

REMINISCENCES OF MRS. C. P. POPPENHEIM
DURING HER STAY AT LIBERTY HILL AS A
REFUGEE FROM CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA,
AND DURING GENERAL SHERMAN'S OCCUPANCY
OF THAT PLACE IN FEBRUARY 1865.

"At 10.15 a.m. we leave Camden, I having a most comfortable seat that Mr. Atkinson took great pains to prepare for me; take my first view of a beautiful country from a wagon. Camden in a lovely little town, with considerable wealth. The long, long road to Liberty Hill has few houses to relieve the monotony; but most beautiful scenery on both sides of the Wateree River. We wind along the bends of the river and in view of the water for many miles; at last we near Liberty Hill and, through the kindness of Mr. Cureton, put up at his unoccupied house, well furnished and comfortable. There we find a train of refugees from Columbia, including Governor Adams' daughter; and very unexpectedly I met my old schoolmate and friend, Harriet Sophia Clarkson. Spend a pleasant night. Stopped there at 6 p.m. and leave next morning at 5.45 o'clock; in a little while we reach Liberty Hill, and must stop awhile, admiring the grandest and most extensive view my eyes ever feasted on; told Christie I could spend one month on that spot and my eyes would never tire of the scene, little dreaming them how many days of fearful anxiety I would spend at this lovely place.

"Sunday morning, ride through the place and lose our way for two miles; but it surely gives us a splendid view of the Hill; return and cross at Peay's ferry; a miserable road, a tiresome jolting in the wagon, and excitement grown greater every mile. Stop a few minutes at Mr. James Caldwell's. Dr. Kinloch kindly invites us in; his wife sends us out a hot lunch, and we conclude to go on as far as possible, though every one is wild with excitement and hourly looking for the Yankees. Arrive at General Clayton's headquarters at dark; have a beautiful view of campfires; all stop and doubt the safety of going on to Blackstock; Christie goes in to see General Clayton, who advises him not to go on, as the Yankees are very near, and Kilpatrick's raiders all through the woods. All hopes are disappointed; with heavy hearts and tired limbs, we turn our course back to Liberty Hill as the only place of safety, there to remain until the Yankees pass through and we have a safe road. In the wagon until 10 p.m.. Stop at a large brick house -Dr. Hall's- and there we find two lunatics from the lunatic asylum in Columbia, placed there to preserve the house from destruction by the Yankees. It was a night of horrors; the crazy woman walked into my room, with a candle in her hand, after I was in bed, drew the curtains aside, and peered into my face to see if I was asleep, I suppose, which I did not pretend to be. We left the place bright and early, and felt that our escape from danger had been very narrow.

A long, tiresome day's ride; recross Peay's ferry; much excitement all the way; met many of Butler's men, and do not feel safe until we cross the ferry; joy that we have crossed the river. Arrive at Liberty Hill at 4 p.m., put up at Mr. John Brown's; very kind people; large house and every appearance of abundant means; large grounds, and hundreds of poultry around.

"Tuesday, February 21st.- The excitement has even reached here, and the place that we thought, of all others, safest, seems to fear the Yankees; so we calmly resign ourselves to our fate of meeting them.

"February 22d.-Great anxiety; many of the citizens send off trunks and bury all their valuables. Mrs. Brown feeds a great many of our soldiers. Several scouts come in, and Christie wants to go to Columbia with one 'Orchard,' who lives in Columbia. At 4 p.m. several horsemen came dashing in; we are eager for the news; I beg Christie to go and hear; he had not left me five minutes before I saw the bluecoats and realized I had sent him to meet the Yankees; I ran to the front door and down the steps; saw them halt him, then pass and seize a negro boy, take his horse and make him lead them to the lot. In a few moments, a band of ruffians, a wild, savage looking set, dashed in the house, into the dining-room, and swept all the silver from the table, that was set for dinner; ran upstairs, broke open doors, locks and drawers, and the utmost confusion prevailed; the hammering sounded like one dozed carpenters were at work, and soon all the floors were covered with scattered papers, in their search for money and valuables. I go to the commanding officer and ask for assistance; he promises protection. Christie and myself go upstairs; my trunks broken open, and everything scattered in confusion over the floor. Oh! what a scene, impossible to describe! Money, jewels and clothing of every description taken by these demons! Lieut. B. Ulrich gives us a guard, and stays himself in the house, to protect us; but little sleep for any of us this night.

"February 23d.-Thousands of Yankees coming in; one command follows another in quick succession; all robbing and plundering; poor Mrs. Brown is robbed of provisions, silver, and almost everything; they go down in the cellar and pour kerosene oil, molasses and feathers all together, then stir them up with their bayonets. Mrs. Brown and myself go out to meet General Logan. What an awful feeling to come so close to hundreds of Yankees who are burning and destroying everything on the face of the land! Several staff officers tell us General Logan has just passed; but if we wait long enough, another camp will pass, and we can see General Wood. While waiting for the Yankees to pass, and looking on their fine horses, and hundreds

of stolen cattle, the refugees from Columbia who followed Sherman's army began to pass; among them I recognized Mary Boozer and her mother in a carriage, she in a lively conversation with a gay looking officer riding by the carriage; the scene is so sickening, I beg Mrs. Brown to let's return; waiting for the General won't pay!

"Friday, February 24th.-Today, Yankees throng the house, search and rob what others left. They ask Christie repeatedly how he keeps out of the army. Mrs. Brown and myself again go out and wait to see the General, but again he has just passed; the staff officers whom we meet look and speak as heartless as stones. Another sleepless night of suspense.

"Saturday, February 25th.- Still they go through-hundreds and thousands- all gayety, with bands of music, and burning houses light their march; last night we could count twelve burning residences, and imagine the horror of those who dwelt in them. Mr. Brown's large mill burnt.

"Sunday, February 26th.-Anything but a quiet Sabbath; Yankees still plundering and the negroes following them. Mr. Brown's large store burnt. A Sleepless night of suspense, expecting every hour to have the torch set to the house we were in.

"Monday, February 27th.-The wicked Yankees! How they torment the people! The brutal wretches! How they insult helpless women! they take every morsel of food that is being cooked in the kitchen; every fowl and every living thing they have killed and destroyed but one lone goose hidden in the cellar by a faithful servant. We had no meat for three days, when this servant attempted to save and cook the goose for us by cooking it in the dining-room; the savory smell of roast goose was perceived by Mrs. Brown and myself, who go to the dining-room and find a horde of ruffians devouring the last remnants of the goose, and we only say. 'The last morsel of meat is gone!' A foraging party, led by a lieutenant, and a squad, led by a captain, plunder every corner of the house that has not been already searched. Christie goes up in the garret to keep them from setting fire; they want to arrest and carry him off to camp; they say he is a captain in the Rebel army by his grey vest, with brass buttons; and they find an old sword up in the garret, which they swear is his. I fear he is up with them too long; I fear foul play, and tell Mrs. Brown I must go up and see what they are doing, although my knees tremble at every step, and I fear they will hear the bumps made by the sound of the money sewed up in the lining of my dress; I had over one hundred thousand dollars sewed up in the lining, to save it from the Yankees; they had taken four thousand dollars out of one of my trunks, and thought that was all. When I reached the top of the stairs, the sharp little captain had him, and Christie said, 'Mary, this man thinks I am a captain in the Rebel army, and wants to take me prisoner to camp.' I had to swear that he was not, and that we had been married a very short time, and now were on our way to my father's plantation. Then I gave him the Masonic sign of distress (which my brother gave me before going to war); he looked down, shut his mouth tight, then said,

'Go on.' And we lost no time in going. When this party came down stairs they captured Mr. Atkinson and Mr. Steinmyer and took them off to camp. How we all pitied their fate!

"Tuesday, February 28th.-Still harrassed by the vile Yankees, and spend sleepless nights, seeing the skies lit by burning fires; at midnight, the academy is in flames, and we expect every moment to see the flames burst out from the house we are in; once a vile Yankee was caught with the torch applied; the flames were put out, and I appealed to an officer to give us a guard for the night.

"Wednesday, March 1st.- Dr. Robert Kinlock and Lieutenant Swinton Bissell come in quite early and tell us of their escape from the Yankees. after having marched several days through mud and knee deep. The Yankees were pushing rapidly for Camden, to plunder and rob the peaceful, quiet little town. We are starving here; have nothing to eat but sorghum molasses and black shorts bread. Sherman's army has left no living thing on their route; nothing but blackened chimneys and smoking ruins mark his path from Columbia here; pillage, robbery, fire and ruin mark their footsteps here; a sign of relief and a prayer of thankfulness that our lives were spared was breathed as we saw the last Yankee soldier disappear from the devastated little village."

Mrs. C. P. Poppenheim.

Charleston, S.C.

Extract from "South Carolina Women in the Confederacy."

Compliments of
John S. [unclear]

Given to [unclear]

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Letter
about L.H. in 1965

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