

PURSUIT AND CAPTURE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS.

I.—BY THE COMMANDER OF THE UNION CAVALRY.



AFTER the last council of the Confederacy at Abbeville, South Carolina, the practical conclusion of which was that the war was ended, it was made evident that no such force as still remained with Jefferson Davis could get through the country occupied by my troops. The cavalry corps under my command had been distributed throughout Georgia, a large detachment had been sent to Florida, strong parties were now watching every ferry and crossing and patrolling every road, and every officer and man of that splendid force was keenly on the lookout for the fugitives, but up to this time without any exact information of Davis's movements. On the 23d of April I learned that he and his party had been at Charlotte, North Carolina, only three or four days before, and that he was on his way to the South with a wagon-train and an escort of cavalry, but there my information ended for the time. [See also page 561.]

On the 28th, Upton left Macon by rail, accompanied by a part of his division, with orders to leave a detachment under Colonel B. B. Eggleston, 1st Ohio, at Atlanta, and to take another on to Augusta, while Winslow, with the rest of the division, was left to march directly to Atlanta. Before starting, General Alexander, commanding the Second Brigade, at his own suggestion and request was authorized to detach an officer and twenty picked men to be disguised as rebel soldiers, to march northeastward into and through the Carolinas if necessary, for the purpose of obtaining definite information of Davis's movements. This party was placed under the command of Lieutenant Joseph A. O. Yeoman, of the 1st Ohio Cavalry, a brave and enterprising young officer, at that time serving on the staff of Alexander as acting assistant inspector-general of brigade. He was tall, slender, and of a somewhat swarthy complexion, which, with hair that for lack of a barber's services had grown long enough to brush back of his ears, and a Confederate major's brand-new uniform, gave him such a close resemblance to his erring but gallant countrymen of the South that his most intimate friend would not have suspected him of being a Yankee. His men were quite as successfully fitted out in captured clothing, and after receiving

instructions at my own headquarters to report frequently by courier, he gaily set off on what afterwards proved to be a most successful expedition. Verbal orders were also given to the other division and brigade commanders to send out similar parties, and they did so without delay.

Yeoman and his followers marched rapidly towards the upper crossings of the Savannah River, entered South Carolina, and by diligent but cautious inquiry and much hard riding found and joined the party they were looking for, without attracting unusual attention to themselves. The country was full of disbanded Confederate soldiers, all more or less demoralized and going home. Discipline was at an end, and every man of them was looking out for himself. This condition of affairs facilitated the operations of Yeoman, and encouraged him to believe that he might find an opportunity to seize and carry off the rebel chief; but the vigilance and devotion of the escort rendered it impossible to put this daring plan into effect, though it did not prevent his sending couriers into the nearest Federal picket post to report the movements of the party he was with. The information thus obtained was promptly transmitted to Generals Alexander and Upton, and by them to me. At Washington, Georgia, there was much confusion, growing out of the further disbanding which was rendered necessary by the proximity of our forces, and Yeoman lost sight of Davis for about twenty-four hours, during which he divided his party into three or four squads, and sought again to obtain definite information of the Confederate chieftain's movements and plans. Persevering in his efforts, he learned enough to convince him that Davis had relinquished all hope of getting through the country to the westward, and would most probably try to reach the South Atlantic or Gulf Coast and escape by sea. This, it will be remembered, was the plan which Pollard, the historian of the Lost Cause, says was deliberately adopted, many weeks before Lee's catastrophe. Relying upon his information, Yeoman sent in couriers to make it known, and as soon as it reached him Alexander repeated it to me by the telegraph, which was now completely in our possession. The air was full of rumors, and everybody had a theory to advance as to the probable movements of the party we were

so anxious to apprehend; but after careful consideration of all the reports and the few absolute facts which had reached me I had already come to the conclusion that Davis would be forced to flee, probably alone and in disguise, towards the Florida coast, and reported to Thomas that I had no doubt we should catch him if he undertook to pass through the country attended by an escort and a wagon-train.

On the afternoon of May 6, immediately after receiving the intelligence from Yeoman, I sent for General Croxton, commanding the First (McCook's) Division, and directed him to select his best regiment in his division, and send it forthwith, under its best officer, eastward by the little town of Jeffersonville to Dublin on the Oconee River, with orders to march with the greatest possible speed, scouting the country well to the northward of his route, leaving detachments at all important cross-roads and keeping a sharp lookout for all rebel parties, whether large or small, that might be passing through that region. It was hoped by these means that the route pursued by Davis might be intersected and his movements discovered, in which event the commanding officer was instructed to follow wherever it might lead, until the fugitive should be overtaken and captured. General Croxton selected the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Harnden, an officer of age, experience, and unconquerable resolution, who reported to me after his regiment was on the march, and whom I notified that Davis was known to have an escort variously estimated at from ten to fifty men, all fully armed, and determined to die "in the last ditch," if need be, in his defense. The sturdy old colonel understood fully what he might encounter and what was expected of him, and assured me as he galloped away that he would give a satisfactory account of himself and command if he should have the good fortune to find the party he was sent after. He had selected 150 of his best men and stoutest horses, and, marching all night, he reached Dublin the next evening at seven o'clock, having left an officer and thirty men at Jeffersonville with orders to send out scouts in all directions. During his march he had kept scouting parties well out on both sides of his column in hopes of finding the trail of the party for whom he was searching, but nothing of importance occurred till after he had bivouacked for the night.

Meanwhile the conviction was growing in my mind that Davis would certainly try to pass through eastern Georgia into Florida, and accordingly the next day—May 7—I sent for Colonel Minty, commanding the Second

(Long's) Division, and directed him also to select his best regiment and order it to follow the southern bank of the Ocmulgee River, watching all the crossings, and seizing all the boats between Hawkinsville and the mouth of the Ochoopee River. Minty selected the 4th Michigan Cavalry, his own regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin D. Pritchard, an officer of rare ability and enterprise. He received the same information and instructions that had been given to Harnden in regard to the strength and character of the escort which was supposed to be with Davis, and was directed to find and follow the party to the Gulf of Mexico if necessary and bring it in if possible. Pritchard, leaving behind his weaker horses, set out immediately with the rest of his regiment, and proceeded rapidly in the direction indicated.

The excitement had now grown to white heat, and every officer and man in the force was on the alert. Upton had telegraphed me from Augusta as early as the 6th, suggesting that I should offer a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the capture of Davis, urging in support of his advice that the Secretary of War would approve my action, and that it would induce even the rebels to assist in making the capture. I did not care, however, to commit the Government in that way, and decided, instead, to offer a reward to be paid from the treasure which the fleeing chieftain was thought by General Halleck, and perhaps others, to have with him. This was done, and printed copies of the offer were scattered throughout the State as soon as possible.

At this time the cavalry corps, consisting of about fifteen thousand horsemen, was holding all the important points along a line extending from Kingston to Tallahassee, with one brigade and many smaller detachments moving in all directions to the front and rear, and the sequel showed that I was fully justified in believing that Davis and his party could not possibly escape unless they left the roads and took to the woods as individual fugitives.

On his arrival at Dublin, Harnden made careful inquiry, but the white inhabitants of the place expressed complete ignorance and indifference in regard to the movements of all parties and detachments such as might accompany the rebel leaders, though they were unusually profuse in offers of hospitality to himself and his command. This being a trait of Southern character that the bronzed old cavalryman had never before seen exhibited to any marked extent, his suspicions were at once aroused, and, declining all attentions, he went into bivouac at the edge of the village, resolved to sleep with one eye open if he slept at all. He had

\$100,000 REWARD! IN GOLD.

Headquarters Cav. Corp.,
Military Division Mississippi,
Macon, Ga., May 6, 1865.

One Hundred Thousand Dollars Reward
in Gold, will be paid to any person or persons who will apprehend and deliver JEFFERSON DAVIS to any of the Military authorities of the United States.

Several millions of specie, reported to be with him, will become the property of the captors.

J. H. WILSON

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A TORN POSTER FOUND IN GEORGIA AFTER THE WAR BY MR. REAU CAMPBELL.

already observed unusual commotion among the colored people, and after sending out scouts and posting his pickets he composed himself for the night.

About eleven o'clock, after complete stillness had settled upon the bivouac, a negro man came stealthily to the colonel's tent and told him with bated breath that he had assisted the ferryman that day in bringing Mrs. Davis and family from the east to the west side of the river; that the party was composed of men, women, and children, about twenty in all; that they had three ambulances and five wagons, and after crossing had gone south on the river road. He was sure that it was Mrs. Davis and family, because he had heard one of the ladies addressed as "Mrs. Davis," and an elderly gen-

tleman, with a defective eye, riding a fine bay horse, spoken to as "Mr. Davis" or as "President Davis." The colored man had evidently made close observation of all that took place. He reported that "Mrs. Davis" and some of the party had not crossed at Dublin, but had gone to a ferry several miles farther down the river, and after crossing there had ridden up to the town, and rejoining the party in the outskirts they had all gone south together "on the river road." Colonel Harnden, after a rigid cross-examination of his voluntary informant, and receiving from another negro a confirmatory statement, went down to the river and called up the white ferryman, whom he again questioned closely, but from whom he failed to elicit any additional facts. Indeed he got

nothing whatever from him, except the conviction that, for a white man, the ferryman was an unusually ignorant and reticent person.

Returning, however, to his camp and reflecting upon the story of the colored man, he concluded that it was too probable and circumstantial to be disregarded. He therefore detailed Lieutenant Theron W. Lane with sixty men to scout from Dublin as a center, in all directions, and especially towards the sea-coast, while he resolved to start at two o'clock with the remainder of his regiment, not exceeding in all seventy-five men and officers, in pursuit of the party about which he had gathered such circumstantial details. With horses well fed and groomed, and his troopers refreshed by a short sleep and by the bountiful supplies of a region which had entirely escaped the ravages of the foragers, he took to the saddle at two o'clock, the darkest hour of the night, determined to overtake the fugitives, wherever they might go. As nearly as he could make out, they had sixteen or seventeen hours the start of him; but as they were encumbered with ambulances and wagons, he felt that the chances were largely in his favor. He had some difficulty at first in finding the right road, which, like all the rest in that region, was at best an obscure path through the forest; but five miles out he obtained information from a woman of the country which convinced him that he was moving in the right direction, and that Davis in person had gone by the day before. This was on the morning of May 8. The colonel at once sent a courier across country with a despatch for General Croxton, informing the latter of his discovery and his general plan of operations, and then pushed on rapidly in pursuit. It is worthy of note, however, that the courier lost his way and was captured, dismounted, and robbed, and did not reach Macon till after the news of Davis's capture had been received. The route by which the latter was traveling led nearly due south through an almost unsettled and trackless but level and sandy region of pine forests, made still more difficult by creeks and swamps crossing and frequently obliterating the road for miles. It began to rain about noon, and this speedily washed out the wagon-tracks and left the pursuers in doubt as to the trail which they were following. After a while they impressed an unwilling "cracker," as the inhabitants of that region are called, and forcing him to act as guide, they pushed forward till they felt sure they were again on the right road. Allowing him to return home, they continued the march till they came to the swamps of Alligator Creek, where the trail disappeared under the water, and they were once more forced to draw rein till another "cracker" could be

found to guide them through the swamp and forest to the path which seemed so illusive, and upon which the trail of the fugitives was so faintly marked. Notwithstanding the delays, Colonel Harnden and his troopers bivouacked that night forty miles south of Dublin. Having no tents, they lay on the ground, and as it rained heavily during the night, they were again drenched to the skin. As a consequence it was more comfortable for the men in the saddle than in their dreary camp, and so with much impatience they mounted and resumed their march at the early hour of three o'clock the next morning.

The route, as before, lay due south, across creeks and swamps and through an almost uninhabited forest, but by noon it brought them to Brown's ferry, where they crossed to the south side of the Ocmulgee. The river was found to be too deep for fording, and its banks so steep and treacherous that the prudent colonel, anxious as he was to get forward, would not permit his command to swim it. Accordingly a rickety old scow, on which the fugitives had crossed only a few hours before, was brought into requisition; but it was overloaded, and under the burden of the first detachment it sprung a leak, which threatened to disable it entirely, and in fact came so near doing so that it was found necessary to limit the loads afterward to four or five men and horses. There were no means at hand for making repairs, and the crossing was thereby prolonged nearly two hours beyond what otherwise would have been necessary. The time was not altogether lost, however, for it afforded Colonel Harnden an opportunity to gather from the ferryman and his assistants such particulars of the party he was pursuing as to remove all doubt, if any existed, in regard to its identity and strength, and also in regard to the route it had taken after crossing the river.

At Abbeville, a hamlet of three families, about a mile and a half below the ferry, he found some corn, and halted to feed his jaded horses. At 3 P. M., just as he was renewing his march, he met the advance guard of the 4th Michigan Cavalry, Lieutenant-Colonel Pritchard commanding, coming down the river road from Hawkinsville. After comparing instructions with that officer, and telling him about the party he was pursuing, he rejoined his own command and continued his march by the road from Abbeville to Irwinville until again compelled by darkness and the consequent difficulty of following the trail to go into camp. This he did about nine o'clock at night, after he had got within two or three miles of where he supposed the fugitives had also been compelled to halt. Here he unsaddled, and after posting pickets and enjoining the most perfect

silence, he sent his horses out to graze for a while before allowing his men to rest. Declaring his purpose to renew the pursuit before dawn the next morning, in the hope of falling upon the camp of the rebel party before it had resumed its march, he threw himself upon the ground and slept soundly for a few hours.

It will be remembered that Colonel Pritchard, who belonged to the Second Division, had left Macon about dark on the evening of May 7, and that his attention had been particularly directed to the crossings of the Ocmulgee between Hawkinsville and Jacksonville, for the purpose of watching the ferries and intercepting Davis and such other important Confederate leaders as might be trying to escape through that region. He had practically the same orders that had been given to Harnden, except that his preliminary line of march was to be southeastward along the southern bank of the Ocmulgee, while Harnden's was to be due east to the Oconee and beyond. Exactly what words passed between these two officers when they met have never been fully reported or agreed upon, but as they were veterans of most excellent character, it is fair to assume that each gave the other all the information he had, after which they parted, Harnden to rejoin his command on the Irwinville road, and Pritchard to continue on the route above indicated. [See page 594.] The latter had not gone far, however, before he met a negro man who gave him such additional information as convinced him absolutely that the party which Harnden was pursuing was the one they were both looking for, and that it was his duty to join in the pursuit. Accordingly he selected seven officers and 128 of his best-mounted men, and after leaving the rest of the regiment under Captain John C. Hathaway, with orders to carry out his original instructions, he set out at a brisk trot. It was now four o'clock, and the route chosen by him led southeasterly along the river nearly twelve miles to the neighborhood of Wilcox's mill, where it turned sharply to the southwest in the direction of Irwinville, some eighteen miles from the river. Night soon overtook the hardy cavalymen, but they pressed on through the overshadowing forest and reached Irwinville between one and two o'clock in the morning. Although this is the county seat of Irwin County, it is an insignificant village, which till that hour had escaped all the alarms of the war; but the presence of so large a body of cavalry soon became known, and caused great excitement among both whites and blacks. Fearing that the alarm would extend to the neighborhood unless promptly allayed, the colonel represented his command as the rear-guard of Davis's escort, and after restoring

order thereby had the satisfaction of learning that the party he was searching for had encamped that night at the creek, about a mile and a half north of the village, on the Abbeville road. Feeling confident that the fugitives were now within his grasp, he marched noiselessly, under the guidance of a negro from the village, to within half a mile of the camp, where he detached Lieutenant Alfred B. Purinton and twenty-five men, with orders to dismount and work their way quietly through the woods to a point on the road north of the camp. He hoped by this means to interpose between Davis and his escort, and to cut off all chance of escape. In case of alarm or discovery, he directed the lieutenant to turn at once towards the camp from wherever he might be, while the principal force, under his own immediate command, would be held in readiness to charge the camp along the main road.

These dispositions were carried into effect without the slightest noise or disorder, and everything was in readiness to close in upon the sleeping chieftain and his attendants; but unfortunately Colonel Pritchard had failed to apprise Colonel Harnden of his plan of operations, and the latter, entirely unconscious of what had occurred since he left Abbeville at three o'clock the previous afternoon, had called his men without the blare of bugles from their slumber, and after a hasty breakfast of coffee and hard bread had taken the road to gather in the party which he had been pursuing with such untiring industry for two days and nights. He had thrown out an advance guard of six men, and directed Sergeant George G. Hussey, in charge, to answer no challenges, but to wheel about as noiselessly as possible and rejoin the main body as soon as he encountered any force on the road. With this disposition made, the colonel and his troopers had covered but little more than two miles when the sergeant was challenged by an unknown party only a short distance ahead of them. There was as yet no show of dawn, and the shadows of the pines, which here constitute the entire forest growth, rendered it impossible to see twenty feet ahead. The sergeant alleges that he replied "All right; friends!" and wheeling about promptly rejoined the column in the rear, but as he did so he was followed by a rattling carbine fire, which of course brought the colonel at once to the front. Without the slightest delay the latter detached a part of his force to move rapidly through the woods upon the flank and rear of the party they had encountered, and ordering the rest of his men to dismount and "fight on foot," he charged straight down the road, regardless of what he might encounter. A sharp fight ensued, but it was soon discovered that the men in front were Purinton's detach-

ment of the 4th Michigan Cavalry instead of the enemy. In this untoward affair one officer of the 4th Michigan was wounded and two men killed, while three of the 1st Wisconsin were severely, and several slightly, wounded. It has always been a source of regret to those concerned that this skirmish took place, and yet it is difficult to see how, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, it could have been avoided. Colonel Pritchard reports explicitly that he had sent a courier to warn Colonel Harnden and had cautioned Lieutenant Purinton to keep a sharp lookout, but withal Harnden remained entirely unconscious that the Michigan men had got around him, and pressed on under the supposition that the force in front could be no other than Davis's escort.

Meanwhile, Colonel Pritchard with his main body, preceded by Captain Charles T. Hudson and twelve men, charged through the somewhat straggling camp just as the first signs of dawn began to show themselves. He at once threw a cordon of mounted troopers completely around the space covered by it, and had sent some dismounted men to the tents and wagons for the purpose of securing such prisoners as they might contain, when the woods resounded with sharp firing beyond the creek in the direction of Abbeville, but apparently close at hand. The camp was now completely aroused, and much commotion followed, but the colonel did not tarry to take account of his captures. Hurriedly consigning that task to his adjutant, he gathered all the men that could be spared, and rode at once towards the scene of conflict, arriving there just in time to receive the volley which brought the unfortunate affair to an end.

During the skirmish and the absence of Colonel Pritchard, which must have lasted ten or fifteen minutes, the adjutant, Lieutenant J. G. Dickinson, having taken every precaution for securing the entire camp and its occupants, had gathered up a few stragglers and sent them to the front, and was about to go in the same direction himself, when his attention was called by one of his men to "three persons dressed in female attire," who had apparently just left the large tent near by and were moving towards the thick woods. He started at once towards them and called out loudly and imperatively, "Halt!" but not hearing him, or not caring to obey, they continued to move off. The command was repeated in louder tones, and this brought several troopers under Corporal Munger from the outer cordon, and as they confronted the party of three with carbines "advanced" and a threatening air, the latter halted, and in the confusion which followed it became evident

that one of them was Mr. Davis in disguise, and that he was accompanied by Mrs. Davis and her sister, Miss Howell.

Shortly afterwards, and before the party had reëntered the tent, Colonel Pritchard accompanied by Colonel Harnden returned from the front, and rode up to the group which had now become the center of interest. Davis, who had not yet recovered his equanimity, although he had been permitted to throw off his disguise, recognized them as officers of rank, turned fiercely upon them, and asked which of them was in command. It will be remembered that these officers were lieutenant-colonels from different States, belonging to different brigades and divisions, and had probably never met till the day before; hence it is not strange that they had not compared dates of commissions, nor that they were somewhat disconcerted by the question of their imperious prisoner.

Noting their hesitation, the latter upbraided them sharply, charged them with incompetency and unchivalric conduct, and finally declared that they could not have caught him but for his desire to protect his "women and children." Whereupon Colonel Pritchard, who was a man of self-possession and dignity, said: "I am Lieutenant-Colonel Pritchard, commanding the 4th Michigan Cavalry, and this is Lieutenant-Colonel Harnden, of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry. We don't know who holds the oldest commission; but that is not important, for between us we shall doubtless be able to take care of you and your party." This ended the conversation, and after a hurried breakfast the captors began their return march to Macon.

Mr. Davis and his family were carried in the ambulances, followed by the wagons containing their baggage and supplies. It should be remembered that the troops had drawn no regular Government rations since leaving the Tennessee River, and were therefore compelled to subsist by foraging. The country being but sparsely settled and poorly cultivated, all kinds of provisions were scarce, and consequently the men had now begun to suffer for food. Discovering that the captured train contained more food than could possibly be consumed by the prisoners, Colonel Pritchard on the way north decided to distribute the surplus to his men, but before doing so politely requested Mr. Davis to direct his cook to set apart enough to last for the few hours which would bring them to Macon. Much to his surprise and annoyance, Mr. Davis declined, strenuously protesting that the supplies were private property and should not be disposed of as the colonel had proposed. A sharp conversation ensued, during which Mr. Davis lost his temper, declared that he never expected to be

compelled to submit to such indignities, and that if he could have got possession of his arms at the time of his capture he would not have been taken prisoner. Colonel Pritchard asked quite naturally, "How could you have prevented it, Mr. Davis?" "Why, sir," replied the now thoroughly angered chieftain, "I could have fought you, or I could have eluded you."

Replying to this somewhat boastful speech, the colonel said impressively, and, in his own words, "perhaps a little acrimoniously," "As for fighting us, we came prepared for that: it would have saved us some trouble and doubtless you a good deal; but as for 'eluding us,' I don't think your garments were on that occasion particularly well adapted for locomotion or for the use of firearms." To this Mrs. Davis retorted sharply, saying, "I want you to understand distinctly that Mr. Davis assumed that disguise at my instance."¹

It is proper to say that Mr. Davis denies the accuracy of this story, and Mr. Reagan, who was captured with the party, but was not present at the interview just described, also denies it; but I see no reason whatever for doubting the statement of Colonel Pritchard. He is a cool, self-possessed, and honorable gentleman, and quite incapable of giving currency to any other than a truthful statement of what actually took place.

Upon mustering the prisoners immediately after the capture, it was found that in addition to Mr. Davis and Mr. Reagan the national troopers had taken Colonel Burton N. Harrison, private secretary; Colonels Johnston and Lubbock, aides-de-camp; four inferior officers and thirteen private soldiers; besides Mrs. Davis, Miss Howell, two waiting-maids, four children, and several colored servants. Only one member of the party, and that a private soldier, succeeded in avoiding capture.

The circumstances of this capture, which summarily and forever put an end to all plans for the further continuance of the war, have been described with more or less particularity in the official reports, and in sketches based upon them or upon the less formal statements of those who participated therein. It is needless to add that I was not personally present, and therefore that in all I have said or written about it I have been compelled to depend in a large degree upon the observations and testimony of others. Both officers and men present have declared that Jefferson Davis when arrested was endeavoring to escape disguised as a woman,

¹ For other interesting details of the capture of Davis, see the article prepared by Colonel Pritchard and published in the "Allegan Journal," March 30, 1878.

² In an interview printed Dec. 7, 1889, General Townsend confirms this statement.—EDITOR.

and they so reported to me. In the belief that this was true, and that under the peculiar circumstances of the case the fact was an important one, I mentioned in the telegraphic reports which I sent at once to the Secretary of War and to my immediate military superiors, that he had been caught "in his wife's clothes," but I gave no details, and specified no particular articles of clothing. The reports were immediately flashed to all parts of the country by the telegraph, and the newspapers and illustrated journals supplied all the details from the imagination of their writers and artists. No official, so far as I know, ever asserted that the Confederate chieftain was caught in crinoline or petticoats, and yet his friends and admirers everywhere hastened to deny that allegation, and some of them have gone so far as to say that he was not disguised at all, and that the whole story was a "disgusting tissue of falsehood." It will not be forgotten that the country was at that time hung in black and plunged into the deepest sorrow for the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, and that so long as the Confederate chiefs were at large, breathing the spirit of war and threatening to carry it on with fire and sword more fiercely than ever, there was no certain assurance of peace. But when the news came that Jefferson Davis had not died in "the last ditch," but had been caught in the act of stealing away in the encumbering clothing of his wife, it was evident to the most infantile mind that the war was ended completely and forever. The articles of his disguise were afterward procured from Mrs. Davis by Colonel Pritchard, acting under the orders of the War Department, and were delivered by him to General Townsend, the Adjutant-General of the army,² for safe-keeping. Mrs. Davis and her son selected or verified them at the time, and there can be no reasonable doubt as to their identity. In the charge into the camp the advance guard passed well through, while the main body swung round and enveloped it entirely. Lieutenant Dickinson, the adjutant of Colonel Pritchard's regiment, says in the Detroit "Tribune":

In this movement I met in front of a small fly tent Colonel Harrison, Davis's private secretary, as I afterwards learned. I stopped and made inquiry as to their force in camp, and while he was replying I heard some one calling me. I turned and saw private Andrew Bee of L Company, who, pointing to three persons dressed in female apparel, at some distance and moving away, called out to me, "Adjutant, there goes a man dressed in woman's clothes." I started at once after them, calling out "Halt!" repeatedly and reaching them just as several troopers in charge of Corporal Munger dashed up, bringing their carbines ready for use. The fugitives halted. Mrs. Davis threw her arms around her husband's shoulders, and [with] the lady close to him formed a

shield which was respected. I noticed several Confederate officers near; one, a tall fellow, was apparently very much excited.

Davis had on a black dress, and though it did not fit fairly at the neck, it covered his form to the boots. The boots betrayed his disguise. A black shawl covered his head and shoulders. His identity was confirmed by the removal of the shawl from his face. I promptly directed him to retire to his quarters, and ordered Corporal Munger to place the men with him and keep careful guard.¹

This statement, made by an officer of rank and intelligence, is conclusive, and it is confirmed by the statements of Corporal George Munger and privates James F. Bullard and Andrew Bee. The latter says that Mrs. Davis remained in the tent with the children, and that the three women who started for the brook were Mr. Davis, Miss Howell, and a white servant-girl, "Mr. Davis stooping over as a very old woman would, so that his head was not on a level with Miss Howell's, but was lower." He adds: "Mr. Davis had on a black morning-gown, belted at the waist, a shawl over his head and shoulders, and a black cloth under the shawl covering his forehead. They had got about six or eight rods from the tent when I, who had been watching them all the time, saw that the old woman had on boots. I at once said to Dickinson: 'See, that is Jeff himself! That is no woman! That is old Jeff Davis!' and started on the run after them. As I got up to them I exclaimed: 'Halt! — you, you can't get any farther this time!' Mrs. Davis at that moment came running out of the tent, and when she reached Mr. Davis she put her arms around his neck and said, 'Guard, do not kill him!' At the same instant Corporal Munger of Company C, mounted, came from another direction and headed Davis. . . . The only portion of the face of Mr. Davis which could be seen when he was disguised were the eyes and nose, he covering the mustache, mouth, and beard with the shawl held close with one hand."

Private William P. Stedman [see page 595] of Company B, 4th Michigan Cavalry, confirms the statement of the others in regard to the disguise and the effort of Davis to escape as an old woman going to the run after water; but if further proof is still required as to the substantial accuracy of the story, it is furnished by Captain Charles T. Hudson, in a letter of July 24, 1875, to the "Detroit Tribune," from which I make the following extract:

I was not the first to see our distinguished captive, nor did I see him in his disguise at all. Several claim that honor, and I have no doubt all speak the truth.

¹ See "Annals of the War, Written by Leading Participants," etc., p. 580 *et seq.*

² For the full text of the letters and statements quoted from in this article, and also for a careful and

judicious summary of the proofs in regard to the disguise, made by Colonel Robert Burns, 4th Michigan Cavalry, see "Annals of the War," pp. 580-586 inclusive.

On our way back to Macon, however, Mrs. Davis told me, and I will use her own words: "I put my waterproof cloak and shawl on Mr. Davis, upon the impulse of the moment, not knowing or having time to think what else to do, in hopes that he might make his escape in that disguise, and I only did what any true woman might have done under similar circumstances." . . . If fuller proof is wanting let me add that upon our arrival at Fort Monroe, with our prisoners, acting under orders of the Secretary of War, I was sent on board of the *Clyde*, then lying in Hampton Roads, to get the shawl (the waterproof having been obtained the day previous by Colonel Pritchard) worn by Davis at the time of his capture. Upon making known my business to Mrs. Davis, she and Mrs. Clement C. Clay, particularly the latter, flew into a towering rage, and Mrs. Clay, stamping her foot on the deck of the vessel, advised Mrs. Davis "to shed her blood before submitting to further outrage." After telling Mrs. Davis my orders were imperative and that she had better submit gracefully to my demands, she became somewhat pacified, and said *she* "had no other wrappings to protect *her* from the inclemency of the weather." I then told her I would go ashore and buy her a shawl, which I did, paying six dollars for it. Upon presenting it to her, she held it up, and with scorn and contempt turned to Mrs. Clay and exclaimed, "A common nigger's shawl!" She then handed me two shawls very similar in appearance and told me to take my choice, adding that she did dress Mr. Davis in her attire and would not deny it, at the same time expressing great surprise that the Secretary of War should want her clothing to exhibit, as if she had not already been sufficiently humiliated.²

Mr. Reagan, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Pollard, and even Mr. Davis's colored servant Jones, have with more or less ill temper and earnestness denied the story of the disguise; but each has admitted enough of what has been alleged by the captors to prove its substantial accuracy, and in the face of the positive and overwhelming testimony of the eye-witnesses and participants it would be conclusive if it were not absolutely confirmed by Davis's own story, as published in the "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," pp. 701, 702. [See page 566.]

As for myself, I did not see Mr. Davis till he had arrived at my headquarters at Macon on the afternoon of May 13. When the cavalcade reached the city the streets were thronged by crowds of rebel citizens, but not one kindly greeting was extended to their fallen chieftain or his party. Of course he and they were closely guarded, but no one was prohibited from expressing his personal feelings or offering a friendly salutation. The party was assigned to rooms in the hotel which I was occupying, and my own servants gave the tired and hungry travelers the best dinner that they could

judicious summary of the proofs in regard to the disguise, made by Colonel Robert Burns, 4th Michigan Cavalry, see "Annals of the War," pp. 580-586 inclusive.

possibly provide, and otherwise treated them with every courtesy and attention.

After dinner I had an interview with Mr. Davis, lasting more than an hour. He looked bronzed, but hardy and vigorous, and had entirely recovered his customary equanimity and distinguished bearing. As we were both graduates of the Military Academy, and he had been Secretary of War at the time I was appointed, and had visited West Point while I was a cadet, the conversation naturally enough turned upon common recollections. He asked about his old friends the professors, and discussed them and their peculiarities with easy good-humor and kindly discrimination, after which I led him to the discussion of the graduates who had become leading generals in the two armies. He spoke in the highest terms of Lee, declaring him to be the ablest, most aggressive, and most courageous, and in short the most worthy and best beloved of all his lieutenants. He spoke slightly of Johnston, and charged him with timidity and insubordination. He ridiculed the pedantry of Beauregard, and deprecated the gallant rashness of Hood. On the other hand he expressed his surprise at the astonishing skill and persistency of Grant, and his admiration for the brilliancy of Sherman and the solid qualities of Thomas. His comments and criticisms were clothed in excellent language, and were delivered with grace, while his manners were stately and dignified without being frigid or repellent. During the conversation he referred to Mr. Lincoln and his untimely death, speaking of him and his service in Congress in terms of respect and kindness, if not of high admiration. He seemed particularly sorry that a man of so much sensibility and kindness had been succeeded in the presidency by Andrew Johnson, whom it was evident he did not like, and whom he

feared would be governed in his relations with the Southern people by a vindictive and unforbearing temper. He remarked in regard to the reward offered by the latter for his arrest, and which he heard of for the first time on the road from Irwinville to Macon, that, while he was surprised and pained at the charge which had been made against him, of complicity in the assassination of the President, he had no serious apprehension of trouble therefrom. In this connection he said, "I do not doubt, General, the Government of the United States will bring a much more serious charge against me than that, and one which will give me much greater trouble to disprove"—doubtless alluding to that of treason.

During our interview he sent for his little son and introduced him to me. His conduct throughout was natural and eminently self-possessed, and did not reveal the slightest uneasiness or apprehension. It created in me the impression that, although he was a prisoner of war, he still felt that he would become an important factor in the reconstruction of the Union. After learning from me that he was to be sent at once via Atlanta and Augusta to Savannah, and thence by sea to such point North as the Secretary of War might designate, he said: "I suppose, as a matter of course, that Colonel Pritchard is to be my custodian hereafter as heretofore; and I desire to express my satisfaction at this, for it is my duty to say that Colonel Pritchard has treated me with marked courtesy and consideration. I have no fault to find with him, and beg you will tell him so. I should do so myself but for the fact that it might look like a prisoner's effort to make fair weather with his captors." He spoke particularly of the dignity and self-possession of Colonel Pritchard, and did not conceal a regret that he had not been so fortunate in his own conduct at the time of his capture.

James Harrison Wilson.

II.—BY AN EYE-WITNESS.

AT Abbeville, South Carolina, we of the 4th Michigan Cavalry met Colonel Harnden of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry, who said a detachment of his regiment had crossed the Ocmulgee and had gone south, and that the party that crossed the river the night before was Jefferson Davis and some refugees from Richmond. He said that he had been following them for two days, and he claimed the first right to the road, which was consented to by Colonel Pritchard of the 4th Michigan, who besides offered to lend Colonel Harnden a part of his regiment. The latter refused the offer and proceeded south towards Irwinville,

Georgia, on Davis's trail. Soon afterward Pritchard learned that there was another road to Irwinville, but it was considerably farther than the road Davis had taken, and nearly twenty-four hours had elapsed since Davis had crossed the river. But Colonel Pritchard concluded to take this road with 120 of his best-mounted men and seven officers, leaving the rest to picket and scout the country around, according to former orders. Captain Charles T. Hudson was given charge of the advance guard, of which I was one. About four o'clock p. m. we took the river road to Wilcox's mill, about twelve miles distant. There we halted

and fed our horses. Then we took an old trail for Irwinville, through an unbroken pine forest, reaching there about two o'clock in the morning of the 10th. It was a bright moonlight night. We soon learned by examining the roads that the Davis party had not passed, and that they must be north of us if they had not taken some other road. The command halted at Irwinville, and orders were given for all to keep by their horses, but two of our men strayed away in search of something to eat. They found a meat-house, and in trying to get into it they disturbed the family in the dwelling-house adjoining it, when a woman put her head out of a window and ordered the men away, saying, "I know where you belong; and if you don't go away I will go to your camp in the morning and report you, for I know that your party does not allow such work." The boys took in the situation at once, and replied that they had lost their way, and wanted to know if there was any one in the house that would show them the way to camp. The woman said there was a colored man in the house that would show them the way. When the man came out the boys took him to Colonel Pritchard and informed him of what they had learned. After asking the man a few questions the colonel dismounted the command, except those that had been in the advance guard under Captain Hudson. The dismounted men, with the colored man for a guide, were sent to establish a line of pickets around the Davis camp. The advance guard was held back on the road until it began to show daylight in the east; then we were to advance on the camp. We marched right into the camp, without disturbing any one, until Captain Hudson said, "Go for them!" Then we gave a yell, and the men went for everything they could find. The camp was situated on a slight elevation of ground in a pine forest, but the timber did not stand very thick where the camp was. There was a creek, with considerable thick brush along it, running round the north and east sides of the camp, about twenty or twenty-five rods away. There were two wall tents and a shelter tent on the east side of the road, and the horses and wagons and ambulances were on the west side of the road, and the men of the camp were seen lying in the wagons and under the trees, for the surprise was so sudden that they had not got out of their beds. There was one tent larger than the rest, and I thought that if Davis were in the camp he would be in this tent, so I stopped my horse near the southwest corner of the tent and waited to see what would come out of it. The tent door was on the east side of the tent, and I could not see it, but a man could not get more than three or four feet from it without my seeing him.

As I sat there some of our men went to the tent door, but were met by a woman who would ask them to keep out, saying that there were undressed ladies within. I heard this same voice several times, and it proved to be Mrs. Davis who was speaking. About this time firing was heard on the north side of the camp. Captain Hudson ordered the men out to where the firing was, except a few men to watch the camp. Soon after the firing began, this woman in the tent asked some one without if he would let her servants pass out after some water. Consent was given, when out came a tall person with a lady's waterproof overdress on and a small brown shawl on the head, a tin pail on the right arm, and a colored woman leaning on the left arm. This tall person was stooping over as if to appear shorter; I at once concluded that it must be Davis in disguise.

They started off east towards the creek, where the brush was very thick. As they were going they had to pass several soldiers who were straggling round the camp. I sat still on my horse, expecting that some of the soldiers would halt them as they passed by; but such was not the case, for they passed all of the soldiers without being noticed. Then I galloped my horse round the north side of the tent and, passing to their left, halted them. Just at this time there came riding up to us two of our soldiers. They made a few remarks to the tall person. He turned his face a little towards me and I saw his gray mustache. We told him his disguise would not succeed. Then Davis and the colored woman started back towards the tents. I rode by the side of Davis, and the two soldiers (Corporal Munger of Company C, and Daniel Edwards of Company L) rode away in another direction. As Davis had got about half way back to the tent, we were met by some of our men, who had just discovered that Jefferson Davis had tried to escape in disguise. A man by the name of Andrew Bee, a Swede, who was cook for Colonel Pritchard, came up on the run, and grabbed both hands into the front of the dress that Davis had on, jerked it open, and said to him, "Come out of this, you old devil!" Davis at this attack straightened up and showed anger. At the same time he put his hand to his back under the dress. I thought he was after a revolver, and covered him with my carbine, and cocked it. As I did so Mrs. Davis, who stood at the tent door, cried out to me not to shoot. She came running to her husband and threw herself on him in front of the gun. She said that he was not armed, for she had caused him to leave his arms in the tent before he came out. Then Davis threw the dress and shawl to the ground and started for the tent. When we reached there,

and as the soldiers were looking at Davis, Colonel Pritchard came up. I reported my prisoner to him. He asked me if I were sure it was Davis. I asked him if he had not seen Davis's picture often enough to know him at sight. Colonel Pritchard then asked Davis what his name was, and Davis answered, "You may call me what you please." Pritchard then said, "I will call you Jefferson Davis." Davis said it was immaterial to him what he was called. Colonel Pritchard then asked what the firing was for out north of the camp, but no one could tell him. He then ordered the men that were around the camp out to where the firing was, and rode there himself. As he left he said to me, "Keep a close watch of Davis." Davis then turned to me and asked if I would allow him to go across the road, where there was a fire burning. I went there with him; he sat down on a log near the fire. As we were there by the fire, a soldier by the name of Linch came up with a fine bay horse and spoke to Davis, and said, "Jeffie, here is your horse; you won't need him any more; won't you give him to me?" Davis did not answer him, but Colonel Lubbock, one of Davis's staff, was very angry towards Linch, and declared that he would die before he would see his President insulted. Linch with an oath said to Lubbock, "What is he President of?"

The firing, an accidental encounter between men of our regiment and the 1st Wisconsin [see page 590], soon stopped; the men came into camp and all had a good look at the rebel chief. The men of the 1st Wisconsin came into camp and saw Davis, but were not pleased to think that we had stolen a march on them. Our men had got their breakfast, and after a while the adjutant came round taking an inventory of the captures. I asked to be relieved from guard, so that I could get my breakfast before we marched. He then detailed a guard for Davis, myself being one of them. About eight o'clock in the morning the command started back for Macon with our prisoners by the direct road to Abbeville. That night we camped at Abbeville, and the rest of our regiment joined us there. We buried our dead at Abbeville on the morning of the 11th, and then took up our march again. The afternoon of the 12th we met our brigade, which had been sent out to assist us. It was drawn up in line on one side of the road. As we passed the band began to play "Old John Brown," and the boys sang "We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour-apple tree." Davis was riding in an ambulance at the time and pulled down the curtains. When we met our brigade we learned for the first time that there was a reward for

the capture of Davis. We reached Macon about three o'clock in the afternoon of May 13, having been gone from camp six days, and having marched nearly three hundred miles in that time. When we arrived at Macon, Davis and the other prisoners were taken to General Wilson's headquarters, and were there about two hours. A line of guards were placed around the headquarters, and the guards had considerable trouble to keep the citizens from breaking through their line to see Davis. There was a lady, well dressed, who approached me crying and was determined to pass me and see her President. I was compelled to use force to keep her back. At Macon there was a detail made from our regiment to guard Davis to Fort Monroe.

I think that I was the only person in our command who saw the whole affair at the capture of Davis; some saw one part and some another.

In *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* for November, 1883, there was an article by Colonel Harrison, Mr. Davis's private secretary, giving a description of the capture. So far as my knowledge goes, Mr. Harrison errs in some of his statements. He says that at the first surprise of the camp Colonel Pritchard rode up to him and asked what the firing meant north of the camp. It was Captain Hudson, whom he took for Pritchard. He says he talked with the mounted soldier near the Davis tent and persuaded him to ride away, which is a mistake. He also says that the soldiers used violent and abusive language to Mrs. Davis. There was no violent language used in my hearing, except by Andrew Bee to Mr. Davis, when he tore open the waterproof, and I was where I could have heard if any had been used. Mr. Harrison tells Colonel Thoburn's story of how he left the Davis camp in the night and ran into the 4th Michigan Cavalry near Irwinville and was fired upon by them, and that he returned the fire and got away from them. There was no firing near Irwinville that night, nor was there any noise made that could have been heard twenty rods away. Mr. Harrison also tells how Colonel Pritchard and his adjutant had a dispute about a horse that he (Harrison) had been riding. This statement is a mistake. A private by the name of Linch got the horse; at Macon Linch and one of his officers quarreled about the possession of the horse, and one Sunday morning Linch shot the horse. Linch is the same man that got Mrs. Davis's valise containing her valuables, said to amount to several thousand dollars. He hid it near Macon, and went there and got it after he was discharged from the army.