

AN ACCOUNT OF MY ESCAPE FROM THE SOUTH  
IN 1861

By John Edwards

## INTRODUCTION

The manuscript of "An account of my escape from the South in 1861" was written by the Reverend John Edwards about 1902, after leaving Wheelock Mission where he had lived for about ten years since his return to his missionary labors among the Choctaws in 1883, under the Presbyterian Board of Missions. A first copy of this manuscript was given the Editor many years ago by the late Edmond J. Gardner of Valliant, Oklahoma, to be used in her historical research, and has lain away among her historical notes with the hope that it might be published. A number of persons both Indian and white in the Choctaw mission field who had lived in this country during the Civil War and Reconstruction days and were still living in Southeastern Oklahoma as late as the 1920's were familiar with this "Account" by Mr. Edwards. Their reaction to his story of his experiences when he fled the Choctaw Nation in 1861 was voiced by a writer living at Goodland, familiar with much of the history and about the people of this region when she remarked to the Editor, "Mr. Edward's story? It just would not do to print!"

It is now 100 years since the end of the American Civil War, the centennial of the events of the great conflict having been commemorated during the past four years in the historical field of the United States by a surge of published materials—books, articles, diaries and reminiscences of the period—as well as by commemorative programs and pageantry at outstanding historic sites, relating to the War. People throughout this country have been enlightened during the Centennial Commemorative period, having learned more about the personalities that had a leading part in the War as well as its problems and the living conditions endured, especially in the Southland. These things prompt the publication of the "Account" by Mr. Edwards as now due. Readers of this here in *The Chronicles* will catch something of the humor of the predicament into which he was forced in 1861, down around Doaksville, Fort Towson and Wheelock as he tells his story. Another comment may be added here: The title given by Mr. Edwards—"An Account of My Escape from the South"—implies an element of heroics in his story. Truly, his "Account" reveals Mrs. Edwards in the role of the

real hero who managed the situation and made the "escape" of the whole family possible!

John Edwards was born at Bath, Steuben County, New York on January 21, 1828. He graduated from Princeton College, New Jersey in 1848, and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1851. He began his service as a missionary teacher at Spencer Academy, Choctaw Nation, some months later, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Mission Board. He became Superintendent of Wheelock Seminary for Choctaw girls in 1853, after the death of the Superintendent, the Reverend Dr. Alfred Wright who had served as a missionary among the Choctaws since 1821, back in Mississippi. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards resided in California for twenty-one years after leaving the Indian Territory, before their return to this Choctaw mission in 1883. The family left the Indian Territory about 1894, the death of Mr. Edwards reported from California some years later.

John Edwards had made a study of the Choctaw language, his translation of the second Book of Kings published by the American Bible Society in 1855. He collaborated with the Reverend Cyrus Byington in collecting data on "Terms of Relationship of the Chocta (Chätä)" which were incorporated in L. H. Morgan's *Systems of Consanguinity of the Human Family* (Washington, 1871). The manuscript of a lecture by Mr. Edwards on the origin, manners and customs of the Choctaws (1857), which was delivered before interested audiences at different times, was sent among other manuscripts of his to the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1929, by members of his family. This lecture was published in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. X, No. 3 (September, 1932) with annotations by John R. Swanton, Smithsonian Institution, through the interest of the late Dr. Grant Foreman, Member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society at the time.

The account of Mr. Edward's "Escape from the South in 1861" is here presented directly from the manuscript. Some paragraphing has been made for clearness, and editorial notes are added.

—Muriel H. Wright, Editor

## MY ESCAPE IN 1861

By John Edwards

From 1851 to 1861 I was a missionary among the Choctaw Indians, located in the Southeastern part of the Indian Territory. The first two years were spent at old Spencer Academy,<sup>1</sup> about ten miles Northwest of Doaksville, near the old Military Road from Fort Towson to Fort Smith. The remaining eight years we were at Wheelock,<sup>2</sup> which was eighteen miles east from Doaksville,<sup>3</sup> thirty miles north of Clarksville, Texas, and thirty-five miles west of the Arkansas line.

Slavery existed to some extent among the Choctaws. About twenty-five hundred negroes were held in bondage among them. The Choctaws dwelling in their country west of Arkansas numbered about eighteen thousand.

<sup>1</sup>The site of old Spencer Academy is north of Sawyer in Choctaw County, about nine miles. It was the noted school for boys in the Choctaw Nation West, established by a special Committee of Choctaws in 1841, and named for John C. Spencer, Secretary of War. Dormitories, school rooms (4 substantial, two-story log buildings), dining room and kitchen, housing for employees, outbuildings, barns, etc., were completed and the school opened to the first students in January, 1844. A hospital and detachments of Confederate Indian troops were located here during the Civil War, after the closing of the school in 1861. The buildings had some repairs and the Academy was re-opened at old Spencer in 1870. It was abandoned with the opening of New Spencer Academy about 7 miles northeast of Soper, Choctaw County in 1883.

<sup>2</sup>Wheelock mission and school was established in December, 1832 by the Rev. Alfred Wright and his wife (Harriet Bunce Wright), missionaries of the American Board (A. B. C. F. M.) who came with some of the first parties of Choctaws from Mississippi during the Indian removal to the West (1830-1842). In 1842, the Choctaw General Council designated Wheelock as a seminary for Choctaw girls. The stone church at Wheelock (about 2 miles north of Millerton, McCurtain County), erected and dedicated in 1846 through the work of Rev. Alfred Wright and members of the congregation, stands on its original site near the ground of Wheelock Academy, the oldest church building in Oklahoma.

<sup>3</sup>Doaksville, site located on the northwest side of the town of Ft. Towson, in Choctaw County, began as a village at the time of the re-establishment and rebuilding of Fort Towson in 1831. It was named for Josiah Doak, a white trader from Mississippi associated in the trading business with Chief Greenwood LeFlore who established his interests in the west though he remained in Mississippi after the Choctaw removal to their new country west. Doaksville was an important town in the Red River region of the Choctaw Nation, and was the capital of the Nation from 1850 to 1863. It was the headquarters of the commanders of the Confederate Army (Indian and white troops) at different times during the late years of the Civil War. Many important Choctaw conventions and meetings of the General Council were held at Doaksville from 1850 through 1865.

My sentiments on the subject of slavery were such that I could not live among them without giving offense. While esteeming it an undesirable institution, and therefore not to be perpetrated, and disapproving many of the laws connected with the system, and many of the proceedings under it, yet I did not deem it necessarily a sin to hold slaves. It seemed to me that the possession of the amount of power over a fellow man conferred by it was not in itself wrong. All depended upon the way in which that power was used. It might be of benefit to both servant and master. But it was very liable to abuse, and was in fact often greatly abused. I never deemed myself fit to be a master. I would be altogether too easy. So I had no disposition to buy a slave even if I had had the means to do so.

With these views I had no hesitation in receiving masters as well as servants to the communion of the church. I also hired slaves as necessity required. They were glad to be hired by the missionaries.

I suppose that, in the War which was beginning in 1861, ministers would be regarded as non-combatants by both sides, and that they would not be expected to take up arms. So my expectation was to go quietly on with my work for the spiritual, as well as temporal good of the Choctaw people, and of others dwelling among them. My idea was that at sometime in the future, perhaps a hundred years hence, God, in His providence, would have the slaves prepared in some better measure for freedom, and that then, perhaps by making the system unprofitable, He would bring it to an end. But His plans were quite different from mine, as events showed.

An unmarried missionary named Wentz had been first a teacher in the Creek Nation, and afterwards at Spencer Academy.<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 1860 he had gone where his parents lived in the state of New York, under an engagement with his brother, each to put in \$300.00, and so buy their aged parents a home. The brother failed to fulfill his part of the arrangement. The question with Mr. Wentz was then how he could best make up the necessary amount himself.

That year he was appointed by the Board of Foreign Missions to be Superintendent of Iyanubi Female Seminary,

<sup>4</sup>The Rev. H. A. Wentz was in charge of the "middle department" of the boys at Spencer; the "primary department" in charge of Mr. Robert J. Young; the "highest department," in charge of the Rev. Sheldon Jackson. The Rev. Alexander Reid was Superintendent of the Academy, the whole teaching staff serving under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions.

a boarding school of twenty girls supported principally by the Choctaw Nation, and in small part by the Board.<sup>5</sup> He was fond of machinery. While at Cineinnati, on his way back to the Choctaw country, meditating, as he constantly was, on the question that was before him as to his parents he passed a gun store. It flashed upon him that revolvers would sell well in the Nation. So he invested his \$300.00 in revolving pistols and carbines, put them in his trunk, put on a Bell and Evertt Medal, and made the trip to his new home. He put most of them in the hands of Mr. John P. Kingsbury,<sup>6</sup> a merchant at Doaksville, to sell for him but kept a few to dispose of himself. He concealed the matter from the rest of the missionaries, as far as he could.

In the late winter (1861) or early spring he was discharged by the Board from his position as Superintendent of the School. On leaving he went to Wheelock and spent a couple of weeks in my home. While there he repaired my watch for me. Thence he went to Spencer Academy.

On Saturday May 11th, he went to Doaksville. In some way the rough fellows about the town learned that [John] Kingsbury had some revolvers belonging to Wentz. After he had left on his return, they went to Kingsbury and demanded them of him. Then they pursued Wentz, overtook him about a mile from town, brought him back, and fired

<sup>5</sup>Iyanubi Seminary for Choctaw girls was established in 1842, by the Choctaw General Council. The Rev. Cyrus Byington was superintendent of this school for many years, its location near old Eagletown on the east side of the Mountain Fork River, present McCurtain County. The Rev. Byington was a New England missionary of the American Board (ABCFM) who began his work among the Choctaws in 1820. He is noted in history for his scholarly work on the Choctaw language, his grammar of the Choctaw, a study of many years published by the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1871. His "Dictionary of the Choctaw Language," a work of nearly 50 years, was published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1915, Edited by John Swanton and Henry S. Halbert (Bulletin 48, Bureau of Ethnology, Washington). Both the manuscripts, the grammar and the dictionary — were produced at Iyanubi Seminary where Dr. Byington lived until the latter part of the Civil War.

<sup>6</sup>John P. Kingsbury was the son of the Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury, who was noted as the "Father of the Choctaw Mission," and was one of the founders of the Southern Presbyterian Church at Augusta, Georgia in 1850. John P. Kingsbury moved from Doaksville in 1858 to Boggy Depot where he built a home and established another store. He served in the Confederate commissary department at Boggy Depot during the Civil War, and was the only white man ever chosen to serve as National Secretary of the Choctaws in the history of their Nation. John P. Kingsbury died at his home in 1887 at Old Boggy Depot, and burial was in the cemetery there. His views on abolitionism are given by James D. Morrison in "Notes on Abolitionism in the Choctaw Nation," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1 (Spring, 1961), pp. 78-84.

revolvers about his ears. He stood up to them and told them if they wanted to kill him to go ahead. He was ready to die as he expected to do [sometime]. But they let him go, and he returned to Spencer. The news soon reached Texas.

On Tuesday May 14, a company of whites came over with a rope to hang him. Taking with them some half-breed Choctaws from Doaksville they went to Spencer. Mr. [Rev. Alexander Reid] Reid informed them that Wentz had left that morning.<sup>7</sup> The whites were disposed to doubt his statement, supposing Mr. Wentz to be concealed somewhere there. Sim Folsom, a Choctaw, said to them, "Gentlemen, you must not doubt Mr. Reid's word."

They wanted to know of Mr. Reid what he would do in case of the war coming into that region of the country. The reply was, "I would take my family and go to a place of safety, if I could find one. I never shot a gun in my life, and I do not know that I could do it." (He was very nearsighted.) On Thursday, May 16, I received a visit from Capt. S. H. Caudle and a Mr. Hailey of Red River County, Texas, accompanied by a Mr. Howell, a white man who had married a half-breed Choctaw, and who lived on the border of Red River in the Choctaw Nation, opposite to that county.<sup>8</sup> Whether there were others of the company or not, I do not know, I saw no others. The previous winter I had gone over into Texas to buy corn to feed the starving Choctaws. I afterwards learned that Capt. Caudle had heard that I was there,

<sup>7</sup>The Rev. Alexander Reid, missionary of the Presbyterian Mission Board, had served as superintendent of Spencer Academy since the early 1850's. He left the Indian Territory at the beginning of Civil War, remaining in the North until the early 1860's when he returned to the mission field among the Choctaws. It was Mr. Reid who supplied the words and air of the now famous Negro spirituals — "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Steal Away to Jesus," etc. — to the Negro "Jubilee Singers" of Fisk University, Tennessee, in 1871. These songs had been first heard sung by the Negro slave servants, "Uncle Wallace" Willis and his wife "Aunt Minerva" at Spencer Academy before the Civil War. The "Jubilee Singers" directed by a Prof. White of Fisk University were on tour of the North to raise money for education of the Negro freedmen of the South, and gave a program in Newark, New Jersey, where Mr. Reid was living after the War. He attended the program, and was inspired to recall the words and music of "Uncle Wallace's" songs with the aid of Mrs. Reid and their sons who remembered them from their former days at Spencer Academy. The "Jubilee Singers" practiced and learned some five or six of the old spirituals under the direction of Mr. Reid aided by Prof. White. Afterward the young negro group became noted for singing these songs in their tours of the United States and Europe in behalf of Fisk University.

<sup>8</sup>This was Calvin H. Howell of Choctaw descent who came from Mississippi and settled on the east side of the Mountain Fork River near Eagletown about 1840.

and had run his horse to Albion to get there before I should cross on my return, in order to compel me to drink with him. He was too late, but had he reached there in season I think he would have had an interesting time in accomplishing his purpose.

Hailey, it was said, had left South Carolina for South Carolina's good. He kept a grocery—i.e. groggery—at Albion, [Texas], the principal business of which was to sell liquor, especially to the Choctaws, for in the Choctaw country the introduction of liquor was prohibited by both the Choctaw law and the law of the United States. He dealt a good deal in horses, and often bought them from the Choctaws. It was said to be a matter of no concern to him whether the seller had any title to the property or not; for the Indian had no standing in the State Courts, and so could not reclaim his property.

The character of the men in that vicinity may be judged from the fact that there was but one man in that region who would not drink. The husband of the lady who told me this died not long afterward of disease brought on by drink. It was held by the people that it was necessary on account of the malaria.

Their character further appears from what follows: In July 1850, Jerry Craft, a negro who was hired by me, told me one day at noon, that that morning when he was milking, a white man came along, hatless, and inquired of him the way to Fort Smith. He directed him Southward toward Albion. "No," he said, "I have just come from there. I had a fine horse that was taken away from me and I just escaped with my life, and lost my hat." I supposed that he was a horse thief, who was escaping the sort of justice which was there administered to such. The next winter, when over there, I heard the story.

He had come from Missouri with a fine horse to sell. Coming down the Arkansas line he found no chance to dispose of him to his satisfaction. Hearing that Hailey dealt in horses, he went to see him. Not succeeding in making a trade, he stopped there a couple of weeks. At first he had pretended to have considerable money; but when Hailey wanted pay for his board, he had none. This brought him under suspicion, and they arrested him. The man who had him in charge talked with him on political matters. Among other things, he said, "I believe that all these Presidential candidates are a set of scoundrels, and Lincoln is just as good as any of them: don't you?" His reply was, "I don't know; perhaps he is."

When night came, the neighbors to the number of ten

gathered in Hailey's saloon to try him. He offered to work for his board till he could send back to Missouri and get proof that the horse was his, and that he was all right on the question of slavery. But they proceeded to try him on the charges of being a horse thief and an abolitionist. Having a fine horse, in connection with his deceit in regard to money, was the proof that he was a horse thief. Not cursing Lincoln to his guard was proof that he was an abolitionist. A line had been drawn across the floor. When the trial was over, the question was put, "All that believe he is a horse thief step across the line." Nine stepped across, one did not. "All that believe he is an abolitionist step across the line." Nine stepped across, the same one stood still. He did not believe that either charge was proved; and moreover, he believed in giving him a chance to prove his character.

Had they been unanimous they would have taken him out and hanged him. As it was they put a rope around his neck led him down to the flatboat, crossed to the other side of Red River, and hung him up three times and let him down again. They said he trembled like a leaf. He begged for a drink of water. They allowed one man to take him to the river to drink. It was necessary to unpinion his arms that he might drink. This done he plunged in, swam across, went up the river a couple of miles, swam back, and in the morning appeared at my corral. He went over into Arkansas, sent back proof that the horse was his, and they sent it to him.

That illustrates the kind of men that paid me the visit.

They told me that they wished to search my premises for revolvers. Said I, "Gentlemen you are welcome to search to your heart's content. I can tell you beforehand what you will find in the way of weapons. You will find three butcher knives, one old one and two new ones which were sent me from Memphis not long since."

They asked me to open some boxes that were there. I did so. They contained Choctaw books. They looked in my desk. They examined the bedroom over my study, and the bedroom on one side of it. They went into the house. In our family room they found George with an eruption on his face. Capt. Caudle inquired what was the matter with him. I replied that I supposed he had the measles. That was too much for him. He had never had the disease, and therefore was not willing to expose himself to it. He left the others to do the searching there. They found a trunk locked, tried it and inquired what was in it. "Really I do not know," I said. "You will have to wait till my wife comes home as she has the key."



They opened the drawer of the kitchen table and there they saw the three butcher knives. They went upstairs and felt in some boxes of clothing which had been sent to us from Dr. Boardman's church, Philadelphia, (the Tenth Presbyterian) for the destitute Choctaws, but which, not having arrived till late in March, we were keeping to give out to the Choctaws the next winter. (Crops had almost completely failed in 1860, and they were on the verge of starvation.) So far as they went, they made a quite thorough search, in closets and cellar, etc. As we passed out, I said to them, "Here is another room upstairs (by another stairway) which you have not seen: and there are several cabins around. You are welcome to search them all."

"No," they said. "We are satisfied." They told me that if I had a revolver or a gun, or both, that would have been nothing out of the way.

Going back to the study, they wanted to know my sentiments. Supposing they wanted my sentiments on the subject of slavery, I proceeded to give them to them. Some time previous I had received by mail two pamphlets published and sent out by "The 1860 Association of Charleston, S. C.," one discussing the subject of slavery, and the other that of the right of secession. In the former, were extensive quotations from a thanksgiving sermon which had been preached by the Rev. Henry J. Van Dyke [sic] D.D. in Brooklyn in 1860. In this he quoted largely from the action of the Presbyterian Assembly in 1818. I read to them from that document. Of course coming from Charleston, they could raise no objection to it.

After listening for a while, Capt. Caudle interrupted me by saying: "Mr. Edwards, we don't think you are an abolitionist. If we did we'd swing you. What we want to know is your sentiments on the public questions of the day."

Supposing that the free soil question was the great question, I proceeded to give my views on that. I stated that I believed the Republicans were right as to the constitutional power of Congress over the question of slavery in the territories; that John C. Calhoun had given that as his view; and that Jefferson Davis had held the same view ten years before when he advocated the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific. But while holding that view, my plan would be to leave the whole question to the people of the territories, provided there should be no usurpation. Understanding me to have referred to Thomas Jefferson, the Captain remarked that he was too far back. He wanted to

know what I thought about the present troubles of the Country and the War.

I told him I did not believe in the right of secession, and that the government had given them no cause for rebellion; and therefore I could not take their side in the War. Had there been any justifying cause for the war by any invasion of the rights of the South on the part of the Government, I would be with them. But there clearly was none. I therefore could not favor their side. The details of the conversation that passed between us have passed from my memory.

Finally, the question was put to me whether I would pledge myself, in case the War came into that region of the country, to take up arms for the South. "Gentlemen," said I, "You might as well ask me to strike my Mother. I was born in the North; my friends and kindred are still living there; I do not believe the Southern states have a right to secede, nor that the Government has given them any cause to rebel. What I wish to do is to stay here quietly and go on with my work for the Choctaws, not taking part in the War on either side. I am willing to give you my pledge to do nothing against you, and to abide by that to the death. Beyond that my conscience will not let me do."

The crisis was reached. They went out and consulted. Returning, Capt. Caudle asked me how long a time I wanted to get ready to leave. I replied that in the feeble state of my wife's health, I thought I ought to have at least a month. He answered, "It would be a cruelty to compel a feeble lady to travel in this hot weather; but get ready and leave as soon as you can."

They were through with me. Taking for granted that they would wish to visit Mr. Libby, I told them that if they were going to his house I would go with them, as he might be absent, and I did not wish to have his family unnecessarily alarmed. Mr. Howell spoke up: "I'll vouch for him." So they concluded not to go there. Little did they imagine that, when he had read the account of the great Union meeting in Union Square, New York, he said, "Don't I wish I was there! I would volunteer."

Mr. L. [Libby] was from Maine. When he first came to Mr. Kingsbury's station\* as a laborer his views and feeling

\*The Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury's station mentioned here was Pine Ridge Mission, established under the auspices of the American Board (ABCFM) in 1835, the site located about 1½ miles northwest of the town of Fort Towson, Choctaw County. The Choctaw Council established Chualha Seminary for Choctaw girls in 1842, at Pine Ridge Mission with Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury as Superintendent.

on the subject of slavery were such and so freely expressed that he made himself offensive. So after he had been there a year or two, it was thought best that he should leave there. In 1855, during our absence on account of Mrs. Edward's health, the steward of our boarding school resigned. I corresponded with Mr. Libby in reference to taking the vacant place. He was willing. He said that the people at home who were making so great a noise on the subject of slavery were doing no good to anyone. On the other hand the missionaries were doing good to all, white, red, and black. He was willing to go back and hold his tongue. Secretary Treat asked me if I did not fear Mr. L. would make us trouble. I told him I thought he would not. So he was appointed.

His predecessor had had in his employ Old Aunt Eliza, who belonged to a young Choctaw. We had her for a little while, but Mrs. E. could not tolerate her lack of neatness in her work. Aunt Eliza wished Mr. L. to hire her and he did. After a while her young master wished to sell her and she begged Mr. Libby to buy her. He yielded to her entreaties and bought her, paying \$200.00 for her. In course of time, her husband, Uncle Bob was sold to a white neighbor, Mr. Hodges, a citizen by marriage, who purposed to sell him into Texas.<sup>10</sup> He came to Mr. Libby and begged him to buy him, too. Their joint entreaties moved him to take pity on them and he bought him, paying \$500.00 for him. So the abolitionist had become a slave holder. That accounted for Mr. Howell's willingness to vouch for him. He supposed he would of course, be on the side where his property interests seemed to be. Still in our discussion in the study, Capt. Caudle had claimed to be ready to go in to the fight for the South, not on account of the property value of the slave, but for principle.

I understood that Mr. Hailey reported to our neighbors that ours was the nicest place he had ever seen. Certainly it could not be on account of the fineness of the house, for it was a piece of patchwork. The original two log rooms had a space between them, in which was a closet, a cupboard and a passageway and in part a stairway. When the Boarding School was established there, a half story in rough frame had been added in the rear of the eastern log room, and used by us as a kitchen. Subsequently a sitting and bed room below, and a half story bedroom above had been added in better frame, ceiled in dressed lumber. In the changes that had taken place a room for George had

<sup>10</sup>This was Mr. Joseph Hodges who married Cabelle Ward of Choctaw descent. Their two sons, John M. Hodges and D. W. Hodges ("MaJe") were prominent citizens and merchants in the Choctaw Nation at Atoka and Lehigh, in the 1850's to 1890's.

been put in the rear of this, while a wide piazza filled the space between this and the kitchen. Yet all was well kept and so comfortable that I scarce doubt that Hailey was correct in pronouncing it the nicest place he had ever seen.

After they had gone, Mrs. E. returned from Mr. Wilson's, and when told what had occurred, she burst into tears, exclaiming, "What will the poor Choctaws do?"

I could not believe that the southern authorities would want us driven away. I hoped therefore to bring influences to bear which would hold them in check. I had learned that the Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, D. D., Secretary of the Board, who, a native of South Carolina, had resigned his secretaryship and gone South, was an intimate friend of Toombs the Confederate Secretary of State. I hoped that through them an influence could be brought to bear which would prevent the Texans from going to extremes. Still I deemed it best to get the means for travelling in case of necessity. To do this it was necessary to visit Dr. [Cyrus] Kingsbury at Pine Ridge who was the treasurer of our mission, appointed by the Board, and who alone could make drafts on its funds. So I prepared to go to him next day.

Next morning at prayers I read the first half of the tenth Chapter of John. The verses 11 to 13 seemed to condemn the idea of fleeing. "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep." That gave me something to think of in my horseback ride that day.

On my way toward Doaksville, beyond Clear Creek, I met the Rev. Mr. Newman, a missionary of the M. E. Church South. I told him what had occurred. "Do you know," said he, "The story is out about you?" "No," said I, "What is it?" He told it. It was that sometime before I had gone to Mrs. Gooding's<sup>11</sup> at old Fort Towson when she and her daughter were absent, had stayed there an hour or so talking with their man Tolbert, telling him what to do in case the War came into that region of the country; that Basil Leflore, who was living at the old hospital of the fort, had seen me when I went there, and when I went away.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Mrs. Gooding was the wife of Lem Gooding, a native of Maine, who had a store at Doaksville before the Civil War.

<sup>12</sup>Basil Leflore was a brother of Chief Greenwood Leflore who had promoted the removal of the Choctaws from Mississippi and been one of the Choctaw chiefs who signed the Treaty of Dancing

I told him that there was just this much basis of truth for the story: Some three or four weeks previously, as I was returning from the meeting of the Presbytery at Goodland, someone had given me a message to deliver to John Kingsbury in Doaksville. I was in Kingsbury's store and bought some things, but was so weak and sick that I sat down to do the business. But I entirely forgot the message, until I had gotten about a mile away from Doaksville, on my way home. I felt too sick to ride back, so adding two miles to my ride. Being near the Fort, and knowing that Tolbert often went over to Doaksville, I went there to ask him to deliver the message to him, talked with him perhaps a minute or two, invited him to come and see his wife who was cooking for us, and rode on home. I did not get down from my pony. Not a word passed between us on the subject of War. Mr. Newman told me they were talking very threateningly about me. "Who am I to look out for?" said I. "Well, Tom Pitchlynn is the worst one, I think," said he. Would you advise me to take the prairie road and so avoid his house?" "Yes," said he. I started on. Thinking of it, I decided to keep the main road and pass Pitchlynn's house. As I passed he was sitting on the piazza. I bowed and passed on.

I went directly to Mrs. Gooding's to make a correction of the story. They gave no intimation as to whether they believed my statement or not. In more recent meetings with the daughter the subject never came up. She had married the man who was responsible for the story.

I went to Pine Ridge and got three drafts on New York of \$100.00 each. Returning I came through Doaksville. The Confederate flag was flying over the town. I wanted to have a talk with Gen. Cooper. He had been the U. S. agent for the Choctaws and Chickasaws for eight years during the administrations of Pierce and Buchanan. He was said to be a cousin to Jefferson Davis. He had accepted the office again under Lincoln. But then he was engaged in raising a regiment of Choctaws and Chickasaws for the Confederate Army. I stated to him what had occurred, and my wishes. Said he, "If you will state that you are willing to defend

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Rabbit Creek in 1830. Basil Leflore married Narcissa Fisher of the well known Fisher family of the Choctaw Nation. He moved his family west and served as treasurer of the Nation longer than any other Choctaw, before the Civil War. He was elected "Governor" of the Choctaw Nation under the Skullyville Constitution in 1859, serving in this office until the adoption of a new constitution at Doaksville and election of officers for the Nation in 1860. Ex-Gov. Basil Leflore moved and made his home in about 1867 near Goodland Mission, which is still in operation as Goodland Indian School about two miles southwest of Hugo, Choctaw County. His log cabin office is standing on the grounds at Goodland School.

the Choctaws against aggression from any quarter, I think I can fix things so that you will be able to remain." Said I, "If that were the question I believe I could say it. But, General, that is not the question." I bade him goodbye and rode on home.

That evening at prayers I read the latter half of the tenth chapter of John. In the 39th and 40th verses were the words: "Therefore they sought again to take him, but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan." There was Christ's example clearly justifying me in leaving to save my life.

Mrs. E. began selling off the things, but I checked her. I still hoped that in some way we would be able to remain. I wrote to Capt. Caudle asking that my orders to leave be put in writing, assigning the reason, as it might be safer for me to travel, if it were known that I was compelled to leave, not as an abolitionist, but as simply unwilling to pledge myself to take up arms for the South. He replied saying that he had no authority to order me away, that from what my neighbors said, he did not think I was abolitionist; but, in his opinion, all men in the Indian Territory country who were not ready to defend the Confederate states had better strike for other parts.

Things went on as usual for nearly three weeks. On the 1st and 2nd of June we had a big meeting. Saturday night and Sunday we had the privilege of entertaining the Principal Chief, George Hudson and Peter P. Pitchlynn, who were on their way to Doaksville to a special meeting of the General Council, which the Chief had called for the following Monday.<sup>33</sup> He went to it with his message prepared recommending neutrality. He said it was none of

<sup>33</sup>George Hudson, born in Mississippi was one-half Choctaw. He made his home on the west side of the Mountain Fork River, a few miles west of Eagletown. He was elected as the first "Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation" under the Doaksville Constitution, serving from 1850 to 1862.

<sup>34</sup>Peter P. Pitchlynn was a prominent citizen of the Choctaw Nation, noted as delegate to Washington in promoting the Choctaw "Net Proceeds Claim" (payment for the approximate 10,000,000 acres of tribal lands in Mississippi given over without compensation from the U.S. Government in the Treaty of 1830). His farm home operated by his Negro slaves was near Eagletown. He practically lived in Washington, D.C. from about 1854, and was in the Capital City during most of the Civil War. He was elected Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, serving the term of 1854-1855. He became closely associated in Choctaw claims before the U.S. Government with Albert Pike who had served as commissioner for the Confederate States in securing the Choctaw-Chickasaw Confederate Treaty in 1851. Peter P. Pitchlynn died and was buried at Washington, D.C., in 1883.

their fight. I afterward learned that he was compelled by a vigilance committee to change it recommending the Choctaws to join the South. I know not the composition of that committee, whether it was of whites or of half-breed Choctaws or both. The people of the adjoining states, Arkansas and Texas told the Choctaws that if they did not join them they would exterminate them. The Government troops having been withdrawn, situated as the Choctaws were right in the corner between those two states, they were completely in their power, and of course were compelled to yield to their dictation. They passed laws, as I afterward learned, assuming jurisdiction over all whites among them and requiring all between 15 and 55 years of age to join the militia, and all over 55 to join the home guards. (I may err as to figures)

On Thursday afternoon I learned that on Wednesday a public meeting had been held at Doaksville, the capital, at which Capt. Robert M. Jones, the wealthiest Choctaw, took the ground that "every man that was not with them must be hung up to the first limb between heaven and hell."<sup>10</sup> I immediately concluded that if so moderate a man as he could make such a speech as that, it was of no use for me to try to remain. So I mounted the pony and started out to sell the cattle. I met with no success.

Next morning I was in my study, writing a note to send to Doaksville offering my furniture for sale when Mrs. E. came in and said, "Mrs. Dukes is here and says the committee are to be here today to hang you, and you must get out of the way as soon as possible." I took my keys out of my pocket, handed them to Mr. Libby who was sitting there, and said, "Mr. Libby will you saddle Jerry for me?" Then I went into the house, put on a warmer suit of clothes

<sup>10</sup>Robert M. Jones (of Choctaw descent) was an ardent secessionist and leader in making the Confederate Choctaw-Chickasaw treaty which he signed as a Choctaw delegate at North Forktown, Creek Nation July 12, 1861, with Commissioner Albert Pike serving in behalf of the Confederate States. Jones was one of the wealthiest (if not the wealthiest) planters in the Southwest, owner of 500 Negro slaves, several plantations on Red River, a sugar plantation in Louisiana, a large store at Doaksville and trading establishments (one for a time at Boggy Depot, etc.) in the western part of the Nation. He completely outfitted the first company of Choctaw mounted volunteers for Confederate Army service in the summer of 1861. "Colonel" Jones served as the Choctaw delegate to the Confederate Congress at Richmond for several terms, and at the end of the War served as the leader of the Choctaw delegation to Washington in the making the Treaty of 1865 with the Federal Government. The site of his pre-Civil War home is on a tract, near the family burial ground now owned as a place of historical significance by the Oklahoma Historical Society about four miles southeast of Hugo, in Choctaw County.

which had come from my mother a few days before, put some clothes and some snack in my saddle bags, had a prayer with Mrs. E., took all the money there was in the house, and mounted and started, probably within 15 minutes of the time the word came.

Mrs. E. wished to know my plans. I told her I would go to Lenox, Dr. Hobbs' station, and wait there for her and the children, if I could.<sup>10</sup> If not I would make the best of my way northward. "What shall I do?" said she. "Get a team and follow me as soon as you can," said I. We had a pair of horses, but one was 16 years old, the other 20. Using all the corn I could get for feeding the destitute Choctaws, I had fed scarce any to my horses, so they were very poor. The wagon was an old one not fit for the trip over the mountains. Thus having sold nothing, I had to leave the brunt of the burden for her to bear. So I bade her farewell and started.

A heavy rain having fallen the night before sufficient to raise Little River, three miles away, Mr. Libby went with me to help me across. "Well," said he, "If it comes to this that I have got to say I will fight for them or hand [sic]. I'll tell them I'll fight for them." I had nothing to say. My conscience would not let me advise him to do otherwise than I was doing. At the same time I could not advise him to a course which might cost him and his family his life. So I said nothing. We met Cornelius Garland, son of James Garland, one of the valued elders of the Wheelock Church.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Lenox Mission established under the auspices of the American Board (ABCFM) in 1852 by the medical missionary, Dr. Simon Leavitt Hobbs at a site about 1½ miles northwest of present Whitesboro, Le Flore County, on the north side of the Kiamichi River. The mission work here prospered with the friendly cooperation of the Choctaws living in this region; one of the staunchest friends of the mission and Dr. Hobbs was Alfred Wade, (Governor of the Choctaw Nation under the Skullyville Constitution, 1857-1858, who signed the Choctaw Treaty with the Confederate States in 1861, and again the Treaty of 1866 with the Federal government at Washington after the War). At the outbreak of the War, Dr. Hobbs left Lenox Mission as leader of the missionaries of Union sympathies fleeing the Choctaw country via of Ft. Smith, and took his family to New England. He returned to mission work among the Choctaws in 1872, and he and his family reopened and were again stationed at Lenox Mission in 1882 where he died the next year. He and Mrs. Hobbs who died shortly after her husband were both buried near the old log mission church, their gravestones marking the old Lenox Mission burial ground still seen northwest of Whitesboro.

<sup>11</sup>The Garlands were a prominent family, Choctaw by blood. Samuel Garland, one of the elder members of this family moved west during the Indian removal from Mississippi, and made his plantation home north of the present site of Tom, in present McCurtain County. He served as Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation in 1862-1864. A handsome marble monument stands at his grave in the old Garland Cemetery, a historic plot now maintained and



He went with us to help me across the river. At the river, a son of Ubalatobi, an older brother of Ibanubi and Thomas Watson, had a canoe there. Swimming Jerry by its side we crossed. There we knelt down and prayed, and I parted with them, never to see the two Choctaws more on earth. I hope I will meet them in the heavenly world. Cornelius became a Christian man and an elder in the church. His widow, a daughter of the old district chief, Thomas LeFlore, still lived, at last accounts, in her old home. Their son has since been county Judge of Towson County.<sup>19</sup>

I travelled northward reaching the house of Rev. Pliny Fisk, the first native (Choctaw) Presbyterian minister, to spend the night.

To return to things at Doaksville and Wheelock: It seems that at the public meeting at which Capt. Jones had made a speech above referred to, Mr. Willie Harkins, a prominent halfbreed was present. On account of some matters connected with the school he had for several years borne some personal ill will toward me. When Jones made the speech, Harkins said, "Edwards is one." And proceeded to make arrangements to come to my house to put the speech in execution. A committee was arranged, composed mostly of halfbreeds, men of low standing as to character.

One, a good neighbor of ours joined them for the purpose of getting into their plans and letting me know that I might escape. It was Mr. John Wilson, father of William, John and Edward Wilson, now prominent men in the Nation. He managed to send word to Mrs. Dukes, the wife of my assistant translator, Joseph Dukes, who was a licentiate under the care of the Indian Presbytery, an excellent man,

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owned by the Oklahoma Historical Society. Judge Joel Garland, another prominent member of this family, served as a judge of the Choctaw courts in Apuckshenubbee District (southeastern part of Oklahoma) after the Civil War. His old home stands about two miles east of Harris, in McCurtain County, and is still owned by members of the Garland family.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas LeFlore came west during the removal of the Choctaws in Mississippi, and served as one of the three district chiefs of the Nation west, in place of his cousin Chief Greenwood LeFlore of Mississippi. Thomas LeFlore lived for a number of years in the old "Choctaw Chief's House" near present Swink, in Choctaw County, having been elected chief of the Southeastern District (Okfusapaya, later Apuckshenubbee District) of the Nation west in 1824. Just before his death about 1850, he and his wife lived near Wheelock, in a house reported to have been built by the U. S. government where their son, Michael LeFlore made his home during and for many years after the Civil War. Towson County was one of the nineteen counties organized in the Choctaw Nation in 1850, its name for that of Fort Towson which was located within the limits of the County.

as well as a superior interpreter and a good preacher.<sup>19</sup> He was at the time in Doaksville. They lived at the old Norwalk station about five miles from Wheelock.

Mrs. Dukes came at once to bring the word. It was only a year or two before leaving the Choctaws the second time in 1896, that I learned that Mr. Wilson had any part in sending me the word. Mrs. Dukes stated also that a letter had been sent me the day before through one of our church members. I had not received it. About noon after I had left Mrs. E. received the letter. Thinking I ought to have it she employed Wm. Duck to follow me with it. He rode as long as he could see the way; and when he could no longer find the path he sat down and held his horse till daylight came. When I rose early in the morning he was sitting on the fence of Mr. Fisk's yard, awaiting me. It was a sad meeting and a sad farewell, for we had become very greatly attached to each other. The letter included one from Father Kingsbury, one from Mr. Dukes and a pass from the Principal Chief, George Hudson, countersigned by Col. D. H. Cooper.<sup>20</sup> It was a good Providence that I did not receive it at home. The word came in it was not so threatening as the word that Mrs. Dukes brought. Had I received it before I left I might possibly have remained at home, and had I remained bloodshed would, in all probability, have been the result.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph Dukes (English-French and Choctaw by blood) attended Mayhew Mission (ABCFM) in Mississippi where he served as interpreter and translator for the Rev. Cyrus Byington in the early years of the mission. Joseph Dukes married Nancy Collins (one-half Choctaw by blood) in September, 1830. The young couple was among the first parties to come west during the Choctaw removal from Mississippi, and settled in the vicinity of Wheelock. Dukes taught the school at Lukfaha for a time, and was highly regarded throughout his life for his work in connection with the Choctaw schools and with the Presbyterian Church. He died in 1881 and was buried near Wheelock Mission. His son Gilbert Dukes (born, 1849) was elected and served as Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation in 1900 to 1902.

<sup>20</sup>Colonel Douglas H. Cooper, a native of Mississippi, attended the University of Virginia (1832-34), and served as Captain in the Mississippi Rifle Regiment, under command of Col. Jefferson Davis in the Mexican War. He was appointed U. S. Agent to the Choctaws, and arrived at the Choctaw Agency (Skullyville) in June, 1853. When Principal Chief George Hudson issued a proclamation in favor of an alliance of the Choctaw Nation with the Confederate States, June 14, 1861, Col. D. H. Cooper was placed in command of the newly organized Mounted Regiment of Choctaw and Chickasaw Riflemen of the Confederate Army. He served in command of Confederate Indian forces throughout the War, and in February, 1865, as Brigadier-General was assigned the military command of the District of the Indian Territory, in the Trans-Mississippi Department, C.S.A. (See Muriel H. Wright, "General Douglas H. Cooper, C.S.A.," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 [Summer, 1954], pp. 142-64.)

As it was Wm. Duck returned to Wheelock and I pursued my way to Lenox, arriving there on Saturday evening. I had as my guide for some distance a man whose name I cannot recall but whom I repeatedly met after my return. We talked matters over as we went along. Well do I remember the emphasis with which he expressed the wish to "Litot kanchih (crush out)" the halfbreeds. For they looked upon the halfbreed party as responsible for much of the trouble.

At Lenox I was very cordially received and remained there the whole of the next week and till Thursday of the week following. I preached both Sabbaths. While there I learned from ex-governor Wade the action of the Choctaw council. Dr. Hobbs concluded that he could not obey the new law, and so concluded that they too must leave. In the meantime what was going on at Wheelock. I left Friday, June 7th, probably between 9 and 11 o'clock. At noon Mrs. E. received the letter which Mrs. Dukes had spoken of as having been sent me the day before. The documents which it contained, so far as I now have them are as follows:

Choctaw Nation: To all whom it may concern,

Executive Office: Greeting:

Be it known that I George Hudson, Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation do hereby grant a passport and safe conduct to Rev. John Edwards and his family, on his journey out of the Choctaw Nation, and hereby enjoin and require all Choctaws or others within the Choctaw Nation to allow Mr. Edwards and family to proceed in peace and without hindrance or molestation.

I further certify that the said Rev. John Edwards had given me satisfactory assurance that he is not an abolitionist and not even a free soiler.

I further request all civil and military authorities within the southern states to give free passage and safe conduct to Rev. John Edwards and his family.

I would also add that Mr. Edwards goes to the North to visit his relatives and for the health of his wife.

Given under my hand and seal at Doaksville, this 6th day of June A.D. 1861.

George Hudson (Seal)

Principal Chief C.N.

I certify that the foregoing passport was signed by Col. George Hudson, Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation and I also join in the same.

Douglas H. Cooper

Col. C. S. Army.

Doaksville, C. N. June 5, 1861

This is to certify that we have known the bearer, the Rev. John Edwards for the past ten years. He is a Presbyterian Minister, and has been laboring among the Choctaws as Pastor of the Church at Wheelock. We can certify that he is in no way tainted with abolition sentiments, but on the contrary has been a strong opposer of

every thing of that kind. He is about to leave us on his way to Little Rock, we take pleasure in bearing testimony to his character as a gentleman and a minister. We recommend him to our friends and to the community through which he may chance to pass.

R. M. Jones.

About three p.m. of Friday, a light horseman (constable) came, having been sent from Doaksville, bringing letters from the Principal Chief, from Dr. Kingsbury, and from Mr. Dukes, (if my memory serves me correctly) asking me to come to Doaksville as the General Council wished to see me, and expressing confidence that all could be so arranged that I could remain. They also requested that, if I had left, Mrs. E. would send for me. So she hurried to get a messenger to carry the notes to me. Hoping that we would be able to remain revived. She wrote to me not to come home first but to take the straight road to Doaksville. The man employed as messenger was Tom Vaughn a full blood, a wicked fellow, but a good friend to me. The river being still up, he could not get off that day.

But the next morning by sunrise he was off with a hurrah. His wife a half-breed woman, who had once been a member of the Wheslock Church, but had been excommunicated before my time there, said to him, "Tom, the horse is mine, you kill him but that you bring Mr. Edwards back." That noon another messenger came. It was brought by his (Capt. Dukes) little son Gilbert, who in 1883, when I returned to the Nation, was District Judge, and has recently been Principal Chief. In it Capt. Dukes said, "For God's sake don't let Mr. Edwards come to Doaksville. There will be bloodshed if he does. The committee are determined to carry out their threat of execution, and as many as a hundred men are determined to protect him."

So Mrs. Edwards had to hurry around to get another messenger to hasten after the second messenger to stop him. The one sent was Billy Parrish, a young man, a part Choctaw and part Mexican, who was in Mr. Libby's employ. He rode 35 miles, wearing his horse's hoofs out, and employed another man to overtake Vaughn and stop him. When he was informed that he was to turn back, he cursed and swore saying he would like to see the man that would touch me.

A note sent by my wife by the last messenger reached me on the second Sabbath after I had left, and I was in the pulpit of the Lenox Church, about to commence the service of the day. It was brief. Without explaining the situation, it said, "The last news has paralyzed me. I cannot even weep. The house is full of weeping people." She wanted advice as to what to do. Father Kingsbury sent word that he was intending to go to see her, but he failed to come. The reason

he afterwards assigned, was that he could not raise money for her. The Rev. Mr. Reid came but he could give her no advice, so also with Mr. Libby. She had the whole responsibility of the situation upon herself. She commenced selling things, pieces or articles about the house ranging from five cents to five dollars.

She sent for a neighbor, Mr. Hodges, a white man with a half-breed wife who lived near us and kept a little store and had a gin and a horse mill and did some farming. She asked him if he would sell his mules. "Yes." "What do you want for them?" "Four hundred dollars." "Will you take cattle for them?" "Yes." So she sent a man out into the prairie to gather them up. All told there was 35. Mr. H. set his valuation on them at \$150, about half their previous price. "Will you take the wheat in the field?" "Yes." (In order to have some food in the country as early as possible I had seen wheat costing me three dollars a bushel. It was then cut and in shock.) He put his own price upon it, "And the oats in the crib?" "Yes." "And the corn sheller?" "Yes." "And the pacing pony?" "Yes." "You are keeping a public house (entertaining travelers) and you haven't a suitable table." So he went into the house and bought the dining table. She took him upstairs. There were the boxes of clothing which had come from Philadelphia. As he had a little store he could sell them. So she let him have them at a low figure. She sold him soap, knives and forks, and various household articles. At last he said he could not take another thing. He counted up the items. They came to \$401. He paid the one dollar and sent over the mules. When Mr. Libby saw the mules, he stood with tears in his eyes. "What is the matter?" "Why Mrs. Edwards, those mules are so poor, they could not draw the empty wagon over the mountains." "No, I'll go on foot first." "Well," said he, "My horses I have not counted as worth more than \$300, but they are in good condition. I cannot get off just yet, so if you choose to trade me the mules for the horses, I will make the trade." "Agreed," she said, and she was provided with a team.

Next as to harness, I had had two old sets. They got them out, selected the best pieces from them, repaired where it was necessary, and they had a set which would do. Then as to a wagon. Our old wagon was unfit for the rough trip. Mr. Hodges had one which he held at \$125. For this Mrs. E. traded him a field belonging to the Board. Thus she was fitted out with a team, harness and wagon. She thought the harness ought to be oiled. "Ah, Mrs. Edwards that is your pride." "No, I think it would be less liable to break." The largest single article was old Bill, our sixteen year old

horse to Capt. Dukes for \$10, or \$20. Charlie the twenty year old was thrown in.

On Thursday Col. P. P. Pitchlynn, the Choctaw who figures in Dickens' *American Notes*, called to see her on his way home from Council. He told her how much he thought of me, and sympathized with her most heartily. "I thank you, Colonel, for your sympathy but I want something more."

"What is it, Mrs. Edwards?"

"I will do anything in my power for you."

"I want money, but I don't want to beg it. You have brought your white wife home from Washington, and I know you have not the things to make her comfortable. I want to sell you our bed and other articles of furniture."

She showed them to him and named to him the price, amounting to \$56. He said they were cheap, and he would take them. He would send the money when he sent for the things. "That will be too late. I want to start tomorrow," said she.

Finally, it was arranged that Mr. Libby would advance the money, and Col. Pitchlynn should pay Mr. Byington. The Col. had but \$5 with him. He took 25 cents to pay his ferriage, and paid her the rest. So the next day she was ready to start with our son, George C., then lacking four days of being six years old, with her \$525, team and wagon, while the people around watched the start with deepest grief.

During the week various schemes had been devised to keep us there. Edmond Gardner, one of the Elders of the Church, a brother of Capt. Noel Gardner, my first interpreter and uncle to the principal chief, Jefferson Gardner, said, "Mrs. E., just say the word, and a hundred men will go up into the mountains for Mr. Edwards, and bring him back to my house and we will protect him."<sup>21</sup> But she told him that would only make trouble for the Choctaws.

The vigilance committee who had made their threats did not appear openly. But they came. At night, Mrs. E. could

<sup>21</sup>The five Gardner brothers—Isaac, Jerry, James, Noel and Edmond (Choctaw by blood)—were young men when they came west from Mississippi in 1833, during the Choctaw removal with a large party of Choctaws led by Capt. Thomas LeFlore (see fn. 21 above). Noel married Henrietta LeFlore, a daughter of Capt. LeFlore, and one of their three sons was Jefferson Gardner who was elected and served as Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, 1894-1898. The Gardners before the Civil War were prominent Choctaw

see the light of their pipes, as they moved around watching the place. They thought that I was concealed in the neighborhood and would be likely to come home at night. If I remember correctly, they numbered six. Their names were given me afterward by an old Negro who belonged to one of them.

My family was safer without me than with me. The first day they went to Pine Ridge, 1½ miles from Doaksville, the station of Father Kingsbury, the old pioneer missionary, whom everybody loved. In course of conversation with Mrs. E., he told her that he thought I ought to have taken the course Mr. Reid had taken, to have yielded to them so that we could have remained. She said she stamped her foot at him, a thing she would never have dared to do under other circumstances. Said she, "Father Kingsbury, I cannot hear such talk. My husband has fled, and I approve his course." He apologized and said no more on the subject. At Doaksville, by some pressure, she raised some more money that was due me.

Saturday they went to Spencer Academy, our first station, where our son had been born. There they were most kindly entertained through the Sabbath by Mr. Reid and other beloved fellow missionaries. While there they had a visit from Henry Clay, a member of the Council. He was the son of Ahokliubi, the first Choctaw who learned to read his own language, who had afterward risen to the rank of a District Chief. He wanted Mrs. E. to return to Wheelock and have me come back and visit the council, assuring her that he thought that arrangements could be made for us to remain. But she thought it not best. His name was given me as one committee who had come to Wheelock to watch for me. I can hardly believe that it was correct. If it was, the aim of the visit to Spencer was to entrap me.

Monday they started further on their journey for Lenox. Monday and Tuesday nights they camped out. The road was rough as they had the "Seven Brothers Mountains" to

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citizens in the vicinity of Wheelock Academy where the Rev. John Edwards served as superintendent in 1861. Jefferson Gardner's home referred to as "the old Governor's Mansion," erected in the latter part of the 1890's at the court grounds of Eagle County, Choctaw Nation, is still seen on its original site west of the bridge on the Mountain Fork River, U.S. Highway 76, McCurtain County. Edmond J. Gardner of Vaillant in McCurtain County, was the son of Jerry Gardner who had come with his brothers from Mississippi in 1832. It was Edmond J. Gardner who gave the Editor (M.H.W.) a first copy of this story, "My Escape from the South" written by the Rev. John Edwards about 1902 after he left the Indian Territory.

cross.<sup>22</sup> Nothing of special interest occurred on the way, save that on Tuesday night they heard the whining of bears. Mr. Libby who slept on the ground while Mrs. E. and the children occupied the wagon, drove them off with fire-brands.

They reached Lenox about the middle of the afternoon. Dr. and Mrs. Hobbs having decided to leave, the people gathered in large numbers at Lenox. On the second Sabbath that I was there, we were many of us sitting on the missionary's piazza, a discussion arose about the missionaries leaving. The ruling elder who introduced the subject said that in his testament he read this: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." (John 10-13) "Now in view of that, is it right for the missionaries to leave their flock out here in the wilderness?"

In the course of the discussion which followed, another elder replied that he read in the Testament that Christ said to his brother, "I go not yet up to this feast, because my time is not yet full come." Now that may be the case with these missionaries, that their time is not yet full come, and so it is right for them to get out of the way of danger."

I was much interested as it showed that these men had read their Choctaw testaments to some good purpose. When the rest had expressed their mind as far as they wished I told them that the morning after the visit of the Texans to me, at family prayers I had read the first part of the 10th chapter of John, and felt almost as though it would condemn me if I left. But evening prayers, after my return home from Pine Ridge and Doaksville, I had read the latter part of the same chapter, which told that, "They sought to

<sup>22</sup>The "Seven Brothers Mountains" (or "Seven Devils") is rough mountain country with several high elevations or peaks in southeastern Pushmataha County, west of Little River and south of Cloudy Creek (T. 3 & 4 S., R. 19 & 20 E.). Mrs. Edwards' party evidently went by the road from Doaksville to Spencer Academy, thence north through the west edge of "Seven Brothers" along the old Fort Towson Military Road that crossed Hurd Creek east of present Clayton and Kiamichi River, just south of Tuskahoma, traveling east past present Albion to Lenox Mission, northwest of present Whitesboro, LeFlore County. Mr. Edwards had traveled horseback up Glover Creek (according to Pelar J. Hudson's account in 1934) to its source, thence by a winding trailways via present Ludlow, in LeFlore County, and north over the Kiamichi Mountain, crossing the Kiamichi River south of present Whitesboro, and then on to Lenox Mission.



take him, but he escaped out of their hand and went away again beyond Jordan." So we were but following Christ's own example. Again when the Jews at Damascus took council to kill Saul of Tarsus (Paul), and watched the gates day and night to kill him, "Then his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall lowering him in a basket," and thus he escaped.

That Sabbath afternoon Dr. and Mrs. Hobbs went to the cemetery to pay a farewell visit to the grave of their babe who had been laid away there. After their return, I asked them from what distance the Choctaws buried their dead there. (They generally bury right at their home.) They replied, "From five or six miles around, and not one is buried there of whom we haven't hope." A remarkable cemetery surely, and a strong testimony to the blessing which had attended their nine years labor there.

Monday morning the people came again in large numbers. Some brought articles for the missionary. Among them was Mrs. Woods, a full-blood Choctaw, the wife of a white man, whose home was two or three miles from the station. She told me of threats which had been made against me. A young man, a half-breed, King Folsom by name, who had spent several years in California, and had returned the February before, had made them. She advised me to leave, going east to the Arkansas line, and take the line road Northward.

I went to Governor Wade, with whom Folsom was stopping, and made inquiries of him in regard to the matter. The situation did not seem so threatening as it had appeared to Mrs. W. As my safe conduct was for myself and family I deemed it safe for me to do my traveling in their company. So I concluded to remain and await their coming unless matters should assume a more threatening aspect.

On Tuesday or Wednesday the Rev. George Ainslie, who had come in 1852 as a teacher at Spencer Academy, who had afterward taken a course at Princeton Theological Seminary and then returned and taken charge of the Goodwater church, and the Goodwater Boarding School for girls, came in company with the teachers of the school; and others who were on their way Northward.<sup>24</sup> He had a visit from a Texas vigilance committee, and had received orders to leave. They started Wednesday afternoon Mrs.

<sup>24</sup>Goodwater Mission (ABCFM) established in 1837 was designated as a seminary for Choctaw girls in 1842, by the Choctaw Council. Its site is west of the Kiamichi in the region of present Frogville, Choctaw County.

E. and the children, with Mr. Libby, arrived. The horses needed shoeing so with George I took them immediately over to Mr. Woods, who had a blacksmith shop, to be shod. When I got there I saw King Folsom in their back yard talking with their daughter Sophia, who had been in our family while attending school at Wheelock, and had become greatly attached to Mrs. E. generally calling her "Mother." As soon as Folsom had left, having learned that Mrs. E. had come, she mounted her pony and ran him over in hot haste to the station. As soon as she greeted Mrs. E. she exclaimed, "Mother, what shall we do for Mr. Edwards?"

"Why Sophia, what is the matter?" She then told of the threats which King Folsom had made to her in regard to me. He had just written letters and sent them over into the Arkansas District, through which we would have to pass. He was himself going over the next day. I and the other gentlemen of the party would be taken back to our own homes, and there hung.

This gave matters a very serious look. That night after my return we held a "Council of War," over the thing. The upshot of it was that we armed a young Choctaw man, Washington Thompson, with a revolver and sent him out to inquire into the matter. He went to one of the elders of the church and told him the story. He promised to look into it. At daybreak the elder went to Gov. Wade's and charged Folsom with it. Folsom denied it and wanted to know who had told him. "Washington Thompson." Forthwith he came to the station and asked Washington who had told him. "Mrs. Edwards." Then he wanted to see Mrs. Edwards, and asked who had told her. "Sophia told me but you must not trouble Sophia on account of it." He denied it, and said that in proof of it, he would go with us as far as we went through the Choctaw country, and see that we passed without even being questioned." Afterward he said that there was only one place where there was any danger, where there were a couple of stores, about 35 miles from there. He would be there when we passed and see that we were not molested.

Mrs. Edwards with the consummate tact which she possessed, went to Mrs. Hobbs and asked permission to invite Folsom to breakfast. It was granted, and she invited him. He declined but she insisted and carried her point. He ate with us, and with the large number who had gathered to wish farewell to their minister. Thus he was secured. He had eaten with us. He could do nothing against us. Then came the morning prayers. Tears were in many eyes, and Folsom's eyes were not an exception. As soon as practicable,

Dr. Hobbs' family and ours were on the way, Mr. Libby rode George's pony back, which I had ridden from Wheelock to Lenox. Mrs. E. had sold him to Mr. Reid for his son John G. Reid, who afterward became a minister and for many years was the pastor of the church at Greeley, Colorado.

That day we crossed the dividing ridge between the Arkansas and Red Rivers, a branch of the Osage [Ouachita] Mountains of Arkansas.<sup>23</sup> At night we camped in a deserted log cabin in the midst of the forest. It was infested with fleas and bedbugs, yet we succeeded in staying until morning. Friday noon we reached the said stores. Our friend, Folsom, was there. Dr. Hobbs and I went into them to make some purchases. On my return to the wagon, Folsom was there talking with Mrs. E. He told her, among other things, that if he had admitted that there was any truth in the story of his threats he would not have lived to see the sun go down. For the people of that valley were our friends.

A temperance meeting to be followed by a religious meeting was to begin that day at a point a few miles farther on, to continue until Monday morning. The people from Lenox were largely going to it, and had got ahead of us, stopping for lunch just beyond at the foot of the hill on which the store stood, near a branch. So if there were any trouble. We had many friends close at hand. But we had no trouble. Folsom detained us so long with his talk that the others who had started on were a little concerned about us, but all went well. When we first reached the stores a number of painted Choctaws standing around suggested the possibility of difficulty, but they had only gathered for a ball play. So we passed on without even being questioned.

That evening we reached a very beautiful camping place, part prairie, part timber, with water near at hand. With hammocks swung between trees and pallets made on the ground or in wagons, and with hearts filled with gratitude to God for His protecting care, and for the many mercies and comforts we enjoyed, we spent a very pleasant night, enjoying much good cheer. By this time, all our different companies had gathered into one, consisting of six white gentlemen, ten ladies, and four children with two or three Choctaws who had come as drivers, to take some of the teams back.

Saturday we reached James Fork, within sixteen miles

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<sup>23</sup>The "dividing ridge" was the Winding Stair Mountains in present LeFlore County. The store mentioned was probably in the vicinity of present Hodgens near a crossing of the Poteau River. The party was following the old Fort Towson Road via the prairie north of Sugar Leaf Mountain and north to Fort Smith.

of Fort Smith, Arkansas. There we camped for the Sabbath. There some had their first experience in baking biscuit on heated stones. On the Sabbath we held services and much time was spent in singing. There for the first time I heard some of the more recent Sabbath school songs, one of which I remember was, "Shall we gather at the river."

Monday morning we were up at two o'clock, teams fed, breakfast over, and all ready to start at the break of day. In the course of the morning we met a Confederate soldier on horseback, who made some inquiries for some horses which he was hunting.

About nine o'clock we arrived at Fort Smith. There we found that a steamboat had advertised to start down the river at ten o'clock, but they said they would wait till afternoon for us, if we could go on it. We found the town in the hands of the Confederates, under the command of General Whelock. He was absent. He had learned that John Ross, the Cherokee chief, who was elected chief year after year for forty years, was a union man, and was intending to carry the Cherokee Nation into the Union ranks. He had gone out with a regiment of soldiers to bring him to terms. Capt. Sparks was in command of the town. It was necessary for us to dispose of our team and wagon. The Captain offered me \$300 in Arkansas script for them. But I thought I had no use for Arkansas script, so I sold the \$525 team and outfit for his brother, Mitchell Sparks for \$250 in gold. The money I entrusted to one of the Choctaw drivers to take back to Mr. Reid to help others get away. I never heard further of it.

The ladies of the party were entertained by other ladies at the hotel with questions and discussions as to where we came from, where we were going etc. Ladies who were there informed us that Memphis was shut up tight, that we could not get North that way. Mrs. E. put on a bold face and informed them that we had good friends in Memphis and New Orleans, and so we could stay in either place if necessary. We six gentlemen were taken before the Mayor and put on parole as prisoners of war, binding us not to give aid and comfort to the North or its army, nor our presence or influence.

Then we were ready to take passage for Little Rock, with our certificate of parole to show in case of necessity. Wednesday or Thursday we reached Little Rock where we had to change boats and had to wait from morning to evening before starting for Memphis. I dined with the widow of Rev. Joshua Green who had been the pastor of the Presbyterian church when we spent a Sabbath there on our way to the

Choctaw Nation ten years before. At the head of the table was a Mr. Worthing, a lawyer. He said he had been a Union man up to the time of Lincoln's proclamation calling for volunteers. "But now," said he, "if they wish to conquer us they must exterminate us."

On board the boat we had a call from Dr. and Mrs. Dodge with whom we had stopped from Friday till Tuesday on our way to the Choctaws in 1851. He told of the visit of the vigilance committee to his drug store. He was from New England and had been a missionary to the Cherokees, but had finally settled in Little Rock. The committee asked him his sentiments. "Gentlemen," said he, "I have lived among you for twenty-five years, and if you don't know my sentiments, it is not worth while for me to tell you. If you wish to destroy my property, it is a very easy thing for you to do. If you wish to take my life, it requires no bravery on the part of twenty-five armed men like you to take the life of a little unarmed man like me. But my property was made here, my children were born here, and here I am going to stay."

And there he stayed. When the Government troops marched into Little Rock late in the war his store was the only store open. He told the story of his wife and himself learning how to shoot revolvers, as a protection from the Arkansas Soldiers who were quartered there. The ladies in general were learning. At first he and Mrs. D. took the head of a barrel for their target. He had always thought it strange that a man with large an object as a man to shoot at should fail to hit him with the ball of a revolver. After a few trials by Mrs. D. and himself they found that a barrel was not large enough. They then took the side of the barn that they might be sure of something.

While awaiting the boat's departure a company of the third regiment of Arkansas volunteers, Col. Rust's, came aboard and occupied the lower deck. They were on their way to Virginia, they were from Hot Springs County, and were a rather tough looking set. At evening we started. At Pine Bluffs another company came aboard. They were from the region of Tulip, Dallas County. One was a Mr. Goodloe Patillo, by whom and his brother, merchants, I had been entertained in 1857, while in attendance upon a meeting of the Synod of Arkansas at Tulip. He had married a Miss Edwards from North Carolina. Another was a son of Mr. Bullock, by whom Mr. Rev. Cyrus Byington and I and old Mishomtabe, an elder and another Choctaw who had fallen in with us on his way to the Choctaw country in Mississippi for a visit, had been most hospitably entertained the night

before the meeting of the Synod and who accompanied us to it. In the fall of 1859, Mrs. E. and the children and myself had been entertained by him and his family for a night while returning to the Choctaw country. He was a wealthy planter. Mr. Patillo told me that their company of ninety men represented a property of \$3,000,000. He said that he had been a union man up to the time of Lincoln's proclamation. "As for the doctrine of secession, I am a rebel."

I told Mr. P. that I had thought of coming directly across the state by team to Little Rock or Pine Bluffs. "It is very well that you did not," said he, "You would have been stopped at every little town, and would have had to show your papers, and even then it is by no means certain that you would have come through safely. Here at Pine Bluffs many have been sent off North, and many have disappeared. Nobody knowing what has become of them."

So kind Providence had led us in ways we knew not. The company was dressed in rather fanciful ways, and many carried a large "Arkansas toothpick." The company occupied the upper deck; the men became thirsty at night and we occupied ourselves in passing water up to them. We gathered up what testaments we had in our party and distributed them among them. Among the officers I remember a Lieut. Butler. It was sad indeed to see those men on their way to war to kill and be killed in a strife brought about by men who felt that power was slipping out of their hands, and that eventually they might find their cherished institution of slavery hemmed in and finally destroyed. George got among the men in the forward part of the boat. They asked him what he was. He told them he was a Lincoln man.

Sunday morning early we arrived at Memphis and were soon at a hotel the best in the place, to spend the day. When we had washed and were ready for breakfast, we started downstairs. At the foot, we found several of the officers. With very thoughtful courtesy they had waited for us. Lieutenant Butler gave Mrs. E. his arm, as did other officers to other ladies. Thus they escorted us into the dining room. Of course we were "alright." We attended church and heard Dr. Steadman preach. The congregation seemed quite thin. The Sabbath was spent quietly. Next morning we took the train for Louisville. Among the passengers were Confederate officers. One of them most bitterly denounced Louisville, because the City had "voted for coercion." He said it ought to be razed, utterly destroyed.

At the Kentucky line, we found Confederate soldiers encamped. Night had already come on when we reached Bowling Green. There we first saw the stars and stripes

floating in the breeze. Ah! but that flag did look good. Never before had it looked so good as then, when for some weeks we had seen only the stars and bars. It has never since lost the value which attached it to them. We felt free, we could speak above a whisper. Miss McBeth [and Mrs. Edwards] were out doing some shopping. They came to a large flag hanging over the street. "Stop Sue," said Mrs. E., "Let me get a breath wafted by that glorious old flag."

"Come," said Miss M., "don't you see those men watching us?"

"I don't care for men or mortal where that flag does float," was the reply.

From Louisville we took a boat up the Ohio River to Madison, Ind., and thence went to Hanover College to visit Dr. Wood, the President, and Mrs. W. with whom Mrs. E. had become intimately acquainted several years before while stopping a year in Philadelphia for her health. We had an exceeding pleasant visit. But I was astonished at the Dr.'s views of the state of things in the South. His idea was that the Union sentiment was so strong there that 75,000 men would walk right through the South. I knew better than that. My idea was that neither could the North conquer the South, nor the South conquer the North. Three millions of people in a country such as we possessed are invincible by any force the enemy can send against us." In subsequent discussions with my brother George, he remarked that "in these days of war, the last dollar wins." "Well," said I, "if the people will furnish the Government a million men and the money that is needed they may be able to carry it through."

Our next move was to Parkersburg, Virginia, where we saw soldiers just in from the battle of Rich Mountain. Thence we crossed the river to Belprie, Ohio, to make a visit to Mrs. Lucy Byington. There we were detained a week or more by Clara's sickness. When she recovered sufficiently, we went on to Bath, New York. At Buffalo I hunted up Sherman Rogers, one of the playmates of my boyhood. He told me that after the battle of Bull Run he felt the shock of the news more than had ever been the case except when he got the news of the death of his brother, Robert, in California.

Arriving in Bath, we were most cordially welcomed by Mother and brothers and sisters and their families. That day a letter came which I had left unfinished when I fled from Wheelock. Mrs. E. had added to it, "John has fled and I am proud of him," and mailed it. It was the last mail communication for four years. Mr. Libby was compelled

to enter the rebel army. He was mostly employed about the wagon train service. Sometimes he had to go into the ranks and fight. But he said that no Union soldier was ever harmed by a bullet from his gun. After the war was over he died at Wheelock. A very kind Providence watched over me and mine, and ordered things very greatly for our good. Forever be praised God's name.

About thirty years later, being at Sulphur Springs (Allkehi) in the Choctaw country, I saw a tall man encamped there evidently in poor health.<sup>26</sup> I thought I would call to see him but was otherwise so occupied that I was nearly ready to return without having done so when I heard Alce Durant, with whom I was stopping, speak of Col. Caudle. "Col. Caudle," said I, "Is that J. H. Caudle?" "I don't know his initials, but they call him Caudle." "Well," said I, "I am going to see him."

I found my old friend of the vigilance committee. We had a long talk over matters. He was glad the war was over, glad it ended as it did, glad that the slaves were free. He had fought through it as a Colonel of a Texas regiment. During the Banks expedition up Red River, he had been ordered to take certain position with his regiment and hold it at all hazards. He went into it with his regiment 450 strong. They cut their way out with 40. Such is war. I told him if our affairs were to be gone over again, I didn't know whether I would have the grit to tell him what I did. He asked me what it was. When I told of my saying, "You might as well ask me to strike my Mother etc.," he replied, "I give you credit for acting in a very manly way with us."

<sup>26</sup>Allkehi (from the Choctaw word for "doctor") was the Choctaw court ground for Nashoba ("Wolf") county, organized in 1850. The sulphur spring here was noted for its medicinal properties, a camping ground resort visited by many from Texas and Arkansas even before the Civil War. Col. George Harkins (the elder), elected District Chief and served as Choctaw delegate to Washington in the early 1850's, had his home here after he moved west from Mississippi. This historic site with the sulphur spring just off the old Choctaw court grounds is located in the western part of McCurtain County on State Highway 3 (Sec. 21, T. 35., R. 22 N.).