

THE TRI-WEEKLY NEWS.

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THE TRI-WEEKLY NEWS:

BY J. E. BRITTON.

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More of the Capture of Jeff. Davis, etc.

The Washington correspondent of the New York Herald, writing under date of the 22d May, gives the following account of the capture of JEFFERSON DAVIS, together with other parties—relating incidents, &c., that came within his immediate scope,—which may not be uninteresting to our readers:

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 22, 1865. Since my arrival at Fortress Monroe, where, for the first time since I left Gravelly Springs, Ala, with General Wilson's cavalry expedition, on the 22d of March last, I had the opportunity of reading Northern newspapers, I find that a great many errors have crept into their columns relative to the attempted escape, capture and final disposition of Jeff. Davis and his co-conspirators. These have been sent for publication by correspondents whose information was obtained principally from Madame Rumor and the grapevine telegraph, and, as a matter of course, are as erroneous as the great bulk of news obtained in that way. Having been intimately connected with the parties who made the capture, and enjoying their full confidence, I had every opportunity of learning, during our voyage, every incident connected with the pursuit and capture of the fugitive from justice; and from Macon to Fortress Monroe, and up to the evening of the 21st inst., can give the facts from personal observation and investigation.

As I have given in my previous letters a very full account of the capture and transit of these parties, I will confine myself principally to incidents not previously written, and to the correction of the errors above mentioned; and in doing so I shall write, as I always do, with the knowledge that I am writing history.

THE CAMP WHERE JEFF. WAS CAPTURED was situated in a pine forest, on the side of the Abbeyville road, about one mile from Irwinstown, Irwin county, Georgia. It consisted of a large wall tent, containing only the arch-traitor and his family, and an ordinary "fly" containing the male portion of the caravan. Surrounding and contiguous to these were two common army wagons, two ambulances and several horses and mules, with the usual amount of camp paraphernalia, such as saddles, harness, cooking utensils, &c. Davis himself and Postmaster Reagan, with the two colonels—Lubbock and Johnson, aid-de-camps—had only overtaken the party the night before, after a fatiguing journey from Washington, Ga., where they had remained to "settle some business," as they say, while Mrs. Davis, with the children and servants, had pushed forward, under the protection and escort of Private Secretary Harrison and a few of the faithful, such as Lieutenant Hathaway, Midshipman Howell and about twenty private soldiers. It was probably at or very near Washington where Davis dismissed his escort and divided the spoils, under the most pressing circumstances. Some of Stoneman's cavalry were hard upon him, and he concluded to deceive them by letting them follow the body of cavalry, while he and his friends travelled incog, across the country and joined his family. To add to the horrors of his situation the escort demanded a division of the contents of the kegs and boxes (gold and silver,) and he was obliged to delay some time and act as paymaster. As far as I could learn the division was very unequally made—some of the officers receiving as much as one hundred dollars and upwards, the lion's share; while others not so exacting received a bare pittance. This raised considerable disturbance in the camp, and during the melee Jeff. and his companions du voyage skedaddled.

THE "PETTICOAT STORY" is, in the main, true, although it has been told a score of times by different correspondents, many of whom supplied the lack of a knowledge or facts by copious draughts from the imagination, and gave it as many different phases as there are months in the calendar. The facts are as follows:—

The attack was made upon the camp by Colonel Pritchard just as the first streak of dawn began to light the Eastern sky. Everything was profoundly silent. Jeff. was undoubtedly dreaming of his former greatness, and the entire party were wrapt in the somnolent embrace of Morpheus, when they were suddenly startled by the yells of the soldiers, and awoke too late to make preparations for even a feeble resistance. After the officers and men in the "fly" were safely under guard, which occupied some time, a corporal went to the door of the tent occupied by defunct royalty, and ordered them to come forth and deliver themselves up. Mrs. Davis appeared at the door and said:—

"Please, gentlemen, do not intrude upon the privacy of ladies. There are no gentlemen here, and you will oblige us greatly by giving us time to dress."

"All right, madame," said the little corporal; "we will give you time to make your toilet, and then you can take a ride to Macon for your health."

A guard was placed around the tent, and the reader's imagination must draw from the denouement what transpired inside. After half hour's interval, the monotony outside only being broken by the demands of the guard to "hurry up," there came to the door Mrs. Davis and Miss Howell, leaving an apparently decrepit old lady, dressed in a lady's morning wrapper, with a tight hood on her head and her face covered with a small veil. The "old lady," could walk only with great difficulty, but crept through the door of the tent with a tin pail on her arm.

"Soldier, I suppose you have no objection to letting my old mother go to the spring for some water for us to wash with?" said Mrs. Davis.

"Wall, I reckon I have some little objection to letting that old lady go," said the corporal. "She wears boots don't she?" and with the point of his sabre he raised the frock, discovering a large, coarse pair of calf-skin boots. While the corporal was discovering and exhibiting the cloven foot of the beast, another soldier stripped the veil and hood from off his face, and lo! the great ass which has so long been hidden beneath a lion's skin—Jeff. Davis—stood before them, in all his pusillanimity, and in his true character, before the light of which Henry VIII. pales, and Richard III. rise in the scale of human greatness.

When Jeff. saw that he was fairly caught, and would be delivered into the hands of his enemies, he waxed exceedingly wroth, and railed out at the soldiers whenever opportunity offered. He frequently made use of such sneering remarks as—

"Valorous soldiers, indeed, to make war upon women and children!" "I thought the Yankee government was a little more valorous than to send its soldiers to steal defenceless women and children out of their beds at night," &c.

Mrs. Davis ironically remarked that she "was not aware that an old woman and four children were of so much value as to be escorted by three hundred soldiers through the country."

JEFF. READS THE PROCLAMATION. I have previously mentioned the effect produced upon Davis by the President's proclamation offering a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for his arrest. I have often tried to imagine the terror of Belshazzar when he read his doom in the handwriting on the wall, or the horror of the murderer when the hands of the officers of the law are laid rudely upon him. Such, but in a vastly magnified degree, must have been the feelings of Jeff. Davis, when he read the proclamation. As his eyes glanced over the fatal lines I have thought that he must have come to the first realization of his condition. He trembled like an aspen leaf, dropped the paper from his hands and sank into reveries and sullenness. His wife picked up the paper, read its contents audibly, and they all burst into tears.

AT MACON AND EN ROUTE. Colonel Pritchard and escort arrived at Macon about four o'clock on the afternoon of the 12th inst. For miles along the streets, and on the road, on which the cortege was expected to arrive, were strung with squads of people eager to catch one glance of the man who but so recently had been their sovereign, and at whose doors so many crimes and sins were laid. Their curiosity, however, was not gratified to any considerable extent, as he rode in a close ambulance, and when he alighted at the Lanier House (Gen. Wilson's headquarters) the

guards obstructed their vision. Dinner was already prepared, and the prisoners partook of it with a relish. After dinner, Postmaster Reagan, who, it seems, had taken the contract to see "the President" (?) safe through to Texas, was admitted to General Wilson's room, where were congregated several officers, including the General himself, and your correspondent. Reagan told General Wilson that he wished to ask his permission to accompany "the President" to Washington, adding that he had shared with him his property—(exactly so; vide the bills of exchange drawn on London in his name)—and did not wish to desert him in the hour of his adversity. On receiving assurance that he would be permitted to accompany him he expressed his gratitude.

"You are under no obligations, sir," said the General, "for I should have sent you, whether you wanted to go or not. You are a civilian prisoner, and he is a prisoner both military and civil."

The party was joined here by Clement C. Clay and his wife, they having come from Lagrange (their home), the previous day, and surrendered themselves to General Wilson. The meeting between Davis and Clay was very cordial and Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Clay were very affectionate towards each other. The affections and feelings of the two families seemed to run in one and the same channel, and they were often caught in secret counsel together, and separated by the guard. While in conversation with Colonel Pritchard and myself, Mrs. Clay jocularly remarked that as she brought Mr. Clay to Macon she should claim the reward.

"Yes," said Mrs. Davis, "one hundred thousand dollars would be considerable amount of pocket change for us poor unfortunates now. I sold my horses, carriage, silver ware and jewelry for what little money I had, and that has been stolen from me."

I could not see, however, any lack of jewelry, about her person, she sported two splendid diamond rings upon one finger.

Nothing farther of interest occurred during the route from Macon to Atlanta, as it was in the night, and most of the party, weary and sleepy, went off in deep slumber.

At Atlanta General Upton had a train, an escort and a warm breakfast in waiting for us, and after about an hour's delay, we were off for Augusta. Gen. Upton and two of his staff officers accompanied us.

ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS. I learned here from General Upton that an escort in charge of the rebel Vice President Stephens had gone ahead of us on the regular train. He was arrested on his plantation, only a short distance from Atlanta, by a squad of General Upton's men, under a captain and staff officer, whose name I have forgotten. Stephens made no effort to escape; but was found at his house quietly smoking his meerschaum. He had no companions save two negro servants and a dog, and lived almost entirely in solitude. He joined us on the boat at Augusta. I solicited an introduction, and had a very pleasant, profitable and lengthy conversation with him. As my object was to gain information I gave him the floor and let him do most of the talking, merely responding in the affirmative or negative, and occasionally putting in a feeler. He was very anxious to know what policy I thought the government would adopt towards the leaders of the rebellion. He asserted that a conciliatory policy would at once reunite the people, revive trade, commerce, manufactures and agriculture, and, in fine, bring the disrupted States back to their allegiance and original status in the Union. A different policy, he held, would serve to keep up a feeling of bitterness and require the presence of a large standing army to reduce to subordination the contending factions. He was careful to impress me with the idea that he did not speak from selfish motives, but I could not see it in the light of that illumination. He remarked that if the government had sent him a note to appear at Washington to be hung he should have taken the shortest route, and went immediately to the capital. What he said in justification of his course in accepting the Vice Presidency of the Confederacy was published in a previous letter and time and space preclude a repetition. Stephens and Jeff. Davis, it is well known, are at sword-points, and there was no sign of recognition or regard on the part of either.

Both kept their respective places, independent entirely of the other's presence. Stephens said to me that when he went to Hampton Roads, in company with Judge Campbell and the Hon. R. M. T. Hunter, to meet President Lincoln, he could have made satisfactory terms of peace in five minutes. He was not, however, clothed with the proper official authority, and hence his mission failed.

GENERAL WHEELER AND STAFF were also captured, about fifteen miles from Atlanta. He had an escort of about one hundred men, who fired at the approach of our cavalry (less in number), and left their general to his fate. They were also taken to Augusta, and were there put under charge of Colonel Pritchard by General Upton. It is supposed that Wheeler and his men were going across the country to join Davis, though they claim they were en route for their respective homes.

As this letter is getting rather lengthy, and as I have previously described the transit from Augusta to Fortress Monroe, I will immediately proceed to the relation of some facts connected with the

FINAL DISPOSITION OF THE CONSPIRATORS.

The Clyde, having on board the prisoners, and also the man-of-war Tuscarora (convoy), were anchored outside the harbor, and Colonel Pritchard and Captain Frailey went on shore in a small boat to report to Washington. As has been previously stated, they learned from the commandant of the post, Colonel Roberts, that he had orders to retain the prisoners at that place, and was then engaged in fitting up six casemates inside Fortress Monroe for their reception. In answer to the reports sent to the capital by Colonel Pritchard, he received a telegram ordering him to guard the prisoners well and "await further orders." Subsequently he received a despatch that General Halleck would arrive at noon on Saturday to take charge of the matter. Accordingly General Halleck did arrive, but it was not until Sunday morning that anything definite was known regarding the disposition of the prisoners. About eight o'clock A. M. on Sunday, the 21st inst. however, the gunboat *Mamee* came alongside the *Clyde*, and took on board General Wheeler and his three staff officers, and Colonels Johnson and Lubbock. They are destined to Fort Delaware.

About noon of the same day the man-of-war *Tuscarora* took on board Vice President Stephens and Postmaster General Reagan, and started with them for Fort Lafayette. I was given to understand, by an officer who knew whereof he spoke, that the rest of them would occupy the casemates in Fortress Monroe. Colonel Pritchard and his men remaining as special guard. Such was the status of affairs when I left on the five o'clock boat for Baltimore.

The Provost Marshal General has ordered the *Richmond Whig* to drop the motto "*Sic Semper Tyrannis*," from its head.

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Any friends receiving papers, or arriving with papers or news, from any places not now in full connection by mail, will oblige us specially by reporting to the News office, and will thus aid in preventing exciting rumors.

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C. & S. C. Railroad.

AS the immediate reconstruction of this road is highly important, all materials of iron, ties and stringers are needed, and their removal is forbidden by any one. April 6/65 WM. JOHNSTON, Pres't.

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