

Andersonville, vol 4

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ANDERSONVILLE A STORY OF REBEL MILITARY PRISONS

FIFTEEN MONTHS A GUEST OF THE SO-CALLED SOUTHERN
CONFEDERACY

A PRIVATE SOLDIERS EXPERIENCE IN RICHMOND,
ANDERSONVILLE, SAVANNAH, MILLEN BLACKSHEAR AND
FLORENCE

BY JOHN McELROY Late of Co. L. 16th Ill Cav.

1879

VOLUME 4.

CHAPTER LXII.

SERGEANT LEROY L. KEY—HIS ADVENTURES SUBSEQUENT TO THE
EXECUTIONS— HE GOES OUTSIDE AT ANDERSONVILLE ON PAROLE
—LABORS IN THE COOKHOUSE— ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE—IS
RECAPTURED AND TAKEN TO MACON—ESCAPES FROM THERE, BUT
IS COMPELLED TO RETURN—IS FINALLY EXCHANGED AT
SAVANNAH.

Leroy L. Key, the heroic Sergeant of Company M, Sixteenth Illinois Cavalry, who organized and led the Regulators at Andersonville in their successful conflict with and defeat of the Raiders, and who presided at the execution of the six condemned men on the 11th of July, furnishes, at the request of the author, the following story of his prison career subsequent to that event:

On the 12th day of July, 1864, the day after the hanging of the six Raiders, by the urgent request of my many friends (of whom you were one), I sought and

obtained from Wirz a parole for myself and the six brave men who assisted as executioners of those desperados. It seemed that you were all fearful that we might, after what had been done, be assassinated if we remained in the Stockade; and that we might be overpowered, perhaps, by the friends of the Raiders we had hanged, at a time possibly, when you would not be on hand to give us assistance, and thus lose our lives for rendering the help we did in getting rid of the worst pestilence we had to contend with.

On obtaining my parole I was very careful to have it so arranged and mutually understood, between Wirz and myself, that at any time that my squad (meaning the survivors of my comrades, with whom I was originally captured) was sent away from Andersonville, either to be exchanged or to go to another prison, that I should be allowed to go with them. This was agreed to, and so written in my parole which I carried until it absolutely wore out. I took a position in the cookhouse, and the other boys either went to work there, or at the hospital or grave-yard as occasion required. I worked here, and did the best I could for the many starving wretches inside, in the way of preparing their food, until the eighth day of September, at which time, if you remember, quite a train load of men were removed, as many of us thought, for the purpose of exchange; but, as we afterwards discovered, to be taken to another prison. Among the crowd so removed was my squad, or, at least, a portion of them, being my intimate mess-mates while in the Stockade. As soon as I found this to be the case I waited on Wirz at his office, and asked permission to go with them, which he refused, stating that he was compelled to have men at the cookhouse to cook for those in the Stockade until they were all gone or exchanged. I reminded him of the condition in my parole, but this only had the effect of making him mad, and he threatened me with the stocks if I did not go back and resume work. I then and there made up my mind to attempt my escape, considering that the parole had first been broken by the man that granted it.

On inquiry after my return to the cookhouse, I found four other boys who were also planning an escape, and who were only too glad to get me to join them and take charge of the affair. Our plans were well laid and well executed, as the sequel will prove, and in this particular my own experience in the endeavor to escape from Andersonville is not entirely dissimilar from yours, though it had different results. I very much regret that in the attempt I lost my penciled memorandum, in which it was my habit to chronicle what went on around me daily, and where I had the names of my brave comrades who made the effort to escape with me. Unfortunately, I cannot now recall to memory the name of one

of them or remember to what commands they belonged.

I knew that our greatest risk was run in eluding the guards, and that in the morning we should be compelled to cheat the blood-hounds. The first we managed to do very well, not without many hairbreadth escapes, however; but we did succeed in getting through both lines of guards, and found ourselves in the densest pine forest I ever saw. We traveled, as nearly as we could judge, due north all night until daylight. From our fatigue and bruises, and the long hours that had elapsed since 8 o'clock, the time of our starting, we thought we had come not less than twelve or fifteen miles. Imagine our surprise and mortification, then, when we could plainly hear the reveille, and almost the Sergeant's voice calling the roll, while the answers of "Here!" were perfectly distinct. We could not possibly have been more than a mile, or a mile-and-a-half at the farthest, from the Stockade.

Our anxiety and mortification were doubled when at the usual hour—as we supposed—we heard the well-known and long-familiar sound of the hunter's horn, calling his hounds to their accustomed task of making the circuit of the Stockade, for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not any "Yankee" had had the audacity to attempt an escape. The hounds, anticipating, no doubt, this usual daily work, gave forth glad barks of joy at being thus called forth to duty. We heard them start, as was usual, from about the railroad depot (as we imagined), but the sounds growing fainter and fainter gave us a little hope that our trail had been missed. Only a short time, however, were we allowed this pleasant reflection, for ere long—it could not have been more than an hour—we could plainly see that they were drawing nearer and nearer. They finally appeared so close that I advised the boys to climb a tree or sapling in order to keep the dogs from biting them, and to be ready to surrender when the hunters came up, hoping thus to experience as little misery as possible, and not dreaming but that we were caught. On, on came the hounds, nearer and nearer still, till we imagined that we could see the undergrowth in the forest shaking by coming in contact with their bodies. Plainer and plainer came the sound of the hunter's voice urging them forward. Our hearts were in our throats, and in the terrible excitement we wondered if it could be possible for Providence to so arrange it that the dogs would pass us. This last thought, by some strange fancy, had taken possession of me, and I here frankly acknowledge that I believed it would happen. Why I believed it, God only knows. My excitement was so great, indeed, that I almost lost sight of our danger, and felt like shouting to the dogs myself, while I came near losing my hold on the tree in which I was hidden. By chance I happened to

look around at my nearest neighbor in distress. His expression was sufficient to quell any enthusiasm I might have had, and I, too, became despondent. In a very few minutes our suspense was over. The dogs came within not less than three hundred yards of us, and we could even see one of them, God in Heaven can only imagine what great joy was then, brought to our aching hearts, for almost instantly upon coming into sight, the hounds struck off on a different trail, and passed us. Their voices became fainter and fainter, until finally we could hear them no longer. About noon, however, they were called back and taken to camp, but until that time not one of us left our position in the trees.

When we were satisfied that we were safe for the present, we descended to the ground to get what rest we could, in order to be prepared for the night's march, having previously agreed to travel at night and sleep in the day time. "Our Father, who art in Heaven," etc., were the first words that escaped my lips, and the first thoughts that came to my mind as I landed on terra firma. Never before, or since, had I experienced such a profound reverence for Almighty God, for I firmly believe that only through some mighty invisible power were we at that time delivered from untold tortures. Had we been found, we might have been torn and mutilated by the dogs, or, taken back to Andersonville, have suffered for days or perhaps weeks in the stocks or chain gang, as the humor of Wirz might have dictated at the time—either of which would have been almost certain death.

It was very fortunate for us that before our escape from Andersonville we were detailed at the cookhouse, for by this means we were enabled to bring away enough food to live for several days without the necessity of theft. Each one of us had our haversacks full of such small delicacies as it was possible for us to get when we started, these consisting of corn bread and fat bacon—nothing less, nothing more. Yet we managed to subsist comfortably until our fourth day out, when we happened to come upon a sweet potato patch, the potatoes in which had not been dug. In a very short space of time we were all well supplied with this article, and lived on them raw during that day and the next night.

Just at evening, in going through a field, we suddenly came across three negro men, who at first sight of us showed signs of running, thinking, as they told us afterward, that we were the "patrols." After explaining to them who we were and our condition, they took us to a very quiet retreat in the woods, and two of them went off, stating that they would soon be back. In a very short time they returned laden with well cooked provisions, which not only gave us a good supper, but

supplied us for the next day with all that we wanted. They then guided us on our way for several miles, and left us, after having refused compensation for what they had done.

We continued to travel in this way for nine long weary nights, and on the morning of the tenth day, as we were going into the woods to hide as usual, a little before daylight, we came to a small pond at which there was a negro boy watering two mules before hitching them to a cane mill, it then being cane grinding time in Georgia. He saw us at the same time we did him, and being frightened put whip to the animals and ran off. We tried every way to stop him, but it was no use. He had the start of us. We were very fearful of the consequences of this mishap, but had no remedy, and being very tired, could do nothing else but go into the woods, go to sleep and trust to luck.

The next thing I remembered was being punched in the ribs by my comrade nearest to me, and aroused with the remark, "We are gone up." On opening my eyes, I saw four men, in citizens' dress, each of whom had a shot gun ready for use. We were ordered to get up. The first question asked us was:

"Who are you."

This was spoken in so mild a tone as to lead me to believe that we might possibly be in the hands of gentlemen, if not indeed in those of friends. It was some time before any one answered. The boys, by their looks and the expression of their countenances, seemed to appeal to me for a reply to get them out of their present dilemma, if possible. Before I had time to collect my thoughts, we were startled by these words, coming from the same man that had asked the original question:

"You had better not hesitate, for we have an idea who you are, and should it prove that we are correct, it will be the worse for you."

"Who do you think we are?' I inquired."

"Horse thieves and moss-backs,' was the reply."

I jumped at the conclusion instantly that in order to save our lives, we had better at once own the truth. In a very few words I told them who we were, where we were from, how long we had been on the road, *etc.* At this they withdrew a short distance from us for consultation, leaving us for the time in terrible suspense as

to what our fate might be. Soon, however, they returned and informed us that they would be compelled to take us to the County Jail, to await further orders from the Military Commander of the District. While they were talking together, I took a hasty inventory of what valuables we had on hand. I found in the crowd four silver watches, about three hundred dollars in Confederate money, and possibly, about one hundred dollars in greenbacks. Before their return, I told the boys to be sure not to refuse any request I should make. Said I:

“Gentlemen, we have here four silver watches and several hundred dollars in Confederate money and greenbacks, all of which we now offer you, if you will but allow us to proceed on our journey, we taking our own chances in the future.”

This proposition, to my great surprise, was refused. I thought then that possibly I had been a little indiscreet in exposing our valuables, but in this I was mistaken, for we had, indeed, fallen into the hands of gentlemen, whose zeal for the Lost Cause was greater than that for obtaining worldly wealth, and who not only refused the bribe, but took us to a well-furnished and well-supplied farm house close by, gave us an excellent breakfast, allowing us to sit at the table in a beautiful dining-room, with a lady at the head, filled our haversacks with good, wholesome food, and allowed us to keep our property, with an admonition to be careful how we showed it again. We were then put into a wagon and taken to Hamilton, a small town, the county seat of Hamilton County, Georgia, and placed in jail, where we remained for two days and nights—fearing, always, that the jail would be burned over our heads, as we heard frequent threats of that nature, by the mob on the streets. But the same kind Providence that had heretofore watched over us, seemed not to have deserted us in this trouble.

One of the days we were confined at this place was Sunday, and some kind-hearted lady or ladies (I only wish I knew their names, as well as those of the gentlemen who had us first in charge, so that I could chronicle them with honor here) taking compassion upon our forlorn condition, sent us a splendid dinner on a very large china platter. Whether it was done intentionally or not, we never learned, but it was a fact, however, that there was not a knife, fork or spoon upon the dish, and no table to set it upon. It was placed on the floor, around which we soon gathered, and, with grateful hearts, we “got away” with it all, in an incredibly short space of time, while many men and boys looked on, enjoying our ludicrous attitudes and manners.

From here we were taken to Columbus, Ga., and again placed in jail, and in the charge of Confederate soldiers. We could easily see that we were gradually getting into hot water again, and that, ere many days, we would have to resume our old habits in prison. Our only hope now was that we would not be returned to Andersonville, knowing well that if we got back into the clutches of Wirz our chances for life would be slim indeed. From Columbus we were sent by rail to Macon, where we were placed in a prison somewhat similar to Andersonville, but of nothing like its pretensions to security. I soon learned that it was only used as a kind of reception place for the prisoners who were captured in small squads, and when they numbered two or three hundred, they would be shipped to Andersonville, or some other place of greater dimensions and strength. What became of the other boys who were with me, after we got to Macon, I do not know, for I lost sight of them there. The very next day after our arrival, there were shipped to Andersonville from this prison between two and three hundred men. I was called on to go with the crowd, but having had a sufficient experience of the hospitality of that hotel, I concluded to play "old soldier," so I became too sick to travel. In this way I escaped being sent off four different times.

Meanwhile, quite a large number of commissioned officers had been sent up from Charleston to be exchanged at Rough and Ready. With them were about forty more than the cartel called for, and they were left at Macon for ten days or two weeks. Among these officers were several of my acquaintance, one being Lieut. Huntly of our regiment (I am not quite sure that I am right in the name of this officer, but I think I am), through whose influence I was allowed to go outside with them on parole. It was while enjoying this parole that I got more familiarly acquainted with Captain Hurtell, or Hurtrell, who was in command of the prison at Macon, and to his honor, I here assert, that he was the only gentleman and the only officer that had the least humane feeling in his breast, who ever had charge of me while a prisoner of war after we were taken out of the hands of our original captors at Jonesville, Va.

It now became very evident that the Rebels were moving the prisoners from Andersonville and elsewhere, so as to place them beyond the reach of Sherman and Stoneman. At my present place of confinement the fear of our recapture had also taken possession of the Rebel authorities, so the prisoners were sent off in much smaller squads than formerly, frequently not more than ten or fifteen in a gang, whereas, before, they never thought of dispatching less than two or three hundred together. I acknowledge that I began to get very uneasy, fearful that the "old soldier" dodge would not be much longer successful, and I would be forced

back to my old haunts. It so happened, however, that I managed to make it serve me, by getting detailed in the prison hospital as nurse, so that I was enabled to play another “dodge” upon the Rebel officers. At first, when the Sergeant would come around to find out who were able to walk, with assistance, to the depot, I was shaking with a chill, which, according to my representation, had not abated in the least for several hours. My teeth were actually chattering at the time, for I had learned how to make them do so. I was passed. The next day the orders for removal were more stringent than had yet been issued, stating that all who could stand it to be removed on stretchers must go. I concluded at once that I was gone, so as soon as I learned how matters were, I got out from under my dirty blanket, stood up and found I was able to walk, to my great astonishment, of course. An officer came early in the morning to muster us into ranks preparatory for removal. I fell in with the rest. We were marched out and around to the gate of the prison.

Now, it so happened that just as we neared the gate of the prison, the prisoners were being marched from the Stockade. The officer in charge of us—we numbering possibly about ten—undertook to place us at the head of the column coming out, but the guard in charge of that squad refused to let him do so. We were then ordered to stand at one side with no guard over us but the officer who had brought us from the Hospital.

Taking this in at a glance, I concluded that now was my chance to make my second attempt to escape. I stepped behind the gate office (a small frame building with only one room), which was not more than six feet from me, and as luck (or Providence) would have it, the negro man whose duty it was, as I knew, to wait on and take care of this office, and who had taken quite a liking for me, was standing at the back door. I winked at him and threw him my blanket and the cup, at the same time telling him in a whisper to hide them away for me until he heard from me again. With a grin and a nod, he accepted the trust, and I started down along the walls of the Stockade alone. In order to make this more plain, and to show what a risk I was running at the time, I will state that between the Stockade and a brick wall, fully as high as the Stockade fence that was parallel with it, throughout its entire length on that side, there was a space of not more than thirty feet. On the outside of this Stockade was a platform, built for the guards to walk on, sufficiently clear the top to allow them to look inside with ease, and on this side, on the platform, were three guards. I had traveled about fifty feet only, from the gate office, when I heard the command to “Halt!” I did so, of course.

“Where are you going, you d—d Yank?” said the guard.

“Going after my clothes, that are over there in the wash,” pointing to a small cabin just beyond the Stockade, where I happened to know that the officers had their washing done.

“Oh, yes,” said he; “you are one of the Yank’s that’s been on, parole, are you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, hurry up, or you will get left.”

The other guards heard this conversation and thinking it all right I was allowed to pass without further trouble. I went to the cabin in question—for I saw the last guard on the line watching me, and boldly entered. I made a clear statement to the woman in charge of it about how I had made my escape, and asked her to secrete me in the house until night. I was soon convinced, however, from what she told me, as well as from my own knowledge of how things were managed in the Confederacy, that it would not be right for me to stay there, for if the house was searched and I found in it, it would be the worse for her. Therefore, not wishing to entail misery upon another, I begged her to give me something to eat, and going to the swamp near by, succeeded in getting well without detection.

I lay there all day, and during the time had a very severe chill and afterwards a burning fever, so that when night came, knowing I could not travel, I resolved to return to the cabin and spend the night, and give myself up the next morning. There was no trouble in returning. I learned that my fears of the morning had not been groundless, for the guards had actually searched the house for me. The woman told them that I had got my clothes and left the house shortly after my entrance (which was the truth except the part about the clothes), I thanked her very kindly and begged to be allowed to stay in the cabin till morning, when I would present myself at Captain H.’s office and suffer the consequences. This she allowed me to do. I shall ever feel grateful to this woman for her protection. She was white and her given name was “Sallie,” but the other I have forgotten.

About daylight I strolled over near the office and looked around there until I saw the Captain take his seat at his desk. I stepped into the door as soon as I saw that he was not occupied and saluted him “a la militaire.”

“Who are you?” he asked; “you look like a Yank.”

“Yes, sir,” said I, “I am called by that name since I was captured in the Federal Army.”

“Well, what are you doing here, and what is your name?”

I told him.

“Why didn’t you answer to your name when it was called at the gate yesterday, sir?”

“I never heard anyone call my name.” Where were you?”

“I ran away down into the swamp.”

“Were you recaptured and brought back?”

“No, sir, I came back of my own accord.”

“What do you mean by this evasion?”

“I am not trying to evade, sir, or I might not have been here now. The truth is, Captain, I have been in many prisons since my capture, and have been treated very badly in all of them, until I came here.”

“I then explained to him freely my escape from Andersonville, and my subsequent recapture, how it was that I had played “old soldier” *etc.*

“Now,” said I, “Captain, as long as I am a prisoner of war, I wish to stay with you, or under your command. This is my reason for running away yesterday, when I felt confident that if I did not do so I would be returned under Wirz’s command, and, if I had been so returned, I would have killed myself rather than submit to the untold tortures which he would have put me to, for having the audacity to attempt an escape from him.”

The Captain’s attention was here called to some other matters in hand, and I was sent back into the Stockade with a command very pleasantly given, that I should stay there until ordered out, which I very gratefully promised to do, and did. This was the last chance I ever had to talk to Captain Hurltrell, to my great sorrow, for I had really formed a liking for the man, notwithstanding the fact that he was a Rebel, and a commander of prisoners.

The next day we all had to leave Macon. Whether we were able or not, the order was imperative. Great was my joy when I learned that we were on the way to Savannah and not to Andersonville. We traveled over the same road, so well described in one of your articles on Andersonville, and arrived in Savannah sometime in the afternoon of the 21st day of November, 1864. Our squad was placed in some barracks and confined there until the next day. I was sick at the time, so sick in fact, that I could hardly hold my head up. Soon after, we were taken to the Florida depot, as they told us, to be shipped to some prison in those dismal swamps. I came near fainting when this was told to us, for I was confident that I could not survive another siege of prison life, if it was anything to compare to-what I had already suffered. When we arrived at the depot, it was raining. The officer in charge of us wanted to know what train to put us on, for there were two, if not three, trains waiting orders to start. He was told to march us on to a certain flat car, near by, but before giving the order he demanded a receipt for us, which the train officer refused. We were accordingly taken back to our quarters, which proved to be a most fortunate circumstance.

On the 23d day of November, to our great relief, we were called upon to sign a parole preparatory to being sent down the river on the flat-boat to our exchange ships, then lying in the harbor. When I say we, I mean those of us that had recently come from Macon, and a few others, who had also been fortunate in reaching Savannah in small squads. The other poor fellows, who had already been loaded on the trains, were taken away to Florida, and many of them never lived to return. On the 24th those of us who had been paroled were taken on board our ships, and were once more safely housed under that great, glorious and beautiful Star Spangled Banner. Long may she wave.

CHAPTER LXIII.

DREARY WEATHER—THE COLD RAINS DISTRESS ALL AND KILL HUNDREDS—EXCHANGE OF TEN THOUSAND SICK—CAPTAIN BOWES TURNS A PRETTY, BUT NOT VERY HONEST, PENNY.

As November wore away long-continued, chill, searching rains desolated our days and nights. The great, cold drops pelted down slowly, dismally, and incessantly. Each seemed to beat through our emaciated frames against the very marrow of our bones, and to be battering its way remorselessly into the citadel of

life, like the cruel drops that fell from the basin of the inquisitors upon the firmly-fastened head of their victim, until his reason fled, and the death-agony cramped his heart to stillness.

The lagging, leaden hours were inexpressibly dreary. Compared with many others, we were quite comfortable, as our hut protected us from the actual beating of the rain upon our bodies; but we were much more miserable than under the sweltering heat of Andersonville, as we lay almost naked upon our bed of pine leaves, shivering in the raw, rasping air, and looked out over acres of wretches lying dumbly on the sodden sand, receiving the benumbing drench of the sullen skies without a groan or a motion.

It was enough to kill healthy, vigorous men, active and resolute, with bodies well-nourished and well clothed, and with minds vivacious and hopeful, to stand these day-and-night-long solid drenchings. No one can imagine how fatal it was to boys whose vitality was sapped by long months in Andersonville, by coarse, meager, changeless food, by groveling on the bare earth, and by hopelessness as to any improvement of condition.

Fever, rheumatism, throat and lung diseases and despair now came to complete the work begun by scurvy, dysentery and gangrene, in Andersonville.

Hundreds, weary of the long struggle, and of hoping against hope, laid themselves down and yielded to their fate. In the six weeks that we were at Millen, one man in every ten died. The ghostly pines there sigh over the unnoted graves of seven hundred boys, for whom life's morning closed in the gloomiest shadows. As many as would form a splendid regiment—as many as constitute the first born of a populous City—more than three times as many as were slain outright on our side in the bloody battle of Franklin, succumbed to this new hardship. The country for which they died does not even have a record of their names. They were simply blotted out of existence; they became as though they had never been.

About the middle of the month the Rebels yielded to the importunities of our Government so far as to agree to exchange ten thousand sick. The Rebel Surgeons took praiseworthy care that our Government should profit as little as possible by this, by sending every hopeless case, every man whose lease of life was not likely to extend much beyond his reaching the parole boat. If he once reached our receiving officers it was all that was necessary; he counted to them

as much as if he had been a Goliath. A very large portion of those sent through died on the way to our lines, or within a few hours after their transports at being once more under the old Stars and Stripes had moderated.

The sending of the sick through gave our commandant—Captain Bowes—a fine opportunity to fill his pockets, by conniving at the passage of well men. There was still considerable money in the hands of a few prisoners. All this, and more, too, were they willing to give for their lives. In the first batch that went away were two of the leading sutlers at Andersonville, who had accumulated perhaps one thousand dollars each by their shrewd and successful bartering. It was generally believed that they gave every cent to Bowes for the privilege of leaving. I know nothing of the truth of this, but I am reasonably certain that they paid him very handsomely.

Soon we heard that one hundred and fifty dollars each had been sufficient to buy some men out; then one hundred, seventy-five, fifty, thirty, twenty, ten, and at last five dollars. Whether the upright Bowes drew the line at the latter figure, and refused to sell his honor for less than the ruling rates of a street-walker's virtue, I know not. It was the lowest quotation that came to my knowledge, but he may have gone cheaper. I have always observed that when men or women begin to traffic in themselves, their price falls as rapidly as that of a piece of tainted meat in hot weather. If one could buy them at the rate they wind up with, and sell them at their first price, there would be room for an enormous profit.

The cheapest I ever knew a Rebel officer to be bought was some weeks after this at Florence. The sick exchange was still going on. I have before spoken of the Rebel passion for bright gilt buttons. It used to be a proverbial comment upon the small treasons that were of daily occurrence on both sides, that you could buy the soul of a mean man in our crowd for a pint of corn meal, and the soul of a Rebel guard for a half dozen brass buttons. A boy of the Fifth-fourth Ohio, whose home was at or near Lima, O., wore a blue vest, with the gilt, bright-trimmed buttons of a staff officer. The Rebel Surgeon who was examining the sick for exchange saw the buttons and admired them very much. The boy stepped back, borrowed a knife from a comrade, cut the buttons off, and handed them to the Doctor.

“All right, sir,” said he as his itching palm closed over the coveted ornaments; “you can pass,” and pass he did to home and friends.

Captain Bowes's merchandizing in the matter of exchange was as open as the issuing of rations. His agent in conducting the bargaining was a Raider—a New York gambler and stool-pigeon—whom we called “Mattie.” He dealt quite fairly, for several times when the exchange was interrupted, Bowes sent the money back to those who had paid him, and received it again when the exchange was renewed.

Had it been possible to buy our way out for five cents each Andrews and I would have had to stay back, since we had not had that much money for months, and all our friends were in an equally bad plight. Like almost everybody else we had spent the few dollars we happened to have on entering prison, in a week or so, and since then we had been entirely penniless.

There was no hope left for us but to try to pass the Surgeons as desperately sick, and we expended our energies in simulating this condition. Rheumatism was our forte, and I flatter myself we got up two cases that were apparently bad enough to serve as illustrations for a patent medicine advertisement. But it would not do. Bad as we made our condition appear, there were so many more who were infinitely worse, that we stood no show in the competitive examination. I doubt if we would have been given an average of “50” in a report. We had to stand back, and see about one quarter of our number march out and away home. We could not complain at this—much as we wanted to go ourselves, since there could be no question that these poor fellows deserved the precedence. We did grumble savagely, however, at Captain Bowes's venality, in selling out chances to moneyed men, since these were invariably those who were best prepared to withstand the hardships of imprisonment, as they were mostly new men, and all had good clothes and blankets. We did not blame the men, however, since it was not in human nature to resist an opportunity to get away—at any cost—from that accursed place. “All that a man hath he will give for his life,” and I think that if I had owned the City of New York in fee simple, I would have given it away willingly, rather than stand in prison another month.

The sutlers, to whom I have alluded above, had accumulated sufficient to supply themselves with all the necessaries and some of the comforts of life, during any probable term of imprisonment, and still have a snug amount left, but they, would rather give it all up and return to service with their regiments in the field, than take the chances of any longer continuance in prison.

I can only surmise how much Bowes realized out of the prisoners by his

venality, but I feel sure that it could not have been less than three thousand dollars, and I would not be astonished to learn that it was ten thousand dollars in green.

CHAPTER LXIV

ANOTHER REMOVAL—SHERMAN'S ADVANCE SCARES THE REBELS INTO RUNNING US AWAY FROM MILLEN—WE ARE TAKEN TO SAVANNAH, AND THENCE DOWN THE ATLANTIC & GULF ROAD TO BLACKSHEAR

One night, toward the last of November, there was a general alarm around the prison. A gun was fired from the Fort, the long-roll was beaten in the various camps of the guards, and the regiments answered by getting under arms in haste, and forming near the prison gates.

The reason for this, which we did not learn until weeks later, was that Sherman, who had cut loose from Atlanta and started on his famous March to the Sea, had taken such a course as rendered it probable that Millen was one of his objective points. It was, therefore, necessary that we should be hurried away with all possible speed. As we had had no news from Sherman since the end of the Atlanta campaign, and were ignorant of his having begun his great raid, we were at an utter loss to account for the commotion among our keepers.

About 3 o'clock in the morning the Rebel Sergeants, who called the roll, came in and ordered us to turn out immediately and get ready to move.

The morning was one of the most cheerless I ever knew. A cold rain poured relentlessly down upon us half-naked, shivering wretches, as we groped around in the darkness for our pitiful little belongings of rags and cooking utensils, and huddled together in groups, urged on continually by the curses and abuse of the Rebel officers sent in to get us ready to move.

Though roused at 3 o'clock, the cars were not ready to receive us till nearly noon. In the meantime we stood in ranks—numb, trembling, and heart-sick. The guards around us crouched over fires, and shielded themselves as best they could with blankets and bits of tent cloth. We had nothing to build fires with, and were not allowed to approach those of the guards.

Around us everywhere was the dull, cold, gray, hopeless desolation of the approach of minter. The hard, wiry grass that thinly covered the once and sand, the occasional stunted weeds, and the sparse foliage of the gnarled and dwarfish

undergrowth, all were parched brown and sere by the fiery heat of the long Summer, and now rattled drearily under the pitiless, cold rain, streaming from lowering clouds that seemed to have floated down to us from the cheerless summit of some great iceberg; the tall, naked pines moaned and shivered; dead, sapless leaves fell wearily to the sodden earth, like withered hopes drifting down to deepen some Slough of Despond.

Scores of our crowd found this the culmination of their misery. They laid down upon the ground and yielded to death as a welcome relief, and we left them lying there unburied when we moved to the cars.

As we passed through the Rebel camp at dawn, on our way to the cars, Andrews and I noticed a nest of four large, bright, new tin pans—a rare thing in the Confederacy at that time. We managed to snatch them without the guard's attention being attracted, and in an instant had them wrapped up in our blanket. But the blanket was full of holes, and in spite of all our efforts, it would slip at the most inconvenient times, so as to show a broad glare of the bright metal, just when it seemed it could not help attracting the attention of the guards or their officers. A dozen times at least we were on the imminent brink of detection, but we finally got our treasures safely to the cars, and sat down upon them.

The cars were open flats. The rain still beat down unrelentingly. Andrews and I huddled ourselves together so as to make our bodies afford as much heat as possible, pulled our faithful old overcoat around us as far as it would go, and endured the inclemency as best we could.

Our train headed back to Savannah, and again our hearts warmed up with hopes of exchange. It seemed as if there could be no other purpose of taking us out of a prison so recently established and at such cost as Millen.

As we approached the coast the rain ceased, but a piercing cold wind set in, that threatened to convert our soaked rags into icicles.

Very many died on the way. When we arrived at Savannah almost, if not quite, every car had upon it one whom hunger no longer gnawed or disease wasted; whom cold had pinched for the last time, and for whom the golden portals of the Beyond had opened for an exchange that neither Davis nor his despicable tool, Winder, could control.

We did not sentimentalize over these. We could not mourn; the thousands that

we had seen pass away made that emotion hackneyed and wearisome; with the death of some friend and comrade as regularly an event of each day as roll call and drawing rations, the sentiment of grief had become nearly obsolete. We were not hardened; we had simply come to look upon death as commonplace and ordinary. To have had no one dead or dying around us would have been regarded as singular.

Besides, why should we feel any regret at the passing away of those whose condition would probably be bettered thereby! It was difficult to see where we who still lived were any better off than they who were gone before and now “forever at peace, each in his windowless palace of rest.” If imprisonment was to continue only another month, we would rather be with them.

Arriving at Savannah, we were ordered off the cars. A squad from each car carried the dead to a designated spot, and laid them in a row, composing their limbs as well as possible, but giving no other funeral rites, not even making a record of their names and regiments. Negro laborers came along afterwards, with carts, took the bodies to some vacant ground, and sunk them out of sight in the sand.

We were given a few crackers each—the same rude imitation of “hard tack” that had been served out to us when we arrived at Savannah the first time, and then were marched over and put upon a train on the Atlantic & Gulf Railroad, running from Savannah along the sea coast towards Florida. What this meant we had little conception, but hope, which sprang eternal in the prisoner’s breast, whispered that perhaps it was exchange; that there was some difficulty about our vessels coming to Savannah, and we were being taken to some other more convenient sea port; probably to Florida, to deliver us to our folks there. We satisfied ourselves that we were running along the sea coast by tasting the water in the streams we crossed, whenever we could get an opportunity to dip up some. As long as the water tasted salty we knew we were near the sea, and hope burned brightly.

The truth was—as we afterwards learned—the Rebels were terribly puzzled what to do with us. We were brought to Savannah, but that did not solve the problem; and we were sent down the Atlantic & Gulf road as a temporary expedient

The railroad was the worst of the many bad ones which it was my fortune to ride

upon in my excursions while a guest of the Southern Confederacy. It had run down until it had nearly reached the worn-out condition of that Western road, of which an employee of a rival route once said, "that all there was left of it now was two streaks of rust and the right of way." As it was one of the non-essential roads to the Southern Confederacy, it was stripped of the best of its rolling-stock and machinery to supply the other more important lines.

I have before mentioned the scarcity of grease in the South, and the difficulty of supplying the railroads with lubricants. Apparently there had been no oil on the Atlantic & Gulf since the beginning of the war, and the screeches of the dry axles revolving in the worn-out boxes were agonizing. Some thing would break on the cars or blow out on the engine every few miles, necessitating a long stop for repairs. Then there was no supply of fuel along the line. When the engine ran out of wood it would halt, and a couple of negroes riding on the tender would assail a panel of fence or a fallen tree with their axes, and after an hour or such matter of hard chopping, would pile sufficient wood upon the tender to enable us to renew our journey.

Frequently the engine stopped as if from sheer fatigue or inanition. The Rebel officers tried to get us to assist it up the grade by dismounting and pushing behind. We respectfully, but firmly, declined. We were gentlemen of leisure, we said, and decidedly averse to manual labor; we had been invited on this excursion by Mr. Jeff. Davis and his friends, who set themselves up as our entertainers, and it would be a gross breach of hospitality to reflect upon our hosts by working our passage. If this was insisted upon, we should certainly not visit them again. Besides, it made no difference to us whether the train got along or not. We were not losing anything by the delay; we were not anxious to go anywhere. One part of the Southern Confederacy was just as good as another to us. So not a finger could they persuade any of us to raise to help along the journey.

The country we were traversing was sterile and poor—worse even than that in the neighborhood of Andersonville. Farms and farmhouses were scarce, and of towns there were none. Not even a collection of houses big enough to justify a blacksmith shop or a store appeared along the whole route. But few fields of any kind were seen, and nowhere was there a farm which gave evidence of a determined effort on the part of its occupants to till the soil and to improve their condition.

When the train stopped for wood, or for repairs, or from exhaustion, we were allowed to descend from the cars and stretch our numbed limbs. It did us good in other ways, too. It seemed almost happiness to be outside of those cursed Stockades, to rest our eyes by looking away through the woods, and seeing birds and animals that were free. They must be happy, because to us to be free once more was the summit of earthly happiness.

There was a chance, too, to pick up something green to eat, and we were famishing for this. The scurvy still lingered in our systems, and we were hungry for an antidote. A plant grew rather plentifully along the track that looked very much as I imagine a palm leaf fan does in its green state. The leaf was not so large as an ordinary palm leaf fan, and came directly out of the ground. The natives called it “bull-grass,” but anything more unlike grass I never saw, so we rejected that nomenclature, and dubbed them “green fans.” They were very hard to pull up, it being usually as much as the strongest of us could do to draw them out of the ground. When pulled up there was found the smallest bit of a stock—not as much as a joint of one’s little finger—that was eatable. It had no particular taste, and probably little nutriment, still it was fresh and green, and we strained our weak muscles and enfeebled sinews at every opportunity, endeavoring to pull up a “green fan.”

At one place where we stopped there was a makeshift of a garden, one of those sorry “truck patches,” which do poor duty about Southern cabins for the kitchen gardens of the Northern, farmers, and produce a few coarse cow peas, a scanty lot of collards (a coarse kind of cabbage, with a stalk about a yard long) and some onions to vary the usual side-meat and corn pone, diet of the Georgia “cracker.” Scanning the patch’s ruins of vine arid stalk, Andrews espied a handful of onions, which had; remained ungathered. They tempted him as the apple did Eve. Without stopping to communicate his intention to me, he sprang from the car, snatched the onions from their bed, pulled up, half a dozen collard stalks and was on his way back before the guard could make up his mind to fire upon him. The swiftness of his motions saved his life, for had he been more deliberate the guard would have concluded he was trying to, escape, and shot him down. As it was he was returning back before the guard could get his gun up. The onions he had, secured were to us more delicious than wine upon the lees. They seemed to find their way into every fiber of our bodies, and invigorate every organ. The collard stalks he had snatched up, in the expectation of finding in them something resembling the nutritious “heart” that we remembered as children, seeking and, finding in the stalks of cabbage. But we were

disappointed. The stalks were as dry and rotten as the bones of Southern, society. Even hunger could find no meat in them.

After some days of this leisurely journeying toward the South, we halted permanently about eighty-six miles from Savannah. There was no reason why we should stop there more than any place else where we had been or were likely to go. It seemed as if the Rebels had simply tired of hauling us, and dumped us, off. We had another lot of dead, accumulated since we left Savannah, and the scenes at that place were repeated.

The train returned for another load of prisoners.

CHAPTER LXV.

BLACKSHEAR AND PIERCE COUNTRY—WE TAKE UP NEW QUARTERS, BUT ARE CALLED OUT FOR EXCHANGE—EXCITEMENT OVER SIGNING THE PAROLE—A HAPPY JOURNEY TO SAVANNAH— GRIEVOUS DISAPPOINTMENT

We were informed that the place we were at was Blackshear, and that it was the Court House, i. e., the County seat of Pierce County. Where they kept the Court House, or County seat, is beyond conjecture to me, since I could not see a half dozen houses in the whole clearing, and not one of them was a respectable dwelling, taking even so low a standard for respectable dwellings as that afforded by the majority of Georgia houses.

Pierce County, as I have since learned by the census report, is one of the poorest Counties of a poor section of a very poor State. A population of less than two thousand is thinly scattered over its five hundred square miles of territory, and gain a meager subsistence by a weak simulation of cultivating patches of its sandy dunes and plains in “nubbin” corn and dropsical sweet potatos. A few “razor-back” hogs— a species so gaunt and thin that I heard a man once declare that he had stopped a lot belonging to a neighbor from crawling through the cracks of a tight board fence by simply tying a knot in their tails—roam the woods, and supply all the meat used.

Andrews used to insist that some of the hogs which we saw were so thin that the connection between their fore and hindquarters was only a single thickness of

skin, with hair on both sides—but then Andrews sometimes seemed to me to have a tendency to exaggerate.

The swine certainly did have proportions that strongly resembled those of the animals which children cut out of cardboard. They were like the geometrical definition of a superfice—all length and breadth, and no thickness. A ham from them would look like a palm-leaf fan.

I never ceased to marvel at the delicate adjustment of the development of animal life to the soil in these lean sections of Georgia. The poor land would not maintain anything but lank, lazy men, with few wants, and none but lank, lazy men, with few wants, sought a maintenance from it. I may have tangled up cause and effect, in this proposition, but if so, the reader can disentangle them at his leisure.

I was not astonished to learn that it took five hundred square miles of Pierce County land to maintain two thousand “crackers,” even as poorly as they lived. I should want fully that much of it to support one fair-sized Northern family as it should be.

After leaving the cars we were marched off into the pine woods, by the side of a considerable stream, and told that this was to be our camp. A heavy guard was placed around us, and a number of pieces of artillery mounted where they would command the camp.

We started in to make ourselves comfortable, as at Millen, by building shanties. The prisoners we left behind followed us, and we soon had our old crowd of five or six thousand, who had been our companions at Savannah and Millers, again with us. The place looked very favorable for escape. We knew we were still near the sea coast—really not more than forty miles away—and we felt that if we could once get there we should be safe. Andrews and I meditated plans of escape, and toiled away at our cabin.

About a week after our arrival we were startled by an order for the one thousand of us who had first arrived to get ready to move out. In a few minutes we were taken outside the guard line, massed close together, and informed in a few words by a Rebel officer that we were about to be taken back to Savannah for exchange.

The announcement took away our breath. For an instant the rush of emotion

made us speechless, and when utterance returned, the first use we made of it was to join in one simultaneous outburst of acclamation. Those inside the guard line, understanding what our cheer meant, answered us with a loud shout of congratulation—the first real, genuine, hearty cheering that had been done since receiving the announcement of the exchange at Andersonville, three months before.

As soon as the excitement had subsided somewhat, the Rebel proceeded to explain that we would all be required to sign a parole. This set us to thinking. After our scornful rejection of the proposition to enlist in the Rebel army, the Rebels had felt around among us considerably as to how we were disposed toward taking what was called the “Non-Combatant’s Oath;” that is, the swearing not to take up arms against the Southern Confederacy again during the war. To the most of us this seemed only a little less dishonorable than joining the Rebel army. We held that our oaths to our own Government placed us at its disposal until it chose to discharge us, and we could not make any engagements with its enemies that might come in contravention of that duty. In short, it looked very much like desertion, and this we did not feel at liberty to consider.

There were still many among us, who, feeling certain that they could not survive imprisonment much longer, were disposed to look favorably upon the Non-Combatant’s Oath, thinking that the circumstances of the case would justify their apparent dereliction from duty. Whether it would or not I must leave to more skilled casuists than myself to decide. It was a matter I believed every man must settle with his own conscience. The opinion that I then held and expressed was, that if a boy, felt that he was hopelessly sick, and that he could not live if he remained in prison, he was justified in taking the Oath. In the absence of our own Surgeons he would have to decide for himself whether he was sick enough to be warranted in resorting to this means of saving his life. If he was in as good health as the majority of us were, with a reasonable prospect of surviving some weeks longer, there was no excuse for taking the Oath, for in that few weeks we might be exchanged, be recaptured, or make our escape. I think this was the general opinion of the prisoners.

While the Rebel was talking about our signing the parole, there flashed upon all of us at the same moment, a suspicion that this was a trap to delude us into signing the Non-Combatant’s Oath. Instantly there went up a general shout:

“Read the parole to us.”

The Rebel was handed a blank parole by a companion, and he read over the printed condition at the top, which was that those signing agreed not to bear arms against the Confederates in the field, or in garrison, not to man any works, assist in any expedition, do any sort of guard duty, serve in any military constabulary, or perform any kind of military service until properly exchanged.

For a minute this was satisfactory; then their ingrained distrust of any thing a Rebel said or did returned, and they shouted:

“No, no; let some of us read it; let Illinoy’ read it—”

The Rebel looked around in a puzzled manner.

“Who the h—l is ‘Illinoy!’ Where is he?” said he.

I saluted and said:

“That’s a nickname they give me.”

“Very well,” said he, “get up on this stump and read this parole to these d—d fools that won’t believe me.”

I mounted the stump, took the blank from his hand and read it over slowly, giving as much emphasis as possible to the all-important clause at the end —“until properly exchanged.” I then said:

“Boys, this seems all right to me,” and they answered, with almost one voice:

“Yes, that’s all right. We’ll sign that.”

I was never so proud of the American soldier-boy as at that moment. They all felt that signing that paper was to give them freedom and life. They knew too well from sad experience what the alternative was. Many felt that unless released another week would see them in their graves. All knew that every day’s stay in Rebel hands greatly lessened their chances of life. Yet in all that thousand there was not one voice in favor of yielding a tittle of honor to save life. They would secure their freedom honorably, or die faithfully. Remember that this was a miscellaneous crowd of boys, gathered from all sections of the country, and from many of whom no exalted conceptions of duty and honor were expected. I wish some one would point out to me, on the brightest pages of knightly record, some

deed of fealty and truth that equals the simple fidelity of these unknown heroes. I do not think that one of them felt that he was doing anything especially meritorious. He only obeyed the natural promptings of his loyal heart.

The business of signing the paroles was then begun in earnest. We were separated into squads according to the first letters of our names, all those whose name began with A being placed in one squad, those beginning with B, in another, and so on. Blank paroles for each letter were spread out on boxes and planks at different places, and the signing went on under the superintendence of a Rebel Sergeant and one of the prisoners. The squad of M's selected me to superintend the signing for us, and I stood by to direct the boys, and sign for the very few who could not write. After this was done we fell into ranks again, called the roll of the signers, and carefully compared the number of men with the number of signatures so that nobody should pass unparoled. The oath was then administered to us, and two day's rations of corn meal and fresh beef were issued.

This formality removed the last lingering doubt that we had of the exchange being a reality, and we gave way to the happiest emotions. We cheered ourselves hoarse, and the fellows still inside followed our example, as they expected that they would share our good fortune in a day or two.

Our next performance was to set to work, cook our two days' rations at once and eat them. This was not very difficult, as the whole supply for two days would hardly make one square meal. That done, many of the boys went to the guard line and threw their blankets, clothing, cooking utensils, etc., to their comrades who were still inside. No one thought they would have any further use for such things.

"To-morrow, at this time, thank Heaven," said a boy near me, as he tossed his blanket and overcoat back to some one inside, "we'll be in God's country, and then I wouldn't touch them d-d lousy old rags with a ten-foot pole."

One of the boys in the M squad was a Maine infantryman, who had been with me in the Pemberton building, in Richmond, and had fashioned himself a little square pan out of a tin plate of a tobacco press, such as I have described in an earlier chapter. He had carried it with him ever since, and it was his sole vessel for all purposes—for cooking, carrying water, drawing rations, *etc.* He had cherished it as if it were a farm or a good situation. But now, as he turned away

from signing his name to the parole, he looked at his faithful servant for a minute in undisguised contempt; on the eve of restoration to happier, better things, it was a reminder of all the petty, inglorious contemptible trials and sorrows he had endured; he actually loathed it for its remembrances, and flinging it upon the ground he crushed it out of all shape and usefulness with his feet, trampling upon it as he would everything connected with his prison life. Months afterward I had to lend this man my little can to cook his rations in.

Andrews and I flung the bright new tin pans we had stolen at Millen inside the line, to be scrambled for. It was hard to tell who were the most surprised at their appearance—the Rebels or our own boys—for few had any idea that there were such things in the whole Confederacy, and certainly none looked for them in the possession of two such poverty-stricken specimens as we were. We thought it best to retain possession of our little can, spoon, chessboard, blanket, and overcoat.

As we marched down and boarded the train, the Rebels confirmed their previous action by taking all the guards from around us. Only some eight or ten were sent to the train, and these quartered themselves in the caboose, and paid us no further attention.

The train rolled away amid cheering by ourselves and those we left behind. One thousand happier boys than we never started on a journey. We were going home. That was enough to wreath the skies with glory, and fill the world with sweetness and light. The wintry sun had something of geniality and warmth, the landscape lost some of its repulsiveness, the dreary palmettos had less of that hideousness which made us regard them as very fitting emblems of treason. We even began to feel a little good-humored contempt for our hateful little Brats of guards, and to reflect how much vicious education and surroundings were to be held responsible for their misdeeds.

We laughed and sang as we rolled along toward Savannah—going back much faster than the came. We re-told old stories, and repeated old jokes, that had become wearisome months and months ago, but were now freshened up and given their olden pith by the joyousness of the occasion. We revived and talked over old schemes gotten up in the earlier days of prison life, of what “we would do when we got out,” but almost forgotten since, in the general uncertainty of ever getting out. We exchanged addresses, and promised faithfully to write to each other and tell how we found everything at home.

So the afternoon and night passed. We were too excited to sleep, and passed the hours watching the scenery, recalling the objects we had passed on the way to Blackshear, and guessing how near we were to Savannah.

Though we were running along within fifteen or twenty miles of the coast, with all our guards asleep in the caboose, no one thought of escape. We could step off the cars and walk over to the seashore as easily as a man steps out of his door and walks to a neighboring town, but why should we? Were we not going directly to our vessels in the harbor of Savannah, and was it not better to do this, than to take the chances of escaping, and encounter the difficulties of reaching our blockaders! We thought so, and we staid on the cars.

A cold, gray Winter morning was just breaking as we reached Savannah. Our train ran down in the City, and then whistled sharply and ran back a mile or so; it repeated this maneuver two or three times, the evident design being to keep us on the cars until the people were ready to receive us. Finally our engine ran with all the speed she was capable of, and as the train dashed into the street we found ourselves between two heavy lines of guards with bayonets fixed.

The whole sickening reality was made apparent by one glance at the guard line. Our parole was a mockery, its only object being to get us to Savannah as easily as possible, and to prevent benefit from our recapture to any of Sherman's Raiders, who might make a dash for the railroad while we were in transit. There had been no intention of exchanging us. There was no exchange going on at Savannah.

After all, I do not think we felt the disappointment as keenly as the first time we were brought to Savannah. Imprisonment had stupefied us; we were duller and more hopeless.

Ordered down out of the cars, we were formed in line in the street.

Said a Rebel officer:

"Now, any of you fellahs that ah too sick to go to Chahlston, step fohwahd one pace."

We looked at each other an instant, and then the whole line stepped forward. We all felt too sick to go to Charleston, or to do anything else in the world.

CHAPTER LXVI.

SPECIMEN CONVERSATION WITH AN AVERAGE NATIVE GEORGIAN —WE LEARN THAT SHERMAN IS HEADING FOR SAVANNAH—THE RESERVES GET A LITTLE SETTLING DOWN.

As the train left the northern suburbs of Savannah we came upon a scene of busy activity, strongly contrasting with the somnolent lethargy that seemed to be the normal condition of the City and its inhabitants. Long lines of earthworks were being constructed, gangs of negroes were felling trees, building forts and batteries, making abatis, and toiling with numbers of huge guns which were being moved out and placed in position.

As we had had no new prisoners nor any papers for some weeks—the papers being doubtless designedly kept away from us—we were at a loss to know what this meant. We could not understand this erection of fortifications on that side, because, knowing as we did how well the flanks of the City were protected by the Savannah and Ogeeche Rivers, we could not see how a force from the coast—whence we supposed an attack must come, could hope to reach the City's rear, especially as we had just come up on the right flank of the City, and saw no sign of our folks in that direction.

Our train stopped for a few minutes at the edge of this line of works, and an old citizen who had been surveying the scene with senile interest, tottered over to our car to take a look at us. He was a type of the old man of the South of the scanty middle class, the small farmer. Long white hair and beard, spectacles with great round, staring glasses, a broad-brimmed hat of ante-Revolutionary pattern, clothes that had apparently descended to him from some ancestor who had come over with Oglethorpe, and a two-handed staff with a head of buckhorn, upon which he leaned as old peasants do in plays, formed such an image as recalled to me the picture of the old man in the illustrations in "The Dairyman's Daughter." He was as garrulous as a magpie, and as opinionated as a Southern white always is. Halting in front of our car, he steadied himself by planting his staff, clasping it with both lean and skinny hands, and leaning forward upon it, his jaws then addressed themselves to motion thus:

"Boys, who mout these be that ye got? "One of the Guards:—"O, these is some

Yanks that we've bin hivin' down at Camp Sumter."

"Yes?" (with an upward inflection of the voice, followed by a close scrutiny of us through the goggle-eyed glasses,) "Wall, they're a powerful ornary lookin' lot, I'll declah."

It will be seen that the old, gentleman's perceptive powers were much more highly developed than his politeness.

"Well, they ain't what ye mout call purty, that's a fack," said the guard.

"So yer Yanks, air ye?" said the venerable Goober-Grabber, (the nickname in the South for Georgians), directing his conversation to me. "Wall, I'm powerful glad to see ye, an' 'specially whar ye can't do no harm; I've wanted to see some Yankees ever sence the beginnin' of the wah, but hev never had no chance. Whah did ye cum from?"

I seemed called upon to answer, and said: "I came from Illinois; most of the boys in this car are from Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Iowa."

"Deed! All Westerners, air ye? Wall, do ye know I alluz liked the Westerners a heap sight better than them blue-bellied New England Yankees."

No discussion with a Rebel ever proceeded very far without his making an assertion like this. It was a favorite declaration of theirs, but its absurdity was comical, when one remembered that the majority of them could not for their lives tell the names of the New England States, and could no more distinguish a Downeaster from an Illinoisan than they could tell a Saxon from a Bavarian. One day, while I was holding a conversation similar to the above with an old man on guard, another guard, who had been stationed near a squad made up of Germans, that talked altogether in the language of the Fatherland, broke in with:

"Out there by post numbah foahteen, where I wuz yesterday, there's a lot of Yanks who jest jabbered away all the hull time, and I hope I may never see the back of my neck ef I could understand ary word they said, Are them the regular blue-belly kind?"

The old gentleman entered upon the next stage of the invariable routine of discussion with a Rebel:

“Wall, what air you’uns down heah, a-fightin’ we’uns foh?”

As I had answered this question several hundred times, I had found the most extinguishing reply to be to ask in return:

“What are you’uns coming up into our country to fight we’uns for?”

Disdaining to notice this return in kind, the old man passed on to the next stage:

“What are you’uns takin’ ouah niggahs away from us foh?”

Now, if negros had been as cheap as oreoide watches, it is doubtful whether the speaker had ever had money enough in his possession at one time to buy one, and yet he talked of taking away “ouah niggahs,” as if they were as plenty about his place as hills of corn. As a rule, the more abjectly poor a Southerner was, the more readily he worked himself into a rage over the idea of “takin’ away ouah niggahs.”

I replied in burlesque of his assumption of ownership:

“What are you coming up North to burn my rolling mills and rob my comrade here’s bank, and plunder my brother’s store, and burn down my uncle’s factories?”

No reply, to this counter thrust. The old man passed to the third inevitable proposition:

“What air you’uns puttin’ ouah niggahs in the field to fight we’uns foh?”

Then the whole carload shouted back at him at once:

“What are you’uns putting blood-hounds on our trails to hunt us down, for?”

Old Man—(savagely), “Waal, ye don’t think ye kin ever lick us; leastways sich fellers as ye air?”

Myself—“Well, we warmed it to you pretty lively until you caught us. There were none of us but what were doing about as good work as any stock you fellows could turn out. No Rebels in our neighborhood had much to brag on. We are not a drop in the bucket, either. There’s millions more better men than we are

where we came from, and they are all determined to stamp out your miserable Confederacy. You've got to come to it, sooner or later; you must knock under, sure as white blossoms make little apples. You'd better make up your mind to it."

Old Man—"No, sah, nevah. Ye nevah kin conquer us! We're the bravest people and the best fighters on airth. Ye nevah kin whip any people that's a fightin' fur their liberty an' their right; an' ye nevah can whip the South, sah, any way. We'll fight ye until all the men air killed, and then the wimmen'll fight ye, sah."

Myself—"Well, you may think so, or you may not. From the way our boys are snatching the Confederacy's real estate away, it begins to look as if you'd not have enough to fight anybody on pretty soon. What's the meaning of all this fortifying?"

Old Man—"Why, don't you know? Our folks are fixin' up a place foh Bill Sherman to butt his brains out gain'."

"Bill Sherman!" we all shouted in surprise: "Why he ain't within two hundred miles of this place, is he?"

Old Man—"Yes, but he is, tho'. He thinks he's played a sharp Yankee trick on Hood. He found out he couldn't lick him in a squar' fight, nohow; he'd tried that on too often; so he just sneaked 'round behind him, and made a break for the center of the State, where he thought there was lots of good stealin' to be done. But we'll show him. We'll soon hev him just whar we want him, an' we'll learn him how to go traipesin' 'round the country, stealin' nigahs, burnin' cotton, an' runnin' off folkses' beef critters. He sees now the scrape he's got into, an' he's tryin' to get to the coast, whar the gunboats'll help 'im out. But he'll nevah git thar, sah; no sah, nevah. He's mouty nigh the end of his rope, sah, and we'll purty' soon hev him jist whar you fellows air, sah."

Myself—"Well, if you fellows intended stopping him, why didn't you do it up about Atlanta? What did you let him come clear through the State, burning and stealing, as you say? It was money in your pockets to head him off as soon as possible."

Old Man—"Oh, we didn't set nothing afore him up thar except Joe Brown's Pets, these sorry little Reserves; they're powerful little account; no stand-up to'em at all; they'd break their necks runnin' away ef ye so much as bust a cap

near to ‘em.”

Our guards, who belonged to these Reserves, instantly felt that the conversation had progressed farther than was profitable and one of them spoke up roughly:

“See heah, old man, you must go off; I can’t hev ye talkin’ to these prisoners; hits agin my awdahs. Go ‘way now!”

The old fellow moved off, but as he did he flung this Parthian arrow:

“When Sherman gits down deep, he’ll find somethin’ different from the— little snots of Reserves he ran over up about Milledgeville; he’ll find he’s got to fight real soldiers.”

We could not help enjoying the rage of the guards, over the low estimate placed upon the fighting ability of themselves and comrades, and as they raved, around about what they would do if they were only given an opportunity to go into a line of battle against Sherman, we added fuel to the flames of their anger by confiding to each other that we always “knew that little Brats whose highest ambition was to murder a defenseless prisoner, could be nothing else than cowards and skulkers in the field.”

“Yaas—sonnies,” said Charlie Burroughs, of the Third Michigan, in that nasal Yankee drawl, that he always assumed, when he wanted to say anything very cutting; “you—trundle—bed—soldiers—who’ve never—seen— a—real—wild—Yankee—don’t—know—how—different—they—are—from—the kind—that—are—starved—down—to tameness. They’re—jest—as— different—as—a—lion in—a—menagerie—is—from—his—brother—in—the woods—who—has—a—nigger—every day—for-dinner. You—fellows—will— go—into—a—circus—tent—and—throw—tobacco—quids in—the—face—of—the—lion—in—the—cage—when—you—haven’t—spunk enough—to—look—a woodchuck—in—the—eye—if—you—met—him—alone. It’s—lots—o’—fun—to you—to—shoot—down—a—sick—and—starving-man—in—the—Stockade, but—when—you—see—a—Yank with—a—gun—in—his—hand—your—livers get—so—white—that—chalk—would—make—a—black—mark—on—‘em.”

A little later, a paper, which some one had gotten hold of, in some mysterious manner, was secretly passed to me. I read it as I could find opportunity, and communicated its contents to the rest of the boys. The most important of these was a flaming proclamation by Governor Joe Brown, setting forth that General

Sherman was now traversing the State, committing all sorts of depredations; that he had prepared the way for his own destruction, and the Governor called upon all good citizens to rise en masse, and assist in crushing the audacious invader. Bridges must be burned before and behind him, roads obstructed, and every inch of soil resolutely disputed.

We enjoyed this. It showed that the Rebels were terribly alarmed, and we began to feel some of that confidence that "Sherman will come out all right," which so marvelously animated all under his command.

CHAPTER LXVII.

OFF TO CHARLESTON—PASSING THROUGH THE RICE SWAMPS—
TWO EXTREMES OF SOCIETY—ENTRY INTO CHARLESTON—
LEISURELY WARFARE—SHELLING THE CITY AT REGULAR
INTERVALS—WE CAMP IN A MASS OF RUINS—DEPARTURE FOR
FLORENCE.

The train started in a few minutes after the close of the conversation with the old Georgian, and we soon came to and crossed the Savannah River into South Carolina. The river was wide and apparently deep; the tide was setting back in a swift, muddy current; the crazy old bridge creaked and shook, and the grinding axles shrieked in the dry journals, as we pulled across. It looked very much at times as if we were to all crash down into the turbid flood—and we did not care very much if we did, if we were not going to be exchanged.

The road lay through the tide swamp region of South Carolina, a peculiar and interesting country. Though swamps and fens stretched in all directions as far as the eye could reach, the landscape was more grateful to the eye than the famine-stricken, pine-barrens of Georgia, which had become wearisome to the sight. The soil where it appeared, was rich, vegetation was luxuriant; great clumps of laurel showed glossy richness in the greenness of its verdure, that reminded us of the fresh color of the vegetation of our Northern homes, so different from the parched and impoverished look of Georgian foliage. Immense flocks of wild fowl fluttered around us; the Georgian woods were almost destitute of living creatures; the evergreen live-oak, with its queer festoons of Spanish moss, and the ugly and useless palmettos gave novelty and interest to the view.

The rice swamps through which we were passing were the princely possessions of the few nabobs who before the war stood at the head of South Carolina aristocracy—they were South Carolina, in fact, as absolutely as Louis XIV. was France. In their hands—but a few score in number—was concentrated about all there was of South Carolina education, wealth, culture, and breeding. They represented a pinchbeck imitation of that regime in France which was happily swept out of existence by the Revolution, and the destruction of which more than compensated for every drop of blood shed in those terrible days. Like the provincial ‘grandes seigneurs’ of Louis XVI’s reign, they were gay, dissipated and turbulent; “accomplished” in the superficial acquirements that made the “gentleman” one hundred years ago, but are grotesquely out of place in this sensible, solid age, which demands that a man shall be of use, and not merely for show. They ran horses and fought cocks, dawdled through society when young, and intrigued in politics the rest of their lives, with frequent spice-work of duels. Esteeming personal courage as a supreme human virtue, and never wearying of prating their devotion to the highest standard of intrepidity, they never produced a General who was even mediocre; nor did any one ever hear of a South Carolina regiment gaining distinction. Regarding politics and the art of government as, equally with arms, their natural vocations, they have never given the Nation a statesman, and their greatest politicians achieved eminence by advocating ideas which only attracted attention by their balefulness.

Still further resembling the French ‘grandes seigneurs’ of the eighteenth century, they rolled in wealth wrung from the laborer by reducing the rewards of his toil to the last fraction that would support his life and strength. The rice culture was immensely profitable, because they had found the secret for raising it more cheaply than even the pauper laborer of the of world could. Their lands had cost them nothing originally, the improvements of dikes and ditches were comparatively, inexpensive, the taxes were nominal, and their slaves were not so expensive to keep as good horses in the North.

Thousands of the acres along the road belonged to the Rhetts, thousands to the Heywards, thousands to the Manigault the Lowndes, the Middletons, the Hugers, the Barnwells, and the Elliots—all names too well known in the history of our country’s sorrows. Occasionally one of their stately mansions could be seen on some distant elevation, surrounded by noble old trees, and superb grounds. Here they lived during the healthy part of the year, but fled thence to summer resort in the highlands as the miasmatic season approached.

The people we saw at the stations along our route were melancholy illustrations of the evils of the rule of such an oligarchy. There was no middle class visible anywhere—nothing but the two extremes. A man was either a “gentleman,” and wore white shirt and city-made clothes, or he was a loutish hind, clad in mere apologies for garments. We thought we had found in the Georgia “cracker” the lowest substratum of human society, but he was bright intelligence compared to the South Carolina “clay-eater” and “sand-hiller.” The “cracker” always gave hopes to one that if he had the advantage of common schools, and could be made to understand that laziness was dishonorable, he might develop into something. There was little foundation for such hope in the average low South Carolinian. His mind was a shaking quagmire, which did not admit of the erection of any superstructure of education upon it. The South Carolina guards about us did not know the name of the next town, though they had been raised in that section. They did not know how far it was there, or to any place else, and they did not care to learn. They had no conception of what the war was being waged for, and did not want to find out; they did not know where their regiment was going, and did not remember where it had been; they could not tell how long they had been in service, nor the time they had enlisted for. They only remembered that sometimes they had had “sorter good times,” and sometimes “they had been powerful bad,” and they hoped there would be plenty to eat wherever they went, and not too much hard marching. Then they wondered “whar a feller’d be likely to make a raise of a canteen of good whisky?”

Bad as the whites were, the rice plantation negros were even worse, if that were possible. Brought to the country centuries ago, as brutal savages from Africa, they had learned nothing of Christian civilization, except that it meant endless toil, in malarious swamps, under the lash of the taskmaster. They wore, possibly, a little more clothing than their Senegambian ancestors did; they ate corn meal, yams and rice, instead of bananas, yams and rice, as their forefathers did, and they had learned a bastard, almost unintelligible, English. These were the sole blessings acquired by a transfer from a life of freedom in the jungles of the Gold Coast, to one of slavery in the swamps of the Combahee.

I could not then, nor can I now, regret the downfall of a system of society which bore such fruits.

Towards night a distressingly cold breeze, laden with a penetrating mist, set in from the sea, and put an end to future observations by making us too uncomfortable to care for scenery or social conditions. We wanted most to

devise a way to keep warm. Andrews and I pulled our overcoat and blanket closely about us, snuggled together so as to make each one's meager body afford the other as much heat as possible—and endured.

We became fearfully hungry. It will be recollected that we ate the whole of the two days' rations issued to us at Blackshear at once, and we had received nothing since. We reached the sullen, fainting stage of great hunger, and for hours nothing was said by any one, except an occasional bitter execration on Rebels and Rebel practices.

It was late at night when we reached Charleston. The lights of the City, and the apparent warmth and comfort there cheered us up somewhat with the hopes that we might have some share in them. Leaving the train, we were marched some distance through well-lighted streets, in which were plenty of people walking to and fro. There were many stores, apparently stocked with goods, and the citizens seemed to be going about their business very much as was the custom up North.

At length our head of column made a "right turn," and we marched away from the lighted portion of the City, to a part which I could see through the shadows was filled with ruins. An almost insupportable odor of gas, escaping I suppose from the ruptured pipes, mingled with the cold, rasping air from the sea, to make every breath intensely disagreeable.

As I saw the ruins, it flashed upon me that this was the burnt district of the city, and they were putting us under the fire of our own guns. At first I felt much alarmed. Little relish as I had on general principles, for being shot I had much less for being killed by our own men. Then I reflected that if they put me there—and kept me—a guard would have to be placed around us, who would necessarily be in as much clanger as we were, and I knew I could stand any fire that a Rebel could.

We were halted in a vacant lot, and sat down, only to jump up the next instant, as some one shouted:

"There comes one of 'em!"

It was a great shell from the Swamp Angel Battery. Starting from a point miles away, where, seemingly, the sky came down to the sea, was a, narrow ribbon of fire, which slowly unrolled itself against the star-lit vault over our heads. On, on it came, and was apparently following the sky down to the horizon behind us. As

it reached the zenith, there came to our ears a prolonged, but not sharp,

“Whish—ish-ish-ish-ish!”

We watched it breathlessly, and it seemed to be long minutes in running its course; then a thump upon the ground, and a vibration, told that it had struck. For a moment there was a dead silence. Then came a loud roar, and the crash of breaking timber and crushing walls. The shell had bursted.

Ten minutes later another shell followed, with like results. For awhile we forgot all about hunger in the excitement of watching the messengers from “God’s country.” What happiness to be where those shells came from. Soon a Rebel battery of heavy guns somewhere near and in front of us, waked up, and began answering with dull, slow thumps that made the ground shudder. This continued about an hour, when it quieted down again, but our shells kept coming over at regular intervals with the same slow deliberation, the same prolonged warning, and the same dreadful crash when they struck. They had already gone on this way for over a year, and were to keep it up months longer until the City was captured.

The routine was the same from day to day, month in, and month out, from early in August, 1863, to the middle of April, 1865. Every few minutes during the day our folks would hurl a great shell into the beleaguered City, and twice a day, for perhaps an hour each time, the Rebel batteries would talk back. It must have been a lesson to the Charlestonians of the persistent, methodical spirit of the North. They prided themselves on the length of the time they were holding out against the enemy, and the papers each day had a column headed:

“390th DAY OF THE SIEGE,”

or 391st, 393d, etc., as the number might be since our people opened fire upon the City. The part where we lay was a mass of ruins. Many large buildings had been knocked down; very many more were riddled with shot holes and tottering to their fall. One night a shell passed through a large building about a quarter of a mile from us. It had already been struck several times, and was shaky. The shell went through with a deafening crash. All was still for an instant; then it exploded with a dull roar, followed by more crashing of timber and walls. The sound died away and was succeeded by a moment of silence. Finally the great building fell, a shapeless heap of ruins, with a noise like that of a dozen field

pieces. We wanted to cheer but restrained ourselves. This was the nearest to us that any shell came.

There was only one section of the City in reach of our guns and this was nearly destroyed. Fires had come to complete the work begun by the shells. Outside of the boundaries of this region, the people felt themselves as safe as in one of our northern Cities to-day. They had an abiding faith that they were clear out of reach of any artillery that we could mount. I learned afterwards from some of the prisoners, who went into Charleston ahead of us, and were camped on the race course outside of the City, that one day our fellows threw a shell clear over the City to this race course. There was an immediate and terrible panic among the citizens. They thought we had mounted some new guns of increased range, and now the whole city must go. But the next shell fell inside the established limits, and those following were equally well behaved, so that the panic abated. I have never heard any explanation of the matter. It may have been some freak of the gun-squad, trying the effect of an extra charge of powder. Had our people known of its signal effect, they could have depopulated the place in a few hours.

The whole matter impressed me queerly. The only artillery I had ever seen in action were field pieces. They made an earsplitting crash when they were discharged, and there was likely to be oceans of trouble for everybody in that neighborhood about that time. I reasoned from this that bigger guns made a proportionally greater amount of noise, and bred an infinitely larger quantity of trouble. Now I was hearing the giants of the world's ordnance, and they were not so impressive as a lively battery of three-inch rifles. Their reports did not threaten to shatter everything, but had a dull resonance, something like that produced by striking an empty barrel with a wooden maul. Their shells did not come at one in that wildly, ferocious way, with which a missile from a six-pounder convinces every fellow in a long line of battle that he is the identical one it is meant for, but they meandered over in a lazy, leisurely manner, as if time was no object and no person would feel put out at having to wait for them. Then, the idea of firing every quarter of an hour for a year—fixing up a job for a lifetime, as Andrews expressed it,—and of being fired back at for an hour at 9 o'clock every morning and evening; of fifty thousand people going on buying and selling, eating, drinking and sleeping, having dances, drives and balls, marrying and giving in marriage, all within a few hundred yards of where the shells were falling—struck me as a most singular method of conducting warfare.

We received no rations until the day after our arrival, and then they were scanty,

though fair in quality. We were by this time so hungry and faint that we could hardly move. We did nothing for hours but lie around on the ground and try to forget how famished we were. At the announcement of rations, many acted as if crazy, and it was all that the Sergeants could do to restrain the impatient mob from tearing the food away and devouring it, when they were trying to divide it out. Very many—perhaps thirty—died during the night and morning. No blame for this is attached to the Charlestonians. They distinguished themselves from the citizens of every other place in the Southern Confederacy where we had been, by making efforts to relieve our condition. They sent quite a quantity of food to us, and the Sisters of Charity came among us, seeking and ministering to the sick. I believe our experience was the usual one. The prisoners who passed through Charleston before us all spoke very highly of the kindness shown them by the citizens there.

We remained in Charleston but a few days. One night we were marched down to a rickety depot, and put aboard a still more rickety train. When morning came we found ourselves running northward through a pine barren country that resembled somewhat that in Georgia, except that the pine was short-leaved, there was more oak and other hard woods, and the vegetation generally assumed a more Northern look. We had been put into close box cars, with guards at the doors and on top. During the night quite a number of the boys, who had fabricated little saws out of case knives and fragments of hoop iron, cut holes through the bottoms of the cars, through which they dropped to the ground and escaped, but were mostly recaptured after several days. There was no hole cut in our car, and so Andrews and I staid in.

Just at dusk we came to the insignificant village of Florence, the junction of the road leading from Charleston to Cheraw with that running from Wilmington to Kingsville. It was about one hundred and twenty miles from Charleston, and the same distance from Wilmington. As our train ran through a cut near the junction a darky stood by the track gazing at us curiously. When the train had nearly passed him he started to run up the bank. In the imperfect light the guards mistook him for one of us who had jumped from the train. They all fired, and the unlucky negro fell, pierced by a score of bullets.

That night we camped in the open field. When morning came we saw, a few hundred yards from us, a Stockade of rough logs, with guards stationed around it. It was another prison pen. They were just bringing the dead out, and two men were tossing the bodies up into the four-horse wagon which hauled them away

for burial. The men were going about their business as coolly as if loading slaughtered hogs. ‘One of them would catch the body by the feet, and the other by the arms. They would give it a swing—“One, two, three,” and up it would go into the wagon. This filled heaping full with corpses, a negro mounted the wheel horse, grasped the lines, and shouted to his animals:

“Now, walk off on your tails, boys.”

The horses strained, the wagon moved, and its load of what were once gallant, devoted soldiers, was carted off to nameless graves. This was a part of the daily morning routine.

As we stood looking at the sickeningly familiar architecture of the prison pen, a Seventh Indianian near me said, in tones of wearisome disgust:

“Well, this Southern Confederacy is the d–dest country to stand logs on end on God Almighty’s footstool.”

CHAPTER LXVIII.

FIRST DAYS AT FLORENCE—INTRODUCTION TO LIEUTENANT BARRETT, THE RED-HEADED KEEPER—A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OUR NEW QUARTERS—WINDERS MALIGN INFLUENCE MANIFEST.

It did not require a very acute comprehension to understand that the Stockade at which we were gazing was likely to be our abiding place for some indefinite period in the future.

As usual, this discovery was the death-warrant of many whose lives had only been prolonged by the hoping against hope that the movement would terminate inside our lines. When the portentous palisades showed to a fatal certainty that the word of promise had been broken to their hearts, they gave up the struggle wearily, lay back on the frozen ground, and died.

Andrews and I were not in the humor for dying just then. The long imprisonment, the privations of hunger, the scourging by the elements, the death of four out of every five of our number had indeed dulled and stupefied us—bred an indifference to our own suffering and a seeming callosity to that of others, but

there still burned in our hearts, and in the hearts of every one about us, a dull, sullen, smoldering fire of hate and defiance toward everything Rebel, and a lust for revenge upon those who had showered woes upon our heads. There was little fear of death; even the King of Terrors loses most of his awful character upon tolerably close acquaintance, and we had been on very intimate terms with him for a year now. He was a constant visitor, who dropped in upon us at all hours of the day and night, and would not be denied to any one.

Since my entry into prison fully fifteen thousand boys had died around me, and in no one of them had I seen the least, dread or reluctance to go. I believe this is generally true of death by disease, everywhere. Our ever kindly mother, Nature, only makes us dread death when she desires us to preserve life. When she summons us hence she tenderly provides that we shall willingly obey the call.

More than for anything else, we wanted to live now to triumph over the Rebels. To simply die would be of little importance, but to die unrevenged would be fearful. If we, the despised, the contemned, the insulted, the starved and maltreated; could live to come back to our oppressors as the armed ministers of retribution, terrible in the remembrance of the wrongs of ourselves and comrade's, irresistible as the agents of heavenly justice, and mete out to them that Biblical return of seven-fold of what they had measured out to us, then we would be content to go to death afterwards. Had the thrice-accursed Confederacy and our malignant gaolers millions of lives, our great revenge would have stomach for them all.

The December morning was gray and leaden; dull, somber, snow-laden clouds swept across the sky before the souging wind.

The ground, frozen hard and stiff, cut and hurt our bare feet at every step; an icy breeze drove in through the holes in our rags, and smote our bodies like blows from sticks. The trees and shrubbery around were as naked and forlorn as in the North in the days of early Winter before the snow comes.

Over and around us hung like a cold miasma the sickening odor peculiar to Southern forests in Winter time.

Out of the naked, repelling, unlovely earth rose the Stockade, in hideous ugliness. At the gate the two men continued at their monotonous labor of tossing the dead of the previous day into the wagon-heaving into that rude hearse the

inanimate remains that had once tempted gallant, manly hearts, glowing with patriotism and devotion to country—piling up listlessly and wearily, in a mass of nameless, emaciated corpses, fluttering with rags, and swarming with vermin, the pride, the joy of a hundred fair Northern homes, whose light had now gone out forever.

Around the prison walls shambled the guards, blanketed like Indians, and with faces and hearts of wolves. Other Rebels—also clad in dingy butternut—slouched around lazily, crouched over diminutive fires, and talked idle gossip in the broadest of “nigger” dialect. Officers swelled and strutted hither and thither, and negro servants loitered around, striving to spread the least amount of work over the greatest amount of time.

While I stood gazing in gloomy silence at the depressing surroundings Andrews, less speculative and more practical, saw a good-sized pine stump near by, which had so much of the earth washed away from it that it looked as if it could be readily pulled up. We had had bitter experience in other prisons as to the value of wood, and Andrews reasoned that as we would be likely to have a repetition of this in the Stockade we were about to enter, we should make an effort to secure the stump. We both attacked it, and after a great deal of hard work, succeeded in uprooting it. It was very lucky that we did, since it was the greatest help in preserving our lives through the three long months that we remained at Florence.

While we were arranging our stump so as to carry it to the best advantage, a vulgar-faced man, with fiery red hair, and wearing on his collar the yellow bars of a Lieutenant, approached. This was Lieutenant Barrett, commandant of the interior of the prison, and a more inhuman wretch even than Captain Wirz, because he had a little more brains than the commandant at Andersonville, and this extra intellect was wholly devoted to cruelty. As he came near he commanded, in loud, brutal tones:

“Attention, Prisoners!”

We all stood up and fell in in two ranks. Said he:

“By companies, right wheel, march!”

This was simply preposterous. As every soldier knows, wheeling by companies is one of the most difficult of manuevers, and requires some preparation of a battalion before attempting to execute it. Our thousand was made up of infantry,

cavalry and artillery, representing, perhaps, one hundred different regiments. We had not been divided off into companies, and were encumbered with blankets, tents, cooking utensils, wood, etc., which prevented our moving with such freedom as to make a company wheel, even had we been divided up into companies and drilled for the maneuver. The attempt to obey the command was, of course, a ludicrous failure. The Rebel officers standing near Barrett laughed openly at his stupidity in giving such an order, but he was furious. He hurled at us a torrent of the vilest abuse the corrupt imagination of man can conceive, and swore until he was fairly black in the face. He fired his revolver off over our heads, and shrieked and shouted until he had to stop from sheer exhaustion. Another officer took command then, and marched us into prison.

We found this a small copy of Andersonville. There was a stream running north and south, on either side of which was a swamp. A Stockade of rough logs, with the bark still on, inclosed several acres. The front of the prison was toward the West. A piece of artillery stood before the gate, and a platform at each corner bore a gun, elevated high enough to rake the whole inside of the prison. A man stood behind each of these guns continually, so as to open with them at any moment. The earth was thrown up against the outside of the palisades in a high embankment, along the top of which the guards on duty walked, it being high enough to elevate their head, shoulders and breasts above the tops of the logs. Inside the inevitable dead-line was traced by running a furrow around the prison—twenty feet from the Stockade—with a plow. In one respect it was an improvement on Andersonville: regular streets were laid off, so that motion about the camp was possible, and cleanliness was promoted. Also, the crowd inside was not so dense as at Camp Sumter.

The prisoners were divided into hundreds and thousands, with Sergeants at the heads of the divisions. A very good police force—organized and officered by the prisoners—maintained order and prevented crime. Thefts and other offenses were punished, as at Andersonville, by the Chief of Police sentencing the offenders to be spanked or tied up.

We found very many of our Andersonville acquaintances inside, and for several days comparisons of experience were in order. They had left Andersonville a few days after us, but were taken to Charleston instead of Savannah. The same story of exchange was dinned into their ears until they arrived at Charleston, when the truth was told them, that no exchange was contemplated, and that they had been deceived for the purpose of getting them safely out of reach of

Sherman.

Still they were treated well in Charleston—better than they had been anywhere else. Intelligent physicians had visited the sick, prescribed for them, furnished them with proper medicines, and admitted the worst cases to the hospital, where they were given something of the care that one would expect in such an institution. Wheat bread, molasses and rice were issued to them, and also a few spoonfuls of vinegar, daily, which were very grateful to them in their scorbutic condition. The citizens sent in clothing, food and vegetables. The Sisters of Charity were indefatigable in ministering to the sick and dying. Altogether, their recollections of the place were quite pleasant.

Despite the disagreeable prominence which the City had in the Secession movement, there was a very strong Union element there, and many men found opportunity to do favors to the prisoners and reveal to them how much they abhorred Secession.

After they had been in Charleston a fortnight or more, the yellow fever broke out in the City, and soon extended its ravages to the prisoners, quite a number dying from it.

Early in October they had been sent away from the City to their present location, which was then a piece of forest land. There was no stockade or other enclosure about them, and one night they forced the guard-line, about fifteen hundred escaping, under a pretty sharp fire from the guards. After getting out they scattered, each group taking a different route, some seeking Beaufort, and other places along the seaboard, and the rest trying to gain the mountains. The whole State was thrown into the greatest perturbation by the occurrence. The papers magnified the proportion of the outbreak, and lauded fulsomely the gallantry of the guards in endeavoring to withstand the desperate assaults of the frenzied Yankees. The people were wrought up into the highest alarm as to outrages and excesses that these flying desperados might be expected to commit. One would think that another Grecian horse, introduced into the heart of the Confederate Troy, had let out its fatal band of armed men. All good citizens were enjoined to turn out and assist in arresting the runaways. The vigilance of all patrolling was redoubled, and such was the effectiveness of the measures taken that before a month nearly every one of the fugitives had been retaken and sent back to Florence. Few of these complained of any special ill-treatment by their captors, while many reported frequent acts of kindness, especially when their captors

belonged to the middle and upper classes. The low-down class—the clay-eaters—on the other hand, almost always abused their prisoners, and sometimes, it is pretty certain, murdered them in cold blood.

About this time Winder came on from Andersonville, and then everything changed immediately to the complexion of that place. He began the erection of the Stockade, and made it very strong. The Dead Line was established, but instead of being a strip of plank upon the top of low posts, as at Andersonville, it was simply a shallow trench, which was sometimes plainly visible, and sometimes not. The guards always resolved matters of doubt against the prisoners, and fired on them when they supposed them too near where the Dead Line ought to be. Fifteen acres of ground were enclosed by the palisades, of which five were taken up by the creek and swamp, and three or four more by the Dead Line; main streets, etc., leaving about seven or eight for the actual use of the prisoners, whose number swelled to fifteen thousand by the arrivals from Andersonville. This made the crowding together nearly as bad as at the latter place, and for awhile the same fatal results followed. The mortality, and the sending away of several thousand on the sick exchange, reduced the aggregate number at the time of our arrival to about eleven thousand, which gave more room to all, but was still not one-twentieth of the space which that number of men should have had.

No shelter, nor material for constructing any, was furnished. The ground was rather thickly wooded, and covered with undergrowth, when the Stockade was built, and certainly no bit of soil was ever so thoroughly cleared as this was. The trees and brush were cut down and worked up into hut building materials by the same slow and laborious process that I have described as employed in building our huts at Millen.

Then the stumps were attacked for fuel, and with such persistent thoroughness that after some weeks there was certainly not enough woody material left in that whole fifteen acres of ground to kindle a small kitchen fire. The men would begin work on the stump of a good sized tree, and chip and split it off painfully and slowly until they had followed it to the extremity of the tap root ten or fifteen feet below the surface. The lateral roots would be followed with equal determination, and trenches thirty feet long, and two or three feet deep were dug with case-knives and half-canteens, to get a root as thick as one's wrist. The roots of shrubs and vines were followed up and gathered with similar industry. The cold weather and the scanty issues of wood forced men to do this.

The huts constructed were as various as the materials and the tastes of the builders. Those who were fortunate enough to get plenty of timber built such cabins as I have described at Millen. Those who had less eked out their materials in various ways. Most frequently all that a squad of three or four could get would be a few slender poles and some brush. They would dig a hole in the ground two feet deep and large enough for them all to lie in. Then putting up a stick at each end and laying a ridge pole across, they would adjust the rest of their material so as to form sloping sides capable of supporting earth enough to make a water-tight roof. The great majority were not so well off as these, and had absolutely, nothing of which to build. They had recourse to the clay of the swamp, from which they fashioned rude sun-dried bricks, and made adobe houses, shaped like a bee hive, which lasted very well until a hard rain came, when they dissolved into red mire about the bodies of their miserable inmates.

Remember that all these makeshifts were practiced within a half-a-mile of an almost boundless forest, from which in a day's time the camp could have been supplied with material enough to give every man a comfortable hut.

CHAPTER LXIX.

BARRETT'S INSANE CRUELTY—HOW HE PUNISHED THOSE ALLEGED TO BE ENGAGED IN TUNNELING—THE MISERY IN THE STOCKADE—MEN'S LIMBS ROTTING OFF WITH DRY GANGRENE.

Winder had found in Barrett even a better tool for his cruel purposes than Wirz. The two resembled each other in many respects. Both were absolutely destitute of any talent for commanding men, and could no more handle even one thousand men properly than a cabin boy could navigate a great ocean steamer. Both were given to the same senseless fits of insane rage, coming and going without apparent cause, during which they fired revolvers and guns or threw clubs into crowds of prisoners, or knocked down such as were within reach of their fists. These exhibitions were such as an overgrown child might be expected to make. They did not secure any result except to increase the prisoners' wonder that such ill-tempered fools could be given any position of responsibility.

A short time previous to our entry Barrett thought he had reason to suspect a tunnel. He immediately announced that no more rations should be issued until its

whereabouts was revealed and the, ringleaders in the attempt to escape delivered up to him. The rations at that time were very scanty, so that the first day they were cut off the sufferings were fearful. The boys thought he would surely relent the next day, but they did not know their man. He was not suffering any, why should he relax his severity? He strolled leisurely out from his dinner table, picking his teeth with his penknife in the comfortable, self-satisfied way of a coarse man who has just filled his stomach to his entire content—an attitude and an air that was simply maddening to the famishing wretches, of whom he inquired tantalizingly:

“Air ye’re hungry enough to give up them G-d d d s—s of b—s yet?”

That night thirteen thousand men, crazy, fainting with hunger, walked hither and thither, until exhaustion forced them to become quiet, sat on the ground and pressed their bowels in by leaning against sticks of wood laid across their thighs; trooped to the Creek and drank water until their gorges rose and they could swallow no more—did everything in fact that imagination could suggest—to assuage the pangs of the deadly gnawing that was consuming their vitals. All the cruelties of the terrible Spanish Inquisition, if heaped together, would not sum up a greater aggregate of anguish than was endured by them. The third day came, and still no signs of yielding by Barrett. The Sergeants counseled together. Something must be done. The fellow would starve the whole camp to death with as little compunction as one drowns blind puppies. It was necessary to get up a tunnel to show Barrett, and to get boys who would confess to being leaders in the work. A number of gallant fellows volunteered to brave his wrath, and save the rest of their comrades. It required high courage to do this, as there was no question but that the punishment meted out would be as fearful as the cruel mind of the fellow could conceive. The Sergeants decided that four would be sufficient to answer the purpose; they selected these by lot, marched them to the gate and delivered them over to Barrett, who thereupon ordered the rations to be sent in. He was considerate enough, too, to feed the men he was going to torture.

The starving men in the Stockade could not wait after the rations were issued to cook them, but in many instances mixed the meal up with water, and swallowed it raw. Frequently their stomachs, irritated by the long fast, rejected the mess; any very many had reached the stage where they loathed food; a burning fever was consuming them, and seething their brains with delirium. Hundreds died within a few days, and hundreds more were so debilitated by the terrible strain that they did not linger long afterward.

The boys who had offered themselves as a sacrifice for the rest were put into a guard house, and kept over night that Barrett might make a day of the amusement of torturing them. After he had laid in a hearty breakfast, and doubtless fortified himself with some of the villainous sorgum whisky, which the Rebels were now reduced to drinking, he set about his entertainment.

The devoted four were brought out—one by one—and their hands tied together behind their backs. Then a noose of a slender, strong hemp rope was slipped over the first one's thumbs and drawn tight, after which the rope was thrown over a log projecting from the roof of the guard house, and two or three Rebels hauled upon it until the miserable Yankee was lifted from the ground, and hung suspended by the thumbs, while his weight seemed tearing his limbs from his shoulder blades. The other three were treated in the same manner.

The agony was simply excruciating. The boys were brave, and had resolved to stand their punishment without a groan, but this was too much for human endurance. Their will was strong, but Nature could not be denied, and they shrieked aloud so pitifully that a young Reserve standing near fainted. Each one screamed:

“For God's sake, kill me! kill me! Shoot me if—you want to, but let me down from here!” The only effect of this upon Barrett was to light up his brutal face with a leer of fiendish satisfaction. He said to the guards with a gleeful wink:

“By God, I'll learn these Yanks to be more afeard of me than of the old devil himself. They'll soon understand that I'm not the man to fool with. I'm old pizen, I am, when I git started. Jest hear 'em squeal, won't yer?”

Then walking from one prisoner to another, he said:

“D—n yer skins, ye'll dig tunnels, will ye? Ye'll try to git out, and run through the country stealin' and carryin' off niggers, and makin' more trouble than yer d—d necks are worth. I'll learn ye all about that. If I ketch ye at this sort of work again, d—d ef I don't kill ye ez soon ez I ketch ye.”

And so on, ad infinitum. How long the boys were kept up there undergoing this torture can not be said. Perhaps it was an hour or more. To the locker-on it seemed long hours, to the poor fellows themselves it was ages. When they were let down at last, all fainted, and were carried away to the hospital, where they were weeks in recovering from the effects. Some of them were crippled for life.

When we came into the prison there were about eleven thousand there. More uniformly wretched creatures I had never before seen. Up to the time of our departure from Andersonville the constant influx of new prisoners had prevented the misery and wasting away of life from becoming fully realized. Though thousands were continually dying, thousands more of healthy, clean, well-clothed men were as continually coming in from the front, so that a large portion of those inside looked in fairly good condition. But now no new prisoners had come in for months; the money which made such a show about the sutler shops of Andersonville had been spent; and there was in every face the same look of ghastly emaciation, the same shrunken muscles and feeble limbs, the same lack-luster eyes and hopeless countenances.

One of the commonest of sights was to see men whose hands and feet were simply rotting off. The nights were frequently so cold that ice a quarter of an inch thick formed on the water. The naked frames of starving men were poorly calculated to withstand this frosty rigor, and thousands had their extremities so badly frozen as to destroy the life in those parts, and induce a rotting of the tissues by a dry gangrene. The rotted flesh frequently remained in its place for a long time—a loathsome but painless mass, that gradually sloughed off, leaving the sinews that passed through it to stand out like shining, white cords.

While this was in some respects less terrible than the hospital gangrene at Andersonville, it was more generally diffused, and dreadful to the last degree. The Rebel Surgeons at Florence did not follow the habit of those at Andersonville, and try to check the disease by wholesale amputation, but simply let it run its course, and thousands finally carried their putrefied limbs through our lines, when the Confederacy broke up in the Spring, to be treated by our Surgeons.

I had been in prison but a little while when a voice called out from a hole in the ground, as I was passing:

“S-a-y, Sergeant! Won’t you please take these shears and cut my toes off?”

“What?” said I, in amazement, stopping in front of the dugout.

“Just take these shears, won’t you, and cut my toes off?” answered the inmate, an Indiana infantryman—holding up a pair of dull shears in his hand, and elevating a foot for me to look at.

I examined the latter carefully. All the flesh of the toes, except little pads at the ends, had rotted off, leaving the bones as clean as if scraped. The little tendons still remained, and held the bones to their places, but this seemed to hurt the rest of the feet and annoy the man.

“You’d better let one of the Rebel doctors see this,” I said, after finishing my survey, “before you conclude to have them off. May be they can be saved.”

“No; d—d if I’m going to have any of them Rebel butchers fooling around me. I’d die first, and then I wouldn’t,” was the reply. “You can do it better than they can. It’s just a little snip. Just try it.”

“I don’t like to,” I replied. “I might lame you for life, and make you lots of trouble.”

“O, bother! what business is that of yours? They’re my toes, and I want ‘em off. They hurt me so I can’t sleep. Come, now, take the shears and cut ‘em off.”

I yielded, and taking the shears, snipped one tendon after another, close to the feet, and in a few seconds had the whole ten toes lying in a heap at the bottom of the dug-out. I picked them up and handed them to their owner, who gazed at them, complacently, and remarked:

“Well, I’m darned glad they’re off. I won’t be bothered with corns any more, I flatter myself.”

CHAPTER LXX

HOUSE AND CLOTHES—EFFORTS TO ERECT A SUITABLE RESIDENCE—DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THIS—VARIETIES OF FLORENTINE ARCHITECTURE—WAITING FOR DEAD MEN’S CLOTHES—CRAVING FOR TOBACCO.

We were put into the old squads to fill the places of those who had recently died, being assigned to these vacancies according to the initials of our surnames, the same rolls being used that we had signed as paroles. This separated Andrews and me, for the “A’s” were taken to fill up the first hundreds of the First Thousand, while the “M’s,” to which I belonged, went into the next Thousand.

I was put into the Second Hundred of the Second Thousand, and its Sergeant dying shortly after, I was given his place, and commanded the hundred, drew its rations, made out its rolls, and looked out for its sick during the rest of our stay there.

Andrews and I got together again, and began fixing up what little we could to protect ourselves against the weather. Cold as this was we decided that it was safer to endure it and risk frost-biting every night than to build one of the mud-walled and mud-covered holes that so many, lived in. These were much warmer than lying out on the frozen ground, but we believed that they were very unhealthy, and that no one lived long who inhabited them.

So we set about repairing our faithful old blanket—now full of great holes. We watched the dead men to get pieces of cloth from their garments to make patches, which we sewed on with yarn raveled from other fragments of woolen cloth. Some of our company, whom we found in the prison, donated us the three sticks necessary to make tent-poles— wonderful generosity when the preciousness of firewood is remembered. We hoisted our blanket upon these; built a wall of mud bricks at one end, and in it a little fireplace to economize our scanty fuel to the last degree, and were once more at home, and much better off than most of our neighbors.

One of these, the proprietor of a hole in the ground covered with an arch of adobe bricks, had absolutely no bed-clothes except a couple of short pieces of board—and very little other clothing. He dug a trench in the bottom of what was

by courtesy called his tent, sufficiently large to contain his body below his neck. At nightfall he would crawl into this, put his two bits of board so that they joined over his breast, and then say: “Now, boys, cover me over;” whereupon his friends would cover him up with dry sand from the sides of his domicile, in which he would slumber quietly till morning, when he would rise, shake the sand from his garments, and declare that he felt as well refreshed as if he had slept on a spring mattress.

There has been much talk of earth baths of late years in scientific and medical circles. I have been sorry that our Florence comrade if he still lives—did not contribute the results of his experience.

The pinching cold cured me of my repugnance to wearing dead men’s clothes, or rather it made my nakedness so painful that I was glad to cover it as best I could, and I began foraging among the corpses for garments. For awhile my efforts to set myself up in the mortuary second-hand clothing business were not all successful. I found that dying men with good clothes were as carefully watched over by sets of fellows who constituted themselves their residuary legatees as if they were men of fortune dying in the midst of a circle of expectant nephews and nieces. Before one was fairly cold his clothes would be appropriated and divided, and I have seen many sharp fights between contesting claimants.

I soon perceived that my best chance was to get up very early in the morning, and do my hunting. The nights were so cold that many could not sleep, and they would walk up and down the streets, trying to keep warm by exercise. Towards morning, becoming exhausted, they would lie down on the ground almost anywhere, and die. I have frequently seen so many as fifty of these. My first “find” of any importance was a young Pennsylvania Zouave, who was lying dead near the bridge that crossed the Creek. His clothes were all badly worn, except his baggy, dark trousers, which were nearly new. I removed these, scraped out from each of the dozens of great folds in the legs about a half pint of lice, and drew the garments over my own half-frozen limbs, the first real covering those members had had for four or five months. The pantaloons only came down about half-way between my knees and feet, but still they were wonderfully comfortable to what I had been—or rather not been—wearing. I had picked up a pair of boot bottoms, which answered me for shoes, and now I began a hunt for socks. This took several morning expeditions, but on one of them I was rewarded with finding a corpse with a good brown one— army make—and a few days later I got another, a good, thick genuine one, knit at home, of blue

yarn, by some patient, careful housewife. Almost the next morning I had the good fortune to find a dead man with a warm, whole, infantry dress-coat, a most serviceable garment. As I still had for a shirt the blouse Andrews had given me at Millen, I now considered my wardrobe complete, and left the rest of the clothes to those who were more needy than I.

Those who used tobacco seemed to suffer more from a deprivation of the weed than from lack of food. There were no sacrifices they would not make to obtain it, and it was no uncommon thing for boys to trade off half their rations for a chew of “navy plug.” As long as one had anything—especially buttons—to trade, tobacco could be procured from the guards, who were plentifully supplied with it. When means of barter were gone, chewers frequently became so desperate as to beg the guards to throw them a bit of the precious nicotine. Shortly after our arrival at Florence, a prisoner on the East Side approached one of the Reserves with the request:

“Say, Guard, can’t you give a fellow a chew of tobacco?”

To which the guard replied:

“Yes; come right across the line there and I’ll drop you down a bit.”

The unsuspecting prisoner stepped across the Dead Line, and the guard—a boy of sixteen—raised his gun and killed him.

At the North Side of the prison, the path down to the Creek lay right along side of the Dead Line, which was a mere furrow in the ground.

At night the guards, in their zeal to kill somebody, were very likely to imagine that any one going along the path for water was across the Dead Line, and fire upon him. It was as bad as going upon the skirmish line to go for water after nightfall. Yet every night a group of boys would be found standing at the head of the path crying out:

“Fill your buckets for a chew of tobacco.”

That is, they were willing to take all the risk of running that gauntlet for this moderate compensation.

CHAPTER LXXI

DECEMBER—RATIONS OF WOOD AND FOOD GROW LESS DAILY—UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE MORTALITY AT FLORENCE—EVEN THE GOVERNMENT'S STATISTICS ARE VERY DEFICIENT—CARE FOR THE SICK.

The rations of wood grew smaller as the weather grew colder, until at last they settled down to a piece about the size of a kitchen rolling-pin per day for each man. This had to serve for all purposes—cooking, as well as warming. We split the rations up into slips about the size of a carpenter's lead pencil, and used them parsimoniously, never building a fire so big that it could not be covered with a half-peck measure. We hovered closely over this—covering it, in fact, with our hands and bodies, so that not a particle of heat was lost. Remembering the Indian's sage remark, "That the white man built a big fire and sat away off from it; the Indian made a little fire and got up close to it," we let nothing in the way of caloric be wasted by distance. The pitch-pine produced great quantities of soot, which, in cold and rainy days, when we hung over the fires all the time, blackened our faces until we were beyond the recognition of intimate friends.

There was the same economy of fuel in cooking. Less than half as much as is contained in a penny bunch of kindling was made to suffice in preparing our daily meal. If we cooked mush we elevated our little can an inch from the ground upon a chunk of clay, and piled the little sticks around it so carefully that none should burn without yielding all its heat to the vessel, and not one more was burned than absolutely necessary. If we baked bread we spread the dough upon our chessboard, and propped it up before the little fireplace, and used every particle of heat evolved. We had to pinch and starve ourselves thus, while within five minutes' walk from the prison-gate stood enough timber to build a great city.

The stump Andrews and I had the foresight to save now did us excellent service. It was pitch pine, very fat with resin, and a little piece split off each day added much to our fires and our comfort.

One morning, upon examining the pockets of an infantryman of my hundred who had just died, I had the wonderful luck to find a silver quarter. I hurried off

to tell Andrews of our unexpected good fortune. By an effort he succeeded in calming himself to the point of receiving the news with philosophic coolness, and we went into Committee of the Whole Upon the State of Our Stomachs, to consider how the money could be spent to the best advantage. At the south side of the Stockade on the outside of the timbers, was a sutler shop, kept by a Rebel, and communicating with the prison by a hole two or three feet square, cut through the logs. The Dead Line was broken at this point, so as to permit prisoners to come up to the hole to trade. The articles for sale were corn meal and bread, flour and wheat bread, meat, beaus, molasses, honey, sweet potatoes, *etc.* I went down to the place, carefully inspected the stock, priced everything there, and studied the relative food value of each. I came back, reported my observations and conclusions to Andrews, and then staid at the tent while he went on a similar errand. The consideration of the matter was continued during the day and night, and the next morning we determined upon investing our twenty-five cents in sweet potatoes, as we could get nearly a half-bushel of them, which was “more fillin’ at the price,” to use the words of Dickens’s Fat Boy, than anything else offered us. We bought the potatoes, carried them home in our blanket, buried them in the bottom of our tent, to keep them from being stolen, and restricted ourselves to two per day until we had eaten them all.

The Rebels did something more towards properly caring for the sick than at Andersonville. A hospital was established in the northwestern corner of the Stockade, and separated from the rest of the camp by a line of police, composed of our own men. In this space several large sheds were erected, of that rude architecture common to the coarser sort of buildings in the South. There was not a nail or a bolt used in their entire construction. Forked posts at the ends and sides supported poles upon which were laid the long “shakes,” or split shingles, forming the roofs, and which were held in place by other poles laid upon them. The sides and ends were enclosed by similar “shakes,” and altogether they formed quite a fair protection against the weather. Beds of pine leaves were provided for the sick, and some coverlets, which our Sanitary Commission had been allowed to send through. But nothing was done to bathe or cleanse them, or to exchange their lice-infested garments for others less full of torture. The long tangled hair and whiskers were not cut, nor indeed were any of the commonest suggestions for the improvement of the condition of the sick put into execution. Men who had laid in their mud hovels until they had become helpless and hopeless, were admitted to the hospital, usually only to die.

The diseases were different in character from those which swept off the prisoners

at Andersonville. There they were mostly of the digestive organs; here of the respiratory. The filthy, putrid, speedily fatal gangrene of Andersonville became here a dry, slow wasting away of the parts, which continued for weeks, even months, without being necessarily fatal. Men's feet and legs, and less frequently their hands and arms, decayed and sloughed off. The parts became so dead that a knife could be run through them without causing a particle of pain. The dead flesh hung on to the bones and tendons long after the nerves and veins had ceased to perform their functions, and sometimes startled one by dropping off in a lump, without causing pain or hemorrhage.

The appearance of these was, of course, frightful, or would have been, had we not become accustomed to them. The spectacle of men with their feet and legs a mass of dry ulceration, which had reduced the flesh to putrescent deadness, and left the tendons standing out like cords, was too common to excite remark or even attention. Unless the victim was a comrade, no one specially heeded his condition. Lung diseases and low fevers ravaged the camp, existing all the time in a more or less virulent condition, according to the changes of the weather, and occasionally ragging in destructive epidemics. I am unable to speak with any degree of definiteness as to the death rate, since I had ceased to interest myself about the number dying each day. I had now been a prisoner a year, and had become so torpid and stupefied, mentally and physically, that I cared comparatively little for anything save the rations of food and of fuel. The difference of a few spoonfuls of meal, or a large splinter of wood in the daily issues to me, were of more actual importance than the increase or decrease of the death rate by a half a score or more. At Andersonville I frequently took the trouble to count the number of dead and living, but all curiosity of this kind had now died out.

Nor can I find that anybody else is in possession of much more than my own information on the subject. Inquiry at the War Department has elicited the following letters:

I.

The prison records of Florence, S. C., have never come to light, and therefore the number of prisoners confined there could not be ascertained from the records on file in this office; nor do I think that any statement purporting to show that

number has ever been made.

In the report to Congress of March 1, 1869, it was shown from records as follows:

Escaped, fifty-eight; paroled, one; died, two thousand seven hundred and ninety-three. Total, two thousand eight hundred and fifty-two.

Since date of said report there have been added to the records as follows:

Died, two hundred and twelve; enlisted in Rebel army, three hundred and twenty-six. Total, five hundred and thirty-eight.

Making a total disposed of from there, as shown by records on file, of three thousand three hundred and ninety.

This, no doubt, is a small proportion of the number actually confined there.

The hospital register on file contains that part only of the alphabet subsequent to, and including part of the letter S, but from this register, it is shown that the prisoners were arranged in hundreds and thousands, and the hundred and thousand to which he belonged is recorded opposite each man's name on said register. Thus:

"John Jones, 11th thousand, 10th hundred."

Eleven thousand being the highest number thus recorded, it is fair to presume that not less than that number were confined there on a certain date, and that more than that number were confined there during the time it was continued as a prison.

II

Statement showing the whole number of Federals and Confederates captured, (less the number paroled on the field), the number who died while prisoners, and the percentage of deaths, 1861-1865

FEDERALS Captured	187,818
Died, (as shown by prison and hospital records on file)....	30,674
Percentage of deaths	16.375

CONFEDERATES Captured	
227,570 Died	26,774
Percentage of deaths	11.768

In the detailed statement prepared for Congress dated March 1, 1869, the whole number of deaths given as shown by Prisoner of War records was twenty-six thousand three hundred and twenty-eight, but since that date evidence of three thousand six hundred and twenty-eight additional deaths has been obtained from the captured Confederate records, making a total of twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and fifty-six as above shown. This is believed to be many thousands less than the actual number of Federal prisoners who died in Confederate prisons, as we have no records from those at Montgomery Ala., Mobile, Ala., Millen, Ga., Marietta, Ga., Atlanta, Ga., Charleston, S. C., and others. The records of Florence, S. C., and Salisbury, N. C., are very incomplete. It also appears from Confederate inspection reports of Confederate prisons, that large percentage of the deaths occurred in prison quarter without the care or knowledge of the Surgeon. For the month of December, 1864 alone, the Confederate "burial report"; Salisbury, N. C., show that out, of eleven hundred and fifty deaths, two hundred and twenty-three, or twenty per cent., died in prison quarters and are not accounted for in the report of the Surgeon, and therefore not taken into consideration in the above report, as the only records of said prisons on file (with one exception) are the Hospital records. Calculating the percentage of deaths on this basis would give the number of deaths at thirty-seven thousand four hundred and forty-five and percentage of deaths at 20.023.

[End of the Letters from the War Department.]

If we assume that the Government's records of Florence as correct, it will be apparent that one man in every three die there, since, while there might have been as high as fifty thousand at one time in the prison, during the last three months of its existence I am quite sure that the number did not exceed seven thousand. This would make the mortality much greater than at Andersonville, which it undoubtedly was, since the physical condition of the prisoners confined there had been greatly depressed by their long confinement, while the bulk of the prisoners at Andersonville were those who had been brought thither directly from the field. I think also that all who experienced confinement in the two places are united in pronouncing Florence to be, on the whole, much the worse place and more fatal to life.

The medicines furnished the sick were quite simple in nature and mainly composed of indigenous substances. For diarrhea red pepper and decoctions of blackberry root and of pine leaf were given. For coughs and lung diseases, a decoction of wild cherry bark was administered. Chills and fever were treated with decoctions of dogwood bark, and fever patients who craved something sour, were given a weak acid drink, made by fermenting a small quantity of meal in a barrel of water. All these remedies were quite good in their way, and would have benefitted the patients had they been accompanied by proper shelter, food and clothing. But it was idle to attempt to arrest with blackberry root the diarrhea, or with wild cherry bark the consumption of a man lying in a cold, damp, mud hovel, devoured by vermin, and struggling to maintain life upon less than a pint of unsalted corn meal per diem.

Finding that the doctors issued red pepper for diarrhea, and an imitation of sweet oil made from peanuts, for the gangrenous sores above described, I reported to them an imaginary comrade in my tent, whose symptoms indicated those remedies, and succeeded in drawing a small quantity of each, two or three times a week. The red pepper I used to warm up our bread and mush, and give some different taste to the corn meal, which had now become so loathsome to us. The peanut oil served to give a hint of the animal food we hungered for. It was greasy, and as we did not have any meat for three months, even this flimsy substitute was inexpressibly grateful to palate and stomach. But one morning the Hospital Steward made a mistake, and gave me castor oil instead, and the consequences were unpleasant.

A more agreeable remembrance is that of two small apples, about the size of walnuts, given me by a boy named Henry Clay Montague Porter, of the

Sixteenth Connecticut. He had relatives living in North Carolina, who sent him a small packs of eatables, out of which, in the fulness of his generous heart he gave me this share—enough to make me always remember him with kindness.

Speaking of eatables reminds me of an incident. Joe Darling, of the First Maine, our Chief of Police, had a sister living at Augusta, Ga., who occasionally came to Florence with basket of food and other necessities for her brother. On one of these journeys, while sitting in Colonel Iverson's tent, waiting for her brother to be brought out of prison, she picked out of her basket a nicely browned doughnut and handed it to the guard pacing in front of the tent, with:

“Here, guard, wouldn't you like a genuine Yankee doughnut?”

The guard—a lank, loose-jointed Georgia cracker—who in all his life seen very little more inviting food than the his hominy and molasses, upon which he had been raised, took the cake, turned it over and inspected it curiously for some time without apparently getting the least idea of what it was for, and then handed it back to the donor, saying:

“Really, mum, I don't believe I've got any use for it”

CHAPTER LXXII

DULL WINTER DAYS—TOO WEAK AND TOO STUPID To AMUSE OURSELVES—ATTEMPTS OF THE REBELS TO RECRUIT US INTO THEIR ARMY—THE CLASS OF MEN THEY OBTAINED —VENGEANCE ON “THE GALVANIZED”—A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE—RARE GLIMPSES OF FUN—INABILITY OF THE REBELS TO COUNT.

The Rebels continued their efforts to induce prisoners to enlist in their army, and with much better success than at any previous time. Many men had become so desperate that they were reckless as to what they did. Home, relatives, friends, happiness—all they had remembered or looked forward to, all that had nerved them up to endure the present and brave the future—now seemed separated from them forever by a yawning and impassable chasm. For many weeks no new prisoners had come in to rouse their drooping courage with news of the progress of our arms towards final victory, or refresh their remembrances of home, and the gladsomeness of “God’s Country.” Before them they saw nothing but weeks of slow and painful progress towards bitter death. The other alternative was enlistment in the Rebel army.

Another class went out and joined, with no other intention than to escape at the first opportunity. They justified their bad faith to the Rebels by recalling the numberless instances of the Rebels’ bad faith to us, and usually closed their arguments in defense of their course with:

“No oath administered by a Rebel can have any binding obligation. These men are outlaws who have not only broken their oaths to the Government, but who have deserted from its service, and turned its arms against it. They are perjurers and traitors, and in addition, the oath they administer to us is under compulsion and for that reason is of no account.”

Still another class, mostly made up from the old Raider crowd, enlisted from natural depravity. They went out more than for anything else because their hearts were prone to evil and they did that which was wrong in preference to what was right. By far the largest portion of those the Rebels obtained were of this class, and a more worthless crowd of soldiers has not been seen since Falstaff mustered his famous recruits.

After all, however, the number who deserted their flag was astonishingly small, considering all the circumstances. The official report says three hundred and twenty-six, but I imaging this is under the truth, since quite a number were turned back in after their utter uselessness had been demonstrated. I suppose that five hundred “galvanized,” as we termed it, but this was very few when the hopelessness of exchange, the despair of life, and the wretchedness of the condition of the eleven or twelve thousand inside the Stockade is remembered.

The motives actuating men to desert were not closely analyzed by us, but we held all who did so as despicable scoundrels, too vile to be adequately described in words. It was not safe for a man to announce his intention of “galvanizing,” for he incurred much danger of being beaten until he was physically unable to reach the gate. Those who went over to the enemy had to use great discretion in letting the Rebel officer, know so much of their wishes as would secure their being taker outside. Men were frequently knocked down and dragged away while telling the officers they wanted to go out.

On one occasion one hundred or more of the raider crowd who had galvanized, were stopped for a few hours in some little Town, on their way to the front. They lost no time in stealing everything they could lay their hands upon, and the disgusted Rebel commander ordered them to be returned to the Stockade. They came in in the evening, all well rigged out in Rebel uniforms, and carrying blankets. We chose to consider their good clothes and equipments an aggravation of their offense and an insult to ourselves. We had at that time quite a squad of negro soldiers inside with us. Among them was a gigantic fellow with a fist like a wooden beetle. Some of the white boys resolved to use these to wreak the camp’s displeasure on the Galvanized. The plan was carried out capitally. The big darky, followed by a crowd of smaller and nimbler “shades,” would approach one of the leaders among them with:

“Is you a Galvanized?”

The surly reply would be,

“Yes, you -- black --. What the business is that of yours?”

At that instant the bony fist of the darky, descending like a pile-driver, would catch the recreant under the ear, and lift him about a rod. As he fell, the smaller darkies would pounce upon him, and in an instant despoil him of his blanket and

perhaps the larger portion of his warm clothing. The operation was repeated with a dozen or more. The whole camp enjoyed it as rare fun, and it was the only time that I saw nearly every body at Florence laugh.

A few prisoners were brought in in December, who had been taken in Foster's attempt to cut the Charleston & Savannah Railroad at Pocataligo. Among them we were astonished to find Charley Hirsch, a member of Company I's of our battalion. He had had a strange experience. He was originally a member of a Texas regiment and was captured at Arkansas Post. He then took the oath of allegiance and enlisted with us. While we were at Savannah he approached a guard one day to trade for tobacco. The moment he spoke to the man he recognized him as a former comrade in the Texas regiment. The latter knew him also, and sang out,

"I know you; you're Charley Hirsch, that used to be in my company."

Charley backed into the crowd as quickly as possible; to elude the fellow's eyes, but the latter called for the Corporal of the Guard, had himself relieved, and in a few minutes came in with an officer in search of the deserter. He found him with little difficulty, and took him out. The luckless Charley was tried by court martial, found, guilty, sentenced to be shot, and while waiting execution was confined in the jail. Before the sentence could be carried into effect Sherman came so close to the City that it was thought best to remove the prisoners. In the confusion Charley managed to make his escape, and at the moment the battle of Pocataligo opened, was lying concealed between the two lines of battle, without knowing, of course, that he was in such a dangerous locality. After the firing opened, he thought it better to lie still than run the risk from the fire of both sides, especially as he momentarily expected our folks to advance and drive the Rebels away. But the reverse happened; the Johnnies drove our fellows, and, finding Charley in his place of concealment, took him for one of Foster's men, and sent him to Florence, where he staid until we went through to our lines.

Our days went by as stupidly and eventless as can be conceived. We had grown too spiritless and lethargic to dig tunnels or plan escapes. We had nothing to read, nothing to make or destroy, nothing to work with, nothing to play with, and even no desire to contrive anything for amusement. All the cards in the prison were worn out long ago. Some of the boys had made dominos from bones, and Andrews and I still had our chessmen, but we were too listless to play. The mind, enfeebled by the long disuse of it except in a few limited channels, was unfitted

for even so much effort as was involved in a game for pastime.

Nor were there any physical exercises, such as that crowd of young men would have delighted in under other circumstances. There was no running, boxing, jumping, wrestling, leaping, *etc.* All were too weak and hungry to make any exertion beyond that absolutely necessary. On cold days everybody seemed totally benumbed. The camp would be silent and still. Little groups everywhere hovered for hours, moody and sullen, over diminutive, flickering fires, made with one poor handful of splinters. When the sun shone, more activity was visible. Boys wandered around, hunted up their friends, and saw what gaps death—always busiest during the cold spells—had made in the ranks of their acquaintances. During the warmest part of the day everybody disrobed, and spent an hour or more killing the lice that had waxed and multiplied to grievous proportions during the few days of comparative immunity.

Besides the whipping of the Galvanized by the darkies, I remember but two other bits of amusement we had while at Florence. One of these was in hearing the colored soldiers sing patriotic songs, which they did with great gusto when the weather became mild. The other was the antics of a circus clown—a member, I believe, of a Connecticut or a New York regiment, who, on the rare occasions when we were feeling not exactly well so much as simply better than we had been, would give us an hour or two of recitations of the drolleries with which he was wont to set the crowded canvas in a roar. One of his happiest efforts, I remember, was a stilted paraphrase of “Old Uncle Ned” a song very popular a quarter of a century ago, and which ran something like this:

There was an old darky, an’ his name was Uncle Ned, But he died long ago, long ago
He had no wool on de top of his head, De place whar de wool ought to grouw.

CHORUS Den lay down de shubel an’ de hoe, Den hang up de fiddle an’ de bow;
For dere’s no more hard work for poor Uncle Ned He’s gone whar de good niggahs go.

His fingers war long, like de cane in de brake, And his eyes war too dim for to see;
He had no teeth to eat de corn cake, So he had to let de corn cake be.

CHORUS.

His legs were so bowed dat he couldn’t lie still. An’ he had no nails on his toes;

His neck was so crooked dot he couldn't take a pill, So he had to take a pill through his nose.

CHORUS.

One cold frosty morning old Uncle Ned died, An' de tears ran down massa's cheek like rain, For he knew when Uncle Ned was laid in de groun', He would never see poor Uncle Ned again,

CHORUS.

In the hands of this artist the song became—

There was an aged and indigent African whose cognomen was Uncle Edward, But he is deceased since a remote period, a very remote period; He possessed no capillary substance on the summit of his cranium, The place designated by kind Nature for the capillary substance to vegetate.

CHORUS. Then let the agricultural implements rest recumbent upon the ground; And suspend the musical instruments in peace neon the wall, For there's no more physical energy to be displayed by our Indigent Uncle Edward He has departed to that place set apart by a beneficent Providence for the reception of the better class of Africans.

And so on. These rare flashes of fun only served to throw the underlying misery out in greater relief. It was like lightning playing across the surface of a dreary morass.

I have before alluded several times to the general inability of Rebels to count accurately, even in low numbers. One continually met phases of this that seemed simply incomprehensible to us, who had taken in the multiplication table almost with our mother's milk, and knew the Rule of Three as well as a Presbyterian boy does the Shorter Catechism. A cadet—an undergraduate of the South Carolina Military Institute— called our roll at Florence, and though an inborn young aristocrat, who believed himself made of finer clay than most mortals, he was not a bad fellow at all. He thought South Carolina aristocracy the finest

gentry, and the South Carolina Military Institute the greatest institution of learning in the world; but that is common with all South Carolinians.

One day he came in so full of some matter of rare importance that we became somewhat excited as to its nature. Dismissing our hundred after roll-call, he unburdened his mind:

“Now you fellers are all so d-d peart on mathematics, and such things, that you want to snap me up on every opportunity, but I guess I’ve got something this time that’ll settle you. Its something that a fellow gave out yesterday, and Colonel Iverson, and all the officers out there have been figuring on it ever since, and none have got the right answer, and I’m powerful sure that none of you, smart as you think you are, can do it.”

“Heavens, and earth, let’s hear this wonderful problem,” said we all.

“Well,” said he, “what is the length of a pole standing in a river, one-fifth of which is in the mud, two-thirds in the water, and one-eighth above the water, while one foot and three inches of the top is broken off?”

In a minute a dozen answered, “One hundred and fifty feet.”

The cadet could only look his amazement at the possession of such an amount of learning by a crowd of mudsills, and one of our fellows said contemptuously:

“Why, if you South Carolina Institute fellows couldn’t answer such questions as that they wouldn’t allow you in the infant class up North.”

Lieutenant Barrett, our red-headed tormentor, could not, for the life of him, count those inside in hundreds and thousands in such a manner as to be reasonably certain of correctness. As it would have cankered his soul to feel that he was being beaten out of a half-dozen rations by the superior cunning of the Yankees, he adopted a plan which he must have learned at some period of his life when he was a hog or sheep drover. Every Sunday morning all in the camp were driven across the Creek to the East Side, and then made to file slowly back—one at a time—between two guards stationed on the little bridge that spanned the Creek. By this means, if he was able to count up to one hundred, he could get our number correctly.

The first time this was done after our arrival he gave us a display of his wanton

malevolence. We were nearly all assembled on the East Side, and were standing in ranks, at the edge of the swamp, facing the west. Barrett was walking along the opposite edge of the swamp, and, coming to a little gully jumped, it. He was very awkward, and came near falling into the mud. We all yelled derisively. He turned toward us in a fury, shook his fist, and shouted curses and imprecations. We yelled still louder. He snatched out his revolver, and began firing at our line. The distance was considerable—say four or five hundred feet—and the bullets struck in the mud in advance of the line. We still yelled. Then he jerked a gun from a guard and fired, but his aim was still bad, and the bullet sang over our heads, striking in the bank above us. He posted off to get another gun, but his fit subsided before he obtained it.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

CHRISTMAS—AND THE WAY THE WAS PASSED—THE DAILY ROUTINE OF RATION DRAWING—SOME PECULIARITIES OF LIVING AND DYING.

Christmas, with its swelling flood of happy memories,—memories now bitter because they marked the high tide whence our fortunes had receded to this despicable state—came, but brought no change to mark its coming. It is true that we had expected no change; we had not looked forward to the day, and hardly knew when it arrived, so indifferent were we to the lapse of time.

When reminded that the day was one that in all Christendom was sacred to good cheer and joyful meetings; that wherever the upraised cross proclaimed followers of Him who preached “Peace on Earth and good will to men,” parents and children, brothers and sisters, long-time friends, and all congenial spirits were gathering around hospitable boards to delight in each other’s society, and strengthen the bonds of unity between them, we listened as to a tale told of some foreign land from which we had parted forever more.

It seemed years since we had known anything of the kind. The experience we had had of it belonged to the dim and irrevocable past. It could not come to us again, nor we go to it. Squalor, hunger, cold and wasting disease had become the ordinary conditions of existence, from which there was little hope that we would ever be exempt.

Perhaps it was well, to a certain degree, that we felt so. It softened the poignancy of our reflections over the difference in the condition of ourselves and our happier comrades who were elsewhere.

The weather was in harmony with our feelings. The dull, gray, leaden sky was as sharp a contrast with the crisp, bracing sharpness of a Northern Christmas morning, as our beggarly little ration of saltless corn meal was to the sumptuous cheer that loaded the dinner-tables of our Northern homes.

We turned out languidly in the morning to roll-call, endured silently the raving abuse of the cowardly brute Barrett, hung stupidly over the flickering little fires, until the gates opened to admit the rations. For an hour there was bustle and animation. All stood around and counted each sack of meal, to get an idea of the rations we were likely to receive.

This was a daily custom. The number intended for the day's issue were all brought in and piled up in the street. Then there was a division of the sacks to the thousands, the Sergeant of each being called up in turn, and allowed to pick out and carry away one, until all were taken. When we entered the prison each thousand received, on an average, ten or eleven sacks a day. Every week saw a reduction in the number, until by midwinter the daily issue to a thousand averaged four sacks. Let us say that one of these sacks held two bushels, or the four, eight bushels. As there are thirty-two quarts in a bushel, one thousand men received two hundred and fifty-six quarts, or less than a half pint each.

We thought we had sounded the depths of misery at Andersonville, but Florence showed us a much lower depth. Bad as was parching under the burning sun whose fiery rays bred miasma and putrefaction, it was still not so bad as having one's life chilled out by exposure in nakedness upon the frozen ground to biting winds and freezing sleet. Wretched as the rusty bacon and coarse, maggot-filled bread of Andersonville was, it would still go much farther towards supporting life than the handful of saltless meal at Florence.

While I believe it possible for any young man, with the forces of life strong within him, and healthy in every way, to survive, by taking due precautions, such treatment as we received in Andersonville, I cannot understand how anybody could live through a month of Florence. That many did live is only an astonishing illustration of the tenacity of life in some individuals.

Let the reader imagine—anywhere he likes—a fifteen-acre field, with a stream running through the center. Let him imagine this inclosed by a Stockade eighteen feet high, made by standing logs on end. Let him conceive of ten thousand feeble men, debilitated by months of imprisonment, turned inside this inclosure, without a yard of covering given them, and told to make their homes there. One quarter of them—two thousand five hundred—pick up brush, pieces of rail, splits from logs, etc., sufficient to make huts that will turn the rain tolerably. The huts are in no case as good shelter as an ordinarily careful farmer provides for his swine. Half of the prisoners—five thousand—who cannot do so well, work the mud up into rude bricks, with which they build shelters that wash down at every hard rain. The remaining two thousand five hundred do not do even this, but lie around on the ground, on old blankets and overcoats, and in daytime prop these up on sticks, as shelter from the rain and wind. Let them be given not to exceed a pint of corn meal a day, and a piece of wood about the size of an ordinary stick for a cooking stove to cook it with. Then let such weather prevail as we ordinarily have in the North in November—freezing cold rains, with frequent days and nights when the ice forms as thick as a pane of glass. How long does he think men could live through that? He will probably say that a week, or at most a fortnight, would see the last and strongest of these ten thousand lying dead in the frozen mire where he wallowed. He will be astonished to learn that probably not more than four or five thousand of those who underwent this in Florence died there. How many died after release—in Washington, on the vessels coming to Annapolis, in hospital and camp at Annapolis, or after they reached home, none but the Recording Angel can tell. All that I know is we left a trail of dead behind us, wherever we moved, so long as I was with the doleful caravan.

Looking back, after these lapse of years, the most salient characteristic seems to be the ease with which men died. There, was little of the violence of dissolution so common at Andersonville. The machinery of life in all of us, was running slowly and feebly; it would simply grow still slower and feebler in some, and then stop without a jar, without a sensation to manifest it. Nightly one of two or three comrades sleeping together would die. The survivors would not know it until they tried to get him to “spoon” over, when they would find him rigid and motionless. As they could not spare even so little heat as was still contained in his body, they would not remove this, but lie up the closer to it until morning. Such a thing as a boy making an outcry when he discovered his comrade dead, or manifesting any, desire to get away from the corpse, was unknown.

I remember one who, as Charles II. said of himself, was— “an unconscionable long time in dying.” His name was Bickford; he belonged to the Twenty-First Ohio Volunteer Infantry, lived, I think, near Findlay, O., and was in my hundred. His partner and he were both in a very bad condition, and I was not surprised, on making my rounds, one morning, to find them apparently quite dead. I called help, and took his partner away to the gate. When we picked up Bickford we found he still lived, and had strength enough to gasp out:

“You fellers had better let me alone.” We laid him back to die, as we supposed, in an hour or so.

When the Rebel Surgeon came in on his rounds, I showed him Bickford, lying there with his eyes closed, and limbs motionless. The Surgeon said:

“O, that man’s dead; why don’t you have him taken out?”

I replied: “No, he isn’t. Just see.” Stooping, I shook the boy sharply, and said:

“Bickford! Bickford!! How do you feel?”

The eyes did not uncloze, but the lips opened slowly, and said with a painful effort:

“F-i-r-s-t R-a-t-e!”

This scene was repeated every morning for over a week. Every day the Rebel Surgeon would insist that the man should be taken out, and every morning Bickford would gasp out with troublesome exertion that he felt:

“F-i-r-s-t R-a-t-e!”

It ended one morning by his inability, to make his usual answer, and then he was carried out to join the two score others being loaded into the wagon.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

NEW YEAR’S DAY—DEATH OF JOHN H. WINDER—HE DIES ON HIS WAY TO A DINNER —SOMETHING AS TO CHARACTER AND CAREER

—ONE OF THE WORST MEN THAT EVER LIVED.

On New Year's Day we were startled by the information that our old-time enemy—General John H. Winder—was dead. It seemed that the Rebel Sutler of the Post had prepared in his tent a grand New Year's dinner to which all the officers were invited. Just as Winder bent his head to enter the tent he fell, and expired shortly after. The boys said it was a clear case of Death by Visitation of the Devil, and it was always insisted that his last words were:

“My faith is in Christ; I expect to be saved. Be sure and cut down the prisoners' rations.”

Thus passed away the chief evil genius of the Prisoners-of-War. American history has no other character approaching his in vileness. I doubt if the history of the world can show another man, so insignificant in abilities and position, at whose door can be laid such a terrible load of human misery. There have been many great conquerors and warriors who have

Waded through slaughter to a throne, And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

but they were great men, with great objects, with grand plans to carry out, whose benefits they thought would be more than an equivalent for the suffering they caused. The misery they inflicted was not the motive of their schemes, but an unpleasant incident, and usually the sufferers were men of other races and religions, for whom sympathy had been dulled by long antagonism.

But Winder was an obscure, dull old man—the commonplace descendant of a pseudo-aristocrat whose cowardly incompetence had once cost us the loss of our National Capital. More prudent than his runaway father, he held himself aloof from the field; his father had lost reputation and almost his commission, by coming into contact with the enemy; he would take no such foolish risks, and he did not. When false expectations of the ultimate triumph of Secession led him to cast his lot with the Southern Confederacy, he did not solicit a command in the field, but took up his quarters in Richmond, to become a sort of Informer-General, High-Inquisitor and Chief Eavesdropper for his intimate friend, Jefferson Davis. He pried and spied around into every man's bedroom and family circle, to discover traces of Union sentiment. The wildest tales malice and vindictiveness could concoct found welcome reception in his ears. He was only

too willing to believe, that he might find excuse for harrying and persecuting. He arrested, insulted, imprisoned, banished, and shot people, until the patience even of the citizens of Richmond gave way, and pressure was brought upon Jefferson Davis to secure the suppression of his satellite. For a long while Davis resisted, but at last yielded, and transferred Winder to the office of Commissary General of Prisoners. The delight of the Richmond people was great. One of the papers expressed it in an article, the key note of which was:

“Thank God that Richmond is at last rid of old Winder. God have mercy upon those to whom he has been sent.”

Remorseless and cruel as his conduct of the office of Provost Marshal General was, it gave little hint of the extent to which he would go in that of Commissary General of Prisoners. Before, he was restrained somewhat by public opinion and the laws of the land. These no longer deterred him. From the time he assumed command of all the Prisons east of the Mississippi—some time in the Fall of 1863—until death removed him, January 1, 1865—certainly not less than twenty-five thousand incarcerated men died in the most horrible manner that the mind can conceive. He cannot be accused of exaggeration, when, surveying the thousands of new graves at Andersonville, he could say with a quiet chuckle that he was “doing more to kill off the Yankees than twenty regiments at the front.” No twenty regiments in the Rebel Army ever succeeded in slaying anything like thirteen thousand Yankees in six months, or any other time. His cold blooded cruelty was such as to disgust even the Rebel officers. Colonel D. T. Chandler, of the Rebel War Department, sent on a tour of inspection to Andersonville, reported back, under date of August 5, 1864:

“My duty requires me respectfully to recommend a change in the officer in command of the post, Brigadier General John H. Winder, and the substitution in his place of some one who unites both energy and good judgment with some feelings of humanity and consideration for the welfare and comfort, as far as is consistent with their safe keeping, of the vast number of unfortunates placed under his control; some one who, at least, will not advocate deliberately, and in cold blood, the propriety of leaving them in their present condition until their number is sufficiently reduced by death to make the present arrangements suffice for their accommodation, and who will not consider it a matter of self-laudation and boasting that he has never been inside of the Stockade—a place the horrors of which it is difficult to describe, and which is a disgrace to civilization—the condition of which he might, by the exercise of a little energy and judgment,

even with the limited means at his command, have considerably improved.”

In his examination touching this report, Colonel Chandler says:

“I noticed that General Winder seemed very indifferent to the welfare of the prisoners, indisposed to do anything, or to do as much as I thought he ought to do, to alleviate their sufferings. I remonstrated with him as well as I could, and he used that language which I reported to the Department with reference to it—the language stated in the report. When I spoke of the great mortality existing among the prisoners, and pointed out to him that the sickly season was coming on, and that it must necessarily increase unless something was done for their relief—the swamp, for instance, drained, proper food furnished, and in better quantity, and other sanitary suggestions which I made to him—he replied to me that he thought it was better to see half of them die than to take care of the men.”

It was he who could issue such an order as this, when it was supposed that General Stoneman was approaching Andersonville:

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY PRISON, ANDERSONVILLE, Ga., July 27, 1864. The officers on duty and in charge of the Battery of Florida Artillery at the time will, upon receiving notice that the enemy has approached within seven miles of this post, open upon the Stockade with grapeshot, without reference to the situation beyond these lines of defense.

JOHN H. WINDER, Brigadier General Commanding.

This man was not only unpunished, but the Government is to-day supporting his children in luxury by the rent it pays for the use of his property—the well-known Winder building, which is occupied by one of the Departments at Washington.

I confess that all my attempts to satisfactorily analyze Winder’s character and discover a sufficient motive for his monstrous conduct have been futile. Even if we imagine him inspired by a hatred of the people of the North that rose to fiendishness, we can not understand him. It seems impossible for the mind of any man to cherish so deep and insatiable an enmity against his fellow-creatures that it could not be quenched and turned to pity by the sight of even one day’s misery at Andersonville or Florence. No one man could possess such a grievous

sense of private or national wrongs as to be proof against the daily spectacle of thousands of his own fellow citizens, inhabitants of the same country, associates in the same institutions, educated in the same principles, speaking the same language—thousands of his brethren in race, creed, and all that unite men into great communities, starving, rotting and freezing to death.

There is many a man who has a hatred so intense that nothing but the death of the detested one will satisfy it. A still fewer number thirst for a more comprehensive retribution; they would slay perhaps a half-dozen persons; and there may be such gluttons of revenge as would not be satisfied with the sacrifice of less than a score or two, but such would be monsters of whom there have been very few, even in fiction. How must they all bow their diminished heads before a man who fed his animosity fat with tens of thousands of lives.

But, what also militates greatly against the presumption that either revenge or an abnormal predisposition to cruelty could have animated Winder, is that the possession of any two such mental traits so strongly marked would presuppose a corresponding activity of other intellectual faculties, which was not true of him, as from all I can learn of him his mind was in no respect extraordinary.

It does not seem possible that he had either the brain to conceive, or the firmness of purpose to carry out so gigantic and long-enduring a career of cruelty, because that would imply superhuman qualities in a man who had previously held his own very poorly in the competition with other men.

The probability is that neither Winder nor his direct superiors—Howell Cobb and Jefferson Davis—conceived in all its proportions the gigantic engine of torture and death they were organizing; nor did they comprehend the enormity of the crime they were committing. But they were willing to do much wrong to gain their end; and the smaller crimes of to-day prepared them for greater ones to-morrow, and still greater ones the day following. Killing ten men a day on Belle Isle in January, by starvation and hardship, led very easily to killing one hundred men a day in Andersonville, in July, August and September. Probably at the beginning of the war they would have felt uneasy at slaying one man per day by such means, but as retribution came not, and as their appetite for slaughter grew with feeding, and as their sympathy with human misery atrophied from long suppression, they ventured upon ever widening ranges of destructiveness. Had the war lasted another year, and they lived, five hundred deaths a day would doubtless have been insufficient to disturb them.

Winder doubtless went about his part of the task of slaughter coolly, leisurely, almost perfunctorily. His training in the Regular Army was against the likelihood of his displaying zeal in anything. He instituted certain measures, and let things take their course. That course was a rapid transition from bad to worse, but it was still in the direction of his wishes, and, what little of his own energy was infused into it was in the direction of impetus,—not of controlling or improving the course. To have done things better would have involved some personal discomfort. He was not likely to incur personal discomfort to mitigate evils that were only afflicting someone else. By an effort of one hour a day for two weeks he could have had every man in Andersonville and Florence given good shelter through his own exertions. He was not only too indifferent and too lazy to do this, but he was too malignant; and this neglect to allow—simply allow, remember—the prisoners to protect their lives by providing their own shelter, gives the key to his whole disposition, and would stamp his memory with infamy, even if there were no other charges against him.

CHAPTER LXXV.

ONE INSTANCE OF A SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE—THE ADVENTURES OF SERGEANT WALTER HARTSOUGH, OF COMPANY K, SIXTEENTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY—HE GETS AWAY FROM THE REBELS AT THOMASVILLE, AND AFTER A TOILSOME AND DANGEROUS JOURNEY OF SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES, REACHES OUR LINES IN FLORIDA.

While I was at Savannah I got hold of a primary geography in possession of one of the prisoners, and securing a fragment of a lead pencil from one comrade, and a sheet of note paper from another, I made a copy of the South Carolina and Georgia sea coast, for the use of Andrews and myself in attempting to escape. The reader remembers the ill success of all our efforts in that direction. When we were at Blackshear we still had the map, and intended to make another effort,” as soon as the sign got right.” One day while we were waiting for this, Walter Hartsough, a Sergeant of Company g, of our battalion, came to me and said:

“Mc., I wish you’d lend me your map a little while. I want to make a copy.”

I handed it over to him, and never saw him more, as almost immediately after we

were taken out “on parole” and sent to Florence. I heard from other comrades of the battalion that he had succeeded in getting past the guard line and into the Woods, which was the last they ever heard of him. Whether starved to death in some swamp, whether torn to pieces by dogs, or killed by the rifles of his pursuers, they knew not. The reader can judge of my astonishment as well as pleasure, at receiving among the dozens of letters which came to me every day while this account was appearing in the BLADE, one signed “Walter Hartsough, late of Co. K, Sixteenth Illinois Cavalry.” It was like one returned from the grave, and the next mail took a letter to him, inquiring eagerly of his adventures after we separated. I take pleasure in presenting the reader with his reply, which was only intended as a private communication to myself. The first part of the letter I omit, as it contains only gossip about our old comrades, which, however interesting to myself, would hardly be so to the general reader.

GENOA, WAYNE COUNTY, IA., May 27, 1879.

Dear Comrade Mc.:

.....

I have been living in this town for ten years, running a general store, under the firm name of Hartsough & Martin, and have been more successful than I anticipated.

I made my escape from Thomasville, Ga., Dec. 7, 1864, by running the guards, in company with Frank Hommat, of Company M, and a man by the name of Clipson, of the Twenty-First Illinois Infantry. I had heard the officers in charge of us say that they intended to march us across to the other road, and take us back to Andersonville. We concluded we would take a heavy risk on our lives rather than return there. By stinting ourselves we had got a little meal ahead, which we thought we would bake up for the journey, but our appetites got the better of us, and we ate it all up before starting. We were camped in the woods then, with no Stockade—only a line of guards around us. We thought that by a little strategy and boldness we could pass these. We determined to try. Clipson was to go to the right, Hommat in the center, and myself to the left. We all slipped through, without a shot. Our rendezvous was to be the center of a small swamp, through which flowed a small stream that supplied the prisoners with water. Hommat and I got together soon after passing the guard lines, and we began signaling for Clipson. We laid down by a large log that lay across the

stream, and submerged our limbs and part of our bodies in the water, the better to screen ourselves from observation. Pretty soon a Johnny came along with a bunch of turnip tops, that he was taking up to the camp to trade to the prisoners. As he passed over the log I could have caught him by the leg, which I intended to do if he saw us, but he passed along, heedless of those concealed under his very feet, which saved him a ducking at least, for we were resolved to drown him if he discovered us. Waiting here a little longer we left our lurking place and made a circuit of the edge of the swamp, still signaling for Clipson. But we could find nothing of him, and at last had to give him up.

We were now between Thomasville and the camp, and as Thomasville was the end of the railroad, the woods were full of Rebels waiting transportation, and we approached the road carefully, supposing that it was guarded to keep their own men from going to town. We crawled up to the road, but seeing no one, started across it. At that moment a guard about thirty yards to our left, who evidently supposed that we were Rebels, sang out:

“Whar ye gwine to thar boys?”

I answered:

“Jest a-gwine out here a little ways.”

Frank whispered me to run, but I said, “No; wait till he halts us, and then run.” He walked up to where we had crossed his beat—looked after us a few minutes, and then, to our great relief, walked back to his post. After much trouble we succeeded in getting through all the troops, and started fairly on our way. We tried to shape our course toward Florida. The country was very swampy, the night rainy and dark, no stars were out to guide us, and we made such poor progress that when daylight came we were only eight miles from our starting place, and close to a road leading from Thomasville to Monticello. Finding a large turnip patch, we filled our pockets, and then hunted a place to lie concealed in during the day. We selected a thicket in the center of a large pasture. We crawled into this and laid down. Some negroes passed close to us, going to their work in an adjoining field. They had a bucket of victuals with them for dinner, which they hung on the fence in such a way that we could have easily stolen it without detection. The temptation to hungry men was very great, but we concluded that it was best and safest to let it alone.

As the negros returned from work in the evening they separated, one old man passing on the opposite side of the thicket from the rest. We halted him and told him that we were Rebs, who had taken a French leave of Thomasville; that we were tired of guarding Yanks, and were going home; and further, that we were hungry, and wanted something to eat. He told us that he was the boss on the plantation. His master lived in Thomasville. He, himself, did not have much to eat, but he would show us where to stay, and when the folks went to bed he would bring us some food. Passing up close to the negro quarters we got over the fence and lay down behind it, to wait for our supper.

We had been there but a short time when a young negro came out, and passing close by us, went into a fence corner a few panels distant and, kneeling down, began praying aloud, and very, earnestly, and stranger still, the burden of his supplication was for the success of our armies. I thought it the best prayer I ever listened to. Finishing his devotions he returned to the house, and shortly after the old man came with a good supper of corn bread, molasses and milk. He said that he had no meat, and that he had done the best he could for us. After we had eaten, he said that as the young people had gone to bed, we had better come into his cabin and rest awhile, which we did.

Hommat had a full suit of Rebel clothes, and I had stolen sacks enough at Andersonville, when they were issuing rations, to make me a shirt and pantaloons, which a sailor fabricated for me. I wore these over what was left of my blue clothes. The old negro lady treated us very coolly. In a few minutes a young negro came in, whom the old gentleman introduced as his son, and whom I immediately recognized as our friend of the prayerful proclivities. He said that he had been a body servant to his young master, who was an officer in the Rebel army.

“Golly!” says he, “if you ‘uns had stood a little longer at Stone River, our men would have run.”

I turned to him sharply with the question of what he meant by calling us “You ‘uns,” and asked him if he believed we were Yankees. He surveyed us carefully for a few seconds, and then said:

“Yes; I bleav you is Yankees.”

He paused a second, and added:

“Yes, I know you is.”

I asked him how he knew it, and he said that we neither looked nor talked like their men. I then acknowledged that we were Yankee prisoners, trying to make our escape to our lines. This announcement put new life into the old lady, and, after satisfying herself that we were really Yankees, she got up from her seat, shook hands with us, and declared we must have a better supper than we had had. She set immediately about preparing it for us. Taking up a plank in the floor, she pulled out a nice flitch of bacon, from which she cut as much as we could eat, and gave us some to carry with us. She got up a real substantial supper, to which we did full justice, in spite of the meal we had already eaten.

They gave us a quantity of victuals to take with us, and instructed us as well as possible as to our road. They warned us to keep away from the young negros, but trust the old ones implicitly. Thanking them over and over for their exceeding kindness, we bade them good-by, and started again on our journey. Our supplies lasted two days, during which time we made good progress, keeping away from the roads, and flanking the towns, which were few and insignificant. We occasionally came across negros, of whom we cautiously inquired as to the route and towns, and by the assistance of our map and the stars, got along very well indeed, until we came to the Suwanee River. We had intended to cross this at Columbus or Alligator. When within six miles of the river we stopped at some negro huts to get some food. The lady who owned the negros was a widow, who was born and raised in Massachusetts. Her husband had died before the war began. An old negro woman told her mistress that we were at the quarters, and she sent for us to come to the house. She was a very nice-looking lady, about thirty-five years of age, and treated us with great kindness. Hommat being barefooted, she pulled off her own shoes and stockings and gave them to him, saying that she would go to Town the next day and get herself another pair. She told us not to try to cross the river near Columbus, as their troops had been deserting in great numbers, and the river was closely picketed to catch the runaways. She gave us directions how to go so as to cross the river about fifty miles below Columbus. We struck the river again the next night, and I wanted to swim it, but Hommat was afraid of alligators, and I could not induce him to venture into the water.

We traveled down the river until we came to Moseley's Ferry, where we stole an old boat about a third full of water, and paddled across. There was quite a little town at that place, but we walked right down the main street without meeting

any one. Six miles from the river we saw an old negro woman roasting sweet potatoes in the back yard of a house. We were very hungry, and thought we would risk something to get food. Hommat went around near her, and asked her for something to eat. She told him to go and ask the white folks. This was the answer she made to every question. He wound up by asking her how far it was to Mossley's Ferry, saying that he wanted to go there, and get something to eat. She at last ran into the house, and we ran away as fast as we could. We had gone but a short distance when we heard a horn, and soon-the-cursed hounds began bellowing. We did our best running, but the hounds circled around the house a few times and then took our trail. For a little while it seemed all up with us, as the sound of the baying came closer and closer. But our inquiry about the distance to Moseley's Ferry seems to have saved us. They soon called the hounds in, and started them on the track we had come, instead of that upon which we were going. The baying shortly died away in the distance. We did not waste any time congratulating ourselves over our marvelous escape, but paced on as fast as we could for about eight miles farther. On the way we passed over the battle ground of Oolustee, or Ocean Pond.

Coming near to Lake City we fell in with some negroes who had been brought from Maryland. We stopped over one day with them, to rest, and two of them concluded to go with us. We were furnished with a lot of cooked provisions, and starting one night made forty-two miles before morning. We kept the negroes in advance. I told Hommat that it was a poor command that could not afford an advance guard. After traveling two nights with the negroes, we came near Baldwin. Here I was very much afraid of recapture, and I did not want the negroes with us, if we were, lest we should be shot for slave-stealing. About daylight of the second morning we gave them the slip.

We had to skirt Baldwin closely, to head the St. Mary's River, or cross it where that was easiest. After crossing the river we came to a very large swamp, in the edge of which we lay all day. Before nightfall we started to go through it, as there was no fear of detection in these swamps. We got through before it was very dark, and as we emerged from it we discovered a dense cloud of smoke to our right and quite close. We decided this was a camp, and while we were talking the band began to play. This made us think that probably our forces had come out from Fernandina, and taken the place. I proposed to Hommat that we go forward and reconnoiter. He refused, and leaving him alone, I started forward. I had gone but a short distance when a soldier came out from the camp with a bucket. He began singing, and the song he sang convinced me that he was a

Rebel. Rejoining Hommat, we held a consultation and decided to stay where we were until it became darker, before trying to get out. It was the night of the 22d of December, and very cold for that country. The camp guard had small fires built, which we could see quite plainly. After starting we saw that the pickets also had fires, and that we were between the two lines. This discovery saved us from capture, and keeping about an equal distance between the two, we undertook to work our way out.

We first crossed a line of breastworks, then in succession the Fernandina Railroad, the Jacksonville Railroad, and pike, moving all the time nearly parallel with the picket line. Here we had to halt. Hommat was suffering greatly with his feet. The shoes that had been given him by the widow lady were worn out, and his feet were much torn and cut by the terribly rough road we had traveled through swamps, *etc.* We sat down on a log, and I, pulling off the remains of my army shirt, tore it into pieces, and Hommat wrapped his feet up in them. A part I reserved and tore into strips, to tie up the rents in our pantaloons. Going through the swamps and briers had torn them into tatters, from waistband to hem, leaving our skins bare to be served in the same way.

We started again, moving slowly and bearing towards the picket fires, which we could see for a distance on our left. After traveling some little time the lights on our left ended, which puzzled us for a while, until we came to a fearful big swamp, that explained it all, as this, considered impassable, protected the right of the camp. We had an awful time in getting through. In many places we had to lie down and crawl long distances through the paths made in the brakes by hogs and other animals. As we at length came out, Hommat turned to me and whispered that in the morning we would have some Lincoln coffee. He seemed to think this must certainly end our troubles.

We were now between the Jacksonville Railroad and the St. John's River. We kept about four miles from the railroad, for fear of running into the Rebel outposts. We had traveled but a few miles when Hommat said he could go no farther, as his feet and legs were so swelled and numb that he could not tell when he set them upon the ground. I had some matches that a negro had given me, and gathering together a few pine knots we made a fire—the first that we had lighted on the trip—and laid down with it between us. We had slept but a few minutes when I awoke and found Hommat's clothes on fire. Rousing him we put out the flames before he was badly burned, but the thing had excited him so as to give him new life, and he proposed to start on again.

By sunrise we were within eight miles of our lines, and concluding that it would be safe to travel in the daytime, we went ahead, walking along the railroad. The excitement being over, Hommat began to move very slowly again. His feet and legs were so swollen that he could scarcely walk, and it took us a long while to pass over those eight miles.

At last we came in sight of our pickets. They were negros. They halted us, and Hommat went forward to speak to them. They called for the Officer of the Guard, who came, passed us inside, and shook hands cordially with us. His first inquiry was if we knew Charley Marseilles, whom you remember ran that little bakery at Andersonville.

We were treated very kindly at Jacksonville. General Scammon was in command of the post, and had only been released but a short time from prison, so he knew how it was himself. I never expect to enjoy as happy a moment on earth as I did when I again got under the protection of the old flag. Hommat went to the hospital a few days, and was then sent around to New York by sea.

Oh, it was a fearful trip through those Florida swamps. We would very often have to try a swamp in three or four different places before we could get through. Some nights we could not travel on account of its being cloudy and raining. There is not money enough in the United States to induce me to undertake the trip again under the same circumstances. Our friend Clipson, that made his escape when we did, got very nearly through to our lines, but was taken sick, and had to give himself up. He was taken back to Andersonville and kept until the next Spring, when he came through all right. There were sixty-one of Company K captured at Jonesville, and I think there was only seventeen lived through those horrible prisons.

You have given the best description of prison life that I have ever seen written. The only trouble is that it cannot be portrayed so that persons can realize the suffering and abuse that our soldiers endured in those prison hells. Your statements are all correct in regard to the treatment that we received, and all those scenes you have depicted are as vivid in my mind today as if they had only occurred yesterday. Please let me hear from you again. Wishing you success in all your undertakings, I remain your friend,

WALTER, HARTSOUGH, Late of K Company, Sixteenth Illinois Volunteer of Infantry.

CHAPTER LXXVI

THE PECULIAR TYPE OF INSANITY PREVALENT AT FLORENCE—
BARRETT'S WANTONNESS OF CRUELTY—WE LEARN OF SHERMAN'S
ADVANCE INTO SOUTH CAROLINA—THE REBELS BEGIN MOVING
THE PRISONERS AWAY—ANDREWS AND I CHANGE OUR TACTICS,
AND STAY BEHIND—ARRIVAL OF FIVE PRISONERS FROM
SHERMAN'S COMMAND—THEIR UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE IN
SHERMAN'S SUCCESS, AND ITS BENEFICIAL EFFECT UPON US.

One terrible phase of existence at Florence was the vast increase of insanity. We had many insane men at Andersonville, but the type of the derangement was different, partaking more of what the doctors term melancholia. Prisoners coming in from the front were struck aghast by the horrors they saw everywhere. Men dying of painful and repulsive diseases lined every step of whatever path they trod; the rations given them were repugnant to taste and stomach; shelter from the fiery sun there was none, and scarcely room enough for them to lie down upon. Under these discouraging circumstances, home-loving, kindly-hearted men, especially those who had passed out of the first flush of youth, and had left wife and children behind when they entered the service, were speedily overcome with despair of surviving until released; their hopelessness fed on the same germs which gave it birth, until it became senseless, vacant-eyed, unreasoning, incurable melancholy, when the victim would lie for hours, without speaking a word, except to babble of home, or would wander aimlessly about the camp—frequently stark naked—until he died or was shot for coming too near the Dead Line. Soldiers must not suppose that this was the same class of weaklings who usually pine themselves into the Hospital within three months after their regiment enters the field. They were as a rule, made up of seasoned soldiery, who had become inured to the dangers and hardships of active service, and were not likely to sink down under any ordinary trials.

The insane of Florence were of a different class; they were the boys who had laughed at such a yielding to adversity in Andersonville, and felt a lofty pity for the misfortunes of those who succumbed so. But now the long strain of hardship, privation and exposure had done for them what discouragement had done for those of less fortitude in Andersonville. The faculties shrank under disuse and misfortune, until they forgot their regiments, companies, places and date of

capture, and finally, even their names. I should think that by the middle of January, at least one in every ten had sunk to this imbecile condition. It was not insanity so much as mental atrophy—not so much aberration of the mind, as a paralysis of mental action. The sufferers became apathetic idiots, with no desire or wish to do or be anything. If they walked around at all they had to be watched closely, to prevent their straying over the Dead Line, and giving the young brats of guards the coveted opportunity of killing them. Very many of such were killed, and one of my Midwinter memories of Florence was that of seeing one of these unfortunate imbeciles wandering witlessly up to the Dead Line from the Swamp, while the guard—a boy of seventeen—stood with gun in hand, in the attitude of a man expecting a covey to be flushed, waiting for the poor devil to come so near the Dead Line as to afford an excuse for killing him. Two sane prisoners, comprehending the situation, rushed up to the lunatic, at the risk of their own lives, caught him by the arms, and drew him back to safety.

The brutal Barrett seemed to delight in maltreating these demented unfortunates. He either could not be made to understand their condition, or willfully disregarded it, for it was one of the commonest sights to see him knock down, beat, kick or otherwise abuse them for not instantly obeying orders which their dazed senses could not comprehend, or their feeble limbs execute, even if comprehended.

In my life I have seen many wantonly cruel men. I have known numbers of mates of Mississippi river steamers—a class which seems carefully selected from ruffians most proficient in profanity, obscenity and swift-handed violence; I have seen negro-drivers in the slave marts of St. Louis, Memphis and New Orleans, and overseers on the plantations of Mississippi and Louisiana; as a police reporter in one of the largest cities in America, I have come in contact with thousands of the brutalized scoundrels—the thugs of the brothel, bar-room and alley—who form the dangerous classes of a metropolis. I knew Captain Wirz. But in all this exceptionally extensive and varied experience, I never met a man who seemed to love cruelty for its own sake as well as Lieutenant Barrett. He took such pleasure in inflicting pain as those Indians who slice off their prisoners' eyelids, ears, noses and hands, before burning them at the stake.

That a thing hurt some one else was always ample reason for his doing it. The starving, freezing prisoners used to collect in considerable numbers before the gate, and stand there for hours gazing vacantly at it. There was no special object in doing this, only that it was a central point, the rations came in there, and

occasionally an officer would enter, and it was the only place where anything was likely to occur to vary the dreary monotony of the day, and the boys went there because there was nothing else to offer any occupation to their minds. It became a favorite practical joke of Barrett's to slip up to the gate with an armful of clubs, and suddenly opening the wicket, fling them one after another, into the crowd, with all the force he possessed. Many were knocked down, and many received hurts which resulted in fatal gangrene. If he had left the clubs lying where thrown, there would have been some compensation for his meanness, but he always came in and carefully gathered up such as he could get, as ammunition for another time.

I have heard men speak of receiving justice—even favors from Wirz. I never heard any one saying that much of Barrett. Like Winder, if he had a redeeming quality it was carefully obscured from the view of all that I ever met who knew him.

Where the fellow came from, what State was entitled to the discredit of producing and raising him, what he was before the War, what became of him after he left us, are matters of which I never heard even a rumor, except a very vague one that he had been killed by our cavalry, some returned prisoner having recognized and shot him.

Colonel Iverson, of the Fifth Georgia, was the Post Commander. He was a man of some education, but had a violent, ungovernable temper, during fits of which he did very brutal things. At other times he would show a disposition towards fairness and justice. The worst point in my indictment against him is that he suffered Barrett to do as he did.

Let the reader understand that I have no personal reasons for my opinion of these men. They never did anything to me, save what they did to all of my companions. I held myself aloof from them, and shunned intercourse so effectually that during my whole imprisonment I did not speak as many words to Rebel officers as are in this and the above paragraphs, and most of those were spoken to the Surgeon who visited my hundred. I do not usually seek conversation with people I do not like, and certainly did not with persons for whom I had so little love as I had for Turner, Ross, Winder, Wirz, Davis, Iverson, Barrett, *et al.* Possibly they felt badly over my distance and reserve, but I must confess that they never showed it very palpably.

As January dragged slowly away into February, rumors of the astonishing success of Sherman began to be so definite and well authenticated as to induce belief. We knew that the Western Chieftain had marched almost unresisted through Georgia, and captured Savannah with comparatively little difficulty. We did not understand it, nor did the Rebels around us, for neither of us comprehended the Confederacy's near approach to dissolution, and we could not explain why a desperate attempt was not made somewhere to arrest the onward sweep of the conquering armies of the West. It seemed that if there was any vitality left in Rebeldom it would deal a blow that would at least cause the presumptuous invader to pause. As we knew nothing of the battles of Franklin and Nashville, we were ignorant of the destruction of Hood's army, and were at a loss to account for its failure to contest Sherman's progress. The last we had heard of Hood, he had been flanked out of Atlanta, but we did not understand that the strength or morale of his force had been seriously reduced in consequence.

Soon it drifted in to us that Sherman had cut loose from Savannah, as from Atlanta, and entered South Carolina, to repeat there the march through her sister State. Our sources of information now were confined to the gossip which our men—working outside on parole,—could overhear from the Rebels, and communicate to us as occasion served. These occasions were not frequent, as the men outside were not allowed to come in except rarely, or stay long then. Still we managed to know reasonably, soon that Sherman was sweeping resistlessly across the State, with Hardee, Dick Taylor, Beauregard, and others, vainly trying to make head against him. It seemed impossible to us that they should not stop him soon, for if each of all these leaders had any command worthy the name the aggregate must make an army that, standing on the defensive, would give Sherman a great deal of trouble. That he would be able to penetrate into the State as far as we were never entered into our minds.

By and by we were astonished at the number of the trains that we could hear passing north on the Charleston & Cheraw Railroad. Day and night for two weeks there did not seem to be more than half an hour's interval at any time between the rumble and whistles of the trains as they passed Florence Junction, and sped away towards Cheraw, thirty-five miles north of us. We at length discovered that Sherman had reached Branchville, and was singing around toward Columbia, and other important points to the north; that Charleston was being evacuated, and its garrison, munitions and stores were being removed to Cheraw, which the Rebel Generals intended to make their new base. As this

news was so well confirmed as to leave no doubt of it, it began to wake up and encourage all the more hopeful of us. We thought we could see some premonitions of the glorious end, and that we were getting vicarious satisfaction at the hands of our friends under the command of Uncle Billy.

One morning orders came for one thousand men to get ready to move. Andrews and I held a council of war on the situation, the question before the house being whether we would go with that crowd, or stay behind. The conclusion we came to was thus stated by Andrews:

“Now, Mc., we’ve flanked ahead every time, and see how we’ve come out. We flanked into the first squad that left Richmond, and we were consequently in the first that got into Andersonville. May be if we’d staid back we’d got into that squad that was exchanged. We were in the first squad that left Andersonville. We were the first to leave Savannah and enter Millen. May be if we’d staid back, we’d got exchanged with the ten thousand sick. We were the first to leave Millen and the first to reach Blackshear. We were again the first to leave Blackshear. Perhaps those fellows we left behind then are exchanged. Now, as we’ve played ahead every time, with such infernal luck, let’s play backward this time, and try what that brings us.”

“But, Lale,” (Andrews’s nickname—his proper name being Bezaleel), said I, “we made something by going ahead every time—that is, if we were not going to be exchanged. By getting into those places first we picked out the best spots to stay, and got tent-building stuff that those who came after us could not. And certainly we can never again get into as bad a place as this is. The chances are that if this does not mean exchange, it means transfer to a better prison.”

But we concluded, as I said above, to reverse our usual order of procedure and flank back, in hopes that something would favor our escape to Sherman. Accordingly, we let the first squad go off without us, and the next, and the next, and so on, till there were only eleven hundred—mostly those sick in the Hospital—remaining behind. Those who went away—we afterwards learned, were run down on the cars to Wilmington, and afterwards up to Goldsboro, N. C.

For a week or more we eleven hundred tenanted the Stockade, and by burning up the tents of those who had gone had the only decent, comfortable fires we had while in Florence. In hunting around through the tents for fuel we found many bodies of those who had died as their comrades were leaving. As the larger

portion of us could barely walk, the Rebels paroled us to remain inside of the Stockade or within a few hundred yards of the front of it, and took the guards off. While these were marching down, a dozen or more of us, exulting in even so much freedom as we had obtained, climbed on the Hospital shed to see what the outlook was, and perched ourselves on the ridgepole. Lieutenant Barrett came along, at a distance of two hundred yards, with a squad of guards. Observing us, he halted his men, faced them toward us, and they leveled their guns as if to fire. He expected to see us tumble down in ludicrous alarm, to avoid the bullets. But we hated him and them so bad, that we could not give them the poor satisfaction of scaring us. Only one of our party attempted to slide down, but the moment we swore at him he came back and took his seat with folded arms alongside of us. Barrett gave the order to fire, and the bullets shrieked over our heads, fortunately not hitting anybody. We responded with yells of derision, and the worst abuse we could think of.

Coming down after awhile, I walked to the now open gate, and looped through it over the barren fields to the dense woods a mile away, and a wild desire to run off took possession of me. It seemed as if I could not resist it. The woods appeared full of enticing shapes, beckoning me to come to them, and the winds whispered in my ears:

“Run! Run! Run!”

But the words of my parole were still fresh in my mind, and I stilled my frenzy to escape by turning back into the Stockade and looking away from the tempting view.

Once five new prisoners, the first we had seen in a long time, were brought in from Sherman’s army. They were plump, well-conditioned, well-dressed, healthy, devil-may-care young fellows, whose confidence in themselves and in Sherman was simply limitless, and their contempt for all Rebels and especially those who terrorized over us, enormous.

“Come up here to headquarters,” said one of the Rebel officers to them as they stood talking to us; “and we’ll parole you.”

“O go to h— with your parole,” said the spokesman of the crowd, with nonchalant contempt; “we don’t want none of your paroles. Old Billy’ll parole us before Saturday.”

To us they said:

“Now, you boys want to cheer right up; keep a stiff upper lip. This thing’s workin’ all right. Their old Confederacy’s goin’ to pieces like a house afire. Sherman’s promenadin’ through it just as it suits him, and he’s liable to pay a visit at any hour. We’re expectin’ him all the time, because it was generally understood all through the Army that we were to take the prison pen here in on our way.”

I mentioned my distrust of the concentration of Rebels at Cheraw, and their faces took on a look of supreme disdain.

“Now, don’t let that worry you a minute,” said the confident spokesman. “All the Rebels between here and Lee’s Army can’t prevent Sherman from going just where he pleases. Why, we’ve quit fightin’ ‘em except with the Bummers advance. We haven’t had to go into regular line of battle against them for I don’t know how long. Sherman would like anything better than to have ‘em make a stand somewhere so that he could get a good fair whack at ‘em.”

No one can imagine the effect of all this upon us. It was better than a carload of medicines and a train load of provisions would have been. From the depths of despondency we sprang at once to tip-toe on the mountain-tops of expectation. We did little day and night but listen for the sound of Sherman’s guns and discuss what we would do when he came. We planned schemes of terrible vengeance on Barrett and Iverson, but these worthies had mysteriously disappeared—whither no one knew. There was hardly an hour of any night passed without some one of us fancying that he heard the welcome sound of distant firing. As everybody knows, by listening intently at night, one can hear just exactly what he is intent upon hearing, and so was with us. In the middle of the night boys listening awake with strained ears, would say:

“Now, if ever I heard musketry firing in my life, that’s a heavy skirmish line at work, and sharply too, and not more than three miles away, neither.”

Then another would say:

“I don’t want to ever get out of here if that don’t sound just as the skirmishing at Chancellorsville did the first day to us. We were lying down about four miles off, when it began pattering just as that is doing now.”

And so on.

One night about nine or ten, there came two short, sharp peals of thunder, that sounded precisely like the reports of rifled field pieces. We sprang up in a frenzy of excitement, and shouted as if our throats would split. But the next peal went off in the usual rumble, and our excitement had to subside.

CHAPTER LXXVII

FRUITLESS WAITING FOR SHERMAN—WE LEAVE FLORENCE—
INTELLIGENCE OF THE FALL OF WILMINGTON COMMUNICATED TO
US BY A SLAVE—THE TURPENTINE REGION OF NORTH CAROLINA—
WE COME UPON A REBEL LINE OF BATTLE—YANKEES AT BOTH
ENDS OF THE ROAD.

Things had gone on in the way described in the previous chapter until past the middle of February. For more than a week every waking hour was spent in anxious expectancy of Sherman—listening for the far-off rattle of his guns—straining our ears to catch the sullen boom of his artillery—scanning the distant woods to see the Rebels falling back in hopeless confusion before the pursuit of his dashing advance. Though we became as impatient as those ancient sentinels who for ten long years stood upon the Grecian hills to catch the first glimpse of the flames of burning Troy, Sherman came not. We afterwards learned that two expeditions were sent down towards us from Cheraw, but they met with unexpected resistance, and were turned back.

It was now plain to us that the Confederacy was tottering to its fall, and we were only troubled by occasional misgivings that we might in some way be caught and crushed under the toppling ruins. It did not seem possible that with the cruel tenacity with which the Rebels had clung to us they would be willing to let us go free at last, but would be tempted in the rage of their final defeat to commit some unparalleled atrocity upon us.

One day all of us who were able to walk were made to fall in and march over to the railroad, where we were loaded into boxcars. The sick—except those who were manifestly dying—were loaded into wagons and hauled over. The dying were left to their fate, without any companions or nurses.

The train started off in a northeasterly direction, and as we went through Florence the skies were crimson with great fires, burning in all directions. We were told these were cotton and military stores being destroyed in anticipation of a visit from, a part of Sherman's forces.

When morning came we were still running in the same direction that we started. In the confusion of loading us upon the cars the previous evening, I had been

allowed to approach too near a Rebel officer's stock of rations, and the result was his being the loser and myself the gainer of a canteen filled with fairly good molasses. Andrews and I had some corn bread, and we, breakfasted sumptuously upon it and the molasses, which was certainly none-the-less sweet from having been stolen.

Our meal over, we began reconnoitering, as much for employment as anything else. We were in the front end of a box car. With a saw made on the back of a case-knife we cut a hole through the boards big enough to permit us to pass out, and perhaps escape. We found that we were on the foremost box car of the train—the next vehicle to us being a passenger coach, in which were the Rebel officers. On the rear platform of this car was seated one of their servants—a trusty old slave, well dressed, for a negro, and as respectful as his class usually was. Said I to him:

“Well, uncle, where are they taking us?”

He replied:

“Well, sah, I couldn't rightly say.”

“But you could guess, if you tried, couldn't you?”

“Yes sah.”

He gave a quick look around to see if the door behind him was so securely shut that he could not be overheard by the Rebels inside the car, his dull, stolid face lighted up as a negro's always does in the excitement of doing something cunning, and he said in a loud whisper:

“Dey's a-gwine to take you to Wilmington—ef dey kin get you dar!”

“Can get us there!” said I in astonishment. “Is there anything to prevent them taking us there?”

The dark face filled with inexpressible meaning. I asked:

“It isn't possible that there are any Yankees down there to interfere, is it?”

The great eyes flamed up with intelligence to tell me that I guessed aright; again

he glanced nervously around to assure himself that no one was eavesdropping, and then he said in a whisper, just loud enough to be heard above the noise of the moving train:

“De Yankees took Wilmington yesterday mawning.”

The news startled me, but it was true, our troops having driven out the Rebel troops, and entered Wilmington, on the preceding day—the 22d of February, 1865, as I learned afterwards. How this negro came to know more of what was going on than his masters puzzled me much. That he did know more was beyond question, since if the Rebels in whose charge we were had known of Wilmington’s fall, they would not have gone to the trouble of loading us upon the cars and hauling us one, hundred miles in the direction of a City which had come into the hands of our men.

It has been asserted by many writers that the negroes had some occult means of diffusing important news among the mass of their people, probably by relays of swift runners who traveled at night, going twenty-five or thirty miles and back before morning. Very astonishing stories are told of things communicated in this way across the length or breadth of the Confederacy. It is said that our officers in the blockading fleet in the Gulf heard from the negroes in advance of the publication in the Rebel papers of the issuance of the Proclamation of Emancipation, and of several of our most important Victories. The incident given above prepares me to believe all that has been told of the perfection to which the negroes had brought their “grapevine telegraph,” as it was jocularly termed.

The Rebels believed something of it, too. In spite of their rigorous patrol, an institution dating long before the war, and the severe punishments visited upon negroes found off their master’s premises without a pass, none of them entertained a doubt that the young negro men were in the habit of making long, mysterious journeys at night, which had other motives than love-making or chicken-stealing. Occasionally a young man would get caught fifty or seventy-five miles from his “quarters,” while on some errand of his own, the nature of which no punishment could make him divulge. His master would be satisfied that he did not intend running away, because he was likely going in the wrong direction, but beyond this nothing could be ascertained. It was a common belief among overseers, when they saw an active, healthy young “buck” sleepy and languid about his work, that he had spent the night on one of these excursions.

The country we were running through—if such straining, toilsome progress as our engine was making could be called running—was a rich turpentine district. We passed by forests where all the trees were marked with long scores through the bark, and extended up to a height of twenty feet or more. Into these, the turpentine and rosin, running down, were caught, and conveyed by negroes to stills near by, where it was prepared for market. The stills were as rude as the mills we had seen in Eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, and were as liable to fiery destruction as a powder-house. Every few miles a wide space of ground, burned clean of trees and underbrush, and yet marked by a portion of the stones which had formed the furnace, showed where a turpentine still, managed by careless and ignorant blacks, had been licked up by the breath of flame. They never seemed to re-build on these spots—whether from superstition or other reasons, I know not.

Occasionally we came to great piles of barrels of turpentine, rosin and tar, some of which had laid there since the blockade had cut off communication with the outer world. Many of the barrels of rosin had burst, and their contents melted in the heat of the sun, had run over the ground like streams of lava, covering it to a depth of many inches. At the enormous price rosin, tar and turpentine were commanding in the markets of the world, each of these piles represented a superb fortune. Any one of them, if lying upon the docks of New York, would have yielded enough to make every one of us upon the train comfortable for life. But a few months after the blockade was raised, and they sank to one-thirtieth of their present value.

These terebinthine stores were the property of the plantation lords of the lowlands of North Carolina, who correspond to the pinchbeck barons of the rice districts of South Carolina. As there, the whites and negroes we saw were of the lowest, most squalid type of humanity. The people of the middle and upland districts of North Carolina are a much superior race to the same class in South Carolina. They are mostly of Scotch-Irish descent, with a strong infusion of English-Quaker blood, and resemble much the best of the Virginians. They make an effort to diffuse education, and have many of the virtues of a simple, non-progressive, tolerably industrious middle class. It was here that the strong Union sentiment of North Carolina numbered most of its adherents. The people of the lowlands were as different as if belonging to another race. The enormous mass of ignorance—the three hundred and fifty thousand men and women who could not read or write—were mostly black and white serfs of the great landholders, whose plantations lie within one hundred miles of the Atlantic coast.

As we approached the coast the country became swampier, and our old acquaintances, the cypress, with their malformed “knees,” became more and more numerous.

About the middle of the afternoon our train suddenly stopped. Looking out to ascertain the cause, we were electrified to see a Rebel line of battle stretched across the track, about a half mile ahead of the engine, and with its rear toward us. It was as real a line as was ever seen on any field. The double ranks of “Butternuts,” with arms gleaming in the afternoon sun, stretched away out through the open pine woods, farther than we could see. Close behind the motionless line stood the company officers, leaning on their drawn swords. Behind these still, were the regimental officers on their horses. On a slight rise of the ground, a group of horsemen, to whom other horsemen momentarily dashed up to or sped away from, showed the station of the General in command. On another knoll, at a little distance, were several-field pieces, standing “in battery,” the cannoneers at the guns, the postillions dismounted and holding their horses by the bits, the caisson men standing in readiness to serve out ammunition. Our men were evidently close at hand in strong force, and the engagement was likely to open at any instant.

For a minute we were speechless with astonishment. Then came a surge of excitement. What should we do? What could we do? Obviously nothing. Eleven hundred, sick, enfeebled prisoners could not even overpower their guards, let alone make such a diversion in the rear of a line-of-battle as would assist our folks to gain a victory. But while we debated the engine whistled sharply—a frightened shriek it sounded to us—and began pushing our train rapidly backward over the rough and wretched track. Back, back we went, as fast as rosin and pine knots could force the engine to move us. The cars swayed continually back and forth, momentarily threatening to fly the crazy roadway, and roll over the embankment or into one of the adjacent swamps. We would have hailed such a catastrophe, as it would have probably killed more of the guards than of us, and the confusion would have given many of the survivors opportunity to escape. But no such accident happened, and towards midnight we reached the bridge across the Great Pedee River, where our train was stopped by a squad of Rebel cavalymen, who brought the intelligence that as Kilpatrick was expected into Florence every hour, it would not do to take us there.

We were ordered off the cars, and laid down on the banks of the Great Pedee, our guards and the cavalry forming a line around us, and taking precautions to

defend the bridge against Kilpatrick, should he find out our whereabouts and come after us.

“Well, Mc,” said Andrews, as we adjusted our old overcoat and blanket on the ground for a bed; “I guess we needn’t care whether school keeps or not. Our fellows have evidently got both ends of the road, and are coming towards us from each way. There’s no road—not even a wagon road—for the Johnnies to run us off on, and I guess all we’ve got to do is to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Bad as these hounds are, I don’t believe they will shoot us down rather than let our folks retake us. At least they won’t since old Winder’s dead. If he was alive, he’d order our throats cut—one by one—with the guards’ pocket knives, rather than give us up. I’m only afraid we’ll be allowed to starve before our folks reach us.”

I concurred in this view.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

RETURN TO FLORENCE AND A SHORT SOJOURN THERE—OFF TOWARDS WILMINGTON AGAIN—CRUISING A REBEL OFFICER’S LUNCH—SIGNS OF APPROACHING OUR LINES—TERROR OF OUR RASCALLY GUARDS—ENTRANCE INTO GOD’S COUNTRY AT LAST.

But Kilpatrick, like Sherman, came not. Perhaps he knew that all the prisoners had been removed from the Stockade; perhaps he had other business of more importance on hand; probably his movement was only a feint. At all events it was definitely known the next day that he had withdrawn so far as to render it wholly unlikely that he intended attacking Florence, so we were brought back and returned to our old quarters. For a week or more we loitered about the now nearly-abandoned prison; skulked and crawled around the dismal mud-tents like the ghostly denizens of some Potter’s Field, who, for some reason had been allowed to return to earth, and for awhile creep painfully around the little hillocks beneath which they had been entombed.

A few score, whose vital powers were strained to the last degree of tension, gave up the ghost, and sank to dreamless rest. It mattered now little to these when Sherman came, or when Kilpatrick’s guidons should flutter through the forest of sighing pines, heralds of life, happiness, and home—

After life's fitful fever they slept well Treason had done its worst. Nor steel nor poison: Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing Could touch them farther.

One day another order came for us to be loaded on the cars, and over to the railroad we went again in the same fashion as before. The comparatively few of us who were still able to walk at all well, loaded ourselves down with the bundles and blankets of our less fortunate companions, who hobbled and limped—many even crawling on their hands and knees—over the hard, frozen ground, by our sides.

Those not able to crawl even, were taken in wagons, for the orders were imperative not to leave a living prisoner behind.

At the railroad we found two trains awaiting us. On the front of each engine were two rude white flags, made by fastening the halves of meal sacks to short sticks. The sight of these gave us some hope, but our belief that Rebels were constitutional liars and deceivers was so firm and fixed, that we persuaded ourselves that the flags meant nothing more than some wilful delusion for us.

Again we started off in the direction of Wilmington, and traversed the same country described in the previous chapter. Again Andrews and I found ourselves in the next box car to the passenger coach containing the Rebel officers. Again we cut a hole through the end, with our saw, and again found a darky servant sitting on the rear platform. Andrews went out and sat down alongside of him, and found that he was seated upon a large gunny-bag sack containing the cooked rations of the Rebel officers.

The intelligence that there was something there worth taking Andrews communicated to me by an expressive signal, of which soldiers campaigning together as long as he and I had, always have an extensive and well understood code.

I took a seat in the hole we had made in the end of the car, in reach of Andrews. Andrews called the attention of the negro to some feature of the country near by, and asked him a question in regard to it. As he looked in the direction indicated, Andrews slipped his hand into the mouth of the bag, and pulled out a small sack of wheat biscuits, which he passed to me and I concealed. The darky turned and told Andrews all about the matter in regard to which the interrogation had been made. Andrews became so much interested in what was being told him, that he

sat up closer and closer to the darky, who in turn moved farther away from the sack.

Next we ran through a turpentine plantation, and as the darky was pointing out where the still, the master's place, the "quarters," etc., were, Andrews managed to fish out of that bag and pass to me three roasted chickens. Then a great swamp called for description, and before we were through with it, I had about a peck of boiled sweet potatoes.

Andrews emptied the bag as the darky was showing him a great peanut plantation, taking from it a small frying-pan, a canteen of molasses, and a half-gallon tin bucket, which had been used to make coffee in. We divided up our wealth of eatables with the rest of the boys in the car, not forgetting to keep enough to give ourselves a magnificent meal.

As we ran along we searched carefully for the place where we had seen the line-of-battle, expecting that it would now be marked with signs of a terrible conflict, but we could see nothing. We could not even fix the locality where the line stood.

As it became apparent that we were going directly toward Wilmington, as fast as our engines could pull us, the excitement rose. We had many misgivings as to whether our folks still retained possession of Wilmington, and whether, if they did, the Rebels could not stop at a point outside of our lines, and transfer us to some other road.

For hours we had seen nobody in the country through which we were passing. What few houses were visible were apparently deserted, and there were no Towns or stations anywhere. We were very anxious to see some one, in hopes of getting a hint of what the state of affairs was in the direction we were going. At length we saw a young man—apparently a scout—on horseback, but his clothes were equally divided between the blue and the butternut, as to give no clue to which side he belonged.

An hour later we saw two infantrymen, who were evidently out foraging. They had sacks of something on their backs, and wore blue clothes. This was a very hopeful sign of a near approach to our lines, but bitter experience in the past warned us against being too sanguine.

About 4 o'clock P. M., the trains stopped and whistled long and loud. Looking

out I could see—perhaps half-a-mile away—a line of rifle pits running at right angles with the track. Guards, whose guns flashed as they turned, were pacing up and down, but they were too far away for me to distinguish their uniforms.

The suspense became fearful.

But I received much encouragement from the singular conduct of our guards. First I noticed a Captain, who had been especially mean to us while at Florence.

He was walking on the ground by the train. His face was pale, his teeth set, and his eyes shone with excitement. He called out in a strange, forced voice to his men and boys on the roof of the cars

“Here, you fellers git down off ’en thar and form a line.”

The fellows did so, in a slow, constrained, frightened ways and huddled together, in the most unsoldierly manner.

The whole thing reminded me of a scene I once saw in our line, where a weak-kneed Captain was ordered to take a party of rather chicken-hearted recruits out on the skirmish-line.

We immediately divined what was the matter. The lines in front of us were really those of our people, and the idiots of guards, not knowing of their entire safety when protected by a flag of truce, were scared half out of their small wits at approaching so near to armed Yankees.

We showered taunts and jeers upon them. An Irishman in my car yelled out:

“Och, ye dirty spalpeens; it’s not shootin’ prisoners ye are now; it’s cumin’ where the Yankee b’ys hev the gun; and the minnit ye say thim yer white livers show themselves in yer pale faces. Bad luck to the blatherin’ bastards that yez are, and to the mothers that bore ye.”

At length our train moved up so near to the line that I could see it was the grand, old loyal blue that clothed the forms of the men who were pacing up and down.

And certainly the world does not hold as superb looking men as these appeared to me. Finely formed, stalwart, full-fed and well clothed, they formed the most delightful contrast with the scrawny, shambling, villain-visaged little clay-eaters

and white trash who had looked down upon us from the sentry boxes for many long months.

I sprang out of the cars and began washing my face and hands in the ditch at the side of the road. The Rebel Captain, noticing me, said, in the old, hateful, brutal, imperious tone:

“Git back in dat cah, dah.”

An hour before I would have scrambled back as quickly as possible, knowing that an instant’s hesitation would be followed by a bullet. Now, I looked him in the face, and said as irritatingly as possible:

“O, you go to —, you Rebel. I’m going into Uncle Sam’s lines with as little Rebel filth on me as possible.”

He passed me without replying.

His day of shooting was past.

Descending from the cars, we passed through the guards into our lines, a Rebel and a Union clerk checking us off as we passed. By the time it was dark we were all under our flag again.

The place where we came through was several miles west of Wilmington, where the railroad crossed a branch of the Cape Fear River. The point was held by a brigade of Schofield’s army—the Twenty-Third Army Corps.

The boys lavished unstinted kindness upon us. All of the brigade off duty crowded around, offering us blankets, shirts shoes, pantaloons and other articles of clothing and similar things that we were obviously in the greatest need of. The sick were carried, by hundreds of willing hands, to a sheltered spot, and laid upon good, comfortable beds improvised with leaves and blankets. A great line of huge, generous fires was built, that every one of us could have plenty of place around them.

By and by a line of wagons came over from Wilmington laden with rations, and they were dispensed to us with what seemed reckless prodigality. The lid of a box of hard tack would be knocked off, and the contents handed to us as we filed past, with absolute disregard as to quantity. If a prisoner looked wistful after

receiving one handful of crackers, another was handed to him; if his long-famished eyes still lingered as if enchained by the rare display of food, the men who were issuing said:

“Here, old fellow, there’s plenty of it: take just as much as you can carry in your arms.”

So it was also with the pickled pork, the coffee, the sugar, *etc.* We had been stinted and starved so long that we could not comprehend that there was anywhere actually enough of anything.

The kind-hearted boys who were acting as our hosts began preparing food for the sick, but the Surgeons, who had arrived in the meanwhile, were compelled to repress them, as it was plain that while it was a dangerous experiment to give any of us all we could or would eat, it would never do to give the sick such a temptation to kill themselves, and only a limited amount of food was allowed to be given those who were unable to walk.

Andrews and I hungered for coffee, the delightful fumes of which filled the air and intoxicated our senses. We procured enough to make our half-gallon bucket full and very strong.

We drank so much of this that Andrews became positively drunk, and fell helplessly into some brush. I pulled him out and dragged him away to a place where we had made our rude bed.

I was dazed. I could not comprehend that the long-looked for, often-despaired-of event had actually happened. I feared that it was one of those tantalizing dreams that had so often haunted my sleep, only to be followed by a wretched awakening. Then I became seized with a sudden fear lest the Rebel attempt to retake me. The line of guards around us seemed very slight. It might be forced in the night, and all of us recaptured. Shivering at this thought, absurd though it was, I arose from our bed, and taking Andrews with me, crawled two or three hundred yards into a dense undergrowth, where in the event of our lines being forced, we would be overlooked.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

GETTING USED TO FREEDOM—DELIGHTS OF A LAND WHERE THERE IS ENOUGH OF EVERYTHING—FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE OLD FLAG—WILMINGTON AND ITS HISTORY —LIEUTENANT CUSHING—FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE COLORED TROOPS—LEAVING FOR HOME—DESTRUCTION OF THE “THORN” BY A TORPEDO—THE MOCK MONITOR’S ACHIEVEMENT.

After a sound sleep, Andrews and I awoke to the enjoyment of our first day of freedom and existence in God’s country. The sun had already risen, bright and warm, consonant with the happiness of the new life now opening up for us.

But to nearly a score of our party his beams brought no awakening gladness. They fell upon stony, staring eyes, from out of which the light of life had now faded, as the light of hope had done long ago. The dead lay there upon the rude beds of fallen leaves, scraped together by thoughtful comrades the night before, their clenched teeth showing through parted lips, faces fleshless and pinched, long, unkempt and ragged hair and whiskers just stirred by the lazy breeze, the rotting feet and limbs drawn up, and skinny hands clenched in the last agonies.

Their fate seemed harder than that of any who had died before them. It was doubtful if many of them knew that they were at last inside of our own lines.

Again the kind-hearted boys of the brigade crowded around us with proffers of service. Of an Ohio boy who directed his kind tenders to Andrews and me, we procured a chunk of coarse rosin soap about as big as a pack of cards, and a towel. Never was there as great a quantity of solid comfort got out of that much soap as we obtained. It was the first that we had since that which I stole in Wirz’s headquarters, in June— nine months before. We felt that the dirt which had accumulated upon us since then would subject us to assessment as real estate if we were in the North.

Hurrying off to a little creek we began our ablutions, and it was not long until Andrews declared that there was a perceptible sand-bar forming in the stream, from what we washed off. Dirt deposits of the Pliocene era rolled off feet and legs. Eocene incrustations let loose reluctantly from neck and ears; the hair was a mass of tangled locks matted with nine months’ accumulation of pitch pine tar, rosin soot, and South Carolina sand, that we did not think we had better start in upon it until we either had the shock cut off, or had a whole ocean and a vat of soap to wash it out with.

After scrubbing until we were exhausted we got off the first few outer layers—the post tertiary formation, a geologist would term it—and the smell of many breakfasts cooking, coming down over the hill, set our stomachs in a mutiny against any longer fasting.

We went back, rosy, panting, glowing, but happy, to get our selves some breakfast.

Should Providence, for some inscrutable reason, vouchsafe me the years of Methuselah, one of the pleasantest recollections that will abide with me to the close of the nine hundredth and sixty-ninth year, will be of that delightful odor of cooking food which regaled our senses as we came back. From the boiling coffee and the meat frying in the pan rose an incense sweeter to the senses a thousand times than all the perfumes of far Arabia. It differed from the loathsome odor of cooking corn meal as much as it did from the effluvia of a sewer.

Our noses were the first of our senses to bear testimony that we had passed from the land of starvation to that of plenty. Andrews and I hastened off to get our own breakfast, and soon had a half-gallon of strong coffee, and a frying-pan full, of meat cooking over the fire—not one of the beggarly skimmed little fires we had crouched over during our months of imprisonment, but a royal, generous fire, fed with logs instead of shavings and splinters, and giving out heat enough to warm a regiment.

Having eaten positively all that we could swallow, those of us who could walk were ordered to fall in and march over to Wilmington. We crossed the branch of the river on a pontoon bridge, and took the road that led across the narrow sandy island between the two branches, Wilmington being situated on the opposite bank of the farther one.

When about half way a shout from some one in advance caused us to look up, and then we saw, flying from a tall steeple in Wilmington, the glorious old Stars and Stripes, resplendent in the morning sun, and more beautiful than the most gorgeous web from Tyrian looms. We stopped with one accord, and shouted and cheered and cried until every throat was sore and every eye red and blood-shot. It seemed as if our cup of happiness would certainly run over if any more additions were made to it.

When we arrived at the bank of the river opposite Wilmington, a whole world of new and interesting sights opened up before us. Wilmington, during the last year-and-a-half of the war, was, next to Richmond, the most important place in the Southern Confederacy. It was the only port to which blockade running was at all safe enough to be lucrative. The Rebels held the strong forts of Caswell and Fisher, at the mouth of Cape Fear River, and outside, the Frying Pan Shoals, which extended along the coast forty or fifty miles, kept our blockading fleet so far off, and made the line so weak and scattered, that there was comparatively little risk to the small, swift-sailing vessels employed by the blockade runners in running through it. The only way that blockade running could be stopped was by the reduction of Forts Caswell and Fisher, and it was not stopped until this was done.

Before the war Wilmington was a dull, sleepy North Carolina Town, with as little animation of any kind as a Breton Pillage. The only business was the handling of the tar, turpentine, rosin, and peanuts produced in the surrounding country, a business never lively enough to excite more than a lazy ripple in the sluggish lagoons of trade. But very new wine was put into this old bottle when blockade running began to develop in importance. Then this Sleepy hollow of a place took on the appearance of San Francisco in the height of the gold fever. The English houses engaged in blockade running established branches there conducted by young men who lived like princes. All the best houses in the City were leased by them and fitted up in the most gorgeous style. They literally clothed themselves in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, with their fine wines and imported delicacies and retinue of servants to wait upon them. Fast young Rebel officers, eager for a season of dissipation, could imagine nothing better than a leave of absence to go to Wilmington. Money flowed like water. The common sailors—the scum of all foreign ports—who manned the blockade runners, received as high as one hundred dollars in gold per month, and a bounty of fifty dollars for every successful trip, which from Nassau could be easily made in seven days. Other people were paid in proportion, and as the old proverb says, “What comes over the Devil’s back is spent under his breast,” the money so obtained was squandered recklessly, and all sorts of debauchery ran riot.

On the ground where we were standing had been erected several large steam cotton presses, built to compress cotton for the blockade runners. Around them were stored immense quantities of cotton, and near by were nearly as great stores of turpentine, rosin and tar. A little farther down the river was navy yard with

docks, etc., for the accommodation, building and repair of blockade runners. At the time our folks took Fort Fisher and advanced on Wilmington the docks were filled with vessels. The retreating Rebels set fire to everything—cotton, cotton presses, turpentine, rosin, tar, navy yard, naval stores, timber, docks, and vessels, and the fire made clean work. Our people arrived too late to save anything, and when we came in the smoke from the burned cotton, turpentine, etc., still filled the woods. It was a signal illustration of the ravages of war. Here had been destroyed, in a few hours, more property than a half-million industrious men would accumulate in their lives.

Almost as gratifying as the sight of the old flag flying in triumph, was the exhibition of our naval power in the river before us. The larger part of the great North Atlantic squadron, which had done such excellent service in the reduction of the defenses of Wilmington, was lying at anchor, with their hundreds of huge guns yawning as if ardent for more great forts to beat down, more vessels to sink, more heavy artillery to crush, more Rebels to conquer. It seemed as if there were cannon enough there to blow the whole Confederacy into kingdom-come. All was life and animation around the fleet. On the decks the officers were pacing up and down. One on each vessel carried a long telescope, with which he almost constantly swept the horizon. Numberless small boats, each rowed by neatly-uniformed men, and carrying a flag in the stern, darted hither and thither, carrying officers on errands of duty or pleasure. It was such a scene as enabled me to realize in a measure, the descriptions I had read of the pomp and circumstance of naval warfare.

While we were standing, contemplating all the interesting sights within view, a small steamer, about the size of a canal-boat, and carrying several bright brass guns, ran swiftly and noiselessly up to the dock near by, and a young, pale-faced officer, slender in build and nervous in manner, stepped ashore. Some of the blue jackets who were talking to us looked at him and the vessel with the greatest expression of interest, and said:

“Hello! there’s the ‘Monticello’ and Lieutenant Cushing.”

This, then, was the naval boy hero, with whose exploits the whole country was ringing. Our sailor friends proceeded to tell us of his achievements, of which they were justly proud. They told us of his perilous scouts and his hairbreadth escapes, of his wonderful audacity and still more wonderful success—of his capture of Towns with a handful of sailors, and the destruction of valuable

stores, *etc.* I felt very sorry that the man was not a cavalry commander. There he would have had full scope for his peculiar genius. He had come prominently into notice in the preceding Autumn, when he had, by one of the most daring performances narrated in naval history, destroyed the formidable ram “Albermarle.” This vessel had been constructed by the Rebels on the Roanoke River, and had done them very good service, first by assisting to reduce the forts and capture the garrison at Plymouth, N. C., and afterward in some minor engagements. In October, 1864, she was lying at Plymouth. Around her was a boom of logs to prevent sudden approaches of boats or vessels from our fleet. Cushing, who was then barely twenty-one, resolved to attempt her destruction. He fitted up a steam launch with a long spar to which he attached a torpedo. On the night of October 27th, with thirteen companions, he ran quietly up the Sound and was not discovered until his boat struck the boom, when a terrific fire was opened upon him. Backing a short distance, he ran at the boom with such velocity that his boat leaped across it into the water beyond. In an instant more his torpedo struck the side of the “Albermarle” and exploded, tearing a great hole in her hull, which sank her in a few minutes. At the moment the torpedo went off the “Albermarle” fired one of her great guns directly into the launch, tearing it completely to pieces. Lieutenant Cushing and one comrade rose to the surface of the seething water and, swimming ashore, escaped. What became of the rest is not known, but their fate can hardly be a matter of doubt.

We were ferried across the river into Wilmington, and marched up the streets to some vacant ground near the railroad depot, where we found most of our old Florence comrades already assembled. When they left us in the middle of February they were taken to Wilmington, and thence to Goldsboro, N. C., where they were kept until the rapid closing in of our Armies made it impracticable to hold them any longer, when they were sent back to Wilmington and given up to our forces as we had been.

It was now nearly noon, and we were ordered to fall in and draw rations, a bewildering order to us, who had been so long in the habit of drawing food but once a day. We fell in in single rank, and marched up, one at a time, past where a group of employees of the Commissary Department dealt out the food. One handed each prisoner as he passed a large slice of meat; another gave him a handful of ground coffee; a third a handful of sugar; a fourth gave him a pickle, while a fifth and sixth handed him an onion and a loaf of fresh bread. This filled the horn of our plenty full. To have all these in one day—meat, coffee, sugar, onions and soft bread—was simply to riot in undreamed-of luxury. Many of the

boys—poor fellows—could not yet realize that there was enough for all, or they could not give up their old “flanking” tricks, and they stole around, and falling into the rear, came up again for’ another share. We laughed at them, as did the Commissary men, who, nevertheless, duplicated the rations already received, and sent them away happy and content.

What a glorious dinner Andrews and I had, with our half gallon of strong coffee, our soft bread, and a pan full of fried pork and onions! Such an enjoyable feast will never be, eaten again by us.

Here we saw negro troops under arms for the first time—the most of the organization of colored soldiers having been, done since our capture. It was startling at first to see a stalwart, coal-black negro stalking along with a Sergeant’s chevrons on his arm, or to gaze on a regimental line of dusky faces on dress parade, but we soon got used to it. The first strong peculiarity of the negro soldier that impressed itself, upon us was his literal obedience of orders. A white soldier usually allows himself considerable discretion in obeying orders—he aims more at the spirit, while the negro adheres to the strict letter of the command.

For instance, the second day after our arrival a line of guards were placed around us, with orders not to allow any of us to go up town without a pass. The reason of this was that many weak—even dying-men would persist in wandering about, and would be found exhausted, frequently dead, in various parts of the City. Andrews and I concluded to go up town. Approaching a negro sentinel he warned us back with,

“Stand back, dah; don’t come any fuder; it’s agin de awdahs; you can’t pass.”

He would not allow us to argue the case, but brought his gun to such a threatening position that we fell back. Going down the line a little farther, we came to a white sentinel, to whom I said:

“Comrade, what are your orders?”

He replied:

“My orders are not to let any of you fellows pass, but my beat only extends to that out-house there.”

Acting on this plain hint, we walked around the house and went up-town. The guard simply construed his orders in a liberal spirit. He reasoned that they hardly applied to us, since we were evidently able to take care of ourselves.

Later we had another illustration of this dog like fidelity of the colored sentinel. A number of us were quartered in a large and empty warehouse. On the same floor, and close to us, were a couple of very fine horses belonging to some officer. We had not been in the warehouse very long until we concluded that the straw with which the horses were bedded would be better used in making couches for ourselves, and this suggestion was instantly acted upon, and so thoroughly that there was not a straw left between the animals and the bare boards. Presently the owner of the horses came in, and he was greatly incensed at what had been done. He relieved his mind of a few sulphurous oaths, and going out, came back soon with a man with more straw, and a colored soldier whom he stationed by the horses, saying:

“Now, look here. You musn’t let anybody take anything sway from these stalls; d’you understand me?—not a thing.”

He then went out. Andrews and I had just finished cooking dinner, and were sitting down to eat it. Wishing to lend our frying-pan to another mess, I looked around for something to lay our meat upon. Near the horses I saw a book cover, which would answer the purpose admirably. Springing up, I skipped across to where it was, snatched it up, and ran back to my place. As I reached it a yell from the boys made me look around. The darky was coming at me “full tilt,” with his gun at a “charge bayonets.” As I turned he said:

“Put dat right back dah!”

I said:

“Why, this don’t amount to anything, this is only an old book cover. It hasn’t anything in the world to do with the horses.”

He only replied:

“Put dat right back dah!”

I tried another appeal:

“Now, you woolly-headed son of thunder, haven’t you got sense enough to know that the officer who posted you didn’t mean such a thing as this! He only meant that we should not be allowed to take any of the horses’ bedding or equipments; don’t you see?”

I might as well have reasoned with a cigar store Indian. He set his teeth, his eyes showed a dangerous amount of white, and foreshortening his musket for a lunge, he hissed out again “Put dat right back dah, I tell you!”

I looked at the bayonet; it was very long, very bright, and very sharp. It gleamed cold and chilly like, as if it had not run through a man for a long time, and yearned for another opportunity. Nothing but the whites of the darky’s eyes could now be seen. I did not want to perish there in the fresh bloom of my youth and loveliness; it seemed to me as if it was my duty to reserve myself for fields of future usefulness, so I walked back and laid the book cover precisely on the spot whence I had obtained it, while the thousand boys in the house set up a yell of sarcastic laughter.

We staid in Wilmington a few days, days of almost purely animal enjoyment—the joy of having just as much to eat as we could possibly swallow, and no one to molest or make us afraid in any way. How we did eat and fill up. The wrinkles in our skin smoothed out under the stretching, and we began to feel as if we were returning to our old plumpness, though so far the plumpness was wholly abdominal.

One morning we were told that the transports would begin going back with us that afternoon, the first that left taking the sick. Andrews and I, true to our old prison practices, resolved to be among those on the first boat. We slipped through the guards and going up town, went straight to Major General Schofield’s headquarters and solicited a pass to go on the first boat—the steamer “Thorn.” General Schofield treated us very kindly; but declined to let anybody but the helplessly sick go on the “Thorn.” Defeated here we went down to where the vessel was lying at the dock, and tried to smuggle ourselves aboard, but the guard was too strong and too vigilant, and we were driven away. Going along the dock, angry and discouraged by our failure, we saw a Surgeon, at a little distance, who was examining and sending the sick who could walk aboard another vessel—the “General Lyon.” We took our cue, and a little shamming secured from him tickets which permitted us to take our passage in her. The larger portion of those on board were in the hold, and a few were on deck.

Andrews and I found a snug place under the forecastle, by the anchor chains.

Both vessels speedily received their complement, and leaving their docks, started down the river. The “Thorn” steamed ahead of us, and disappeared. Shortly after we got under way, the Colonel who was put in command of the boat—himself a released prisoner—came around on a tour of inspection. He found about one thousand of us aboard, and singling me out made me the non-commissioned officer in command. I was put in charge, of issuing the rations and of a barrel of milk punch which the Sanitary Commission had sent down to be dealt out on the voyage to such as needed it. I went to work and arranged the boys in the best way I could, and returned to the deck to view the scenery.

Wilmington is thirty-four miles from the sea, and the river for that distance is a calm, broad estuary. At this time the resources of Rebel engineering were exhausted in defense against its passage by a hostile fleet, and undoubtedly the best work of the kind in the Southern Confederacy was done upon it. At its mouth were Forts Fisher and Caswell, the strongest sea coast forts in the Confederacy. Fort Caswell was an old United States fort, much enlarged and strengthened. Fort Fisher was a new work, begun immediately after the beginning of the war, and labored at incessantly until captured. Behind these every one of the thirty-four miles to Wilmington was covered with the fire of the best guns the English arsenals could produce, mounted on forts built at every advantageous spot. Lines of piles running out into the water, forced incoming vessels to wind back and forth across the stream under the point-blank range of massive Armstrong rifles. As if this were not sufficient, the channel was thickly studded with torpedoes that would explode at the touch of the keel of a passing vessel. These abundant precautions, and the telegram from General Lee, found in Fort Fisher, stating that unless that stronghold and Fort Caswell were held he could not hold Richmond, give some idea of the importance of the place to the Rebels.

We passed groups of hundreds of sailors fishing for torpedos, and saw many of these dangerous monsters, which they had hauled up out of the water. We caught up with the “Thorn,” when about half way to the sea, passed her, to our great delight, and soon left a gap between us of nearly half-a-mile. We ran through an opening in the piling, holding up close to the left side, and she apparently followed our course exactly. Suddenly there was a dull roar; a column of water, bearing with it fragments of timbers, planking and human bodies, rose up through one side of the vessel, and, as it fell, she lurched forward and sank. She

had struck a torpedo. I never learned the number lost, but it must have been very great.

Some little time after this happened we approached Fort Anderson, the most powerful of the works between Wilmington and the forts at the mouth of the sea. It was built on the ruins of the little Town of Brunswick, destroyed by Cornwallis during the Revolutionary War. We saw a monitor lying near it, and sought good positions to view this specimen of the redoubtable ironclads of which we had heard and read so much. It looked precisely as it did in pictures, as black, as grim, and as uncompromising as the impregnable floating fortress which had brought the "Merrimac" to terms.

But as we approached closely we noticed a limpness about the smoke stack that seemed very inconsistent with the customary rigidity of cylindrical iron. Then the escape pipe seemed scarcely able to maintain itself upright. A few minutes later we discovered that our terrible Cyclops of the sea was a flimsy humbug, a theatrical imitation, made by stretching blackened canvas over a wooden frame.

One of the officers on board told us its story. After the fall of Fort Fisher the Rebels retired to Fort Anderson, and offered a desperate resistance to our army and fleet. Owing to the shallowness of the water the latter could not come into close enough range to do effective work. Then the happy idea of this sham monitor suggested itself to some one. It was prepared, and one morning before daybreak it was sent floating in on the tide. The other monitors opened up a heavy fire from their position. The Rebels manned their guns and replied vigorously, by concentrating a terrible cannonade on the sham monitor, which sailed grandly on, undisturbed by the heavy rifled bolts tearing through her canvas turret. Almost frantic with apprehension of the result if she could not be checked, every gun that would bear was turned upon her, and torpedos were exploded in her pathway by electricity. All these she treated with the silent contempt they merited from so invulnerable a monster. At length, as she reached a good easy range of the fort, her bow struck something, and she swung around as if to open fire. That was enough for the Rebels. With Schofield's army reaching out to cut off their retreat, and this dreadful thing about to tear the insides out of their fort with four-hundred-pound shot at quarter-mile range, there was nothing for them to do but consult their own safety, which they did with such haste that they did not spike a gun, or destroy a pound of stores.

CHAPTER LXXX

VISIT TO FORT FISHER, AND INSPECTION OF THAT STRONGHOLD—
THE WAY IT WAS CAPTURED—OUT ON THE OCEAN SAILING—
TERRIBLY SEASICK—RAPID RECOVERY— ARRIVAL AT ANNAPOLIS
—WASHED, CLOTHED AND FED—UNBOUNDED LUXURY, AND DAYS
OF UNADULTERATED HAPPINESS.

When we reached the mouth of Cape Fear River the wind was blowing so hard that our Captain did not think it best to venture out, so he cast anchor. The cabin of the vessel was filled with officers who had been released from prison about the same time we were. I was also given a berth in the cabin, in consideration of my being the non-commissioned officer in charge of the men, and I found the associations quite pleasant. A party was made up, which included me, to visit Fort Fisher, and we spent the larger part of a day very agreeably in wandering over that great stronghold. We found it wonderful in its strength, and were prepared to accept the statement of those who had seen foreign defensive works, that it was much more powerful than the famous Malakoff, which so long defied the besiegers of Sebastopol.

The situation of the fort was on a narrow and low spit of ground between Cape Fear River and the ocean. On this the Rebels had erected, with prodigious labor, an embankment over a mile in length, twenty-five feet thick and twenty feet high. About two-thirds of this bank faced the sea; the other third ran across the spit of land to protect the fort against an attack from the land side. Still stronger than the bank forming the front of the fort were the traverses, which prevented an enfilading fire. These were regular hills, twenty-five to forty feet high, and broad and long in proportion. There were fifteen or twenty of them along the face of the fort. Inside of them were capacious bomb proofs, sufficiently large to shelter the whole garrison. It seemed as if a whole Township had been dug up, carted down there and set on edge. In front of the works was a strong palisade. Between each pair of traverses were one or two enormous guns, none less than one-hundred-and-fifty pounders. Among these we saw a great Armstrong gun, which had been presented to the Southern Confederacy by its manufacturer, Sir William Armstrong, who, like the majority of the English nobility, was a warm admirer of the Jeff. Davis crowd. It was the finest piece of ordnance ever seen in this country. The carriage was rosewood, and the mountings gilt brass. The

breech of the gun had five reinforcements.

To attack this place our Government assembled the most powerful fleet ever sent on such an expedition. Over seventy-five men-of-war, including six monitors, and carrying six hundred guns, assailed it with a storm of shot and shell that averaged four projectiles per second for several hours; the parapet was battered, and the large guns crushed as one smashes a bottle with a stone. The garrison fled into the bomb-proofs for protection. The troops, who had landed above the fort, moved up to assail the land face, while a brigade of sailors and marines attacked the sea face.

As the fleet had to cease firing to allow the charge, the Rebels ran out of their casemates and, manning the parapet, opened such a fire of musketry that the brigade from the fleet was driven back, but the soldiers made a lodgment on the land face. Then began some beautiful cooperative tactics between the Army and Navy, communication being kept up with signal flags. Our men were on one side of the parapets and the Rebels on the other, with the fighting almost hand-to-hand. The vessels ranged out to where their guns would rake the Rebel line, and as their shot tore down its length, the Rebels gave way, and falling back to the next traverse, renewed the conflict there. Guided by the signals our vessels changed their positions, so as to rake this line also, and so the fight went on until twelve traverses had been carried, one after the other, when the rebels surrendered.

The next day the Rebels abandoned Fort Caswell and other fortifications in the immediate neighborhood, surrendered two gunboats, and fell back to the lines at Fort Anderson. After Fort Fisher fell, several blockade-runners were lured inside and captured.

Never before had there been such a demonstration of the power of heavy artillery. Huge cannon were pounded into fragments, hills of sand ripped open, deep crevasses blown in the ground by exploding shells, wooden buildings reduced to kindling-wood, *etc.* The ground was literally paved with fragments of shot and shell, which, now red with rust from the corroding salt air, made the interior of the fort resemble what one of our party likened it to “an old brickyard.”

Whichever way we looked along the shores we saw abundant evidence of the greatness of the business which gave the place its importance. In all directions,

as far as the eye could reach, the beach was dotted with the bleaching skeletons of blockade-runners—some run ashore by their mistaking the channel, more beached to escape the hot pursuit of our blockaders.

Directly in front of the sea face of the fort, and not four hundred yards from the savage mouths of the huge guns, the blackened timbers of a burned blockade-runner showed above the water at low tide. Coming in from Nassau with a cargo of priceless value to the gasping Confederacy, she was observed and chased by one of our vessels, a swifter sailer, even, than herself. The war ship closed rapidly upon her. She sought the protection of the guns of Fort Fisher, which opened venomously on the chaser. They did not stop her, though they were less than half a mile away. In another minute she would have sent the Rebel vessel to the bottom of the sea, by a broadside from her heavy guns, but the Captain of the latter turned her suddenly, and ran her high up on the beach, wrecking his vessel, but saving the much more valuable cargo. Our vessel then hauled off, and as night fell, quiet was restored. At midnight two boat-loads of determined men, rowing with muffled oars moved silently out from the blockader towards the beached vessel. In their boats they had some cans of turpentine, and several large shells. When they reached the blockade-runner they found all her crew gone ashore, save one watchman, whom they overpowered before he could give the alarm. They cautiously felt their way around, with the aid of a dark lantern, secured the ship's chronometer, her papers and some other desired objects. They then saturated with the turpentine piles of combustible material, placed about the vessel to the best advantage, and finished by depositing the shells where their explosion would ruin the machinery. All this was done so near to the fort that the sentinels on the parapets could be heard with the greatest distinctness as they repeated their half-hourly cry of "All's well." Their preparations completed, the daring fellows touched matches to the doomed vessel in a dozen places at once, and sprang into their boats. The flames instantly enveloped the ship, and showed the gunners the incendiaries rowing rapidly away. A hail of shot beat the water into a foam around the boats, but their good fortune still attended them, and they got back without losing a man.

The wind at length calmed sufficiently to encourage our Captain to venture out, and we were soon battling with the rolling waves, far out of sight of land. For awhile the novelty of the scene fascinated me. I was at last on the ocean, of which I had heard, read and imagined so much. The creaking cordage, the straining engine, the plunging ship, the wild waste of tumbling billows, everyone apparently racing to where our tossing bark was struggling to maintain herself,

all had an entrancing interest for me, and I tried to recall Byron's sublime apostrophe to the ocean:

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Classes itself in tempest: in
all time, Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the
torrid clime Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime—
The image of
eternity—the throne
Of the invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of
the deep are made; each zone
Obey thee: thou goest forth, dread, fathomless,
alone,

Just then, my reverie was broken by the strong hand of the gruff Captain of, the vessel descending upon my shoulder, and he said:

“See, here, youngster! Ain't you the fellow that was put in command of these men?”

I acknowledged such to be the case.

“Well,” said the Captain; “I want you to ‘tend to your business and straighten them around, so that we can clean off the decks.”

I turned from the bulwark over which I had been contemplating the vasty deep, and saw the sorriest, most woe-begone lot that the imagination can conceive. Every mother's son was wretchedly seasick. They were paying the penalty of their overfeeding in Wilmington; and every face looked as if its owner was discovering for the first time what the real lower depths of human misery was. They all seemed afraid they would not die; as if they were praying for death, but feeling certain that he was going back on them in a most shameful way.

We straightened them around a little, washed them and the decks off with a hose, and then I started down in the hold to see how matters were with the six hundred down there. The boys there were much sicker than those on deck. As I lifted the hatch there rose an odor which appeared strong enough to raise the plank itself. Every onion that had been issued to us in Wilmington seemed to lie down there in the last stages of decomposition. All of the seventy distinct smells which Coleridge counted at Cologne might have been counted in any given cubic foot of atmosphere, while the next foot would have an entirely different and equally demonstrative “bouquet.”

I recoiled, and leaned against the bulwark, but soon summoned up courage

enough to go half-way down the ladder, and shout out in as stern a tone as I could command:

“Here, now! I want you fellows to straighten around there, right off, and help clean up!”

They were as angry and cross as they were sick. They wanted nothing in the world so much as the opportunity I had given them to swear at and abuse somebody. Every one of them raised on his elbow, and shaking his fist at me yelled out:

“O, you go to —, you — — —. Just come down another step, and I’ll knock the whole head off ‘en you.”

I did not go down any farther.

Coming back on the deck my stomach began to feel qualmish. Some wretched idiot, whose grandfather’s grave I hope the jackasses have defiled, as the Turks would say, told me that the best preventive of seasickness was to drink as much of the milk punch as I could swallow.

Like another idiot, I did so.

I went again to the side of the vessel, but now the fascination of the scene had all faded out. The restless billows were dreary, savage, hungry and dizzying; they seemed to claw at, and tear, and wrench the struggling ship as a group of huge lions would tease and worry a captive dog. They distressed her and all on board by dealing a blow which would send her reeling in one direction, but before she had swung the full length that impulse would have sent her, catching her on the opposite side with a stunning shock that sent her another way, only to meet another rude buffet from still another side.

I thought we could all have stood it if the motion had been like that of a swing-backward and forward—or even if the to and fro motion had been complicated with a side-wise swing, but to be put through every possible bewildering motion in the briefest space of time was more than heads of iron and stomachs of brass could stand.

Mine were not made of such perdurable stuff.

They commenced mutinous demonstrations in regard to the milk punch.

I began wondering whether the milk was not the horrible beer swill, stump-tail kind of which I had heard so much.

And the whisky in it; to use a vigorous Westernism, descriptive of mean whisky, it seemed to me that I could smell the boy's feet who plowed the corn from which it was distilled.

Then the onions I had eaten in Wilmington began to rebel, and incite the bread, meat and coffee to gastric insurrection, and I became so utterly wretched that life had no farther attractions.

While I was leaning over the bulwark, musing on the complete hollowness of all earthly things, the Captain of the vessel caught hold of me roughly, and said:

“Look here, you're just playin' the very devil a-commandin' these here men. Why in — don't you stiffen up, and hump yourself around, and make these men mind, or else belt them over the head with a capstan bar! Now I want you to 'tend to your business. D'you understand me?”

I turned a pair of weary and hopeless eyes upon him, and started to say that a man who would talk to one in my forlorn condition of “stiffening up,” and “belting other fellows over the head with a capstan bar,” would insult a woman dying with consumption, but I suddenly became too full for utterance.

The milk punch, the onions, the bread, and meat and coffee tired of fighting it out in the narrow quarters where I had stowed them, had started upwards tumultuously.

I turned my head again to the sea, and looking down into its smaragdine depths, let go of the victualistic store which I had been industriously accumulating ever since I had come through the lines.

I vomited until I felt as empty and hollow as a stove pipe. There was a vacuum that extended clear to my toe-nails. I feared that every retching struggle would dent me in, all over, as one sees tin preserving cans crushed in by outside pressure, and I apprehended that if I kept on much longer my shoe-soles would come up after the rest.

I will mention, parenthetically, that, to this day I abhor milk punch, and also onions.

Unutterably miserable as I was I could not refrain from a ghost of a smile, when a poor country boy near me sang out in an interval between vomiting spells:

“O, Captain, for God’s sake, stop the boat and lem’me go ashore, and I swear I’ll walk every step of the way home.”

He was like old Gonzalo in the ‘Tempest:’

Now world I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground; long heath; brown furze; anything. The wills above be done! but I would fain die a dry death.

After this misery had lasted about two days we got past Cape Hatteras, and out of reach of its malign influence, and recovered as rapidly as we had been prostrated.

We regained spirits and appetites with amazing swiftness; the sun came out warm and cheerful, we cleaned up our quarters and ourselves as best we could, and during the remainder of the voyage were as blithe and cheerful as so many crickets.

The fun in the cabin was rollicking. The officers had been as sick as the men, but were wonderfully vivacious when the ‘mal du mer’ passed off. In the party was a fine glee club, which had been organized at “Camp Sorgum,” the officers’ prison at Columbia. Its leader was a Major of the Fifth Iowa Cavalry, who possessed a marvelously sweet tenor voice, and well developed musical powers. While we were at Wilmington he sang “When Sherman Marched Down to the Sea,” to an audience of soldiers that packed the Opera House densely.

The enthusiasm he aroused was simply indescribable; men shouted, and the tears ran down their faces. He was recalled time and again, each time with an increase in the furore. The audience would have staid there all night to listen to him sing that one song. Poor fellow, he only went home to die. An attack of pneumonia carried him off within a fortnight after we separated at Annapolis.

The Glee Club had several songs which they rendered in regular negro minstrel style, and in a way that was irresistibly ludicrous. One of their favorites was

“Billy Patterson.” All standing up in a ring, the tenors would lead off:

“I saw an old man go riding by,”

and the baritones, flinging themselves around with the looseness of Christy’s Minstrels, in a “break down,” would reply:

“Don’t tell me! Don’t tell me!”

Then the tenors would resume:

“Says I, Ole man, your horse’ll die.”

Then the baritones, with an air of exaggerated interest;

“A-ha-a-a, Billy Patterson!”

Tenors:

“For. It he dies, I’ll tan his skin; An’ if he lives I’ll ride him agin,”

All-together, with a furious “break down” at the close:

“Then I’ll lay five dollars down, And count them one by one; Then I’ll lay five dollars down, If anybody will show me the man That struck Billy Patterson.”

And so on. It used to upset my gravity entirely to see a crowd of grave and dignified Captains, Majors and Colonels going through this nonsensical drollery with all the abandon of professional burnt-cork artists.

As we were nearing the entrance to Chesapeake Bay we passed a great monitor, who was exercising her crew at the guns. She fired directly across our course, the huge four hundred pound balls shipping along the water, about a mile ahead of us, as we boys used to make the flat stones skip in the play of “Ducks and Drakes.” One or two of the shots came so close that I feared she might be mistaking us for a Rebel ship intent on some raid up the Bay, and I looked up anxiously to see that the flag should float out so conspicuously that she could not

help seeing it.

The next day our vessel ran alongside of the dock at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, that institution now being used as a hospital for paroled prisoners. The musicians of the Post band came down with stretchers to carry the sick to the Hospital, while those of us who were able to walk were ordered to fall in and march up. The distance was but a few hundred yards. On reaching the building we marched up on a little balcony, and as we did so each one of us was seized by a hospital attendant, who, with the quick dexterity attained by long practice, snatched every one of our filthy, lousy rags off in the twinkling of an eye, and flung them over the railing to the ground, where a man loaded them into a wagon with a pitchfork.

With them went our faithful little black can, our hoop-iron spoon, and our chessboard and men.

Thus entirely denuded, each boy was given a shove which sent him into a little room, where a barber pressed him down upon a stool, and almost before he understood what was being done, had his hair and beard cut off as close as shears would do it. Another tap on the back sent the shorn lamb into a room furnished with great tubs of water and with about six inches of soap suds on the zinc-covered floor.

In another minute two men with sponges had removed every trace of prison grime from his body, and passed him on to two more men, who wiped him dry, and moved him on to where a man handed him a new shirt, a pair of drawers, pair of socks, pair of pantaloons, pair of slippers, and a hospital gown, and motioned him to go on into the large room, and array himself in his new garments. Like everything else about the Hospital this performance was reduced to a perfect system. Not a word was spoken by anybody, not a moment's time lost, and it seemed to me that it was not ten minutes after I marched up on the balcony, covered with dirt, rags, vermin, and a matted shock of hair, until I marched out of the room, clean and well clothed. Now I began to feel as if I was really a man again.

The next thing done was to register our names, rank, regiment, when and where captured, when and where released. After this we were shown to our rooms. And such rooms as they were. All the old maids in the country could not have improved their spick-span neatness. The floors were as white as pine plank could

be scoured; the sheets and bedding as clean as cotton and linen and woolen could be washed. Nothing in any home in the land was any more daintily, wholesomely, unqualifiedly clean than were these little chambers, each containing two beds, one for each man assigned to their occupancy.

Andrews doubted if we could stand all this radical change in our habits. He feared that it was rushing things too fast. We might have had our hair cut one week, and taken a bath all over a week later, and so progress down to sleeping between white sheets in the course of six months, but to do it all in one day seemed like tempting fate.

Every turn showed us some new feature of the marvelous order of this wonderful institution. Shortly after we were sent to our rooms, a Surgeon entered with a Clerk. After answering the usual questions as to name, rank, company and regiment, the Surgeon examined our tongues, eyes, limbs and general appearance, and communicated his conclusions to the Clerk, who filled out a blank card. This card was stuck into a little tin holder at the head of my bed. Andrews's card was the same, except the name. The Surgeon was followed by a Sergeant, who was Chief of the Dining-Room, and the Clerk, who made a minute of the diet ordered for us, and moved off. Andrews and I immediately became very solicitous to know what species of diet No. 1 was. After the seasickness left us our appetites became as ravenous as a buzz-saw, and unless Diet No. 1 was more than No. 1 in name, it would not fill the bill. We had not long to remain in suspense, for soon another non-commissioned officer passed through at the head of a train of attendants, bearing trays. Consulting the list in his hand, he said to one of his followers, "Two No. 1's," and that satellite set down two large plates, upon each of which were a cup of coffee, a shred of meat, two boiled eggs and a couple of rolls.

"Well," said Andrews, as the procession moved away, "I want to know where this thing's going to stop. I am trying hard to get used to wearing a shirt without any lice in it, and to sitting down on a chair, and to sleeping in a clean bed, but when it comes to having my meals sent to my room, I'm afraid I'll degenerate into a pampered child of luxury. They are really piling it on too strong. Let us see, Mc.; how long's it been since we were sitting on the sand there in Florence, boiling our pint of meal in that old can?"

"It seems many years, Lale," I said; "but for heaven's sake let us try to forget it as soon as possible. We will always remember too much of it."

And we did try hard to make the miserable recollections fade out of our minds. When we were stripped on the balcony we threw away every visible token that could remind us of the hateful experience we had passed through. We did not retain a scrap of paper or a relic to recall the unhappy past. We loathed everything connected with it.

The days that followed were very happy ones. The Paymaster came around and paid us each two months' pay and twenty-five cents a day "ration money" for every day we had been in prison. This gave Andrews and I about one hundred and sixty-five dollars apiece—an abundance of spending money. Uncle Sam was very kind and considerate to his soldier nephews, and the Hospital authorities neglected nothing that would add to our comfort. The superbly-kept grounds of the Naval Academy were renewing the freshness of their loveliness under the tender wooing of the advancing Spring, and every step one sauntered through them was a new delight. A magnificent band gave us sweet music morning and evening. Every dispatch from the South told of the victorious progress of our arms, and the rapid approach of the close of the struggle. All we had to do was to enjoy the goods the gods were showering upon us, and we did so with appreciative, thankful hearts. After awhile all able to travel were given furloughs of thirty days to visit their homes, with instructions to report at the expiration of their leaves of absence to the camps of rendezvous nearest their homes, and we separated, nearly every man going in a different direction.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

CAPTAIN WIRZ THE ONLY ONE OF THE PRISON-KEEPERS PUNISHED—HIS ARREST, TRIAL AND EXECUTION.

Of all those more or less concerned in the barbarities practiced upon our prisoners, but one—Captain Henry Wirz—was punished. The Turners, at Richmond; Lieutenant Boisseux, of Belle Isle; Major Gee, of Salisbury; Colonel Iverson and Lieutenant Barrett, of Florence; and the many brutal miscreants about Andersonville, escaped scot free. What became of them no one knows; they were never heard of after the close of the war. They had sense enough to retire into obscurity, and stay there, and this saved their lives, for each one of them had made deadly enemies among those whom they had maltreated, who, had they known where they were, would have walked every step of the way

thither to kill them.

When the Confederacy went to pieces in April, 1865, Wirz was still at Andersonville. General Wilson, commanding our cavalry forces, and who had established his headquarters at Macon, Ga., learned of this, and sent one of his staff—Captain H. E. Noyes, of the Fourth Regular Cavalry— with a squad. of men, to arrest him. This was done on the 7th of May. Wirz protested against his arrest, claiming that he was protected by the terms of Johnson's surrender, and, addressed the following letter to General Wilson:

ANDERSONVILLE, GA., May 7, 1865.

GENERAL:—It is with great reluctance that I address you these lines, being fully aware how little time is left you to attend to such matters as I now have the honor to lay before you, and if I could see any other way to accomplish my object I would not intrude upon you. I am a native of Switzerland, and was before the war a citizen of Louisiana, and by profession a physician. Like hundreds and thousands of others, I was carried away by the maelstrom of excitement and joined the Southern army. I was very severely wounded at the battle of "Seven Pines," near Richmond, Va., and have nearly lost the use of my right arm. Unfit for field duty, I was ordered to report to Brevet Major General John H. Winder, in charge of the Federal prisoners of war, who ordered me to take charge of a prison in Tuscaloosa, Ala. My health failing me, I applied for a furlough and went to Europe, from whence I returned in February, 1864. I was then ordered to report to the commandant of the military prison at Andersonville, Ga., who assigned me to the command of the interior of the prison. The duties I had to perform were arduous and unpleasant, and I am satisfied that no man can or will justly blame me for things that happened here, and which were beyond my power to control. I do not think that I ought to be held responsible for the shortness of rations, for the overcrowded state of the prison, (which was of itself a prolific source of fearful mortality), for the inadequate supply of clothing, want of shelter, etc., etc. Still I now bear the odium, and men who were prisoners have seemed disposed to wreak their vengeance upon me for what they have suffered—I, who was only the medium, or, I may better say, the tool in the hands of my superiors. This is my condition. I am a man with a family. I lost all my property when the Federal army besieged Vicksburg. I have no money at present to go to any place, and, even if I had, I know of no place where I can go. My life is in danger, and I most respectfully ask of you help and relief. If you will be so generous as to give me some sort of a safe conduct, or, what I should greatly

prefer, a guard to protect myself and family against violence, I should be thankful to you, and you may rest assured that your protection will not be given to one who is unworthy of it. My intention is to return with my family to Europe, as soon as I can make the arrangements. In the meantime I have the honor General, to remain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Hy. WIRZ, Captain C. S. A. Major General T. H. WILSON, Commanding,
Macon. Ga.

He was kept at Macon, under guard, until May 20, when Captain Noyes was ordered to take him, and the hospital records of Andersonville, to Washington. Between Macon and Cincinnati the journey was a perfect gauntlet.

Our men were stationed all along the road, and among them everywhere were ex-prisoners, who recognized Wirz, and made such determined efforts to kill him that it was all that Captain Noyes, backed by a strong guard, could do to frustrate them. At Chattanooga and Nashville the struggle between his guards and his would-be slayers, was quite sharp.

At Louisville, Noyes had Wirz clean-shaved, and dressed in a complete suit of black, with a beaver hat, which so altered his appearance that no one recognized him after that, and the rest of the journey was made unmolested.

The authorities at Washington ordered that he be tried immediately, by a court martial composed of Generals Lewis Wallace, Mott, Geary, L. Thomas, Fessenden, Bragg and Baller, Colonel Allcock, and Lieutenant-Colonel Stibbs. Colonel Chipman was Judge Advocate, and the trial began August 23.

The prisoner was arraigned on a formidable list of charges and specifications, which accused him of "combining, confederating, and conspiring together with John H. Winder, Richard B. Winder, Isaiah II. White, W. S. Winder, R. R. Stevenson and others unknown, to injure the health and destroy the lives of soldiers in the military service of the United States, there held, and being prisoners of war within the lines of the so-called Confederate States, and in the military prisons thereof, to the end that the armies of the United States might be weakened and impaired, in violation of the laws and customs of war." The main facts of the dense overcrowding, the lack of sufficient shelter, the hideous mortality were cited, and to these added a long list of specific acts of brutality,

such as hunting men down with hounds, tearing them with dogs, robbing them, confining them in the stocks, cruelly beating and murdering them, of which Wirz was personally guilty.

When the defendant was called upon to plead he claimed that his case was covered by the terms of Johnston's surrender, and furthermore, that the country now being at peace, he could not be lawfully tried by a court-martial. These objections being overruled, he entered a plea of not guilty to all the charges and specifications. He had two lawyers for counsel.

The prosecution called Captain Noyes first, who detailed the circumstances of Wirz's arrest, and denied that he had given any promises of protection.

The next witness was Colonel George C. Gibbs, who commanded the troops of the post at Andersonville. He testified that Wirz was the commandant of the prison, and had sole authority under Winder over all the prisoners; that there was a Dead Line there, and orders to shoot any one who crossed it; that dogs were kept to hunt down escaping prisoners; the dogs were the ordinary plantation dogs, mixture of hound and cur.

Dr. J. C. Bates, who was a Surgeon of the Prison Hospital, (a Rebel), testified that the condition of things in his division was horrible. Nearly naked men, covered with lice, were dying on all sides. Many were lying in the filthy sand and mud.

He went on and described the terrible condition of men—dying from scurvy, diarrhea, gangrenous sores, and lice. He wanted to carry in fresh vegetables for the sick, but did not dare, the orders being very strict against such thing. He thought the prison authorities might easily have sent in enough green corn to have stopped the scurvy; the miasmatic effluvia from the prison was exceedingly offensive and poisonous, so much so that when the surgeons received a slight scratch on their persons, they carefully covered it up with court plaster, before venturing near the prison.

A number of other Rebel Surgeons testified to substantially the same facts. Several residents of that section of the State testified to the plentifulness of the crops there in 1864.

In addition to these, about one hundred and fifty Union prisoners were examined, who testified to all manner of barbarities which had come under their

personal observation. They had all seen Wirz shoot men, had seen him knock sick and crippled men down and stamp upon them, had been run down by him with hounds, *etc.* Their testimony occupies about two thousand pages of manuscript, and is, without doubt, the most, terrible record of crime ever laid to the account of any man.

The taking of this testimony occupied until October 18, when the Government decided to close the case, as any further evidence would be simply cumulative.

The prisoner presented a statement in which he denied that there had been an accomplice in a conspiracy of John H. Winder and others, to destroy the lives of United States soldiers; he also denied that there had been such a conspiracy, but made the pertinent inquiry why he alone, of all those who were charged with the conspiracy, was brought to trial. He said that Winder has gone to the great judgment seat, to answer for all his thoughts, words and deeds, “and surely I am not to be held culpable for them. General Howell Cobb has received the pardon of the President of the United States.” He further claimed that there was no principle of law which would sanction the holding of him—a mere subordinate — guilty, for simply obeying, as literally as possible, the orders of his superiors.

He denied all the specific acts of cruelty alleged against him, such as maltreating and killing prisoners with his own hands. The prisoners killed for crossing the Dead Line, he claimed, should not be charged against him, since they were simply punished for the violation of a known order which formed part of the discipline, he believed, of all military prisons. The statement that soldiers were given a furlough for killing a Yankee prisoner, was declared to be “a mere idle, absurd camp rumor.” As to the lack of shelter, room and rations for so many prisoners, he claimed that the sole responsibility rested upon the Confederate Government. There never were but two prisoners whipped by his order, and these were for sufficient cause. He asked the Court to consider favorably two important items in his defense: first, that he had of his own accord taken the drummer boys from the Stockade, and placed them where they could get purer air and better food. Second, that no property taken from prisoners was retained by him, but was turned over to the Prison Quartermaster.

The Court, after due deliberation, declared the prisoner guilty on all the charges and specifications save two unimportant ones, and sentenced him to be hanged by the neck until dead, at such time and place as the President of the United States should direct.

November 3 President Johnson approved of the sentence, and ordered Major General C. C. Augur to carry the same into effect on Friday, November 10, which was done. The prisoner made frantic appeals against the sentence; he wrote imploring letters to President Johnson, and lying ones to the New York News, a Rebel paper. It is said that his wife attempted to convey poison to him, that he might commit suicide and avoid the ignomy of being hanged. When all hope was gone he nerved himself up to meet his fate, and died, as thousands of other scoundrels have, with calmness. His body was buried in the grounds of the Old Capitol Prison, alongside of that of Azterodt, one of the accomplices in the assassination of President Lincoln.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE RESPONSIBILITY—WHO WAS TO BLAME FOR ALL THE MISERY—AN EXAMINATION OF THE FLIMSY EXCUSES MADE FOR THE REBELS—ONE DOCUMENT THAT CONVICTS THEM—WHAT IS DESIRED.

I have endeavored to tell the foregoing story as calmly, as dispassionately, as free from vituperation and prejudice as possible. How well I have succeeded the reader must judge. How difficult this moderation has been at times only those know who, like myself, have seen, from day to day, the treason-sharpened fangs of Starvation and Disease gnaw nearer and nearer to the hearts of well-beloved friends and comrades. Of the sixty-three of my company comrades who entered prison with me, but eleven, or at most thirteen, emerged alive, and several of these have since died from the effects of what they suffered. The mortality in the other companies of our battalion was equally great, as it was also with the prisoners generally. Not less than twenty-five thousand gallant, noble-hearted boys died around me between the dates of my capture and release. Nobler men than they never died for any cause. For the most part they were simple-minded, honest-hearted boys; the sterling products of our Northern home-life, and Northern Common Schools, and that grand stalwart Northern blood, the yeoman blood of sturdy middle class freemen—the blood of the race which has conquered on every field since the Roman Empire went down under its sinewy blows. They prated little of honor, and knew nothing of “chivalry” except in its repulsive travesty in the South. As citizens at home, no honest labor had been regarded by them as too humble to be followed with manly pride in its success;

as soldiers in the field, they did their duty with a calm defiance of danger and death, that the world has not seen equaled in the six thousand years that men have followed the trade of war. In the prison their conduct was marked by the same unostentatious but unflinching heroism. Death stared them in the face constantly. They could read their own fate in that of the loathsome, unburied dead all around them. Insolent enemies mocked their sufferings, and sneered at their devotion to a Government which they asserted had abandoned them, but the simple faith, the ingrained honesty of these plain-mannered, plain-spoken boys rose superior to every trial. Brutus, the noblest Roman of them all, says in his grandest flight:

Set honor in one eye and death in the other, And I will look on both indifferently.

They did not say this: they did it. They never questioned their duty; no repinings, no murmurings against their Government escaped their lips, they took the dread fortunes brought to them as calmly, as unshrinkingly as they had those in the field; they quailed not, nor wavered in their faith before the worst the Rebels could do. The finest epitaph ever inscribed above a soldier's grave was that graven on the stone which marked the resting-place of the deathless three hundred who fell at Thermopylae:

Go, stranger, to Lacedaemon,— And tell Sparta that we lie here in obedience to her laws.

They who lie in the shallow graves of Andersonville, Belle Isle, Florence and Salisbury, lie there in obedience to the precepts and maxims inculcated into their minds in the churches and Common Schools of the North; precepts which impressed upon them the duty of manliness and honor in all the relations and exigencies of life; not the “chivalric” prate of their enemies, but the calm steadfastness which endureth to the end. The highest tribute that can be paid them is to say they did full credit to their teachings, and they died as every American should when duty bids him. No richer heritage was ever bequeathed to posterity.

It was in the year 1864, and the first three months of 1865 that these twenty-five thousand youths were cruelly and needlessly done to death. In these fatal fifteen months more young men than to-day form the pride, the hope, and the vigor of any one of our leading Cities, more than at the beginning of the war were found

in either of several States in the Nation, were sent to their graves, “unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown,” victims of the most barbarous and unnecessary cruelty recorded since the Dark Ages. Barbarous, because the wit of man has not yet devised a more savage method of destroying fellow-beings than by exposure and starvation; unnecessary, because the destruction of these had not, and could not have the slightest effect upon the result of the struggle. The Rebel leaders have acknowledged that they knew the fate of the Confederacy was sealed when the campaign of 1864 opened with the North displaying an unflinching determination to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion. All that they could hope for after that was some fortuitous accident, or unexpected foreign recognition that would give them peace with victory. The prisoners were non-important factors in the military problem. Had they all been turned loose as soon as captured, their efforts would not have hastened the Confederacy’s fate a single day.

As to the responsibility for this monstrous cataclysm of human misery and death: That the great mass of the Southern people approved of these outrages, or even knew of them, I do not, for an instant, believe. They are as little capable of countenancing such a thing as any people in the world. But the crowning blemish of Southern society has ever been the dumb acquiescence of the many respectable, well-disposed, right-thinking people in the acts of the turbulent and unscrupulous few. From this direful spring has flowed an Iliad of unnumbered woes, not only to that section but to our common country. It was this that kept the South vibrating between patriotism and treason during the revolution, so that it cost more lives and treasure to maintain the struggle there than in all the rest of the country. It was this that threatened the dismemberment of the Union in 1832. It was this that aggravated and envenomed every wrong growing out of Slavery; that outraged liberty, debauched citizenship, plundered the mails, gagged the press, stifled speech, made opinion a crime, polluted the free soil of God with the unwilling step of the bondman, and at last crowned three-quarters of a century of this unparalleled iniquity by dragging eleven millions of people into a war from which their souls revolted, and against which they had declared by overwhelming majorities in every State except South Carolina, where the people had no voice. It may puzzle some to understand how a relatively small band of political desperados in each State could accomplish such a momentous wrong; that they did do it, no one conversant with our history will deny, and that they—insignificant as they were in numbers, in abilities, in character, in everything save capacity and indomitable energy in mischief—could achieve such gigantic wrongs in direct opposition to the better sense of their communities is a fearful

demonstration of the defects of the constitution of Southern society.

Men capable of doing all that the Secession leaders were guilty of—both before and during the war—were quite capable of revengefully destroying twenty-five thousand of their enemies by the most hideous means at their command. That they did so set about destroying their enemies, wilfully, maliciously, and with malice prepense and aforethought, is susceptible of proof as conclusive as that which in a criminal court sends murderers to the gallows.

Let us examine some of these proofs:

1. The terrible mortality at Andersonville and elsewhere was a matter of as much notoriety throughout the Southern Confederacy as the military operations of Lee and Johnson. No intelligent man—much less the Rebel leaders—was ignorant of it nor of its calamitous proportions.

2. Had the Rebel leaders within a reasonable time after this matter became notorious made some show of inquiring into and alleviating the deadly misery, there might be some excuse for them on the ground of lack of information, and the plea that they did as well as they could would have some validity. But this state of affairs was allowed to continue over a year—in fact until the downfall of the Confederacy—without a hand being raised to mitigate the horrors of those places—without even an inquiry being made as to whether they were mitigable or not. Still worse: every month saw the horrors thicken, and the condition of the prisoners become more wretched.

The suffering in May, 1864, was more terrible than in April; June showed a frightful increase over May, while words fail to paint the horrors of July and August, and so the wretchedness waxed until the end, in April,

1865.

3. The main causes of suffering and death were so obviously preventible that the Rebel leaders could not have been ignorant of the ease with which a remedy could be applied. These main causes were three in number:

- a. Improper and insufficient food. b. Unheard-of crowding together. c. Utter lack of shelter.

It is difficult to say which of these three was the most deadly. Let us admit, for the sake of argument, that it was impossible for the Rebels to supply sufficient and proper food. This admission, I know, will not stand for an instant in the face of the revelations made by Sherman's March to the Sea; and through the Carolinas, but let that pass, that we may consider more easily demonstrable facts connected with the next two propositions, the first of which is as to the crowding together. Was land so scarce in the Southern Confederacy that no more than sixteen acres could be spared for the use of thirty-five thousand prisoners? The State of Georgia has a population of less than one-sixth that of New York, scattered over a territory one-quarter greater than that State's, and yet a pitiful little tract—less than the corn-patch "clearing" of the laziest "cracker" in the State—was all that could be allotted to the use of three-and-a-half times ten thousand young men! The average population of the State does not exceed sixteen to the square mile, yet Andersonville was peopled at the rate of one million four hundred thousand to the square mile. With millions of acres of unsettled, useless, worthless pine barrens all around them, the prisoners were wedged together so closely that there was scarcely room to lie down at night, and a few had space enough to have served as a grave. This, too, in a country where the land was of so little worth that much of it had never been entered from the Government.

Then, as to shelter and fire: Each of the prisons was situated in the heart of a primeval forest, from which the first trees that had ever been cut were those used in building the pens. Within a gun-shot of the perishing men was an abundance of lumber and wood to have built every man in prison a warm, comfortable hut, and enough fuel to supply all his wants. Supposing even, that the Rebels did not have the labor at hand to convert these forests into building material and fuel, the prisoners themselves would have gladly undertaken the work, as a means of promoting their own comfort, and for occupation and exercise. No tools would have been too poor and clumsy for them to work with. When logs were occasionally found or brought into prison, men tore them to pieces almost with their naked fingers. Every prisoner will bear me out in the assertion that there was probably not a root as large as a bit of clothes-line in all the ground covered by the prisons, that eluded the faithfully eager search of freezing men for fuel. What else than deliberate design can account for this systematic withholding from the prisoners of that which was so essential to their existence, and which it was so easy to give them?

This much for the circumstantial evidence connecting the Rebel authorities with

the premeditated plan for destroying the prisoners. Let us examine the direct evidence:

The first feature is the assignment to the command of the prisons of “General” John H. Winder, the confidential friend of Mr. Jefferson Davis, and a man so unscrupulous, cruel and bloody-thirsty that at the time of his appointment he was the most hated and feared man in the Southern Confederacy. His odious administration of the odious office of Provost Marshal General showed him to be fittest of tools for their purpose. Their selection—considering the end in view, was eminently wise. Baron Haynau was made eternally infamous by a fraction of the wanton cruelties which load the memory of Winder. But it can be said in extenuation of Haynau’s offenses that he was a brave, skilful and energetic soldier, who overthrew on the field the enemies he maltreated. If Winder, at any time during the war, was nearer the front than Richmond, history does not mention it. Haynau was the bastard son of a German Elector and of the daughter of a village, druggist. Winder was the son of a sham aristocrat, whose cowardice and incompetence in the war of 1812 gave Washington into the hands of the British ravagers.

It is sufficient indication of this man’s character that he could look unmoved upon the terrible suffering that prevailed in Andersonville in June, July, and August; that he could see three thousand men die each month in the most horrible manner, without lifting a finger in any way to assist them; that he could call attention in a self-boastful way to the fact that “I am killing off more Yankees than twenty regiments in Lee’s Army,” and that he could respond to the suggestions of the horror-struck visiting Inspector that the prisoners be given at least more room, with the assertion that he intended to leave matters just as they were—the operations of death would soon thin out the crowd so that the survivors would have sufficient room.

It was Winder who issued this order to the Commander of the Artillery:

ORDER No. 13.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY PRISON, ANDERSONVILLE, Ga., July 27, 1864.

The officers on duty and in charge of the Battery of Florida Artillery at the time will, upon receiving notice that the enemy has approached within seven miles of

this post, open upon the Stockade with grapeshot, without reference to the situation beyond these lines of defense.

JOHN H. WINDER, Brigadier General Commanding.

Diabolical is the only word that will come at all near fitly characterizing such an infamous order. What must have been the nature of a man who would calmly order twenty-five guns to be opened with grape and canister at two hundred yards range, upon a mass of thirty thousand prisoners, mostly sick and dying! All this, rather than suffer them to be rescued by their friends. Can there be any terms of reprobation sufficiently strong to properly denounce so malignant a monster? History has no parallel to him, save among the blood-reveling kings of Dahomey, or those sanguinary Asiatic chieftains who built pyramids of human skulls, and paved roads with men's bones. How a man bred an American came to display such a Timour-like thirst for human life, such an Oriental contempt for the sufferings of others, is one of the mysteries that perplexes me the more I study it.

If the Rebel leaders who appointed this man, to whom he reported direct, without intervention of superior officers, and who were fully informed of all his acts through other sources than himself, were not responsible for him, who in Heaven's name was? How can there be a possibility that they were not cognizant and approving of his acts?

The Rebels have attempted but one defense to the terrible charges against them, and that is, that our Government persistently refused to exchange, preferring to let its men rot in prison, to yielding up the Rebels it held. This is so utterly false as to be absurd. Our Government made overture after overture for exchange to the Rebels, and offered to yield many of the points of difference. But it could not, with the least consideration for its own honor, yield up the negro soldiers and their officers to the unrestrained brutality of the Rebel authorities, nor could it, consistent with military prudence, parole the one hundred thousand well-fed, well-clothed, able-bodied Rebels held by it as prisoners, and let them appear inside of a week in front of Grant or Sherman. Until it would agree to do this the Rebels would not agree to exchange, and the only motive—save revenge—which could have inspired the Rebel maltreatment of the prisoners, was the expectation of raising such a clamor in the North as would force the Government

to consent to a disadvantageous exchange, and to give back to the Confederacy, at its most critical period one hundred thousand fresh, able-bodied soldiers. It was for this purpose, probably, that our Government and the Sanitary Commission were refused all permission to send us food and clothing. For my part, and I know I echo the feelings of ninety-nine out of every hundred of my comrades, I would rather have staid in prison till I rotted, than that our Government should have yielded to the degrading demands of insolent Rebels.

There is one document in the possession of the Government which seems to me to be unanswerable proof, both of the settled policy of the Richmond Government towards the Union prisoners, and of the relative merits of Northern and Southern treatment of captives. The document is a letter reading as follows:

CITY POINT, Va., March 17, 1863.

SIR:—A flag-of-truce boat has arrived with three hundred and fifty political prisoners, General Barrow and several other prominent men among them.

I wish you to send me on four o'clock Wednesday morning, all the military prisoners (except officers), and all the political prisoners you have. If any of the political prisoners have on hand proof enough to convict them of being spies, or of having committed other offenses which should subject them to punishment, so state opposite their names. Also, state whether you think, under all the circumstances, they should be released. The arrangement I have made works largely in our favor. WE GET RID OF A SET OF MISERABLE WRETCHES, AND RECEIVE SOME OF THE BEST MATERIAL I EVER SAW.

Tell Captain Turner to put down on the list of political prisoners the names of Edward P. Egging, and Eugenia Hammermister. The President is anxious that they should get off. They are here now. This, of course, is between ourselves. If you have any political prisoners whom you can send off safely to keep her company, I would like you to send her.

Two hundred and odd more political prisoners are on their way.

I would be more full in my communication if I had time. Yours truly,

ROBERT OULD, Commissioner of Exchange.

To Brigadier general John H. Winder.

But, supposing that our Government, for good military reasons, or for no reason at all, declined to exchange prisoners, what possible excuse is that for slaughtering them by exquisite tortures? Every Government has an unquestioned right to decline exchanging when its military policy suggests such a course; and such declination conveys no right whatever to the enemy to slay those prisoners, either outright with the edge of the sword, or more slowly by inhuman treatment. The Rebels' attempts to justify their conduct, by the claim that our Government refused to accede to their wishes in a certain respect, is too preposterous to be made or listened to by intelligent men.

The whole affair is simply inexcusable, and stands out a foul blot on the memory of every Rebel in high place in the Confederate Government.

“Vengeance is mine,” saith the Lord, and by Him must this great crime be avenged, if it ever is avenged. It certainly transcends all human power. I have seen little indication of any Divine interposition to mete out, at least on this earth, adequate punishment to those who were the principal agents in that iniquity. Howell Cobb died as peacefully in his bed as any Christian in the land, and with as few apparent twinges of remorse as if he had spent his life in good deeds and prayer. The arch-fiend Winder died in equal tranquility, murmuring some cheerful hope as to his soul's future. Not one of the ghosts of his hunger-slain hovered around to embitter his dying moments, as he had theirs. Jefferson Davis “still lives, a prosperous gentleman,” the idol of a large circle of adherents, the recipient of real estate favors from elderly females of morbid sympathies, and a man whose mouth is full of complaints of his wrongs, and misappreciation. The rest of the leading conspirators have either departed this life in the odor of sanctity, surrounded by sorrowing friends, or are gliding serenely down the mellow autumnal vale of a benign old age.

Only Wirz—small, insignificant, miserable Wirz, the underling, the tool, the servile, brainless, little fetcher-and-carrier of these men, was punished—was hanged, and upon the narrow shoulders of this pitiful scapegoat was packed the entire sin of Jefferson Davis and his crew. What a farce!

A petty little Captain made to expiate the crimes of Generals, Cabinet Officers, and a President. How absurd!

But I do not ask for vengeance. I do not ask for retribution for one of those thousands of dead comrades, the glitter of whose sightless eyes will follow me through life. I do not desire even justice on the still living authors and accomplices in the deep damnation of their taking off. I simply ask that the great sacrifices of my dead comrades shall not be suffered to pass unregarded to irrevocable oblivion; that the example of their heroic self-abnegation shall not be lost, but the lesson it teaches be preserved and inculcated into the minds of their fellow-countrymen, that future generations may profit by it, and others be as ready to die for right and honor and good government as they were. And it seems to me that if we are to appreciate their virtues, we must loathe and hold up to opprobrium those evil men whose malignity made all their sacrifices necessary. I cannot understand what good self-sacrifice and heroic example are to serve in this world, if they are to be followed by such a maudlin confusion of ideas as now threatens to obliterate all distinction between the men who fought and died for the Right and those who resisted them for the Wrong.

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