CHAPTER XVII

Exile's Retreat

Every alternate week after Mrs. Ramsey went to Mr. Cannon’s I went by rail to see her. Sherman was advancing through and desolating South Carolina and my office was in such danger as to lead me to prepare for a further hegira. He made a feint towards Charlotte. Everybody was expecting his arrival there. Colonel Alexander and myself went up the Beatty’s ford, as far as Hopewell. In passing I noticed several pits near the road which had once been dug in prospecting for gold but had been long since abandoned. I prospected some too and examined how far I could make these pits subserve the purpose of—not extracting golden ore from them but to deposit coin in them. A few, very few, of the toil were said to live in the neighborhood and I considered it rather hazardous to make even a temporary deposit of my assets there. I went to Henderson Ferry a few miles further and found a very suitable point below it on the Catawba where my treasure could be sunk in a deep place near its western bank. The surroundings were all favorable for concealing my operations in the darkness of the night and at a distance from any path or human habitation and perfectly secluded from sight even in daylight. No location could be better fitted for such a purpose as I contemplated under certain contingencies. I marked a tree on the bank opposite to which I intended to sink my assets.

On our return to Charlotte, news had arrived that Sherman had desolated Chester, that Stoneman’s raiders were on the west side of the Catawba. Bank officers were hiding the contents of their vaults or preparing to remove them to other places. Railroad communication was in the direction of Virginia and that was the only avenue of escape left me. I adopted it. I wrote to my wife that I was going to ________, I knew not where, but that Sherman should not get either me or my money if I could help it, that she must take care of herself and not feel anxious for me, but that she should be kept posted as to my whereabouts. My clerk, Mr. Paxton, had my money, Confederate issues, and effects carried
to the depot from the Bank of Charlotte. (Colonel Torbett, Mr. Fisher, and others had heretofore removed the Bank of Tennessee to Augusta.) My depository was placed on the cars and we started. At the depot near Concord I saw Mr. Cannon and sent word by him to Mrs. Ramsey that I might be in the Trans-Mississippi before she heard from me—exacted a promise from Mr. Cannon that he would take care of my family. Near to Greensboro, we encountered a wreck on the track in a very deep cut. My baggage was carried to a small house near to the place. A delay of nearly a day retarded our arrival at Greensboro. The town was more than filled with refugees from everywhere else—amongst others Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie from Charleston. I could get no lodging for myself but found room in a Mr. Lindsay’s vault for my valuables. I met here W. A. Smith from Kingston, Tennessee who politely shared his bed with me and I got my rations as I could. Rumors of the approaching crisis at Richmond reached us. Raiders were said to be at Salem and near to Salisbury. A general stampede from Greensboro followed. We could get no further north and very little further south. We left for the latter and arrived late at night in a heavy rain at Salisbury.

Leaving the young men with my effects at the depot, I went up into town. I could find neither supper nor lodging. Every public and private house was full of people driven in from the incessant rain. At the mansion house I found a small space between the feet of a small table unoccupied. I crept into it. The entire floor of the room was covered over with men, some snoring, some drunk, some sober. I slept little and rested none. At daylight I left my narrow bed, observing as I left it that the planks of Rowan county were sawed out of very hard wood. I inquired for something to eat. Nothing could be procured there. I saw an immense crowd of hungry men besieging Mr. Buce’s eating house, but nothing was to be had. I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. I went into the house, found the landlord. I beckoned to him and getting him away from the importunate crowd around him I whispered into his ear that I had silver to pay for my breakfast. It was soon on the table and I leave to the reader’s imagination to tell how voraciously I ate it. I never relished breakfast before or since with a higher appreciation. I hastened to the depot, found the young men as hungry as wolves, told them I had spoken to Mr. Buce to provide a silver breakfast for them and that while they were gone to eat it I would guard the baggage. While sitting upon the depot I noticed an old gentleman standing near me—Dr. Long. I asked him to take a
note from me to Mrs. Curry. I extemporized with a pencil on my knee. Dr. Curry had been our pastor at home in Tennessee, had become a chaplain and surgeon in our army, had been in charge of the United States prisoners' hospital in Salisbury, had died there suddenly a few days before and the substance of the note I sent was to inquire how she was provided for and if she needed assistance to let me know it.

I had scarcely handed this note to Dr. Long when the startling intelligence was received that raiders were within a few miles of Salisbury in large force. My young men had returned from breakfast. We went aboard at once. I afterwards was informed that within one hour Salisbury was in possession of the Federal cavalry. This was another very narrow escape.

At Charlotte I found Major Butt, chief clerk of the Confederate States treasury department, with many other officials from Richmond. He and others of the scattered cabinet of President Davis had passed me at Greensboro. I had corresponded with him officially and he knew all my antecedents but we had not been known to each other before. He disclosed to me his plans in part and said "You have had a long experience in such things. You have thus far been remarkably successful. We will take you into our council." He had along with him a captain in the navy (whose name I cannot recall) who commanded a company of marines. These constituted Major Butt's guard. I think there were sixty or eighty marines, besides cashiers and other fiscal officers, in charge of the Confederate States treasury and official papers, etc., etc. There was no well-defined plan in view as far as I was informed—only so far as to reach Augusta quickly and safely. Major Butt asked me to be his pilot. Sherman had deflected to the right, in the direction of Camden. Our way was open to Chester. That far the country was unoccupied by the Yankees. How it was between Chester and Abbeville, South Carolina and Washington, Georgia, was not certainly known and our best route was only matter of conjecture. It was determined to go by rail to Chester and then be governed by circumstances for the future. I embarked my own depository with Major Butt's treasury and we left on the train for Chester. Below that village the road and bridges were so burnt and destroyed as to forbid further railroad travel. We extemporized about fifty army wagons and other vehicles and transferring the cargo from the cars to the wagons we struck across the country to Abbeville or to a railroad leading to that point. Our first camp was at a church on the great road. There I for the first time ascertained that Mrs. Davis and young Jeff were with our train. She lodged in the
church and the rest of us either slept in the wagons on top of the boxes and barrels or upon the ground. I slept in the wagon which carried my own depository and effects and no one disputed my claim to that privilege. I invited one of the marines or of the officers to occupy it with me. We observed the usual military regulations in our marches and our encampments,—posted out our sentinels at night, and had our advance guard and our rear guard, our sign and our countersign. The Confederate flag was not unfurled. I supposed though it was somewhere in our train.

Beyond Abbeville one night a courier brought to the camp information that upon our right a few miles off were some Federal scouts who intended to meet, or rather intercept, us as we crossed Little River on the bridge. Major Butt came with a lamp to my wagon about midnight to consult with me what was best to be done. Without hesitation I said, "If the courier's information is true let us start at once and pass the bridge before daylight and thus put Little River between us and the enemy. If the rumor is, on the other hand, not true we will have only progressed the further on our campaign." My advice was at once put into effect. Mrs. Davis was sent for at the hotel near our camps, our advance guard was sent forward, we advanced, crossed the bridge and were not pursued by the Yankee scouts. I heard afterwards that they were bushwhackers from the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee under Captain Duncan whom I had so fortunately escaped at Piney September 1863.

As we approached the Savannah River I suggested we should put our stores upon a boat or boats and descend the Savannah in them to Augusta. A messenger was sent forward to the river who brought back the information that no boat was to be found. Arrived at Washington, Georgia, we transferred our cargo to the cars and went down to Augusta. We left Mrs. Davis at Washington, and it was understood in camps (though Major Butt did not tell me so) that Mr. Davis and his faithful adherents, of which Captain R. M. Ramsey was one, were on our right and near to us every night and in communication with us daily. We found Augusta in hourly expectation of assault and probable capture. It was understood by the knowing ones that the authorities would surrender it on the first summons. Our cargo was placed in the upper story of some commissary or quartermaster's storehouse and our guards placed over it. We consulted what was best to be done. I suggested the Trans-Mississippi and General Kirby Smith as our new commander-in-chief. We slept upon it one night.
Going into town from the depot I found several of the Bank of Tennessee officials who had, as if by a common impulse of a despairing patriotism, concentrated at Augusta. I invited them down to our branch bank headquarters (Fleming's cotton commission house). Dr. Strong, my cashier, was in. We spent an hour in solemn deliberation. I said among other things that if we were to be captured anywhere I hoped it would not be in a city with fortifications around it and surrendered without a fight. I preferred to be overtaken by the enemy while making an effort to prolong the life of the Confederacy by trying to reach General Kirby Smith's headquarters. The following proceedings then took place.

“Augusta, Georgia, 26th April 1865


“On motion of Mr. Fisher, Dr. Ramsey was called to preside and H. L. Claiborne, appointed Secretary—

“The object of the meeting was explained—it being to take into consideration the safe keeping and disposition of the assets of the Bank of Tennessee, with a view to their being returned to the people of Tennessee to whom they belong.

“A letter was read from His Excellency, Isham G. Harris, giving his views, and offering some advice to the officers in charge of the valuables, in view of the present critical condition of the country,

“The following resolution was offered

Resolved That in view of the present condition of the country and the probability of an early peace, this meeting deems it imprudent to attempt the removal of the assets of the Bank of Tennessee, and is of the opinion that the assets can best be preserved for and returned to the people of Tennessee by keeping them in Augusta, in such places as may be deemed safest for storage.

“After considerable discussion the resolution was, for the present, laid on the table.

“The meeting then adjourned to meet at the same place at 3 O'Clock this evening.

3 o'clock, P.M.

“The meeting was called to order by its chairman, gentlemen (present as in) the forenoon except Cashr. Strong and Hon Thos. Meneers.

“The following resolutions were offered and after discussion were unanimously adopted.

Resolved That it is manifestly to the interest of the people of the State of Tennessee, that the assets of the Bank of Tennessee be immediately and
quietly removed to the department of Mississippi for security, to be held for the citizens of said State.

Resolved That it is the opinion of this meeting at least one official from each Branch Bank who is in the Confederate States, shall accompany the assets of the Bank of Tennessee to such place of security as may be determined.

Resolved That Messrs. Rye, Brown, Cleage and Fisher be appointed a committee to secure transportation for the assets and that they have full power and are hereby instructed to proceed to the discharge of their duty with the utmost dispatch.

"The meeting then adjourned to meet at the Augusta Hotel at 9 o'clock, this evening.

Augusta Hotel 9 o'clock P.M.

"The meeting was called to order by Dr. Ramsey.

Same gentlemen present as in the evening, with the addition of Mr. S. B. Settle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

"The minutes of preceding meetings were read and approved. The following resolution was adopted,

Resolved That a copy of the proceedings of this meeting be prepared by the Secretary to accompany the assets of the Bank and a copy to be spread upon the minutes of the Bank of Tennessee.

"The Committee on transportation made a verbal report, of satisfactory progress.

"Adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, to meet at J. A. Battle's room, Augusta Hotel.

"H. L. Claiborne
Secretary

J. G. M. Ramsey,
Chairman"

[Inscription on back of Proceedings: "Last Meeting of Directors of Bank of Tennessee Augusta Ga. Apr. 26, 1865]
to escape under present circumstances from Augusta with the imposing transportation and guard such an undertaking would require would be alike fruitless and unwise. It was therefore abandoned, though the committee on transportation had acted promptly. They had selected their Confederate States quartermaster Colonel _______. He had procured some wagons and supplies. Captain _______ was to take command of the guard. The expedition was to go by Athens and Calhoun, Georgia, Decatur, Alabama—cross the Mississippi at some swamp below Memphis, strike for General Smith's headquarters wherever it should be, raise the Confederate flag, and keep the money of the people of Tennessee from the grasp of the Yankees.

I was content, however, to leave it where it was in the vaults of Mr. Metcalf and under the control of my faithful and honest cashier, Dr. Strong. He handed me the next day $50.00 in part of my salary as president. I heard afterwards that when it was captured Dr. Strong was allowed to go with it to Nashville but was not permitted to count it.

The Bank of Tennessee being thus disposed of I turned my attention to my other bantling—my Confederate States depository. It was almost out of town in a storehouse of some Confederate quartermaster in Augusta. I sought Major Butt, communicated to him what I had heard last night at our bank meeting and also what I had heard on the streets: viz., a rumor that stragglers from both armies were intending to make a run upon and appropriate it to their own use and their urgent wants and necessities. He said to me that day that as I had brought him there I must take him back. "Very well, Major," I replied. "The Southern Confederacy! Today, yesterday and forever I am at its and your service!" He inquired, "Which way can we go?" I answered, "Towards the enemy—the same way we came, via Washington, Georgia and Abbeville, South Carolina. Thence as best we can." "When?" was his next inquiry. "By tonight's train. The earlier the better. Load up this afternoon. The mob will notice your night movements." He seemed to acquiesce.

I thought the Confederacy was ended. But still Confederate States issues maintained some vitality. They were taken by the merchants at greatly reduced values. I had some shopping to do and asked Mrs. Schwab to go with me where she dealt. She did so, and bought a plain lawn dress for Mrs. Ramsey, Mrs. Breck and Sue each for $600.00 = $1,800.00—and some other light articles at corresponding prices. "Are you not afraid to hold
Confederate money?" I inquired. He answered "not while it will pay for cotton. I have a place to put it in. Can't I sell you some more goods. I want all the Confederate money you have." I put the goods into my trunk and my trunk and valise into the cars and next day found myself at Washington.

The Confederate States treasury had come up the previous night—the wagon train was still there, was soon reorganized, and we were again upon the road on our way to Abbeville where we arrived without molestation. I had to march on foot part of each day and was exceedingly fatigued and weary. It was Saturday evening and I determined to avail myself of enjoying the quiet and rest of a Christian Sabbath in the family of an old friend, Langdon Bowie, Esquire. His son was the Confederate States quartermaster and with him the Confederate States treasury was left under our own guard. He had exacted a promise from me when I passed up that if I did not go further than Augusta I would on my return visit his father's family. He drove me out to his beautiful country seat a few miles from town. It is a beautiful place, highly improved and tastefully cultivated. I had known him as a merchant in Charleston and New York, had often seen him at my own house and in Knoxville where Mrs. Bowie was born. I went with his family to church and heard an excellent sermon from Reverend Dr. Barne, I believe. I spent Sunday night in this social, hospitable, and Christian family. I really felt almost at home in Tennessee. When I left Monday morning Mrs. Bowie—fortunately for me as matters turned out—overburdened me with an abundant and excellent luncheon which, long as my journey was, lasted me to Charlotte. I bade the kind family farewell, returned to the village.

Our Confederate States treasury officers concluded to go no further than Abbeville. This place is classic ground and hereafter historical as once the residence of the great American statesman Calhoun. Here he had for nearly half a century forewarned the people of the United States that the government was rapidly tending to consolidation. That great catastrophe had now taken place. The treasury of the seceding states was here within the grasp of consolidationists and usurpers. The coercive policy had triumphed over the constitution, over state rights, over liberty. As I left my depository with the chief agent of the Confederate States treasury and retired from the door, I venerated more highly and appreciated more fully the character and services and virtues and statesmanship of Calhoun. I
DR. J. G. M. RAMSEY

knew before that he was a statesman of unsurpassed ability, that he was a patriot of unequaled private and public virtue. But now I bowed down before and did homage to the memory of a Prophet.

When I turned my face toward Charlotte I felt a little depressed that I had left behind me two fiscal institutions that had long been confided to my care and supervision, but on the other hand I had before me still richer treasures—my wife and daughters, my family. I had done my whole duty zealously and faithfully in financing for Tennessee and the South. Other duties now devolved upon me. These were confined to domestic and social obligations hereafter falling upon myself. Under such influences I took the train and was soon at Newberry. I went down to the late Confederate States quartermaster’s office and asked for transportation to Chester. Like an Irishman mourning over his deceased bride, the Confederate quartermaster was on a spree. I soon found him and showed him my now useless transportation papers. With a hearty embrace he said, “Dr. Ramsey, I cannot. It always gave me sincere pleasure to oblige or serve any gentleman who was true to our cause. But now I have no horses, no ambulances, no wagons, no buggies, no drivers, no nothing,—all gone home. I wish I could.” But he went with me to a livery stable where, after several refusals, the proprietor promised to send me forward five miles early next morning. I found supper and lodgings with Mr. Malone of Greeneville, Tennessee whom I had known there. Mrs. Malone told me at supper that Captain Ramsey had been there with his scouts a few days before, had made some inquiries, was answered and dashed out of town towards Abbeville. I guessed his object.

Early next morning a horse and buggy came to the door. As I went the five miles to the appointed place the liveryman (he drove me himself) told me what I could see myself every step we took—that he was afraid to send his vehicles on the roads. The paroled soldiers from Lee’s disbanded army met us constantly in crowds, tried to press his horse and buggy, and if he had not told them who I was they would have taken both. The day before they had jumped into and hung upon one of his carriages returning to town, broke it down, and took the horses from the wreck and rode them off. It was so afterwards till I reached Chester. All living on or near the great roads had to hide their horses and dismantle their vehicles or they would have been taken by the hungry, unpaid, and
worn out paroled soldiers returning further south. I easily excused this apparent demoralization and from my heart sympathized with them.

The richest planters all along the route were without subsistence for themselves and if I had not been abundantly supplied by Mrs. Bowie's bounty I would have been under the necessity (which knows no law) to have done some pressing myself. At the end of my five miles I got out of the buggy. I had a small trunk beside my valise. I put them inside the gate, went to the house and asked for breakfast. I got only some buttermilk. Neither man nor horse was on the place. I waited hour after hour to find someone to take me forward. I waited in vain. I saw and heard nothing but the tramp tramp of the poor disbanded Confederates. At length a wagon hove in sight. It was going in the right direction for me. It had been pressed the day before and was now returning with the broken-down horses. The owner agreed to take me a few miles to the fork of the road where he left me at Dr. Webb's. The doctor was not at home. I waited till his return. He could do nothing for me but kindly invited me to take dinner and see if anything might turn up. In the P.M. a messenger arrived requesting a professional visit from him, miles off and in my direction. He improvised a rickety buggy and took me and my baggage to ______, where he left me afoot. There I hired a manumitted Negro man to carry my trunk on his head a few miles. I walked, too, carrying alternately in both hands my heavy valise. At length the Negro gave out. I hired another who carried my trunk till night. I stopped at a large plantation where the house had been eviscerated. Here one of the marines overtook me. In my valise I had a small package of tea and proposed to my comrade if he could make the tea I would supply the breadstuffs. He brewed it in a tin cup and without cream or sugar it really was excellent and refreshing. We had the privilege of laying all night upon the floor. At daylight we repeated the tea operation which, with Mrs. Bowie's luncheon, made us a good breakfast. I extemporized another Negro for the means of transportation till he became tired. I saw a wounded army horse ("U. S." was branded on him) on the road side. The Negro mounted him without bridle or saddle. I handed up my trunk and thus, I on foot and the Negro on the "U. S." horse, we traveled on till I broke down at a house where I went in and found a very sick Confederate soldier. The proprietor was on the point of starting off after a doctor nine miles forward on my road. I told him who I was. He asked me to examine the sick Georgian and prescribe for him. He was the son of ______ at Dalton
whom I knew there. I gave him some medicine and told them that in eight hours after he would need some drops which he must send for at once. I asked about my further transportation. He fixed up his buggy and agreed to take me and my baggage as far as the doctor's shop.

Paying the Negro well for his services and, without leaving any equivalent for the U. S. horse, to the United States treasury, I got into the buggy and went on rapidly. We met as usual squad after squad of Confederate soldiers who attempted to press our establishment and were only withheld from doing so by the consideration which I urged upon them, of the sick Georgian's case. Arrived at Dr. ______'s on the road side I represented the case to him. He could not visit him till next day. I sent back the necessary medicine. I hope he recovered. By similar contrivances and uncommon resources I at length reached Mrs. Mosby's, if I recollect right. There I found Colonel Wodfen, a refugee acquaintance and refugee from Asheville, North Carolina. I began to meet and see the Blue and the Grey—and if on one occasion, when asked by an armed scout dressed in the former, "What is your name?" I replied, "At home they used to call me McGready." "Huh! any kin of the McGreadys in Guilford?" "I believe there was one of them lived up there. I don't know that he was of the same family." The reader will excuse the harmless deception. My whole exterior was rather of the shabby-genteel order and did not much resemble that of a financier. I was not arrested. From Mrs. Mosby's I was sent forward in a carriage to Chester. Here while waiting for the train I met an old Knoxville acquaintance, now Reverend J. T. Helms, an Episcopal minister, once so jovial and blithesome a companion. He had heard of our afflictions and adversity. I was agreeably surprised when he, in a Christian spirit, administered to me the strong consolation of the Gospel.

When I reached Rock Hill I tried to procure conveyance to Mr. Presley's, where my son Alexander's wife and family were. Neither horse, wagon, nor buggy was to be had. I heard that our new authorities had established at, or rather on, the pontoon-bridge across the Catawba a rigid police and espionage. I had done nothing wrong but still preferred not to be arrested. Just as the train started an old lady, feeble and without attendant, asked some of us to take charge of her trunk and hire a Negro to carry it for her when we came to the bridge. I promised to comply with her request and did speak to one boy for her baggage and another one for my own. As we went down to and approached the bridge I noticed the United States functionary examining and catechising the passengers
and their papers. I had the old lady and our two Negro porters in charge. We bore to the right and were not interrogated or otherwise molested. On the other side of the river passengers were subjected to the same ordeal. As soon as I was seated in the car I affected to be in a very profound sleep with my hat drawn over my face. I heard the conductor going through the car examining the people. He could not get me awake. After he came back I was still asleep. The train was not ready for some hours and I noticed a small wagon loaded with screws, bolts, etc., etc., taken from the ruins of the burned bridge. I inquired if they were going towards Charlotte? They replied, "As far as Fort Mills." I employed the owners to take me and my baggage that far. It was nearly night and in switching off the down-train a poor Confederate's leg and ankle were crushed. I was the only surgeon present, heard his cries of agony. A torch was lighted. I gave him a large dose of opium, dressed wounds, had him taken to an adjoining house on a cabin door pulled from its hinges, and directed the bystanders to send for a resident surgeon for his further treatment. Late in the night the up-train came to Fort Mills and carried me forward to Charlotte. I, with my baggage, was on a flat or open car. Colonel William Johnson recognized me in the moonlight and said "Great changes since you left." He could tell me nothing of my family. I found at Kern's every room occupied and the lights extinguished. My friend, W. A. Smith, heard me knocking at the door and recognizing my voice inquired from the window if that was not Dr. Ramsey and offered me half of his bed. I was more than glad to accept his kind offer. At daylight I went to Colonel B. W. Alexander's. I had not changed my clothes since I left Abbeville. Colonel Alexander could tell me nothing certain or recent from my wife. Mr. Davidson Alexander had got back from the army, happened to come to town that day, carried me home with him that night and next morning drove me up to Mr. Cannon's. My wife and Sue were there. They had not heard a word from me since I left and thought it not improbable that I was captured or possibly was en route for Texas or Mexico. But I was really broken down. Such an excursion as this last, such fatigues, exposures, responsibilities and dangers as I had endured, no sexogenarian and eight had ever before undergone.

I found Mrs. Ramsey cheerful and well. Her courage and fortitude had always sustained mine. She made a good tutoress. Employment congenial to her taste and her great capacity to instruct and her success in it encouraged and stimulated her. Then the consciousness of being useful to
others was itself a source of, if not of emolument, certainly of a comfortable living. So also of Mrs. Breck. The scattered condition of the family was indeed a drawback upon their domestic happiness but when we did meet, as sometimes happened, our reunions were delightful and enjoyed only with a keener relish. I felt that my public life was ended and that the remainder of my days was to be devoted to my family and the evening of my life was to be spent in the quiet of home and in the domestic circle.

But where was to be the center of that circle? We knew nothing of the large property we had left in Tennessee. From what we learned from the banished members of my household, from other exiles and refugees and from an occasional Union paper picked up by our scouts and brought to Dixie, the property was either burnt or destroyed or lawlessly sold, alienated, or confiscated. So that we had little to hope for and expect from that quarter. I had brought home with me from Georgia seventeen dollars all told of silver. My wife had still the twenty-five dollars of contraband gold which the generosity of Major Smith had restored to her at McBee's, making thus our joint fortune of forty-two dollars of available money on which to start in the world again—my wife at the age of nearly sixty-four and myself at the age of sixty-eight. Our daughters were not better provided for. Our four surviving sons were equally penniless. One of them had not yet got out of Camp Morton. Another had been captured, imprisoned and was now under trial (as will be presently detailed) in Knoxville. Another had clung to the fortunes of Mr. Davis to the last and had not yet returned. The remaining son had been paroled at Charlotte. He had a cavalry horse and saddle, his own property, worth all told perhaps one hundred dollars. We were in North Carolina among strangers and many of them as much impoverished as ourselves. The means of subsistence were very nearly exhausted by the wants and spoliations of both armies.

What was best to do? This was the question now to be solved. For a few days I rested and recruited my impaired energies at Mr. Cannon's. He was more despondent and discouraged than myself. So were all others I saw and conversed with, though on their own lands and in their own houses with stock and farming implements. I had, indeed, to cheer everyone I met. They had all desponded and were spiritless. Many stout men, not as old as myself, yielded to the pressure of adversity and died prematurely and without disease. I was surprisingly elastic. Necessity made
me energetic. Under the circumstances I may be said to have been even buoyant and vigorous. *Nil desperandum* had always been one of my favorite maxims. *Labor vincit omnia* was another. In English, root, hog, or die. My wife and children had the same indomitable spirit. In a week it was determined that as we had not the means to get away from North Carolina we would stay where the waves of the revolution and disaster had floated us. We were as badly wrecked as mariners can be if they are not drowned. I had always been very fond of my profession and I determined to resume practice in the office of Dr. McKnitt Henderson of Mecklenburg. I put my card into the *Democrat*. This paper, I found afterwards, had few, almost no, readers in my neighborhood. The country was exceedingly healthy. Retired physicians had, like all other people, been ruined by the war. They were therefore forced to fall back on their profession. The army physicians and surgeons came in with rather close propinquity for the success of a stranger, and I therefore could expect little professional emolument but I borrowed a pair of medical saddle wallets, bought at least 37½ or 43¾ cents worth of medicine, and with McKnitt’s cavalry horse and saddle was equipped for conquest not with Yankees but with disease. My wife and Mrs. Breck had still some of their five months session to fill out and while that term was being completed I rented an old farm. The house was comfortable and partly furnished. The stock, farming utensils and feed were also furnished. All we had to do was to furnish the labor. Fuel was abundant and convenient, water excellent. The season proved to be an average one and our third was about enough for a support for us five.

There were in the summer and fall of 1865 remaining in Hopewell besides others, refugees and exiles from New Orleans, a brother and sister, Mr. R. C. Kerr and Miss Mary Kerr. They were perfectly destitute. The former I had known during the war as an exiled printer and for the present as the foreman of Mr. ______ in the office of the _________ in Charlotte. The surrender had thrown him out of employment. Poor as we were, my wife offered him a plate at our frugal board and my son McKnitt offered to share his bed with him. He accepted their offer and this brought an addition of one more to our good society. For it was good. Mr. Kerr had a cultivated mind, sang well, had virtuous principles, was self-reliant, no croaker, was cheerful, polite and a man of business. Still no employment seemed to offer. Printers in North Carolina were all broken up by the war. No typographical enterprise was started till General D. H. Hill
proposed to publish at Charlotte *The Land We Love*. He needed a fore­
man for his business and one day, hearing of Mr. Kerr's qualification, came 
out to our house to see and employ him. While there he became acquainted 
with me and asked me to contribute to his journal.\(^1\) I did so frequently, 
for which he *paid me liberally*. I mention these unimportant details to 
show how truly the promise has been in my case fulfilled—"Cast thy 
bread upon the waters and after many days it shall be returned to thee."
If Mr. Kerr had not eaten my bread I might never have heard of General 
Hill, nor received any money from him. Two only of my male acquaint­
ances ever assisted us during these times of need. Reverend Ransom of 
the Associate Reformed Synod had been a guest at my house in Tennessee 
and sent down to us a bountiful supply of sweet potatoes—the best we 
ever ate. I went one day in search of corn for bread. Reverend W. S. Pharr, 
hearing that I wanted to buy, said he had none to sell but handed me 
$5.00 and gave me his blessing with it. The ladies on the other hand were 
more liberal or considerate. The daughters of Mrs. M. W. Alexander in 
Charlotte sent a tailor to take my measure for a cloth cloak. The tailor 
said he was directed not to tell who were the donors of the much needed 
garment. My cousin, Mrs. A. B. Alexander, also gave me some domestic 
cloth and some provisions. Mrs. Charles Jay Harris of Cabarrus gave me 
a suit of Confederate grey for my constancy to the Southern cause. I 
have enjoined on my family to bury me in it. The Lenoir brothers in 
Tennessee loaned me money without security. Thus we made out to live 
comfortably.

In May 1865, I believe, before I had yet left Dr. Henderson's, Captain 
R. M. Ramsey stepped in, languid and broken down. From his recital I 
take the following details. As before stated, he adhered to Mr. Davis’ for­
tunes to the last and only left his escort when the ex-president begged 
them as a matter of favor to himself to do so. He returned as far as Wash­
ington, Georgia, and from his exposure and his fatiguing services was 
taken down with a violent bilious fever. Finding that he was seriously ill 
had to sell his fine and favorite horse. When he paid up his medical and

\(^1\) Identifiable contributions to *The Land We Love* by Dr. Ramsey are: "Sketch of Mecklen­
burg County," by Mnemonika, 2:129–145 (December, 1866); "Battle of King's Mountain," 
3:381–400 (September 1867); "Duel Between Jackson and Dickerson," by A. Keosis of 
Tennessee, 4:135–136 (December, 1867), and "The State of Franklin" 4:460–472, 5:13–22, 
109–116, 216–229 which ran from April through July 1868.
hotel bills he had barely enough to bring him to Charlotte. He did as I had done a few days before—walked some, rode some, any way he could to get along. At Newberry, South Carolina, as he was yet very weak, he went at night into an empty boxcar which was at the depot. A comrade was with him. The town was in the occupancy of the Yankees and a force was stationed there. A cannon loaded and ready to fire was placed near the depot. The camp of the artillerists was not far off. After these were quietly asleep, no one being on guard, Robert got out of his boxcar, went noiselessly to the cannon, fired it off, retraced his steps in the dark, got into his own sleeping place and, weak as he was, enjoyed the fun of seeing the whole Yankee force thrown into terror and confusion occasioned by the firing and assault of two disband Confederates. The consternation was extreme. The Federals were evidently alarmed. The whole town was aroused and were unable to explain the treason and rebellion of the unexpected assault. If one of Wheeler's company had been at hand and had demanded it he believes the garrison at Newberry would have surrendered at discretion. As it was, he was satisfied with his own participation in scaring the Yankee conquerors so badly. This was the last gun fired, he believes, by the Confederates during the war. So that as the first gun in our revolution was fired in South Carolina so too was the last—and that by a defiant but invalid Tennessee Captain.

I went up with Robert to see his mother and sisters: and leave the reader to imagine their joy at seeing him. He, after resting and recruiting a few weeks, recovered. He became the manager and tenant of Reverend Mr. Watts in Rowan County. Being but twenty-two miles from us he occasionally visited us.