The Campaign in Kentucky.

[Correspondence Cincinnati Commercial.]

From McCook's Division.

IN CAMP NEAR CRAB ORCHARD, KY., }
October 18, 1862. }

Bragg is gone! The conviction which existed in the minds of the men composing the Army of the Ohio, that if they remained under the command of Don Carlos Buell, Bragg would escape them, is fully verified! He is gone, and the pursuit is abandoned.

It was thought by many, when Buell permitted Bragg to pass him and come into Kentucky, without a blow struck—when he permitted the capture of the men and stores at Munfordsville—that our cup of bitterness was full; that we would not again take the field under him. And when we did again come forth under him, many hoped that experience had taught him something—that the deep voice of an impatient army, and the clamor of a still less patient people, would be respected, and he would by these be urged to do "some great thing."

What has been the result? and how has it been accomplished? When the events of the last few weeks become history, it will be found that Braxton Bragg, with an army of less than 50,000 men, has marched into a country not friendly to him, accomplished all for which he came, baffled an army of more than double his strength, and escaped.

This result is attributable, on the most charitable theory, to the incompetency of Gen. Buell. His mistake, if it was nothing more, at Perryville, was grievous; his inaction, during several succeeding days, was fatal.

If Gen. Bragg had massed his forces at some unexpected point, and fallen upon and defeated a fraction of Buell's army where it could not be supported, it would have been taken as one of those fatalities of war which must be borne; but to permit this to be done at a point where the enemy is known to be in force, and within plain view of overwhelming numbers of friends, is one of those egregious blunders to be sought for in vain outside of the career of Don Carlos Buell.

The force brought against McCook that day was not over thirty or thirty five thousand men. Within plain view of the field lay the army of Gen. Gilbert, where it had been for *twenty hours* before the battle. A little beyond, and on the enemy's left, lay the splendid corps of Gen. Crittenden, composed of three old divisions. If a general engagement had been contemplated, no better disposition of the forces could have been made. And yet this whole force lies idle, while the enemy concentrates his strength against the weary divisions of McCook, already famishing for water, hurls against him three to one, slaughters his brave troops, captures his guns, and almost drives him from the field!

And on what pretext was this done? That Buell had ordered McCook not to bring on a general engagement! I do not know what Gen. Buell's orders were, but certainly McCook was innocent of "bringing on a general engagement." All the water on the road behind us had been exhausted—the men were thirsty, and their canteens empty—there was no water short of the Chaplin, or the springs beyond—and if Gen. McCook was not ordered to proceed, it was nevertheless a necessity that he should do so. He was attacked on the march, his tired and thirsty troops overpowered, driven back and slaughtered under the eye of Gen Buell, who was able to save them—and for this Gen. McCook is reprimanded! And the engagement—one of the severest of the war—is called "a reconnoissance!"

But the Napoleonic feature of the campaign was in the action taken by Gen. Buell subsequent to the battle. During the night of the 8th, the forces of Gen. Bragg did what every intelligent man knew they would do—

"Folded their tents like the crabs,
And silently stole away;"

and yet, on the following morning, the rising sun glistened upon the fixed bayonets of all this magnificent army, drawn up in battle array—an army that could have clubbed their guns and beaten the brains out of every rebel in Kentucky—where it so remained until high noon! In the afternoon, the corps of Gen. Crittenden moved to Crawford's Springs, close by Perryville, where it remained that night—the corps of McCook and Gilbert not moving at all. On the second day, Crittenden marched to Nevada, four miles in the direction of Harrodsburgh, and then turned toward Danville, while the corps of McCook and Gilbert encamped at the various springs on the Chaplin, below Perryville, where they remained *three days*—"*in hot pursuit of Bragg*"—as the Journal had it.

Five days after the battle, we marched to Salt River, within a mile of Harrodsburg—and next day, (the 14th) we marched to within three or four miles of Danville. On the 15th and 16th, we marched from there to this place—three miles southeast of Crab Orchard—where we have since remained idle.

I do not know how near Crittenden marched to Danville on the 10th. He certainly had time to cut off the retreat of part—perhaps the whole—of Bragg's forces in that direction, for they fell back on Harrodsburgh after the battle. It is ten miles from Perryville to Harrodsburg, and the same distance to Danville—the three places forming a triangle. To cut off Bragg's retreat, after the battle, a force should have been sent at once to Danville—and yet not a soldier marched directly there. In going from Perryville to Danville, Crittenden and Gilbert marched through Nevada, at least four miles out of the way, while McCook marched by way of Salt River, and was yet three or four miles from Danville on the morning of the 15th—*one week* after the battle!

How long is this army of lions to be commanded by a jackass? KAPPA.

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rankfort Oct 31/62

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ly
Yr M. O. S.
Leslie Combs

Gov of Ky

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and All-Wool Hose

Frankfort Oct 31/62

D Sir:

I do not know the writer of the within letter, but it corresponds very fully with information given me by several officers in the battle of Chaplin Hills —

The Commercial is a loyal paper as you well know —

I have great personal regard for Genl Buel & when parting with him at Louisville, the evening he started after Bragg — I remarked, "Genl you now have a chance "for immortality & I hope you "will embrace it" — I am truly "glad you have been restored to "your command" —

Respy
Yr M. O. S.
Leslie Combs

To
Genl Halleck

[Leslie Comb] Gov of Ky

would escape them, is fully verified
and the pursuit is abandoned.

Frankford, Oct 31st 1862
C-135-Hqa 1862

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Combs, Leslie.
Leslie Combs
Gov. of Kentucky

Encloses slip of Paper of campaign in Ky
States that he has great personal regard for Genl Buel &c.

Rec'd H.Q. Army Nov 5 1862