

How Can God Permit Such Villains to Wander Over the Country?

English-born Captain Henry W. Feilden was appointed assistant adjutant general by President Jefferson Davis in early 1863 and assigned to General P.G.T. Beauregard's staff at Charleston. After the fall of Savannah and South Carolina threatened with invasion in early 1865, he departed the city with General William J. Hardee's forces bound for North Carolina and described the chaos in letters to his wife.

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"Henry W. Feilden to Mrs. Julia Feilden, c/o J.K. Sass

Charleston, S.C., February 14, 1865

" . . . I am afraid the enemy are moving rapidly on Columbia. Things are culminating here, rapidly, to a crisis, and our exit from here cannot be long delayed. I expect we are going to see hard times. I hope you, and all in Greenville, will be mercifully preserved."

Florence, S.C., February 28, 1865

"We evacuated Charleston on Saturday morning the 18th. I have just seen a gentleman from [Columbia]. He tells me that Columbia is burnt to the ground and that it is an awful scene of desolation, the population starving. Sherman then moved to Camden burning a large portion of that town. His army is now moving on Cheraw. Genl Hardee and our army are there.

I am distressed of course at the amount of misery that I see around me. I am staggered when I think how God can permit such villains as these Yankees to wander over the country, burn our cities and turn out our women and children to perish of starvation. I hope and pray the day of retribution may come.

I hear the Yankees have stripped the inhabitants of everything even to their dresses. I do not know how much more we have to endure but as far as I am concerned I am a stronger Southern man at this moment than I ever was before, and I shall not give in till the very last moment."

Camp near Fayetteville, N.C., March 12, 1865

" . . . [W]e have been running from Sherman ever since we left Charleston and will continue to do so until we can join with Bragg & Beauregard then I suppose we can turn and give fight. We were driven out of Cheraw on the third by the enemy. We had a little skirmish there as were burning the bridge behind us. Ned Parker had his mare killed under him there; 6 shots put through her.

The day before yesterday [General Wade] Hampton (who is with us) surprised Kilpatrick and captured his camp taking over 450 prisoners, releasing 150 of our men and damaging the enemy considerably. Our troops are in good spirits and will make a good fight at the first opportunity we have of confronting the enemy.

I do hope the Yankees will not come to Greenville. All the reports I have from the rear of Sherman's army agree in saying that he leaves a howling wilderness behind him. Every horse & mule and all [live]stock and particle of food are taken and the house robbed of everything, frequently burnt down. I can only hope that [P]rovidence will vouchsafe to us a victory over him & that we may run him from here to the sea coast. I should like to see that day."

(A Confederate Englishman, the Civil War Letters of Henry Wemyss Feilden, W. Eric Emerson and Karen Stokes, editors, USC Press, 2013, pp. 104-108)



Here's the photo that is supposed to show Sherman's courteous soldiery calling upon a Southern lady with all chivalry and courteous behavior. Bovine eschatology

Invading Yankees don't seem very menacing to the Confederate belles in artist Thomas Nast's illustration "Southern Plantation."