

February 22, 1865

I take advantage of a small respite to commence detailed account of the events of the past twenty-four hours in which I fear are destined still further to be lengthened out before we are freed from this state of wretchedness and left in mercy to ourselves.

After you left Monday ^{the} ~~one~~ of Colonel ^{Calver} ~~Whelan~~ ^{Calver} dined with us, polite gentleman, ^{and for} ~~and~~ that ^{we were sad at parting}

~~parting~~ With knowing that they were the last grey-coats that would bless our eyes for some time. All night long we were in a state of apprehension and dread, having heard just before dark that Sherman was within a mile and one-half, or less, of the Town. It was not until about ten o'clock on the first appearance several scouts riding up and inquiring for our horses. Dootie and myself walked out to meet them and informed them that the horses had been sent away. With a very incredulous air they looked around the house, cursing and threatening the negroes to the consternation and surprise of the whole yard. Several of the negroes rushing in to inform us that they had taken Dick's hat and sworn to burn every house on the place if the desired information was not given them.

They passed on ^{however} without inflicting further damage. We, ^{in the meantime were} suffering agonies of dread but it was not many moments

before another party came dashing into the yard headed by the most impertinate looking rascal I ever saw who hitched his mule to the steps, and, calling to his comrades "to come along", rushed past two of us who had gone into the piazza to meet them and walked into the room. They were too ^{lawless} and rude, and we did not pretend

to follow or restrain them, ^{but} ~~both~~ ^{commanded} ~~commanding~~ ^{McCaule} ~~members~~

to do so while we remained in a body, ^{in the hall} quietly knitting ^{nerve & strengthening ourselves} ~~nerve~~ looking for the worst. It would

be impossible to describe their depredation, They went from one end of the house to the other, ~~opening and breaking locks, emptying every~~

~~and of the house to the other,~~ opening and breaking locks, emptying every trunk and box and helping themselves to whatever they liked, singing and whistling and talking at the very top of their voices. Every now and then they would come into the hall with some impertinent question and remarks, which we tried to answer always calmly and plainly. They cross-questioned us about the firearms, and unfortunately, after denying there were any in the house, they found an old one stored away in a trunk which we had forgotten, and five swords. The capture of these last delighted them highly, and they afterwards brought it up as proof to Mrs. R. (Mrs. Robertson), "that Southern ladies could tell lies"--a little circumstance which annoyed me considerably, because I would not for the world have the meanest of the wretches suppose that we would so lower ourselves intentionally.

Words could not express to you all of the agony that we suffered during the two or three hours that these wretches were running riot over the house, especially when the aforementioned leader of the party, an Irishman, came into the hall and leaning on the piazza, looked at each one of us and inquired in the most familiar manner, "Do any of you play the piano?" No reply was made to the question and it was not repeated. After awhile two men who seemed to feel some pity for us took their seats by the door and acted as some protection to us. We maintained a formal dignity, and soon our tongues gave utterance to our indignation, and we treated them to some of the plainest talking you ever heard. Some declared that they respected us for avowing our sentiments openly, but others were offended, and one fellow after receiving a very spirited reply from Dootie to his injunction to write to her lover and brothers to lay down their arms and stop the war, declared that he had come with the intention of affording us protection, but we talked too d--- strong, and did not deserve it" and walked out calling some of the men after him.

Towards noon an officer rode up and seemed much incensed and mortified at the behavior of the men and ordered them out and gave us a guard. Several officers were taken over the house to behold the work of destruction, and all expressed regret, though they were so exultant over their triumphs that they incensed us very much in their way.

Quiet being restored, we take a tour of the house and from the garrett closet down, the appearance of confusion cannot be described. Every article of the boys' clothing was gone, but our garments,

though all tossed over the floor, were left untouched with some exceptions. Even my little darling was the loser by one dress--the nicest she had, not yet made up.

Just at dark our guard took leave and left us in a state of unparalleled misery and wretchedness, having heard that threats had been made to return at night and burn the house and not leave anyone who we could send to demand a guard. We were mercifully permitted to remain in quietness and perfectly undisturbed until after daylight, when they came swarming into the yard like locusts, searching and digging in every corner and in the dry wells without success. Just where you concealed some articles in the vegetable garden they had dug with hoes and spades and their bayonets. We have watched them in perfect misery and have been grateful to you at many times that your work was so well performed.

(Febr. 22) How long it is to remain so Heaven only knows! Those that came into the house today were more orderly and did not seem to be disposed to show disrespect. One impudent fellow walked into the house about two hours ago, seated himself before the fire and commenced a conversation in the most familiar manner. He insisted twice on our performing on the piano. We gave him the most freezing reception you ever witnessed, and seeing that we would not talk to him, left us after a long visit. The most genteel of them have no manners. They have tried to gather from us all of the information possible concerning the movements of our Army; are all perfectly exultant and declare their firm belief that Richmond and the Confederacy soon will fall before Sherman's hosts of eighty thousand.

By yesterday evening our stock of provisions was so nearly exhausted that when Louise demanded her "tup and poon", as usual, there was not a mouthful of anything to give her and we substituted a dose of paregoric instead and put her to bed. This morning Mrs. Robertson sent over a little girl and coffee saved from the wreck over there and we eat for breakfast hominy with some turkey sauce left from Sunday's dinner using for spoons a piece of horn, and iron spoon and two salt spoons. We gathered around the one dish very merrily and felt thankful for that little. Everything has been taken from the house and storerooms except a little peas, a small chine and two bags of flour which Mauma's ingenuity saved for us. The carriage, and even Louise's cart have been carried off laden with provisions. Mrs. Robertson and the Boyces have suffered equally with ourselves.

We can hear nothing from Wimsboro, except the burning of the steam mill, Mrs. River's and Mrs. Lauderdale's houses and the greater part of Main Street.

The depot and the cotton were destroyed before our soldiers left. We have been told repeatedly that we ought to be grateful that our house has stood so long, and do not expect to be allowed to remain under its shelter. We look forward with dread to the coming night. God have mercy upon us!

We have just been grieved to hear that our dear little Church was burned to the ground last night, but can hear nothing of our friends in town. The whole of the Railroad was burned this morning. Just now everything is perfectly quiet and we see only an occasional straggler. But don't know whether we are to expect any more.

Our negroes have suffered too dreadfully, losing most of their provisions and clothing, but they are firm friends and have gained my gratitude and respect. Every threat has been made to extort the secret of the silver, etc., etc., but without effect. I don't think we could ever have imagined how terrible this trial was to be, but we have tried to bear it bravely and are all certain that our principles are much strengthened by it. Some of the soldiers tell us that all of the South Carolinians are strong "rebels"; while others again insist upon the exception of some good unionists. All express their surprise at the small resistance they have met with.

Two yankees guarded Mrs. Robertson's house voluntarily last night, having heard threats of burning, etc., and were really kind to her. Upon leaving this morning, one of them offered to carry a note requesting a guard. Sometime afterwards he came back to say that General Younge(?) had refused the request saying in an angry tone he offered "no protection to Rebel property", so this is why we have been left to ourselves.

Since writing this letter, some of Mrs. Robertson's negroes went over, returned and reported the whole expedition a failure, and the party, without doubt prisoners if their lives have been spared. This morning upon the near approach of the enemy, the gentlemen abandoned their wagons, horses, etc., and took to a swamp nearby. I feel almost certain that they have failed in their object, and am much worried about Mr. Dwight who I never expect to see again. (?)

Poor Mrs. Robertson bears up bravely under this accumulation of trouble.

Peter has come from town since dark and has given us some account of the burning. The Main street from the printing office to the bank on one side and from Dr. Robertson's to Leventritt's old store on the other is in ashes, besides

the Church and old Dr. Boyleston's house. Several of the soldiers declared that they are acting under orders and threaten to complete the work of destruction to-night. This makes us very uneasy and we are expecting to be put out of the house at any moment. So far, at half past twelve, everything is perfectly quiet, however, and I hope will continue so.

In the country the enemy are carrying on most outrageously. We heard of the burning of Mr. John Adger's, occupied at present by Mrs. Clark, tied up Mrs. Anderson in her house and threatened to burn it over her head if she did not deliver up her silver. We hear have hung Mr. Harrison, son-in-law of Mr. C. Woodward, and his little son. They are sweeping the whole country for miles around, and I suppose there is no chance of Tommy's escape. Oh, if the house had only been given to our own soldiers!

They carried off Dick yesterday morning but he returned tonight, tired and frightened, and very certain that these wretches surpassed any Yankees he had ever seen. He is sleeping in the house now and serves as a small comfort to us.

I don't believe that you can begin to imagine what this being left in the enemy's lines is, and how very miserable it is to feel that we are completely at the mercy of this brutal soldiery, flushed with victory and eager to reap their vengeance on our gallant little State. I earnestly trust, however, that our trial is nearly if not quite over, as most of the Army must have passed on.

One of the soldiers spoke the truth yesterday when he said, "You South Carolinians will remember Billy Sherman many a long day".

I must close for tonight now, and will add our experience every day until I find an opportunity to send this through the lines to you.

February 23rd.

Contrary to our expectations, the night was unusually still. Not a sound alarmed us, though our ears were on a stretch during every moment of the time and we were prepared to take to the woods. The negroes tell us that we had a guard without being conscious of it. The terrible threats which the wretches have issued against us for our "insolence", the finding of the swords in the house, among which were several captured ones, and the admiration which they all expressed for the place and house left us still uneasy, but I trust in God's mercy. Not a Yankee has been to our house today. We have only seen a few at a distance. The negroes give wretched accounts of these experiences and concur in the opinion that they are the

meanest nation on the face of the earth.

Springvale and every house on the place, excepting the negro quarters, is burnt. All of the negroes, excepting Peter, Simon, Charlie, and Closs have made their escape with loss of clothing and some provisions. Tommie came down this morning, fearing that the house was burnt but returned to secure the horses which were still safe from the enemy.

The story of the killing of Mr. Harrison, we hear, is false but Mr. Brice's and Mr. John Adger's are both burned and a good many others. There is no telling what to believe among the thousand reports that reach us. Poor Mrs. Robertson has borne herself bravely, but is suffering tortures on account of her lov'd ones.

February 24th.

We kept watch again last night hearing that the country was full of stragglers, but were much blessed again in being permitted to remain in our comfortable home. This morning we commenced putting the house to rights and have ascertained for the first time the extent of our losses. Hattie says that I must tell you that you never could imagine "ransacking" carried to such an extent as was done here. Some of the Yankee officers told us the other day that they had never seen a house in such a condition. Each of us has lost a good many things--not enough to inconvenience us but quite enough to heighten our already intense indignation. We are too relieved and delighted to hear of the safety of the whole of Mr. Robertson's party after enduring hardships and losing everything but the change of clothing they had on. They are pretty near home now and will soon come up.

Just after dinner about a dozen of Hampton's Scouts passed riding down the road in search of stragglers. I never felt such reverence for our soldiers as I do now. I wish some of them would come and see us. Not a Yankee in sight today. You cannot imagine the apprehension from which we have suffered during this dreadful week. If we could only fight there is not one of us who ^{would} not enlist immediately. Bettie writes that not a Yankee entered their house, they having been fortunate enough to secure a guard from the beginning. Mrs. Naylor's household suffered considerably, Aunt.M. not very much. Miss Finney's rooms were burnt, but she saved her clothing. Have not heard particulars of other friends. Late in the evening we walked over to Mrs. R's. and met the Dr. and the two Toms just returned from their eventful expedition.

25th.

Raining the whole day so that we have not been able to see any of our friends

altho we are so anxious to meet them after our common trouble. Feel depressed as the excitement wears away, by our entire separation from friends in the army.

26th.

Altho very wet, Kate, Ria and myself walked into town and attended service in the Court House. It was an impressive and solemn occasion--heard a fine sermon from Dr. Lora on the text: "Man doth not live by bread alone", etc. We were warmly welcomed by a host of friends and spent a long time giving our experience and listening to that of others.

Just as we were preparing to go to bed Mr. D. arrived in excellent spirits(?) and looking much better for his sojourn in the bushes. Their escape was really wonderful.

27th.

We went this morning to the scene of our expedition in the woods and found our treasurers beautifully packed away and all safe, disinterred, them and afterwards paid a visit at Mrs. Boyce's. We are enjoying intensely the blessing of quiet and immunity from the hated wretches. My little darling seemed quite sick today. Lilla came to spend the night.

28th.

This morning had the pleasure of seeing Lt. Farley and an officer from Va. who called in to see how the Yankees had treated us. They are scouting in the neighborhood and gave us many pleasant incidents of their recent exploits. We completed the work of disinterring and found many of our articles injured by exposure and rain--especially a number of likenesses. My little Louise continues very unwell. Mr. D. and Lilla with us all day. Daddy Saby came down and gave us an account of the destruction of our old home.

(Written by: Elizabeth Gaillard Dwight (grandmother of Mary Buchanan)
She lived at "Clifton" on Old Camden Rd. next to Doty home. She was
daughter of David Gaillard; married Wm. Moultrie Dwight; their daughter,
Floride Peyre Dwight, married Wm. Davis Douglas.)