



Minerva McClatchey

“July the 3rd ... Firing ceased after a while – two were killed and buried near the house and several wounded and carried to the rear. Their limbs were amputated in Mr. Goodman’s yard. Genl. Hooker and his staff came up and by this time the whole face of the earth, as far as could be seen in the road, yard, garden, and lot – everywhere was crowded with soldiers. The officers, many of them came into the house and behaved gentlemanly towards us. They asked us thousands of questions about the army, the roads, and the way the army would go. Genl. Hooker came in and shook hands cordially as an old friend – saying he was glad to see a citizen at home, that all the houses he had passed were deserted and why was it that the inhabitants would run away from their friends. He supposed I did not believe all the tales I had heard about yankee cruelty, etc. I told him that this was my home – I had none other – and had stayed with the hope that all gentlemen and true soldiers would recognize a woman’s right to stay at home. “You are right Madam – you have acted wisely and will be protected. We did not come to war with inoffensive citizens, but to preserve the Union and establish the authority of the Government. Let the rebels lay down their arms, and we give them the hand of friendship,” and much more in the same strain. Finally the Genl. left giving orders to some Captn. to place guards and have premises protected. I felt somewhat relieved supposing that General Hooker meant what he said. But the guard only stayed while the Corps was passing – when they left followed by a succession of others, negroes, waggons, men on foot and horse, a continual stream. Many officers still lingered, as they said “glad to see ladies at home.” One jumped up saying “I’ll go in the parlor – haven’t been in a parlor in six months.” He seemed to know the way. “Oh, here’s a piano” – and threw it open and played quite well. Several of them went in and danced for dear life. I said to one who was standing near me in the hall, “This is Sunday, I never encourage nor permit dancing in my own house – and I think it is particularly wrong on the holy Sabbath day.” “Is this Sunday? Well, we never know when Sunday comes in the Army. I’ll stop that.” And so he did. They all behaved very well after that and soon left – only a few surgeons remaining, who were powerless, or pretended to be so to prevent the men who were prowling about outdoors, stealing everything they fancied. They did not come in the house, but took everything we had in the storeroom and kitchen. Killed all my fowls but one or two that escaped somehow, took the

mothers from little chicks a few days old – and left them chirping. They took all our corn, flour, meal, honey, molasses and meat they found, and left us with a very small supply that we happened to have in the house. Took cooking vessels – flatirons, crocks, pans – pitchers – everything that was outside the house. Took all the children’s books – and valuable files of newspapers – pitchers, slates, everything out of the office, went to the carriage house and cut the carriage all to pieces – tore the green grapes from the vines, and the green apples were beaten from the trees. The garden was tramped all over and everything destroyed. A field of fine corn near the house, that was cut down in 15 minutes, and fed to their horses. That tho was done first thing in the morning – and even General Hooker’s horse notwithstanding his master’s loud professions, shared a part of that. Evening was drawing on and I thought if this was the way they do in daytime, what may we expect tonight. My feelings of loneliness, helplessness and dread cannot be described. Hearing that General Thomas was camped at the [Georgia Military] Institute, I sent Devereaux with a note to him, asking for a guard. He sent me two soldiers and I felt quite relieved. They were a great protection and satisfaction to us, but quite an eyesore to other soldiers when they came about on evil business. I have no doubt that the house would have been ransacked from top to bottom if they had not been here. An officer came one day and cursed them bitterly. O, such wicked oaths – said “You are volunteer guards, and if you are not gone in an hour – you will be arrested and punished.” I went out and spoke to him politely – told him that I had applied to General Thomas for a guard, and he had sent me those men – I supposed they knew their duty, I had nothing to do with it, but would rather they would stay. He seemed pacified and went off. In a few days the Provost Marshall sent two other men to relieve them and they very reluctantly went to their command.

Oct 18th. O sad terrible heart sickening news has reached me. A friend from Tenn. writes me – he has heard from below from our friends there, that my poor boy was wounded on the 11th of June and died on the 11th of July. Can it be? My God, my God must I believe it – I did not know what it was to have a child cruelly wounded, and to die away from me – I did not know all this time that I have been suffering so much, that this last most severe drop was to be added to my already full, and bitter cup. The Lord has been good to me, I must question his doings...

Nov. 15th. Now they are all gone, I can but think of the terrors of last night. The Institute was on fire, a sick lad was here to stay with Mary – the officers were upstairs, so I knew the house was

safe. Mr. Underwood said he would watch the door so Devereaux and I and a couple of the officers concluded we would go up on the hill and see the wretches at their work – at least that was my motive. Every house was in flames, it was as light as day. The houses in town were burning, many of them. Kinesaw mountain was in flames and as far as the eye could see the railroad was burning too and looked like a fiery serpent stretched through the darkness. Not a man was to be seen for sometime. We went all round the buildings, and finally saw about a half dozen very young soldiers, mere lads, who were doing the terrible work. I asked them if they liked to burn houses, they said “No matter whether we like it or not we have to obey orders...”

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