

## CHAPTER XI

### *Other Sons and a Cousin*

With Captain Ramsey was associated on this same service during this daring invasion of Kentucky an elder brother, Colonel Francis Alexander Ramsey. Like his grandfather of the same name, he entered in his nineteenth year upon his public life. Before he completed his studies in East Tennessee University he joined a company of adventurers to go overland from Knoxville, Tennessee, to San Francisco, California. He drove the first wagon out of the encampment a mile north of town.

An older brother, W. Wilberforce Alexander Ramsey, was his messmate and companion on the whole route. Wilberforce had the stamp of genius on his face, was exceedingly intellectual and fond of study. He had graduated with distinction in East Tennessee University and had obtained license to practice law in his native district and had entered on his circuit duties. But the *auri sacra flammæ* had bewildered most of his countrymen and seduced them from the tamer pursuits of ordinary life. At this moment the company was being organized to penetrate the vast interior of the Great West—cross the Rocky Mountains and thus reach the shore of the Pacific Ocean. It was not the belittling love of money nor the hope of acquiring a thing so little and insignificant that led Wilberforce from a society he could so well enjoy and adorn, from his books, his studies and his profession of which he was so proud and of which he would have become an ornament and a pillar. No. His ambition was loftier. It was to cultivate science, to study nature in its primitive simplicity, to investigate ethnology, philology, the flora of the interior, its climate, soil, products, and resources. He was very fond of antiquarian and historical researches and devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. Mental culture, mental discipline,—in short, intellectuation—this was his forte, his ambition, his purpose, his idol.

The journal which he kept and which has survived the exposures of his long and perilous expedition over mountain and desert and wilderness and, alas too, the life of its writer, is the evidence of what is here said by a fond father of the endowments and attainments of a favorite son. His

fondness of the Muses is evidenced by an ode, since published, written in the depth of a boundless wilderness by his campfire with no other book near him than his Bible, a present from his beloved and idolized mother. Besides the mental traits thus enumerated Wilberforce, too, possessed and developed in good proportion the physical attributes—courage, endurance, enterprise, manhood and self-reliance not always found in a nature so ethereal and sublimated.

Such were the two brothers en route to California. The one was the *sua vitur in modo*—the other *fortitu in re*. The one eager in the pursuit and capture of the buffalo on the plains or the hostile Comanche lurking in the Nevada fastnesses, the other talking to the padre in Latin at his ranch or investigating the features and language of the inoffensive and quiet Pernos in their lodges or wigwams.

The route of the adventurous explorers was by St. Louis and Independence, Missouri, and from the latter by the usual trading path to Santa Fe and Albuquerque where the company wintered. Leaving their winter camp, in the spring they struck across the continent, came to the Colorado (of the Pacific). Some exorbitant Yankees had established and claimed a ferry across this stream and demanded the unreasonable toll of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for crossing. The company, resisting the exaction, built a boat a little below the Yankee ferry. My two sons were not only good water-men but at my own boat landing at Mecklenburg had learned the whole plan of boatbuilding and of calking and launching the craft. Under their direction the boat was soon finished. They tore up their shirts to answer for caulking, no supply of hemp nor cotton being within their reach. My sons took command of the boat and put across that river not only their own company but gave transportation to a vast number of Mexicans, peons, Indians, who during their stay on the bank had accumulated around their encampment.

I will not stop here to tell the usual incidents of surprises, resistance, escapes, hardship, hunting, exploits, scarcity of water, of fuel and of food occurring in so long, so dangerous and so difficult a route. Many of them are narrated in Wilberforce's journal with his remarks upon the physical history of the interior of this great American desert and wilderness, his account of the traditions, language, religion of the aboriginal tribes, etc. The company at length arrived at Los Angeles on the Pacific, each man having in his knapsack only a teacup full of bean-meal procured from the Indians by exchange of some worn-out shoes and clothes.

From Los Angeles the adventurers, after a short rest, distributed themselves to different points on the slope of the Pacific. My sons and a few others stopped at a place known there as Volcano Diggings. A small river was turned from its old channel. The excavation required for this purpose was laborious and exhausting in the extreme. Poor Wilberforce sank under it. The dreadful winter at Albuquerque and the unparalleled sufferings of their terrible tramp to Los Angeles had brought on an imposthume of the lungs, a predisposition to which he had inherited from his father. (He had my flat chest, my complexion, my hair, especially my eyes, my voice even, my contour—my whole physical, intellectual and moral nature.) He sank quietly to his grave in peace with his God and his fellow men. He was the first man buried in a coffin at Volcano Diggings, California. Strange to say, poor Wilberforce had a Christian burial in these wilds. A Presbyterian minister, Reverend Davidson, originally from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, performed for him the last funeral rites. He was, if I had a favorite, my favorite son, my child of promise and of hope. (See my *History of Tennessee*, page 408, footnote.)

My son, F. Alexander Ramsey, was also taken sick in California and determined to return back to us. The sad information of the death of our son was, soon after its occurrence, communicated in a friendly letter from Captain J. C. Vaughn, one of the California adventurers. At the time this letter came to Knoxville I was absent and on my way to a meeting of the E. T. & G. R. R. at Athens. My son Crozier opened the letter, and seeing its contents dispatched a messenger after me. I was at Philadelphia, Tennessee when the messenger overtook me there at night and in bed. I knew his voice and that his night mission portended no good. I returned with him to Knoxville. My son Crozier had thoughtfully withheld the mournful intelligence from others. He rode out with me home when I had to communicate the distressing news. Our anxiety was now turned to the return of our other son, Alexander. He might arrive any day at New Orleans sick, destitute, and without friends in that strange city. I wrote by mail, I telegraphed, I watched the papers for marine intelligence. At last I found under the head of "Arrivals from California" among other names that of Francis Alexander Ramsey. Supposing that he would come up the Cumberland rather than the Tennessee River, I took the stage to Nashville and telegraphed to different points, but heard nothing. Almost in despair I took the stage back to Knoxville. At the supper house in Kingston Dr. McNutt, once a medical student of mine, came in and gave me the agree-



*"Swan Pond," near Knoxville, now undergoing restoration by the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities to become a state historic shrine. Built by Colonel Francis Alexander Ramsey in 1797. The Childhood home of Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey. Thompson photo.*



able information that he had a few days before seen Alexander on board the steamboat bound to Knoxville and that he was sick. Next day, on arriving home, I found him there. But how changed! *Diarrhoea Mexicana* and a long voyage by two seas and the rivers had almost ruined his excellent constitution. His native air, the comforts of home, and the care we all could give him soon resuscitated him and restored his health. A vacancy just then occurred of colonel in our regiment. The recital of his adventures, his exploits, his dangers, gave him great popularity and consideration with the military and he was elected to the position of colonel of the regiment.

In the meantime my son-in-law, Colonel Breck, had become interested in a large landed property high up on the Kentucky River, and wishing to improve and develop it by the erection of machinery invited my son, Alexander, to become his active partner. This he did. Under his direction a mountain was tunneled and one of the forks of the Kentucky River diverted through it. The mills proved to be valuable, furnishing to Frankfort and other places vast quantities of plank and lumber transported in rafts down the river. Sometime after, he returned to Tennessee, and becoming acquainted with Miss Presley of South Carolina went there and married her. I gave him the property sometimes known as Swan Pond, more recently as the Stone-house. . . .<sup>1</sup>

As before stated I gave as his patrimony to my son Colonel F. A. Ramsey Swan Pond which had been the home of his grandfather of the same name and title. He occupied and improved it for a few years, and the war coming on, he took his wife and children to South Carolina, returned to Tennessee and entered upon the active duties of a soldier's life. He joined Captain Kain's Artillery, went to Chattanooga, bore a gallant part in the affair at Bridgeport, followed his captain in the campaign he carried across the Sequatchee and Walden and Cumberland Mountains. From these towering heights their cannon resounded one day from one eminence, the next day from another, perplexing and confusing the enemy by their rapid change of place and giving rise in this way to the report that the mountains were filled with rebels, and causing thus a precipitate retreat of the enemy back from the Tennessee towards their main army. In

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<sup>1</sup> The description of Swan Pond, which Dr. Ramsey inserted here, appears as footnote 5 in Chapter I.

one of these excursions Kain aimed at (perhaps Winchester) where Andrew Johnson had an appointment to speak for the Union. The artillery expected to disperse the crowd and hoped to capture the speaker. A countryman passing along, and too good a Confederate to attend such a speaking, informed the captain that a large body of Federal troops was near the place appointed, for the protection of Mr. Johnson. But for this opportune information our one hundred artillerists would have fallen victims to the vastly superior forces of the enemy. Next morning Kain was beyond their reach thundering his cannon at the head of Elk River. During the whole time of his absence on this *secret* service not a word could be heard of him and his men, and when they emerged from the woods on Embree and made their appearance at Kingston it was as if they had risen from the dead. Everyone believed they had been captured or destroyed.

In some cave of these mountain solitudes my son hid in the night enough of artillery stores to have furnished a long campaign. He knows where they are. I take it to be near the head of Sequatchee. Captain W. C. Kain promised me an account of this daring campaign, but I have not yet received it. It deserves a place in history. His small force and his artillery artfully roaring forth its thunders from every hill top in that mountain region drove back thousands of the Federal forces and thus delayed for one year the assault upon and capture of Chattanooga.

The artillery was left again at Loudon and more formidable defences erected near it. It was at this time, I believe, that I procured the detail of my son Alexander to go as a detective after the counterfeiters in Putnam county—an account of which has already been given.

This may be the most proper place to introduce to the reader another of my sons,—the junior of his brother, Robert, last mentioned. J. G. McKnitt Ramsey had also been a member of the class in Tusculum College but had not completed his studies when the portentous clouds of war began to hang over our South and Tennessee. From his youth he had been a pattern of sobriety, industry, patient attention to business, always and under all circumstances reliable and efficient. He had assisted me in my shop, compounding my medicine and keeping my books, in my absence and on distant rides prescribing to my patients—often curing them. He also assisted me supervising my farms, my ferry, and my business generally. Essentially practical, he had little of the visionary and enthusiast. He was

fond of good society and indulged his taste for it. With all, at home and abroad, he was the favorite. When it became necessary, he aided me in my financial duties in the Bank of Tennessee, as well as in my Confederate States depository, often acting for me as a teller. After the war commenced I had him detailed to transport my monies from one point to another as army exigencies required. He was thus qualified for almost any of the duties of life, in peace or in war. He never made an error of a figure and his count was invariably correct and accurate. His health was less vigorous than some of his other brothers. He first went into camp at Chattanooga (Anglice, the River of Death), he contracted malarial disease and soon became quite sick and was allowed to return home. During his convalescence he was often detailed to light but responsible duties elsewhere. At length, the service demanding it, he was assigned the duty of commander of the steamer *Jas. Glover*, and was constantly on that boat which transported supplies of subsistence, army stores, etc., from the mouth of French Broad to all points below on the Holston, the Tennessee, Clinch, Hiwassee and Ococe rivers. Some of these points were exposed to sudden incursions of the enemy. . . .

At an earlier page it has been mentioned that I was at Atlanta. One P.M. a telegram was sent me. It found me near Mr. Clayton's bank. (It is here appended.) The operator by mistake, or in the hurry and confusion of the battle raging near him, had put the wrong name to the telegram. It should have been Abner Baker Crozier instead of A. B. C. Ramsey. At first I thought it was my son Robert, who was dangerously wounded, and acted accordingly. I went at once and applied for transportation to the provost marshall. Seeing me in citizen's clothing the clerk said I could not get transportation. I replied I must have transportation. My son was wounded at Chickamauga and had telegraphed for me: that I was a civil officer of the Confederate States and that as a surgeon of its armies I was needed on the field. He refused the second time. I asked for his chief. He pointed to him. I went to him and, presenting my telegram, asked him to read it. He did so and wrote for me this special permission: indorsing it on the telegram, and observing kindly to me that one would help the other where ever I went. It was almost night when I got on the train. There was no light in the car but I recognized the voice of many sympathising friends on board. Arrived at Dalton, I heard the passenger train would go no fur-

ther. I found a lumber train on the point of leaving, laden with material to rebuild a bridge burned the day before. I took a seat on top of the timbers but was directed to get off. I appealed to the sympathies and humanity of the conductor. I and a few others were permitted to remain on the train. We at length reached the burnt bridge. Of course we could go no further by rail. I inquired the moment we stopped for someone who could direct me the road to Mr. Corry's where, according to my telegram, the wounded soldier lay. Mr. Inman, an acquaintance formerly of Dandridge, Tennessee, spoke from the surrounding crowd that he would pass his gate and would be glad to be my pilot. I followed him on foot across the country and through the wood. Coming at length to Catoosa Church where yesterday had been a battle I saw dead horses, broken cavalry wagons, and artillery fragments laying scattered all around. The killed and wounded had been removed before I reached the place.

I went on to Mr. Corry's gate and saw from it my son Robert walking near the house and some other Confederate soldiers standing around it. I went up to where Robert was. He had not yet seen me and I exclaimed, "Why Robert! I heard you had been wounded." "No," said he, and manifesting some emotion added, "It was Cousin Robert Crozier, and he has just died." A cousin of my own in the neighborhood, William Baxter Ramsey, came in and promised to go and procure a coffin. I asked Mrs. Corry to allow us to dig the grave for the gallant soldier who had just expired, in the family burying ground and not at the church yard of Catoosa—where we would be exposed to the enemy's cavalry near and around us. She immediately granted me that permission. On entering the inclosure of this private cemetery the first gravestone I read: "Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Ramsey, Wife of Reverend S. G. Ramsey," etc., etc. On other gravestones I read similar inscriptions *in memoriam* of other members of the family of my cousin Colonel R. A. Ramsey, formerly of Catoosa. Mrs. Corry was his niece and granddaughter of Major Lenoir, father of my own son-in-law. From the moment I read these inscriptions I felt relieved that the remains of my nephew would be interred amongst the ashes of my own kindred and in a Christian cemetery. Here they were interred by moonlight in a quiet forest. Poor Robert Crozier! He was buried by his comrades in arms without the usual military ceremonies. We were in hearing of the enemy's camp and it was thought to be best not to make such a demonstration. We returned in sadness to the house. But soon the comrades were seated around the fire, running bullets, burnishing their

revolvers and their sabers so as to be prepared for another fight tomorrow. Around this fire I heard from the comrades of Lieutenant Crozier the details of the service he had seen and especially those of the conflict in which he lost his life. From these on my return to Atlanta I prepared the obituary notice here inserted as cut from the columns of Sperry's *Atlanta Register*.<sup>2</sup>

I also wrote to the parents of the deceased an account of the sad event. They were then at some hospital of which Dr. Crozier was surgeon. (Perhaps Cassville, Georgia.) In my letter of condolence I alluded to, as the assuasive of their grief, the fact that he was buried in a private Christian graveyard and surrounded by kindred and pious dead.

Early the morning after this interment, my son Robert took me over to the burnt bridge and at once joined his comrades already in their saddles across Chickamauga. Each of them seemed determined to avenge the death of their brave and patriotic lieutenant.

Arrived at the burnt bridge, I saw ambulances coming in with the wounded from battlefields near and around it. I at once determined to remain there and render what surgical aid one man could do. I extemporised a wayside hospital by using for that purpose the woodshed there, now empty. I had straw hauled in from the adjoining farms and the place made as comfortable otherwise as the circumstances around me permitted. There was not a single table, not a single chair, in my improvised hospital. The

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#### OBITUARY

Died Tuesday morning, September 22d [1863], of the effects of wounds received on the nineteenth, Lieutenant R. C. Crozier, elder son of Doctor C. W. Crozier, of Knoxville, Tenn., in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

The deceased joined the Provisional Army of the Confederate States as early as May, 1861, in the company of Captain Paxton's Knoxville Guards, Colonel Cummings' Regiment—was in nearly all of the battles in Kentucky, viz: Wild Cat, Fishing Creek, Richmond, Lexington, Sommerset. In the latter he was taken prisoner and remained in captivity in Camp Chase and Fort Delaware several weeks. As soon as exchanged he went immediately again into active service under Captain Deven's Company D, Colonel Ashby's Second Tennessee Regiment, General Scott's Brigade of Cavalry. After the evacuation of East Tennessee this company fell down towards Chattanooga, and under command of First Lieutenant J. F. McMahon has been in constant and successful skirmishes all around General Bragg's army. On Saturday, the nineteenth, this company was the advance of General Scott's command, and six of them, viz: Lieutenant Crozier, R. M. Ramsey, Jas. Legg, \_\_\_\_\_ Beeler, and \_\_\_\_\_ Ford, and \_\_\_\_\_, being in front came upon the advance of the enemy drawn up in line in force of more than one hundred. Not waiting for the rear to come up, these six, dismounting from their horses, waded a creek, which skirted the field occupied by the Yankees, and ascending its bank fired rapidly on the enemy's line. It is known that nine of them were killed and several others wounded. The enemy in falling back to the woods on the opposite side of the field continued to fire, killing Mr. Ford on the spot and inflicting a fatal wound on Lieutenant Crozier, who was carried off the field by one of his comrades a short distance. . . .

number of the sick and wounded was constantly increasing, arriving some in wagons, ox carts, buggies, ambulances,—some on horseback, some on foot. Some very seriously wounded, in danger from hemorrhage, from comminuted fracture, from lacerated as well as incised wounds; some almost dead from complicated injuries of the joints. Some suffering from tetanus, some moribund from exhaustion and neglect—a sleepless night and the constant jolting of their vehicle over a stony and uneven road in the night. To add to present difficulties and embarrassments I found there were only two assistant surgeons in the camp, and these furnished very poorly with imperfect instruments and a most inadequate supply of medical stores. Fortunately a full supply of whiskey, brandy, wine, and especially coffee had been captured from the enemy the day before and had been brought to the burnt bridge. Many of the wounded must have died in a short time without this opportune capture of cordials and stimulants. I gave my attention first to those in most imminent danger, leaving for a time those whose wounds were more manageable and excited least apprehension on the part of the surgeons and inflicted least pain on the part of the sufferer. I soon found that the three surgeons were breaking down from the constant stooping posture we necessarily had to take, and the labors we had to perform. I telegraphed for more surgical and medical assistants to all points within my reach. Dr. Pride and Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ were sent to me. Soon after, other professional reinforcements came also to our relief. We placed wagon bodies on their side under shade trees, and spreading blankets over the inequalities of the surface of the exterior of a wagon bed, we began to operate with less fatigue to the surgeon and in some cases with less pain to poor patient. We were in railroad communication with the towns above us in Georgia—Ringold, Dalton, Calhoun, Cassville, etc., etc. And as soon as a carload of the wounded had passed through the hands of the surgeons they were placed upon the open flat cars and sent elsewhere. An assistant surgeon generally went on each flat. A bucket or canteen of water was placed within reach of every wounded or sick soldier. Augur holes in the gunwales of the flat were arranged so as to receive a bush or a limb of a shady tree so as to protect the patient from the incessant glare of a September sun and often in that oppressive weather the travel was confined to the evenings and night.

To avoid miasmatic diseases to which surgeons alike with others were exposed anywhere near the Chickamauga (Anglice, "The Stream of Death"), whose paludal exhalations are always productive of febrile dis-

ease, we found it necessary to remove our wayside hospital to more healthy stations higher up the country. Dr. Pride—a victim to professional zeal and humanity—amongst the surgeons. Let me here bear witness to his patriotism, his skill, his constancy under the fatiguing pressure of that extraordinary service, under extraordinary exposure to malaria, to discomfort, to perpetual mental and physical labor. I saw it all daily and on one occasion, when taking charge of a platform car filled with wounded men for Atlanta, admonished him how susceptible a physician practicing on the heights around Maryville would be to disease under the poisonous atmospheric influences of the deadly Chickamagua. He had a chill next day and apprehensive of the issue took the cars for Macon where he died. I prepared a suitable obituary of the deceased which was published in Sperry's paper and which I hoped to find and append hereto.

My other son F. A. Ramsey remained with Bragg's army watching the movements of the enemy and for a suitable opportunity to join any Confederate forces that might be organized to return to East Tennessee and recover Knoxville. Crozier was at Atlanta and McKnitt was now at Bristol; Alexander and Robert around the enemy's camps in the neighborhood of Chattanooga—all of them burning with an ardent desire, common to them, to me, and all my East Tennessee co-refugees to expell the invaders and rescue our families from the domination of our enemies. This began to be talked of as the policy of the administration. I urged it by letters to President Davis. The recovery of East Tennessee was the only hope of preventing the bisection of the Confederacy—an event which, as all knew, it could not survive.