

CAPTURE, SACK and DESTRUCTION OF THE City of Columbia

XXX.

The morning of Saturday, the 18th of February, opened still with its horrors and terrors, though somewhat diminished in their intensity. A lady said to a Yankee officer at her house, somewhere about 4 that morning: "In the name of God, sir, when is this work of hell to be ended?" He replied: "You will hear the bugles at sunrise, when a guard will enter the town and withdraw these troops. It will then cease, and not before." Sure enough, with the bugle's sound and the entrance of fresh bodies of troops, there was an instantaneous arrest of incendiarism. You could see the rioters carried off in groups and squads, from the several precincts they had ravaged, and those which they still meditated to destroy. The tap of the drum, the sound of the signal cannon, could not have been more decisive in its effect, more prompt and complete. No farther fires were set, among private dwellings, after sunrise; and the flames only went up from a few places, where the fire had been last applied; and these were rapidly expiring. The best and most beautiful portion of Columbia lay in ruins. Never was ruin more complete; and the sun rose with a wan countenance peering dimly through the dense vapors which seemed wholly to overspread the firmament. Very miserable was the spectacle. On every side ruins, and smoking masses of blackened walls, and towers of grim, ghastly chimneys, and between, in desolate groups, reclining on mattress, or bed, or earth, were wretched women and children, gazing vacantly on the site of a once blessed abode of home and innocence. Roving detachments of the enemy passed around and among them. There were those who looked and lingered nigh, with taunt and sarcasm. Others there were, in whom humanity did not seem wholly extinguished; and others again, to their credit, be it said, as wondrous exceptions from the usual characteristics of their comrades, who were truly sorrowful and sympathizing, who had labored for the safety of family and property, and who openly deplored the dreadful crime, which threatened the lives and honors of the one, and destroyed so ruthlessly the other.

XXXI.

But we have no time for description. The relentless fate was hurrying forward, and the destroyer had still as large a share of his assigned labors to execute. This day was devoted to the destruction of those buildings of a public character which had escaped the wreck of the city proper. The Saluda cotton manufactory, the property of Col. L. D. Childs, was burned by the enemy prior to their entry of the city and on their approach to it, the previous day. The several powder mills were destroyed on Saturday. The Arsenal buildings on Sunday, and it is understood that, in the attempt to haul away ammunition from the

latter place, the enemy lost a large number of men, from an unlooked for explosion. It is reported in one case that no less than forty men, with their officers—one entire company—were blown to pieces in one precinct, and half as many in another. But the facts can never be precisely ascertained, unless in the report of Yankee orderlies. The magnificent steam printing establishment of Evans and Cogswell—with the house assigned to their engravers, and another house, stored with stationery and book stock—perhaps the most complete establishment of the kind in the Confederacy—was destroyed on Saturday; their lithographic establishment, itself complete and singularly extensive, was burned in the general conflagration of Friday night. These were all private property, most of it isolated in situation, and deliberately fired. So, the fearful progress of incendiarism continued throughout Saturday and Sunday, nor did it wholly cease on Monday. The gas works—private property also—one of the greatest necessities of the people, was then deliberately destroyed; and it was with some difficulty that the incendiaries were persuaded to spare the water works. The cotton card manufactory of the State; the sword factory—a private interest; the stocking manufactory—private; the buildings at Fair Grounds, adjoining cemetery; the several railway depots; Alexander's foundry; the S. C. R. R. foundry and work shops—the Government armory, and other buildings of greater or less value, partly Government and partly private property—all shared a common fate. Major Niernsee, the State Architect, was a great loser, in his implements and valuable scientific and professional library. The new Capitol building, being unfinished, and not likely to be finished in many years—useless, accordingly to us—would have too greatly taxed the powder resources of the enemy to destroy it, and it was spared accordingly—only suffering from some petty assaults of malice. Here and there, a plinth fractured; here and there a Corinthian capital. The beautiful pilast of Tennessee marble was thus injured. So, at great pastaking, the miserable wretches clambered up on ladders to reach and efface the exquisite scroll and ornamental work on the face of the building—disfiguring the beautiful chiseling which had wrought out the vine and acorn tracery on the several panels; and the bundles of fuses, on the Northern part, were fractured or broken away in parts. The statue of Washington in bronze, cast in 1858, for the city of Charleston, from Houdon's original, in the rotunda at Richmond, received several bruises from brick bats, addressed to face and breast. A shell scratched his back, and the staff which he bore in his hand was broken off in the middle. But the bronze seems to have defied the destructives, and may be considered still perfect. The bust of Calhoun, by Powers, was totally destroyed; so, also, was the ideal personification, by the sculptor Brown, of the Genius of Liberty. A large collection of complete capitals, destined

for the Capitol, and lying in the open square, were destroyed either by the light of the contiguous fire, or by explosions of gun-powder introduced among them. Hereafter, such beautiful pieces of workmanship might be kept more safely and certainly, by being buried deeply in excavations of sand. The iron palmetto tree, that ingenious performance of Werner, of Charleston, dedicated as a monument to the Palmetto Regiment, so renowned in the war with Mexico, suffered the loss of a number of its lower and larger branches; but these, we think, may be restored at comparatively little cost. The apartment in the base was torn open, having been wrenched from its fastenings, but no other mischief seems to have been done to it. It was probably spared, as commemorating the deeds of those who had fought under their own flag, at a season when that flag was still held in some degree of honor, and was not wholly significant of shame and crime.

XXXII.

Something should be said in respect to the manner in which the negroes were treated by the enemy while in Columbia, and as regards the influences employed by which to beguile or take them from their owners. We have already adverted to the fact that there was a vast difference between the feelings and performances of the men from the West, and those coming, or directly emanating, from the Eastern States. The former were adverse to a connection with them; but few negroes were to be seen among these, and they were simply used as drudges, grooming horses, bearing burdens, humble of demeanor and rewarded with kicks, cuffs and curses, frequently without provocation. They despised and disliked the negro; openly professed their scorn or hatred, declared their unwillingness to have them as companions in arms, or in company at all. Several instances have been given us of their modes of repelling the association of the negro, usually with blow of the fist, but of the musket, slash of the sword or prick of the bayonet. Sherman himself looked on these things indifferently, if we are to reason from a single fact afforded us by Major Goodwyn. This gentleman, while walking with the Yankee General, heard the report of a gun. Both heard it, and immediately proceeded to the spot. There they found a group of soldiers, with a stalwart young negro fellow lying dead before them on the street, the body yet warm and bleeding. Pushing it with his feet, Sherman said, in his quick, hasty manner, "What does this mean, boys?" The reply was sufficiently cool and caseless, "The d—d black rascal gave us his impudence, and we shot him." "Well, bury him at once! Get him out of sight!" As they passed on, one of the party remarked, "Is that the way, General, you treat such a case?" "Oh!" said he, "we have no time now for court-martial and things of that sort!"

A lady showed us a coverlet, with huge holes burned in it, which she said had covered