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### Letters of Samuel Forry, Surgeon U. S. Army, 1837-1838. Part II

Samuel Forry

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LETTERS OF SAMUEL FORRY, SURGEON U. S.  
ARMY, 1837-1838

PART II

*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Black Creek)*

Fort King, August 25th, 1837

Dear Sir:

I now propose giving you the pith of our recent talk [with the Indian chiefs]. There is, by the way, a new arrangement in the mails ; it comes twice a week from Black Creek, and returns once from Tampa. . . .

On the first day, the Gen. addressed Coa-hadjo alone, as he believed him acting in good faith. It is unnecessary to go into detail, as the second day was nearly a repetition. Coa concluded by a request that, in the event of his life's being endangered by the hostiles, the Gen. would afford protection to his family. "I am betwixt two fires," said he ; "the Indians have threatened me with the fate of Charley Emathla, should I show a disposition to remove; and should I oppose it, I am in danger of falling in battle with you." The Gen. pledged himself to do so, if Coa-hadjo would enable him to throw troops between his family and the enemy.

The next day were present Coa-hadjo, Tuskeneho, and Hicks. The Gen., having received his cue from Cudjo, addressed them in a very dogmatic style. It is unnecessary to maintain the form of a dialogue. "Who are you? Whence come you? Whom do you represent? What is your business? You have violated every treaty that you have made. The treaty must be fulfilled. This is my last talk. I have not yet begun to fight. I extend your time of emigration

to the first of October. I came here as your friend. I brought with me the Creek, your friends and relatives, in the hope that you would see your own interest. It is now necessary to decide in council upon peace or war. On no condition will I acknowledge Sam Jones as a Chief: he is a fool, a knave, and a liar; he is all tongue; he is a squaw, and if ever I catch him, I will put a petticoat on him and whip him around the camp. (Coa smiled and the other two looked glum.) Have you no man of sense among the Miccasukees to create King? Is there none inspired with the wisdom of the late John Hicks? Why don't you make his son John Chief? (The countenance of Joe now lit up with animation.) You have lately stolen our cattle and horses. Now mark: I have 180 of your prisoners, including negroes. The moment fresh depredations are committed, I will throw them into irons. If you spill a drop of blood, I will execute them man for man. Two men were lately killed at the Cape, etc. If this had occurred subsequent to this talk, I should have executed two prisoners. (The Indians here interposed - thought it a hard case, as those were a wholly distinct people, etc.) I have some other facts to tell you. I know you to be warriors and that you fear not death; but I tell you these things that you may discuss them in council for your own benefit. Had I wished to destroy you, I could have brought, instead of the Creeks, a host of Indians from the West, who are as much wilder than you, than you are wilder than the white people. I have 10,000 at my nod. I have only to will it, and they are here. They are anxious to come for the sake of your horses and cattle, your women and children. Their way of fighting is to kill every warrior captured, and to make slaves of women and children. There are now 1000 ready at

a moment's warning. These are 400 Shawnees, 200 Choctaws, 200 Delawares, 100 Sacs and Foxes, and 100 Kickapoos. These are facts. Do not imagine that I hope to frighten you. I am a warrior myself, and as a warrior I am a stranger to fear; but I have a wife and children; and for their sake, I wish to live. Now ponder well in your councils before you decide upon the words of the President—'*that you must go.*' If you have no regard for your own lives, reflect at least upon the condition to which your women and children will be inevitably reduced."

Coa-hadjo entered upon his reply with the usual exordium in relation to gods and men. He acknowledged all that Gen. Jesup had said, and repeated what we have heard a thousand times. All difficulties he attributed to Sam Jones and the brother of Cooper. He said there are some Indians who will shake with one hand the hand of his white brother, and with the other conceal his weapon. He spoke of the various treaties that had been made, by which the thread had become so entangled that it could be unravelled only by going to Arkansas. He said that he had been always willing to go, and that the treaty must be fulfilled.

The Miccasukees, he said, had elected a new king of royal blood ; but that he was yet a boy, and that Sam Jones ruled the nation as Chief. He had some hopes of elevating John Hicks to Sam's station.

As regards the capturing of negroes, you had better, said he, *speak to Abraham.* Etc., etc.

In conclusion, said Gen. Jesup, let it be plainly understood that the treaty must be fulfilled. You may give us much trouble ; but if one year is not sufficient to remove you, we will take 2, 5, 10, or 20. So many outrages have been committed that it is impossible for you and the whites to live together here. In

the West, you will be separated from the whites by a chain of posts, and no citizens will be permitted to enter your boundary without special permission. I can grant none of your favours now—fulfill your treaty—the past shall be forgotten—send a delegation to Washington from the West, and I pledge my honour that the President will not turn you away from his door.

Gen. Hernandez now made a speech in which he fought over the battle of Dunlawton, and passed in review all the devastation of the East, as the Indians moved from plantation to plantation. Truly, a great man Gen. Jesup hastened to neutralize this corroding *alkali* by pouring over it the oily remark that all the *past must be forgotten*.

Well, Paddy left us day before yesterday. We feel his loss very sensibly, and we are now obliged to keep closer to the pickets. The same day, Cudjo, surrounded by thirty-one Miccasukees, was sitting at the Sutter's store engaged in conversation. One of them alluding to the past, threatened to scalp Cudjo, when our old friend became most impassionately excited, and ran up to the pickets, soliloquizing most boisterously. He came into the Capt's. quarters, with scarce breath enough to relate his hair-breadth escape. The Miccasukee apologized by saying that he only meant it for a joke.

Last night we had an alarm. A sentinel saw three Indians between the fort and the garden. Two were unarmed and one had a pole. He hailed them three times, and then fired upon their retreat. No traces of blood can be discovered.

Yoha-hadjo, the brother-in-law of Powell, came in the night before Paddy left. There is every reason to believe that all are false, excepting perhaps Coa-hadjo. When Joe Hicks, (it is not John), arose

to leave the council, he gave Major Ashby a hearty shake by the hand, saying, "we have a right to shake hands, we once had a fight." The Major, surprised, enquired where, and Joe replied that he had led the band that attacked the waggon-train near Miconopy.

Yours,

Lieut. Phelps

Forry

Sunday morning—The Tampa mail has not arrived, but your amusing dissertation with comical illustrations has just greeted my eye.

I condensed that talk as much as I could. I do not wish it to pass of your hands.

\* \* \*

*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, 4th Artillery, Black Creek)*

Fort King, August 29th, 1837

Dear Misanthropos :

How often does it occur that man's best motives are misconstrued! How often is it that his best exertions are rewarded with censure! My two last letters were written to you under peculiar circumstances. As we have had no mail from Tampa for a fortnight, I availed myself of two private opportunities to keep you apprized of current events ; and yet, in the face of all this, you descend upon me with the preponderating ponderosity of an avalanche! As Gen. Jesup departed directly after the breaking up of the council, I had only time to scratch the scrawl which seems to have soured you so mysteriously. And now I am writing to you with equal haste, as the Capt. has resolved to despatch an express to Miconope, although the regular Tampa mail has not yet arrived. As regards *estrangement*, I have not a single compunction of conscience, and I, therefore, naturally seek for its cause in the discordant vibrations of the cerebral fibres of your misanthropic genius.

This morning an Indian showed himself on the brow of the hill near the spring. Cudjo and the officer of the day walked out. He stated that, owing to sickness among some women and children, several families were still on this side of the Ocklawaha, and that his object in coming was to obtain for them a *handful of salt*. He added that when the Council was being held, Sam Jones was on the opposite side of Ocklawaha, intending to bring on some cattle; but learning the decision of Gen. Jesup, he withdrew. He says that he has just come from the vicinity of Fort Mellon, and that much disease prevails, especially among the children.

On the morning that Paddy left us, a fine-looking female came to camp, who had, a few days before, her ears cropped and her nose clipped. You know that according to Indian custom, a widow is doomed to four years of "single blessedness." But she, a voluptuous creature, unable to resist the warm impulses of nature, counted months instead of years. Thus the flesh triumphed over the spirit, in the language of the erudite St. Paul. Her husband was mutilated in the same manner. The lady concealed her ears, and held the corner of her handkerchief upon the nose, but I discovered that she had been deprived only of the tip. She is enceinte, and will soon find it necessary to invoke the aid of Lucina or Lucindia, or anybody else that presides on such occasions.

I presume you have heard of Gen. Jesup's wild excursion in pursuit of his sword. The evening on which he started from here for Miconope, he left his sword at the seven-mile pond, and did not ascertain his loss until his arrival at Miconope. Unwilling that his weapon should share the fate of Gen. Clinch's, he, accompanied by Lieut. Searle and half a dozen horsemen, returned, got the sword, and proceeded on their

way rejoicing. Thus the Gen. rode 64 miles in one night.

To be serious, however, in regard to my letter of the 20th, I can only say that I have only a slight recollection of its general tenor. I keep no copies of my epistolary correspondence ; and therefore instead of a general charge of estrangement, I would beg you to reduce your charges to specific allegations.

Yours forever,

Lieut. J. W. Phelps.

F o r r y

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*(Address lacking)*

Fort King, September 1st, 1837

Dear Phelps,

We are now living here in glorious monotony. The only news I have to communicate is that we have not yet had a mail from Tampa, which may be construed into negative news. It affords us, however, the opportunity of speculating upon the causes of its delay. Perhaps Joe Hicks is about taking some prisoners with the view of exchanging with the General for his family.—For the last twenty hours we have had a most awful storm. It exceeds the former one by fifty per cent.

We have received an accession of one company of Dragoons, under Lieut. Cade.

For a week past, a party has been engaged in clearing out, for several hundred yards, the hammock in the vicinity of the Spring. Another party is erecting large quarters inside of the pickets, for men and stores. It nearly fills up the arenose area, and the eaves of the roof overlooks the pickets.

Cudjo says that Paddy was very much afraid of the Miccasukees when he set out for Tampa. He



overheard him endeavoring to ingratiate himself into their favour. He said that, in coming to Florida, he had been controlled by circumstances, and that the white man acted towards the Indians as the latter does towards two pups—he pulls them both by the ears and makes them fight. Paddy tried to appease them by making many presents, and wished to purchase a barrel of flour to distribute among them.

When Boyd and the Indians were pushing on the way, Paddy amused the Indians here till after mid-day. He made most impassioned speeches, and they frequently almost assailed him. I hope Paddy has suffered nothing on the way.

There is some consolation in the reflection that this is the first of September. I hope it may possess the exhilarating effect of arousing you from the slough of despondency into which you have fallen—a despondency which causes you to view God and his works with a jaundiced eye.

Yours truly,  
Samuel Forry

\* \* \*

*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Fort Heileman, Florida)*

Fort King, September 5th, 1837

Dear Phelps :

In my last letter I forgot to mention an interesting fact. It was communicated by Col. Gates to our Captain as confidential. I know not why it should be regarded as of a private character; but if you have not heard it before, I would not wish you to make it known as coming from me. The ways of the great are mysterious,—a fact that will account for a host of things.

When Gen. Jesup got back to Miconopy after holding his talk at this post, he learned some of the secret

cabinet history of the Seminoles. It was communicated to him by Yoholo-hadjo, (the roaring wind). This Creek, you know, being imprisoned at Columbus, as a hostile, was released by the Gen. He told the Gen. that "old Tustenug," who was introduced by Paddy as Powell's aid, and Tuskeneho, one of the delegation, had come to our camp as spies ; and that they had made a proposition to the Creeks to unite with them against the whites. The first object in view was the taking of Forts King and Defiance ; and this was to be effected by a simultaneous movement, in which the Creeks were to attack within and the Seminoles without.

The Gen. will be on our frontier again in a few days. Abraham had consented to act as a guide, on condition that in the event of Miconope or Jumper, or either of their families being taken, the lives of all shall be saved. This is quite a magnanimous trait in Sohanac's character.

Well, Col. Harvey has had an "excursion". Do you remember how you criticised the use of that word in my Miconopy ride? You assumed the ground that as my visit was a matter of *duty*, it could be no excursion. Was not Col. Harvey's expedition a matter of duty? With me, however, it was no matter of duty. Being submitted to my option, I was anxious to go, principally on account of the ride. In both cases, however, I maintain that the word is correctly applied. In Scott's Napoleon, you read of Generals with 10,000 men making excursions. . . . .

. . . . Your letter of the 2d with a host of amusing details has just arrived.

Accounts from Washington say that our campaign is not to be opened till the first of November. A letter from Capt. Lion, at Fort Monroe, states that

there were at that post 900 Recruits, and that in a few days the number would be 2000.

Believe me yours, etc.,

Lieut. J. W. Phelps,  
Fort Heileman

F o r r y

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*[Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Fort Heileman, Florida]*

Fort King, September 15th, 1837.

My dear John :

This morning about four o'clock we were aroused from our slumbers by the pleasing intelligence of Gen. Hernandez's immortality. O! ye Gods and little fishes From Papaminaquaddy bay to the isles of the Southern ocean, his name will henceforth sound like a great war trumpet!

But it strikes me that the glory of this victory is tarnished by a breach of public faith. The act cannot even find any justification on the ground of fighting an enemy with his own weapons. As Philip never signed a treaty, he has of course violated none. Admitting him, however, bound by the acts of Miconope, his position when taken was so near our imaginary boundary line that an infringement of stipulations can scarcely be alledged. The word of Gen. Jesup, in presence of Gen. Hernandez, was pledged, giving them a further extension of time, until the first of October, to prepare for immigration. Philip holds possession of the soil by tenure of the Great Spirit, not unlike Adam in the garden of Eden; and as he never yielded up his right, no power on earth can justly deprive him of it. He is an original proprietor of the soil, the claim to which has been transmitted to him by the remotest succession. Euchee Billy and Jack were driven from the Creek country by Gen. Jackson. The course of Gen. Hernandez seems to me

of doubtful propriety ; but success generally vindicates every enterprise. Had he been unsuccessful, would he not be deeply censured for having precipitated hostilities before the General is ready for the field, or the crops of corn have been gathered? If I am wrong in this view of the question, do set me right.

The Baron is once more arrested—he is a gone case.

John Lee Williams has published a book on Florida. Capt. Galt represents him as a man of good intentions, mediocre talents, but an intimate knowledge of the country—he is a broken-down gentleman, residing at Picolata, and he has lived here ever since the exchange of flags. His book, according to an advertisement in a New York paper, is entitled—“The Territory of Florida, or Sketches of the Topography, Civil and Natural History of the Country, the Climate, and the Indian Tribes, from the first discovery to the present time.”

If you can procure a copy for me, I wish you would send it by the Express mail. It may perhaps be offered for sale at your post.

As a letter from you describing the battles and victories of our Hidalgo Gen. is now on the way to me, it will be a matter of amusement to see how our ideas will graduate. We now behold the same object from different points, and the respective shades of colour it will receive may determine what resemblance there is in the mental medium through which we view the same facts.

Capt. Beall, a day or two ago, took an Indian trail and followed it many miles towards the cove of the Ouithlacochee. The Indians, it is thought, must have driven off 150 head of cattle, as the trail was 30 yards wide.

Yours forever,

Forry

Lieut. Dade has made a scout as far as his cousin's battle-ground. All is quiet.

I remain yours with all the affection of a mother for her first born-

F o r r y

\* \* \*

*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Black Creek)*

Fort King, September 19th

Monsieur Phelps-

Your two last letters have just come, fair and comely as the Siamese twins. I am obliged to answer you in great haste.

Two discharged soldiers have just arrived here from Tampa, having come thro' on foot and unarmed. They say that ten Indians had come into Tampa, declaring their intention to emigrate. Like stupid jack-anapes, all they know is that one Hicks was among them. Our war is a riddle, and all the world is a humbug.

The question in regard to Gen. Hernandez you view in a very philosophical light; but the point to which I wished to direct your special attention was its justness in relation to a breach of public faith.

Keith is as crazy as a June bug. Before leaving, he called upon me, saying that he had discovered, when standing on post near the grave yard, that the inmates of the graves were lying in a trance. He was led to the discovery of this fact by studying the instinct of the dogs.

"Frostwork upon the casement." Well, this phrase has been obnoxious to your hyper-critical genius; and in delving through the mountains of knowledge that, like Pelion and Ossa, are piled up in your cranium, you discovered that I have stolen it from Byron. Pray, tell me from what portion of

the noble Lord's works. As regards myself, I can conscientiously say that it has been with me a favourite comparison before ever I read Byron. If stolen, it must therefore be purloined second-handed.

I forgot to add some other information from Tampa, viz ; four mules have been stolen. This may answer as a set-off to the more favourable past.

We have just received the three first numbers of Lockhart's life of Scott. It is fine.

Poinsett has issued an order that no citizen shall be appointed the Artillery; and that in the Infantry, the candidate must undergo an examination. A requisition has been made on Tennessee for troops.

Yours in haste and infinite friendship,  
Lieut. Phelps Forry

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*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Black Creek)*

Fort King, September 26th, 1837

Dear Phelps :

I cannot complain that I received no letter from you this morning, as my last was very diminutive, nor will the present one be longer.

The Baron has just told me that a mail will be off in a few minutes, and so I avail myself of the opportunity to say that I am just alive and no more. I am most heartily sick of the hammock and pine barren—a feeling of sympathy communicated by your lugubrious epistles. Nearly the whole garrison is, at this moment, drunk. The Catalonia has, of course, arrived, and a large supply of kindred drinks by the waggon train. This post has become quite unhealthy. There are now forty cases on the sick-list, mostly intermittent fever.

You will observe that the Baron is reinstated in the honours of his office. The Gen. has been so kind

as to make another effort to "wean him from his unfortunate habits."

I applied to the General about a week ago to be relieved temporarily, with the view of visiting St. Augustine. He has not yet condescended to reply to the request of his humble servant.

There is a letter lying here from Abraham to Coahadjo; but Tufts, damn him, says I must stop.

Yours truly,  
Sam Forry

\* \* \*

*(Written to Lieut. J. W. Phelps, Black Creek)*

Fort King, Florida,  
September or rather October 3d, 1837

My dear Phelps,

Your welcome epistle has just come to hand. I am much gratified to learn that Dr. Turner is on his way to this post. I received an order by last mail to proceed to Fort Peyton upon his arrival. . . . .

. . . . Were I not in expectation of seeing you in a few days, I would give you a copy of Abraham's letter to Coahadjo.

We have received intelligence of Coa-cuchee's being enticed into St. Augustine—that he came under protection of a white flag, which secured him a position in the old Fort. Can such things be enacted by men who call themselves civilized I do not, however, credit this report.

I have the honour to be very respectfully,  
your obedient servant,

Lieut. Phelps

Sam Forry

[This series of letters will be concluded in the next number QUARTERLY, with an account of the seizure of Osceola, Miconopy, Coe-Hadjo, and other chiefs.]