

## CHAPTER XVIII.

March to Nashville—Cold Weather—Partial Investment of the City—Leave of Absence—Turn the Command Over to Brig. Gen. C. W. Sears—Battle of Nashville—Hood Not Physically Able for the Duties of a Commander in Want of All Supplies—Marshal Saxe—Mulai Malek—Going to Nashville a Failure; Could Not Be Otherwise—Leave for Columbus, Ga.—Marriage to Mary Fontaine Abercrombie—Go to Meriwether County to Avoid Wilson's Raid—Robbing in Columbus—Adventures of My Orderly—Yankees Raid the Houses—Gen. A. Had No Pies—Gens. Lee and Johnston Surrender—Terms Thereof—War with the Musket Ends.

DECEMBER 2, 1864, Hood in his impetuosity rushed in pursuit of Schofield's army, that was securely at rest behind the fortifications at Nashville, where he formed a junction with the troops there under Gen. G. H. Thomas. Hood formed his line close as he could in front of their works. My division was on the left of the Granny White turnpike, and ran north of the dwelling of E. Montgomery, who was a cotton planter and neighbor of mine in Mississippi. Owing to the condition of my eyes, I could write no more in my diary. The weather was cold, the ground frozen, and covered with snow.

I remained there suffering with my eyes until the 13th, when I was granted a leave of absence, and I turned the command over to Gen. C. W. Sears. I remained there the 14th, intending to leave the next day, but, observing a movement of the enemy's troops on the 15th, remained there to ascertain his intentions. Instead of a demonstration, it proved to be a real attack. I remained on the field all day, and by night our left was forced back parallel to the Granny White pike. By noon on the 16th it was plain that the battle was lost, and in the afternoon I was advised to leave to avoid confusion of the retreat. So, with my two aids, we started for the Tennessee river, and crossed it at Tuscumbia. The horses were given the servants to ride to Columbus, Ga., and we left by train for the same city.

The history of the Army of Tennessee from this time to its surrender on April 25, 1865, by Gen. J. E. Johnston in North Carolina may be found in the War Records. Johnston was placed in command of this army again at the request of the Confederate Congress by a joint resolution that was passed.

As I shall here probably take my leave of Gen. Hood, I desire to say that, had he not made erroneous statements in his reports and in his book, and perverted facts, and cast reflections on me and the men I had the honor to command at Allatoona, I would have kept silent, and this biography would never have been written; but he and Gen. Corse have obliged me to vindicate the truth of history for my children and myself, and the Confederate soldiers that I had the honor to command.

Gen. Hood was a noble commander of a division, for he was indeed a brave man; but as the commander of an army, circumstanced as the Confederate States were, he was too impulsive. As well try to catch all the fish in the ocean as to kill all the men that the United States could obtain, or recruit, from the nations of the earth, including our slaves, for the bounty offered. Constant conflicts entailed losses on both sides, and we had no men to sacrifice. The misfortune in part was that he had condemned Johnston's policy, and obeyed him reluctantly, and felt bound when he superseded him to carry on an aggressive war, and in doing so wrecked the Army of Tennessee.

The influence of personal valor in an officer on his men is generally limited to a small body of troops that witness it; whereas, victory for an army depends on the *skill* and the *art* with which the impulsive force of the masses is united on the field of battle, quickly to accomplish an object and destroy the plans of the enemy. By the art of skillful maneuvering an army may be obliged to abandon an advanced position without being driven out at the expense of life. Hood was a fighter; but he was not able by reason of his wounds to undergo the labor devolving on a commander constantly marching and fighting, often without supplies.

It is true that Marshal Saxe, carried on a litter, won the battle of Fontenoy; that Mulai Malek, Emperor of Morocco, in a dying condition, planned his last battle, and was carried on a litter through the ranks to animate the men. With anguish of mind he saw some of his troops giving way. In his last agonies he collected strength of life enough to throw himself from the litter, and rallied them, and led them to the charge. Exhausted, he fell on the field. When placed again on the litter, he laid his finger on his mouth to enjoin secrecy on his officers, and in a moment expired; but he won the victory. These, and others I

remember, are exceptions, but it is not safe to make exceptions the rule.\*

Hood's physical condition should have been considered by the authorities before he was placed in command, and the question asked: "Has he ever been thrown on his own resources to *provide for* and *direct* an independent command?" To command a corps is a small matter compared with directing a campaign (against a superior force) often without supplies. I have no desire to criticise Hood's movements, and will only remark that I am not able to see why he interrupted Gen. Schofield from leaving Franklin when he was getting away as fast as he could. That interference cost us the loss of nearly 5,000 men, the flower of the army, without any compensating object in view or result likely to be obtained under the environments.

Then came Nashville. We went there for recruits and army supplies. The presence of our poor, worn-out, and badly clothed troops that had survived the late battles of Peach Tree Creek of July 22 and 28 outside of Atlanta, and the siege of that city, Jonesboro, Allatoona, Franklin and many smaller conflicts consolidated the stream of reënforcements sent to Thomas at Nashville until it became a formidable army.

As a river on its course when stopped by a dam must overflow the obstruction or sweep it away, so Thomas's army was gathering force to overwhelm ours, which received no additional strength, but on the contrary lost some at Murfreesboro. On the walls of Hood's tent were now written: "*An army that can obtain no recruits must eventually surrender.*" And that he could not interpret. Then the tempest came! And the best reason I can give that the remnant of the grand Army of Tennessee so successfully crossed the Tennessee river is that Gen. Thomas always rode his horse at a walk. This is no reflection on the defense of our rear guard.

I remained in Columbus, Ga., and on the 12th of January,

\*The battle of Alcazar, called the "Battle of the Three Kings," fought about three hundred years ago between Mulai, the emperor of Morocco, on the one side, and his nephew, king of Fez, on the other, assisted by Don Sebastian, king of Portugal, under whose standard had flocked the nobility of Christian Europe. Mulai Malek had 40,000 Moorish cavalry. Fifteen thousand of the allies were left dead on the field, and the river Machassan ran red with blood.

1865, married Miss Mary F. Abercrombie, daughter of Gen. Anderson Abercrombie, a planter in Russell County, Ala.\*

Sherman had now captured Savannah, and was marching to join Grant. Then came the surrender of Gen. Lee. And now Gen. J. H. Wilson was nearing Columbus. To escape his thieving crowd, I started on Saturday, April 15, in a carriage with my wife to take her to Mrs. Campbell's, in Meriwether County, Ga., some twenty-five miles above Columbus. We remained that night in town with Judge G. E. Thomas, and started next morning. Gen. Howell Cobb was in command of the troops in Columbus, and he asked me to remain and take the command of the forces. This I declined, but I promised to return Monday morning and aid him. About 10 A.M. we heard cannon at Columbus, and knew that Wilson had attacked the town. The next morning at the dawn of day fugitives from Columbus were passing by, and told us that the town was in possession of the Federals. So I did not go to join Gen. Cobb. However, being anxious to know the condition of affairs, I asked my orderly, Hedrick, if he would next morning ride down in the direction of the city, and ascertain the condition of affairs, and he said: "Yes, General."

Now it chanced, soon after he started, that Hedrick met a Con-

\*Gen. Anderson Abercrombie was adjutant of Maj. Freeman's battalion of Georgia volunteers, U. S. army, in the war of 1812. Again under the command of Brig. Gen. John Floyd, U. S. A., and was wounded in the battle with the Creek Indians at Camp Defiance, Ala., January 27, 1814.

In an engagement on the 14th of July, 1864, between the Confederate troops under Gen. J. H. Clanton and the Federal forces under Gen. Rousseau, Miss Abercrombie's brother, Capt. Robert S. Abercrombie, was mortally wounded. He stood in the road alone, whence all had fled, save one friend beside him (Albert Hyer), whose life he had saved in battle, and when surrounded and *begged* to surrender refused. To capture him they shot him, designedly in his leg, and then through thoughtlessness let him bleed to death, notwithstanding there was a tourniquet in his pocket, and Mr. Hyer had another. He was buried under a red oak on Mr. D. Carroll's place on the Talladega road, Calhoun County, Ala., one and three-quarter miles from Greensport, within a half mile of Ten Island P. O., on the beautiful Coosa river. He received from the United States officers every attention to save his life, except the all-important one of stopping the flow of blood from the wound, which was *below* the knee. The great loss of blood was not noticed by reason of so much water poured on the wound. Thus perished a brave man whose life might have been saved.

federate soldier who told him that the Yankees had taken the fort at West Point, Ga., and gave him the name of the Federal officer who commanded the expedition, and Hedrick's sagacity applied the information to the accomplishment of his purposes. Riding on, just below the town of Hamilton, he suddenly encountered a regiment of Federal cavalry. Without hesitation he rode up to the leading officer, and inquired for Gen. Wilson, saying he was a messenger from the Federal commanding officer at West Point, sent to meet Gen. Wilson.\* He was directed to go on to Columbus. About a mile farther on two cavalymen in a skirt of wood cried out "Halt," and said: "You are a prisoner." He told them the story of his having been sent to find Gen. Wilson. They were doubtful, and one said: "If you please, none of your blarney to us, for we are from Ould Ireland itself, and you are a Johnnie Rebel, and are after daceiven' us, you are. Look at the stripe on your jacket." Hedrick explained that he could not ride through the country with his United States uniform on, and that his clothing was taken from a prisoner, etc. "Mike," said one of them, "of course he could not wear his own coat, and I am sure he is a gentleman; and did not the colonel himself let him pass?" So Pat agreed with Mike, and Hedrick rode on. Next, after crossing a stream, he came to a dwelling by the roadside: the owner was sitting on the fence by the front gate, watching for more Yankees to pass by, when Hedrick rode up to him and asked if he could have dinner. The farmer inquired who he was; and he varied the story of being a messenger to suit the occasion, by saying he was a Yankee, and as so many Yankees had just passed, he invited him into his house. His daughters hastily prepared a dinner. Hedrick was gracious, told them to come down to Columbus—send down chickens and butter, and get coffee, sugar, and nice dresses—and with thanks departed. About a mile farther on he was stopped by a number of men armed with shotguns (in quest of stragglers), farmers in the neighborhood, who also inquired who he was and where he was going. He said that he was my orderly, "sent to Columbus in quest of information." They did not believe him until one of the party, who was a lieutenant in the Confederate army, asked

\*The name of the Federal commander, and also that of the Confederate officer who so nobly defended the fort, have been given in a previous chapter.

him, "How long have you been with Gen. French? were you with him at Suffolk? where did he have his headquarters?" etc., to all of which he gave true answers. The lieutenant, who had been at Suffolk, said, "Gentlemen, he is all right, I know, for I was there;" and so Hedrick journeyed on. Near Columbus he encountered the videttes, rode up, and asked that one of them should be sent with him to Gen. Wilson's headquarters. The corporal refused, telling him, however, where he would find the commanding officer. It was dark when he entered the city. He rode to Judge Thomas's, remained there all night, and saw Gen. Wilson leave the town next morning riding in the carriage taken from J. C. Cook. After the troops left the city for Macon, Hedrick rode back to Mrs. Campbell's and related to me his adventures.

Two days after we started for Columbus, and below Hamilton, we found that lieutenant and a squad of men still guarding the road. He asked me if I had sent my orderly to Columbus. On my answering that I did send him, the maddest man in the crowd was the one who, when he sat on the fence, had bidden his daughters to give the Yankee a dinner. He swore he "would shoot Hedrick for deceiving him;" and while I was remonstrating with him Hedrick, who was behind, rode over the hill and was recognized by the irate man, who exclaimed: "Yonder the rascal comes." He was warned by his party to be quiet. Hedrick passed us, raising his cap to the crowd, bowed smilingly, and passed on. Poor Hedrick, without occasion, and for mere adventure, ran the risk of being captured as a spy in Columbus.

When we were at Mrs. Campbell's the Federal cavalry several times was near by and kept the ladies alarmed, and as for myself I was not inclined to be captured and carried off, if it could be avoided. Our horses were kept saddled to leave, and several times word was sent us that raiding parties were on the road. Tired of these alarms, we were at dinner, when some one rode by and said: "The Yankees are coming." One of the ladies went to the front door, and came back screaming. I went to the gate, and like a whirlwind came a cloud of dust, and beneath it I thought I saw the feet of cavalry horses; but in half a minute, at full run, passed by about forty loose mules driven by negro men at their heels wildly shouting. For three days Hedrick and the servants were camped out in the woods lest our

horses should be stolen at night. It was so demoralizing that I returned to Columbus, where there was a Federal garrison, passed through the town, and returned to Gen. Abercrombie's.

While we were gone—as I anticipated—nine of Wilson's bummers quietly surrounded the dwelling of Gen. Abercrombie (near Columbus), and entered the grounds from different directions. The General was sitting in a chair on the front gallery by the door, and the first intimation he had that the thieves were at work was a hand from behind him passed, snakelike, over his shoulder and down to his vest pocket to get his watch; fortunately, he had placed it where it was safe. In a few minutes those in the house went *through* every wardrobe, bureau, closet, etc. They took all the silverware and jewelry. While this was being done the two guards in the rear entered the large out kitchen, where "old Aunty Minty," the negro cook, had presided for fifty years, and screamed out: "Get us something for dinner, quick." The good old soul was scared half out of her wits, and raised her hands, pleading for mercy. "Get some ham and eggs for us quick, quick, you old dunce." The stove was hot, and she cooked some with the turn of a hand. In a minute the platter was empty, and they demanded of her to "bring on the *pies*." She called on all the saints to witness that she had no *pies*; the rascals swore they "never saw a house as big as that was that did not have *pies* in it." However, the pie question was settled by the captain of the band shouting "Come on," and they mounted their horses with their plunder, and left for other fields. Then "Aunty" came into the house and told her mistress: "Them is the meanest people I ever did see."

When my overseer left the plantation with the negroes for Columbus, he packed up my Brussels linen and best China, and took them with him, and left them at Judge Thomas's house. The evening Columbus was taken, Mrs. Thomas was sitting by a parlor window, and seeing some men in the yard, she asked, "Who are you there?" and the reply was, "Yanks; you did not expect us so soon, did you?" They *went through* everything in the house in a jiffy, Judge Thomas with them. By his engaging manners he got them by the baggage room, and saved things there. But they carried my chest of crockery out of the basement, thinking they had a prize; but when they found only China they commenced breaking it, but desisted at Mrs. Thom-

as's request. These men became experts from long practice, and generally knew where to look for hidden treasures. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks," so the hearts of these hirelings panted for plunder.

When the Yankees first went to my plantation, in five minutes a company of about thirty men marched into the garden, formed line, fixed bayonets, and, marching abreast, probed the ground until they struck a box that was buried there containing silver tableware. But in this case I am sure "old Aaron," a house servant who buried it for mother, betrayed her confidence in him and told the Yanks where it was. These are small matters, but I mention them to show how the men, by the connivance of officers, if not by participation, became an army of thieves generally.

In a day or two authenticated information was received that both Lee's and Johnston's armies had been surrendered on terms of agreement, and as I was included in the latter army, I went to Columbus and obtained my parole. The terms of the surrender were that we were not to be molested by the *United States authorities* so long as we obeyed the laws which were in force previous to January, 1861, where we resided.

On my part, I was sworn "not to bear arms against the United States of America, or give any information, or do any military duty or act in hostility to the United States, or inimical to a permanent peace," etc., and thus the war *with the musket* ended.

On reading my parole I discovered what seemed to me a *petty trick*, for it read "not to be disturbed by the *United States military authorities*," leaving me at the mercy of the civil authorities to be indicted. I was informed those were the paroles sent them to be used in Columbus. It must have been a misprint.