

LETTER FROM CAPTAIN FARNUM OF THE NICARAGUAN ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK HERALD.

New York, April 14, 1857.

It is an awkward thing for a soldier to sound his own praise, or to be forced into a position where he feels it not only necessary but imperative that he should defend himself from the assaults of one who neither as a soldier nor in social life he can recognize, but one who, through the accident of association, has gained a notoriety that would seem to give him claims to an authoritative position. I allude to Col. S. A. Lockridge, of the San Juan river.

This man, this Col. Lockridge, has seen fit to use that "little brief authority," which he has assumed, to assail me without the least shadow of a justification—without the first particle of a right, and at a time when he knows too well that distance alone shields him from the consequences of his dastardly baseness. I use strong language, but the provocation is stronger. I wish to make a refutation of the charges he brings against me, and at the same time permit my friends and the public, by a brief statement of facts concerning my exemplify with Nicaraguan affairs, to judge between us.

I went to Nicaragua for the first time in January, 1855, and after an arduous campaign was stricken down with fever in the following June. So severe was my illness that Gen. C. C. Hensby, who then commanded the Occidental Department, insisted on my returning to the United States, giving me orders to report at headquarters as soon as I recovered my health. In accordance with these orders I left New York city on the 26th of January, per steamer Teanetsee; and, it not being possible to reach the headquarters of the service, I landed at San Juan del Norte, arriving at the same time, as the only "live" officer present, the temporary command of the recruits on board. At Puerto Arriabal was met by S. A. Lockridge, emigration agent of the republic of Nicaragua, who having first arrived

with a body of recruits from New Orleans, had assumed command of the river San Juan. He not holding rank in the army, of course I could not report to him for duty, and so I informed him, at the same time requesting him to relieve me of the command I had assumed. He said that he was perfectly willing to comply with my request, but requested of me in return that, as a special favor, I would retain the command until after the battle of Serapiquí. I did so, and continued in the temporary charge of the company until after the reverse in our fortunes at Castillo. I then proceeded on the *Reconce* to Greytown, for the purpose of meeting the *Tennessee*, by which vessel we expected to receive those reinforcements, without which nothing more could be done upon the river. The day of her arrival—the having failed us in our expectations—Lockridge informed Lieut. Col. MacDonald, Major Ellis, Col. Geo. R. Hall and myself, (the only com-missioned officers on the river, and consequently the only officers without commands,) that he was about proceeding up the river. I replied, as did the other gentlemen, that as nothing could be done until the arrival of the *Texas*, and as I had no command, that for the purpose of preparing my letters for the United States, I should remain at Greytown until that time. He acknowledges the position I had taken, and said it was "entirely immaterial."

That evening we crossed from Greytown to Puerto Arenas, and found that Lockridge had gone, and that he had not only taken all the public stores with him, but had also taken the baggage and private stores, to wit everything that he could lay his hands upon. The private stores on which we had intended to mass during the absence of the boat were just as much our individual property as the fact of having purchased them with private purses could make them. Here then we found ourselves (in company with five or six officers of the recruits, who, disguised, had resigned, and whose resignations had been accepted) without money, without food, without blankets, sans everything; no possible communication with our friends, and none but enemies, and poor ones at that, around us.

In this dilemma we were forced to strip ourselves, and trust to the brackish water that backed into the lagoons along the beach for its scanty supply of clams and crabs for food sufficient to keep us from absolute starvation. This continued for several days, when Col. Kinney, the last man on earth whom an officer of Gen. Walker's army had a right to look to for aid of any kind came forward, and offered us his hospitality, which we accepted, and were rendered comfortable during the rest of our sojourn.

Had Lockridge done nothing more than this, abstaining, without cause, officers who had every claim upon him, or the army proper, no gentleman, who had the least respect for himself could every again co-operate with him, and to this conclusion we quickly arrived. Knowing his incompetency for any command, we, the commissioned officers, appointed a committee to await upon any officer of the Nicaraguan army who held a commission for the purpose of offering to the eldest in date and rank that command which Lockridge had assumed without authority. Col. Don Carlos Thomas, the former Secretary of the Treasury of Nicaragua, then present in Greytown, waited upon us with his commission of Colonel Echico, colonel in the line, dated November 24, 1855, and consequently, he ranking all others present, we proffered him the command of the river. He accepted it, and we notified Lockridge, in writing, of our proceedings. He answered Colonel Thomas that with all due respect to his rank, he would not give up the command, as he was authorized by General Walker to retain it. Colonel Thomas asked to be shown his authority; but Lockridge, maintaining his position, refused to show it, for the very good reason—not assigned by L.—that at that time he did not possess any. In the meantime, we had entered several recruits, among them Colonel Kinsey himself, who publicly declared his willingness to shoulder a musket under any other man than Lockridge. The *Texas* also arrived with 140 men, accompanied by General Hornsby. To him I immediately reported for duty, as he had given me my furlough. He expressed great pleasure at seeing me, and I recounted to him the "story of our wrongs." Expecting, as he expected, and indeed had every right to expect, that he would take the command, I prepared to go up the river with him, when, lo and behold! Major Baldwin, who had arrived via Panama from headquarters a few days previous, served upon him an order from thence displacing him and recognizing Colonel S. A. Lockridge as Commander of the San Juan river. As it is slightly unusual for a General to take service under a Colonel, of course Gen. Hornsby refused to have anything to do with the affair there, and declared his intention of "returning thither, whence he came," but he, a few hours subsequently, informed Colonel Lockridge that he should ascend the river as a mere looker-on, which he did. General Hornsby recognizing the respect due to ourselves, vociferated for us to the officers of the ship in regard to our passage home, and, more sorry to leave than we would have been to stay, with a decent man in command, we left Greytown for Aspinwall. There learning that it was impossible to reach the headquarters of the army, we took the only alternative left us, and at home we have arrived. My intention has been to essay the first opportunity that presented itself for the purpose of joining General Walker, and that purpose is only deferred, not given up, by learning that a man who never did command me has first dismissed me, and then preferred charges against me.

He charges me with "intemperance." Well, suppose I were to admit (which I do not do by any means) that at Greytown, on neutral ground, outside of duty, fresh from salt pork, hard bread, knee deep mud, and an almost ruinous army, I did indulge a little too freely, and do not care to fall back upon the actions of others as a precedent for my great crime. Is it at all probable that in an army composed of such materials as is the army of Nicaragua, there could be found condemnation from any board of officers, were the fact even half way correctly reported? I appeal to every officer and soldier of the army who knows me, here in this city and elsewhere, if it was ever charged, if it was ever known that I ever was intoxicated whilst on duty, or more than two or three times at most whilst in command of a company. Colonel Lockridge charges me with "conduct unbecom-ing an officer and a gentleman." You who read this will find his only grounds for such a charge, to wit: the above related attempt to substitute an officer and a capable man in the place of one notoriously ignorant of every detail of military science, notoriously ignorant of every thing else but manual labor, overbearing, coarse, insolent, and not notoriously brave.

General C. R. Wheat, than whom a nobler soldier does not live, as well as Colonels Lockridge and Anderson, have each testified to my conduct at the battle of Serapiquí, else, I doubt not, another charge would have been made against me. That I did my duty, and that I was fortunate or unfortunate enough to lose the only men who were killed in that fight, Col. Lockridge has testified to, but he must have learned it from hearsay, as to my certain knowledge he himself was not under fire through the entire fight. To Gen. Wheat, Col. Anderson, Col. Titus and Major Doubleday Col. Lockridge may ascribe every particle of credit that he has gained, or is likely to gain, for planning the operations on the river. It was through either the negligence or culpable ignorance of Lockridge that Col. Titus retired from Castillo. I have the word of Gen. Wheat for it that Col. Titus is as brave a man as ever trod on Nicaraguan soil—I have the assertion of Col. Lockridge for it, "that failing to receive reinforcements, Col. Titus deemed it prudent to retire, and did so orderly and without the loss of a man." I have my own observations for it: that not one of the recent calumniators of Col. Titus dared so wag their tongues to his discredit, until after he was safe (for them) upon his journey to Rivas.

In conclusion I would remark that I know it will be hard to prejudice Generals Walker or Henderson against me, they know me: but I am also certain that no stone will be left unturned to effect this object, and should my detractors succeed in the effort, I shall be truly concerned. My sympathies have ever been with the cause, and for its support I have perilled health and life, and given that period of a young man's life most valuable to him. It would be a sorry recompense, when glory is the only pay and a belief in the justice of the cause the only motive, were I to be condemned for refusing inglorious service under such a man as Col. S. A. Lockridge.

J. E. FARNUM,
Captain, Army of Nicaragua.

P. S.—In hurriedly making the above statement, I neglected a very important fact in connection—Col. Lockridge was the last man I saw over the side of the ship *Texas*, and neither to Col. Hall or MacDonald, Major Ellis or myself, did he ever, by word or sign, intimate his approval or disapproval of the course we had pursued. As in the case of Col. Titus, he swatted five days to be com-mitted of our certain departure, before he dared put an indignity upon us. The date of the order and the departure of the *Texas* will prove this. J. E. F.