

**"The heroic conduct of these ladies"**

**The two Heronies, Misses Kerr and McLeod.**

The two noble heroines, Misses Abbie Kerr and Mary McLeod, of Fairmont, Marion county, who rode from their home to Phillippi, a distance of thirty-odd miles, to apprise our forces there of the approach of the enemy, arrived in Staunton, by the Western train, on Wednesday night last and remained till Friday morning, when they went to Richmond. Whilst here, they were the "observed of all observers," and were received with a cordial welcome. Great anxiety was manifested by all to hear a detailed account of their interesting adventures from their own lips. They left Fairmont at 6 o'clock on Sunday morning, and hastened, without escorts, to Phillippi. They had not gone a great distance before they found that a shoe of one of the horses needed fixing. They stopped at a blacksmith's shop for that purpose, and whilst there a Union man came up and questioned them very closely as to who they were and on what mission they were going. Miss McLeod replied to his interrogatories—telling him that their surname was Fleming, and that they were going to Barbour county to see their relations.— Their interrogator seemed to be very hard to satisfy, and it taxed the ingenuity of Miss McLeod to improvise a story which would succeed in imposing upon him. As soon as the horse-shoe had been fixed, they again proceeded upon their way, but had not gone far before their evil-genius, the interrogator at the blacksmith shop, dashed by them on horseback. They perceived that his suspicions had not been allayed, and that he was going on in advance of them to herald the approach of spies. They allowed him to pass out of sight in advance, and then destroyed the letters they had in possession, that the search of their persons, to which they then anticipated they would be required to submit, might not betray them. When they arrived at the village of Webster, they found it in commotion, and many persons were anxiously awaiting their arrival in the eager hope of capturing the spies. They were then subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The heroines were calm and self-possessed—answering their questions without hesitancy—and expressed a perfect willingness to have their persons searched by any lady they might select for that purpose. They were allowed to pass on, after being detained for some time, though there were some in the crowd who were very much opposed to it. As soon as they got out of sight of that village they rode very rapidly for fear that they might still be arrested by some of those who were so much opposed to allowing them to proceed. They arrived at Phillippi about 2 o'clock in the afternoon



## Transcription

of the same day, and told Col. Porterfield that they enemy would attack his camp that night or the next morning. These ladies then went to the house of a Mr. Huff, about a mile and a half from Phillippi, where they stayed all night. The next morning they heard the report of the firing at Phillippi, and, in disguise, accompanied by a countrywoman, returned to Phillippi on foot to see what had been the result. They moved about amidst the enemy without being detected or molested in the least degree. Going into one of the houses, they found James Withers of the Rockbridge Cavalry, who had concealed himself there to prevent the enemy from capturing him. These ladies immediately told him that they would effect his rescue if he would trust to them. He very readily consented, whereupon these ladies disguised him as a common countryman by furnishing him with some old clothes. They then gave him a basket of soap, with a recipe for making it, that he might pass as a pedlar of that necessary article. With these old clothes and his basket of soap on his arm, and gallantly mounted upon a mule, accompanied by his guardian angels, he passed safely through the crowds of the enemy; and was brought by them safe and sound into the camp of his friends at Beverly, after a circuitous and hard ride over precipitous mountains, where persons seldom, if ever, rode before. His fellow-soldiers and friends rejoiced greatly when he arrived, for they thought the he was either killed or taken prisoner by the enemy—they rejoiced that the supposed "dead was alive, and the lost was found." He is now known in our camp as the "pedlar of soap." The heroic conduct of these ladies will live in history, and they will become the heroines of many a thrilling story of fiction in years to come.

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