SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

REPUBLICAN STAR.

EASTON....TUESDAY MORNING,

JANUARY 7, 1812.

The following message from the President of the United States, enclosing Gov. Harrison's two letters to the Secretary at War, on the subject of the late engagement with the Indians on the Wabash, was laid before Congress on Thursday.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

I lay before Congress two letters received from Gov. Harrison of the Indiana Territory, reporting the particulars and the issue of the expedition under his command, of which notice was taken in my communication of Nov. 5.

While it is deeply lamented that so many valuable lives were lost in the action which took place on the 7th ult.—Congress will see with satisfaction the dauntless spirit and fortitude victoriously displayed by every description of the troops engaged, as well as the collected firmness which distinguished their commander on an occasion requiring the utmost exertions of valor and discipline.

It may reasonably be expected that the good effects of this critical defeat & dispersion of a combination of savages which appears to have been spreading to a greater extent, will be experienced not only in a cessation of the murders & depredations committed on our frontier, but in the prevention of any hostile incursions otherwise to have been apprehended.

The families of those brave and patriotic citizens who have fallen in this severe conflict, will doubtless engage the favorable attention of Congress.

JAMES MADISON.

Washington, December 18, 1811.

Vincennes, 18th Nov. 1811.

SIR,

In my letter of the 8th inst. I did myself the honor to communicate the result of an action between the troops under my command and the confederation of Indians under the control of the Shawanoe Prophet. I had previously informed you in a letter of the 2d inst. of my proceedings previously to my arrival at the Vermillion River, where I had erected a block house for the protection of the boats which I was obliged to leave, and as a depository for our heavy baggage and such part of our provisions as we were unable to transport in waggons. On the morning of the 3d inst. I commenced my march from the block house. The Wabash above this turning considerably to the eastward—I was obliged in order to avoid the broken and woody country which borders upon it to change my course to the westward of north to gain the prairies which lie to the back of those woods. At the end of one day's march, I was enabled to take the proper direction (N. E.) which brought me on the evening of the 5th to a small creek at about eleven miles from the Prophet's Town. I had on the preceding day avoided the dangerous pass of Pine creek by inclining a few miles to the left where the troops and waggons were crossed with expedition & safety. Our route on the 6th for about six miles lay through prairies separated by small points of woods.

My order of march hitherto had been similar to that used by General Wayne; that is, the infantry were in two columns of files on either side of the road and the mounted riflemen and cavalry in front, and in the rear and on the flanks. Where the ground was unfavorable for the action of cavalry they were placed in the rear, but where it was otherwise they were made to exchange positions with one of the mounted rifle corps.—Understanding that the last four miles were open woods and the probability being greater that we should be attacked in front than on either flank, I halted at the distance from the town and formed the army in order of battle. The United States infantry placed in the centre, two companies of militia infantry and one of mounted rifle men, on each flank formed the front line. In the rear of this line was placed the baggage drawn up as compactly as possible, and immediately behind it a reserve of three companies of militia infantry. The cavalry formed a second line at the distance of three hundred yards in the rear of the front line, and a company of mounted riflemen the advanced guard at that distance in front. To facilitate the march the whole were then broken off in short columns of companies, a situation the most favorable for forming in order of battle with facility and precision. Our march was slow and cautious and much delayed by the examination of every place which seemed calculated for an ambuscade. Indeed the ground was for some time so unfavorable that I was obliged to change the position of the several corps, three times in the distance of a mile. At half past 2 o'clock we passed a small creek at the distance of one mile and a half from the town, and entered an open wood when the army was halted and again drawn up in order of battle. During the whole of the last day's march parties of Indians were constantly about us and every effort was made by the interpreters to speak to them, but in vain—new attemp's of the kind were now made, but proving equally ineffectual, captain Dubois of the spies and guides, offering to go with a flag to the town, I dispatched him with an interpreter to request a conference with the Prophet—in a few moments a message was sent by captain Dubois to inform me that in his attempts to advance, the Indians appeared in both his flanks, and although he had spoken to them in the most friendly manner they refused to answer, but beckoned to him to go forward, and constantly endeavored to cut him off from the army. Upon this information I recalled the capt. and determined to encamp for the night and take some other measures for opening a conference with the Prophet.—Whilst I was engaged in tracing the lines for the encampment, Major Davies, who commanded the dragoons, came to inform me that he had penetrated to the Indian fields, that the ground was entirely open and favorable—that the Indians in front had manifested nothing but hostility and had answered every attempt to bring them to a parley with contempt and insolence. I was immediately advised by all the officers around me to move forward. A similar wish indeed pervaded all the army—it was drawn up in excellent order, and every man appeared eager to decide the contest immediately. Being informed that a good encampment might be had upon the Wabash, I yielded to what appeared the general wish, and directed the troops to advance, taking care however to place the interpreters in front with directions to invite a conference with any Indians they might meet with. We had not advanced above four hundred yards, when I was informed that three Indians had approached the advanced guard and had expressed a wish to speak to me. I found upon their arrival that one of them was a man in great estimation with the Prophet. He informed me that the chiefs were much surprised at my advancing upon them so rapidly—that they were given to understand by the Delawares and Miamies whom I had sent to them a few days before, that I would not advance to their town, until I had received an answer to my demands made thro' them. That this answer had been dispatched by the Potawatamie chief Winemac, who had accompanied the Miamis and Delawares on their return; tear they had left the Prophet's Town two days before with a design to meet me, but had unfortunately taken the road on the south side of the Wabash. I answered that I had no intention of attacking them until I discovered that they would not comply with the demands which I had made—that I would go on and encamp at the Wabash, and in the morning would have an interview with the Prophet and his chiefs, and explain to them the determination of the President—that in the mean time no hostilities should be committed. He seemed much pleased with this, and promised that it should be observed on their part. I then resumed my march, we struck the cultivated grounds about five hundred yards below the town, but as these extended to the bank of the Wabash, there was no possibility of getting an encampment which was provided with both wood & water. My guards and interpreters being still with the advanced guard, and taking the direction of the town, the army followed and had advanced within about 150 yards, when 50 or 60 Indians sallied out and with loud exclamations, called to the cavalry and to the militia infantry, which were on our right flank to halt. I immediately advanced to the front, caused the army to halt, and directed an interpreter to request some of the chiefs to come to me. In a few moments the man who had been with me before made his appearance. I informed him that my object for the present was to procure a good piece of ground to encamp on, where we could get wood and water—he informed me that there was a creek to the north west which he thought would suit our purpose. I immediately dispatched two officers to examine it, and they reported that the situation was excellent. I then took leave of the chief and a mutual promise was again made for a suspension of hostilities until we could have an interview on the following day. I found the ground destined for the encampment not altogether such as I could wish it—it was indeed admirably calculated for the encampment of regular troops that were opposed to regulars, but it afforded great facility to the approach of savages. It was a piece of dry oak land, rising about ten feet above the level of a marshy prairie in front (towards the Indian Town) and nearly twice that height above a similar prairie in the rear, through which & near to this bank ran a small stream clothed with willows and other brush wood. Towards the left flank this bench of high land widened considerably, but became gradually narrower in the opposite direction, and at the distance of 150 yards from the right flank, terminated in an abrupt point. The two columns of infantry occupied the front and rear of this ground at the distance of about 150 yards from each other on the left, and something more than half that distance on the right flank—these flanks were filled up, the first by two companies of mounted riflemen amounting to about 120 men, under the command of Major General Wells, of the Kentucky militia who served as a Major; the other by Spencer's company of mounted riflemen, which amounted to eighty men. The front line was composed of one battalion of United States infantry, under the command of Major Floyd, flanked on the right by two companies of militia, and on the left by one company. The rear line was composed of a battalion of United States troops under the command of Captain Baen, acting as Major, and four companies of militia infantry under Lieut. Col. Decker. The regular troops of the line joined the mounted riflemen under Gen. Wells on the left flank, and Col. Decker's battalion formed an angle with Spencer's company on the left.

Two troops of dragoons, amounting to in the agregate about sixty men, were encamped in the rear of the left flank, and captain Parke's troop, which was larger than the other two, in the rear of the front line. Our order of encampment varied little from that above decribed, excepting when some peculiarity of the ground made it necessary. For a night attack the order of encampment was the order of battle, and each man slept immediately opposite to his post in the line. In the formation of my troops I used a single rank, or what is called Indian file—because in Indian warfare, where there is no shock to resist, one rank is nearly as good as two, and in that kind of warfare the extension of line is a matter of the first importance. Raw troops also manœuvre with much more facility in single than in double ranks. It was my constant custom to assemble all the field officers at my tent every evening by signal to give them the watch-word and their instructions for the night—those given for the night of the 6th, were, that each corps which formed a part of the exterior line of the encampment, should hold its own ground until relieved. The dragoons were directed to parade dismounted in case of a night attack, with their pistols in their belts, and to act as a corps de reserve. The camp was defended by two captains guards, consisting each of four non-commissioned officers and 42 privates—and two subalterns guards of twenty non-commissioned officers and privates. The whole under the command of a field officer of the day. The troops were regularly called up an hour before day, and made to continue under arms until it was quite light. On the morning of the 7th, I had risen at a quarter after four o'clock, and the signal for calling out the men would have been given in two minutes, when the attack commenced. It began on our left flank—but a single gun was fired by the centinels or by the guards in that direction, which made not the least resistance, but abandoned their officer and fled into camp, and the first notice which the troops of that flank had of the danger, was from the yells of the savages within a short distance of the line—but even under those circumstances, the men were not wanting to themselves or to the occasion. Such of them as were awake, or were easily awakened, seized their arms and took their stations; others which were more tardy, had to contend with the enemy in the doors of their tents. The storm first fell upon capt. Barton's company of the 4th U. S. regiment, and captain Geiger's company of mounted riflemen, which formed the left angle of the rear line. The fire upon these was excessively severe, and they suffered considerably before relief could be brought to them. Some few Indians passed into the encampment near the angle, and one or two penetrated to some distance before they were killed. I believe all the other companies were under arms and tolerably formed before they were fired on. The morning was dark and cloudy—our fires afforded a partial light, which, if it gave us some opportunity of taking our posidions, was still more advantageous to the enemy, affording them the means of taking a surer aim—they were therefore extinguished as soon as possible. Under all these discouraging circumstances, the troops (nineteen twentieths of whom had never been in action before) behaved in a manner that can never be too much applauded. They took their places without noise and with less confusion than could have been expected from veterans placed in a similar situation. As soon as I could mount my horse, I rode to the angle that was attacked; I found that Barton's company had suffered severely, and the left of Geiger's entirely broken. I immediately ordered Cook's company and the late captain Wentworth's, under lieut. Peters, to be brought up from the centre of the rear line, where the ground was much more defensible, and formed across the angle in support of Barton's and Geiger's. My attention was then engaged by a heavy firing upon the left of the front line, where were stationed stationed the small company of U. S. riflemen (then however armed with muskets) and the companies of Baen, Snelling and Prescott, of the 4th regiment. I found major Daveiss forming the dragoons in the rear of those companies, and understanding that the heaviest part of the enemy's fire proceeded from some trees about fifteen or twenty paces in front of those companies, I directed the major to dislodge them with a part of the dragoons. Unfortunately the major's gallantry determined him to execute the order with a smaller force than was sufficient, which enabled the enemy to avoid him in front, and attack his flanks. The major was mortally wounded and his party driven back. The Indians were however immediately and gallantly dislodged from their advantageous position, by captain Snelling at the head of his company. In the course of a few minutes after the commencement of the attack the fire extended along the left flank, the whole of the front, the right flank, and part of the rear line. Upon Spencer's mounten riflemen, and the right of Warwick's company, which was posted on the right of the rear line, it was excessively severe: Capt. Spencer and his first and second lieutenants were killed, and capt. Warwick was mortally wounded; those companies however still bravely maintained their posts, but Spencer had suffered so severely, and having originally too much ground to occupy, I re-inforced them with Robb's company of riflemen, which had been driven, or by mistake ordered from their position on the left flank towards the centre of the camp, and filled the vacancy that had been occupied by Robb, with Prescott's company of the 4th U. States' regiment.—My great object was to keep the lines entire, to prevent the enemy from breaking into the camp until day light, which should enable me to make a general and effectual charge. With this view I had re-inforced every part of the line that had suffered much; and as soon as the approach of morning discovered itself, I withdrew from the front line Snelling's, Posey's (under lieut. Albright) and Scott's, and from the rear line, Wilson's companies, and drew them up on the left flank, and at the same time I ordered Cook's and Baen's companies, the former from the rear and the latter from the front line, to re-inforce the right flank; foreseeing that at these points the enemy would make their last efforts. Major Wells, who commanded on the left flank, not knowing my intentions precisely, had taken the command of these companies, and charged the enemy before I had formed the body of dragoons with which I meant to support the infantry; a small detachment of these were however ready and proved amply sufficient for the purpose. The Indians were driven by the infantry at the point of the bayonet, and the dragoons pursued and forced them into a marsh, where they could not be followed. Captain Cook and Lt. Larebee, had, agreeably to my order, marched their companies to the right flank, had formed them under the fire of the enemy, and being then joined by the riflemen of that flank, had charged the Indians, killed a number, and put the rest to a precipitate flight. A favorable opportunity was here offered to pursue the enemy with dragoons, but being engaged at that time on the other flank, I did not observe it until it was too late.

I have thus, sir, given you the particulars of an action which was certainly maintained with the greatest obstinacy and perseverance by both parties. The Indian manifested a ferocity uncommon even with them—to their savage fury our troops opposed that cool and deliberate valor which is characteristic of the christian soldier.

The most pleasing part of my duty, (that of naming to you the corps and individuals who particularly distinguished themselves) is yet to be performed. There is, however, considerable difficulty in it—where merit was so common, it is almost impossible to discriminate.

The whole of the infantry formed a small brigade under the immediate orders of Colonel Boyd. The Colonel throughout the action manifested equal zeal and bravery in carrying into execution my orders, in keeping the men to to their posts, and exhorting them to fight with valor. His brigade-major, Clark, and his aid-de-camp George Croghan, Esq. were also very serviceably employed. Col. Joseph Barthlomew, a very valuable officer, commanded under Col. Boyd the militia infantry; he was wounded early in the action, and his services lost to me.—Major G. R. C. Floyd, the senior of the 4th U. States' regiment, commanded immediately the battalion of that regiment, which was in the front line;—his conduct during the action was entirely to my satisfaction. Lieut. Col. Decker, who commanded the battalion of militia on the right of the rear line, preserved his command in good order; he was, however, but partially attacktacked. I have before mentioned to you that major-gen. Wells, of the 4th division of Kentucky militia, acted under my command as a major at the head of two companies of mounted volunteers; the Gen. maintained the fame which he had already acquired in almost every campaign and in almost every battle which has been fought with the Indians since the settlement of Kentucky. Of the several corps, the 4th U. States' regiment and two small companies attached to it, were certainly the most conspicuous for undaunted valor. The companies commanded by capts. Cook, Snelling and Barton, lieuts. Larsbee, Peters and Hawkins, were placed in situations where they could render most service and encounter most danger, and those officers eminently distinguished themselves. Captains Prescot and Brown performed their duty also entirely to my satisfaction, as did Posey's company of the 7th regiment headed by Lt. Albright. In short, sir, they supported the fame of American regulars, and I have never heard that a single individual was found out of the line of his duty. Several of the militia companies were in no wise inferior to the regulars. Spencer's, Geiger's and Warwick's maintained their posts amidst a monstrous carnage, as indeed did Robb's after it was posted on the left flank; its loss of men (17 killed and wounded) and keeping its ground is sufficient evidence of its firmness. Wilson's and Scott's companies charged with the regular troops and proved themselves worthy of doing so. Norris's company also behaved well; Hargrove's & Wilkin's company were placed in a situation where they had no opportunity of distinguishing themselves or I am satisfied they would have done it. This was the case with the squadron of dragoons also. After major Davies had received his wound, knowing it to be mortal, I promoted captain Parke to the majority, than whom there is no better officer.

My two aids-de-camp, majors Hurst and Taylor, with lieut. Adams of the 4th regiment, the adjutant of the troops, afforded me the most essential aid, as well in the action as throughtout the campaign.

The arrangements of capt. Pratt in the quarter-master's department were highly judicious, and his exertions on all occasions, particularly in bringing off the wounded, deserve my warmest thanks. But in giving merited praise to the living let me not forget the gallant dead. Col. Abraham Owen, commandant of the 18th Ken. regiment, joined me a few days before the action as a private in capt. Geiger's company; he accepted the appointment of volunteer aid-de-camp to me; he fell early in the action. The Representatives of his state, will inform you that she possessed not a better citizen nor a braver man. Major J. H. Deveiss was known as an able lawyer and a great orator; he joined me as a private volunteer and on the recommendation of the officers of that corps, was appointed to command the 3rd troop of dragoons. His conduct in that capacity justified their choice; never was there an officer possessed of more ardor and zeal to discharge his duties with propriety, and never one who would have encounter greater danger to purchase military fame. Captain Baen of the 4th U. S. regiment, was killed early in the action; he was unquestionably a good officer and valiant soldier.—Capts. Spencer and Warrick and lieutenants M'Mahan and Berry, were all my particular friends; I have ever had the utmost confidence in their valor, & I was not deceived. Spencer was wounded in the head—he exhorted his men to fight valiantly—he was shot through both thighs, and fell, still continuing to encourage them—he was raised up, and received a ball through his body, which put an immediate end to his existence! Warwick was shot immediately through the body; being taken to the surgery to be dressed, as soon as it was over (being a man of great bodily vigor and still able to walk) he insisted upon going back to head his company, although it was evident that he had but a few hours to live.

All these gentlemen, sir, capt. Baen excepted, have left wives, and five of them large families of children; this is the case too with many of the privates among the militia who fell in the action or who have died since of their wounds. Will the bounty of their country be withheld from their helpless orphans, many of whom will be in the most destitute condition and perhaps want even the necessaries of life? With respect to the number of Indians that were engaged against us, I am possessed of no data by which I can form a correct statement. It must, however, have been considerable & perhaps not much inferior to our own; which deducting the dragoons, who were unable to do us much service, was very little above seven hundred, non-commissioned officers and privates; I am convinced there were at least six hundred. The Prophet had three weeks before 450 of his own proper followers. I am induced to believe that he was joined by a number of the lawless vagabonds who live on the Illinois river as large trails were seen coming from that direction. Indeed I shall not be surprised to find that some of those who professed the warmest friendship for us were arrayed against us—'tis certain that one of this description came out from the town & spoke to me the night before the the action. The Potowatimie chief, whom I mentioned to have been wounded and taken prisoner in my letter of the 8th inst I left on the battle ground, after having taken all the care of him in my power, I requested him to inform those of his own tribe who had joined the Pr't. and the Kickapoos & Winebagoes