found they could not reach us that night. Everything that was movable in Bloomfield had been carried away, and I was ready to fight, but not prepared to starve. The men toward night began to "let down" in

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1. This movement was the result of a plan to destroy Thompson's force. Fremont sent Col. Carlin from Iron-ton and ordered Grant to send a force from Cape Girardeau. Grant sent Col. Oglesby. R.R., III, 268.
 2. Ibid., 261.
 3. The Union commander from Cape Girardeau reported that he contacted the Confederate pickets, but gave no estimate of the delay. Ibid., 258.

their valor, having expected the enemy all day, and just before night it became apparent from their grumbling and complaining that they were not as anxious for a fight as usual. The regimental officers sent to advise me not to rely on the men if I desired to wait much longer.

I went to them and spoke a few words to them, and I found the surmises of the officers were correct, so I ordered the infantry and artillery to push on after the wagons, and I retained the cavalry to cover their retreat.¹ At nine P.M. I followed the infantry, leaving a company of cavalry for a picket in the town to let me know when the enemy should arrive.

By this untimely disaffection among the men we lost the opportunity of gathering up much property; for at day-break next morning, a courier arrived at the enemy's camp to inform them of the day before at Belmont. They were ordered to return immediately to Cape Girardeau, so a curious spectacle was witnessed in the morning--of me hurrying southward, and enemy hurrying northward.

So badly did the picket that I left under Captain Van Hale perform its duty, that I did not know of this fact until I reached Clarkton, at the end of the plank

1. The Union troops did not enter Bloomfield until the next morning, Nov. 7, 1861. R.R., III, 258.

road, then it was too late to return to pick up the large amount of material the enemy abandoned in their hurried retreat. I had now broken up my headquarters in Bloomfield, and moved away all the tools and machinery of my blacksmiths and gunsmiths, so I now determined to make a permanent headquarters at New Madrid.

The battle of Belmont, the history of which is well known, was caused by a concerted movement to break up my command.¹ General Grant had become tired of having a force flying about his posts that he could neither count nor locate, so he planned the movements which were to "wipe me out." He supposed that my camp was still at Belmont when I moved toward Fredericktown, for Col. Tappan had taken his Arkansas troops over to occupy the same company ground when I left it, and our men looked alike.²

It was supposed that the two columns that marched on Bloomfield would catch me between Negro Wool and St.

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1. The battle of Belmont was fought Nov. 7th, with Grant in charge of the Union forces. He attacked the Confederate encampment at Belmont (opposite Columbus), with the purpose of preventing a strengthening of Price and keeping the Confederates from cutting off Oglesby, who was pursuing Thompson. The battle was not decisive. R.R., III, 266-364.
 2. Gen. Grant knew that Thompson was not at Belmont, for he thought him to be at Bloomfield or farther west. Ibid., 531.

Francois Swamps, and crush that moving body of my troops. General Grant, himself, went down to destroy the camp at Belmont. In this he miscalculated, for he was badly whipped at Belmont and did not effect a single thing to hurt me--I did not lose as much as an old gun barrel, having moved everything away.¹

At New Madrid I disposed of my men to the best advantage for comfort, but God knows, it was comfortless enough at best.²

The men who had marched every day and kept right well and hearty were now stricken down with sickness, and I soon had my hospitals full. The measles and other diseases of the kind swept the camps; we had much trouble and lost more men during the months of November and December than we had the preceding four months.

It was now too late for another campaign, and I began to prepare to disband at the expiration of the six months service.

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1. Indirectly Thompson caused the battle of Belmont by causing a disturbance in southeastern Missouri, but he was not the direct cause.
 2. Correspondence with Dr. McDowell indicates that there was a shortage of clothing, shelter, and medical supplies at New Madrid. Missouri Republican, Dec. 9, 1861.

The next two months, although uninteresting to the people at large, except the taking of the steamboat "Platte Valley," was important and interesting to my men. Several matters of importance occurred, which I will now explain.

The first is in regard to clothing. The Confederate States government had appropriated a large amount of money to supply the Missouri troops with clothing and much other material as they might need, and Major Broadwell was appointed to distribute the money, as agent.¹ My quartermaster, Col. W. H. Moore, had made a requisition for two thousand suits, which had been approved, and I understood the clothes had been bought and stored in Memphis. About this time there was a perfect furore in the South about sending clothes and blankets to the Missouri troops, and as my brigade was very popular, I was led to believe that a large amount of the clothing would be sent us. At last, from New Orleans, I received every assurance that large amounts were being collected for me. This report also reached Dr. McDowell, who was then in Memphis, and also Dr. Leremond, a queer and eccentric person who had been in

1. The Confederate States Congress appropriated "\$1,000,000. to supply clothing, subsistence, arms, and ammunition to the troops of Missouri who may co-operate with those of the Confederate States during the progress of the existing war . . ." The act was approved Aug. 6, 1861. R.R., LIII, 721.

my brigade with Dr. McDowell. They concluded that they would immortalize themselves by going to New Orleans to deliver lectures in favor of my men. They are the last men that I ever would have selected for such a purpose and I would have objected to their going had they been under my command at the time. Their intentions were undoubtedly good, but neither of them was the men for the business and the results proved it.

The lecture was advertised and given all the publicity and assistance which the press could extend and everybody went to hear it.

Dr. McDowell rose to deliver the lecture and commenced by striking his breast, and saying: "Thank God, I am a Know-nothing,"¹ and forgetting the object of his lecture and the people he was among, for there were many foreigners and very many Catholics present, he made one of his St. Louis "Know-nothing" speeches; relating his troubles with the foreigners, and I am informed that he concluded by saying that, "Jeff Thompson does not want and

1. "Know-nothingism was the political exploitation of an instinctive dislike for foreigners." Formed by native-Americans as a secret "Order of the Star-Spangled Banner," its members when questioned said, "I know nothing." In 1855 it was known as the American Party, held a national convention in which the Southern members caused the organization to stand for slavery--causing its own downfall. It campaigned against Catholics and foreigners.

will not have anything from a foreigner."

Suddenly my supplies stopped; many boxes that had already been delivered at Messrs. Dameron Co. for us were taken away or had the address changed. I, in the meantime ordered the 2,000 suits of clothes (purchased as I supposed by Broadwell) to be held back until we distributed the donated clothes, and the cold weather having come before the error could be rectified, we soon found our supply exhausted and there was much suffering. Afterward, when I sent for the 2,000 suits, we received only 700 suits, Moore and Broadwell having disagreed about some purchases, and they were never completed. I was not informed of it until too late, so all of these mishaps occurred without my being able to control them.¹

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1. These reasons which Thompson gives to explain his lack of clothing and medical supplies do not seem to be consistent with certain correspondence and reports of the time. He wrote McDowell on Nov. 25th, "I am satisfied that you have used your utmost endeavors in our behalf, and not only our sick, but our healthy soldiers, are under many obligations to you . . ."

To this Dr. McDowell replied, "So soon as I had recovered, I repaired to New Orleans, and made my publications, and never did people respond more cheerfully. I had expected to receive a few things, and those for the suffering sick, but to my astonishment, I received donations in thousands, as well for the healthy soldiers as for the sick."

To make the situation more confusing, Thompson wrote early in 1862, "The good people of New Orleans have

The plan of settlement with my soldiers and the people of the country that had certificates of indebtedness, is well worthy of note, for it was found to work admirably. The quartermaster general, commissary general, and paymaster of the state complimented the plan very much.

I gave notice that every person who had a "piece of script" as the certificates of indebtedness or evidences of debt were called, should bring them to New Madrid and have a proper certificate issued in place of them. From the entire want of funds, and also an absolute want of forms, paper, and military requirements, every party, large and small, companies, squads, and single couriers, had to give receipts for what they might receive. These things could never have been settled except by me, who, fortunately, knew every man and every necessity for issuing these receipts.

been sending us many presents, and I understand that there is \$10,000 in a bank there now to be expended as I may desire for my men."

Certainly the clothing shortage had become apparent before January, 1862, yet Thompson does not see it or realize its source. The loss of good will which Thompson mentioned is not observed some five weeks after it was supposed to occur. Thompson must either have incorrectly placed the time when this occurred, or he was entirely wrong about the incident. Missouri Republican, Dec. 9, 1861; R.R., VIII, 732.

When these papers were brought in they were of every conceivable form and material, from the backs of books and margins of newspapers, to whole sheets of paper. All of these that had been signed by authorized agents or known persons, such as quartermasters and commissaries, were taken up at once, numbered and filed, and a proper certificate issued of the same amount with the number of the original indicated; and all that were not known to be proper, were submitted to me for approval or orders. The plan worked so well that before we disbanded nearly every piece of "script" that had been issued was cancelled, and a proper printed certificate issued for it.¹

In settling with the troops I required that the rolls and accounts should be made out and signed as if the cash were being paid, and every officer or soldier received a paymaster's certificate of the amount due him.

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1. Thompson's script was not legal tender but it was redeemed in Confederate and Missouri money.

The Rebel Legislature voted \$10,000,000 in Missouri Defense Bonds which were to be used to carry on the war. This money, when printed up, was used to pay all of the debts incurred by the military forces prior to Nov. 1, 1861, and the Confederacy took over the payments after that time.

Thompson secured \$100,000 of the Defense bonds early in 1862 and began paying off the script. At that time he estimated that a million dollars would be the cost of his brigade for 1861. R.R., III, 257; VIII, 735; LIII, 754; Rebel Senate Journal, 34.

I concluded that the State Guard had volunteered for seven years, according to the law, and therefore honorable discharges were only given to those who made it appear that they had been induced to believe that it was only for six months.¹

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1. This confusion exists in the Military Bill itself. Section 39 provides that the term of enlistment, in time of peace, shall be seven years; but sections 135 and 136 raise a doubt as to whether the term of enlistment, while in the field, lasts for more than six months. "AN ACT to provide for the Organization, Government, and Support of the Military Forces of the State of Missouri," in Laws of Missouri, Called Session, 1861, 9, 25, 26.

The problem of reorganization was not settled by determining the length of the enlistment. Thompson sent repeated inquiries to Sterling Price and others to determine the correct procedure but received little attention. It was finally decided to disband and reorganize under the Confederate States regulations. This involved a complete recruiting project and none of the men would reenlist without first taking a furlough. The men went home but did not reappear and things went from bad to worse until by Dec. 21st, Thompson had but six or seven hundred men and they a "wretched, ragged, dispirited looking set of men; half armed, undisciplined, careless, and inattentive."

The problems which arose here were not the fault of Thompson, for he had done the best possible under the circumstances, this being noticed by several of the officers in the area. Thompson said, "The terms of enlistment of my men are expiring every day, and while there is so much suspense many are desiring to leave who would cheerfully enlist if matters could be placed right."

On Dec. 14th, Thompson issued a proclamation calling for 20,000 men--to rendezvous at New Madrid, but it was spring before the brigade was functioning again. R.R., VIII, 704, 707, 717, 727, 741; Missouri Republican, Dec. 20, 1861, Dec. 23, 1861.

Before the winter set in it was determined to purchase one thousand sacks of salt, with some of the Charlestown gold, for the use of the brigade, and to divide among the soldiers who had families. This was done; and every soldier who made application was furnished with salt to put up the bacon for his family. We had several hundred sacks left which were disposed of in 1862, and will be mentioned at the proper time.

In November it was determined to be expedient to build permanent fortifications at New Madrid, and a captain of the engineers was sent down from Columbus to superintend the work. The site for a fort was selected. The Negroes throughout the country were called in and a handsome four bastion fort was commenced, about one mile from New Madrid.¹

1. Thompson objected to the building of a fort at New Madrid. He sensed, correctly, that it was better to keep a large force looking for him and fearing his moves, than to put up an ineffective defense against a large force. R.R., III, 739-740.

The press of this period laughed at Thompson's ragged forces and his humorous proclamations, but they respected his strategy. The article below is from the Missouri Republican of Nov. 23, 1861, and is not unusual.

It would seem "to a man up a tree, or a woman in a cellar," that these heavy expeditions against JEFF THOMPSON ought to be "played out by this time." They have become utterly farcical. We cannot fight him on his own ground unless in his own way. He

The tamping on this fort was done by my cavalry.¹ Whenever a sufficient quantity of material was thrown up on the parapet, I would take down several hundred cavalry, and we would have a circus on the soft dirt. Each round would harden it, and we would continue until it would be as hard as a race track--then the fun would commence.

None but fine horsemen and active horses could stay on the parapet, for at every angle, salient, and redoubt somebody would go over into the ditch or into the fort. This circus we had at regular intervals until the fort was completed.

An order came that the fort should be named after me, and Governor Jackson having arrived at New Madrid about

will not risk any general engagement if he can help it; the ground in which he is acting is exactly fitted for his operations, and in no respect fitted for ours. He has with him a crowd of Missouri swampers, who know every inch of the woods, lakes, creeks, and swamps in that region; he is incumbered by no baggage trains and but little artillery; and he can move with the utmost celerity, making a dash whenever he sees a chance, defying any efforts of our men to find him, or follow if they can find him.

1. The work was done by Negroes. Gen. Thompson said, "I will be obliged to have the work done by Negroes, as it will be impossible to make my men work, and would be impolitic, if I could, as the time of their enlistments is nearly expired, and it is important that they should be induced to re-enlist." R.R., III, 741.

this time (the date I forget),¹ we had a regular christening, and the fort was named "Jeff Thompson."² The bad fortune that afterward befell the fort I attribute to the fact that E. W. Gantt assisted in the christening, and made a spread eagle speech upon the occasion. In fact, neither I nor the fort have ever had any luck since that day, for the spirit of Washington could see the spirit of Arnold in Gantt's heart, and he smiled on nothing that he was connected or associated with. Gantt was in command of this fort at the evacuation of New Madrid.³

Not long after our arrival at New Madrid information was received that the steamboat "Maria Denning" was about to leave St. Louis for Cairo with the guns and ordnance for the gunboats, and could not cross the "bars" with their armament on board. These facts were made known to General Polk at Columbus, and he ordered me to take a party and go above Cairo and try to intercept the "Denning."⁴

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1. The date was Dec. 9, 1861. R.R., III, 432.
 2. Gov. Jackson spoke at the christening, his speech being directed toward the reenlistment of the men. A copy of this speech can be found in Buel Leopard & Floyd Shoemaker, [comp.], The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, III, 395-400.
 3. Col. E. W. Gantt commanded the 12th Arkansas Infantry and was ordered to New Madrid on Dec. 2nd, when Thompson's troops became so demoralized as to be untrustworthy. He was in command when the evacuation of the fort was ordered, March 15, 1862. Estes, 47; R.R., III, 165, 700.
 4. R.R., III, 368; Missouri Republican, Nov. 23, 1861.

I selected about one hundred picked men and two guns and late in the afternoon we took the road to Sikeston. We pushed on all night with no one knowing where we were going, and before daybreak we reached Price's Landing, having gone fifty-seven miles in about fourteen hours.¹

We immediately placed the guns in position, masked them with cord-wood, and tied all the horses back of Price's house.

The men were placed behind the screen and in a few minutes were sound asleep. Hour after hour passed and nothing came in sight, except a few country people and they were nearly frightened to death at seeing so many men hid about the fence corners--all fast asleep. We that were awake did not choose to tell them who we were, but kept them with us for fear that the news would spread. There were people living within a mile of where we were who did not know we were there until we were preparing to leave.

After several long hours had passed, we saw the smoke of a boat coming up stream. The one we were looking for was expected down. She came up into view, and we saw she was a gunboat. It occurred to me that we had been betrayed, but I afterward concluded that she did not know we

1. Missouri Republican, Dec. 7, 1861.

were there and might pass on, which would give us a better chance to stop the boat we wanted. I therefore ordered everybody to hide and to keep quiet; the cavalry went back to their horses, so that if we were shelled, the horses could be ridden out of range. She came nearer and nearer, and her high guns could be seen in her ports. I remained close at hand, and with my glass could see the very color of the captain's eyes. Presently they were up to us (within fifty yards), but we were not discovered and she passed on up the stream. She was so close I could almost see the bottom of the bore of her guns, and to my frightened eyes, they looked large. Away she went and scarcely had she passed us when another boat appeared coming up the river. This was evidently a transport or passenger boat, and I thought it would be tempting fortune too far to let her pass, if we could take her, although she was not what we came for. It was afternoon, and we might be cut off by a large force from Cairo if we remained too long where we were, for we were only twenty miles above Cairo and with the Charleston railroad, a force could easily have been sent out to ambush us.¹

1. Thompson realized when he undertook this ambush that time was an important factor, which might make it impossible for him to stop a particular ship. He, therefore, determined in advance that he would take some other ship if he could not find the "Maria Denning." R.R., III, 368.

I now brought the men back to their positions, only placing the line down the river instead of up from the guns.

The gun boat was still in sight and the matter was getting interesting, for the transport was evidently coming to the landing. I went to the landing and stood with my aide, Billy Chappell.¹ Preston was a little distance off where the men could all see him. I had on a blue blanket coat, Billy had on a blue U.S. Army overcoat, and the boat feared no danger. She came to the landing, passed out a line, ran out the stageplank, and seemed to expect us to come on board. The clerks ran ashore to collect some freight bills, and soon all was "fast." I motioned to Preston, he called to the men, and as I drew my revolver from under my coat to prevent the stageplank from being drawn in, the yell and rush of my men was heard. The fright that pictured itself on the faces of the passengers who had thronged to the guards to see the boat land, was really amusing.

Each one rushed for the cabin, but my men were nearly as fast, and in scarcely an instant some were in the pilot-house, some with the engineer, and others around the guards to prevent the mails from being thrown overboard.

1. Lieut. Col. William Chappell later told the whole story of the capture. Missouri Republican, Dec. 7, 1861.

The steamboat "Platte Valley" was ours.

I now leisurely walked on board and passed back to the ladies cabin to allay any fear that the ladies might entertain, and in five minutes all hands seemed to take the capture as a good joke, except one Federal officer, who seemed frightened nearly to death and stuck to the side of his wife as if she must protect him.

This was particularly noticed from the contrast with the behaviour of another Federal officer who was on board, for he came forward like a brave gentleman and acknowledged himself to be my prisoner. He passed about among the men with that freedom and consciousness of safety which brave men always feel when in the hands of soldiers whom they also believe to be brave.¹

We found these two officers, seven privates, and two spies on board. We retained possession of the boat for more than one hour and I will guarantee, and every soldier on the boat will bear me out in the assertion, that not one rude or ungentlemanly word or act was said or done. I did not have a man with me who was not a gentleman at home, and in all the excitement and confusion incident to such a

1. The two Federal officers were Capt. T. J. Larison and Lieut. J. B. Tenny of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry. Both were immediately paroled and one returned to Cairo to inform Grant of the capture. R.R., III, 367, series II, I, 522.

capture, not one of our feet, not even mine, invaded the ladies' cabin. We halted at the folding doors and even made the frightened Federal captain come out and sign his parole.¹

We paroled the officers and soldiers, but I felt constrained to take the spies away with me. They had been workmen at Columbus, and had come away with drawings of all the works there, and after reporting at Cairo, were going north. When they got above Cairo they felt perfectly safe and commenced bragging on their information, little dreaming what was in store for them.

I took them over to New Madrid and sent them to General Polk. They might possibly have been executed, but General Grant wrote to me that, "They are not spies, but simply Union men who have escaped from the South. If they have information that is dangerous to your cause, you are justified in retaining them, but they have done nothing to deserve death." His representations were approved when

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1. Captain Portal and two clerks named White and Lyle were arrested on a charge of collusion in the capture of their boat when the "Platte Valley" reached Cape Girardeau. Missouri Republican, Nov. 23, 1861.

Jeff Thompson wrote Gen. Halleck, in St. Louis, and explained that these men were entirely innocent of the charges brought against them. R.R., series II, I, 137.

forwarded to General Polk, and the men were sent to Memphis.¹

I found on the boat a set of brass band instruments belonging to Uncle Sam, which I confiscated. I also confiscated half a barrel of whisky for my men.²

The captain, pilot, and clerks were all personal friends of mine, and as this boat was private property, I would not burn it. I knocked in the head of the barrel of whisky when it reached the shore, and bade the men help themselves and fill their canteens. We allowed the boat to proceed on her way rejoicing, and as she started we fired two guns for a salute. We gave her three cheers before we mounted our horses and started for home.

The whisky began to work on the men as we went along and they concluded to have some music on their new horns. Not one knew a single note on his instrument, but at the signal all commenced blowing.

1. The newspapers said the spies were immediately hung, but this was denied by Chappell. The communication which Grant sent to Thompson cannot be found, but a reference to it was made by Col. Plummer in one of the numerous correspondences between Union and Confederate officers about prisoners. Missouri Republican, Nov. 23, 1861, Dec. 7, 1861; R.R., series II, I, 523.

2. The Missouri Republican of Nov. 23, 1861, said that Thompson took a keg of whisky, five barrels of white beans, and other articles too unimportant to mention.

A Chinese army could not have made a more hideous noise, and as the horses were frightened out of their wits, they tried to run away; I enjoyed the sport myself and therefore did not try to stop it. The men had behaved themselves so well on the boat that I wanted them to have some fun.

We passed through Charlestown and went eight miles south to camp. The next morning at nine o'clock we were on the march.

We had not been gone one hour when twenty-five hundred Yankees arrived--hoping to catch us. They were told how lately we had been gone, but they said they would return to Cairo and not try to overtake me, for that had been found impossible on too many chases. We had spent the night at or near Mr. Miller's, and I will here remark that as far as I was individually concerned they were right, for my sorrel horse trotted from Miller's to New Madrid (25 miles) in exactly three hours, and several of my staff kept up with me.¹

1. The Union troops, which were to pursue Thompson, arrived at Charlestown by rail. They were told that the enemy had left fifteen hours earlier so they returned to their posts. If Thompson's men spent the night near Charlestown, the fact was not reported to the Union authorities. Missouri Republican, Nov. 23, 1861.

The men came in during the afternoon, but none heard of the Yankees being so near us until the next day.

Time now rolled on, filled with the ordinary duties and changes. My men were beginning to volunteer in the Confederate States service. I took charge of the Confederate recruits as if they were mine.

The year was drawing to a close and Christmas had come and gone when it occurred to me that there should be one more item for the old year; so on Saturday I called for volunteers for an expedition or raid, as they were now called.

About sixty men, including two gun-crews, volunteered, and we started about four o'clock in the afternoon, not a soul but myself having any idea where we were going.¹ We pushed up the Sikeston and Benton road, and at midnight we halted for a rest. I found the road so much worse than I expected, and the night so much colder than usual, that we did not make our usual time travelling and the men scattered to kindle fires to warm by. After a few hours rest, when the stragglers were all in, we started again. In a few miles I found that my guns could not keep up so I

1. Thompson's official report of this expedition follows the story he gives here. He left at 9 P.M., however. R.R., VIII, 45.

ordered them to go to Jones' Ford to remain until I returned, and all tired men and horses were left with them.

I pushed on with twenty-seven men, and just before noon on Sunday morning, we dashed into the town of Commerce on the Mississippi river, and captured everybody, men, women, and children, in the churches.¹ They were terribly frightened at first but soon found that I was along, so they became quiet and confident. I ordered two Jew stores to be opened for my men to get some clothes. The stores were opened and I told the proprietors to get each of my men, who desired them, a suit of clothes and other articles, and to keep a strict account of every article so that I could have a bill of it. They said that they did not care for the few goods that we would want, and would make no bill of it.

I told them that I must have a bill, or they would go East and cheat their creditors by stating that I had robbed them of everything that they had; and I only wanted to be responsible for what we actually took.

I ordered the men to have everything that they might take put on a bill and I am pretty sure that it was done.

1. Thompson arrived in Commerce about 10 P.M. according to his official report of the incident. R.R., VIII, 45.

If these Jews will present the bill to the Confederacy, I will approve it, and if they prove their loyalty they will get their pay in Confederate money.¹

We now mounted our horses again, and left Commerce.

Clarence Prentice, of Louisville, Sim Shaw, of New Orleans, William Wood, of Winchester, and a few other amateurs,² were with me on this trip.

We found our guns in position at Jones' Ford, the horses were rested, and after dividing the clothes with those at the guns, we hurried back to New Madrid. Those who had been on the trip could be known by their being the best dressed men in town.

This was my Christmas gift to the men, and the eventful year of 1861 went out with this adventure.

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1. Thompson took muskets, 2 rifles, 6 horses, and 15 or 20 suits of clothes on this trip. R.R., VIII, 45.
 2. Amateurs, in Thompson terminology, usually meant unofficial military observers, not attached to his command but going along for a single trip. It is quite possible that these men were nothing more than guerrillas.

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have
examined a thesis entitled

The Civil War Experiences Of General M. Jeff Thompson
In 1861.

presented by John Glendower Westover

a candidate for the degree Master of Arts

and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

Lewis E. Atherton

Forrest J. Lee

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