

Sardis

From Clayvillage we had taken a northeastern course, passing from Harrison County into Robertson, thence to Sardis, a small town south of Maysville. At Sardis I witnessed a scene, similar to others, nearly always incidental to cavalry raids. A store, stocked with general merchandise, was being robbed by men who had marched in advance of the main column. It was enough to bring the blush of shame to the cheek of any honest cavalier, and was especially mortifying and humiliating to all proud Kentuckians, and more's the pity we were nearly all Kentuckians. We had to halt until the "looters" could be persuaded to move on. Men of other commands caught the infection, and doubtless thinking that as "everything was going" they might as well have a share they entered the store and appropriated to themselves all the lighter class of goods that the other fellows had failed to carry off. It was understood that the owner of the store was a Union man, and the boys not having much love for that class of men, especially at that particular time, thought *lex talionis* a good motto, and remembered that *inter arma silent leges*. The scene was not without a ludicrous side. Horses were loaded with bolts of calico, domestic cotton, boots, shoes, millinery goods, even babies' shoes, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

There are strange anomalies in war—especially in a civil war. To use the language of Victor Hugo:

"One of the most surprising things is the rapid stripping of the dead after victory; the dawn that follows a battle always rises on naked corpses. Who does this? Who sullies the triumph in this way? Whose is the hideous, furtive hand which slips into the pocket of victory? Who are the villains dealing their death stroke behind the glory? Some philosophers, Voltaire among them, assert that they are the very men who have made the glory; they say that those who keep their feet plunder those lying on the ground, and the hero of the day is the vampire of the night. After all a man has the right to strip a corpse of which he is the author. We do not believe it, however; reaping a crop of laurels and stealing the shoes of a dead man, or of a live one, either, does not seem possible from the same hand."

I am inclined to the belief of Voltaire. I know that the soldiers who plundered the store at Sardis, thoughtless boys that they were, had shown their gallantry on many a field, and that they were not criminals in the common acceptance of the term.

From Sardis we moved at an ordinary pace, not stopping, however, until we reached the vicinity of Morehead, in Rowan County. Here, at night, in a large grass field, without unsaddling, we turned our horses loose to graze, and lay down to rest and sleep, of which we were much in need.