

While waiting in Augusta I received a telegraphic dispatch from Mr. Mallory, directing me to disband my command,—but, under the circumstances, I declined to do so. At this time we heard of the assassination of President Lincoln; an event which gave much pain to all with whom I conversed, and which cast a gloom over all thinking men. It was universally condemned at the South; but “that goes without saying.”

On the 20th General Fry notified me that the armistice would end the next day, and he advised me to “move on.” I decided to go back, and try to meet President Davis in his retreat. I knew he would cross the Savannah river at one of two points—between Abbeville and Washington, or lower down. After much reflection, I determined to retrace my steps, in the hope of intercepting him at some point on the former route. Accordingly we left Augusta on the 23d in the cars for Washington, Georgia, again.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RETURN TO ABBEVILLE—AN ALARM—ARRIVAL OF PRESIDENT DAVIS AND CABINET—I TRANSFER THE TREASURE TO GENERAL BASIL DUKE, AND DISBAND MY COMMAND—INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT DAVIS—HIS DEPARTURE FROM ABBEVILLE—GENERAL JOS. E. JOHNSTON'S SURRENDER—AM PAROLED—LEAVE ABBEVILLE ON MY RETURN HOME—BAD TRAVELING—A DAY AT BURKSVILLE—ARRIVAL AT NORFOLK, VIRGINIA.

WE formed a wagon train again at Washington, picked up our ladies, and started for Abbeville. On the way we met Mrs. President Davis and family, escorted by Mr. Burton Harrison, the President's private secretary. They could give me no news as to the whereabouts of the President. I have forgotten where they told me they intended to go. They had a comfortable ambulance, and two very fine led horses, which I thought they would very likely lose. In crossing the Savannah river I remember saying to Captain Rochelle that if the money were mine I would throw it overboard rather than be longer burdened with it. I had had it nearly thirty days; the midshipmen were suffering for shoes, hats and clothing, and the care and responsibility weighed upon me.

We arrived at Abbeville about the 28th, and here I stored the treasure in a warehouse on the public square, and placed a guard over it as before. I also kept a strong patrol in the town, which was now full of General Lee's paroled soldiers on their way to their homes. Threats were frequently made by these men to seize the money, but they always received the same reply.

Abbeville was on the direct route south, and all the trans-Mississippi troops passed through it, as well as others. The citizens had known but little of the sufferings of war. They were very kind and hospitable to us. On the night of the

1st of May, I was invited to a May-party, which I attended more to find out what was going on in the town than anything else. While there a paroled officer of General McGowan's brigade approached me and said he had information that the paroled men intended to attack the treasure that night, and he thought it his duty to tell me. I thanked him and went to my quarters, where I issued orders to double the guard and patrol. I had given directions as soon as I arrived in Abbeville that a train and engine should be held ready for me, with steam up, at all hours of the day and night. My intention was, if threatened by the enemy, to run by steam to Newberry, and then take to the dirt road again. Everything seeming to be in a state of quietude, I retired about midnight: leaving directions with the officer-of-the-guard to call me if anything occurred. I had quarters in a private house, and slept on the floor of the parlor where I could be easily aroused.

About 3 o'clock in the morning Lieutenant Peek the officer of the guard tapped at my window. I can hear him now: "Captain," said he in a low voice, "the Yankees are coming." Upon inquiry I learned that a detachment of Federal cavalry had captured two gentlemen at Anderson about thirty miles distant the evening before. One of the gentleman had escaped and brought the news to Abbeville, and as Mr. Peek told me, "thought the Federals would arrive about daylight." I immediately called all hands and packed the money in the cars, and by daybreak had everybody on the train in readiness to move. I walked the platform in thought—for I had not quite decided to run. About sunrise we saw a company of cavalry winding down the hills in the distance, and I sent out two scouts who shortly returned with the information that it was the advance guard of President Davis' escort. So I had judged rightly in returning to Abbeville. About 10 A. M. President Davis and his Cabinet rode into town and were well received by the population of Abbeville. It was a sad enough sight to me, I know. It reminded me of scenes I had witnessed in Central American revolutions! By order of Secretary Mallory I trans-

ferred the treasure to the acting Secretary of the Treasury, and by him was instructed to deliver it to the care of General Basil Duke, which I did at the railroad station. By Mr. Mallory's order I then immediately disbanded my command, and the Charlotte company marched off for home before I left the depot. The midshipmen left in detached parties, and an hour after President Davis' arrival the organization was one of the things of the past. And yet to show how unwilling we were to acknowledge that the Confederacy was broken—how hard we died, in fact—I present here a copy of the letter I furnished every midshipman under my command, when I bid them farewell:

ABBEVILLE, S. C., May 2, 1865.

SIR: You are hereby detached from the naval school, and leave is granted you to visit your home. You will report by letter to the Hon. Secretary of the Navy as soon as practicable. Paymaster Wheliss will issue you ten days rations, and all quartermasters are requested to furnish you transportation.

Respectfully your obedient servant,

WM. H. PARKER, commanding.

Midshipman _____ C. S. Navy.

We had about thirty colored servants in the command, and they started for Richmond in a body. They went off in high spirits, singing a song in chorus, and all walking lame in the left leg as it is the habit of the colored population to do. I gave them all as much bacon, sugar and coffee as they could carry; and did the same to the midshipmen and the Charlotte company. The remainder was then divided into equal parts and distributed among the officers who remained with me.

Mr. Davis had with him four skeleton brigades of cavalry, viz.: Duke's, Dibrell's, Ferguson's and Vaughn's. Many of the men traveled with him, I believe, to get their rations. Some of them were throwing away or selling their arms, as they looked upon the war as over. There were many noble

spirits among them who were ready, and anxious, to follow and defend the President to the death: but the force taken as an organization was demoralized.

President Davis went to the house of the Hon. Mr. Burt. After finishing my duties in regard to transferring the treasure, and disbanding my command, I called upon him. I never saw the President appear to better advantage than during these last hours of the Confederacy. He was captured eight days after this, near Irwinsville, Georgia, about 175 miles from Abbeville. His personal appearance has been often described. I remember him as a slender man, of about 5 feet 10 inches in height, and with a grey eye as his most marked feature. His deportment was singularly quiet and dignified. At this time he showed no signs of despondency. His air was resolute; and he looked, as he is, a born leader of men. [His cabinet officers, with the exception of General Breckenridge and Mr. Reagan, stood, I thought, rather in awe of him.

General Breckenridge presented his usual bold cavalier manner; but Mr. Mallory, Secretary of the Navy, and Mr. Benjamin, Secretary of State, were much depressed and showed it. I do not recall Mr. Reagan—he was the Postmaster-General, and acting Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Trenholm, Secretary of the Treasury, and Mr. Davis, Attorney General, had been taken ill by the way and were not with the party.

In addition to the four brigades of cavalry the President had in company more Brigadier-Generals than I thought were in the army. Many of them had ambulances and wagons, and the train must have been several miles long. It seemed to me that it was half a day coming in. Referring to the Federal cavalry I have alluded to, it was said that it was marching on Abbeville, when it met Mr. Davis' escort and turned back. I never knew the truth of this report.

After shaking hands with President Davis, whom I found alone, I first gave him an account of my taking his family

from Charlotte, and told him of my having met Mrs. Davis a few days before. He thanked me, and then inquired after my command. I told him I had disbanded it. He said: "Captain, I am very sorry to hear that," and repeated it several times. I told him I had but obeyed Mr. Mallory's order; that my command had been on the march for thirty days, and was without shoes and proper clothing. The President seemed to be in deep thought for a few moments, and I, wishing him clearly to appreciate my position, said: "Mr. President, I must beg you to understand that I acted upon the peremptory order of the Secretary of the Navy." He then replied: "Captain, I have no fault to find with you, but I am very sorry Mr. Mallory gave you the order." After seeing the escort, I understood Mr. Davis' regret. I told the President of my trip to Augusta, and of General Wilson's movements, and asked him what he proposed to do. He said he should remain four days in Abbeville. I then mentioned the affair of the previous night, and said I looked upon his capture as inevitable if he prolonged his stay. He replied that he would never desert the Southern people; that he had been elected by them to the office he held, and would stand by them. He gave me to understand that he would not take any step which might be construed into an inglorious flight. He was most impressive on this point. The mere idea that he might be looked upon as fleeing, seemed to arouse him. He got up and paced the floor, and repeated several times that he would never abandon his people. I stuck to my text; said I: "Mr. President, if you remain here you will be captured. You have about you only a few demoralized soldiers, and a train of camp followers three miles long. You will be captured, and you know how we will all feel that. It is your duty to the Southern people not to allow yourself to be made a prisoner. Leave now with a few followers and cross the Mississippi, as you express a desire to do eventually, and there again raise the standard."

The interview lasted an hour, and I used every argument

I could think of to induce him to leave Abbeville; but it was in vain. He insisted that he would remain four days. Upon leaving the President I found Messrs. Mallory and Benjamin awaiting me. The latter very nervous and impatient to continue the retreat. Mr. Mallory was more phlegmatic, but was of my opinion, that they would all be captured if they remained.

During the afternoon the soldiers packed the treasure in the wagons again, preparatory to moving. After it was taken away from Abbeville, which was on that night, I have no further personal knowledge of it. The admirable letter of Captain M. H. Clark published in the Southern Historical Society papers December, 1881, gives the best account of it I have seen. A day after the party left I yielded to the solicitations of my officers and sent Paymaster Wheliss to Washington, Georgia, to see if he could not secure money enough from Mr. Reagan to enable us to get back to our homes. We were paid fifteen hundred dollars, which was divided *pro rata*. It gave us each about twenty days pay. A reference to Captain Clark's letter shows that several of the President's aids received each as much as my entire command. But everything was in confusion, and no justice was to be expected. I think the President took as little account of the money as I did myself, and I cannot say more than that. As to the charge that he took an undue portion of it, I scorn to notice it.

I asked Mr. Mallory to come to my quarters to tea that evening, and about 8 o'clock Mr. Benjamin came in. He begged me to see the President again, and to urge him to leave. After some demur I consented to do so. I found Mr. Davis alone as before, and apologizing for my intrusion, said my intense anxiety for his safety must excuse it. I remained some time, and saw that he had a better appreciation of the condition of affairs in Georgia than when I had seen him in the morning. I proposed to him that he should leave Abbeville with four naval officers, (of whom I was to be one) and escape to the east coast of Florida. The object of taking naval officers was that they

might seize a vessel of some kind and get to Cuba or the Bahamas; but this he rejected.

I left the President at 9 o'clock, and as I went out he sent one of his Aids to call the Cabinet together. I went to my quarters, and not long after received a note from Mr. Mallory saying they would leave that night, and he notified me so that I might accompany them if I desired. As they were all mounted and I was on foot and could not get a horse, I was obliged to decline. About 11 o'clock the President and his escort left Abbeville for Washington, Ga. If I have given undue prominence to myself in relating the occurrences of this day at Abbeville it is only because I had just returned from Georgia, and was supposed to have a better knowledge of the condition of affairs there than any one else about the President. *C'est tout.*

A few days after this a passing soldier told me General Johnston had surrendered, and showed me his parole. I called together the few officers still with me, and told them that as we were in General Johnston's command we must accept the conditions—and now after the four years war, in which I certainly never desired to figure as a prisoner, I did wish to be captured so that I might obtain my parole: without it I did not like to set out upon my return to Virginia.

We had several alarms that the Federals were coming, and upon such occasions the officers would assemble at my quarters, where we would await our fate like the Roman senators, but they came not, and finally hearing that a troop of cavalry was in Washington, Ga., I sent a Lieutenant there with a letter to the commanding officer, explaining my condition and inclosing a list of my officers. He very kindly spared us the trip to Washington by sending us paroles, only requiring the officer I had sent over to swear us in, which he accordingly did.

Our party now consisted of Captain Rochelle, Professor McGuire and wife, my wife and myself, and being "far away from home," we began to cast about for means to get back to Virginia. We went in the cars to Newberry, S. C., where I

fell in with Surgeon Lynah, who had been a messmate of mine in the *Palmetto State*; and he kindly found quarters for us whilst we were detained there. We hired a wagon for our baggage, and an ambulance for the ladies—paying for them in sugar and coffee—to take us to Chester. On the way there we passed a night with my old friend Means, and were most hospitably entertained. The trip across the country passed without incident, except the stalling of our wagon the morning we left Means'. We would never have left that spot, I believe, had it not been for the superhuman energy of Professor McGuire, who with a small sized tree finally persuaded the mules to pull together. We stayed a day or two in Chester, and then took the cars for Charlotte, N. C., where we first fell in with the Federal troops. It seemed strange to see them walking around, and no one shooting at them!

From Charlotte we went to Danville by easy stages. The roads were out of repair and the cars went very slowly, getting off the track every few hours. We slept in the cars, which were always crowded. All the negroes in the country were making for Richmond, with their "things." They did not feel free until they had left the plantations; a very natural feeling. We clung to our seats day and night, determined not to "let go our hold" until we reached Burksville, where we intended to take the south-side railroad for City Point, on the James River.

I really do not remember how many days we were in going from Charlotte to Burksville; but we got there at last, one day about four o'clock in the afternoon. The first news we got was that there would not be a train to City Point until the next afternoon. Twenty-four hours to remain in Burksville. Ye gods and little fishes! Our previous sufferings sank into insignificance in comparison to it—and to make matters worse it was raining. I went out to find quarters for the night. If there was a tavern it was full. I believe I went to every house in town to inquire for rooms, but they were all full. I explained that I only wanted accommodations for two ladies, but

all my entreaties were in vain—not a room could I get. Nothing better offering, we determined to remain in the cars; so Rochelle and I made the coffee as usual, and after supper we went about making the ladies comfortable for the night. The rain had driven the negroes and soldiers into the cars,—and, to make matters worse, some of them were drunk. While we were making our preparations, a Federal surgeon passed through the cars, and, noticing the state of affairs, very kindly told me I could have a room at the hospital. He said it was a poor enough place, but, he thought, better than the cars. We were glad to accept his offer, and accompanied him to the hospital. It was a frame building, and the room had neither windows nor doors. We pinned up blankets as substitutes, and, leaving McGuire to sleep across the doorway as a guard, Rochelle and I went to the railway station, where we made a delightful bed of sacks, full of shelled corn, and passed the night *al fresco*. I never slept better. The next morning early I called at the hospital to see how the ladies were getting on, and found that, for the first time, they had broken down. They had bivouacked by the wayside, slept in the cars, and undergone hardships of every description; but *Burksville* was entirely too much for them.

In despair I set out again to look for quarters: although I was assured it was useless to do so. I determined to try the country, and walked up the road intending to continue on until I found a house. I had not gone a mile before I came to a deserted mansion. The window frames and doors were gone, and the house was much torn to pieces; it evidently had been a well-kept, pretty place.

"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!
But something ails it now: the spot is cursed."

While looking over the fence, pondering, a negro woman came to the door of the kitchen, and as soon as I caught sight of the *bandanna* handkerchief on her head I knew she was the cook. She told me the family had "done run away," a

long time before. She said she would gladly cook our provisions for us; that the rooms had no furniture in them, but there was plenty of fresh water, etc.

I returned in triumph to Burksville and brought back my entire party. We enjoyed the luxury of a bath and as we had an abundance of provisions we soon had a smoking breakfast on the table. I had kept three servants with me, so there was no lack of attendance. I passed here one of the most pleasant days of my life. We made a sort of a pic-nic of it, and enjoyed it beyond measure. We were "far from the madding sword," and had for the time at least no cares.

About 4 P. M. we packed up and went to the train, which soon after left for City Point. We arrived within a mile of the Point at dark, and here the engine left us and the conductor coolly informed us that the cars would be taken down the next day. But we did not mind; the cars were not crowded. We got out to cook our supper, and we sat around our camp-fire that night for the last time.

From the time of our leaving Charlotte until we got to City Point we were constantly thrown with the Federal soldiers as well as our own, and I do not remember in that time hearing an unpleasant word spoken on either side. The fighting men on both sides were the most tolerant.

In the morning the engine took us to City Point, where we were to take the boat to Norfolk. Professor and Mrs. McGuire left us here, and I discharged my last servants and sent them to their homes. At 10 o'clock the boat arrived from Richmond, and we went on board. It seemed strange to find myself on board with nothing to do. I could hardly realize it. About 4 we arrived in Norfolk and were at home again—just three years after our evacuation of it in 1862. So ended my career as a Naval Officer. "Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone."

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