

MacPherson, the Confederate Philosopher: By Alfred C. Hill

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Macpherson, the great Confederate philosopher and Southern blower

by Alfred C Hills

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By JAMES MILLER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

PREFACE.

The "Macpherson Letters" were published, in the New Orleans Era during the past year. Their unexpected, and, perhaps, undeserved popularity in the Southwest, and a very general desire on the part of the author's friends to see them in a book, are his reasons for publishing them. His observations in New Orleans led him to believe that ridicule was the most potent weapon that could be employed against the absurd opinions and prejudices of that portion of the people of the Southwest who sympathised with the rebellion. He had, at least, the gratification of knowing that they were very generally read, not only in the army and navy, but by the people, many of whom believed, for some time, that "Macpherson" was an actual citizen of Madisonville, and a genuine correspondent of the Era.

The blind prejudices, the profound political ignorance, the strong passions and boundless credulity of the rebels in New Orleans, must appear incredible to those who have always lived in a free community, where freedom of speech is tolerated, and where universal education renders every one more or less familiar with passing events and the topics of the times. But those who have freely mingled with that class of Louisianians who still cling to the faith of Jeff. Davis, will not be surprised to learn that Macpherson's philosophy was so much in accordance with theirs, and that his exaggerated style of speech was so faithful a copy of secession bombast, that the "great Confederate Philosopher" was, for some weeks, quite a favorite with the hot-headed rebels of the Crescent City.

Many of the incidents which the author attempted to ridicule in these "Letters," were too local in their character to be understood by a reader not familiar with the facts. So far as practicable, these parts have been omitted in this publication, and such explanatory notes have been prefixed to each chapter, as seemed necessary to give the general reader an understanding of its import.

The author will state that when he commenced the publication of these letters, he had no expectation of writing but one; and to that he signed the first name that occurred to him, without reflection. He was not then aware that an officer named James B. McPherson held a commission in the United States Army,—an ignominy due, probably, to the fact that for many

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THE LETTERS

JAMES B. MCPHERSON.

CHAPTER I.

Flee Trade With The Rebels.

Note.—Madisonville is a town situated on the river, near Lake Pontchartrain, and was within the rebel lines at the time these letters were written, as it is, in fact, at the present time. The people were known to be destitute of many of the necessaries of life, and the secessionists of New Orleans made a strong effort to induce the authorities to permit free trade across the lake, on the ground that humanity required it, and that the people were non-combatants. The *Daily Picayune* advocated this theory, and a writer, signing himself "Observer," published a communication in that paper urging its adoption by the authorities. The notion appeared too absurd to be treated seriously, and the author attempted to exhibit it in this light in the following letter, which appeared in The Ea, February 17th, 1863.

La., Sunday Evening, February 15.

Tie :—I have a wife and twelve children, all of them sons except the wife. Nine of them are in the Confederate service, and so am I. The other three are not in the--service, "because one of them is only three years old, but he will probably be old enough to join the army before the United States are crushed. Another one has lost a leg in the war, so that he can't march; and the other one is idiotic. I am home on a furlough, and find my wife and three sons bad enough off. They are destitute of many of the necessaries of life, and for my part I don't know what they will do.

I think the United States ought to supply them with food. They are non-combatants, and there is no chance that any of them will ever fight except the youngest; and stipulation might be made that he should not eat any of the food sent over, if that should be deemed necessary, n So long as I and the nine able bodied boys stay in the Confederate army, it will be necessary to have the rest of the family receive supplies from i New Orleans; and humanity and philanthropy demand that trade should be allowed.

I was pleased to read in this morning's *Picayune*, a communication from Mr. Observer, on this point. He proposes to send salt and other indispensable articles, and says he would go into the business himself, if he had the means, and could get the necessary authority. I hope he will go into it at once, as we need the salt much, and the indispensable articles would also come handy. He can make a good thing of it, as we are willing to pay a large price for salt, flour, quinine, clothing,

cotton-cards, etc., all of which will bring a larger price here than Observer will have to give for them in New Orleans. I would pay a large price for what my family needs, as I fight a great deal better if I knew the folks were comfortable at home.

FEES TRADE WITH THE 1")

By all means let some one lend Mr. Observer the capital if he hasn't got it, for there is no reason why noncombatants shouldn't be fed.

Yours, sincerely,

James B.

P. S.—While you are about it, tell Observer to bring me an English rifle, with a cartridge-box, and a hundred rounds of ammunition.

J. B. M.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. McPherson Hath Hopes For His Idiotic Boy.—He HIMSELF TO BE A GOOD UNION Man. CORRESPONDENCE, And The Way To Send It.—The True Plan Of Conciliation, Etc.

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