Ex-Governor Letcher’s Home.

His Daughter Tells How It Was Burned During the War.

"Ex-Governor Letcher had been warned by an ante-bellum friend, a member of Hunter’s brigade, to make his escape. A large reward had been offered for his capture, and dreadful threats had been made against him in consequence of his late position as Chief Officer of the Commonwealth. On the morning of June 12, 1864; before the family had arisen, a posse of soldiers, with one commissioned officer, rang the door-bell, and, with no other warning of any kind, delivered a verbal order from General Hunter, in General Grant’s name, for the destruction of the place and without the removal of a single article, not even a change of clothing for its inmates. The order was to be executed in ten minutes. Even that small respite was not allowed, as the work of firing began at once, before the inmates could dress and leave the building. The only articles which had been removed were a portrait of my father and a bust of him, which it had been feared would be treated with indignity. These were cared for and restored afterwards by faithful colored friends.

"The silver was buried in the garden, as was a general custom at the time, it being property invariably seized by the soldiers. But the garden and grounds were bayonetted by the men and the silver was taken, although several valuable pieces were restored by the courtesy of officers.

"Inflammable fluid was poured over the carpets and fired while the house was filled with blue coats ransacking and appropriating all that they could conveniently carry off. My father’s personal belongings were afterwards put up in camp to the highest bidder. His Odd-Fellows’ regalia, the gift of the lodges of the State, was used for the ornament of a horse, which was led through the streets. A silk dress belonging to my sister served for a flag on the point of a bayonet, and many other jests of like character were perpetrated. Among the serious losses were my father’s fine private and law libraries, with valuable marginal annotations; albums, containing the autographs of prominent men for a quarter of a century and longer; a portrait, considered the best one of General Sam Houston, considered the best one of General Sam Houston.

In another part of her letter Mrs. Showell says:

"When the division of the Union Army under General Hunter passed through the Valley of Virginia it left a record like the proverbial new broom. All the horrors of warfare were repeated, and heaps of ashes marked its progress. The cloud of smoke and pillar of fire which went before the Israelites, indicating the favor of God, followed behind Hunter’s division, typifying the vengeance of man and the unbridled animosity of war. The reminiscences of the generation now passing are replete with hair-stirring horrors, romantic and thrilling incidents, wonders of heroism and endurance most strange. There was an exodus from home of the male population, embracing almost all of the ‘seven ages of man,’ ‘robbing the cradle and the grave,’ as it was pithily termed, to make up the ranks that stood between the invading foe and home and family.

"There was the wail of lovely women who mourned their dead-for of the many who went forth few returned, even for a grave, and the quickly decimated ranks killed hope in mothers and wives and sisters’ hearts. The Valley of Virginia has deep scars to remember. It was the battle-ground of the war. Every home was a hospital. It gave all the fruits of its fertile soil and the offspring of its far-famed stock for the support of two armies, and its most venerated inheritance to satisfy the vengeance and ruthless destruction of the one. Down the Valley came Hunter’s army, and woe and loss and pitiful despair followed everywhere in his wake! In stern adherence to war principles he spared not even his own brothers and kindred’s possessions. Up the Valley went his victorious army, with a torch in one hand and a sword in the other. All that could not be used or carried off was remorselessly destroyed. At the far-famed old town of Lexington their work of destruction was irreparable. The college that owed its name and founding to George Washington was racked and desecrated, its valuable old libraries and scientific apparatus all destroyed. The Virginia Military Institute, the West Point of the South, its picturesque buildings, splendid libraries, pictures, curiosities, and scientific apparatus, all made a magnificent bonfire to celebrate the Northerners’ triumph."