

*Colonel Nelson—The Gold Diggers, &c.*—The following letter was received by a gentleman in this town a few days since, and we have taken the liberty to lay the interesting information it contains before the public. The letter is dated at Gainesville, Hall county, the 7th of February, and is from a source that we know from personal acquaintance to be highly respectable.—After alluding to a former letter, the writer says:

“On the 15th of last month, a Sergeant Sappington of Georgia’s standing army, came to Leathers’-Ford in this county. He there met an individual by the name of Cron, a short distance from a gate leading into the yard of Mr. Joel Halsey. Sergeant Sappington, in a very peremptory manner, ordered Cron to go back and open the gate. Cron pointed to others nearer the gate, and remarked, “they can open the gate.” Sappington, in a more authoritative tone, bid him again open the gate, when Cron replied he would not; for which Sappington, by a severe blow with his musket, brought Cron to the ground. This blow was inflicted on the cheek bone of Cron, and by reason of it he has been since then unable to transact business; indeed, if I am correctly informed, he has been confined, and his recovery is still despaired of. This act of lawless savagism produced very naturally a good deal of indignation at the Ford.

“On the 16th ult. Col. Nelson having arrested several prisoners in the Nation, (on suspicion of their having dug gold since the first of January, but without a warrant authorising it,) arrived at the Ford, and having met a detachment of the army at that place, ordered them to join him and aid in conducting the prisoners to this place. The detachment of three or four men alluded to at the time of receiving the order, was dismounted, and the Colonel leaving a Sergeant Henderson to conduct them, proceeded some three hundred yards with the prisoners and his guard, where he awaited his remaining company. He was, at the time of stopping, entirely out of view of the point where he left his men. Henderson was detained a little in waiting on one of his men, who was endeavoring to replenish his flask, and while thus waiting was addressed by a Mr. Ligon, (who is a man of worth and respectability,) and asked what would be done with the prisoners. Henderson, in a very abrupt and uncourteous manner, told him to ask no questions. Ligon observed he thought himself in a free country, and hoped he had the liberty of speech. This self-important Sergeant in reply told him he should not talk to him; this enraged Ligon, and he commenced abusing Henderson and his company by words, saying that if they were not a set of inhuman desperadoes, they would never compel prisoners, no matter how high the crime, to wade a river when the ground was covered several inches in snow; nor would a soldier have treated an individual as Sappington had Cron the day previous.

“These remarks carried such a piercing wound to the sensitive feelings of Sergeant Henderson, that he immediately cocked and presented his musket at the old man. Ligon told the Sergeant he would not present his arms so readily at him if he were on a footing, and immediately inquired of the bystanders for a gun. Taylor (who was afterwards severely stabbed) said to Ligon he thought a gun could be had; at which moment Henderson strained off to his commander, and possibly informed him he had been attacked. In a few moments Col. Nelson and eight or ten of his guard returned, making a furious charge on Taylor, and, at the same time, inquiring for a man of Ligon’s description. Taylor was standing weaponless; three or four of the guard rushed on him with fixed bayonets, commanding him to surrender, at the same time piercing him on all sides with the bayonet. Taylor attempted to ward off the stabs, and endeavored to get out of the way. After receiving his most dangerous wound, Taylor seized a mall, and threw it with some violence at one of the guard.

“The remainder of the guard, while three or four were subduing Taylor, were engaged in thrusting at Ligon; and his friends, seeing his helpless situation, and the ruthless attack made on him, seized and conveyed him to a house; and as Col. N.’s communication, from its broad terms, would imply a rescue or an attempt, it may be that Ligon’s seizure is what he alludes to, as that was the only appearance of rescue on the occasion.—Ligon and Taylor seemed to be the sole offenders, as the charge was directed immediately against them, nor did any one else interfere in any manner, except to save the life of Mr. Ligon by taking him away. About the time Taylor threw the mall, it spread such terror that a fire was ordered by the Colonel. The report of a gun was instantly heard, and Taylor believing himself shot, exclaimed, “I’m a dead man;” when a cessation of hostilities at once ensued. The Colonel then repaired to his prisoners under guard, and pursued his route to this place.

“I notice Col. N. supposes the number in battle array on the occasion to be 60. I am credibly informed there were not more than 15 or 20, and but two of those participated in the conflict, and with them it was matter of necessity, that is, in self-defence. Taylor has not recovered; Ligon, by the timely aid of his friends, escaped uninjured. Thus ended the brilliant achievement of the 16th ult. and had it been me, sooner than have blazoned it to the world, I should have let it sleep, and numbered it among the little unfortunate deeds of my life.

“An idea prevails with Col. N. that he is not answerable to the civil authority for any act he may do or command, while he retains the office he now fills. He may be right; his bond, however, is outstanding for his appearance at our next Court, to test the correctness of the principle. Those imprisoned were principally Georgians. They have, however, all been discharged by a Habeas Corpus Court, and we have no persons in Jail accused of digging gold.”

The public are now favored with two statements of this transaction, both emanating from those who have ample means of knowing the facts as to what they write, both from men who ought to be entitled to confidence, and yet in all the material facts, both diametrically opposed to each other. It is impossible to reconcile this palpable contradiction; and those who read must give credit to one account and reject the other, or admit the correctness of neither; for they cannot both be believed. For ourselves, despite the “pomp and circumstance” of official authority, or the overstrained eloquence of the late bulletin from the commander of the guard, we are strongly inclined to believe the plain statement above, which, by the by, we understand has been legally authenticated, to be a correct version of the affair.

Admitting the above to be true, we would ask, and that seriously, is it politic, or justifiable, or wise—is it right, that the men now stationed in the gold region to protect the mines, should be permitted to remain? If the statement above is untrue, one fact is evident, that the department of the guard has been such as to incense the inhabitants of the contiguous country to a degree that may be dangerous to the peace of this community. This being the case, still ought not the present guard to be removed?

Whatever contributes to beget intestine broils, or keep in perpetual ferment the angry feelings of any people, ought to be deprecated, and, if possible, removed. The people of Hall county are in a state of bitter excitement—their animosity towards the guard is deep-rooted, and will most assuredly be perpetual; and all this cannot be without some cause. The guard consists of men taken from different parts of the State, having no common interest or kindred feeling with the citizens of Hall; and it is possible that a want of that cordiality and friendship which should exist between the soldier and the citizen whose rights he is bound to protect, may have kindled a fire of jealousy in their bosoms, which subsequent want of forbearance has blown into a large and dangerous blaze.

To promote the cause of friendship and unanimity, to induce a cheerful acquiescence in the administration of the laws, and to remedy the evils complained of, we would beg leave to offer a suggestion: Let the existing guard be recalled, and let one be appointed—officers and men—from respectable citizens of Hall county, or others near it. The mines would be as safe in their hands as they can possibly be in others, a spirit of co-operation in the execution of the trust confided to the guard, would be manifested by the citizens; aggressors and foreign invaders would be punished, and the innocent and unoffending would live unmolested. They could better appreciate each other's motives; and from a more extensive personal acquaintance, they would know better than those who are there now do, whom to suspect, and consequently where, and on whom to exercise their vigilance.

These few hints are thrown out, not without a hope of enlisting public attention to this unhappy collision among our citizens. If the subject is duly investigated, the good sense of our public officers will discover the appropriate remedy. Our object will then be accomplished; but until some steps are taken to produce a more tranquil feeling in the upper counties, we shall continue to revert to the subject, and as occasion calls and our time will admit, shall endeavor to enlarge upon the ideas already advanced.