

# NORTH WILKESBORO NEWS.

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**MIRANDA.**  
They had "small and early" at "The Elms" across the way. Where the season's budding beauties blushed in summer time array. A galaxy of loveliness rose beaming on the view. And only traces harbored gloom, and only eyes were blue. But in all that starry gathering the fairest spot to me Was where the sweet Miranda poured the coffee and the tea. Oh, her face was like the lily when the sunshine follows shower! And the men around her hovered like the bees around a honey. How they hungered for her glances when her lids were lifted up! If she smiled on one, 'twas sweeter than the sugar in his cup. And her little trills of laughter seemed celestial melody. To the strains who watched Miranda pour the coffee and the tea. Skillful sculptor never molded who could reproduce the turn Of the arm of sweet Miranda as she tips the teacup. Yellow blooms will be the fashion when the news is spread abroad. Each gallant of the countryside will woo the jealous god. For before the season's o'er, tele-a-tete, for happy me Will Miranda's dainty fingers pour the coffee and the tea. -Clinton Scollard in Century.

**UNDER FIRE.**  
Vicksburg boys never lacked for excitement. The great river rolled before them, and its capillaries were exhausted. Steamers passed back and forth at all hours of the day and night, and it was seldom that several of them could not be found at the wharves, discharging or taking on cargo. And naturally the boys felt it incumbent on them to see that everything was done right. No freight could be properly transferred without their presence. No passenger left the boat without the consciousness of being under close surveillance. The wharves were the common property of the boys, and was to the wharfinger who said them nay. His life was henceforth a burden to him, and the juvenile ingenuity of the city was freely taxed in his behalf. But usually the wharfinger was a wise man in his generation, and freely conceded what he knew could not be withheld. There were many cozy nooks among the piles of freight and cotton bales, and here the boys met to discuss the present and lay plans for the future, and generally the future oscillated between steamboating and piracy. But when the early sixties saw the freight of steamers gradually change from cotton bales and merchandise to soldiers and munitions of war the ambition of the boys veered round to the possession of muskets and revolvers. Swimming contests and piratical schemes were forgotten in the quickly formed military company and in marches and counter-marches up and down the streets. The question of social distinction had long ago been settled, and those who could outswim, outdrive and outrun the others had taken easy precedence. So it was that ragged Newt Bixby, whose father fired on the River Belle, became leader, and Charlie Calhoun second in command. Charlie's father was colonel of the — Mississippi and was with Lee in Virginia. Charlie was a born aristocrat and had been "raised" on a large sugar plantation, where there were always hundreds of negroes who were ready to obey the slightest wish of the "young master." He had thus naturally acquired a haughty manner, but was generous, brave and noble in disposition and a universal favorite with the boys. His knowledge of tactics and military matters seemed wonderful, and it was not long before it became a saying among the boys that he furnished the brains and Newt the dash for the company.

All the leisure time was now spent in drills and maneuvers. There were few able men in the city outside the garrison. Even the older boys were on duty with the guard or away in the regular army. Provisions were getting scarce as the river communications began to close up, and every face grew anxious and expectant. The boys forgot their years and went into the drill with the earnestness of those who expected to be called to the front at any time. Gradually the gunboats of the enemy crept toward the city until the entire water front was occupied. Then soldiers and batteries seemed to spring up from all the land sides, and the city awoke to the fact that it was besieged. It could be only temporary, of course, for were there not 27,000 of the bravest of the southern army on guard! What mattered it how superior were the forces of the enemy! But it became terribly real when the bombardment commenced. The previous silence had seemed almost oppressive, and when it was suddenly broken by the thundering crashes of artillery, which made the ground and the very foundations of the buildings tremble, pandemonium itself might have broken loose. The sky was cobwebbed with the crisscrossing red lines streaming from flying bombshells. Broken window glass rattled upon the sidewalks, and a hailstorm of iron fragments descended upon the city. Most of the chimneys were more or less demolished. Nearly all of the buildings had great ragged holes torn through the boarding and plaster. But the people were getting used to it. It took an unusually severe tempest of shell to start them leisurely for the caves,

and heavy masses of iron had little respect for frame buildings and stone walls. All through the day they crouched trembling, and not till the darkness came to an end to the uproar did they venture forth to ascertain the damage done. As the days went by and week followed week in slow, dreadful suspense the first unreasoning fear began to wear off, and the course of a shrieking shell was watched with a tolerably correct calculation of its probable fall. Holes or tunnels were dug in the perpendicular clay banks back of the city, and whenever the bombardment recommenced the women and children hurried to them for safety. The caves were branched like the letter Y and would hold from 10 to 30 persons. As there were upward of 3,000 non-combatants in the city, it took a long line of caves to accommodate them. Before the end of the six weeks' siege many had become so used to the noise of the shells that they retreated every leisurely to the caves when the firing recommenced. One eye, however, was always kept warily on the heavens.

During the first few days the Vicksburg cadets were very prompt in their attendance upon the caves, but one afternoon, as a sudden shower of hail sent every one hurrying from the city, Captain Newt Bixby commanded with his officers and with their aid managed to collect most of the company outside the caves. "Soldiers must not be children!" he shouted, his clear young voice rising above the din of the flying shells. "If any of the boys want to enter the caves, let them go now. We don't want them. We have had our scare, and now it is time to show ourselves worthy of our fathers and brothers. All the cadets who remain in the ranks now must do it with the free will of soldiers who are ready to die with their comrades." He paused a moment, but no one stirred. "Good!" he exclaimed. "Now, boys, there are nearly 60 of us, and I think we can be as good soldiers as some of the boys who have entered the army. We are too young for that, so we must look after the duties our fathers have obliged to leave. Corporal Johnson will deploy 20 men between the caves and the city to assist such as need it, while the rest of us will return to the streets and do what we can to help stragglers and to prevent fires." Even as he spoke there came a wild shriek from a group of women who were hurrying toward one of the more distant caves. A fragment of shell had struck one of their number and torn away part of her left arm. A small child held by that arm had fallen to the ground, apparently unhurt. At the same moment the storm of shell increased, and the forms of the woman and her child could hardly be seen for the clouds of dust. The rest of the women fled shrieking to the caves, and most of the spectators quickly followed their example. Even the cadets wavered for a moment as the iron rain began to fall about them. But not for a moment. Then Captain Newt Bixby's voice was heard forming the men into a compact body, and as they marched back to the city Corporal Johnson and one of his men were seen moving the wounded woman to the nearest cave. Reaching the center of the desolate city, the boys separated into squads and sought different parts of the town. Some of the inhabitants still remained in their homes, and occasionally a store door was found open, and its proprietor peering from behind a pile of barrels or boxes. During the afternoon several incipient fires were put out and a bomb taken care of before it had time to explode. After a few weeks the boys became accustomed to the noise of battle and could hear the shells whistle by with supreme indifference. The excitement of action they found to be immeasurably preferable to being half smothered in the caves. Several of their number had been more or less hurt, and brave Corporal Johnson had met a soldier's death. The city was becoming more desolate every day. Most of the grocery and provision stores were closed. Flour was \$200 a barrel, and corn \$10 a bushel, bacon \$5 a pound, and coffee and poultry not to be had at any price. Mule meat had to take the place of poultry, beef and mutton. The streets were littered with broken shells and bombs. Here and there a citizen, for want of other employment, had gathered a ton or more of broken iron and piled it up in his front yard. The strange pyramids were ghastly reminders of the times. There were no newspapers or visitors to give news of the outside world. Nothing but the incessant bomb shelling from the implacable circle outside. The streets were deserted, fruit and candy booths a thing of the past. The non-combatants had no energy for anything but to walk back and forth, back and forth—and wait.

Hardly an entire window pane of glass remained in the city. Most of the chimneys were more or less demolished. Nearly all of the buildings had great ragged holes torn through the boarding and plaster. But the people were getting used to it. It took an unusually severe tempest of shell to start them leisurely for the caves,

to which a few scattering shot had formerly sent them scurrying. One day Captain Newt Bixby and his men saw a tongue of flame shoot up from one of the large public buildings near the wharves. It was in one of the most exposed situations and under the direct fire of the gunboats. The flame was on the roof, and unless it could be extinguished would undoubtedly destroy the building and all the valuable papers within. There was no means of entrance, as the edifice had been closed since the beginning of the siege, and the keys were in the possession of the commandant of the garrison, half a mile away. But the Vicksburg cadets had been taking severe lessons in a very practical school, and veteran firemen could not have been more prompt or efficacious. Like many other southern towns, Vicksburg was well supplied with shade trees. Several of these their thin limbs directly over the building. Like squirrels the boys went up the trees and were soon on the roof fighting the fire. It had made little headway, and the boys extinguished it before help arrived from the garrison. In the excitement little attention had been paid to the storm of shell, but when the soldiers from the fort slowly descended into the now open building they assisted the cadets in bearing away three of their number. The next day General Lamb sent for Newt Bixby and Charlie Calhoun. When they were ushered into his presence, he turned to the group of officers he was conversing with and regarded them earnestly. Newt had an ugly scar from an exploding shell across his cheek, while one of Charlie's arms was in a sling. After a short silence the general said in half sad, half musing tones: "Strange that our cadets should have been when the children are the part of veterans!" Then, more briskly: "I have been hearing strange reports of you boys. If your strength was equal to your courage, I would have you join the river expedition tonight. Sometimes a youngster's agility and quick wit are of as much service as the greater strength of a man."

"Try us," cried both boys in a breath. "All in good time, my boys. You seem to have the soldier's ambition of being rewarded for one braved with the opportunity of encountering still greater perils. But I sent for you for a different purpose. Are there any good swimmers in your company? I mean boys who could swim a mile and pass half the time under water if necessary. They will have to pick their way in the dark, dodge gunboats and river scuttles, meet deadly perils, and if they succeed be rewarded with the consciousness of having done the cause inestimable service." While he was speaking the boys listened with flushed cheeks, and they now pressed forward eagerly. But as the general nodded significantly at Charlie's useless arm the latter drew back in confusion. "Never mind, my boy. I have other work that you can do. So you understand the river thoroughly?" he continued, turning to Newt and speaking in a quick, sharp voice. "He's the best swimmer in the river and can swim under water 'most as well as a fish," said Charlie, before Newt had time to reply. The general looked pleased. "I think you are the man we want. The success of the enterprise means more than you could understand. I have been cautioned against trusting the affair to a boy, but I think a sharp lad can pass the lines with less difficulty than a man. You may select two of the best swimmers in your company to accompany you and report to me here at 12 o'clock tonight for instructions. In the meantime I would advise you to get as much sleep as you can." As he turned away and resumed his conversation with the officers, the boys concluded that the audience was over and slowly left the room. When they reached the corner where they must separate, their hands met for a moment. "Perhaps we shan't see each other again," said Charlie soberly. "It'll be a tight squeeze," replied Newt, "but if we get the message through the lines I won't mind so much what happens to me." Late in the afternoon a dark mass of clouds overspread the sky, and when the boys went to the general's quarters for instruction they had to literally feel their way. A strong wind was blowing, and a drizzling rain had set in from the southeast. It would be a bad night. The general was writing when they entered, but presently he turned from his desk. "It will be a terrible night," he said abruptly. "Do you think you can reach Cane point?" "The boys started. Cane point was over a mile down the stream, and surrounded with such a network of snags that it was considered dangerous, even by daylight. "It'll be awful jobs to swim 'gainst the wind that fur," said one of the boys, looking white. "I agree with you," said the general quietly. "Besides, you can do better service here, fighting fire. And do you two wish to risk your lives on the river?" turning to Newt and his companion.

"If you will let us," they answered. "Very well! Here are two dispatches (exactly alike. If one of you fails, the other may succeed. You will go to the little cabin under the three live oaks and give the papers to the cripple you will find there. If you succeed, throw a light from Live Oak hill. A lantern swing in a live circle will answer. You had better not attempt to return until the siege is raised." He paused a moment, then added in an impressive voice: "The papers must not be seen by the enemy, and if necessary you must die yourselves to insure their destruction. Now go."

The boys made their way slowly and cautiously along until they reached the nearest wharf. The wind was blowing fiercely in their faces, and they could hear the best of the waves against the spiles. Overhead every thing was inky black, except for the occasional streaks of fire across the heavens. In spite of their years and the excitement of the moment, the boys fully realized the perils of the undertaking and made every preparation to meet it. Their clothing was removed and carefully placed under a pile of lumber. It did not occur to them that they would probably never see it again, even should the trip be successful. Then, fastening the waterproof bags containing the dispatches more securely about their necks, they dropped quietly into the river and disappeared in the darkness. There was little of the excitement of battle about it. Nothing but the solid wall of blackness around, which was now and then cut by a flash, showing glimpses of the black hulls of the silent watchdogs before them. Sometimes the flashes were followed by such deafening, reverberating crashes that the boys were obliged to clench their teeth firmly to keep from turning back to the wharf. The current was in their favor, but the wind against them. However, it served to deaden the sound of the waves against their faces. As they neared the line of gunboats, they swam as lightly as possible, keeping all but their faces under water. The darkness was full of ears now, and even the wind and waves could not smother unusual sounds. One by one they felt, rather than saw, the dark hulls glide by. Frequently they had to sink under water as a sudden flash showed sentinal forms within a few yards. A dozen times they were on the point of being discovered, but escaped by a seeming miracle. Their progress was slow, laborious and uncertain. Sometimes their hands would encounter the side of a vessel before they were aware of its vicinity. Since leaving the wharf neither had dared to speak. In spite of its seeming declaration the river was keenly alert. Once or twice Newt fancied from his companion's labored breathing that he was becoming exhausted. Suddenly, as they were moving along side by side, a great light flashed upon them from the deck of a vessel close by, and a dozen stern faces met their eyes. The boys sank instantly, and as they disappeared from sight a shower of bullets rained upon the water. Second after second passed, and a glimpse of a white face was seen several rods down the river, and was met by another shower of bullets. A little to the right another white face was seen for an instant and received a similar welcome. Several minutes passed, and a dark spot appeared still lower down. A perfect storm of bullets almost instantly fell about it. A few more seconds, and then somebody said, "I guess they're done for." The lights disappeared, and the vessel returned to its dark watchfulness. Hour after hour went by, and the storm increased in violence. Limbs were torn from the trees and hurled into the streets. The blank expanse of the river gave no intimation of the silent enemy. His presence was swallowed up in the world of darkness. In his quarters the general paced up and down uneasily. He had reckoned much on the success of this enterprise. It meant much to the cause. In spite of its apparent impossibility, he had hoped that the boys might succeed—that almost brought himself to believe that they would. But as the hours went by he ceased to glance toward Live Oak hill. The enterprise had failed, and the brave boys were at the bottom of the river. Well, they had met a soldier's death and somewhere would find a soldier's reward. Their fathers and brothers had met the same fate or probably would meet it in the near future. Suddenly, as he passed the window, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. Surely there was a light on Live Oak hill, a lantern being swung to and fro. Even as it moved a brother officer entered the room, with benning face, and the two grasped hands. Meanwhile a half unconscious boy—only one—was being cared for by a tall man, who seemed to have forgotten his supposed crippled condition as he moved quietly about the room. The boy was covered with bruises and cuts, and blood flowed freely from half a dozen wounds upon him. He looked as though he had been pounded from head to foot with jagged clubs. Eventually he crawled out, with little injury save the scars, and these, his lifelong friend Charlie often reminded him, were not scars, but decorations.—Frank H. Sweet in Romance.

**HE WANTED INFORMATION.**  
And the Butcher Heard His Story and Supplied His Needs.  
"Is raw beef good for a black eye?" he asked as he entered a butcher shop on Michigan avenue.  
"It is accounted a good thing," replied the butcher. "Take off the handkerchief and let me see. There! but you got a hard one, didn't you?" "I was unconscious for 10 minutes after the feller hit me. Gained about four pounds of raw material." "You don't want over a pound at once. A fellow hit you, eh?" "He did. He just hauled off and drew in his breath and jumped on the blow. I thought I had been struck by a thunderbolt. Cut the meat party thick." "I suppose you were talking politics?" queried the butcher as he sharpened his knife. "No, sir—never talk politics." "But you had a disputer?" "No, sir—never dispute. If a man don't believe as I do, I let him believe as he wants to." "Maybe you called him a liar?" persisted the butcher as he cut at the meat.  
"No, sir—never called a man a liar in my life. Better make that two pounds. You see, I was down to the depot to see about trains, and I met a man with yaller eyes. Ever see a man with yaller eyes, same as a cat's?" "I don't think I ever did." "Nor I either. Struck me as rather curious. I spoke to a feller about it, and he said it also struck him as rather curious. A feller with cat's eyes ought to be able to see in the dark, hadn't he?" "I should think so." "So should I. I spoke to another feller about it, and he said he should think so too. If you could see in the dark, you wouldn't get mad about it, would you?" "Of course not." "Neither would I. I spoke to another feller about it, and he said he wouldn't either. If you'd let me there, would you have asked the yaller-eyed man if he could see in the dark?" "Why, yes, I think so." "Thank you. I thought I was the only feller in Michigan, and it consoles me to find a partner! I put the question to him, and the depot, and a wheat elevator, and a warehouse all lit me in the eye at once, and when I recovered consciousness yaller eyes had departed on the train. Better make that 10 pounds, for I can feel my whole head swelling, and I'll beef it clear down to the chin!"—Detroit Free Press.

**French "Bulls."**  
The number of phrases of the class which we call "Irish bulls" but which are found in polite works not written by Irishmen, is very large indeed. A novel which was recently crowned by the French academy as possessed of unusual merit contained a sentence of which the following is a translation: "It was midnight. A man who lay in ambush listened to their conversation, but suddenly a dense, dark cloud passed in front of the moon and prevented him from hearing more." Here is another phrase, written in full earnest by a master of French criticism, "it was one of those duels in which the blades literally bury themselves in the heart of the other." A critic in a French journal upon a dramatic performance lately ended with these words, which are worthy of Sir Boyle Roche: "Mme. Judic's talent is like the froth on good champagne. Beware of thrusting the scalpel into it, for if you do there will remain naught but a pinch of ashes at the bottom of the alembic." Another French journal in speaking of the results of certain false reports declared: "This is the handiwork of evil tongues, manipulated by cruel hands!"—Youth's Companion.

**The Flying Turk.**  
In Knolles' "History of the Turks" there is an eloquent account of a flying man, whose feat was part of the amusement provided for the visit of the Turkish sultan to the Greek emperor in 1147. He was to fly a fur-long from the top of a high tower, on which he appeared "in a long and light white garment in many plaits devised for the gathering of the wind." He hovered on the battlement, unwilling to venture into the unaccustomed element, and not until the immense throng of spectators grew impatient and began to cry, "Fly, Turk, fly," did he take flight. Instead of mounting aloft he came tumbling down and broke every bone in his body. During the 800 years that have intervened little better has been done. In Scotland a criminal condemned to death was offered by the savants of the day the alternative of trying his luck with wings from the top of Stirling castle, and he came down in perfect safety, but that again was not flying, but falling. Why Is It?  
"Did you ever notice," said an observant young man, "that men as a rule run down the heels of their shoes on the outside, while women run them down on the inside?" He was asked to explain the reason, but said he had no reason, as he only mentioned it as being singular, with no means of explanation.—Buffalo Times.



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