CHAPTER XXIV.

CAPTURE AND ESCAPE OF CONGRESSMAN WHALEY.

Kellian V. Whaley, member of the House of Representatives, who had been commissioned Major by Governor Peirpoint and authorized to recruit a regiment, had made his headquarters at Guyandotte, Cabell County, his home town. He had enlisted about 150 men, when a raid was made on Guyandotte, November 10, 1861, by Jenkins and Clarkson, with 1,200 cavalry. Whaley was taken prisoner, but after almost incredible hardships escaped. His men had made a stubborn fight and he himself was taken in the street with a musket in his hand which he had just fired. An account of the fight in the Ironton (O.) Clipper, written by two of his captains, Turner and Battin, said:

A company headed by Capt. H. C. Pate, of Kansas notoriety, came rushing through the street, and Colonel Whaley, after firing his gun, was surrounded and taken prisoner. The rebels rushed upon him crying, "Kill the damned Abolitionist!" and presented their guns, and one attempted to fire at his breast while he was being held by the arms by two men, but the gun missed fire. Captain Pate in a loud voice demanded to know of him where his men were, threatening to kill him if he did not tell. • • • Colonel Whaley refused positively to give him the desired information, replying: "You will find them soon enough." The men still continued to threaten his life when Colonel Clarkson
rode up and asked if he was Colonel Whaley. Whaley replied
that he was not a Colonel, though in command of the post.
Clarkson then commanded his men not to kill him and re-
marked: "He is a brave man and I design to so report him."

Major Whaley visited Wheeling December 4th. His
story as told to the editor of the *Intelligencer* and related
in the columns of that paper was substantially as follows:

He was taken prisoner in the street with the others. As
they passed through Barboursville, he saw a large number of
Union men tied along the roadside awaiting the arrival of the
cavalry. They left Guyandotte Monday, and during that day
marched forty miles without a bite to eat. Many of the
prisoners fainted from weakness and from the inhuman manner
in which they were forced along on foot. Whaley begged Jen­
kins to take them and himself out into the fields and shoot
them as preferable to the slow torture they were compelled to
endure. After that the prisoners were mounted.

During that day a messenger overtook the cavalry and
reported that Colonel Zeigler (Federal commander) had killed
several Secessionists in Guyandotte and fired the town. This
so enraged the rebels that they rushed upon Whaley and his men
crying: "Kill the damned Abolition scoundrels!" And it was
only through the exertions of Colonel Clarkson that the lives of
the prisoners were saved.

At a point near Chapmanville, Whaley was left in charge
of rebel Captain Witcher's company. About three in the morn­
ing Whaley awoke and found the guard of eight men all
asleep. He took Witcher's hat and his own shoes, lifted the
latch of the door and finding all clear outside ran for his
life a couple of hundred yards down to the Guyandotte River.
Here he stopped and put on his shoes and finding no other
means of crossing the river swam it. He went a mile or so
down the river and then left it and climbed the mountain, the
summit of which he reached at daybreak, just as Witcher was
firing guns as a signal of his escape. Knowing it would be
fatal to attempt to travel by daylight, he sought a thicket of
red-oak brush in which he found a sort of path. He was wet,
had no coat, a bleak wind was blowing and he was nearly perish­ing from cold, and he had to keep in rapid motion to keep him­self warm and save his life. Back and forth over this path in this thicket he walked all day, much as David Crockett once saved himself from perishing one bitter night by climbing up and sliding down a tree.

When night came, Whaley started down the Guyandotte Valley; but had scarcely proceeded two miles when he came upon a camp of rebel cavalry. Next day he took a circuit on the hill-tops. On Hart's Creek, he came to the house of an old lady named Adkins, whose son and son-in-law were with her. Young Adkins agreed to conduct him to Keyser's Creek for two dollars; and when they started Whaley observed that the son­in-law started in another direction. Suspecting that Thompson knew him and fearing pursuit, Whaley hurried Adkins along a good deal faster than the young man desired. Arriving at Keyser's Creek, Whaley having been robbed of all his money could not comply with his agreement. He gave Adkins twenty­five cents, all the money he had, and his shoes, which were new and good, in exchange for his guide's old moccasins. Whaley struck down the creek, but had not gone far before he heard the tramp of cavalry in pursuit. He had barely time to jump over a fence and lie flat on his belly, when along dashed a company of cavalry headed by Thompson. He was lying not six feet from them as they passed; and if they had not been looking so intently forward in momentary expectation of catching sight of him in the road, they must have seen him behind the fence. Whaley says he "stuck closer to the ground than ever a bat on a wall." He crawled up a ravine, where he spent another twelve hours exposed to a hard rain. Being by this time very faint and weak, having been thirty-six hours without food, he determined to approach a house he saw a short distance ahead and ask for something to eat. He waded a creek about waist-deep, picked up a couple of boulders for defense if neces­sary, and going to the house spoke to the occupants. He was answered by the man of the house—a Union man—who recog­nized him at once and warned him not to remain a moment as the cavalry had been there hunting for him. Whaley offered the man five hundred dollars to conduct him to the Queen
settlement and to the house of Absalom Queen. The man, although avowing himself a good Union man refused the offer, saying that he would be killed by his neighbors if discovered. He, however, gave Whaley a blanket to throw over his shivering shoulders, and directed him how to find the house of Queen.

When he at last reached Queen's, he found a home-guard of twenty-five men; and here, for the first time, he got something to eat. Queen and eleven of his men accompanied Whaley; and, traveling only at night, they crossed the Tug Fork of Big Sandy into Kentucky; stopped at the house of Roland Sammon until night; and then moved down the river in a boat, reaching the forks of Big Sandy before midnight. There they found encamped the command of Col. Laban Moore, member of Congress from the Ninth Kentucky district. The party reached the mouth of Big Sandy Sunday at noon, where they were received with great rejoicing.

Whaley gave each of Queen's men an Enfield rifle, a thousand rounds of ammunition, and a lot of various necessaries, as a return for their devotion to him and to the Union cause. Absalom Queen had been a soldier in the War of 1812, and was a true-blue Unionist. There were about two hundred Union men in the settlement where he lived, and through his influence a hundred of them were in Colonel Zeigler's Fifth (Union) regiment.