

little, but he seemed to convey a more potent reason, when he added, in a whisper: "For I must tell you, my sister, that Columbia is a *condemned city*! Terrible doom! This creature, having his roots behind him, disappeared to show himself no more. The guards so left behind were finally among the most busy as plunderers. The thought that to inmates, drawn out by the fire, were forced to abandon their posts, they began to revel in its contents. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?—who shall guard the guard?*—asks the proverb. In half the number of cases, the guards provided for the citizens were among the most active plunderers; they were quick to betray their posts, abandon their posts, and bring their comrades in to join in the general pillage. The most flexible and pliant of them, it is the opinion of most persons, were chiefly Eastern men, or men of immediate Eastern origin—probably the exports, through a sort of course, of training, of the larger cities, graduating finally at Sing-Sing and other places of mental and moral training. The Western men, including the European portion of the Illinois and Iowa, were neither so docile nor so unscrupulous—they were frequently firm and respectful; and, though it would be safe to assert that many of the houses which escaped the sack and fire, owed their safety to the presence of the *bona fides* of some of these men. Rather of speech in a manner than the Eastern men, rough and rude perhaps, they lacked equally the impudence, pretension, pomposity and utter indifference to truth, honesty and shame, which distinguished the latter. But we must refrain

XI.

It may be well to remark that the discipline of the enemy upon their first entrance into the city was perfect and most admirable. There was no disorder or irregularity on the line of march, showing that their officers had them completely in hand. They were a fine looking body of men, mostly young and of vigorous constitution, well clad and well shod, seemingly wanting in nothing. Their arms and accoutrements were in bright order. The negroes accompanying them were not numerous, and seemed mostly to act as drudges and body servants. They groomed horses, waited, carried baggage, and, in almost every instance inferior services appeared in a purely servile, and not a military, capacity. The men of the West treated them generally with scorn or indifference, sometimes harshly, and not infrequently with blows. Most of those escaping from them bore their departure—and they have been generous—express themselves sufficiently satisfied with their brief taste of Yankee eternity.

But, if the march of the enemy into town and while on duty, was indicative of admirable drill and discipline, such ceased to be the case the moment they were dismissed. Then, whether by tacit permission or direct command, their whole deportment underwent a sudden and rapid change. The demoralization

was soon begun. We have shown that the robbery of the persons of the citizens and the plunder of their houses commenced within one hour after they had reached the Market Hall. It continued without interruption throughout the day. Sherman, at the head of his cavalry, traversed the streets everywhere—so did his officers—yet they saw nothing to rebuke or restrain. Subsequently, these officers were everywhere on foot, yet beheld nothing which required the interposition of authority. Robbery was going on at every corner—in every house—yet there was no censure, no punishment. Citizens generally applied for a guard at their several houses, and, for a time, these guards were allotted them. They consisted usually of two soldiers—a sergeant and a private. These might be faithful or not. In some cases, as already stated, they were, and civil and respectful; considerate of the claims of women, and never trespassing upon the privacy of the family; but, in half the number of cases, at least, they were intrusive, insulting and treacherous—leaving no privacy undisturbed, passing without a word into the chambers and prying into every crevice and corner. They were so many spies set upon the homestead, to become plunderers when the chance was afforded them; and, falling in opportunity to make it, by firing the dwelling, in concert with their comrades without, and, after expelling the inmates, through the terrors they inspired, proceeding to the work of pillage without embarrassment from any quarter.

But the reign of terror did not fairly begin till night. In some instances, where parties complained of the misrule and robbery, their guards said to them, with a chuckle: "This is nothing. Wait till to night, and you'll see!" Well it was, and these wretches the demons did not lose.

Among the first fires at evening was without dark, which broke out in a filthy portion of low houses, of wood, of Gervais's street, occupied mostly as brothels. Almost at the same time, a body of the enemy scattered over the Eastern outskirts of the city, fired severely the dwellings of Mr. Secretary Trenholm, Gen. Wade Hampton, Dr. John Wallace, J. U. Adams, Mrs. Starke, Mr. Latta, Mrs. English and many others. There were then some twenty fires in full blast, in as many different quarters, at nearly the same moment; and while the alarm sounded from these quarters, a similar alarm was sent up almost simultaneously from Cotton Town, the Northernmost limit of the city, and from Main street in its very centre, at the several stores or houses of O. Z. Bate, C. D. Eberhardt and some others, in the heart of the most densely settled portion of the town; thus enveloping in flames almost every section of the devoted city. At this period, thus early in the evening, there were few shows of that drunkenness which prevailed at a late hour in the night, and only after all the grocery shops on Main street had been rifled. The wretches engaged in this appointed incendiarism were

well prepared with all the appliances essential to their work. They did not need the torch. They carried with them, from house to house, pots and vessels containing combustible liquids, composed probably of phosphorus and other similar agents, turpentine, &c.; and, with balls of cotton saturated in this liquid, with which they also overspread floors and walls, they conveyed the flames with wonderful rapidity from dwelling to dwelling. Each had his ready box of Lucifer matches, and, with a scrape upon the wall, the flames began to rage. Where houses were closely contiguous, a brand from one was the means of conveying destruction to the other.

The winds favored the demons. They had been high throughout the day, and steadily prevailed from South-west by West, and here the flames Eastward. To this fact we owe the preservation of the portions of the city lying West of Assembly street. The houses in this quarter being mostly of humble dimensions and appearance, held forth no inducements to the plunderers, and, indeed, they found sufficient employment for all their numbers in the more wealthy and fashionable portions of the city. To the abundance of the spoils in these quarters, which gave employment to all, we owe those dwellings which were saved, and possibly to this and their subsequent drunkenness, we owe the safety of our women.

XII.

The work, begun thus vigorously, went on without impediment and with hourly increase of fury throughout the night. What remained from the morning of engines and hose, were brought out by the firemen, but these were soon driven from their labors—which were indeed idle against such a storm of fire—by the pertinacious hostility of the incendiaries. Engines were trampled over and disabled, the hose was hewn to pieces, and the firemen, dreading worse tragedy to themselves, left the field in despair. Meanwhile, the flames spread from side to side, from front to rear, from street to street, and where their natural and inevitable progress was too slow for the demons who had kindled them, they helped them on by the application of fresh combustibles and more rapid agencies of conflagration. By midnight, Main street, from its Northern to its Southern extremity, was a solid wall of fire. By 12 o'clock, the great blocks, which included the banking houses and the Treasury buildings, were consumed; Janney's (Congaree) and Nickerson's Hotels; the magnificent manufactories of Evans & Cogswell—indeed, every large block in the business portion of the city; the old Capitol and all the adjacent buildings were in ruins. The range called the "Granite" was beginning to flame at 12, and might have been saved by ten vigorous men, resolutely working, if there had been a will for it among the enemy or if our own firemen had been permitted. At one o'clock, the hour was struck by the clock of the Market Hall, which was even then illuminated from within. It was its own last