

August 17, 1862 - "More so," in Union-occupied McMinnville; an entry in Lucy Virginia French's war journal



What I have written as occurring in our midst during last week—had continued the whole of the past week—the only variation being that it has been as the boys say—"more so." Every day—nay—every hour these graceless tramps of Yankees are stealing and prowling about the place—and corn, fruit, vegetables, and chickens disappear with marvelous celerity. One month ago this place was as Mammy says "J's lined" with poultry—about 500 chickens—now there is not 50 to be found and they are "going fast." We have been "pitching in" to them very freely ourselves also, during the past two weeks—thinking we would eat all we could to save them from the "blue devils," as Mammy calls them. She says "I tell you Miss Ginnie, them chickens knows a Yankee 'jis as far as they can see 'em—they thinks 'em a *Varmint*." And by the way if her supposition be correct I must say that I consider that the fowls have remarkably clear judgment on the subject of Yankees. They even take the *setting hens* and their *eggs*—much good may they do them! We had 44 head of hogs—now scarcely one can be seen anywhere. The goats will go this week I suppose, of course. They dig up the potatoes with their bayonets and have taken. . . up the cows and [are] milking them. Of peaches we have scarcely had any "the Torments" as Nancy calls them, keeping them all cleaned as fast as they are able to sink a tooth or knife in them. I never go out side in the yard—and Nancy tells me she will not go out into the garden for to milking without taking some of the children with her to watch for the Yankees. You never know were to find them—you may look out and think the coast clear,—go out and they start up as from the earth, or you see them skulking through the corn, among the trees and in fact everywhere. Let the Col. holler at them when they are on a chicken chase, and they sink away out of sight, like a sheep-stealing dog. Sum of everything that is vile into one "altogether Abominable" and you have my opinion of Bull Nelson<sup>Note 1</sup> and his hordes of marauders. Puss is still sick, and I am very much concerned about her. We can get no physician to attend—no one in town but Armstrong and he—having volunteered to attend the sick Yankees, will not practice among the citizens, I am told. I was sick myself the past week—was attached in a moment as it were, with something like bilious cholic, and lay in bed 3 days. Is it fortunately happened we had some medicine (calomel) in the house, which Darlin' gave me, with repeated rubbings etc. No salts being about the establishment Darlin' got John Malone, who is a "Union man" to go into town to get me some—not a bit could be found at any of the defunct stores but making known his delemma to old Mrs. Spurlock—she was good to send me a little. What should I have thought a year or two ago, had any one told me the time would come when neither a physician or medicine could be had here for the sick? A few days since I understood that a man lay at the old Kincannon place at the point of death, and the pickets would not let a messenger enter who [was] flying to town for medical aid. Two cordons of picket guards are placed around the town and camps—and so thickly are they set that it is impossible to pass them. All along the road above us they are

posted—upon and around the bluff and along the river on both sides—On Monday we got some intelligence of Cooper.<sup>Note 2</sup> Mr. Duke came over in the afternoon saying that Randolph had been [in] to tell him to let Mr. French know that his boy had been by his house an hour or two previous, trying to make his way home, but having on the everlasting blue was espied by the pickets in his lane who rushed up and took him off with them to town.

Randolph's account of Coop's<sup>Note 3</sup> appearance, and his bewilderment and confusion was such that I really felt very sorry of the boy altho' he had been so foolish. We had no reliable news of him again until yesterday when Malone came to tell us that Cooper had escaped from Camp and came to town to Lee, and was then at John Ramsay's. We expected both him and Lee yesterday evening but Mr. Ramsay had been drinking, and was not in a state to get them a pass. The morning, however, Cooper made his debut at home again, having changed his costume, and appearing in "*citizen's dress*," that is to say jeans, instead of blue. He looked a good deal embarrassed at "first sight," of home folks, but seemed very glad to get home, and expresses himself very satisfied with his first experiment in *soldiering*. I am in hopes that it will prove a good lesson to him and the he will hereafter know his place better, and remain satisfied to do his duties to his mother and his master. Nancy was delighted at his recovery. She said she was glad on her own account and on her Mas' John's too—for said she, "I just can't bear to see Mas' John going around here attending to his horse, and such things—Mas' John aint never been used to the like of that, and I thinks what would his mother say if she saw him doing work that Cooper ought to be doing right now." Mr. Ramsay having *recovered himself* somewhat, brought Lee out this afternoon—he looks very badly—the negro is worked down shoeing Yankee horses; and I don't mean that he shall go back if I can help it. I was quite surprised this morning, as I sat at my window to see Dr. Armstrong riding up to the gate. I met him very cordially for I was glad to see him on account of Puss. He went to see her and pronounced her case not a serious one—says she needs strengthening treatment and ought by all means to have chalybeates water. I do wish I could take her to Bersheba -she is not willing to go unless I go with her. Then Dr. spent a long time with us—took dinner, etc. I cannot see thro' him exactly—I thought he was maneuvering to get the Col. to take the oath, if required. I studied him well as he talked and though he was maneuvering—so did the Col.—as he has since told me. How abominable it is to appear frank, cordial, and friendly to a person whom you all the time distrust—whose sentences you are weighing every moment—whose drapery so speak you scan keenly with an eye "that seeing all seems naught to spy"—to catch if possible the chance sheen of a hidden danger. The Dr. may be a true friend—if he is I trust God will forgive my suspicions—if they are unjust no one would soon ask pardon than myself. But when he said that "some men" talked like the Col. ought to be brought in and made to take the oath—and argued that if he were the Col., and were taken, he would take it rather than be sent to prison and depart from his family, I thought he was maneuvering to get the Col. to say "Yes—so would he"-and he would have done it in order to



paralyze his farther influence with the southern soldiery. I do not see why he should do this however, because it was only Darlin's influence with these soldiers that saved his property, and his own life too when he was in the hands of the Confederates. He told the Col. he would get him a pass to come to town to look after his hogs—and urged him to come to town as that would quash the little conspiracy hatching against him by men who thought he was staying out for fear, when he was only staying because he could not get a pass to go in. Now this looked as if he really had no wish to have the Col. made to take the oath, but on the contrary desired to have him passed over and put to no inconvenience. I cannot see the bottom of it yet—but time will show. . . The Yankees arrested Mrs. Lawson Hill, and brought her to town—as a hostage for her husband. They sent him word that if he did not come in, in two days they would cut down every tree in his orchard. He has immense orchards and a distillery for the fruit. Dr. Reid was arrested but subsequently released, whether or not he was made, to take the oath, I do not know.—Mr. Jessee Martin was arrested and put in prison. The troops tore up things dreadfully at his house, I am told. They broke open a trunk and took thence 1000 dollars in gold before his wife's face—they accused him of assisting Brewster<sup>Note 4</sup> and his men to capture several Yankee wagons, teams, soldiers, etc., who went out in that direction on a foraging expedition. Martin has since been released—he was made to take the oath, of course. I wish there could be some hope of this force leaving, but I see no gleam of hope. They have brought in large supplies of provisions from Murfreesboro by wagons, and hauled in immense quantities of forage from everywhere around us. They are positively eating the country up—destroying great quantities which they take—cutting down corn in the fields, etc. In town I am told, everybody's garden is laid wasted, fencing burned up—and general desolation will reign supreme when they leave—if they ever do. They are working on the R. Road.—If that should be repaired and put in operation, perhaps, we might stand some chance for the winter—how it will be Heaven only knows.—Nelson has left and another officer Gen. Ammon<sup>Note 5</sup> has taken his place. Nelson's reputation is dreadful—he is cross, crabbed, crusty and full to the brim with curses. In short, it would seem from report that he ate, drank, and slept, damning everything as he went. His troops seem to be like him for you can hear from the road the "God damns" in a perfect stream. It is execrable indeed. The troops here number 15,000—there are smaller forces at Manchester, Tulaoma, Murfreesboro, and between this and Alexandria. . . A report has reached us also that there are 160,000 Confederates at Chattanooga—if so why don't they move on up this way and clean out these wretches from here?. . . This week and last, on account of distress of the family, Puss's illness and my increased cares consequent thereon, my own illness this week, and the warm weather all combined—I have allowed the children to go with any lessons whatever, except to have Jessie practice not and then, and indeed I had but little heart for that."It is ill singing with an anxious heart" I have found to be true.



**Note 1:** William Nelson, who was defeated by Confederates under E. Kirby Smith on August 30, 1862. In September, 1862, his fellow Federal General Jefferson C. Davis, after being slapped in the face by Nelson, shot him dead in the Galt House Hotel in Louisville.



**Note 2:** Cooper was a slave belonging to the French family. He was either taken away by Federal soldiers or ran away with them, but returned finding army life not to his liking.



**Note 3:** I. e., Cooper.

**Note 4:** A local partisan leader.

**Note 5:** Jacob Ammen. He was promoted to Brigadier General of volunteers on July 16, 1862, having mainly garrison commands, administrative duties and courts-martial duties,

