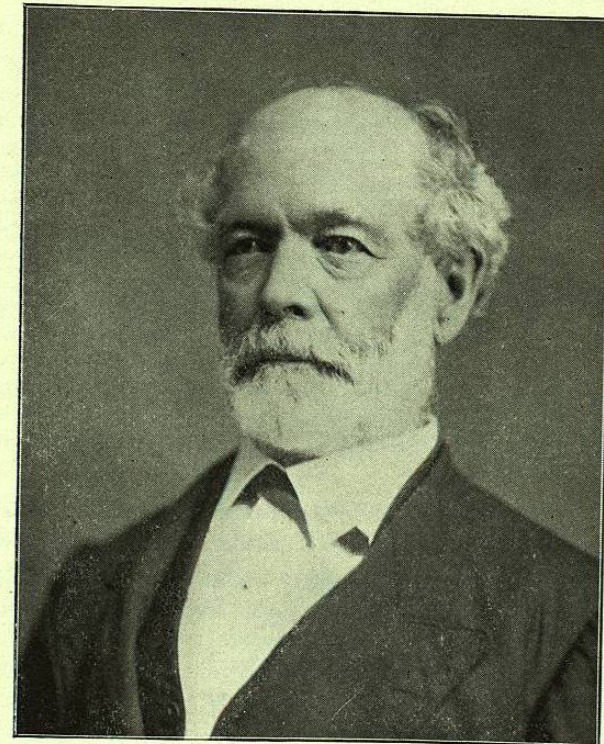


### CHAPTER XIII.

Leave Petersburg for Jackson, Miss.—Visit Home—My Division Composed of the Brigades of Gens. Maxey, Evans, and McNair—Extraordinary Correspondence between Gen. Johnston and President Davis—Movements to Attack Grant at Vicksburg—Fall of Vicksburg—Retreat to Jackson—Siege of Jackson—Visit Home—Negro Troops Surround the House—Narrow Escape—Vandalism—Johnston Takes Command of the Army of Tennessee—Polk in Command of Army of Mississippi—A Court of Inquiry That Was Not Held—My Division at Meridian—President Davis—Jackson Burned—Sherman's Advance on Meridian—Ordered to Mobile—Polk Crossing Tombigbee River—He Is Slow to Move—Go to Demopolis—Mr. Fournier—Sent to Lauderdale—Tuscaloosa—Montevallo—Reach Rome—Fight at Rome—Join Gen. Johnston at Cassville.

ON Wednesday, June 3, 1863, I started in accordance with orders from Petersburg to report to Gen. J. E. Johnston in Mississippi. I arrived in Jackson on the 10th. Next day reported for duty; but as I had not been home since I joined the army, and the service was not pressing, got permission to visit my family. I went by stage to Yazoo City, and by chance met my neighbor, F. A. Metcalf, there, and together we crossed the Yazoo bottoms. Riding horseback, sixty-five miles the last day, I reached my home on Deer Creek at 11 p.m., and found my mother, sister, and little daughter, aged nearly eight years, all well. I remained at home Monday, the 15th, and started back on the 16th. Before I reached home Mr. Bowie, my agent, had gone to Georgia with seventy-eight of my negro servants, leaving twenty-five here to cultivate a corn crop. I joined my division, composed of the brigades of Gens. Maxey, McNair, and Evans, on the 24th, encamped at Mrs. Carraway's, in Madison County, near Livingston; put Gen. Evans in arrest by order of Gen. Johnston. I was in camp the 25th and the two days following.

Before proceeding any further in reference to military matters in Mississippi, I will give some rich correspondence that took place between Gen. Johnston and President Davis and which I knew nothing about until months after it occurred. Here it is. (See page 195, War Records, Serial 36.)



JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON.



CANTON, MISS., June 9, 1863. }  
Via Montgomery, June 10. }

His Excellency, President Davis.

It has been suggested to me that the troops in this department are very hostile to officers of Northern birth, and that on that account Maj. Gen. French's arrival will weaken instead of strengthening us. I beg you to consider that *all* the general officers of Northern birth are on duty in this department. There is now a want of major generals (discipline). It is important to avoid any cause of further discontent. J. E. JOHNSTON.

THE ANSWER.

RICHMOND, VA., June 11, 1863.

Gen. J. E. Johnston.

Your dispatch received. Those who suggest that the arrival of Gen. French will produce discontent among the troops because of his Northern birth are not probably aware that he is a citizen of Mississippi, was a wealthy planter until the Yankees robbed him; and, before the Confederate States had an army, was the chief of ordnance and artillery in the force Mississippi raised to maintain her right of secession. As soon as Mississippi could spare him he was appointed a brigadier general in the Provisional Army of the Confederate States, and has frequently been before the enemy where he was the senior officer. If malignity should undermine him, as it had another, you are authorized to notify him of the fact and to relieve him, communicating it to me by telegram.

Surprised by your remark as to the general officers of Northern birth, I turned to the register, and find that a large majority of the number are elsewhere than in the Department of Mississippi and eastern Louisiana.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

Men of Northern birth who held high rank in the Confederacy: Samuel Cooper, general, New Jersey; Josiah Gorgas, chief of ordnance, Pennsylvania; John C. Pemberton, general, Pennsylvania; Charles Clark, general and Governor of Mississippi, Ohio; Daniel Ruggles, general, Massachusetts; Walter H. Stevens, general, New York; Julius A. DeLagnel, New Jersey; John R. Cooke, general, Missouri; R. S. Ripley, general, Ohio; Hoffman Stevens, general, Connecticut; Samuel G. French, general, New Jersey; Bushrod R. Johnson, general, Ohio; James L. Alcorn, general, Illinois (was Governor and United States Senator); Danville Leadbetter, general, Maine; Archibald Gracie, general, New York; William McComb, general, Pennsylvania; Otho French Strahl, general, Ohio; Daniel M. Frost, general, New York; Albert G. Blanchard, general, Massachusetts; Johnson K. Duncan, general, Pennsylvania; Albert Pike, general, Massachusetts; Daniel H. Reynolds, general, Ohio; Edward Aylesworth Perry, general, Massachusetts; Francis A.



Shoup, general, Indiana; Martin L. Smith, general, New York; Franklin Gardner, general, New York.

A brief sketch of these men was published in the *Atlanta Constitution* by Prof. J. T. Derry. The number is twenty-six, and twelve of them were educated at West Point. They believed in the right of States to secede, and, owing allegiance to the States where they lived or wished to reside, they cast their lot with the South.

July 1, 1863. Moved to some springs on the Vernon and Brownsville road.

2d. Moved at 4 A.M.; marched through Brownsville. I slept under a tree last night, but have an abandoned house to-night.

3d. Rode over to meet Gen. Johnston. There were present Gens. Loring, W. H. T. Walker, Jackson, and myself. If there be any one thing in this part of the country more difficult than all others, it is to find a person who knows the roads ten miles from his home. *Nine* hours were spent in vainly attempting to get accurate information from the citizens respecting the roads and streams. But little could be learned of the country on either side of the Big Black that was satisfactory, because it was so contradictory.

July 4. Anniversary of a declaration that was read eighty-seven years ago, and which awakened a benighted world to the fact that man was born with certain inalienable rights. All was still in the direction of Vicksburg. What does it portend? No firing there yet, and it is 12 M. But there is always something to mar one's pleasure or disturb his rest, for now came the news that the enemy had crossed Messenger's Ferry, on the Big Black.

5th. Remained in camp. Some skirmishing on the Big Black. The order of Gen. Johnston to cross the Big Black and attack Grant's new line was issued. I soon after received news of the surrender of Vicksburg, and it was determined to fall back toward Jackson. The enemy's camp fires extend about three miles on the other side of the stream.

6th. My division in advance. Moved by Queen's Hill Church to some ponds near Clinton. The day was very hot and the dust simply awful. I took breakfast with J. E. Davis, brother of the President.

8th. We reached Jackson yesterday at 2 P.M. Enemy at Clinton. I rode around with Gen. Johnston to examine the line. It is miserably located and not half completed.

9th. This morning I was awakened at 2 A.M. to take my division to the trenches.

10th. All day there has been heavy fighting. In front of Gen. Evans the enemy has got so near that they render it difficult to man the guns. . . .

11th. The order of the divisions of the army that encircle Jackson, from the river above the city to the river below, is as follows, beginning on the right: Loring, Walker, French, and Breckinridge. Fighting commenced early this morning, and the firing was rapid all along the line. About 11

A.M. we drove the enemy from their lines and burned a number of houses that they occupied.

From now on to the 16th the usual occurrences of cannonading, dismounting pieces, fighting all the time, continued. Cotton bales were set on fire that were used for breastworks, flags of truce to bury the dead passed, shells are falling all over the town. The Governor of the State, Pettus, is in the city about the capitol. He goes over the river at night to prevent being captured. He believes the main object of the expedition is to capture *him*. Well, he has his early wishes gratified. The Yankees have set their feet on the sacred soil of his domain! Where are his double-barrel shotguns to ambuscade the Yankees?

16th. Met at Gen. Johnston's to consider the order of evacuating the town. At 10 P.M. troops were withdrawn from the trenches, and at 1 A.M. the advanced skirmishers. We reached Brandon at 8 A.M. Two of Evans's men were left, accidentally, on the skirmish line with some amateur soldiers, and in the morning when they awoke they found themselves alone. The enemy did not discover our departure until late.

While in camp near Brandon I was taken sick with remittent fever, and was granted a leave of absence and left for Columbus, Ga., and made my home with Judge G. E. Thomas. When my leave was out I received a dispatch from Gen. J. E. Johnston to remain in Columbus, as I would be required as a witness for him before a Court of Inquiry to be held in Atlanta.

I remained in Columbus and at the Warm Springs most of the month of September, and then went to Enterprise, Miss.

October 19. Received a dispatch to move to Meridian, prepared to take the field. Found the President at the hotel, and had an interview with him alone.

November 7. Moved my command to Meridian.

14th. Started to make a visit to my family at my home in Washington County. I took with me Lieut. James R. Yerger, one of my aids, and Levi, one of my servants.

16th. We left Canton with two cavalymen as a guard; crossed the Yazoo at Yazoo City. About sunset we reached Col. Fall's plantation, on Deer Creek. The enemy had passed there the day previous. Crossing the creek at Judge Ruck's plantation (Judge Ruck is my aid's grandfather), we met an old negro man leading a pony over the bridge. Lieut. Yerger knew the old man, and asked what he was doing with the pony. He said the Yankees were on the creek about three miles below my house, and he was saving his pony. In the dark we were not recognized by the old servant.



But for meeting this old servant we should have ridden into the camp of the Yankees. After a while we recrossed the creek and rode on up to Eleck Yerger's, called him up, and slept in his parlor. He confirmed the negro's statement about the Yankees being on the other side of the creek. I got a cup of coffee, or something else (think it was the latter), and rode on up the creek till we got opposite my house.

It is the 19th of November. Indian summer: the sky hazy, and a drowsy sleepiness rested over the landscape. Seeing a crow resting himself on the front gatepost, I dismounted and crossed to my home. I found mother, sister, and my little Tillie all well. They were surprised and delighted to see us, and then they were frightened also. They said the Yankees were a mile or two above us, and two miles below us.

20th. I put a faithful male slave on the upper gallery to watch the roads, and especially to report if any dust was raised on the road, and then I was content for the day. However I thought the "Yanks" were too near, and that my being at home would be made known, so I ordered the horses to be at the door at 5 P.M. to ride down the creek to a neighbor's ten miles below, and the family to come down next day to where I was going. I was implored not to go, but I resisted entreaties. We rode across the plantation to Metcalf's house. My servant knocked at the door and received no response. Mrs. Metcalf came out by a side door and exclaimed: "Gen. French, you must not cross the creek. Look at the camp fires of the Yankees just in front of you!" I asked for Mr. Metcalf, and was told he had fled to the woods. His agent was on the fence watching for the "Yanks." It was now quite dark. Notwithstanding all this advice, we forded the creek and I went forward to reconnoiter. I found no pickets, so, it being late, we went into the woods and rested for the night.

21st. We mounted our horses and rode out to reconnoiter. We met Mr. Metcalf. I learned that two white Yankee officers and a company of colored soldiers surrounded my house about ten minutes after we left it. So as we were crossing the field east, this company was in the field coming up from the south. The negroes surrounded the dwelling, and the officers entered to capture me. They were told I had left. This did not satisfy them. My sister took a light and went with one officer and let him search all the rooms and closets upstairs. Then she told him where the steps were, and insisted that he should go up into the cockloft to be sure that I was not there. He declined, saying it was an unpleasant duty he was sent to perform, and apologized for the trouble he had given the family. When my sister returned to the sitting room the other officer had my United States army uniform coat in his hand. He told her it was a contraband article, and as such he would take it. She replied: "I know you are going to steal it, and to relieve your conscience from remorse I will give you the coat. It is my brother's, but he would scorn to wear it with those badges on it." He declined to accept it, but as a contraband article he would take it. She then asked him if contraband articles were the property of the individual, and he answered: "I shall make a report of my visit to the commanding officer." During these proceedings the "First Colored Native Mississippi Cavalry" stole two mules and

a horse, all we had on the place. And I will here remark that my dear friend (classmate and roommate at West Point), Gen. Fred Steele, had in the spring carried off thirty-five fine mules for the benefit of the United States. He sincerely apologized to my mother for this act, but it was an order of Gen. Grant's that he had to execute. But more of this anon.

November 22. This is my birthday. After I learned that the blacks came so near capturing me I determined to let mother know that I was not captured, so I went back home and took breakfast with them. Bidding them good-by, I tried to console them, but it was with a bitter heart that I left them alone without a horse to send a servant in case of any necessity. During the night we saw a fire down the creek, and when I got back to where I left my aid I learned that the enemy set fire to Judge Shall Yerger's house while the family were asleep, and they barely escaped alive. The Yankees, colored ones, being mainly on the right bank, we traveled down the left, in the rear of the plantations, to Bogue Phalia. Away out in this wilderness of woods, at Dr. Harper's, we were treated to a bottle of champagne. We drank it on the banks of that meandering stream out of tin cups; it was good all the same. We went on to Mr. Heathman's, on Indian Bayou, to stay all night. My two guards, innocently going up Deer Creek, rode into a camp of negro troops and were fired at in the dark, and fled to this place. As we rode up to the house the two soldiers came out with their carbines, but Mr. Heathman (a feather bed ranger) jumped out the window and hid back in the rear, and no calling induced him to come back. About twelve o'clock at night he came up, peeped in the window, saw we were not Yankees, and came in. But his supper had vanished.

25th. I arrived at Jackson, or where Jackson once was, and found it in ruins, it having been burned down by "childlike and bland" Sherman. Now I first heard of the defeat of Bragg at Missionary Ridge yesterday, November 25, and felt very gloomy.

December 6. I received orders to move the brigades of Ector and McNair to Brandon with the batteries. Capt. C. D. Myers left to-night. He is a gentleman and a good officer. His home is in Wilmington, N. C.

13th. Gen. Johnston arrived yesterday. Gen. J. R. Lidell remained in camp with me Friday and Saturday.

14th. Capt. J. M. Baldwin left this morning for Columbus, Ga., taking with him my servant, John Sharp. He is not in the service now, and goes there as my agent to care for my servants taken out there.

17th to 22d. Gen. Johnston ordered to the command of the Army of Tennessee. Lieut. Gen. Polk in command of this department now. Tomorrow Gen. Johnston will leave for the Army of Tennessee, much to my regret.

December 24. This morning Gen. Polk sent for me and told me that he would start for Enterprise at once, and we rode down to the depot together. The cars had left, and he took a locomotive and started after the train. During the ride he said he wished me to go to Jackson and put the railroad and the bridges in repair. In the afternoon we drove to Jackson. At Mrs. Ruck's we had tableau and charades. Women are never