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, by John Azor Kellogg**

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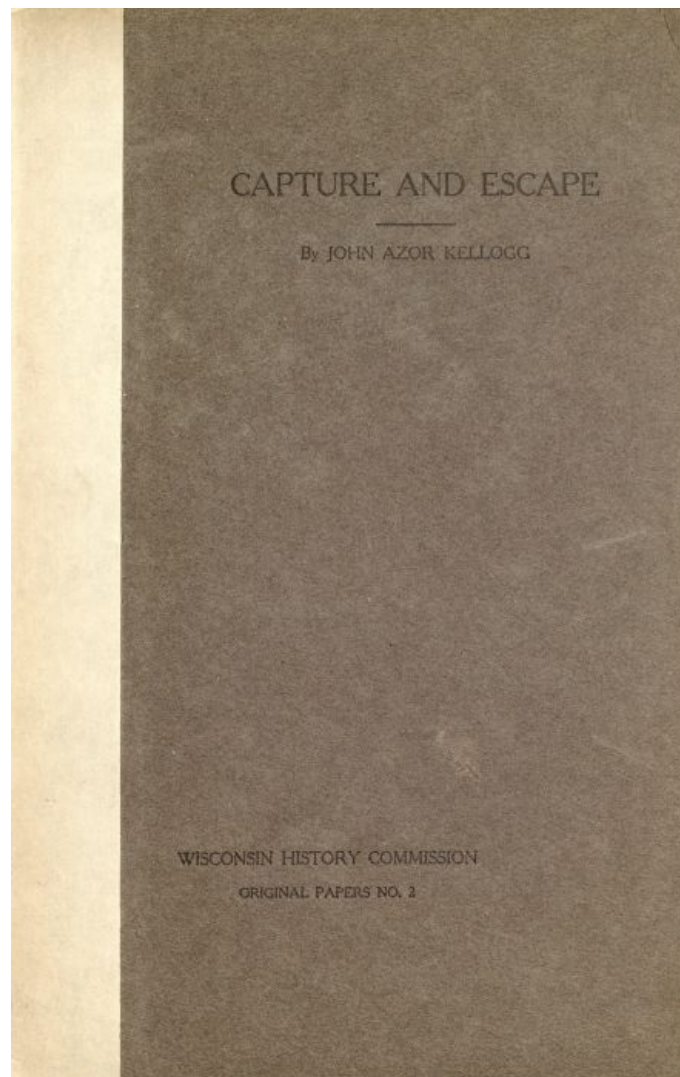
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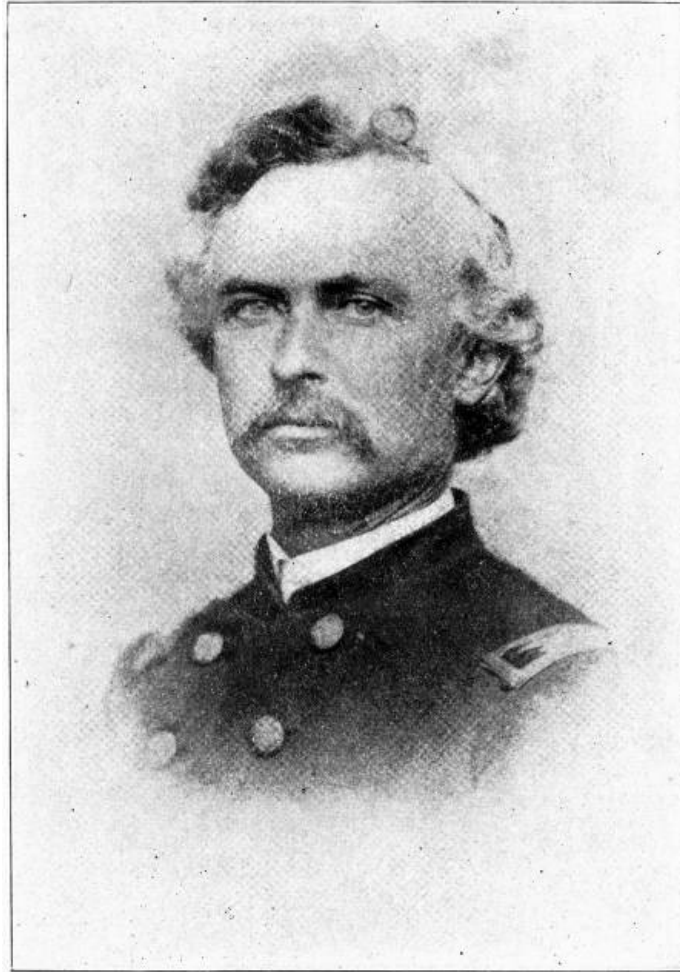
Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographic errors have been corrected.



CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

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JOHN AZOR KELLOGG

WISCONSIN HISTORY COMMISSION: ORIGINAL PAPERS, No. 2

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CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

A NARRATIVE OF ARMY AND PRISON LIFE

BY JOHN AZOR KELLOGG

**COLONEL OF SIXTH WISCONSIN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY AND BREVET
BRIGADIER-GENERAL**

**WISCONSIN HISTORY COMMISSION
NOVEMBER, 1908**

TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED COPIES PRINTED

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ILLUSTRATION

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PORTRAIT OF AUTHOR, while Colonel of Sixth Wisconsin Infantry [Frontispiece](#)

WISCONSIN HISTORY COMMISSION

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(Organized under the provisions of Chapter 298, Laws of 1905, as amended by Chapter 378, Laws of 1907)

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PREFACE

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John Azor Kellogg, author of the Commission's Original Narrative No. 2, was born on the 16th of March, 1828, at Bethany, in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, the son of Nathan and Sarah (Quidor) Kellogg. Nathan's father was an American soldier in the Revolutionary War; he himself a tavern-keeper, stage proprietor, and general contractor. The Kelloggs moved to Wisconsin Territory about 1840, settling at Prairie du Chien.

John's early youth was spent in farm work, his education being confined to three winters at a private school. When eighteen years of age, he began reading law; at first taking a correspondence course with George W. Woodward, later chief justice of Pennsylvania, but completing his studies with S. S. Wilkinson of Prairie du Sac. Mr. Kellogg was one of the founders of the Republican Party, being a member of the Madison convention of September 5, 1855.

Admitted to the bar in 1857, in his twenty-ninth year, he opened an office at Mauston. In November, 1860, he was elected district attorney of Juneau County, but resigned in April, 1861, to enlist in the Union Army. His earliest military experience was as First Lieutenant of the Lemonweir Minute Men, an organization that became Company K of the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry—his commission being dated May 3. The several companies composing this regiment were mustered into Federal service at Camp Randall, in Madison, on the 16th of July, and twelve days later left for the front. On December 18 following, Lieutenant Kellogg was promoted to be Captain of Company I. He served actively with his company until January, 1863; but was then appointed adjutant-general of the famous Iron Brigade (of which the Sixth Wisconsin was a member), holding that position until the following January, when he returned to duty with his regiment.

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Captain Kellogg participated in the battles of Gainesville, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Rappahannock Station, Mine Run, and Gettysburg. It was during the great Fight in the Wilderness, while the Iron Brigade was of the Army of the Potomac, that our author was captured (May 5, 1864) by Confederates, while he was doing skirmish duty on special detail. Imprisoned successively at Lynchburg and Danville (Virginia), Macon (Georgia), and Charleston (South Carolina), he escaped on October 5 by jumping from a rapidly-moving railroad train while he and his fellow prisoners were being transported to Columbia.

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The story of his depressing experiences in Confederate prisons, and of his curious adventures while a fugitive after the escape, is told in the present volume. A man of acute intellect, resourceful, and courageous in an unusual degree, Captain Kellogg's narrative is a document of great human interest. His literary style is as vivid as his experiences were thrilling, and the modest tale is certain to hold the attention of the most jaded reader of war-time reminiscences. The Commission considers itself fortunate in being able to include in this series so admirable a paper.

While Captain Kellogg was absent in captivity, or before his safe return to the Union lines at Calhoun, Georgia (October 26), he was twice promoted—September 1, to be Major of his regiment; October 19, to be its Lieutenant-Colonel. Soon after assuming the last-named office (November), he was made Colonel of the regiment. Being assigned to the command of the Iron Brigade in February, 1865, he led that redoubtable organization in the battles of Hatcher's Run, Boydon Plank Road, Gravel Run, Five Forks, High Bridge, and Appomattox. On the 9th of April he was deservedly brevetted brigadier-general, "for highly meritorious service during the campaign

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terminating with the surrender of the insurgent army under General Robert E. Lee," and on July 14 following was mustered out.

Being appointed United States Pension Agent at La Crosse, General Kellogg removed to that city in the spring of 1866, remaining there until July, 1875, having resigned his position in April of that year. He now settled in Wausau, successfully resuming the practice of his profession, and in 1879-80 represented his district in the State Senate. His death occurred at Wausau, February 10, 1883, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. Married on October 5, 1852, to Miss Adelaide Worthington of Prairie du Sac, he left three children of the five born unto them.

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General Kellogg published a narrative of the adventures herein related, in a series of articles in the La Crosse *Leader*, between September 25, 1869, and January 15, 1870. In its present amplified and improved form, the story appears, from internal evidence, to have been written in 1882, a year before his death. We are indebted for our manuscript copy to his widow, now living in Faribault, Minnesota. The portrait of the author, given as our frontispiece, is from a photograph taken in Madison while he was Colonel of his regiment—probably quite soon after his return from captivity.

The purpose of the Commission is merely to select and publish such material bearing upon Wisconsin's part in the War of Secession as, from considerations of rarity or of general excellence, it is deemed desirable to disseminate. Opinions or errors of fact on the part of the respective authors have not been modified or corrected by the Commission—save as members may choose to append thereto individually-signed foot-notes. For all statements, of whatever character, the author alone is responsible, whether the publication be in the form of Original Narratives or of Reprints.

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The Commission is indebted to Miss Annie A. Nunns, of the Wisconsin Historical Library staff, for supervising the reading of the proof.

R. G. T.

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL LIBRARY
November, 1908

CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

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The Iron Brigade in Camp

On the morning of the third of May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac confronted the Confederates on the banks of the Rapidan.

The consolidated First and Fifth Army Corps was commanded by Major-General George G. Warren.^[1] To this corps was attached that part of the Army of the Potomac known as the Iron Brigade, then under the command of General Lysander Cutler, one of the ablest of our volunteer generals. To this brigade was attached the Sixth Wisconsin, commanded by Colonel (afterwards General) Edward S. Bragg. I commanded Company I in this regiment.^[2]

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Fearing a repetition of the long, cold winter of 1863-64, the army, under the immediate supervision of that thorough soldier, General George G. Meade, had been re-organized, completely equipped, and fitted for the stern duties of the next campaign.

The hills around Culpeper were dotted with the white tents and rude yet more comfortable cabins of the patriot soldiers. All along the banks of the Rapidan, at regular intervals, curled the smoke of the picket fires. Beyond them trod the weary sentinels, whose watchful eyes and stalwart arms had for twenty-four hours guarded their comrades in camp from surprise and consequent disaster. But now the allotted time for relief had come, and they stole an occasional impatient glance toward the long blue column winding its way along the turnpike toward the reserve post, knowing that it was the relief guard that was to take their place in the tedious, irksome, and sometimes dangerous outpost duty.

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In camp, here and there, might have been seen a regiment executing the beautiful evolutions of battalion drill, and perhaps a camp guard being mounted, the air meanwhile resounding with the martial music so inspiring to the soldier. To the civilian all would have seemed confusion; but to the soldier the scene simply represented an army at rest; his eye could only see the monotonous details of camp life, the every-day life of the soldier. Such had been the daily routine through weary months of waiting, until all were eagerly anticipating the order to move.

As the sun disappeared that night, behind the western hills, its last beams shone upon an army whose banners floated from every hillside and valley as far as the eye could reach; and as the camp fires came out in the deepening twilight, they glimmered and sparkled like the lights of some great city.

The camp guards paced their well-trodden beats. The confused murmur of thousands of voices mingled together, conversing of home and friends; occasionally a merry laugh would arise, as some wag related a droll story, or, more frequently, perpetrated a practical joke upon a comrade, until "taps" sounded, and the lights went out as if by magic. Gradually all sounds died away, and

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the army was at rest. Dreams of wife, children, and home blessed the sleeping hours of the patient, waiting soldier, cheating him into a few minutes of bliss.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Although General Warren never did and probably never will be able to arouse an army corps, in the middle of the night, from the deep sleep that follows the exhaustion of a battle, build a bridge thirty feet long over a brawling stream swollen by a twelve hours' rain, and march five miles over muddy roads, in an hour from the time he receives the order, it is quite doubtful whether more than one general officer could be found in the United States who would require it or imagine it could be done; and I assert that no more efficient and patriotic officer than Warren ever wore a star.

[2] The Iron Brigade was at first composed of the Second, Sixth, and Seventh Wisconsin, and the Nineteenth Indiana. In October, 1862, was added the Twenty-fourth Michigan. The heaviest loss by brigades, in the entire Union army, fell to this command.—EDITOR.

On the Skirmish Line

Hark! a horse comes galloping up to the Colonel's quarters, a few hurried words are spoken, and then come the quick, sharp words of command: "Adjutant, go to the commanding officers of companies; tell them to have their commands under arms at once, and report them on the parade ground in heavy marching order. Make no noise; no drums will be beaten, nor alarms sounded."

Soon from out the darkness, upon the chill night, sounds again: "Orderly, see that the company is at arms at once, in heavy marching order!"

"Strike tents and pack knapsacks!" cries the orderly; and all along the line is heard the busy stir and bustle of striking tents and packing knapsacks, accompanied now and then by a suppressed yawn or muttered curse from the sleepy soldier thus rudely aroused from pleasant dreams and comfortable blankets to pack up his bed, tear down his house, and travel he knows not, and in many cases cares not, where. The sun next morning looked down upon a solitude where last evening a city stood. The army is crossing the Rapidan.

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Surprised at the celerity of the movement, the enemy made but feeble resistance at the fords, and fell back to its retrenchments at Mine Run.

That night, weary and foot-sore, we lay waiting for the rising of the morning sun, whose beams were to be obscured by the sulphurous battle cloud.

Early on the morning of the 5th, we were aroused from our slumbers by the command: "Turn out! Ten minutes to cook coffee and prepare for marching!"

Staff officers and orderlies were galloping hither and thither, the ammunition wagons were ordered to the front, general officers could be seen inspecting the ground, and all those grim preparations were being made that to the soldier were recognized as the precursor of battle.

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Soon our line was formed, and the old soldiers scarcely waited for the order to throw up breastworks. This done, we threw ourselves along the ground, waiting for the enemy to show themselves. But, so far as I was concerned, alas for human expectations! At this moment an excessively polite orderly came up to me, and, touching his hat, said: "Captain, Colonel Bragg directs that you report with your company to General Cutler, for skirmish duty."

Around Colonel Bragg there was a group of officers, who were evidently pleased that this unwelcome message should have come to some one besides themselves. Concealing my distaste for the duty assigned me, I sent them a cheerful "Good bye! I expect you fellows will all be wiped out before I get back."

"Good-by!" was returned. "Better 'shake' before you go, for it's the last we'll ever see of you."

"Shake them up lively, my boy!" said the Colonel.

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"Never mind me," I replied. "Look out you don't get run over by the line of battle, when they follow me in." And so the badinage went on. Major Plummer and Captain Converse of that merry group were both destined to fight their last battle that day.

Upon reporting to General Cutler, I found him pacing up and down before his quarters, evidently laboring under some excitement. I had at one time served on his staff, and we were familiarly acquainted. He invited me into his tent, and extending his hand said: "Captain, your work this morning will not be play. Out in front—I do not know exactly how far, but probably within a mile—you will find the sharp-shooters deployed as skirmishers. You will join them. Use your own company as you think best; take command of the line, and advance until you raise the enemy and bring on an engagement."

Just as I was leaving him, he added, "Take along plenty of orderlies, and report frequently."

Those of my readers who have had actual experience in skirmishing, can readily understand how distasteful it is to the soldier. It is a duty that furnishes the best opportunity in the world for getting "wiped out," with but slight chance of achieving military glory. It is a duty that requires your best efforts, all of which are sure to be overshadowed by the more momentous events to

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follow, and sure to be forgotten in the official reports.

Somewhat reluctantly, I will confess, I obeyed the order, found the line deployed, and immediately ordered an advance.

Our progress was necessarily slow, the ground being broken and heavily timbered with a kind of scrub pine. After advancing about a mile, I discovered a long line of "graybacks" moving slowly forward in line of battle, without the precaution of throwing forward a skirmish line. My men were immediately halted, and the command to commence firing given.

If ever a set of men were astonished, those Confederates were the men. The nature of the ground was such that neither party saw the other until within thirty-five or forty yards of each other. We had the advantage. They were in line of battle, while my men were deployed and behind trees, stumps, stones—anything that might afford concealment and protection.

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The rattling, scattered firing from my line told fearfully upon the enemy, and they at once replied with a volley. Whew! How the bullets sung and whistled around us! The only thing I feared was, that they would discover our weakness and charge us, for my men were sheltered. But the Confederates simply held their ground, replying to our skirmish fire from line of battle.

Soon word reached headquarters of the position of the enemy, and a cracking and roar at the rear gave notice of the advance of our line of battle. Hurrah! Here they come on, double quick! "Cold steel, boys! Give 'em the bayonet!" I heard General Cutler say; and over us they came.

My own men caught the inspiration, and gladly obeyed the order to move forward with the line. At the first shock the enemy's line was broken. Two miles we drove them, and then the programme changed.

In moving a long line over broken ground at double quick, intervals are bound to occur; connections to be lost. The enemy, taking advantage of this, had thrown a force into our rear, and bullets began to come from behind us. At first this caused confusion, then panic. Our line, vigorously pressed in front and rear at the same time, became demoralized. Officers made desperate efforts to rally the men, but it was of no use; they could not endure the bullets coming from the front and rear at once, and away they went.

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About this time I had a sensation akin to being struck by lightning. Upon recovering consciousness, I found myself with a badly-swelled head and great confusion of ideas, and I was bleeding profusely from ears and nose. On all sides were the maimed, the dying, and the dead. There was no enemy in sight save those killed and wounded. This was consoling; but unfortunately, if I had no enemies to fear, I was equally destitute of friends.

Which way was north, south, east, or west, I was wholly unable to determine. I was equally at a loss to decide which was front and which rear. Hearing firing in one direction, I came to the sage conclusion that by going in the direction of the sound I should at least be able to determine where our forces were.

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But what was the matter with the trees? They were cutting up all sorts of antics—advancing, retreating, bobbing up and down, actually waltzing about me. Around and around they went, until they made me dizzy. In trying to catch one of them, the ground suddenly flew up into my face, and, not satisfied with that, tried to roll me off; but I held on like a tick, grasping the twigs with all my might. The exertion was too much, and I fainted outright. Upon recovering my senses, I concluded to make my way to the rear. I found it difficult to travel, however, because of the giddiness and partial blindness caused by my wound. When I had progressed about a quarter of a mile, I found myself looking down the barrel of a musket.

Captured

A Confederate regiment, the Thirteenth Georgia, had, in the mêlée, become detached from its brigade, and was lost in the dense forest. The commanding officer had ordered the men to lie down in a thicket, and unfortunately I had surprised them. Not being in the humor just then to "surround them," like the Irishman, I surrendered at discretion, and was immediately disarmed and conducted to the commander, when the following conversation took place:

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Confederate Officer. Captain, were you in the skirmish line out yonder?

Yank. I am a prisoner, sir, and must decline to answer any questions touching our position or forces.

Confederate. That's all right, Captain, but I would like to know whether you have any skirmishers in there. Do you know where Gordon's brigade is?

Yank. Gordon's brigade! Why, I don't know where I am myself.

Confederate. Then there are two of us in the same fix. To tell the truth, I am lost. I got through an interval in your lines, I think; at all events, I found myself in your rear without knowing how I got there, and was trying to get back when you uns run over us. We just lay still, and the Yanks passed us.

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Yank. In which direction did they go?

Confederate. Out yon.

Yank. Then it strikes me that your rear is in an opposite direction.

Confederate. Well, yes, I reckon so. Corporal, take this officer to the rear and find the Provost Marshal and report him.

En Route to Lynchburg

I found myself traveling toward Richmond in quite different company and under less favorable auspices than I had ever imagined would be my lot. After running about an hour we at length found the Provost guard of the Confederate army, and to my chagrin about twelve hundred of my companions in misfortune. Some, like myself, were wounded. Some expressed impatience and mortification. Others evidently accepted their condition as inevitable and determined to make the best of it, expressing more concern for the success of our arms than solicitude for themselves.

At a little distance from the prison corral were the badly wounded, awaiting the ministrations of a surgeon. There, under a large tree, on a blanket, lay the gallant Captain Converse, a prisoner, wounded and dying; by his side, with one leg already amputated, Corporal Frank Hare, with cocked revolver, kept at bay a couple of the enemy's surgeons who were desirous of experimenting upon the yet breathing body of his leader. The heroism of those two men was sublime. The Captain had been shot through the body and both thighs. It was utterly impossible for him to recover. He knew that his moments were numbered, and the end was nigh. He only asked to be permitted to die in peace, but the surgeons were desirous of experimenting upon him by what is known as the "hip amputation."

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Converse had overheard their conversation, and directed Hare to put his hand in a certain pocket and get his revolver, which had been overlooked when his captors took his side-arms, and, armed with this, to prevent them from torturing him. Hare did as his officer directed; and when they attempted to remove his Captain he cocked the revolver, and in quiet, yet firm tones, warned them that he would shoot the first man that laid a hand on him. Weapons were pointed at him, with threats to kill him if he did not surrender the pistol. Hare only laughed at them, asking them what they supposed he cared for life, with one leg gone?

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Struck with admiration for his bravery, the guard was withdrawn. A Confederate officer, standing near, filled with admiration of his heroism, said, "I would like a regiment of such men!"

This aroused the dying Captain, who, his eyes flashing with patriotic fire, told him that he had the honor to lead a hundred just such men, and added: "The North is full of them. Sooner or later we shall triumph, and your rebel rag will be trampled beneath their feet."

With these brave, prophetic words he breathed out his young life, a willing sacrifice upon the altar of his country. At the instant he expired the sun broke through a rift in the battle cloud, and glancing down through the shimmering foliage of the forest tree, illumined the face of the dead. I thought it the pathway of the angel that bore aloft the released spirit of my comrade and friend.

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I have seen men in the mad excitement of a charge perform reckless deeds of bravery, facing death with apparent nonchalance, and admired them for their soldierly bearing and courage; but this was something different. It will be difficult to find an instance in either ancient or modern history, of greater fidelity, love, confidence, courage, and fearless patriotism than was displayed by these two wounded heroes. High up on the list of those made deathless by heroic deeds, should be inscribed the names of Captain Rollin P. Converse and Corporal Frank Hare.

Before I witnessed the death of Converse, I had felt despondent, but now the sight of his calm courage determined me to bear my own lot with philosophy. As a matter of fact, I was no worse off than thousands of others, and vastly better off than many. Even then, I began to plan some way for escape.

A short time only was allowed us to rest and recuperate. All able to march at all were soon en route for Orange Court House, under the escort of a strong guard. There were several hundred of us. Among others I recollect Colonel Grover, a gallant officer of the Seventh Indiana. Although the distance could not have been more than eight or ten miles, perhaps less, it was about 10 o'clock before we arrived at our destination for the night. During the march in the darkness several of the prisoners made their escape, but I believe that all these were eventually recaptured.

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No rations had been issued to us, and many were ready to faint from hunger and fatigue, but the "bitter cud" of our disappointment was all we then had to chew. So far, we had been in the hands of soldiers, and our treatment had been as good as we had any reason to expect. But upon our arrival at Orange Court House we were turned over to a squint-eyed, knock-kneed Provost-Marshal and his home guard, and with the change of guard came a most decided change in our treatment.

Cowards are always tyrants, and this redheaded commander of the home guard was no exception to the rule. The enlisted men were separated from the officers and driven into a dirty back yard, where they bivouacked quite comfortably, for they had their rubber and woolen blankets and could on ordinary occasions sleep as well without shelter. But they were aroused at an early hour in the morning, and under the directions of the squint-eyed Provost Marshal systematically robbed of their blankets, both rubber and woolen, also their knapsacks. One poor fellow, indignant at such robbery, tore his blanket into strips. This act being observed by the delectable

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specimen of Confederate chivalry, he sprang upon him with a club and knocked him down, striking him several blows while he lay on the ground, senseless and bleeding. Some of our officers remonstrated against such plain violation of civilized warfare, and were coolly told they had better keep their sympathy to themselves, as they would probably need it all for home consumption.

On inquiry we learned that no rations could be obtained, but were kindly permitted to purchase from a sutler a corn-dodger and cup of coffee each, for which we paid two dollars apiece, in greenbacks. Soon after breakfast, we were formed in column for marching, and started for Gordonsville.

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If some of us had been with our commands, instead of being prisoners, we probably would not have thought we could endure the march in the hot sun. My head was badly swollen and pained me greatly; this, together with the heat, insufficient food, and depression of spirits consequent upon the situation, almost unmanned me. Keep up with the column I could not. Finally, two or three of us cripples were permitted to fall behind under the guard of one man, and never in my life did I feel the need of money so badly, for if we could have raised only fifty dollars in greenbacks we had reason to believe our guard's cupidity would have easily overcome his sense of duty. But alas! The money was not to be commanded; so, a few rods at a time, we continued our march.

Just as it was getting dark we reached Gordonsville. Although the distance traversed was comparatively short, yet I venture to say the day's march will be remembered by that little squad of cripples longer than many another of double the distance. One of the things that discouraged us was the reports concerning the battle of the day before, received from Confederate sources. We were informed that our forces were in full retreat to Washington, that our loss was about one-half our effective force, and the like.

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Immediately upon our arrival at Gordonsville we were corralled in a railroad excavation and closely guarded. The next morning we were loaded upon freight cars, and to our surprise found that Lynchburg, not Richmond, was our destination.

Upon this slight foundation we immediately began to build great hopes. If we had lost the battle, what was the reason we were not shipped to Libby and Belle Isle? We had not then heard of a great man's famous expression, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." The celebrated flank movement that placed the army south of Richmond and bottled up the Confederate army, existed only in the prolific brain of the greatest soldier of the age.

The Army of the Potomac had so many times marched up the hill, only to march down again, that we began to look upon this performance as the regular thing. We did not realize that this army was then under the guidance of a man who knew no such word as fail; who, if whipped on one day, only fought harder the next.

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Our trip to Lynchburg was relieved of its monotony by one circumstance. The bottom of one of the cars was mined, a plank was cut out, and when a halt was made to take on wood and water, one or two adventurous fellows crawled through and dug the dirt from between two of the ties, so as to allow them room to escape collision with the bottom of the cars, lying there while the train passed over them. The ruse was successful, so far as escaping from the train was concerned; but unfortunately the fugitives were discovered as soon as the train passed by, and recaptured. The attempt was a foolish one, but indicative of the general disposition to attempt any manner of escape that had the slightest chance for success.

Arrival at Lynchburg

The next morning we arrived at Lynchburg, and were taken from the cars. Here occurred a ludicrous scene, that, notwithstanding their situation, furnished our boys a hearty laugh. Some philosopher has said, "Man is an animal that laughs." Man is the only animal that laughs. This, as distinctly as speech, marks the distinction between reasoning beings and brute instinct. Show me a man who never laughs, and I will show you one whose instincts are brutish and cruel. These thousands or more prisoners, surrounded by enemies, cut off from all that makes life endurable, deprived of liberty, laughed heartily, and it did them good.

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A militia company had been improvised to act as our guard and escort us from the cars to the prison. They were not uniformed, being dressed in everything from swallow-tailed coats and slippers to home-spun butternut, and armed with everything that could shoot, from a carbine to a flint-lock musket. The members were of all ages, from school boys to decrepit old men. They were commanded by a young fellow in a nondescript uniform. His sword and scabbard were the only really soldierly things about him, and were handled about as awkwardly as we had handled ours, when first transformed from citizens into officers, two or three years before.

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This amateur officer wanted the prisoners formed into four ranks, faced in the proper direction, but how to do it was a problem to him. After several abortive attempts, our folks obeying every order strictly, which only demonstrated the fact that his orders failed to convey his meaning, he at last lost patience and roared out: "G--- d--- it! I want you Yanks to git in four ranks, faced yon way!"

This direction, though not in strict accordance with military parlance, was at least intelligible; and after much pulling and hauling, the desired result was accomplished, every man merrily

repeating the order, and pushing and pulling his fellows. Then he attempted to form his guard on either flank of the column. He had great difficulty in bringing this about, for our boys insisted on obeying every order given to the guard. At last, out of patience with us, he exclaimed: "See here! I want you Yanks to stand still, when I give orders! I'm speaking to the company, not you uns!"

When at length he had formed the order of march, he commanded, "Forward, march!" The guard started, and we stood still. This was not observed until about half of the guard had passed us. This necessitated a halt, and he then explained that now he wanted us to "git up along with the balance."

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Thus, laughing and jesting, we passed up the street and into our first prison pen, an old tobacco warehouse situated on the principal street, but rather small for the company it was expected to entertain. Here we commenced our prison life.

Attached to the building was a small yard, which at certain hours we were permitted to visit, for the purpose of supplying ourselves with water, washing clothes, exercise, etc. Our prison proper was a room about twenty by fifty feet. Into this space were crowded nearly two hundred officers; for prior to this time the enlisted men had been separated from us, while additions of officers from other sources had been added to our squad.

Treatment at Lynchburg

The floors of the building were filthy, and the ceilings swarmed with vermin. The only ventilation was from two windows at one end of the room. The building was only a fit habitation for the rats that infested it. Very few of us had blankets, and none were issued to us. At night we were obliged to lie on the floor, so closely packed that every inch of space was occupied; and if necessity required one to leave the room during the night, he was compelled to travel over his comrades to accomplish his purpose. Before morning the air would become almost poisonous, through lack of ventilation.

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Our rations here consisted of bread and a small quantity of meat. They were good in quality, although rather limited in quantity; but our experience as soldiers, sometimes on short rations, would have accustomed us to such hardships, if we could only have divested ourselves of the intense longing for liberty. Compared with other Southern prisons, our condition here was quite tolerable.

The officer in command of this prison was humane. Only once did he show any temper, and that was one night when we all began to sing patriotic songs, ending with "Old John Brown." When we got to

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"We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree."

he came into the room and ordered us to stop singing; but we only sang the louder, telling him that our tongues were our own, and we should sing if we wanted to.

"Well," he replied, "*sing*, if you will, but you shan't eat, for I'll stop your rations."

This had the desired effect. Our sonorous chorus soon sank to a feeble quaver and faded away. Some of us consoled ourselves with the memory of one occasion when the Iron Brigade entered Warrenton, every man singing "John Brown," the column keeping time to the music. But we did not sing any more on this occasion.

For a time we kept up our courage by cheerful conversation or practical jokes. Sometimes an amusing incident would serve to break the monotony, and was eagerly seized upon and made the most of. Many obtained nick-names, such as "Lengthy," "Shorty," "Whitehead," etc. One, a Lieutenant Wetterville, obtained the nickname of "Rats" in this way: One night, after all had retired, and the cheerful snore began to enliven the sleepless hours of the restless, this young officer was roused from his slumbers by a huge rat gnawing his toes. He sprang to his feet in affright, and ran the length of the room, shouting: "Rats! Rats!" arousing all the sleepers, to the indignation of some and the mirth of others. The scene ended with three cheers and a tiger, for "Rats." This light-heartedness was but the foam on the surface, and only ill concealed the troubled under-current that was gradually mining away the better feelings of our natures.

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The mind of man is so constituted that he cannot be deprived of his liberty for any considerable time, without there being generated an inordinate desire to be free. Actual physical ills become secondary to this acute desire:

"The wish which ages have not yet subdued,
In man to have no master but his mood."

This feeling at length becomes morbid, the gay laugh becomes hollow and forced, the eye loses its fire, and a hopeless expression settles over the countenance like a pall.

The novelty of our situation had not yet worn away. We had been comparatively well treated, and, besides, we were planning an escape. Some negroes had contrived to communicate with us, and through them we had concocted a scheme for crossing the river. We had started a tunnel out of

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the yard from a closet, and were to be harbored by a negro family until we could procure some Confederate clothing. Two of the prisoners had formed the acquaintance of some women by talking through the fence, and through them had secured a suit of Confederate clothes. Clad in these, they had boldly walked out past the guards in open daylight, escaped across the river, and never were recaptured.

At Danville

Before we had perfected our tunnel, we were removed to Danville. There we were confined in a two-storied brick building that had been used as a prison for deserters, and was filthy beyond description. The floors were covered with dirt and grease, and literally swarmed with vermin. Our rations here, consisted of pea soup and corn bread. Such bread, and such soup! The very recollection is nauseating. Guards were stationed around the building, with orders to shoot any person seen looking out of the windows. The first knowledge we had of the existence of such an order was, by a bullet whistling through the room, and grazing an officer's head. The official in charge of the prison apologized for this occurrence, telling us that he had forgotten to notify us of the standing order given the guard, a slight omission that might have proved fatal to some of us.

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Removed to Macon

We remained here but a few days, when we were again packed in freight cars and started for Macon, Georgia. Every change in our place of imprisonment thus far had been for the worse, yet we hailed this news almost with rapture. We thought, poor fools! that anything was better than our present situation. Alas! We had not yet tasted the dregs of the bitter draught before us. We had not conceived the idea that such a brute as "Hog Winder" could exist, or that men wearing the human form could be so debased as to serve as the willing agents of such a demon. We had not even heard the names of Tabb and Wirz. We were then miserably dirty, covered with vermin, and half starved; but we had yet to learn the horrors of starvation.

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Happily ignorant of the future, we gladly started for our new destination. A rumor of an exchange in progress filled us with new hope, and although standing room was scarce and a chance to sit down at a premium in our crowded cars—seventy-five men being packed into each small-sized freight car—once more the song and jest went round. We could even laugh, as we told and retold each other that we should certainly be exchanged now; the more sanguine being sure that we were even then on the way to a general rendezvous established on the coast for that purpose.

While the train halted at Augusta to take on wood, a crowd gathered around to see the show—among others a boy about twelve years old, who carried a large market basket filled with sandwiches. We looked longingly at the food and tried to purchase, but he refused to sell to "Yanks," and the guard seemed highly pleased at his spirit, allowing him to approach near to the train.

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Ours was the last car, and he lingered around the rear of it, talking with us, always in the most defiant manner; only it seemed to me that his countenance did not denote him to be the ferocious rebel his language seemed to indicate, and I could not help thinking it strange that he should refuse to sell to the guards, who tried to buy of him. At last the train began to move. He waited until we were fairly under way, then tossed the basket to us and ran back into the crowd.

In the basket was a note from his mother, a Union woman, filled with brave, hopeful words, saying that she trusted to the native shrewdness of her son to secure to us her offering. The note was handed round, and many a thankful heart blessed that woman, not so much for the timely offering of food, as for the words of sympathy and kindness that accompanied the gift.

After a long and exceedingly tiresome journey, we arrived at Macon. I can not even now repress a shudder as I pronounce that name. It is associated in my mind with suffering, misery, starvation, death.

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Near a beautiful grove of trees, about twenty rods from the railroad, was an enclosure of about five acres, nearly square in form, surrounded by a fence constructed of pine boards twelve feet long, fastened perpendicularly to rails in the same manner we sometimes see tight-board-fences made in the North. Four feet from the top, on the outside, a walk was constructed. On this sentinels were stationed at intervals of about fifty feet. Near the entrance, on the outside, was the office of the commander of the prison, a small wooden structure.

Upon our arrival we were passed into the office, one at a time, and from there into the prison yard. We could not imagine why so much caution should be used in passing us in. Some suspected that the Provost Marshal wanted to examine our passports. At length my turn came, and I passed in. Before me stood a thing in uniform. I cannot describe his personal appearance. Imagine, if you can, an excessively vicious baboon, dressed in gray, half drunk, and you have him—Captain Tabb!

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Upon my entrance he looked me over and observed to a subordinate, "No pickin's here!" Then he walked up to me, and with the dexterity of an expert pickpocket inserted his hands in my pockets. He seemed intuitively to know the exact location of each one. If my life had depended on keeping silence, I could not have refrained from telling him, as I did, when he found nothing to reward his industry, that another thief had forestalled him.

I expected that he would be very angry at hearing this, but he only laughed, remarking: "I kind o'

reck'ned from your looks that you'd been cleaned out. You can git." Filled with indignation and disgust, I left his presence, and was ushered into the Macon prison pen.

The Prison Pen

What a sight! Who were these gaunt skeletons, clothed with rags, covered with dirt, who crowded up to the gate, yelling, "Fresh fish! Fresh fish!" Long skeleton fingers were already inserted into our haversacks, eagerly searching for the crumbs at the bottom; wild, eager eyes were peering into our faces—eyes from which had departed all expression except that of hopeless misery.

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One pressed through the crowd and called me by name, and listlessly held out his hand. I looked at him in astonishment. There was not a feature that I could recognize. His hair and beard were long and neglected, he was barefooted, a coarse blue shirt and a pair of overalls were his only clothing. The expression of his face, like that of his companions, was indescribable. It mirrored the soul of a man from whom hope had forever departed.

"I don't know you!" I cried in horror.

He laughed a bitter, mocking laugh. "I used to be Captain Rollins," he said.

"Can it be possible!" I exclaimed.

I thought of the last time I had seen him, on the first day of July, 1863, at the battle of Gettysburg, a man noble in appearance and in character, a lawyer by profession, who had formerly served on General Cutler's staff, and who had been my own intimate friend. He had been captured on that day, and this was the sequel.

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"Who are these men around you? Who and what are they?" I asked.

"Old Libby prisoners," he replied. "Officers, all of them. We only arrived a few days since. No hope of exchange, I suppose?"

I told him of the rumor we had heard on starting from Danville. He laughed. "That's an old ruse," said he. "We are always told that when being moved, to prevent our trying to escape."

My heart sank within me. Hungry and tired, we began to look around for a place to sleep, or at all events to lie down and rest. There was a long frame building in the yard, that had formerly been used for a fair building. Three or four wooden sheds had been erected, open at the sides, but everything in the shape of a building was already crowded to its fullest capacity.

At length a few of us dug a hole under the structure first described, and burrowed there. We were fortunate, for the larger proportion of our comrades were compelled to camp in the open air, without either fire or blankets, subjected to the heavy dews at night and the scorching sun by day.

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On the inside of the pen, about ten feet from the high fence already described, was a picket fence, about five feet high. This was the "Dead Line." All were forbidden to approach within three feet of it, under penalty of death, and the sentinels were judges as to distance.

A small stream ran through one corner of the pen. Over this were the sinks, and by the side of it the spring, from which we obtained water. This spring was about ten feet from the "Dead Line." There were two or three trees scattered through the yard, that, for a favored few, afforded shade from the sun's burning rays, and a partial protection from the dew.

There were about twelve hundred old Libby prisoners in this pen when we arrived, and with the accession of our squad it was crowded to its fullest capacity. It was easy by the expression of their faces alone, to distinguish the "Fresh fish" from the old prisoners. Those of the latter had a starved, hopeless look, that must have been seen to be realized. Long confinement and starvation have the effect of deadening all the finer feelings. They are brutalizing. All the selfish propensities are developed. The mind becomes gangrened. Long brooding over the deplorable situation, with hunger constantly gnawing at the vitals, gradually saps away all that is noble and God-like, leaving active only the animal nature.

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I saw two Lieutenants belonging to the regular army, snap, snarl, and actually fight over the distribution of a tablespoonful of corn meal; yet these men were educated gentlemen, and under ordinary circumstances would have resented as an insult the imputation that they could ever be guilty of such conduct. I looked at them, and wondered if we too would become like the pitiable objects around us.

With these thoughts came visions of the longing, waiting hearts at the North. These men represented homes, scattered through every loyal State, in which sat the patient wife or mother, anxiously watching for tidings of husband or son. In the reports she had read with sinking heart the fearful words, "missing in action," or "wounded and missing," and the cry had gone up from quivering lips, "Oh God, let me not be left a widow and my children fatherless!" Then had commenced the long agony of suspense, of waiting, waiting, waiting—how drear an ordeal, only those who have passed through it can tell.

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I thought of a certain little cottage home, wherein was gathered my own little flock, and pictured to myself the anguish they were then enduring. I had been reported killed, as I had ascertained

from an officer captured later. For the first time I realized the full horror of the situation.

Appetite was already clamorous, and we began to make inquiries about rations. We were told that these would be issued in the morning. That would be twenty-four hours without food.

Slowly the first long night in our new prison passed away. Early in the morning we were turned out for roll call. Captain Tabb had appeared with his guard, a line was formed across the centre of the yard, and we were all driven to one side of it, and then commenced the roll call, or rather the count. One by one we were passed through a particular part of the line and counted, Tabb making a practice of heaping upon us every insult his debased mind could invent. How our fingers itched to get hold of him as we passed!

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The count over, came the issuing of rations. These consisted of a pint of corn meal and a teaspoonful of salt to each man, and once in two or three days a slice of bacon, or a handful of black peas in lieu of the bacon. This was to last us twenty-four hours. Ought we not to feel grateful to our Southern brethren for the sumptuous manner in which they entertained us? We no longer wondered at the starved, cadaverous look of the old prisoners; we only wondered that they were alive.

Our former prisons had been comfortable, in comparison with this. We realized that long confinement in this situation meant slow but certain death by starvation and exposure, and we began to cast about us to see if there were no hope of speedy release.

An exchange became the topic of conversation. It was last in our thoughts at night, and first in the morning. Every morsel of news with reference to it was eagerly discussed and repeated; but with us, as with the old Libby prisoners, came the conviction that a speedy exchange was not to be hoped for. We were tauntingly told by Tabb that our government would not exchange us unless their government would exchange the negro troops, and that we were thus placed on a level with the niggers by our own government, and that this was all that stood in the way of exchange.

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I thank God that I can truthfully say, that not a corporal's guard of these starving men could be found, who did not say that if that were the case, and we could by our own votes determine the question, rather than that the government should abandon to their fate any of her soldiers who had worn the blue and fought under the stars and stripes, be they black or white, they would stay there and starve.

Tunneling

With the death to our hope of exchange, was born the hope of escape. Various plans were discussed and abandoned. An organization was attempted to revolt—overpower the guard, and fight our way through to our lines with such weapons as we could capture from the guards. But when we came coolly to reflect upon the project, and considered the desperateness of the attempt on the part of fifteen hundred unarmed, unorganized men, to overpower about an equal number, well-armed and supported by a battery, we abandoned the project.

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Then we planned to escape by tunneling out. We found that prior to our arrival a party had been organized for this very purpose, and that a tunnel had already been started. After considerable finesse, a few of us were admitted to the confidence of the conspirators, and permitted to participate in the digging.

The greatest secrecy was observed in this enterprise. Not more than twenty or thirty of the prisoners knew of the tunnel's existence, and they were by a solemn oath bound not to reveal their knowledge. One would suppose that there could have been no danger from the prisoners themselves; but subsequent events proved that these precautions were only too necessary.

This tunnel was started in one of the sheds, under a bank, about twenty feet from the Dead Line, and it had progressed about ten feet when I first transformed myself into a woodchuck.

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Our mining tools consisted of a strap hinge, fastened to a stick about two feet long, a tin dipper, and some sacks. The manner of digging was to lie upon the side, and with the hinge work out the hard clay. This was loaded into the sacks by means of the cup. A confederate, holding a cord attached to the sack, would draw it back and empty it, and then crawl back to the digger, who by this time would have another sack of dirt ready.

After getting about thirty feet from the mouth of the tunnel, the air became so bad that a candle would not burn for a second, and the number of diggers who could endure this atmosphere was reduced to two or three. The sensation on first getting back to the mouth end of the tunnel, was that of suffocation; the perspiration would start from every pore; but after a few moments this would partially pass away. It was, however, nothing unusual for the digger, after his work in the tunnel, to faint away upon getting to fresh air.

The natural inquiry will arise: What became of the dirt? The negroes took care of it for us. Every morning the ground in the pen was nicely swept up, and the dirt hauled away by negroes. We piled up the dirt taken from the tunnel, and when the negroes came with their cart, they would take great pains to put the red dirt on the bottom of the cart, and cover it with the black. They knew what we were doing, by the appearance of this fresh earth; but when they came to one of our red piles, it was only by a wink of the eye or a broad grin that they indicated their knowledge.

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We had progressed about ninety feet with our tunnel, and were outside the guards. We only needed to make thirty feet more to come out behind a brick wall across the street.

Betrayed

We had then been working on it for about a month but at this juncture we were betrayed by one of our own men, a Lieutenant of a cavalry regiment, by the name of Silver.

The first intimation we had of our betrayal, was one morning at roll call. I think it was on the first day of July, after we had been driven to one end of the pen, after the custom I have described. We saw the Confederate officer and a guard inspecting the ground in the vicinity of the tunnel. This they did by stabbing a bayonet into the ground, as no one could detect the existence of the tunnel by the eye, the mouth being covered and dirt swept over it, so as to make it resemble the surface. [Pg 44]

Imagine our feelings as we saw them approach the mouth of the hole. That tunnel, to us, was the door to liberty. It was the telescope through which we could see wife, children, and friends. Men who never prayed before, prayed now that it might not be discovered.

But alas! these prayers were vain. All our labor and our suffering in this direction had been for naught, and I am not ashamed to say that some of us wept like children over our disappointment. We did not then know by what means the enemy had discovered our plan of escape, for we could not imagine that we had been betrayed. At first we were disposed to lay the blame upon ourselves, believing that in some way the guard had discovered something suspicious from the fact that a day or two before unusual excitement had, for the following reason been manifested by those interested in the scheme. [Pg 45]

It had been agreed between the parties engaged in digging, that while engaged in work during the daytime, we would submit to the follow regulations: Each should perform an equal amount of labor in the tunnel, and in case the authorities came into the yard, or if from any cause there should be danger of discovery, the watchman should immediately *cover the mouth of the tunnel*. The person digging should submit to this necessity, and take his chance for life. What that chance was, may readily be inferred, from the fact that with the mouth of the tunnel open, air of any kind was a scarce commodity, and the quality nothing to boast of.

It so happened that while I was busily engaged at work in the tunnel that day, the air was suddenly darkened, and a rattle at the mouth end notified me that the emergency had arrived, upon which we had agreed to risk life itself. I was buried alive. [Pg 46]

To attempt to describe the sensations of a person at such a moment, is simply impossible. Within a minute from the time the mouth of the tunnel was closed, the air was exhausted. And here let me describe the manner of closing it: First, about four inches from the surface, a flange or offset received a covering of boards; over this an old shirt was spread, to prevent the dirt from sifting through the cracks, and over this about three inches of dirt were placed. Then a few whisks of the brush broom, and the eye could detect nothing to denote the existence of a cavity beneath.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. I was not ready to die just then; to live, I must have air. To attempt to get back to the mouth and open it, even could I succeed in doing so, would betray the existence of the tunnel, and forfeit a solemn pledge.

All this flashed through my mind with the rapidity of lightning. As by an inspiration, the means of preserving my life was suggested to me. Rolling upon my back, I commenced boring for air. Inserting the point of the hinge in the roof of the tunnel, and turning and pushing it with the energy of despair, I worked at the hard clay two feet or more above my head. Slowly but gradually, inch by inch, the improvised drill worked its way to the air and life. Just as I thought my very last energy expended, and when the handle of the drill lacked an inch of being inserted its entire length, the end broke the surface of the ground over my head, and air, blessed air, came rushing into the aperture. Withdrawing the drill I placed my mouth to the hole, and breathed. Oh, the ecstasy, the supreme comfort of that moment is indescribable! I was saved. [Pg 47]

In the meantime, on the outside, I had a friend—not in name only, but a friend in deed—one of the noblest men the sun ever shone upon: L. G. Billings, Paymaster in the United States Navy. Billings and I were among the very few who could bear the bad air in the tunnel. He knew I was in there when the mouth was closed, and it took the united efforts of the initiated to keep him away from it. As soon as the investigating officer had left the yard, he tore open the mouth of the tunnel and plunged in. [Pg 48]

I heard my name called, but I kept quiet, thinking I would see what he would do. Hearing no response, and believing me dead, I heard him groan, "My God, he is dead!" and then he commenced crawling to where I was. I waited until he had nearly reached me, but when I heard him sobbing like a child, I could hold out no longer.

"Billings, my friend," I said, "I am all right, thank God."

"Thank God!" he rejoined; "but how did you live?"

"Look here," I said, pointing to the hole I had drilled.

Therefore, when our tunnel was discovered we thought that the excitement caused by my imprisonment in the ground had led to our detection. But the following morning one of the negroes, while loading the dump cart, informed us that "Massa Lieutenant Silver told Massa

Captain all about it." We immediately organized ourselves into a detective force for the purpose of ascertaining the facts, and in a short time became convinced of the truth of this statement. But while we were contriving ways and means to procure a rope, the Confederate authorities intervened and took Silver out of prison, and that is the last we ever saw or heard of him. What price was paid for his treachery we never knew. We realized only the fact that we were again hopeless prisoners.

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Prison Life

By this time our clothing was ragged, and it was only by the greatest care that it could be kept even tolerably clean.

Our rations I have before described. Oh, ye epicures, think of it! A pint of corn meal to last you twenty-four hours! As you sit down to your tables, covered with substantial food, imagine it swept away, and in its place a pint of mush, or in lieu of that a corn dodger, but little larger than your two hands, to last you twenty-four hours. There were at this time about fifteen hundred officers confined in this pen, literally starving. It was only a question of time. The result was as certain death, eventually, as it would have been had we been entirely deprived of food.

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One day, by some means, a cat got into the yard, and caught a rat. When I saw the feline, she had the rat, and the idea immediately struck me that there was no great difference between a rat and a squirrel. I remembered also the customs of the antipodal Chinese, as related and illustrated in old school geographies, and immediately gave chase. As good fortune would have it, I succeeded in capturing the cat and the rat before my companions in misery had got the idea through their heads that rats were fresh meat. Like a fool, I let the cat go, and commenced skinning the rat.

A hungry officer, looking on, instantly caught the idea, and made for the cat. Good gracious, how foolish I felt! The cat was so much larger than the rat, and although poor and skinny was much the more valuable, for there was more meat there. But I was too late.

I felt fortunate in securing my share of the spoils, and immediately cast about for the best method of serving my dainty dish, so as to make it go the furthest. After long consideration I determined to have a soup. I looked over my stock of peas and found I had about two-thirds of a cupful. Many of them, probably about a half, were wormy. If I threw these away, there would not be enough left, so I concluded that if the worms could stand it I could. I then recollected seeing a beef bone that had been thrown away by some officer who was so fortunate as to have enough money to purchase it and had used it once. I picked it up, and found, on close inspection, that the marrow was still left almost intact. I washed the bone and cracked it. I also found some dried onion peelings, and with these, the peas, the bone, and the rat, I made my soup. Oh, ye gods! How I feasted!

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But rats were scarce. We were starving. We must be exchanged, escape, or die. We had lost all hopes of the first. The most of us did not feel prepared for the last, and so a few of us concluded to start another tunnel. This time we decided to limit the membership of the tunneling party to a select few, and these were sworn to secrecy. We started operations under the bunk of Colonel O. H. La Grange,[\[3\]](#) and succeeded in sinking a shaft to a depth of about five feet, whereupon we commenced tunneling.

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FOOTNOTE:

[\[3\]](#) Afterwards General. In after years General La Grange became the Superintendent of the San Francisco Mint, and died in California in 188-, universally mourned by the community in which he lived, and to which he had endeared himself by his high character and winning personality.

Removed to Charleston

Before we had progressed more than six feet, we were informed that six hundred of our number were to be sent to Charleston, to be placed under the fire of our own guns. This news at once changed our plans of operations. A secret society was started, called the "Council of Ten," the object of which was to capture the train when we arrived at the Pocotaligo River, and to make our way to our lines at Port Royal.

Our leader was Captain David McKibbin, of the Fourteenth Wisconsin Infantry, a good, cool-headed man. Although the scheme was a failure, it was through no fault of his, as subsequent events demonstrated.

While we were perfecting our plans for the capture of the train, and awaiting the order for our removal, time, which waits for no man, again brought around the anniversary of our National Independence. The Fourth day of July, 1864, is a day that will never be forgotten by the inmates of that prison yard.

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The sun rose that morning, clear and bright. The leaves on the forest trees that lined our prison were sparkling with bright dewdrops, which, shaken by the morning breeze and falling to earth, seemed weeping over our misfortunes. The air resounded with the musical voices of feathered songsters, vying with each other in chanting their morning hymns of praise to the Great Giver of all Good. In imagination we could hear the church bells pealing at the North, calling the people as of yore, to celebrate the Nation's natal day. Suddenly the prison gates were thrown open, and

the voice of a Confederate officer rudely awakened us from our pleasing day dreams, with "Turn out, Yanks, for the roll call!"

As we passed through the line of our jailors, we discovered a group of officers, seemingly a good deal excited. Upon approaching them we discovered that one had constructed a miniature national flag. It was only about four by six inches, but it was the stars and stripes, the national emblem. How dear that old flag is to every man who deserves to be called an American, can only be appreciated by one deprived of its protection. How the eye of a traveler in a foreign land will sparkle and his bosom heave, when the stars and stripes unexpectedly meet his eye, flaunting proudly to the breeze! To the soldier and sailor, that flag is the representative of his and his country's honor. On the battle field he will defend it with his life. When defeated and flying, at the sight of his ragged colors he will rally, and under its folds do and dare all, and even die for its protection.

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To us that little flag was the emblem of the cause for which we were then suffering imprisonment and facing death, and for which our comrades were then struggling on the field of battle; and for which so many poor fellows had already rendered up their lives. As one by one we gathered around it, manly tears were dropped from eyes unused to the melting mood. With hands clasped we sang the "Star-spangled Banner," and then one of our number (a chaplain) raised his voice in prayer. A stillness, like that of the grave, settled down on the whole vast assemblage, broken only by the voice of the man of God, asking Heaven's blessing upon us and the flag.

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When he had finished his prayer, all joined in singing "Rally 'round the Flag," ending with three times three cheers for the Union and the President of the United States. Speakers were called out and responded, and better speeches I never heard in my life.

The excitement became intense. The Confederates, alarmed by the unusual stir, doubled the guard, manned two pieces of artillery bearing upon the camp, and then advised us to desist from further demonstrations. But notwithstanding this order, we kept up our celebration until nearly dark, and as we composed ourselves to sleep that night, it was with intensified feelings of loyalty to our country.

A few days later six hundred of our number were selected to be sent to Charleston. Afterwards, all the Macon prisoners, myself included, were added to the number. It was amusing to see the anxiety displayed by the prisoners to go to Charleston, for the purpose for which we were sent was well understood. Any onlooker might have supposed from the eagerness exhibited by the prisoners, that they expected to be exchanged at once, rather than to become targets for our own gunners to shoot at. Yet in this anxiety I fully shared; not that I was particularly anxious to be shot, but because I had made up my mind that we would capture the train. I had full faith in our ability to do so; and still believe that we should have succeeded, had not our plans been suspected by or become positively known to our captors.

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The plan was this: The means of transportation used, was common freight cars. From sixty to seventy of us were loaded into each. There were usually four guards stationed inside, and about five on the top of each car. We had it so arranged that from eight to ten of the Council of Ten should be apportioned to each car, under the command of an officer selected by ourselves. When the designated point should be reached, at a signal from Captain McKibbin, who was in the first car in the rear of the tender, we were to seize, gag, and bind the guard on the inside, while the party in the Captain's car would stave a hole through the end and uncouple it. When the train stopped, we were to rush from the train and overpower the guards on top of the cars, and with muskets force our way to the coast. But

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"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley."

Just before we reached the designated point, the guards were all withdrawn from inside the cars, and about thirty of them placed upon the top of the Captain's car, with instructions, at any unusual noise, to fire through the roof. By this arrangement we were deprived of the chance to capture four muskets inside each car, and besides incurred the certainty of having many men killed or wounded by the guards on top. Under these circumstances, our leader became convinced that the attempt would be a failure, and did not give the signal.

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Escape from the Train

As soon as we became assured that our plan had failed, six of us determined to attempt to escape by leaping from the train. It required but a few moments to perfect our arrangements. The night was not quite so dark as we could have wished, there being a bright moon, only occasionally obscured by a passing cloud. But, waiting until the train was running on a down grade, at its maximum speed, we sprang from the car.

As good fortune would have it, we struck in a soft sand bank. The train passed on without our being observed by the guard, and none of us were injured. The place was near Adam's Run, about twelve or thirteen miles from Charleston. We were without compass or map. A council was called, and all the pros and cons of the situation discussed. We concluded that by traveling east, we would, at all events, strike the coast, and if we failed in finding our troops, we might possibly run across one of our vessels.

Calculating our direction by the moon and stars, as near as we could, we left the railroad and plunged into a South Carolina swamp. Of all the doleful places on the face of God's green earth, I do not think there is another so hideous. The timber is a species of cypress, from which hangs a gray moss, from three to twenty feet in length. When it is high tide, the water is from two to six feet deep. At low tide the surface has the appearance of solid earth; but in fact there are only a few inches of soil, supported by the cypress roots, which spread over, or rather just under the surface, and form a network, through which the unwary traveler is liable to break at any moment, and find himself unceremoniously seated on a root with his feet hanging either in water, or in space below, as the case may be. Every few rods there is a bayou, or slough, frequented by alligators. All kinds of vines and hanging plants interlace the spaces between the trees, and render it tiresome and difficult to penetrate. Several kinds of birds with mournful cries, and myriads of frogs, make night hideous, while the air is fairly alive with mosquitoes and gnats, and every tussock of grass seems tenanted by the poisonous moccasin snake. Occasionally a huge alligator will flop into a neighboring slough with a splash, and the snap of his hungry jaws can be heard for rods.

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Altogether, the traveling is neither pleasant nor swift; but through it all we toiled on. Starvation and imprisonment were behind us, and liberty and the dear old home to the front. Our progress was necessarily slow, and before we were fairly started, the sun began to gild the east with his rosy beams. As nearly as we could calculate, we had traveled in the neighborhood of five miles since leaving the railroad. By the rise and the fall of the tide, we knew that we could not be far from the coast. We had no provisions; we must either reach the shore or starve. Safety dictated that we should seek a thicket and hide during the daytime, but necessity commanded us to travel while we had strength, and so we toiled on.

At length we came to a ridge running through the swamp, at about a right angle to our line of march. While crossing it we suddenly saw two horsemen moving leisurely along over what we discovered to be a well-traveled road. Fortunately seeing them before they saw us, we threw ourselves on the ground among the scrub pines. They proved to be a Confederate officer and his negro servant, and passed within perhaps three or four rods without discovering us. It was a narrow escape. We carefully reconnoitered the ground, crossed the road, and again plunged into the swamp.

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After traveling a mile or two farther, we again met with an obstruction that compelled us to come to a halt. We had reached an outpost of the enemy. Peering through the underbrush we reconnoitered the ground. Before us, in a ridge running through the swamp, was a squadron of Confederate cavalry. There was but one thing for us to do, and that was to keep quiet until night.

Throughout the whole long summer afternoon we lay in a thicket, within a quarter of a mile of the enemy's cavalry. Occasionally the long-drawn-out note of a horn was heard, followed by the baying of hounds. We had read of the famous "negro dogs," and had been told by friends who had escaped and been recaptured, that they were used by our enemies to hunt down fugitives, so that these sounds did not serve to lessen our disquietude, or to render our situation more pleasant.

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The sun at length disappeared, however, without our being discovered, and darkness almost immediately followed the setting of the sun. Unfortunately, the night was cloudy. The moon and stars, which had been our guides the night before, were obscured. We could only guess our course by the direction of the wind, and an occasional glance at the heavens through a break in the clouds. We were nearly exhausted by fatigue and want of food.

The enemy's pickets were in our front, and must be passed that night or never. Watching, crawling, now through quagmire and slime, now over fallen trees and through creeping vines, our eyes blinded by the stings of poisonous gnats and mosquitoes, we toiled on.

Hark! What is that? A human voice in our front! It must be the picket line. No chance to pass it here. The ground is dry, and the snapping of a twig might betray us. Back—silently, stealthily, and then by the left flank, to the swamp. Wading out into it, we found a slough. Getting into the middle of that, we waded down in the direction of the picket line. If we made an occasional splash, we knew it could do no harm; alligators were plenty, and the noise might be attributed to them.

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Silently, scarcely breathing, we trudged through the water—stagnant and poisonous with malaria, among the alligators, lizards, frogs and snakes—and at last, thank God! past the pickets. Then working our way through a mass of tangled vines, we were again out on a dry ridge, with the enemy behind us, and Old Ocean and Liberty not far distant.

A few moments of rest and whispered congratulations, and then again on. On—yes, but in what direction? The wind had ceased to blow, thick clouds obscured the sky, we had no guide to direct us. A few moments' reflection convinced us that the attempt to travel farther that night would result in the useless expenditure of our little remaining strength. So, crawling into a thicket, we huddled together like swine, to save a little warmth to our bodies, while as patiently as we could, we waited for daylight.

Morning at last, and no clouds to obscure the sun. At our feet, all around us, glittering and sparkling in the dewdrops, kind Providence had provided us with a breakfast—whortleberries by the handful. Eagerly gathering them, we satisfied the cravings of appetite.

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Refreshed and invigorated by our breakfast, with our direction secured, and with renewed energy we again pushed on to the coast. It was past noon. We knew that we must be within a few miles

of the ocean. Hark! What is that? Away back of us, at regular intervals, came the long-drawn-out yell of a pack of hounds. For several minutes we looked in each others' faces, and listened. Were they after us? The sound came from last night's camp. A short time sufficed to make our fears a certainty. The hounds were on our trail.

Now again for the bayou! A half-mile would take us to the swamp again. Can we reach it in time? Now, boys, keep together if you can! Like greyhounds, away we started. Our intelligence was matched against brute instinct. Which would succeed?

We had heard that water would baffle the keen scent of the dogs. The friendly bayou was at last reached, and into it we plunged, now unmindful of the lazy alligators, quite regardless of the dangerous moccasin snakes that infested it. We floundered along, now in mud and mire, now stumbling over logs, for perhaps a mile. Then, fainting and exhausted, we left this morass and started on our course. Ever and anon, however, we could hear the baying of the hounds, sometimes farther, sometimes nearer.

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Prisoners Again

Would our ruse be successful? Could the beasts follow us through the water? At intervals we stopped and listened. We could easily tell when they struck the bayou. For a short time there was a cessation of their regular bay, and then it broke out again, accompanied by the sound of horses. Nearer and nearer they came. They were following our trail through the bayou.

Billings had that courage that never failed. He had been the life of the party. When it became evident that we must be overtaken, he selected the feeblest of us, directed them to crawl through a thicket of willows, one after the other, himself bringing up the rear, leaving but a single track for the brutes to follow; and then, under his direction, we armed ourselves with clubs and awaited the attack. Imagine, if you can, the feelings of that group of officers.

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We had all been reared at the North, in a land of schools and churches. We were men of ordinary intelligence, accustomed to mingling in the society of our fellows, men who at home or in the army were qualified by education and character to be called gentlemen, and possessed at least the ordinary feelings of manhood. Yet there we were, run down and standing like brutes at bay, to defend ourselves from a pack of hounds. One glance at the faces of my comrades revealed more of their feelings than could printed pages.

With noses to the ground, on came the dogs, at a slow gallop, once in a while lifting their heads to emit their infernal howls. Behind them were a few cavalry men. At last the thicket was reached, and one after another the bloodhounds plunged in. Now could be seen the wisdom of Billings's plan. The dogs were compelled to follow each other in single file, for the track we made was but wide enough to admit one at a time.

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With our clubs firmly grasped, standing on either side of the path, we awaited the appearance of the leader. Before his head appeared in sight, however, we were discovered by the hunters, who comprehended the situation at a glance. One or two sharp toots of the horn, and the dogs stopped.

Bringing his carbine to bear on us, the fellow called out: "Well, Yanks, do you surrender?"

We were unarmed, surrounded. "We can do nothing else," we replied.

"Throw down your clubs, then."

"But how about the dogs? We do not surrender to them. If they attack us we shall defend ourselves."

"I won't let the dogs bite you," he replied.

With this assurance we threw down our clubs, and were again prisoners. The dogs paid no further attention to us, except to smell about, acting very much like other hounds.

"Would those dogs have bitten us, if you had not called them off?" I asked.

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The fellow grinned as he replied: "I reckon they might; right smart, too. I've seen them hounds eat niggers, and I reckon they wouldn't know the difference atween them and you uns. You uns wuz green to take to the bayou," he again remarked.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, if you traveled there for fun, it wuz all right; but if you did it to throw the dogs off the scent it wuz d—d green, for dogs will follow the scent in stagnant water as well as on dry land."

"How would it be in a running stream?" I asked.

"Well, ef you are in a running stream, ef you travel up and the dogs are close on your trail, they kin foller; but ef you travel down, they can't. But," he added, "ef you go down, and the dogs is throwed off the scent, then I kin foller, fer then I know you've gone down."

"How about rain?" I asked.

"A rain gits us," he replied. "It kinder washes out all the scent."

"Are you a soldier?" I asked.

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"I suppose so," he answered. "I draw pay as a soldier; but my business has allers been catching niggers, and that wuz the business of my father before me. Me an' the dogs has done nothin' but hunt niggers, deserters, an' sich, ever sence the war."

"What pay do you draw?" I asked.

"Oh, just common pay," he said. "Pay don't amount to much anyway; but I draw a ration for each of them dogs."

"What kind of a ration?"

"Just the same as a soldier's. But I sell the rations and feed the dogs mostly on alligator meat an' scrapin's. I tell you, stranger," exclaimed he, waxing enthusiastic, "them dogs has catched more niggers an' deserters than all the Provost Marshals in South Carolina."

"But," said I, "have you no compunctions about making a business of hunting down human beings this way?"

"To be honest," said he, "it does go agen the grain to hunt white men, but I do as I'm ordered."

"Then the Confederate government recognizes the use of hounds for this purpose as legitimate warfare, does it?"

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"Certainly it does, or how could I draw rations for the dogs?"

I looked the brutes over—sixteen four-legged Confederate soldiers, regularly mustered into the service.

"Well," said I, "you Southerners need not say anything more against the North employing negroes for soldiers, when you use dogs. I had rather fight by the side of a negro than a bloodhound."

"That's jest as a feller is raised," said he. "I think niggers is more ornery than dogs."

A year or two since this negro hunter, Davis, exhibited his pack of bloodhounds in New York City, and among those who attended the exhibition was my friend L. G. Billings. I should have supposed his curiosity would have been gratified in South Carolina. For my own part, although I am fond of dogs and of hunting, I confess that it makes all the difference in the world to me, which end of the dog is toward me when the hunting is being done.

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We were taken by the negro hunter back to the camp of the Second South Carolina Cavalry, which was on outpost duty, and were placed in an inclosure that had evidently at one time been a hog pen. There a guard was thrown around us, and we were kept on exhibition until nearly dark. Some spicy, italicised conversation here took place between the prisoners and their captors, which finally resulted in our being removed to a log building used as a medical dispensary. By giving our parole not to attempt to escape during the night, we were relieved from the surveillance of a guard, and furnished with a good supper. Next morning, on extending our parole to our arrival at Charleston, we were escorted to the cars by the First Lieutenant, in whose charge we had been placed, and who finally accompanied us to Charleston.

Confined at Charleston

Upon our arrival in this latter place, we were confined in the Charleston jail and yard. The members of our party were placed in the jail for a few days, as a punishment for attempting to escape, although our right to do so if possible was not seriously questioned. On our release from close confinement we found our old companions in misery, in the jail yard.

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This jail was a stone structure, two stories in height, situated very nearly in the centre of the city. On one side was the workhouse, wherein were confined a large number of the prisoners; on the other was the Marine Hospital. The jail yard was in the rear of the building; the fence surrounding it was about sixteen feet in height, and its top bristled with iron spikes. Both outside and inside the walls was stationed a line of sentinels, although for several days after our first introduction to the interior I did not discover the fact that there was a guard outside. Inside the walls was a well, a cistern, and a sink. Six hundred of us were confined here and within the building.

Our situation was not as comfortable as at Macon. The height of the wall prevented a free circulation of air, which circumstance, together with the atmosphere generated by the sink, did not precisely furnish us with the air of Araby the Blest. The water was brackish, and unfit for anything but washing and culinary purposes. The cistern furnished a limited supply to quench our thirst. Taking it altogether, it was neither pleasant nor salubrious.

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While a change from the everlasting corn meal, our rations were light, and not the most palatable to Northern stomachs. They consisted of rice and lard. Just what use we were expected to make of the lard, we never found out.

Another Tunnel

Here again another tunnel was projected. Our shelter consisted of wall tents. The one assigned to

Lieutenant Brooks and myself was located near one of the walls. The soil was loose sand, easy to dig. The walk of the sentry was between the tent and the wall of the yard. An officer whose name has escaped me, possessed an air bed that could be inflated. We took him into the scheme, on condition that he would allow the party to use the bed to float down the river. Our plan was to mine out under the wall, and make either Cooper or Ashley River, and float out to our shipping in the harbor. It will be recollected that at this time the Union forces were in possession of the coast, had erected batteries that commanded the city, and were engaged in shelling it.

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As before, the naval officers were taken into the secret of the mine, especially my friend Billings and Lieutenant Commodore Austin Pendergrast. These officers had been captured at the time the "Water Witch" was surprised and taken by the enemy in Ossabaw Sound, Georgia, June 3, 1864. Better nor braver men never lived. Billings, in particular, although strictly a non-combatant, was said by the Confederates to be the bravest man they ever fell in with. He was one of the first officers who succeeded in getting on deck when the vessel was surprised. Twice knocked on the head, and afterward being cut down on the deck, he refused to surrender until he had emptied his revolver, killing and wounding several of the enemy. Pendergrast—"the old man," as the sailors called him—was a large man, weighing, I should judge, in the neighborhood of three hundred pounds, and he stipulated with us to dig the hole large enough for him to crawl through.

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The shaft was started in the tent. It was sunk for about six feet, then deviated until we struck the wall; then it ran almost perpendicularly beneath the wall, and rose again at an acute angle towards the surface. According to the best observations we could make from the inside of the yard, the building situated on the grounds adjoining the prison wall had the appearance of a private residence, and we did not imagine that the outside of the wall was guarded. So one night, all things being ready for our leave-taking, we concluded to set out on our journey.

I went ahead and broke a hole through the surface of the ground, and stuck my head through to reconnoitre. The first view I obtained was somewhat limited, for I discovered the muzzle of a musket about two feet from my face. I did not delay for any further investigations, but made the very quickest time on record, back through the tunnel under the wall and into my tent, and from there across the yard to the quarters of Commodore Pendergrast.

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The Commodore was fastidious, and possessed all the hauteur and exclusiveness of old naval officers. But covered with dirt as I was, I crawled in beside him.

"Cover me up quick!" I cried.

"Ugh! D—— it! You are all sand!" he protested.

"Never mind the sand. Keep still! They are after me," I answered.

Just then there was a commotion in the yard. The reserve guard was called in, and the tents were inspected. Of course our tent was vacant, and the hole in plain sight, but both occupants had completely vanished. Brooks had concealed himself somewhere, and I was under the protection of Commodore Pendergrast, for by this time the "old man" had taken in the situation and had taken pains to turn upon his side, telling me to snuggle up to him as close as I could.

Soon the searchers entered the tent and commenced.

"Hello there!"

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"Who in hell are you?" responded the "old man."

"Beg pardon, Commodore, but there has been an attempt to escape here, and we want the parties."

"Well, what do you want here? Do you think I can fly?"

"No. But this attempt was by mining under the wall."

"Well, do you suppose I am a woodchuck? It is bad enough to sleep here on the ground, without being disturbed in my first sleep. Get out of this!"

And with a grunt the "old man" settled himself again as if for sleep.

"See here," said the inquisitive official, "this won't do; we must search the tent for form's sake, if for nothing more."

"Search away, then," said Pendergrast; "but be quick about it."

"All right, Com.," said the man. "We'll not disturb you more than we can help."

Entering the tent he looked it carefully over. I was on the opposite side from the searching party, and if ever a man shrank into small compass, I did then. I crept as close as I could to the huge mountain of flesh that overshadowed me. Even then I shook with laughter, for the Commodore fairly shuddered at feeling me, covered with dirt as I was, in close contact with his spotless undress uniform.

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At last, with an apology, the Confederate left the tent. Nothing was said for about an hour, but Pendergrast was actually suffering. At last he whispered:

"Say!"

"Umph?" I responded.

"I've stood this as long as I can. I'm grit from head to foot."

"Never mind, Commodore. I dug that hole large for your especial benefit."

"Yes, I suppose so. But what has become of it?"

"I left it right there, and a fellow looking into it with a musket. Am glad it was crooked," I said reflectively.

"Why?" he asked.

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"Because if it had been straight, he might have sent a bullet after me," I replied. And then I told him all about it.

As soon as daylight made its appearance, I decamped. The old fellow generously divided his blankets with me, however. But I was homeless, for neither Brooks nor myself dared to claim the tent for several days, and then we applied for it on the score that the tent where we were located was overcrowded. Our request was granted, but we were ever after regarded with suspicion. It may be asked how we concealed the dirt and obtained tools to dig with. The dirt we dumped into the sink, or packed on the bottom of the tent. We dug with clam shells, the soil being soft sand. The most serious mistake we made was in taking the Marine Hospital for a private residence; for, unknown to us, it was crowded with prisoners at the time, and more closely guarded than the jail yard, and I had broken ground almost under the feet of a sentinel. If he had realized the truth, no doubt he would have put an effective stop to all further mining operations as far as I was concerned; but very likely his surprise at seeing the ground yawn at his feet and a queer looking animal show its head, saved me.

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Some few days after this occurrence, when the yard had resumed its tiresome monotony, our captors proposed to us that if we would give our parole not to attempt to escape while we were held in the city of Charleston, they would provide us with comfortable quarters in the city.

This offer caused a good deal of discussion among us. At first many were disposed to reject it. But we reflected upon the almost utter hopelessness of the task of attempting to escape from Charleston. It is a city built upon a point of land lying between the Cooper and Ashley rivers; the land side was securely guarded, and the only chance for escape was by the sea, with not more than one chance in a hundred of getting past the picket boats constantly patrolling the harbor. Added to this was our miserable condition, and our longing for restoration to a more civilized manner of living; so the offer was a greater temptation than the most of us could withstand. All but two of the prisoners accepted the proposition—Colonel La Grange of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, and the Colonel of a Pennsylvania regiment, whose name I have forgotten. These gentlemen refused the offer, not so much because they thought there was a chance to escape, as because they believed it their duty to hold themselves in readiness to do so if an opportunity occurred. We appreciated their motives, although we felt that they were mistaken in their ideas of duty.

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In the Line of Union Fire

Shortly after this compact was entered into, we were removed from the pestilential atmosphere of the jail to comfortable quarters in the Roper Hospital buildings and grounds, and relieved from the immediate surveillance of the guard. Because now, at every turn, we failed to meet the watchful eye of a grey-coated sentinel, we were none the less prisoners. We were bound by invisible bonds, stronger than the combined forces of Lee and Johnson—a breath of air; a mere sound that ceased to vibrate almost as soon as spoken: We had pledged our honor that during the time we were confined in Charleston we would not attempt to escape, and that we would not pass certain defined limits. That pledge stood instead of bolts and bars. Our honor stood guard over us, and from its requirements we could only be relieved by ourselves; a part of the stipulation being that the parole might be dissolved at any time, by giving reasonable notice to that effect.

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The reader will recollect that the avowed object of the Confederate government in removing us from Macon to Charleston, was to place us under the fire of our own forces, which were bombarding the city, and thus force a cessation of the siege. The jail was situated in a portion of the city not yet visited by any messages from the "Swamp Angel," as the heavy advance battery located about five miles from the city was called. We discovered, however, that our new quarters, while more healthfully located so far as air, water, and agreeable surroundings were concerned, were unpleasantly near that portion of the city occasionally visited by Union shells. We were uncharitable enough to ascribe motives not altogether disinterested, in this assignment.

We had no more than got quietly settled, when a cry arose of, "Look out, boys, there she comes!"

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On looking up, we saw a small white cloud suddenly make its appearance over our heads, followed by a dull, reverberating sound, and a piece of exploded shell came screaming over us. Strange as it may seem, the sound of that missile was inspiring. We realized that we were within shot of friends; that five minutes before, that piece of iron had been handled by "boys in blue," under the protecting folds of the stars and stripes. Such expressions as these, were heard from all parts of the house and yard: "Good for you, old fellows! Hurrah! Hurrah! Uncle Sam is feeling for us. Give us another!" As another burst in an adjoining street, scattering big pieces of iron in every direction, it was greeted with hearty cheers from the prisoners.

It must not be inferred from this that we were so foolhardy as to court danger, or that we really enjoyed being under fire; but we were under the influence of excitement, and zealous to impress upon the Confederates around us, that we should not aid them by making any request to our government to suspend operations on our account. We also took into consideration the fact that a city was a large thing to shoot at, and the chances of being hit or injured not alarming. We took the precaution, however, of establishing a watch for shells, and I have no doubt that every man had his place of refuge picked out, in case of actual danger.

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From our point of view, the sight of the bombardment at night was exceedingly fine. A dull, heavy report would be heard, and almost simultaneously something that looked like a shooting star would be seen moving with great rapidity toward the zenith, until it reached its greatest altitude, when it would fall to the earth almost perpendicularly, usually bursting in the air at an elevation of from fifty to a hundred feet, scattering fragments in every direction.

Only once, during our stay of nearly a month, were we in real danger. One day, about noon, when the most of us were in the building, a fragment of shell came crashing through the roof and two floors, on its way down passing through a table surrounded by a party eating dinner. Fortunately, only one man was hurt, and he but slightly. From the jocular manner in which the strange visitor was greeted, one might have supposed it was a mere piece of pleasantry, arranged for our special benefit.

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Daily Experiences

Our rations in this prison were good in quality, varied, and plentiful. Daily we drew corn meal, flour, salt, fresh meat, rice, sugar, molasses, and beans. Besides this, those having money were permitted to purchase milk, sweet potatoes, shrimps, and other luxuries from the hunters, who were principally negroes. In short, we were now treated humanely, as we were entitled to be by the laws of nations and the customs of civilized governments. This change in our treatment, we were informed, was due to the humanity of General Sam Jones, who commanded the department.

Our surroundings at this place were as pleasant as we could expect. The yard and grounds of the Roper Hospital were laid out with care and taste. Beautiful flowers bordered the well-kept walks; orange and lemon trees perfumed the air; two large fig trees dropped their fruit at our feet, and furnished magnificent shade from the fierce rays of the sun. It was a very paradise of Confederate prisons. The officials, too, were gentlemanly and courteous, and seemed really desirous of making our condition as comfortable as was in their power.

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Here, too, for the first time, we received mail from home, which came to us by flag of truce. It is almost impossible to describe the longing all felt for news from home: to hear from wives and families, and, not least, to hear from friends in the army. We had written many letters, which we were assured would by flag of truce be forwarded by our captors, but we had as yet received nothing, and the "Stale fish" Libby prisoners had received no mail since leaving Richmond in the previous spring. Imagine, then, the commotion caused by a voice loudly bawling, "Yankee mail! Turn out for letters."

Every man, regardless of rank, crowded to the front of the building. There in the yard, were several mail sacks. Three or four of our number were selected as temporary postmasters, and several others as temporary policemen, authorized to keep the crowd back. Then the distribution began.

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The officers selected for this purpose, commenced calling out the address on the letters. As a name was called, the eager "*Here!*" would be heard, were the person present. Sometimes the response was heard, "Sent to Columbia (or Salisbury)," as the case might be; and often, after a mournful pause, would come the melancholy answer, "Dead!"

I shall never forget one poor fellow, a Second Lieutenant of a New York regiment. As his name was called, he eagerly pressed forward to receive the longed-for letter, and before it reached his hand, cried out: "Hurry up! Hand it over! Hurrah! I knew mother would not forget me."

When it reached him he was so excited that he could scarcely hold the envelope. Hastily opening it—there was no seal to break—he glanced at the contents; and then, such a groan of concentrated disappointment and misery I never heard before and hope never to hear again. No words were spoken; no tear stained his cheek; quietly working his way back out of the crowd, he sought his quarters and temporarily passed out of my mind, and in a moment was forgotten by the eager, anxious crowd.

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When the excitement was partly over and I had read the long-expected letter from my wife, I sought him out. He was sitting upon a box with his head resting on his hands, a picture of despair.

"You seem to have had bad news," I said.

His reply was to place the letter in my hands. It was evidently from a stranger, and in a few words informed him that his mother had died shortly after his capture, and when on her death bed had asked the writer to convey her blessing to her boy.

"I am the only child," he cried; "and my mother was a widow."

Attempts at consolation were useless. I did not try. The poor fellow never rallied from the blow.

He was removed to the hospital and died a month later. His capture had killed his mother, and her death killed him. Only two of the thousands of victims offered up on the altar of the country! One more family destroyed—a sacrifice to the unholy ambition that drew the South into a rebellion whose brilliant commencement was only equalled by its inglorious ending.

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In the latter part of August or the first of September, yellow fever made its appearance in Charleston. To a Northerner there was something terrifying in the thought of being penned up there, to meet this pestilence. We had endured famine, but this was worse. We knew that there had been one or two cases in the prison, and all had been exposed, or might have been. The patients had been removed under the care of the Sisters of Charity, God bless them! Having been brought up a Protestant, I had imbibed a prejudice against everything pertaining to Catholicism; but since experiencing their gentle ministrations in Charleston, where they literally obeyed the Scriptural injunction: "Sick they ministered unto us, in prison they visited us, and naked they clothed us," I have learned a broader charity. I have learned that neither creed nor sex make the Christian or the hero. I never now see their distinctive costume without a feeling of gratitude and respect.

While we were at Charleston, the Andersonville prisoners were moved to a place near Charleston, passing through the city on their way to camp on the race track. My pen falters when I attempt to describe the passage through the streets of that sad column. Starvation, nostalgia, and disease, together with brutal treatment, had reduced these gallant Union soldiers to half naked savages. I saw many with not enough clothing to cover their nakedness. Starvation was stamped on every face. Hundreds of the poor fellows died after reaching our lines, and thousands more died in prison. Why, in the name of common decency, our government has not passed a law granting them pensions, I do not know. If pensions are ever granted to discharged soldiers, it should be to them. Better lose a leg or an arm in battle, than to have suffered the living death of Confederate imprisonment. I sometimes wish a sleek, well-fed congressman might experience a short term of this same imprisonment, that he might realize precisely what it was.

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To the credit of the people of Charleston, and especially to the Sisters of Charity be it said, they obtained permission to aid these Andersonville prisoners with donations of food and clothing, and helped them to the best of their own limited means. Nourishing soups were provided, and clothing enough to cover their nakedness. Although Charleston was the scene of the inauguration of hostilities, there is a warm spot for it in my heart, since my imprisonment there in 1864.

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About the first of October the Confederates became anxious to rid the city of us, for fear the fever should spread and become a pestilence that might sweep them all off. It was therefore decided to remove us again, this time to Columbia. Immediately upon hearing this news, some of us began to look about us for means to facilitate an escape, and a long march across the country.

Five months previous, an officer of General Sherman's staff had been captured, who had in his possession, carefully preserved, topographical maps of South Carolina and Georgia. These had been copied by Captain John B. Vliet, Captain Henry, and Lieutenant Dahl, until there were several duplicates of them. I had been fortunate enough to secure one of these charts. I was also in possession of a small night and day compass, presented to me by Commodore Pendergrast when he was exchanged. A short time previously I had conversed with several of my comrades, and found four ready to join me in attempting a trip across South Carolina and Georgia, on the "underground railroad." The party consisted of Captain John B. Vliet, Captain Henry Spencer, Lieutenant and Adjutant Gough of the Tenth Wisconsin, Lieutenant Hatcher of the Thirteenth Ohio, and myself.

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At length dawned the morning of the fifth of October, 1864, a memorable day for us. For several days there had been rumors of an exchange about to take place, the old story that we had heard every time we were to exchange prisons. Just where we were to be transported, was not stated; we thought Savannah our destination, but Columbia was actually the place to which they were taking us.

A Second Escape

No notice that we were to leave at any particular time was given, until we were ordered to pack up and fall in line. This was to prevent any special preparation or saving of rations, the intention being to discourage any attempt of escape, by reason of lack of food. But they did not by any means relax their vigilance in guarding us. An entire regiment, the Thirtieth Georgia Infantry, was detailed to guard us, and we filed out of prison between long lines of grey-coated soldiers warily watching our every movement. Once more the long procession marched through the streets of Charleston to the railroad station.

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Our party managed to keep together, and were assigned to the same car, located near the centre of the train. As usual, the transportation furnished was freight cars, each car being crowded to its capacity. The side doors were thrown open to furnish air, and we secured a place between the open doors. Four guards were stationed on the inside, and from five to six others on the roof of each car, with orders to shoot any of the prisoners attempting to escape. The guards inside our car took their station beside each corner of the open doors.

At length, everything being in readiness, the whistle sounded, the wheels began slowly to revolve, and we were off.

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Our plans were soon formed. We decided to wait patiently until night, and then, selecting a time

when the cars were running down grade, at their maximum rate of speed, jump from the train. It was necessary that the cars should be moving rapidly, for otherwise the guards would have little difficulty in riddling us with bullets. As they passed successively by, the guards on each car would have a chance for a shot at us at unpleasantly short range: for the same reason, our chances would be better in the dark. We easily calculated that at the usual rate of progress, the train could not reach Columbia until after midnight; so that these two very essential concomitants to success were not beyond the bounds of probability. The route selected was to make the nearest practicable point in the lines occupied by Sherman's command, between Atlanta and Chattanooga.

A careful inventory was taken, of stock belonging to the party. Shoes were more essential than any other article of clothing. A man may travel without hat or coat; he can dispense with undergarments; he may even travel *sans culottes*, but he must have his feet protected.

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With the exception of Lieutenant Hatcher, each of the party was provided with something in the shape of boots or shoes. Hatcher had a pair of boots, but they were nearly minus the soles, and it was evident that they would last but a few days. Captain Vliet had a pair of long-legged army boots that I made up my mind would furnish leather enough to make a pair of moccasins for Hatcher, and still leave enough to serve a useful (if not ornamental) purpose to their owner. Our other clothing was nothing to boast of. We each had coat, shirt, and pantaloons, but neither hat nor cap. There was but one blanket in the party, and a new linen sack or bag. We had a kettle that I had made out of an old paint keg, while in Roper Hospital. Spencer had about a quart of flour, in addition to the one day's rations furnished us at starting, and I had saved a small piece of salt pork. We had two maps and the compass.

There was yet to overcome one difficulty. Four armed men were present, to prevent our escape. We knew that at the first movement we should be fired upon. Even were we not hurt, the shot would give notice to guards on the succeeding cars that something was wrong. This would result in attracting vastly more attention to ourselves, personally, than we were ambitious for just at that time. We must therefore either disarm the guards or render their muskets temporarily useless.

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This we accomplished. "Familiarity breeds contempt." At first our jailors were on the alert every moment; not a movement of the prisoners was made, that they did not narrowly watch; but after a while they became interested in our conversation, and fell to laughing at our jokes. At first perhaps a little nervous at being in such close proximity to fifty or sixty "Yanks," even though the latter were unarmed, this passed away, and we were soon conversing together like old acquaintances. As it began to get dark, tired of standing on guard so long without being relieved, they set their muskets on the floor of the car and seated themselves at the ends of the open door, with their feet hanging outside, their bayonets leaning against the top of the doorway.

One of our party was stationed near each sentinel, and getting into conversation with him quietly raised the hammer of the lock from the tube, with his thumb, while with the little finger the cap was worked off the nipple. All this, without attracting attention. Within twenty minutes of commencing operations, every musket was uncapped. Meanwhile we were nearing Branchville. It was quite dark now, and we were only waiting for the train to get under full headway.

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At length we reached a thick wood. The train was moving through it at the rate of twenty miles an hour. The pine forest through which we were passing, added to the darkness. The time for action had arrived. Quietly notifying my companions to be in readiness, I grasped the bag before described, in which I had deposited the kettle and pork, gave the signal, and sprang from the car out into the darkness.

Fugitives

It is difficult to describe one's sensation in jumping from a rapidly-moving to a stationary object. It is very much as one might imagine it would be in jumping from a stationary object upon a large and very rapidly-revolving wheel. You do not fall, but the earth comes up and hits you; and then, unless you hold fast to something, you roll off. I struck first upon my feet, then upon the back of my neck, and then, as it seemed to me, I rolled over several times. In fact, before I had fairly settled in one position, the train had passed me. Some idea of the rapidity with which the train was moving may be gained from the fact that five of us jumped, one after another, as rapidly as possible, and yet from where I landed to where the last man struck the earth was at least twenty rods. Fortunately the ground was smooth, though very hard. Although terribly jarred and shaken up, none of us were seriously injured, and in a few moments we were standing together on the track. We knew that an alarm would be given, and that we should probably be pursued. Even while we were talking, a musket was discharged from the train, and we heard the whistle sounded for "Down brakes."

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We at once plunged into the forest in the direction of the coast, exactly the opposite of our true direction. After traveling for about a mile, we doubled on our track, crossed the railroad within a quarter of a mile of the point where we had left it, and taking a northwesterly course commenced our pilgrimage toward Sherman and Liberty.

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Our object in apparently wasting precious time in making a false start, was to puzzle the pursuers, whom we knew would be on our track in the morning. We had hardly left the railroad when, in the thick brush ahead of us, we heard men's voices, and the barking of dogs. Hist! Lie

down! Which way are they heading? Straight for us. Shall we run? No, that will not do, we should be heard and followed. Crouching upon the ground in a thicket, scarcely breathing, we awaited their approach. Soon they were near enough for us to understand their conversation.

"Wondah what dat shot foh?" said a voice.

"Do'no. Reck'n it war a geard on dat train. Hey, Cæsar, you rascal! Wat de mattah now, ole boy? Dat dog smell somet'in'."

"Coon, I reckon."

"Dat no coon. See de way he growl and show his teef. Heyar, Cæsar! Come, Cæsar! Hunt 'em up, ole boy! Wat ye got, dat scars ye so?"

By this time we could distinguish two forms in the darkness, and could see the dog smelling around our track. It was a perilous moment. Evidently the men were negroes, probably out hunting for coon or opossum. If they discovered us they might prove our betrayers. We thought the best way was to keep still and await the dénouement.

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"Wondah wat dat is," said one. "Don't act like coon. Reck'n we bettah let dat alone."

"Reck'n so, too. Come on, Cæsar!" and whistling off the dog, the negroes passed on, greatly to our relief.

As soon as they were fairly out of hearing we started on through the woods, taking a northwesterly direction, occasionally stopping to consult the compass and reassure ourselves as to direction. Through the brush, over fallen trees, now in quagmire, now on the ridges, among the pines, we made our way. At length we found a road running in the direction of our march, and struck into it with an accelerated pace that amounted almost to a double-quick, with hearts cheered by our successful escape from the train, and with high hopes of final success. On and on we traveled. No words were spoken above a breath, and only the whispers were such as the leader thought actually necessary to guide those in the rear.

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With body half bent, the leader, listened intently to every sound, and strained his powers of vision to their utmost capacity. When any unusual sound attracted his attention, he halted those following, with a low "Hist!" while he went forward, carefully reconnoitering the ground. At the word "Again forward!" we flitted like spectres over the lonely road. So eager were we to get on, that daylight found us somewhat unprepared for a halt. We were in a cultivated country—cornfields on both sides of us, a house in plain sight. On our left, in a field, was a thicket, with a cornfield on one side running quite up to the thicket. Leaving the road, we struck across the fields and gained the thicket, fortunately without discovery save by a house-dog that barked furiously at us until we were out of sight, and then, with a growl, regained his kennel.

Selecting the densest part of the thicket, we spread our coats on the ground. After consulting our compass and map, and guessing at our location, and finding that we had traveled, as far as we could judge, about twenty-five miles, we drew our blanket over us and were soon sound asleep, with the exception of the one detailed to stand guard.

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Our slumber was of short duration. As the sun came up, the horns, on all sides, calling the negroes to their labors, the crowing of the cocks, and all the customary sounds on a Southern plantation, warned us that we might accidentally be discovered at any moment. Our anxiety precluded the possibility of sleep, until we had become somewhat accustomed to our peril. It was only the knowledge that we must sleep to be able to keep awake at night, when the friendly darkness should again shield us from sight, that induced us to even try to secure this much-needed means to recuperate our exhausted physical powers.

Thus, watching and dozing by turns, the long day at length came to an end. As soon as it was dark, we were fortunate enough to find some corn and beans, not yet hard. Building a small fire, shielded from observation by surrounding it with a screen made of our coats and blankets, we boiled this food in our kettle and ate heartily of the nutritious succotash. Thus invigorated, we again started on the journey towards our lines. Passing through the cornfield, we again reached the road, our hearts light and courage redoubled. It was evident that we were not pursued; if we had been, we would have been overtaken during the day, and we intended before morning to put a good thirty miles more between ourselves and our starting point.

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We had been on the road for about an hour, when ahead of us, apparently in the road, a light was discovered. A halt was called, and this phenomenon discussed in all its bearings. Why should a fire be kindled in the road? Was it an outpost of the enemy's cavalry? Were the negroes building a fire for fun? Was it a guerilla party out on a scout? Or was it that the country had been notified of our escape, and that the inhabitants were out looking for us?

Without arriving at any definite conclusion, we decided, at all events, to flank the danger, whether real or imaginary. Acting upon this decision, we left the road and took to the brush, in the following order: myself, followed by Spencer, Hatcher, Vliet, and Gough, one following the other in single file. We had thus progressed perhaps forty rods, when our onward course was arrested by something moving through the brush in our front.

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I immediately halted, and by a low "s-sh!" notified those in the rear of danger ahead. Throwing myself on the ground, I cautiously crawled forward to reconnoiter. I soon discovered an object, apparently a man, cautiously picking his way through the brush towards us. Occasionally he

would stop and apparently reconnoiter, and then cautiously advance. It was just opposite the fire in the road, distant from it by perhaps thirty rods. Could it be that there was a picket line here, so far away from the contending forces? At all events, he was so near us that he must have heard our movements. Was he watching to get a shot at us? I could feel the hair rise on my head as I contemplated this probability, for he was not more than a rod away. What was it best to do?

After thinking it all over, I decided upon the desperate plan of suddenly attacking him, and trusting to Providence for the result. Slowly and carefully, I raised to my feet, and with a silent prayer for success, dashed upon—an overgrown hog, peacefully following his legitimate business of gathering acorns. It is difficult to determine whether the relief afforded by the discovery of his hogship was adequate compensation for this sudden letting down from the feeling of desperation to which we were wrought but a moment before. We were too frightened to laugh, too relieved to be angry.

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Only a moment was lost in contemplation of our situation. I gave the signal to advance, and started. I heard my companions following. Safely passing the fire that had at first alarmed us, we soon regained the road. I may as well say here, that we never discovered what that fire did mean, or for what purpose it was kindled. We only know that, be the purpose what it may, it resulted disastrously for our little party, as the sequel will show.

Two of Us Missing

Upon reaching the highway, it was discovered that two of the party were missing. Vliet and Gough were gone. What could it mean? Had they been intercepted and taken prisoners? Or had they voluntarily cut loose from us, and taken this method of doing it?

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There was one circumstance that pointed that way. Early in the evening, Vliet had both compass and map. Just after we discovered the fire, he had returned them to me, with the remark that should we get separated he could get along better without the compass than I could. But, in justice to my companions and myself, let me say that this thought found no lasting place in our minds. We knew both Vliet and Gough too well to believe that they would pursue such a course. If they had, for any reason, concluded to divide the party they would have manfully told us of their plan, and not have deserted us.

It was at once decided to institute a search. We dared not halloo, or make any unusual noise to attract their attention. It was therefore a still hunt. So two of us retraced our steps and searched the bushes and thickets thoroughly, but could discover no trace of our missing comrades.

After spending at least two hours of precious time, we were compelled to abandon the search as hopeless, and returned to our companion in the road. He too had watched closely, but had failed to discover anything, and we were obliged to face the thought that our party was broken, that we were separated. Shall we ever meet again? If we do, will it be under the Stars and Stripes, or within the walls of a prison pen? With saddened hearts, our party of three—Spencer, Hatcher and myself—again started on our lonely journey, but doubly lonely now.

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Ruminations upon our unfortunate separation so occupied our minds, that we became less watchful of our own immediate surroundings than had been our custom, or than safety required. The results of this might have proved disastrous, had we not rudely been aroused from our useless regrets by the sudden need to exercise all our faculties for our own protection.

An abrupt angle in the road had concealed from us the approach of a man, until suddenly, without warning, we were standing before him, face to face. He immediately halted. So did we. There was no time for concert of action, and for a moment I was at a loss what to do, when Spencer took the initiative by asking: "Where are you going?"

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"Ober to Miss Clemen's plantation," was the reply.

The dialect disclosed what the darkness had concealed, the fact that he was a negro. The reader will recollect that we were in the interior of the enemy's country; that every white man, almost without exception, was an enemy, who would not only esteem it a duty but a privilege to kill us at the first opportunity; and we did not then know that the negro could be trusted. Stories had been industriously circulated among us by Confederates to persuade us that the negroes would be sure to betray us if we attempted to escape. So we had started out with the determination to trust no one, white or black. Notwithstanding this, it was a great relief to us to find that our new acquaintance was a negro. However, we pursued the conversation but little further. Cautioning the fellow not to be caught out again so far from home without a pass, we started on our way, and he on his. As soon as he was fairly out of sight and hearing, we left the road and plunged again into the woods.

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When we had placed a safe distance between ourselves and the highway, a halt was called, for the purpose of holding a consultation over our movements. We had met one negro; and while we had not trusted him any further than we could help, yet from his manner we were all of the opinion that he distrusted our being Southerners. Our speech, of itself, was sufficient to betray us. We had seen enough of negro shrewdness to realize that if the news of our escape from the train had been circulated, as we had every reason to believe it had been, he would be at no loss to guess that we were Yankees.

After discussing the matter, we decided to take the first road running in our direction, and run

the chances of the negro's betraying us. We resolved, further, that in case we came across another, we would tell him freely that we were Yankees—this, of course, to depend upon whether we should have reason to believe the man our friend.

Consulting our maps and compass, and assuring ourselves of the proper direction, we traveled on through the woods for perhaps five miles. At length, finding a road running in the direction of our line of march, we pursued our journey without further adventure, until the near approach of daylight warned us again to seek the shelter of the friendly woods, where we could find a thicket sufficiently remote from roads and dense enough to afford us shelter from observation by any passing wanderer. We were successful in finding the desired haven, and throwing ourselves upon the ground were soon sleeping soundly. [Pg 110]

So ended our second day's, or rather night's, march. We had traveled only about fifteen miles that night. Thus far we had been traveling in a northwesterly direction, through the parishes of Orangeburg and Lexington, nearly on a line with the railroad running from Keyesville to Columbia, about ten miles from the railroad.

We had as yet selected no particular point in Sherman's line as our goal. We were, indeed, at a loss to know what place to select. When we last heard from our forces, Sherman had taken Atlanta; Hood had succeeded Johnston in command of the Confederate army, and had commenced his celebrated movement to flank Sherman out of Atlanta, and in reality out of Georgia; so we were left to conjecture what the result of the movement would be. [Pg 111]

Atlanta was the nearest point, but we were not by any means sure that Sherman still occupied that place. We finally concluded to make for the nearest practicable point on the line held by Sherman between Atlanta and Chattanooga. On our approach to what was Sherman's lines on the second of October, we would gather such information as we could from the negroes, and be governed accordingly.

As nearly as we could calculate, we were about twenty or twenty-five miles southwest from Columbia. We now concluded to make our course a little north of west, so as to head off some of the streams running into the Saluda River, until we should strike the Savannah.

A Friend in the Dark

On the approach of darkness we started out on our third night's march. Nothing unusual occurred until about three o'clock in the morning. We had traveled on a turnpike road, part of the time through a cultivated country, and partly through a forest of stunted pines, the second-growth of timber on abandoned plantations. We had just passed a large plantation, when we came suddenly upon a pedestrian wending his way in a direction opposite to our own. Before we saw him we were too close to avoid his observation, and we therefore boldly approached him. To our joy he proved to be a negro. [Pg 112]

By this time we were both hungry and faint. The last crumbs of our rations had been eaten hours before. When and how we were to procure more, was a problem difficult of solution. We had tried several cornfields, but were unable to find anything except perfectly hard corn. Gathering some of this, we had determined to boil it and do the best we could. Naturally, then, when we discovered the race of our new acquaintance, our first thought was to ascertain from him if there was any prospect of supplying our larder with something more palatable than hard corn—always providing he should, upon further acquaintance, prove to be our friend. Notwithstanding our desperate situation in the matter of food, and the fact that we had deliberately determined to trust the first negro that we should meet, our intercourse would, to a looker on, have seemed strangely cautious on both sides. Our conversation, as my memory serves me, was substantially as follows: [Pg 113]

Yankee. Well, boy, where are you traveling so late at night?

Negro. Been ovah to see my wife, massa.

Yankee. Where does your wife live?

Negro. Down about a mile from Ninety-six.

Yankee. Ninety-six. Let's see! That's on the railroad, isn't it?

Negro. Yes, sah, reck'n it is.

Yankee. Whose boy are you?

Negro. Massa Gen'l Haygood's.

Yankee. That's his plantation about a mile down this road, isn't it?

Negro. Yes, sah. Dat's Massa's plantation whar de big house is.

Yankee. Well, boy, what do you think of the war now going on? Your master's in the army, I suppose?

Negro. Yas, sah. Massa in de ahmy. I do'no jus' what I does tink 'bout it. [Pg 114]

Yankee. You know that the Yankees are trying to make you blacks all free, don't you?

Negro. Wal, I hab heard dat dey were.

Yankee. Would you rather be free or would you rather be as you are—a slave?

Negro. Wal, Massa, I don't zac'ly know. Spects ebery man like to own hissef.

Yankee. Now, supposing you found a man on his road to liberty, that had been a slave or prisoner, would you help him, or would you betray him?

Negro. Who is you, Massa? Wat for you asks such queer questions?

Yankee. Suppose we tell you; suppose we put our lives in your hands—will you betray us?

Negro. No, sah. I reckon not. But who is you?

Yankee. We are Yankee officers, and have been in prison. We are now trying to get through to our lines, and want you to help us.

Negro. 'Fore God, Massa! Is dat so?

Yankee. Yes, that is so! We've started for the Yankee lines in Georgia. Now you won't betray us, will you, when you know we're trying to help you and your people, and to give them their liberty? [Pg 115]

Negro. 'Fore God, Massa, if you is wat you say you is, I'll do eberyting for you. Wot ken I do?

Yankee. The first thing is something to eat; and next, we want to know whether you have heard that any Yankees escaped from the train when we were being taken from Charleston to Columbia.

Negro. Yes, sah. I hab heard all about it, an' dey has been hunting de country all ober for you—an'," taking a tin pan from his head, "my wife hab made up some biled bacon an' greens for me to take home wid me, an' you's welcome to dat, if you want it."

We stood upon no ceremony, but seating ourselves upon the ground, greedily devoured the poor fellow's bacon and greens with a relish that an epicure might have envied. It was astonishing the rapidity with which we stored away six quarts of greens and bacon. And yet, truth to tell, the supply was not equal to the demand. [Pg 116]

Had there been another panful, I venture to say it would have followed the same downward road traveled by its predecessor, without any extra effort on our part.

Having swallowed the man's dinner and obtained from him all the information it was in his power to impart, we again started on our way, with thankful hearts and renewed courage and physical vigor.

Novel Foot-gear

But the night was not to pass away without our experiencing a reverse, almost commensurate with our good fortune. As will be remembered, Hatcher was, when we left the cars, almost destitute of boots. The old pair he started with had become almost useless, and the soles were nearly or quite gone. They were better than none when traveling through brush; but when on the smooth road he could do better barefoot, and when we met the negro he was carrying the boots in his hands. Strange to say, when we again started on our journey, he left them lying beside the road where we had eaten our nocturnal dinner, and failed to discover his loss until many miles stretched their weary length between us and the forgotten property. It was so near daylight when the loss was discovered, that we did not dare retrace our steps for fear of being seen. Poor Hatcher was discouraged. To attempt to travel barefooted across two States, looked like an impossible task. If we had only had Vliet's long boot-legs, the problem would not have been so difficult of solution. [Pg 117]

Hatcher must be supplied with boots, or something to cover his feet. To attempt to obtain them from the negroes, we knew to be hopeless. A pair of shoes was among them something to be hoped for, prayed for, and when obtained, preserved with the greatest care. Even the whites were driven to extremities for clothing of every description, and shoes were especially difficult to obtain at any price. What should we do? I say we, because we had started out with the agreement that we would keep together, under any and all circumstances. If anyone fell sick, the others were to remain with him, giving the best care we could under the circumstances, until he was able to travel, or died. We had also agreed that we would under no circumstances give ourselves up, or voluntarily abandon the attempt to escape, so that the misfortune of one was the misfortune of all. [Pg 118]

Something must be done. An inventory of stock was taken. I had a pair of badly-worn shoes. Spencer had a boot and a shoe. Jointly, we had the kettle made from the paint keg, and the new linen sack. Here were the materials from which a pair of shoes were to be constructed, and the feat was accomplished. An inventory of tools disclosed a needle and a jack-knife. A close inspection of the sack showed that it was strong, new, and that the ravelings could easily be converted into stout thread. There was leather enough in Spencer's one boot leg to furnish the soles, and material enough in the sack to make the uppers. It was amusing to see the rapidity with which Hatcher's face shortened up, as one difficulty after another was met and overcome.

It took the combined mechanical skill of the party to fashion and fit this novel foot-gear; but [Pg 119]

before night they were finished. Hatcher now had by far the best pair of shoes in the party; and if we had only been better supplied with rations, we should have started out that night in better condition for a night's march than at any time since we jumped from the cars.

But the fact was, we were hungry, and after an hour's march found that we were getting faint. Provisions must be had in some way. Leaving the road, we struck into a plantation, in hope of finding either corn or sweet potatoes. We were fortunate enough to secure some hard corn, and a quantity of a species of bean, which I have never seen in the North. They are called peas by the natives, but there is nothing about them, either in growth or appearance, that resembles a pea, and they do not taste like a bean. Be they what they may, they are nutritious if not palatable.

Building a fire in a hollow, and then making a screen of our blanket and coats, to prevent the light from being seen, we proceeded to cook our corn and beans. We soon discovered, however, that while it is an easy matter to cook beans in this way, hard corn has a perverse inclination to remain hard corn, however much it is boiled; so while our supper served a very useful purpose, it was nothing to boast of as a palatable meal. We lost at least three hours in finding, cooking, and eating our supper, and made our jaws ache in our effort to masticate it. Hence, daylight found us only about eighteen or twenty miles from our shoe shop of the day before.

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We now knew that the people had been notified of our escape, and that in all probability there were even then parties searching for us. We knew that they had not as yet been able to get upon our trail. Every consideration of prudence demanded that we should remain concealed in the daytime, and we fully intended to observe this caution; but as the long day slowly dragged to a close we became impatient, and concluded to risk a start before dark—traveling away from any road, and thus making up for lost time. We were also anxious to find a negro, if possible, and procure something more palatable to eat than boiled corn.

Taking our course by the sun, we left the road and hurried into the woods. After traveling perhaps four or five miles in this way, we were somewhat shocked at hearing voices not far from us, and hastily concealed ourselves in a thicket. What was our astonishment to see two white men pass, not more than a rod from our place of concealment. After they had passed, we discovered that we had been traveling nearly on a parallel line with a well-traveled road, and probably had not been out of sight of it for a mile back. Here was a dilemma. Had they discovered us and gone on, making no sign, with a view of getting arms and returning for us, or had we been fortunate enough to escape observation?

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It was evident that in case they had discovered us, our only safety lay in immediate flight. So, taking an entirely new direction, we started again with beating hearts and greatly accelerated speed. A mile, perhaps, on our new direction, and we came to an open, cultivated country. Beyond a field in our front, we could see a wood; we determined to risk crossing the field, and then change our course again. Skulking behind the fences and crouching along behind thickets, we at length succeeded once more in reaching the friendly shelter of the woods.

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Interrupting a Revival

At the corner of the field, near the woods, was a cross-roads, and nearby a church. We could see neither the church nor the roads until reaching the fence, and then it was too late to return. We were in full view of the church, situated to the left of our line of march. Notwithstanding that by our reckoning it was not Sunday, it was filled with people, and some kind of religious services were being held.

Only a few rods farther and we should be out of sight, but we were not fortunate enough to escape observation. We could see fingers pointed at us. As soon as we were out of sight, our careless, measured walk changed to a brisk run. Leaving the road, we struck into the woods again, and as good fortune would have it happened to discover a negro cutting brush, and immediately told him who we were and of our dilemma.

"You git in de brush ober dar," said he. "Dere is a big meetin' goin' on, an' lots ob white folks on de roads. Mighty dang'rous runnin' 'way to-day."

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"But suppose they come after us now, won't they find us?" I asked.

"Golly, Massa, I reckon I ken fool dem if dey do—ef dey don't go after de dogs, an' dey aint no nigger dogs less dan eight mile, an' it's mos' night now. Reckon you uns mus' be hungry, aint ye? Looks as t'ough you didn't have nuffin to eat for a week—S-st! Mars, git in dat brush quick! Dere's white folks comin'!"

The warning came not a moment too soon. In the road, not more than a dozen rods from us, we could see persons moving. Throwing ourselves on the ground, we crawled into a thicket and awaited the denouement. The negro caught up his axe and commenced cutting brush industriously. Soon gathering an armful of it, he started towards his cabin, situated on the road, in sight of our retreat in the thicket. He had so timed himself as to reach his cabin about the time the parties on the road passed it. We could see them in conversation, and soon after we saw them pass on, and the negro go into his hut.

It was now nearly dark. Our suspense can be imagined, during the time we were waiting for his return. Would he be true to the interests of three unknown men, simply upon the statement that they were Yankees? Would not the education of a lifetime of slavery teach him to side with the

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strong against the weak, as a matter of policy? Were he to deliver up to the whites three Yankee officers who had escaped from prison, he would win a local notoriety for fidelity to his master and his master's interests, that would make him the hero of the neighborhood, at least among the whites, and probably insure a reward that to him might be riches. Or would he be faithful to his race, by succoring their recognized friends? For it is a fact that none of his people were so ignorant that they did not know that the result of the war was to be to them either freedom or perpetual slavery.

The action taken by the black man was to us a question not of capture and imprisonment, but of life. We had fully determined that we would not be recaptured. If necessary we would die; but be recaptured while we had life or reason—never! Little was said by either of us, but our thoughts were pictured on our faces.

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About an hour after dark we heard footsteps stealthily approaching our hiding-place. How anxiously we listened! Was there more than one person's step? Yes, there were two of them. We could hear voices. What should we do? Run now, while we had a chance, or wait and fight? If they were after us, they would of course be armed. Now they were coming again. We could hear them breathe.

"Say, Joe! I tell you dey was just de patroles foolin' ye, boy. Dey warn't no Yankees—dey's just tryin' to see wot you'd do ef dey was Yankees, an' dey'll gib you de debbil."

"I know bett'n dat. Didn't I talk wid dem, an' didn't dey talk Yankee? 'Sides, two ob dem had on blue coats. Tell ye I know dey was Yankees, an' I'se goin' to find dem an' gib dem someting to eat."

Our fears were gone, our unjust suspicions removed. We would have been ashamed to have that faithful fellow know how unjustly we had dealt with him in our thoughts. We left our lair and joined them at once. A hearty clasp of the hand and fervent thanks from all of us in turn, soon convinced them that we were indeed Yankees.

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A generous loaf of corn bread and some sweet potatoes, nicely baked, in quantities to suit the demand, soon filled our empty stomachs. Say what we may, there is a very close affinity between one's stomach and that state of mind we call courage. Poorly fed and overworked troops will not and cannot fight with the courage of fresh troops with well-filled stomachs.

Negro Sympathizers

Our prospects, which a few moments before looked so dark, were now rose-colored. It was not altogether because we had satisfied the cravings of hunger and thereby invigorated our physical powers, that we felt renewed courage to endure the hardships before us; we now had evidence of the fidelity of the negroes to us as representatives of the great element of Freedom, then in combat with Slavery. We were now persuaded that we could trust the negroes as a class—not because of any sympathy they had for us personally, but because they appreciated the vital interests of their race in the struggle. The difficulties of the long and dangerous road before us seemed vastly lessened and to a great extent shorn of their terrors, for the majority of the inhabitants along our route were friends—ignorant, it is true; prisoners at large, so to speak—but nevertheless our friends, who would shield us so far as lay in their power, and, to the best of their ability, aid us on our journey.

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These faithful friends also told us how our first friend had contrived to mislead the persons whom our unfortunate appearance at the church had put on our track. He managed to meet them on the road with his load of brush, and upon their inquiring if he had seen any strangers pass along, replied that he had, and that they had crossed the field and gone off in a direction opposite to our place of concealment. Believing his statement, they had followed the direction indicated by him.

We were warned, however, that they would probably get the dogs and put them on our track, and this did not serve to make us feel over secure; we therefore determined to make the greatest possible efforts in the way of traveling that night. Securing the remnants of our supper, and an old coverlid furnished by the negroes, we again started on.

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As ill luck would have it, early in the evening we again incurred the risk of capture, by reason of what seemed to us the extraordinary religious excitement prevailing among the inhabitants of this region. We were traveling along the road, using, as we thought, all due care, when suddenly we came upon a private house, situated near the road, where there was another religious gathering. The door was open, and several persons were gathered around the outside. We passed along the road without attracting any particular notice, as we then thought; but we felt that our appearance then, coupled with our presence near the church the day before, might serve to put the hounds on our track. We pushed on, with beating hearts and accelerated speed. As we were passing the house, I heard for the first time the plantation hymn,

"Dere's nobody knows de trouble I see."

sung in melodious negro voices. There certainly never was a musical number more appropriate to the occasion.

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We made a good night's march, of at least twenty miles. At daylight we again sought the cover of

a thicket and were soon asleep. It would seem, that after our experience of the day before, we ought to have been satisfied to remain quiet that day; and probably we should have been, had it not been that about noon we heard the baying of hounds. Were they after us? We listened. They certainly were trending in the direction of our trail. What should we do? Remain and test the question as to whether the dogs were after us or other game; or should we risk traveling by daylight, and, if they were indeed after us, give them a long race. We decided on the latter course, and, taking our direction from the compass, we started on through the forest, running where the ground would admit of it, and again plunging through the most impenetrable thickets, to delay horsemen should they attempt to follow us.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, we came into the open, cultivated country. Here the greatest caution was needful. We were beside a fence, with a cornfield on one side and on the other an open, uncultivated space. Skulking, so as to keep our heads below the top of the fence, we were passing it. [Pg 130]

We had nearly reached the end of the field, when on our right, in the cornfield, in a hollow that had concealed them from our sight, we came upon about twenty negroes of both sexes, two white men and one white woman, engaged in husking corn. They saw us about the same time we saw them; so, straightening ourselves up, we walked by them, trying to look as unconcerned as possible.

Hunted with Hounds

We passed the field and on into the woods beyond. At the first opportunity we halted, and one of our number skulked back to see what effect our sudden appearance had had upon the people in the cornfield. It took but a moment to satisfy ourselves on that score. They had scattered like a covey of quails at the approach of the hunter; all were running, some in one direction, some in another. It was very plain that the whole country would be aroused, and we should have the hunters upon our trail, if they were not already following us. [Pg 131]

Now then, for it, boys! We must gain on them all we can. A short run brought us to a stream of water, and into it we went without a moment's hesitation. Turning our heads down stream, we floundered along—now over huge boulders, then into holes up to our chins, now through shallow rapids, and again through deep, still water. We were profiting by the lesson taught us by the South Carolina man-hunter in the swamps. The stream was rapid most of the way, and would carry our scent down with its turbulent waters.

We must stick to the stream as long as possible. Stop. What is this? A bayou putting into the stream, and overhung with willows on its banks. Here is our refuge. Wading out into the bayou and behind the willows, we are at least safe from observation. We have left no track since reaching the stream, and unless the hounds are sagacious enough to catch the scent from the air or water, they will be baffled. At all events, it is our only safety. [Pg 132]

Hark! Do you hear it? Listen! Yes, here they come! Away up the creek, at regular intervals, the baying of the hounds can be distinctly heard. Now then, for it! Will they be able to discover our retreat? Listen. Do you hear them? No. They have ceased their infernal howl.

A long pause, and then the notes of the horn. Soon a noise along our side of the creek is heard. The hunters are upon us. The bayou is reached and crossed. On and on down the creek, out of sight and hearing. Thank God! Thank God! We are safe.

Hark! Not so fast! They are coming back. Nearer and nearer the sounds of the hunters come, on the other side of the creek, going up again. They have passed us, and again the sounds of the chase die out, and are heard no more.

We remained in the water, shivering until night, and then, exhausted as we were by cold, hunger, and excitement, traveled through the entire night, this time making twenty-five miles.

Just before daylight it commenced to rain: not a drizzling mist, but a regular, pouring rain, as though the clouds had a day's work to perform, and meant to get the most of it done before noon; a rain that not only wet to the skin, but gave you a good pelting besides. The reader will recollect that this was in October, and even in South Carolina the weather was not as warm as it might be. The nights, especially, were cold and unpleasant. It was no pleasing prospect, that of crawling into a thicket and lying down in the beating rain, with neither shelter nor fire; but, disagreeable as it was, we hailed the storm with rapture. We remembered the lesson of the man hunter in the swamps: "The rain gits us; dogs can't keep the scent after a smart rain." We knew, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the hunters would be able to get on our track in the morning; without this merciful rain, sent, as it seemed, by kind Providence, we should probably be overtaken before night. [Pg 133]

Shivering, and nearly exhausted by fatigue and want of food, we crawled into a thicket, some twenty rods from the highway along which we had been traveling. Throwing ourselves down, we drew over us our one blanket and the old coverlid obtained from our black friend, and sought, by lying close to each other, to preserve enough of the natural heat of our bodies to prevent perishing from the cold. How we did suffer! It required all the force of will of which we were possessed, to prevent us from stirring around. It was only by keeping constantly before our minds the fact that if we attempted to travel or even to move among the wet bushes, it would be a very easy matter for the hounds to get our scent again, that we could keep still. So, with aching bones [Pg 134]

and chattering teeth, we lay there in the rain and waited.

The sun was up, but his rays could not penetrate the dense rain cloud. What a blessing to have been, if only for a few moments, warmed by his beams. We had the material to build a fire and relieve our sufferings; but to build a fire would have advertised our exact locality for miles around. Thus the tedious hours slowly passed.

About noon we were rewarded for our self-denial by seeing two horsemen and five hounds pass along the road. It required no stretch of imagination to determine their business. The men were armed with carbines, and were evidently searching for somebody, and we were strongly of the opinion that we knew who it was. [Pg 135]

In the afternoon the sun came out once more, and, throwing off our wet blanket, we sunned ourselves in his cheering beams. But still we did not dare to stir around much. Our only safety consisted in keeping down the scent. If we started on then, through the wet bushes, we could easily be followed, for after our impromptu bath of the day before and our subsequent thorough drenching from the rain, it would not require a very sagacious dog to find us. We were nearer the road than we thought thoroughly safe; but we were afraid that if we attempted to put more distance between us and the road, we would run more risk of creating a scent that could be caught by the dogs than if we remained where we were.

About five o'clock in the afternoon we saw the same men and dogs returning. As they were about opposite us, one of the dogs, probably the leader, stopped, threw up his head, and snuffed the air for a moment as though there were some game near. Fortunately, the men did not notice him. After snuffing around for a while, he dropped his head and followed the other two brutes on horseback—on, and out of sight. [Pg 136]

Hurrah! We were saved! Not by any skill of our own, but by the merciful interposition of Divine Providence, in sending the rain, and thus depriving our enemies of their only means of tracing us.

We had now been without food for about twenty-four hours. Our bodies were cramped, and our joints stiffened, by cold and exposure to the rain; yet we hailed the friendly darkness that closed around us, shielding us from observation, with feelings of gratitude to the Great Giver of All Good. We could endure hunger and fatigue vastly better than we could our forced inaction.

At the earliest practicable moment, therefore, we were again upon the road. Our greatest need just then was food. We were growing weak, and we knew that unless we could soon get relief our strength would entirely fail. We also knew that it would not do for us to attempt to visit negro quarters to procure supplies—the country was roused, and undoubtedly we were watched for. The negro quarters would of course be placed under surveillance. [Pg 137]

We therefore concluded, to supply our pressing need, to depend upon our own resources, or rather upon our ability to forage upon the resources of the enemy. It was late at night, however, somewhere in the neighborhood of twelve o'clock, before we reached a plantation. Reconnoissance was made, and the location of the house and of the negro quarters ascertained. Avoiding the dwellings, we commenced a search for food. Sweet potatoes are usually abundant on Southern plantations at this time of year, but we were unable to find any. We found plenty of corn, but it was as hard as flint. We also found a quantity of the peas before described; and this was all that we could raise in the way of a supper. Skirting the plantation, we finally reached the highway beyond it. A consultation was held, and all the pros and cons of the situation discussed.

After due deliberation, we decided that it would not be safe to build a fire, as the light would betray us. We must do the best we could, with the raw material. So, dividing it between us, we munched the dry corn as we walked. We were our own millers, cooks, and bakers, but while our primitive repast served to maintain life and to a certain extent relieve us from the cravings of hunger, I cannot recommend it as a steady diet. It is open to very serious objections: first, want of variety; second, difficulty of mastication—one can grind corn with his teeth for an hour or two, but after that one's teeth get sore; thirdly, although hygienists tell us that to preserve health we should eat slowly, the process of masticating corn is altogether too slow for comfort. In fact one must eat all the time or go hungry, and if the mill be ever so much out of order, the grinding must still go on, or the baker and cook will be out of employment. [Pg 138]

We were now near Savannah River, about two miles south of Abbeville, South Carolina. Since our adventure at the church, detailed above, we had been obliged to devote all our energies to saving ourselves from recapture. We had necessarily made many divergences from our line of march, so that while we had traveled a long distance we had gained but little, so far as reaching Sherman's lines was concerned. But we again took up our regular line of march, and there was but one obstacle in our way that caused us much uneasiness. The Savannah, a deep and rapid stream, was to be crossed. But two of our party could swim—Spencer and myself. Hatcher must be got over the stream in some way, but how? We had studied upon this difficulty for several days, and concluded, if we could do no better, to make a raft and float him over, provided we could find the materials with which to construct one. We did not dare take a boat, because if we left it on the opposite shore from which we got it, the enemy would certainly get on our track; while if we turned it adrift, after crossing, the fact that the boat was missing would serve the same purpose. After our success in getting rid of the hounds, we were determined not to have them again on our track if we could avoid it. [Pg 139]

Slowly the long night passed away. I say slowly, because we were getting wretchedly tired and faint. Long exposure and excitement were beginning to tell upon us. It was only by the stern

exercise of will that we were enabled to move at all. Under ordinary circumstances none of us would have believed himself capable of marching an hour. Daylight at length admonished us that we must again seek shelter for another twelve hours. It so happened that daylight overtook us in an open, cultivated country, and the best we could do was to crawl into a thicket in the midst of an open field, where we lay all day, alternately dozing and munching corn.

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Friendly Blacks

At length darkness again closed around us. Exhausted, footsore, and almost disheartened, we once more started upon our tedious journey. Discovering a road not very well traveled, and evidently neither a turnpike nor a public highway, but running in the direction we wished to go, we concluded to follow it. This road, unfortunately as we then thought, led us to a plantation, and directly through the negro quarters. The planter's house was but a short distance from the quarters. It seemed a fearful risk to run, to attempt to pass at so short a distance from the house and through the quarters, so early in the evening. If we had not been so nearly exhausted, we certainly should not have attempted it; but to make a detour would have involved additional travel through the forest. We were just in that state of mind and body that, rather than incur any extra travel and add to the bruises and scratches on our already blistered feet and lacerated limbs, we preferred to take the extra risk, so we boldly pushed on. It was Sunday evening, and the cabins of the negroes were all closed, with one exception, and no one was stirring without. In passing the last cabin, I saw, through the only open door of the row, an old negro, apparently alone, sitting before the fire. Instantly I determined to appeal to him for help, and whispered this intention to my comrades. They hid in an angle of the fence while I boldly entered the cabin, closed the door, and locked it.

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Those familiar with the construction of negro cabins, will at once understand how this was done. To those who are not, I will explain. Nearly all of the cabins are provided with a wooden bar, running across the door; so all that I had to do, was to take the bar standing near the door jambs, and drop it into the hasps.

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The sudden apparition of a gaunt, unshaven man, clothed in rags, with famine stamped in every lineament, thus abruptly entering his hut, evidently startled the old man. Rising to his feet, he exclaimed: "Who is you?"

Walking up to him, I placed my hand on his shoulder and looking him in the eye, asked: "Old man, if I place my life in your hands, will you betray me?"

I shall never forget the appearance of that man as I asked this question. He was, I should think, between sixty and seventy years of age, and his head white as snow. In his prime he must have been a fine specimen of a man, physically. Straightening his tall form he looked me over from head to foot.

"Who is you?" he asked again.

"I am a Yankee officer, escaped from a Rebel prison, and I am trying to reach the Yankee army," I replied; and again I asked, "Will you betray me?"

"No, sah, and dar ain't a nigga in Souf Car'lina dat would betray ye!"

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I have seen some of our most gifted and celebrated orators, when they have seemed almost inspired; but never in my life did I see more dignity of deportment or a countenance display more nobility of soul, than did that old man's as he uttered this sentence.

While we were talking, a young negro woman, who had been lying on a bed at the back part of the room, and whom I had not observed before, got up, unbarred the door, and left the cabin.

In less than ten minutes, the room was filled with negroes of both sexes. Notwithstanding the assurance of the old man, I became uneasy. "For God's sake," I said, "don't let any more in."

Some one inquired, "Why?"

"I am afraid some of you may betray me," I replied; "and I would rather die than to be recaptured."

It was evident that the girl had told them who I was, from the remarks dropped by one and another.

"I'd jes' like to see the nigga as would do dat," said a young, stalwart negro.

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"Pears to me dat you do'no who your frien's is," said another.

It took but a very few minutes to convince me that I had nothing to fear from that party, at all events. I then told them of my companions in the fence corner, and they were called in.

"Now, den, Massa," said the old man, "jest you tell us wot we can do for ye."

"We want something to eat, and we want to cross the Savannah River," I replied.

One motherly old woman, after peering into our faces, asked: "W'en did ye hab anyt'ing to eat las', honey?"

We told her.

"De Lord bress ye, honey, ye mus' be mos' starved!" she cried.

Here the old man broke in. He had evidently been revolving the matter in his mind.

"See here, Bob, you an' Jim take dese men out in de cornfield an' hide 'em. Mary, you go an' made dem some brof an' chicken fixin's. Ole Massa may come down heah, an' de debbil 'd be to pay, 'fore we know it. Den we'll see 'bout crossin' de ribber. I tell ye de Lord sent dese men heah to be took keer of, an' we're gwine to do it."

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Following the directions of the old man, we were taken out into the middle of a large cornfield, where we remained while these good friends were preparing our supper.

Soon the old woman appeared, bearing a kettle of nourishing broth. Seating herself upon the ground, she commenced feeding us.

"Only tiny bit, Massa. Jes' tiny bit at a time. Lor' bress ye, honey, take yer time, dar's 'nough of it. I went an' killed some o' ole Massa's chickens, purpose fur ye. Specs he'd swear awful ef he knowed dat you uns was eatin' dem. When ye gits filled up wid some brof, I got de meat heah, an' sweet taters, an' hoe cake."

All the while she was talking, she kept the spoon busy, first ladling out the broth to one, and then to another of the party. At last she consented to let us have more substantial food, and the way the corn bread, sweet potatoes, and boiled chicken disappeared was wonderful.

"Ki-ki! 'Pears like ye was holler all de way down, don't it, honeys?" exclaimed the kind old woman. "Does me good to see ye eat. You'll feel a heap bettah when ye gits yer stomachs full. Ya-ya!"

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But even our appetites were at length satisfied. Meanwhile, three stalwart negroes reported for duty. They were detailed to ferry us across the river, distant only about a mile. When ready to start, young and old gathered around us, and with a hearty grasp of the hand and a fervent "God speed!" they bade us good-bye; but not before furnishing us with cooked rations sufficient to last us five days.

Upon reaching the Savannah, a ferry-boat was stolen, and we were safely landed on the Georgia side. While crossing, I asked one of the negroes what would be the result to them, if it were known that they had assisted us in this manner.

"Golly, Massa, dey'd hang us to de fus tree!" was the reply.

These faithful fellows were not only ready to feed and shelter us, but they willingly risked their lives for us. We also obtained from them accurate knowledge of the movements of Sherman's troops only five days previous; and this, too, a hundred and fifty miles from the scene of action. How they obtained it they would not tell; but it was plain they had means of conveying intelligence in some way, probably from one plantation to another, by means of runners.

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In truth, traveling by the underground railroad, as we did, associating with and depending upon slaves, we were enabled to judge of them with far greater accuracy than it would have been possible for us to do under any other circumstances. After the lapse of eighteen years, I may be credited with speaking dispassionately when I say that in my opinion they were, as a class, better informed of passing events and had a better idea of questions involved in the struggle between North and South, than the majority of that class known as the "poor whites" of the South. In this opinion I venture to say that I will be sustained by seven-eighths of our soldiers who had opportunities for forming an intelligent opinion. They were faithful to every trust imposed upon them by us, even to the imperiling of their lives. They were not only willing to divide their final crust with us, but to give us the last morsel of food in their possession. May my right hand wither, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, when I forget to be grateful to that people, or fail to advocate their cause, when their cause is just!

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With our hearts overflowing with gratitude, we shook hands with our sable ferrymen, and bade them good-bye.

"Take keer ob yousel's, Massas; an' wen you comes back wid de army, don't forget Jake an' Tom, an' de res' ob us."

These were the last words we heard from the lips of our friends. We have not been able to hear anything from them since; but let the circumstances be what they may, those men and women who succored us in our great peril are my friends, and will be met and treated as such, wherever found, though their skins be darker, and their hair curl tighter than my own.

Difficulties, Day by Day

It was long past midnight before we were fairly upon our road again; yet we felt better able to travel twenty miles before daylight, than we did to travel five before finding friends and a supper. How changed our prospects from a few hours before! We were now buoyant and happy; difficulties that had seemed insurmountable had been met and conquered. We were invigorated with good food, and had enough more provided to last five days.

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We were now in the county of Elbert. Shaping our course so as to flank the village of Elberton on the south, we started on in the direction of Carnesville. We had learned from the slave "telegraph line" that Sherman still held his lines between Atlanta and Chattanooga, but that our troops were

falling back towards Tennessee. We made up our minds to strike the railroad at the nearest practicable point between Dalton and Atlanta.

A glance at the map will show the reader one of the many difficulties that beset our way. The country through which we were passing is well watered. Numerous small streams rise in the mountains and empty into the Savannah and Appalachian rivers. Many of these were not bridged. Even when they were, we dared not attempt to use the bridges, for fear they might be guarded. Many of the streams are deep and rapid, and it was by no means pleasant fording them, for the nights were cold and frosty, even for that time of year. So, in shaping our course, we endeavored to keep as close to the heads of the streams as possible, without greatly increasing the distance to be traveled.

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We were determined to use the greatest caution, to run no risks of being seen by a white man, and never again to get the hounds on our track, if we could possibly avoid it. We were satisfied that we had successfully baffled them this time, but our escape would be only by the merest chance should they again scent us. We also determined to husband our provisions, and, if possible, make them last us through. In fact, we were in such buoyant spirits over our good fortune in securing them and getting across the big river, that it seemed as though all difficulties were now cleared from our path; as though all we had to do was to march ahead in order to succeed—another evidence of the close affinity existing between the mind and stomach.

The time lost in the society of our black friends necessarily made our journey that night a short one. We had made no more than ten miles, when daylight again compelled us to seek safety in a thicket. The next night we traveled twenty-five miles, as nearly as we could judge, without an incident worthy of mention. The same may be said of the two or three nights that followed. We averaged about twenty-five miles a night, until we reached the vicinity of Gainesville.

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On reaching this point, we were in something of a dilemma in regard to crossing the Chattahoochee River. The stream was about eighteen rods in breadth at the point where we desired to cross. We could see that it was rapid, but we had no means of determining its depth. We were anxious to reach the river before daylight, so as to have the advantage of the light in reconnoitering and finding a safe place for fording; but daylight overtook us while still about five miles from the stream.

We were in a very dense forest, with heavy undergrowth. We again concluded to risk traveling to the river by daylight, and, if possible, selecting a crossing place. Pushing forward, we reached the bank of the stream without accident. Here we found several wild-grape vines, loaded with fine fruit, and differing from any other species I ever saw, in that the grapes grew singly instead of in clusters. They were large and luscious, although the skin was thick and tough; otherwise, there was nothing in the appearance or taste to distinguish them from the largest varieties of cultivated grapes. We soon stripped the vines, and converted Confederate grapes into a Yankee dinner.

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We felt somewhat discouraged at the prospect facing us. The river was evidently too deep to ford at this point. We could discover no boat on our side of the stream. Opposite, a house was in sight; on our side, near us, a plantation. As far as the eye could reach, up and down the river, the country was under cultivation. We tried to find driftwood with which to construct a raft, but were unable to do so.

At night, we were no nearer accomplishing our purpose than we were in the morning. We concluded, however, to push on up stream, in the hope of finding either a boat or a landing place; so, following the bank, we came at length to a place where a road led into the river, suggesting a ford, and made up our minds to attempt a crossing. Taking off our clothing, we started in.

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Whew! But the water was cold! If the place was in reality ever used as a ford, I must say that the people who used it were not very particular about having a bottom for a good portion of the way; and where there was bottom, it was shockingly rough. The water averaged five feet in depth, varying from one foot to eight. Taking it in the night, with no knowledge of the river, was not only very unpleasant, but highly dangerous.

We hoped to save our clothes from getting wet, but in this most signally failed. In fact, each of the party, at different times, was under water, struggling for life; but we crossed at last. Wringing the water from our clothing as best we could, we dressed ourselves, and started on.

We had proceeded but a few rods, when lo! here was another river right before us. We consulted our map and compass. We were not mistaken in our direction. We wanted to go west. The map laid down only one river, running south. We had crossed from the east to the west bank; and yet, going west, we were confronted with another river, running north. What could it mean? I do not think I was ever so puzzled in my life. We retraced our steps to make sure we were not mistaken as to the direction of the first stream. There was no mistake; the river laid down on the map was the Chattahoochee. We had passed that; still within sixty rods, was another of about the same size, running north. Simple as was the solution of the problem, I do not believe any circumstance during the entire trip caused me more uneasiness for the time being. I began to distrust map and compass. We soon discovered that the river at this place merely ran in the shape of an ox bow. Afterwards we had many a hearty laugh over the matter, but at the time our perplexity was far from amusing.

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It will be observed that our general direction was northwest; yet actually, for various causes—traveling in the night through a strange country, divergences when pursued by the dogs, and

occasionally losing our way—the route we actually followed was crooked and erratic. The distance we traveled was in the neighborhood of three hundred and fifty miles. [Pg 155]

It would be tedious to narrate each day's experience; therefore I will confine myself to incidents that seem to me to be of special interest.

The provisions furnished by our black friends at the time we crossed the Savannah, were at length exhausted. We concluded again to recruit them at the first opportunity, but for some reason this seemed long in coming. However, early one morning, after crossing Etowah River, and secreting ourselves in the brush, we heard voices, and soon afterwards footsteps, which we discovered to belong to two young negroes. We at once made ourselves known, and asked them to supply our wants. This they promised to do during the day, and just at dark they appeared with some provisions, sufficient to fill our empty stomachs, and begged to be permitted to accompany us. This request we dared not grant, for this would unquestionably have put the man-hunters again upon our track. If caught under such circumstances, we would be treated to a speedy passage to the celestial regions, without calling into practice the services of judge or jury. Selfish reasoning this, no doubt, but quite sufficient for three feeble and well-nigh exhausted fugitives. [Pg 156]

We were now within some sixty miles of where we supposed our lines to be, and concluded to divide the distance that night, so as to be able to reach the army the following night. But after traveling until three o'clock in the morning, the supper of the evening before had served its purpose. We were like the nightingale in the fable of the "Nightingale and the glow-worm," beginning to feel the keen demands of appetite.

During all this time Spencer had saved a few spoonfuls of flour. We thought we should never need it more than we did just then. My old kettle was brought into requisition, a small fire kindled, and the flour converted into gruel. This consumed, we went on.

By the map, we were nearing Jasper, the seat of Pickens County, about forty miles from Calhoun, the point at which we were aiming to strike our lines. As we were winding along the side of a hill, at a turn of the road, there stood within a couple of rods of us a man with a gun in his hand. It was just in the grey of the morning. [Pg 157]

A Cautious Picket

A man was the last object we wished to see just then, unless he happened to be clad in Federal blue, and this fellow was in Confederate grey. If we could, we would have avoided his acquaintance. In truth, we could not have encountered a more startling object. Under such circumstances men think quickly. Avoid him we could not. If we ran, he would shoot, and it struck me quite forcibly that the gun was a thing to gain control of, so I jumped for him. To my astonishment, he exclaimed in startled tones: "Who is you, Mars?"

In appearance he was a white man; his dialect was that of a negro.

"Who are you?" I inquired.

"I'se Mars Jackson's boy."

"You don't pretend you are a slave?"

"Yes, Mars."

"What are you doing with that gun?"

"Mars tole me I might go out coonin'." [Pg 158]

I knew negroes, as a rule, were not to be trusted with a gun for such purposes; this, together with the color of his skin, which was as white as ours, caused us to distrust his story, and we began to quiz him:

"See here. You don't look like a nigger. You're a white man. What do you want to deceive us for?"

"I'se not tryin' to deceib you. I'se tole you uns the truf, shore."

"Whose gun is that?"

"Dat gun? Dat—dat's Mars Jackson's gun."

"How long is it since your master trusted you with a gun? That story won't hold water."

"Sho' as you lib, Mars, dat's Mars's gun; he tole me to take it an' come out heah an'—an'—look fer coon."

"Yes, and you found three of them, eh?"

The fellow grinned. At length he asked, "Is you Jordan's men?"

We had heard of Jordan, a Confederate guerrilla said to infest the country near this point.

"No," I answered. "Are you?"

"No, Mars Jordan don't want no niggas in his band." [Pg 159]

"Who do you belong to, then? Come, you might as well tell the truth!"

"I tole you, I'se Mars Jackson's nigga."

It would be tedious to follow out a conversation that occupied the better portion of an hour. Suffice it, that after a time the man convinced us that he was in reality a slave. Then we told him truthfully who we were. At this he seemed filled with terror, and evidently did not believe us. Finally we sat down and talked with him until we convinced him of our character. We showed him the compass, but he could comprehend nothing of its uses; it excited his curiosity, but nothing more. Then we showed him our map, and explained to him how we used it: showed him our route from Branchville, and at last, when we came to the place where we had crossed the river (Etowah), he laughed outright.

"Golly, Mars! De ribber is more'n so fah from heah," marking on his finger-nail the space indicated on the map.

We explained to him that the map was drawn on a certain scale, representing certain distances, etc. After a while we told him that just before we had left Charleston, Spencer had received a letter from his home in Wisconsin. This letter Spencer read rapidly aloud. The negro, for such he really was, pondered on this for awhile, and finally said: "I blieb you couldn't make up dat so fas' as dat." [Pg 160]

At last convincing him of our truthfulness, we began to question him as to the road, the chances of getting provisions, etc., when he said: "Ef you uns is Yankees, you is all right, foh it's jes a little way to the camp of de Home Geards."

The Home Guard

Supposing that this was of course a Confederate organization, I asked how we should get past them.

"You doesn't want to git past 'em," he replied. "Go right in dar, and dey'll gib you somet'ing to eat. Dey's Union men, dey is, an' has got a camp an' geards, an' all dat. Dey's fightenin' Jordan's men ebery day mos'."

This information was startling, and it took the sentinel, for such he proved to be, a long time to convince us he was telling the truth. At length we agreed to the following conditions for accepting his guidance: One of us was to carry the gun, the two others were to carry clubs, and he was to pilot us to the camp of the Home Guards. On the first evidence of his having deceived us, we were to kill him. [Pg 161]

To this he assented, and under his leadership we started forward. Soon we reached a log house, and he went to the door and knocked. There was considerable delay about opening the door; so much, that our suspicion was aroused. At length the door was partly opened, and a woman's face appeared. She recognized our guard and he briefly informed her who we were. She hardly trusted him, but after a brief parley we were admitted. We told her frankly who we were, and she supplied our wants as well as she could from her own limited resources, at the same time informing us that her husband was in the house when we arrived, but that he had hastily taken himself to the brush. We afterwards learned the cause.

We had proceeded but a short distance from the house when we discovered in the road ahead of us, a mounted picket, dressed in Confederate grey. [Pg 162]

To describe our feelings at the sight, is impossible. My first impulse was to turn and fly. I grasped my club with fierce energy, with the mental vow that if that negro had betrayed us into the hands of our enemies I would send him to his long home, if my life paid the forfeit. Not a word was spoken until the picket challenged, "Who goes there?"

"Friends," replied Spencer.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

"We have no countersign," I replied.

"Who are you?"

My voice trembled as I replied, "Escaped Union prisoners."

"All right. Come in."

"Wait a moment. Are you a Union man?"

"I just am that. I belong to the Home Guard."

"Well, who are the Home Guard?"

"Union men, belonging around here. Come along. We will take care of you."

"All right," we replied, and under his guidance we moved forward.

We soon reached the camp, more properly the rendezvous, of the command. We found perhaps a dozen men, all armed, in and around a small but comfortable log house. The guard reported us to one whom he saluted as Major, who immediately put us through a thorough questioning. We told him who we were, and the rank and regiment of each. We showed him our letters, and, among [Pg 163]

other things, our compass and map.

After undergoing a rigid examination, we were successful in convincing our new-found Union men that we were in very truth Yankees and escaped prisoners, and we were permitted to go where we pleased, being cautioned, however, that it was highly dangerous to stray far from camp. Immediately after our examination was closed, one of the men came up to us and said, "Did you uns stop at a house back here, this morning?"

"We stopped there, certainly," I replied; "and the woman gave us a good breakfast. Why do you ask?"

"I only wanted to be sure that you were the ones stopped there. That was my house. I made tracks out of the back door and took to the brush, when you went in at the front." [Pg 164]

"Why did you do that? Why were you frightened at our approach?"

"Well," said he, "I'll just tell ye. We're mighty scary 'bout strangers comin' to our houses, jest now. 'Taint more'n a month since one of Jordan's Band came to the house of my neighbor, not more'n a mile from heah, an' let on he was a Union man, an' wanted to join the Home Guards, and his wife sent to the bush an' had her husband come in. But afore he got clar into the house a dozen of Jordan's men come out'n the bush, an' they just took an' tied him hand an' foot, mutilated him in the most horrid manner, an' then, bleeding as he was, they hung him to a tree right in sight of his own house. I tell ye, stranger, it stan's a man in hand to look out for himself these times. If I'd knowed who you was, I wouldn't have run into camp, as I did."

While we were talking, a little group of men gathered around us, listening to the conversation. Our looks must have expressed incredulity. In fact it was hard, soldiers as we were, used to scenes of blood and brutality upon the battlefield, to believe it possible that such hellish deeds could have been enacted in a Christian land. [Pg 165]

"Reck'n that's a pretty tough yarn to believe, now, ain't it?" said a tall, gaunt specimen of a North Georgia man. "But I tell you it's true, every word of it. I seed it with my own eyes. I helped to cut him down and bury him—and he ain't the only one that's been served that way."

Among the Georgia Unionists

Looking around, a little later, we saw in the field at a short distance, three or four men at work digging sweet potatoes—*each man with a musket strapped to his back.*

I had read in histories of the early settlement of the Eastern States, and of pioneering in the West, incidents corresponding in some respects with this. There was, however, one radical difference between the cases of our pioneers and the Georgia Unionists. The former were compelled to defend themselves against the North American savages, in a war prosecuted without regard to the laws governing civilized nations; but this was in the interior of Georgia, one of the older States, in the noon-tide of the nineteenth century. These men were not warring with savages, but with their fellow men of the same race, with their neighbors, their former friends and acquaintances. [Pg 166]

Here were about a hundred men banded together for mutual protection—Union men, who had voted against secession, who had refused to join in that fratricidal step, and who were in sympathy with the North in desiring to maintain and preserve the Union. When conscripted into the Confederate army they fled to the mountains, and were there hunted like wild beasts, and when pressed like them, stood at bay. Their wives and little ones had tilled the soil, and managed to raise enough corn and sweet potatoes to maintain life, and to send to the hiding places of their husbands and fathers and brothers, supplies from this meagre store, as occasion required.

To this class were added those who were so unfortunate as to have been captured—forced into the Southern service by conscription, and who had subsequently escaped and returned to their homes. So soon as they were in sufficient numbers to warrant it, they had left their places of concealment and formed an organization for mutual protection. They were armed with muskets, carbines, revolvers, shot-guns—anything that would shoot. [Pg 167]

They had made one or two raids on the planters in the lowlands, known to be prominent Confederates, and had supplied themselves with provisions. The exigencies of the Southern cause had compelled that government to put into the field every available man. The theatre of activity being so far removed from here, however, had, to a certain extent, protected these mountaineers from attack by any detachment of the Confederate army.

There was, however, a guerrilla company, known as Jordan's Band, used by the Confederates as scouts, whose business it was to give information of the movements of Sherman's forces, which were located on the railroad. They waylaid foraging parties, bushwhacked pickets, etc. Well armed and mounted, they outnumbered the Home Guards nearly two to one. With this band the Home Guards were constantly fighting. It was a war of extermination between them. No prisoners were taken by either side. When we arrived in camp they were momentarily expecting an attack. The men were stationed where they could overlook the different roads, with orders, if attacked, to fall back slowly to camp, sending in information to the commander, Major McCreary, so that he might put his men in the best possible position to receive the enemy. [Pg 168]

The Home Guards were outside any regular military organization, but were most desirous of

entering the United States service. They were not so anxious for the pay they would then be entitled to draw, as they were to procure good arms and clothing, and to be entitled to the protection of the government, as regularly-organized soldiers. They begged of us to represent their case to our government, and see if this could not be accomplished. I may as well state right here, that information concerning their case was promptly filed in the War Department, but I could never learn that it was acted upon.

With few exceptions, these were rough, unlettered men, without even the rudiments of an education. But they were generous, hospitable, brave, and Union men to the core; men who would suffer privations, and death itself, rather than array themselves in strife against the Stars and Stripes, the emblem of the country they loved. All the power of the Confederate government could not compel them to fight against it. Uneducated though they were, under their homespun jackets beat hearts pure as gold, and stout as oak.

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These were the men to whom Providence had directed our steps. We were invited into the house, and after eating a good dinner and enjoying the luxury of a bath—more strictly speaking, a good, thorough wash from head to foot—we were provided with good beds. What a treat! Soft, clean beds, for men who for six months had thought a blanket a luxury, and who for the last twenty days had turned day into night and slept in the woods, with no kindly covering but the sky—depending upon the rays of the sun for warmth; all the time with a sense of danger hovering over us that would only permit brief and troubled rest, liable to be broken should a leaf fall, or a twig snap. Throwing ourselves into bed, we were soon lost in quiet, refreshing sleep, from which we did not awaken until long after daylight the next morning. We now felt like new men, and after a hearty breakfast were eager to take the road as soon as circumstances should permit, certainly by the time darkness should again make it prudent.

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Our new friends would not for a moment listen to this proposition. We must stay and rest, they said, and when fit to travel some of them would accompany us to Sherman's lines. The roads were scouted during the night by Jordan's men, and the chances were two to one in favor of our being recaptured. They could not go with us that night, and perhaps not the next, because they were expecting an attack. So soon as the emergency had passed, and it was safe to proceed, they promised to take us on our way.

It was hard to act upon this prudent advice. Our patience was sorely tried. Only forty miles separated us from our lines, and from telegraphic communication with wife and home. One night or two at most, would finish the journey. It was hard to wait, but discretion and the urgent advice of friends prevailed. We consented to remain, provided they would furnish us with any kind of arms, and permit us temporarily to volunteer in the Home Guards, and in case of a fight to participate in it. To this proposition they gave a cordial assent. I was furnished with a revolver, and Spencer and Hatcher with other weapons.

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That night, word was brought in that some of Jordan's men had been on a certain road, and the probabilities were that we should be attacked before morning. The Major immediately took the necessary steps to put his force in the best possible position for defense. His plan was to ambush the enemy. Two mounted scouts were sent out, with orders to ascertain the Confederate strength, and then, after showing themselves, to fall back and if possible to draw them into our trap. We waited patiently for several hours, and at length the scouts returned. They reported having seen the enemy, who prudently refused to follow them in. It being apparent that no attack would be made that night, the usual precaution of posting pickets was taken, and all returned to camp.

The next morning, one of the men asked to see "that little thing" I showed the Major when I came into camp. It was some time before I could make out what he meant. I finally asked him if it was the compass; and he reck'ned it was. I took it out of my pocket and showed it to him. Finding him ignorant of its uses, I explained them as well as I was able, saying among other things that the needle always pointed to the north, unless attracted by some more powerful magnet. I took a piece of iron, and caused the needle to traverse by attraction. Some of the questions he asked, would have puzzled old Doctor Benjamin Franklin to answer. It is hard to believe that at this age of the world, in a civilized country, a man could be found so utterly ignorant of the uses of a compass.

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Here could be seen the difference between educated freedom at the North, and uneducated slavery in the South. Without any system of free schools, the poor whites were unable to procure the means to educate their children. It was not to the interests of the slaveholders, the aristocracy of the South, to educate the masses. Slavery naturally created an aristocracy, to maintain which it was necessary to keep both negroes and poor whites in ignorance. There were no common interests between the rich and the poor whites, to induce the former to tax themselves to educate their neighbors' children. The result was, that while the children of the aristocrats were, generally, educated above the common standard at the North, the masses were left in deplorable ignorance.

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By this time we were becoming impatient to resume our journey, and urged our friends, with all the eloquence of which we were possessed, to make the attempt to reach our lines that night. But the Major, although plainly desirous of accommodating us, was firmly convinced that the attempt could not be made with safety, and wisely, no doubt, overruled us. Much against our inclination, we abided by his decision, and concluded to remain another night. During the course of the day, we received an invitation to attend a wedding.

A Mountain Wedding

One of the members of the Home Guards was a reckless young fellow, a deserter from an Ohio regiment. Wild, yet generous-hearted, he had, he said, been grossly abused by his Captain, and had therefore left his command and joined the Home Guards. In less than a month, he had succeeded in captivating one of Jasper's fairest maidens, and we were invited to witness the ceremony that should make the twain one flesh.

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We more than suspected that the desire to witness this ceremony had influenced, if not the Major, at least a large proportion of his men, to delay our journey. We put the best face on the matter, however, and inasmuch as we were compelled to wait, decided to attend.

Just before the time arrived for the invited guests to assemble, Major McCreary made a detail of a sufficient number of his command to secure us from surprise, and posted them upon all the approaches to the place; the balance attended the wedding in a body, taking with them their arms and equipments.

Like a majority of the homes of Georgia mountaineers, the house in which the ceremony was to be performed was about sixteen feet square, and constructed of logs. A large fireplace, extending nearly across one end of the building, was piled with wood that crackled and roared as the ruddy blaze encircled and devoured it. It sent back into the room a delightful glow, lighting up the dusky nooks and corners of the old cabin, now flickering up to the ceiling and again dying away, leaving the inmates in the dancing shadows. A bed occupied the opposite side of the room. Opposite the only entrance was one small window. The other furniture consisted solely of a rough pine table and a few chairs.

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The assembled company composed a group that if faithfully drawn would insure to any artist the reputation of a first-class caricaturist. The guests, numbering between thirty and forty persons of both sexes, filled the room to overflowing. Immediately in front of the fireplace stood the bride and groom, hand in hand.

The costume of the bride was not such as Paris would have prescribed for such an occasion. Durability and comfort rather than a desire for artistic effect, had evidently been the ruling considerations in its selection. The material was calico, bright colors predominating, and it was made up without any of the furbelows and jimcracks called "trimmings." No unsightly hoops (then everywhere in vogue) concealed the outlines of the girl's well-developed form. Upon her feet were worn good, substantial leather shoes and woolen stockings. Her "waterfall" was made up of her own luxurious hair, held in place by a horn comb. No ornament of any kind or description, not even a sprig or flower, was permitted to relieve the chaste simplicity of her costume. Standing there by the side of her chosen husband, she looked substantial and durable, rather than beautiful.

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The groom, resplendent in all the glories of a white shirt and clean homespun jacket and trousers, seemed to be as happy as is often permitted to mortals.

Grouped around the room, in various grotesque attitudes, were the members of the Home Guards. Some were standing, resting their chins upon hands folded across the muzzles of their muskets; others were standing in the position of a soldier at ordered arms; others were squatted on the floor, with their guns lying across their laps. Sitting on the bed and on the few chairs, were some of the women, while others mingled with the soldiers, quite regardless of appearances.

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Everything being in readiness, the clergyman took his place, and in a few words pronounced the marriage ceremony—which, whether performed in palace or hovel, is so fraught with good or ill, to both the parties concerned.

For a moment after he had concluded, all were silent. The grave deportment of the minister combined with the peculiar circumstances attending upon the marriage, acted like a spell upon the audience, compelling even the most reckless to yield to its influence. The silence was rudely broken by the young husband, who, taking his bride by the chin, by this means getting her face in position, gave her a rousing smack on the mouth, exclaiming: "Well, Mary, how do you like gitt'n' married?"

"I like it fust rate. I wouldn't mind gitt'n' married every day," was her reply.

The scene that followed beggars description—such pulling and hauling and kissing of the bride; such kissing of everybody who would submit to being kissed, and of some who wouldn't; such screaming and laughing; such jostling and mixing, surely never were seen before.

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For an hour or more the carnival continued. At length they were tired out by their wild play and boisterous mirth. Quiet was restored. Songs were called for. Spencer, a good singer, gave them the song, "Who will care for mother now?" I followed with "Old Irish Gentleman" in my best style, my music resembling the notes of a jay bird alternated with those of a wild goose, with an occasional note resembling the filing of a saw. The songs, however, were received with applause about equally divided, although I heard a pretty widow remark that she thought Spencer the better singer, and I could not dispute her taste.

When the bride remarked that "It must be gitt'n' moughty late, hard on to one o'clock," the company dispersed; some to their homes, others to the picket line to relieve the guard and learn

the signs of the night. Spencer, Hatcher, and I betook ourselves to the headquarters of the Guards, where we were soon soundly sleeping.

The next morning the Major despatched men in every direction to ascertain the whereabouts and movements of Jordan's men. We were urgent in our request to start that night. [Pg 179]

"Wait until I hear from my men," he said. "I sha'n't run the risk of having you recaptured, nor of unnecessarily sacrificing my men. I am just as anxious as you are to have you reach your lines in safety. We are in need of ammunition and supplies, and you can assist us in getting them. You can also establish the fact that we are Union men, and that we can be trusted. I want to accompany you myself, and we will start just as soon as it is safe to do so; but you must wait until that time comes. We have repeatedly tried to make your people understand our position, but they do not seem to trust us."

There was altogether too much good sense in the Major's reasoning to gainsay it, and we perforce submitted with the best grace possible.

Diplomacy

In the course of the day, two members of Jordan's Band came into camp under flag of truce. Their ostensible object was to enter into a compact with the Home Guards, by the terms of which the private property of each should be respected. Major McCreary evinced good diplomatic ability in the conduct of the negotiation. He insisted upon the restitution of property taken by Jordan's men prior to the formation of the Home Guards. He detailed with great clearness and force the manner in which the houses of his men had been plundered by the guerrillas; how they had not only appropriated articles of value, but had destroyed furniture and clothing, with no other motive than that of revenge. [Pg 180]

"When you restore to us the full value of what you have destroyed," he said, "less the value of what we have taken from you, then we will enter into an agreement to respect private property."

He greatly exaggerated his numerical strength, and I think was successful in impressing upon the minds of the envoys that in position and men he was far stronger than he really was. He also succeeded in worming out of them information of the utmost importance as to the location of the Band at that time.

A Start for Our Lines

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When the interview was ended, the Major informed us that the news he had obtained, if substantiated by the scouts when they came in, would enable us to start that night. A little later we were told that the attempt would be made.

Ten men, under the command of the Major, were selected as an escort, and we started out in a state of high exhilaration. Our horses were fair roadsters, we were armed; and judging by our feeling at that moment, nothing less than a battalion would have seemed a formidable obstacle in our path. In fact, I believe some of us would have rather enjoyed the prospect of a skirmish that night. The Major had occasion to check our rather noisy demonstrations more than once during the first hour of our ride. The night was intensely dark. The rain came down steadily, and as our clothes became saturated, our exuberant spirits toned down to the level of reasonable men.

Once more, at a distance of about four miles from our starting point, we came to the outpost of a guard. He reported that just before night he had discovered a man skulking in the bushes beyond. [Pg 182]

The Major immediately detailed one of his men, with orders to reconnoitre a certain by-road, at a point known to be a rendezvous for Jordan's men when they were in that vicinity, and to report to us a few miles farther on. He then informed us that if we were attacked at all, it would be near the point where he had ordered his man to report.

The scout put spurs to his horse and in an instant was lost to view in the darkness. It was curious how suddenly our desire for a fight evaporated, when the probability arose that our wishes might be speedily gratified; especially when the chances were so decidedly in favor of an enemy lying in ambush, from which we should be compelled to dislodge him.

Quietly and unostentatiously the Major communicated his plans to his men, and everything being in readiness we resumed our march. When within a mile of the point where the scout had been ordered to join us, we heard a crackling and snapping in the brush at the side of the road. We halted and breathlessly listened.

Somebody on horseback was coming our way. If it was the scout, all was right; if not, it was certain the enemy was on the road. Silently we sat on our horses and listened. At length the Major challenged, "Who comes there?" [Pg 183]

No answer. Again the Major challenged. I cocked my revolver, and the click-click running along our line sounded ominous.

"Halloo, boys, is that you?" came out of the brush.

We recognized the voice in a moment; it was the scout's.

"Why didn't you answer when I challenged?" demanded the Major.

"I reck'ned I'd just wait and see who you was, fust," was the cool reply.

"You ran a mighty narrow chance of being fired into."

"Yes, I calc'lated on that; but I thought I'd take the risk. It's mighty onsertain 'bout hitt'n' a feller in the brush, dark as it is now; and I'd ruther be shot at than fool along into Jordan's hands."

"I say," said Spencer to me, *sotto voce*, "that fellow is a cool one!"

And so he was. Think of a man's calmly calculating, rather than make a mistake and thereby raising a false alarm, the chances of a dozen shots being fired at him at a distance not exceeding ten rods—from a point he all the while intended to advance toward, until near enough to recognize voices. He was a specimen of the kind of men that made up the Home Guards.

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The scout's report was favorable. He thought there had been no enemy around the old rendezvous for several days. This intelligence corresponded with that already obtained by the Major. Coupled with the state of the weather, it seemed nearly certain that we should have only the elements to contend with that night. Again we were off.

"We must push ahead, now, at double quick. We have no time to lose," said the Major.

Putting our horses into a gallop, we rushed into the darkness. Splashing through the mud, now fording creeks, now floundering through quagmires, our little band flitted like spectres. Every hour lessened the distance between us and the boys in blue. Daylight would find us within sight of the stars and stripes, if no misfortune overtook us. Our horses were reeking with perspiration. Up hill and down, on and on we galloped. At last a house appeared in sight.

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"Halt! Dismount!"

"What is this, Major?" I asked.

"The house of a friend," was the reply. "We are within five miles of your picket lines."

Could it be possible that only five miles divided us from our old comrades—from the "boys in blue," from telegraphic communication with wife and children? Only five miles to liberty? We could hardly restrain our feelings within reasonable bounds. My heart fluttered and my limbs shook with excitement. My voice trembled so that I could scarcely articulate.

"Why do you halt?" I querulously asked the Major.

"We must wait till daylight. It is not safe to approach the picket line at night."

"But, Major, is there not another house nearer the line? Must we stop here? Would it not be safer to get as near the line as possible? Is there not a possibility that we may be attacked even here?"

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I poured these questions out without giving him a chance to reply. It seemed as if I could not stop.

"It seems like you were gitt'n' mighty uneasy just now. I reckon we'll have to stop a time, anyhow. You might as well come in and make yourselves comfortable. We will get warmed up, have something to eat, let the horses blow awhile, and then perhaps we will go on to the Widow H——'s. She lives right close to the line, but she's a Reb clean through, and I don't like to trust her any longer than is necessary."

The Major's cool, matter-of-fact way of disposing of the matter, made me ashamed of my excitement and petulance. I felt the more chagrined at the display of my feelings, because Hatcher and Spencer had exhibited so much more coolness and self-restraint, and I determined that thereafter I should act with more discretion. So, hiding my impatience as best I could, I dismounted and followed my companions into the house. We found the family asleep, but a good fire burning on the capacious hearth was a welcome sight to the drenched and shivering troopers.

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The noisy summons of the Major aroused the sleeping inmates. When they found who we were that visited them at such an hour, they extended to us a hearty welcome. Fresh wood was piled upon the fire, around which we gathered in a steaming semicircle. The Major took our host aside. A few brief questions were asked and answered.

"It's all right," he said as he joined us. "The whelps have been around, but left yesterday. I reckon we'll stop awhile, get a bite to eat, and then shove on to Widow H——'s."

It was yet two hours or more to daylight, and our friends could not be blamed if they preferred their present comfortable quarters before the fire, to muddy roads, darkness, and pelting rain. As for myself and two companions, we were the very pictures of suppressed impatience. When our hospitable host passed around some food and home-made coffee, we were far too excited to partake. The sight of Major McCreary and his men, coolly stowing away the bread and coffee, fairly made me grate my teeth with impatience.

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At length the Major, taking pity upon us, rather than following his own better judgment, as I am firmly convinced, gave the order to remount. We were the first to obey.

The night was still very disagreeable. The rain continued to come down with pitiless violence,

accompanied by a cold northeast wind, which, combined with the pitchy darkness, rendered traveling the reverse of pleasant. We were, however, too much excited with the prospect to mind the unpleasant state of the weather. We were living on anticipation. Our brilliant hopes overshadowed the uncomfortable present to such an extent that even now I look back to that night's ride as one of the most delightful episodes of a not altogether uneventful life.

An hour's ride brought us to the house of Widow H—, within half of a mile of our picket line. It was still very dark, and altogether unsafe to attempt to approach the pickets. We must wait for daylight. So, when the order to dismount was given, we acquiesced with the best grace possible.

Fastening our horses, we approached the house. A resounding *rat-tat-tat* brought the widow to the door. Finding the party headed by the leader of the Home Guards, she seemed the reverse of pleased, and was not inclined to accede to our moderate demands for shelter until morning; but finally, with a repugnance she took no pains to conceal, she permitted us to enter. We soon built up a good fire, and under the influence of its cheering warmth forgot the inhospitable conduct of our hostess. With many a jest and story we beguiled the tedious hour till daylight.

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Among Comrades

At the earliest dawn we were again on the road. Ahead of us, upon either hand, as far as the eye could reach, could be seen the blue smoke of the picket fires. We were traveling leisurely. I was conversing with Spencer; when suddenly, upon an elevation not ten rods from us, appeared a soldier dressed in blue, who in short, crisp tones commanded, "Halt! Who comes there?"

The Major answered, "Friends!"

"Halt, friends! Advance one, without arms, and give the countersign."

The Major dismounted and advanced. A few moments' conversation took place between him and the soldier, which the distance prevented us from hearing. We soon after heard the order given by the outpost guard to fall in, and then came the order, "Dismount! Advance, friends!"

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Dismounting, we advanced, leading our horses. Upon reaching the outpost guard I thought I recognized a familiar face. "What regiment do you belong to?" I asked.

"The First Wisconsin Cavalry," was the reply.

"Give us your hand, old fellow!" I exclaimed, with the tears running down my cheeks. "Let me hug you. Hurrah, boys! Do you hear that? First Wisconsin Cavalrymen!"

Hatcher and Spencer were dancing about, crying and laughing. In fact, we were all of us fairly crazed with joy. Our new friends did not seem at all proud of their demonstrative guests. In truth, they rather drew back from our demonstrations of affection.

"Who are you, anyhow?" one of them sourly asked.

"Escaped prisoners," we replied.

"Where did you make your escape?"

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"Near Charleston."

"You don't pretend to say that you have come all the way from Charleston, right through the Reb country?"

"Yes, we do pretend that very thing."

"Well, it may be so, but I don't care about being hugged"—glancing towards us with a look expressive of mingled incredulity and disgust.

This rebuff had the effect to cool us down a bit, and when we came to look ourselves over, we could but confess that so far as personal appearance was concerned we were nothing to boast of. We were unshaven and unshorn, our rags barely sufficient for decency, barefooted or nearly so, bareheaded, and most miserably dirty. No wonder a well-clad Union soldier resented our familiarity!

We were disarmed, placed under charge of the guard, and marched to the headquarters of the Brigade, then commanded by Colonel Lampson, of an Indiana regiment.

After some delay we were ushered into the presence of the Colonel. He listened attentively to us, reducing each of our statements to writing. After he had finished, he sat a few moments in meditation.

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"You have got this thing pretty well fixed up," he finally said. "Hatcher and Spencer each belong to regiments now mustered out of service; and you," turning to me, "belong to the Army of the Potomac. We have been deceived too often by you fellows."

"Who, in God's name, do you take us to be?" I asked.

"Starved-out bushwhackers or spies, or perhaps both," he answered curtly. "Orderly, call the officer of the guard."

"Colonel, the First Wisconsin Cavalry is camped here, is it not?" I asked.

"Yes. Do you know any of the members of that regiment?"

"I hardly know. Where is Colonel La Grange?"

"La Grange is in Wisconsin. Did you know him?"

"I did. We were in prison together. Where is Captain Clinton?"

"Captain Clinton is here. Orderly, go and say to Captain Clinton that I desire him to report to me in person, immediately." [Pg 193]

Clinton had been engaged with me in our tunneling enterprise at Macon, and was one of my most intimate friends. He had been exchanged but a short time before we left Charleston.

In a few moments I heard him speak to the Orderly in an excited voice: "Get out of the way and let me in! I'll bet it's Captain Kellogg!"

Almost at the same moment he opened the door. I stood facing him as he entered.

"I told you it was him! It's Kellogg! It's Kellogg!"

By this time we were in each other's arms, both of us sobbing like children. Then leaving me, he first caught Spencer and then Hatcher.

"There—there!" broke in Colonel Lampson; "you appear to know these men."

"*Know them?* I should rather think I did. *Know them?* Didn't Kellogg and I dig tunnels together? Didn't we starve together in Rebel prisons? I should rather think I do *know them!*"

"Well, then, take them and take care of them," said the old Colonel, swallowing hard and trying to keep his eyes from overflowing. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, turning to us; "but we have been imposed upon so often, and"—here his voice became thick and husky. Turning savagely to Clinton, he exclaimed: "Take them, I tell you, and, d— you! feed them well, and see that they have some decent clothes. God bless my soul! I—I like to have sent them to the guard house!" [Pg 194]

Under the guidance of Captain Clinton, we left the quarters of the Colonel, men once more.

"Out of the jaws of death,
Out of the gates of Hell."

Our first care was for our true friends, the Home Guards. We represented to General McCook, commanding the division, the facts of their case, and before leaving Calhoun had the satisfaction of seeing them on their road back to Jasper, with a government wagon loaded with commissary and quartermaster's stores—clothing, arms, and ammunition—escorted by a squad of cavalry. What became of them afterwards, we were never able definitely to ascertain. Spencer informed me some time since, that the Confederates, shortly afterward, came upon them in force and that the most of them were killed. But I most sincerely hope that his information may not have been reliable, and that they are living in peace in the homes they so gallantly defended. [Pg 195]

The Home Guards taken care of, the telegraph was brought into requisition, and messages to our homes and friends were soon flashing along the wires.

Then the First Wisconsin Cavalry took possession of us. We were invited into the quarters of Major Henry Harnden. We went in dirty, ragged, and barefooted; we came out, a half hour later, once more clad in the noble livery of the United States army. We were supplied with every necessary in their power to grant us, money not excepted. One day only, we remained with our hospitable entertainers, and then took the first train for Chattanooga.

The Mystery Solved

Only one thing marred our perfect happiness—the mysterious disappearance of Vliet and Gough. Had they been with us, our cup of happiness would have been indeed full. What their fate had been, we could only conjecture. It seemed certain that they had not reached our lines; if they had, the newspapers would surely have published the tidings. In imagination we could see them toiling along on their weary way, without compass or map; or perhaps recaptured, and again the inmates of a prison pen, all their toils and struggles for freedom in vain. [Pg 196]

We arrived in Chattanooga about dark, and were compelled to lay over until morning, before taking the cars for Nashville. There were two hotels in the place, both of which were crowded with guests. We found a place on the bar-room floor of one, on which to spread our blankets, and were soon soundly sleeping.

Early in the morning a soldier came into our hotel, and commenced to tell of two escaped prisoners who had arrived the evening before, and who were stopping at the other hotel.

We listened to him with bated breath; then we started thither on a run. I am sure that the bystanders must have thought us either intoxicated or crazy. Upon reaching the hotel we forced our way through the crowd that filled the office and bar room, until we reached the counter. [Pg 197]

"Where are they?" I pantingly asked.

"Where are who?" asked the landlord.

"The escaped prisoners—the two men that came last night."

"There's a good many came last night. How do you suppose I know which two men you mean?"

"The men we want are escaped prisoners of war—came in last night with a picket guard."

"Oh, yes. Now I know who you mean. Here, Jake, show these gentlemen up to No. 19."

We followed the waiter up to the room. The door opened in answer to our rap, and—Glory Hallelujah! there were Gough and Vliet! To describe the scene is simply impossible. I never was so happy before, and I never expect to be again.

When we had become calm enough to talk, the mystery of our separation was solved. At the time we halted in the brush to investigate the noise made by the hog, Vliet, as the reader will recollect, was followed by Hatcher. It so happened that Hatcher stopped near a white stump. When Hatcher started on, Vliet mistook the white stump for him, and thus did not notice our forward movement or follow us. [Pg 198]

After a considerable time, while he waited in silence, he discovered his mistake. The two then started after us, as nearly as they could guess at the direction we had taken, and unfortunately missed us. When we went back to look for them, we must have passed each other in the brush. They had taken a more northerly direction than we followed, and reached our lines at Chattanooga one day after our arrival at Calhoun.

All the members of our party were together once more. Our desperate attempt had been successful. We had traversed over three hundred miles in the heart of the South; pierced the Confederate egg, from shell to shell. Our trials were over, and we were on our way home.

Again in the Field

Receiving orders to that effect, I proceeded at once to my home in Wisconsin, made a short visit there, and went thence to Madison. There I obtained an order from the War Department assigning enough drafted men to fill our regiment to the maximum, and with them proceeded to the field, then lying on the Jerusalem Plank Road, near City Point. Here I found many changes. The regiment was commanded by Major Kerr, who was a Lieutenant when I left. Nearly every officer on duty when I left the regiment the previous May, was either promoted, killed, or mustered out. It seemed lonesome. [Pg 199]

I presided that night at dress parade. When it was dismissed, there were many anxious inquiries by the men, who wanted to know who "that white-headed old fellow" was, that was commanding "our regiment?" Six months of Southern prison life had turned my head white, and reduced my weight from a hundred-and-seventy-five to a hundred-and-fifteen pounds.

In the following February (1865), General Bragg having been ordered to Washington with a portion of his command, the balance of the Iron Brigade was reorganized by adding to the Sixth and Seventh Wisconsin an independent battalion of the Second Wisconsin, and the Ninety-first New York Heavy Artillery, under command of Colonel Tarbell; the brigade thus numbering about thirty-five hundred men. I was assigned to its command, and had the satisfaction of participating in the last campaign, witnessing the final ending of the War of the Rebellion, at Appomattox, on the ninth of April, 1865. Among the troops laying down arms at this surrender, was the Thirteenth Georgia, the same regiment that had captured me on the fifth day of May, 1864. [Pg 200]

A Belated Report

During my absence from the army, General Cutler had again been wounded, and placed in command of a recruiting camp in Michigan. I did not have the pleasure of meeting him again until the war was over. Happening, one day, to be in the office of General Lucius Fairchild, then Secretary of State, I found that the latter was temporarily absent in the Governor's office. When he returned and saw me, he seemed somewhat excited, and told me that there was a man in the executive office, inquiring for me.

The reader will recollect that the last order I received from General Cutler was, "Take plenty of orderlies and report frequently." [Pg 201]

On entering the Governor's office, I saw General Cutler, who advanced toward me with his hand extended and eyes suspiciously moist. He tried to speak. His usually stern face became more stern, his chin quivered, he grasped my hand more firmly. At length he blurted out: "*You've been a terrible long time reporting!*"

In which opinion I have no doubt the reader will share, applying it to the long story now happily ended.

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