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The Camden Confederate

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J. T. HERSHMAN, Editor.

GOVERNOR BONHAM'S MESSAGE

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }
Columbia, September 21, 1863. }
Gentlemen of the Senate
and House of Representatives:

The day for your annual meeting is so near at hand that I should not have invoked you again in extra session, but for what I deem a pressing emergency admitting of no delay. The progress of the war for the last few months has not been favorable to our arms. The brilliant repulse of the enemy's iron-clad fleet on the 7th of April last, in Charleston harbor, has been succeeded by the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson; our retirement from Pennsylvania, Maryland and Tennessee, and also by our evacuation of Morris' Island, but not without a stubborn resistance by the brave garrisons of Wagner and Gregg, under a fire from naval and land batteries such as no works have ever before withstood.

Fort Sumter still holds out with an infantry garrison, which has recently achieved a brilliant success. Her noble ruins afford the best proofs of the indomitable courage of the officers and men of the First South Carolina Artillery. Our malignant foe is now erecting on Morris' Island powerful batteries of Parrott guns, and repairing his damaged fleet, preparatory to another and more determined attack upon our harbor out posts, whilst his land forces are being increased, with the hope, possibly, of carrying Charleston in a combined attack by land and sea. The call of the President for five thousand troops for six months' service within the State, beginning the first of August last, has been promptly responded to, with the exception of five companies, now in process of organization. This requisition and the enforcement of the Conscription Act to forty-five, embracing almost the entire population between the ages of forty and fifty, so impairs the efficiency of our militia organization that I find it impracticable to obtain readily a force adequate to such emergencies as seem likely now soon to be upon us. To meet those emergencies I have endeavored, under your late Act and the Act of 1841, to raise a volunteer force of one mounted regiment, two companies of cavalry and one battery of artillery, for service wherever in the State they may be needed. This force has not been so promptly raised as the occasion requires, and I have, therefore, felt it my duty again to convene your bodies, and to recommend to you that you devise such plan, as in your wisdom may seem expedient, for furnishing for immediate service a military force of at least two regiments of infantry, one of which should be mounted, and a proportionate force of cavalry and artillery. Also, that the law be so amended as to place in some military organization, for the defence of the State every able bodied citizen between the ages of sixteen and sixty, not in-Confederate service or otherwise legally exempted. The immediate danger to be apprehended arises from raiding parties of the enemy, who may dash suddenly into the State from Tennessee, through Upper Georgia, or the passes of the mountains of North and South Carolina. Should the enemy in large force attempt invasion from these sections, the Confederate Government will no doubt, afford adequate protection. But, to report raids and to protect our firesides, the State herself should make preparation. The persons to compose the organizations should be the able bodied citizens between sixteen and sixty

years of age, not in Confederate service or otherwise legally exempted; and in this class should be embraced all persons who have procured exemptions by furnishing substitutes. No one should be relieved from the duty of defending his home because of having furnished a substitute for the war for Confederate service. Aliens who have declared their purpose to become citizens, as also such as are domiciled amongst us, enjoying the protection of our laws, should be included. I recommend, also, that the class of those whose service is limited to the district or regiment in which they reside, be reduced to the lowest practicable point consistent with the safe policy of the State. I call your attention to the report of the Adjutant and Inspector General upon the subject, herewith transmitted.

In connection with the subject of exemptions, I call your attention to my correspondence with the Commandant of Conscripts for South Carolina, Major C. D. Melton, who is the successor of Col. John S. Preston, with whom, previous to your last extra session, I had a correspondence, a copy of which was then transmitted to you. Another copy, as also a copy of that with Maj. Melton, is now transmitted. This subject calls for legislation so as to reconcile as far as possible the difference between the laws of the two Governments. It is an important question involving the jurisdiction of the two Governments, and needs to be delicately handled. I am satisfied our true policy is, as far as is compatible with the constitutional rights of the State, to conform to the law of Congress on this subject. I have not felt at liberty to make any distinction between the classes exempted by our law when the cases have been made, but have claimed the exemption of all alike. The action of the Executive Council, on the same subject, and the action of your two Houses, at your last session (the House approving and the Senate by its silence acquiescing) made it proper that I should reply to Maj. Melton as I had done to Col. Preston.

Additional legislation is needed to enable the Executive, through civil or military authority, or both, more effectually to aid the Confederate Government in arresting deserters from the army. In most cases the absentees have probably not left their commands with the intent to desert their colors; but the result of their absence is the same, so far as the good of the service and protection of the country is concerned. I have endeavored, so far as I was authorized, to afford assistance, but the law is inadequate to such efficient aid as is needed. Many construe your late Act on this subject to mean that the Sheriffs are not to render aid to the Enrolling Officer till resistance has been made. In all such cases the deserter, of course, makes his escape. Such law as you may think proper to pass should embrace deserters from State service, and should also punish aiding and in resisting or avoiding arrest.

I invite your attention to the operation of the system of impressment adopted by the Confederate Government. I am informed that in some sections where the people have little more than is absolutely necessary for their own use, it is apprehended that destitution will be brought about by its unequal operation. Coming as you do from every section of the State; you are doubtless better informed upon this subject than myself, and better prepared to adopt a judicious policy than I am now to suggest it. I have called the attention of the Confederate Government to the subject; and suggested to them the probability that the collection of that tax in kind, which operates more equally on all, would obviate the necessity for the impressment of provisions.

The system adopted for furnishing labor for coast defences has failed to accomplish its purpose. Large numbers have availed themselves of the provision of the law and paid the fine of one dollar and fifty cents instead of furnishing the labor; and others, with the hope of impunity, have neither furnished the labor or paid the fine. With the money collected by the agent he has been unable to hire any labor.

I recommend an amendment of the Acts on this subject, so as to abolish the fine and so as to authorize the Governor, through the Commissioners of Roads, (who in the main are true to their trust,) to impress the labor requisite to enable him to respond to the calls of the Commanding General, giving credit for all labor previously furnished, and that the time of service be extended to two months. The free negroes should be included. I doubt not that there has been cause for the complaint heretofore made as to the treatment and detention of the negroes, but it is believed that through the instrumentality of the energetic State Agent, (whose report is herewith transmitted,) many of the evils have been remedied.

M. L. BONHAM.

The Troubles in Iredell and Wilkes.

We find the following in the *Iredell Express*, of Thursday:

Considerable excitement was produced in this place on last Wednesday morning by a report coming from the neighborhood of Jacob Fraley, Esq., that a number of deserters in that section had massed themselves for a battle with a portion of the State Guard, from Camp Vance, commanded by Lieut. Robards.

It appears that the people of that region had appointed a day for a Union meeting in the vicinity of Esquire Fraley's, and had extended an invitation to the deserters and skulkers thereabouts to attend and take part in the proceedings. The guard marched from near this place Monday night and reached the place where the meeting was to be held about day-break Tuesday, a distance of twenty miles.

After the meeting assembled, (a large number of women being present,) the guard and militia surrounded the building and took possession of the ring-leaders, letting the females and a number of citizens loose, retaining under guard five deserters who were present and the chairman, a Mr. John Diffee, who is from appearance seventy five years old and quite infirm.

About one hundred and sixty deserters were on their way to the rendezvous, but would not advance nearer than Warren's Bridge, (three miles distant from the place of meeting,) on learning of the presence of the guard. The supposition was they were waiting for reinforcements from Trap Hill, in Wilkes County, and intended attacking the next day; but the guard were disappointed on reaching the place of an anticipated battle the following morning, the deserters having skeddaddled to the mountains in Wilkes.

An attempt was made on Tuesday night to release the prisoners who were being conveyed to Camp Vance, by a party of sixteen citizens, but did not succeed in their object, one of whom was captured early Wednesday morning and confessed being one of the party. Two militia officers were also arrested the same day for aiding and abetting deserters. On Thursday, these men were placed, under guard of militia, to be brought to this place, but on reaching a creek within four miles of here, they escaped through negligence of a portion of the men under whose care they had been placed for safe deliverance into the jail, prior to their shipment to Camp Vance.

A PASSPORT FOR NON-COMBATANTS:—The Columbia *Carolinian* vouches for the following "case:" A lady presented herself at Branchville to enter the car for Charleston. The sentinel told her it was contrary to law, and she could not go. She ordered him twice to take down his musket, which barred the entrance. He refused. She drew a revolver, and pointing it at him, threatened to shoot him if he persisted in excluding her. With some surprise, he demanded, "Are you a man in woman's clothes?" "No," was the reply, "I am a woman." "Then come in," said the sentinel, "for hang me if I fight a woman, or be killed by one; you can't be classed with non-combatants, and they are what I am ordered to keep from going to Charleston." So she was recognized as a belligerent power, and allowed to pass.

Kershaw's Brigade.

At a meeting of this Brigade, upon motion of Lieut. Col. Gaillard of the 2d S. C. regiment the body was organized by calling Brig. Gen. Kershaw to the Chair, and appointing Adjutant Y. J. Pope Secretary.

Gen. Kershaw explained the object of the meeting to be to consider whether or not the misrepresentation of one of our leading State journals, concerning the opinion the army entertained of the President, should be corrected by the expression of the true feelings of the Brigade towards our worthy Chief Magistrate. After which the meeting was declared ready for business.

Col. James D. Nance, of the 3d S. C. regiment, then said in substance: It is cause for regret, Mr. Chairman, that any necessity should have arisen for us to join issue with any portion of our fellow citizens; and that thus an appearance is given that the unanimity and harmony of our State (which has always been her chief glory) is disturbed. I think the policy of every one should be to avoid irritating issues or provoking discussions which are likely to lead to divisions and dissensions. But when we are so far misrepresented on a subject vitally affecting the efficiency of the army, and, as we believe, the welfare of the country, it becomes our imperative duty to respectfully repel the opinions attributed to us. It is not proposed to raise a partisan issue, or to deny in an unbecoming spirit the allegations of one of the most prominent papers in our State.

Whatever opinions I have hitherto held or declared, have, for the most part, as some of you know, been in harmony with those which have been so ably announced and supported by the Charleston Mercury. I am, therefore, without prejudice. But I have never agreed with the Mercury, or those who agree with it in opposition to the President. Before Mr. Davis was elected to his elevated and responsible office I thought him the fit man we had for President, and, in my humble judgment, he has since vindicated this opinion. Apart from these considerations, the necessities of the times require of us all a heavy support of the President, who is bending his best energies and abilities for the good and independence of our country. Least of all, should we, by our silence, give a tacit acknowledgement that the Mercury has correctly spoken our opinions in saying we (a portion of the army) have "lost confidence in the President."

The paper which I now submit, it is considered, embraces in substance and spirit what is proper on this subject. I submit, Mr. Chairman, the following paper for the consideration of the meeting:

A portion of the army from South Carolina have, by the accident of republication in a Richmond paper, been made aware of the following misrepresentation of their opinion:

Speaking of the President, the Charleston Mercury is represented as saying, "He has lost the confidence of both the army and the people."

Among the first troops of South Carolina to enter the service of the Confederate States, this brigade affirms their entire confidence, admiration and respect for the President, and they believe their sentiments are shared by the army of Northern Virginia, for which South Carolina knows they have as clear a right to speak as any troops representing her in the field.

Upon motion, the paper thus submitted was unanimously adopted and ordered to be printed in the Charleston Courier, Charleston Mercury, Southern Guardian, and South Carolinian, with the request that the other papers in the State copy.

The meeting then adjourned.

Brig. Gen. J. B. KERSHAW, President.
Y. J. POPE, Secretary.

BRIDGE NOTICE.

THE REFUGEES FROM THE LOW COUNTRY, residing in Camden or the vicinity, are invited to extend their pleasure rides across the Bridge over the Wateree River, at their will, free of charge.

By order of Directors.

JOHN M. DESAUSSURE, Pres't.

September 18