

CHAPTER XVI

Some Atrocities and Some Adjustments

It is a relief though in the midst of such heavy and oppressive bereavements to receive the cordial condolence and sympathy of others. Such relief the survivors received abundantly at Bristol. Reverend James King, a Presbyterian pastor there, Reverend George Eagleton, a persecuted and almost martyred refugee from Jefferson county, Reverend John Doak, another exiled preacher from Greene, were all now at Bristol and called daily at the Lancaster House to offer to our afflicted and bereaved family the consolations of our holy religion. The resident and transient population of Bristol—now full of men and women suffering from similar inflictions—all came in to mingle their griefs, their tears, their sorrows and their consolations with our own. Before my arrival there, Captain Kain, then Confederate provost marshal there, had politely offered his headquarters in the Lancaster House for the accommodation, occupancy, and use of my destitute family. No supplies of household convenience and comfort could be had. But the resident ladies of Bristol, whose supplies had become scanty, soon supplied the deficiency. One sent a bedstead, another some chairs, another plates, another knives and forks, some one thing and some another. Colonel Goodson sent some wood and corn. Mr. _____, a printer, sent us every morning milk and butter. Our son Robert had left his boy Wesley; we extemporized him into a cook, house servant, steward, and woodcutter and we were soon fixed up comfortably if not tastefully. Everybody called to see the pilgrims, exiles, refugees, etc., and extended every courtesy and kindness possible. Amongst others Miss Sarah Boyd and Mrs. Cynthia Boyd came to Bristol from up towards Abingdon to see us. They had been close neighbors of ours and we appreciated this Christian and kind sympathizing visit under our afflictions and misfortunes. Mr. Boyd had been with me at Atlanta.

While at Bristol we heard of and saw many Tennesseans escaping from Federal aggression and insult at home. I can take time to mention only one or two. Reverend George Eagleton, in charge of the Presbyterian

Church near New Market, was warned to desist from preaching. He continued, however, to discharge as usual the important duties of his holy calling. Sunday night he was called up from his bed, was seized by some ruffians, taken some distance from his house, ordered to take off his clothes as they intended to inflict a severe scourging upon his naked back. He refused to denude himself. They proceeded to do this for him and to wear out several hickory withes upon his nude person. With the stumps of the withes left in their hands they struck him on the head and across his face till he fell unconscious. He bled freely, which probably restored him to consciousness, and perceiving how badly he was mutilated he took the direction towards Dr. Blackburn's, one of his elders and neighbors. The doctor dressed his wounds, put some clothes upon him, and sent him a few miles up the country—advising him to get out of his neighborhood before daylight for if it were known he had done anything for his relief he himself would be exposed to a similar infliction or his house would be burned. With great effort and caution he made out at length to reach Bristol where I met him and saw deep wounds and scars still on his forehead and face. His only offense was that he preached in a rebel church.

Another case was that of Miss Turnley, daughter of J. C. Turnley, Esquire, near Dandridge, Tennessee. Miss Turnley was a highly educated lady and extensively known. In 1863 she was a tutoress in some female academy in Ohio. Her father was a Southern citizen, a lawyer and of good character. The daughter was of the opposite politics. She obtained the necessary passports and returned home. Arrived there she found his property destroyed and he himself banished into exile. He was then at Bristol. She determined to follow him, and her little brother drove her buggy and they arrived late at night and stopped at Greeneville. She was the guest of one of the most respectable families in that town. During the night a band of ruffians entered the house, procured a candle, inquired for Miss Turnley's room, entered it, told her she was their prisoner and must accompany them to camp. She replied she was not accustomed to make her toilet before gentlemen and begged them to leave her alone while she dressed. The leader refused to comply with this reasonable request and the poor girl had to get up and dress before the leader and his gang. They took charge of her baggage, ordered her fine horse from the stable, the chief mounted him and ordered her to get also upon his horse behind him and all started off in the dark. They went some miles to the house of a citizen whose wife happened to know Miss Turnley, left her there, and de-

parted saying that their leader would soon return. Soon after their departure the explosion of a gun was heard and not long after the gang returned bringing with them their leader badly wounded. He was taken into the house. The rest of the bandits disappeared in the darkness and were not heard of afterwards. The chief bandit was very penitent, asked Miss Turnley to forgive him for what he had done and for what he had intended to do further. He restored to her also her horse, the money he had taken from her satchel, and also made her take all that he had of his own—craved her pardon again and soon after became speechless and died. While the culprit lived, Miss Turnley gave every assistance to the wounded man and told him she forgave him but that he must look to a higher power for forgiveness. It was believed that some chivalrous rebel had pursued the ruffians from Greeneville and shot him. It is also possible that one of his associates in crime, dissatisfied with his portion of the spoils or perhaps disgusted with the baseness and infamy of the whole transaction, had assassinated his leader in crime and guilt.

Miss Anna Law, a coexile of my wife, was another case. She was a very true rebel and was suspected of course of communicating with the patriot army. She was arrested, brought to Knoxville, held and treated as a prisoner, watched, searched and expatriated. While we were at Bristol she composed those beautiful verses, afterwards published in the obituary notice of Arthur's death in the *Christian Observer*. . . .

I heard every day a recital of similar atrocities perpetrated by our enemies—superciliously, arrogantly, presumptuously claiming a higher civilization—the victims of which were my personal friends and acquaintances. I became so indignant as sometimes to feel (unchristian as it was) a spirit of retaliation. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But our Savior said, "I say unto you love your enemies and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." This is the highest proof that the Christian religion is divine. It is certainly not of this world.

But public duties required my services elsewhere. I kept myself in constant communication by telegraph with Atlanta. I found it necessary to return to my office as depository. I tore myself, therefore, from my family at Bristol and went south. Taking the train I got to Staunton River. The bridge there was still unfinished. Passengers going or coming got out of the cars there on either side and were allowed a few minutes to walk over the bridge in its unfinished condition,—a mere skeleton, sills and sleepers without a plank or floor, with perhaps a space of eighty feet between the

passengers and the river below you. I had, besides, a small money box in my hand. The young men all passed me on the bridge. The whistle had sounded and I must not be left. At the center there was an opening or chasm perhaps fifty or eighty feet across with a single streamer on which to walk. I kept the erect posture half across this chasm—the slightest vertigo or the smallest departure from the erect posture or the center of gravity and I would have been precipitated into the river below me. I realized this all. I steadied myself, set my money box on the streamer, got astride of it, pushed the box before me and thus crossed the bridge safely. A Confederate soldier helped me onto the car while on the point of starting. I have ever considered that in this crossing I underwent the greatest danger of my whole life.

Arrived at Atlanta I found the Federal army ready to invest the city. The wounded and sick had already been sent out to the interior hospitals and I could see other preparations to evacuate the place. I called again at the headquarters and the general commanding assured me he would give me timely warning of his movements. I made some heavy army payments, balanced my books, and packed up everything. Next morning the general sent one of his aides early to me saying that the enemy's shells were already falling within the city. I asked for a guard to come immediately to the Bank of Fulton. Mr. Cleage procured a dray. I put my assets on it—put them on the express car. With my guard I entered it, took leave of my friends and bade adieu to the Gate City. We were soon at Decatur, the first station. Here I noticed that while waiting for wood and water the enemy was erecting a battery on an eminence east or northeast of the village. I called the attention of the conductor to the battery. The whistle was sounded sharply and the train was at once in motion and before we had gone a mile the battery opened upon Decatur. We had made a narrow escape. During our trip some delays had occurred and we did not reach Augusta till nearly daylight. I waited at the depot till I could procure a dray. I took the depository to the bank of Mr. Metcalf who was also a Confederate States depository. The doors were not of course yet opened. I put the chests on the steps of his vaultroom door, placed my guard around them and went and got my breakfast and returned and waited there till the cashier arrived and let me in. My funds were kept afterwards in this same vault of Mr. Metcalf, though my books, office papers and letters were kept in the counting room of General T. W. Fleming—on _____ Street near the river. Besides being a depository

he was also a commission merchant. His counting room had been extemporized by my cashier, Dr. Strong, as his place of business for our branch. He, however, deposited its money, coin, and issues with Mr. Metcalf. This now became the headquarters of all our Tennessee friends now in the South.¹ Amongst others my wife's nephew, E. W. Crozier, came in from the camp sick. He remained till he had recovered.

While at Bristol I had determined if the enemy got possession of Atlanta and should threaten Augusta I would move the two offices I held to Columbia first and afterwards to Charlotte, North Carolina, and there establish for a time at least the Confederate States depository and the Knoxville branch. It had become evident that Sherman's march to the sea would sooner or later take place, and in my own opinion Charlotte would be the last place in the South which could be held, and if I had to be captured or be forced to surrender I would as soon this should occur at Charlotte as any other point. When, therefore, Macon and Savannah fell it became evident that Augusta, vulnerable as it was both by land and water, must also fall before the invading army. Some of us had one small ray of hope that if the Federal forces should be so scattered and distributed as to favor the policy we would endeavor to strike through the intermediate country and carry our assets to the Trans-Mississippi, penetrate the best way we could, reach the headquarters of General Kirby Smith and thus escape to Texas or Mexico and thus keep the Confederate cause alive and its flag unfurled. Such a subdivision of the Federal forces though had not yet occurred and perhaps would not, and our funds were accordingly taken first to Columbia and then to Charlotte. I had written to the secretary of the treasury to give me permission to occupy the mint. He replied that that institution, buildings, vault and all, had been transferred to the Confederate States navy department and was now under the control of Captain Ramsey of the Confederate Navy. I called to see this officer

¹ From Augusta, Dr. Ramsey wrote to his son, Crozier, on September 1, 1864, that "The news are discouraging today from Atlanta, and I am on the point of leaving by this evening's train for Macon to bring away the specie of our branch to Augusta or perhaps to Charlotte. I will try to induce Torbett to bring off all his assets too. A big fight will come off at Jonesboro, Georgia today or soon. Crozier, if any raid threatens Bristol, let your Ma and the rest come in the direction of Charlotte in time to escape it." Later, Dr. Ramsey added a note to this letter: "This raid, though then apprehended by me at Augusta, did not take place till near the end of that year (1864). I was anxious all the time at the exposed and defenseless condition of my family then at Bristol. On this account I had removed them to Charlotte, though no entreaties of ours could induce our son Crozier to come more to the interior. I did not mention at the proper place that, as herein stated, I did go to Macon and persuaded Colonel Torbett to transport all his assets as well as the specie of the Knoxville branch from Macon, which he did."

at the mint in Charlotte, his headquarters, and was allowed to have part of his vault—the rooms all being occupied for other purposes. The assets had been temporarily placed by Mr. Fisher, cashier of our mother bank, Dr. Strong, my own cashier, Mr. Wilcox, cashier at _____, and other officials of the Bank of Tennessee in the vault of _____ on Tryon Street. Afterwards they were moved to the mint. I opened my depository by the kindness of Colonel Williams, cashier of the Bank of Charlotte, in his banking house.

In September (?) I went to Bristol for my family. While there I went below to the headquarters of General Vaughn and met several of the other survivors of the disastrous battle of Piedmont where poor Arthur fell, and learned some details of the fight I had not known before. The general had recovered from his wound. In my absence to Georgia he and Captain Gammon and others had called to see my family at Bristol. Captain Gammon said to my wife that Arthur was the favorite of his company and the idol of his officers, that when the order came to him to dismount his men and take the cars for Piedmont, he and his officers all wished Arthur, on account of his defect of vision and of his extreme youth, to remain behind and take care of the horses. The gallant boy replied he did not join the army to take care of horses and he declined that service. They afterwards, when taking the train, earnestly renewed the request for him not to go with them. He still persisted in refusing to remain in camp while others were going to Virginia to fight. They had to yield to his own preferences. After these dismounted cavalry left the cars a fatiguing march and countermarch had to be endured before they could reach the advancing enemy who outnumbered the Confederates in the proportion of four to one. General Williams was in chief command and determined to fight where he was, notwithstanding the disparity of numbers and the unfavorable nature of the ground and his position. General Vaughn dissented and advised him to fall back to _____ a more favorable position. The enemy advanced in full force and the battle took place. Our general fell early in the fight. General Vaughn was wounded but was able to conduct the retreat. Captain Gammon and his command received no orders to fall back and received the assault of the enemy in full force. They maintained their ground stubbornly, and lost, of course, a disproportionate number of men. Arthur was loading and firing in the most exposed part of the hotly contested field. Captain Gammon was near him when a cannon ball struck Arthur's leg near the ankle and he fell.

Though wounded himself the captain bore him a short distance to the root of a tree. He could be carried no further. But as our forces fell back and passed the tree where he lay he asked them not to let him be left so as to fall into the hands of the Yankees. Alas, such is the fortune of war! He did fall into their hands, was captured on the field and with two hundred fifty-four other wounded were scattered about the neighborhood in extemporized hospitals and left to the care of *two* army United States surgeons. This was the extreme of cruelty, inhumanity and dishonor on the part of a *victorious* enemy. Honor, humanity, civilization, would have assigned to the relief of two hundred fifty-four badly wounded soldiers left on the field where they fell gloriously and bravely fighting to the last, at least twenty-five competent surgeons. It will remain as a stigma upon the character of General David Hunter,² the Federal commander, that when thus victorious he could spare only two surgeons to attend to the vanquished and wounded. It was unofficerlike and exhibits little of genuine courage, magnanimity or chivalry. His epaulettes should be torn from his shoulders and tramped upon into the ground.

These indignant remarks will be fully excused when I add that though Arthur's leg was splintered and nearly shot off on Sunday the fifth of June his leg was not amputated till to the ____th. Mrs. Ramsey, hearing the name of the kind family near _____ to whose house he was taken and where he died wrote to them to ascertain the details of his sufferings. . . . It was so ordered in the merciful Providence of God that one of our Knoxville neighbors, Wm. Engles, a venerable member of our church, was now in the neighborhood of the battleground, a refugee from vandalism at home. . . . He, Christian-like, visited him on his death bed, prayed with him, pointed him to Jesus our Mediator and Savior, and saw him decently interred at _____, Augusta County, Virginia.

From others, too, who survived the fight I obtained similar accounts of his gallantry and his devotion to the Confederate service. I met in Georgia a Mr. Taylor of Jefferson County with whom Arthur had boarded while at Mr. Wilson's school. Like most of the citizens of wealth and character he had expoused the Southern cause and was now with me a co-refugee and an exile. He refused to take any compensation for Arthur's

² Dr. Ramsey left a blank for the name of the Federal commander. Major-General David Hunter commanded the United States' forces in the Lynchburg campaign, May 26-June 29, 1864, and was in active command on the field at the engagement at Piedmont, Virginia, on July 5. Brigadier General William E. Jones, C.S.A., was killed on the field. *Official Records*, series 1, vol. 37, part 1, pp. 94-95.

boarding. He delighted in his company and that was compensation enough. He was so amiable, so polite, so mannerly, so diligent in his studies. He said further that Arthur always read his Bible, and especially on Sundays when his other boarders were visiting about, and that he was the best and most agreeable boy he ever saw, and that on one occasion when some Union men were depredating upon Southern men in his neighborhood he raised some volunteers and went in pursuit. Arthur proposed to lay down his books and go with them after these offenders. Mr. Taylor gave him one of his rifles and he went along, driving the culprits back into Sevier county. He shed tears when I told him Arthur was shot down with a rifle in his hand.

Arthur was under age when he died. I had not of course given him any of my real estate but had devised to him in my will an excellent farm above me on Holston. After his death I determined to give that farm on which to found an asylum for the education and support of the children of such Tennessee soldiers as had lost their lives in the Confederate service. When in March of 1869 I visited Knoxville I found that that farm had, with nearly all my real estate, been sold during Yankee rule there and was still alienated. If I should recover it, the sacred object to which I had consecrated it, shall still be carried into effect. It is a relief to even hope it may some day be accomplished.

Arthur had two other brothers in the same fight with him. One of them, Alexander, was taken prisoner and was the same day hurried off to Camp Morton in Indiana. The details of his march there and of his imprisonment will be given on a future page. The other brother Robert, captain of some scouts, was in another part of the field on horseback and of course not present when Arthur fell. After our forces retired he heard that Alexander was a prisoner and Arthur left on the field dangerously wounded. He immediately turned back and in the darkness of the night went over the battleground and the surrounding neighborhood where the wounded Confederates were but not a word could he hear of his wounded brother. His intention was to rescue him at the cost of his life. During his rambles he crossed some river twice, but could not find him. Next day he overtook our men, who being organized and reinforced were now in vigorous pursuit of the enemy, overtook them at Liberty, Virginia, pushed them through Liberty so earnestly as not to allow them time to plunder the non-combatants. His sister Sue was looking on the fight and route of the Yankees from the veranda of the house where she was with her aunt, Mrs.

Crozier, and her children looking on. It was fun and frolic to Robert who was avenging the disasters at Piedmont a few days before. It was as they passed "Blue Ridge" that General Vaughn telegraphed me at Atlanta "Robert safe, Alexander a prisoner. Arthur wounded," etc. Robert pursued them nearly to Lynchburg and eventually across the Blue Ridge into the valley.

While at General Vaughn's headquarters at Zollicoffer I met there, besides others, Mrs. Vaughn. The story of her wrongs ought to be preserved. It places in agreeable contrast Southern and Northern character. I can here only say by way of comment that if General Lee had captured Mrs. Meade in Pennsylvania and she, after her capture, had denounced the Confederacy and its civil and military officers and their measures *ad libitum*, even then the wife of General Meade would have been treated with the respect and consideration due to a lady. If she desired to be sent to the United States from the conquered territory General Lee would have sent her out, not in an old filthy boxcar, but in a splendid coach and four and under a guard of honor and the guard of honor would have been under the command of an admitted gentleman. What has become of the chivalry of the grand *old* army of the once United States? Contrast, too, the conduct of General Sam Houston when he captured Santa Anna with that of the United States authorities when President Davis was their prisoner. Although trained in the backwoods of Tennessee and at the end of the last century, General Houston had the manliness and the magnanimity to send his prisoner to Washington in a retinue of gentlemen with not one circumstance about him that was humiliating, much less degrading. What has become of the lessons taught to modern American heroes by George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Robert E. Lee? Where is the civilization of our earlier periods? And echo answers, "Where?"

I left Zollicoffer and returned to Bristol impressed with the most painful apprehensions of the humiliating, degrading, oppressive, unjust and cruel treatment in store for the South should it be subjugated by the low-flung political leaders of Mr. Lincoln and the arbitrary and despotic chieftains of his army. These apprehensions I have lived to see realized. Political leaders, hatched into consequence by the accidents and contingencies of a revolution, army commanders hatched into power and authority by the sunshine of a tyrant's favor or the corrupt patronage of a venal department of government—what can be expected from them but misrule,

tyranny, injustice, violence and wrong, venality, corruption and crime!
Oh my country to what depths of infamy and ruin hath thou fallen!

“And in that deep, a lower deep,”

“Still threatening to devour us, opens wide.”

A short time after this we left Bristol for the South. General Ramsey was still in the hospital then under the care of Dr. F. A. Ramsey. I advised him to come south with us. But he still hoped to be exchanged and enter upon his military services again and concluded to remain. I parted with him in sorrow. His lumbago it distressed us to see. Though still a young man he did not stand straight and erect. Using a staff he walked with us at night to the depot. I left him alone a minute with his mother. When I returned both were affected to tears. Our parting was painful. He promised to come to see us at Charlotte and we said good-by! At Liberty we spent a day with Colonel Crozier and his family. Next day we took the train. At Burkesville Junction I recalled to mind the mental sufferings and the parental griefs I had experienced there in July. We were soon at Charlotte. That place was crowded. We spent the night with a kinsman, Colonel B. W. Alexander—the next day with the family of a cousin of mine, Dr. Moses Winslow Alexander, now deceased. They were all dressed in mourning for the Confederate dead of their connections. At church the whole congregation wore black. Next day, leaving Sue at Colonel Alexander's, Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Breck and myself went to the country. We inquired for boarding but the country had scarcely subsistence for itself. We called at another kinsman, John Ramsey Alexander. They were all too in mourning for their brave son Captain Francis Ramsey Alexander who had fallen at Petersburg. We stopped at night at Mrs. A. B. Alexander's, the bereaved widow of another kinsman. Her sons were all in the southern army—as chaplain, surgeon, and commissary. One of her daughters about eleven years old and herself constituted her whole family except Mr. and Mrs. Chilton, an aged couple, refugees from Tennessee. The house was large, some better supplied with provisions and servants than we had yet met with. Mrs. Alexander proposed to board us for Mrs. Breck's services as the governess of her daughter Charlotte. I had to stay, of course, in Charlotte to attend to my depository and bank

correspondence. Five nights in the week I was with Sue at Colonel Alexander's. The remaining two I was with my family at Mrs. Alexander's in the country, and to be more with them I often went out Friday night instead of Saturday night.

Once I took Mrs. Ramsey down to York District, South Carolina to see our daughter and her children—the family of our son F. Alexander Ramsey, now a prisoner at Camp Morton. I left Mrs. Ramsey there. While there she took sick and I was written to. I found her better but I brought her back to North Carolina. Confederate soldiers from Tennessee called frequently to see me in Charlotte and my family in the country. My pecuniary resources were small and daily becoming smaller. My salary was \$1,500 as depository and much smaller as president of a *bank on wheels*. But I was never so poor as to say to a transient Tennessee Confederate “No!” if he needed money. I was often in the hospital at Charlotte as surgeon, and took some professional cases in town and country. Mrs. Ramsey wished to employ her time more usefully and actively accepted an invitation from Mr. Theopilus Cannon near Concord to come there and give lessons to his children. He sent his carriage to take her and her trunks to Cabarrus. He was an elder of Poplar Tent and near to the church. She had been thoroughly educated at Salem, North Carolina, and was fully competent to discharge the duties and functions of a teacher. Besides, she was as loyal to the South as I was and could not hesitate to submit to annoyances and discomforts imposed by our exile. I never heard her murmur or complain. Throughout her whole life she had had not plenty only but profusion. But now, as bold as Julius Caesar and as calm as a Christian martyr she faced poverty and destitution with fortitude and resignation. One day before she left Mrs. Alexander's who should step in but our son Robert. He had been sent by General Wheeler from the mountains of Virginia to rest and recruit his horses in the grain counties of North Carolina. Next day he came on to Charlotte to see me. He overtook on the way a co-refugee from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Captain John, going also to Charlotte. They were soon well acquainted and came opposite to the office inquiring if I was within. I went to the door. Robert in a heavy winter overcoat captured from a Yankee I could scarcely recognize. It was a most agreeable surprise. I returned with him to the country. Several of his comrades joined us in the evening—amongst others Pryor Harris, ——— Morris, and others belonging to the company of scouts. They amused and interested us with a recital of their scouts and raids at and

above Knoxville and old Mecklenburg the winter before. I do not mention them here. But must all these brave men did nothing which was not soldierly, chivalrous and honorable.

The same morning on which Mrs. Ramsey left to go to her new engagement in Cabarrus I saw J. H. Crozier passing up the road. He was without saddle or bridle, only a halter. His shoes were worn out. I said to him, "Jonny, you must be out of money." He replied, "So I am." I handed him \$20.00. I wanted him to stop at Mrs. Alexander's but as I had told him his aunt had left for Mr. Cannon's he preferred to follow her carriage track and overtake her. He went on—did overtake her, and spent the night with her there.³ Other soldiers from Knoxville and from Tennessee frequently called at Mr. Cannon's and met a cordial welcome.

³ Mrs. Ramsey began a diary on the day that she entered on her new duties. She kept it with some regularity for a couple of years, and thereafter she wrote in it intermittently for some years. The last dated entry is September 23, 1885. A number of undated reminiscences relate to her experiences in Knoxville and Mecklenburg in 1863 and 1864.

The first entry was dated March 6, 1865: "Arrived here at Mr. Cannon's this evening. My son, J. G. McK, came with me. This is a pleasant place, kind and hospitable people. After dark my nephew John Crozier came. We were very glad to see him. The last time was at our own home almost two years. Then my dear son Arthur was with us. My heart yearned to this young boy. His presence brought up many sad recollections, and I wish I could do something for him. It is little I can do now for our soldiers. He was riding without a saddle, had no overcoat, was cheerful."

A typed copy of the "Journal of Mrs. J. G. M. Ramsey" is in the McClung Collection of the Lawson McGhee Library.