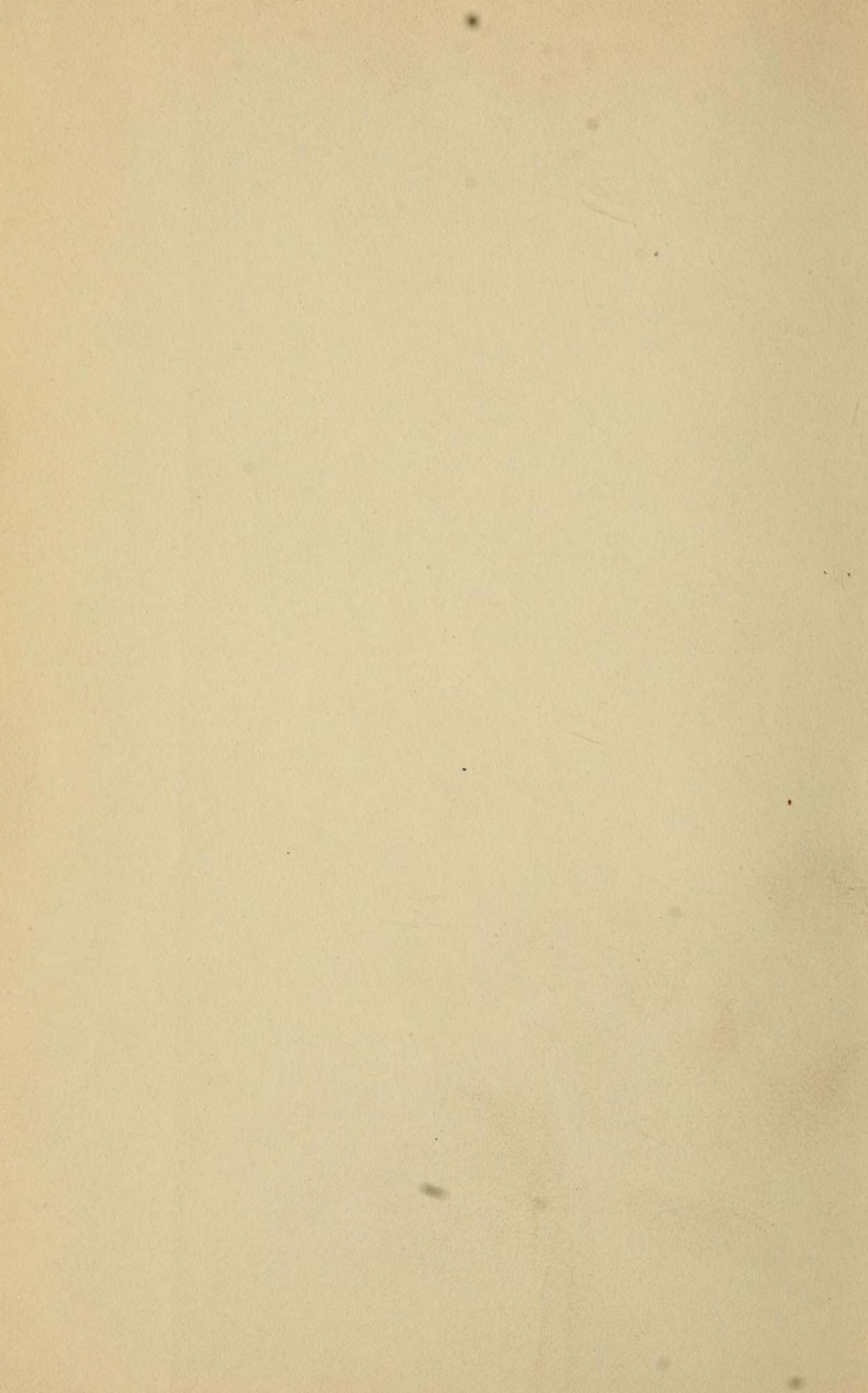




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In and Out  
of  
Andersonville Prison

by

W. F. Lyon

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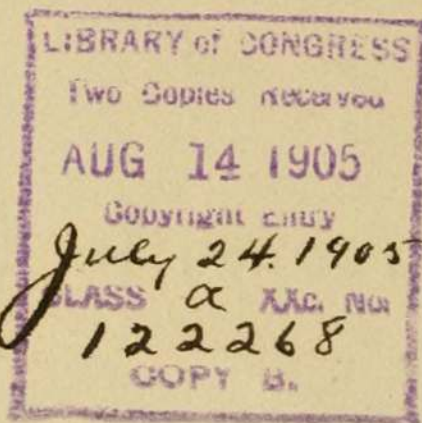
Seventeen years supervisor of penmanship  
in Detroit Public Schools

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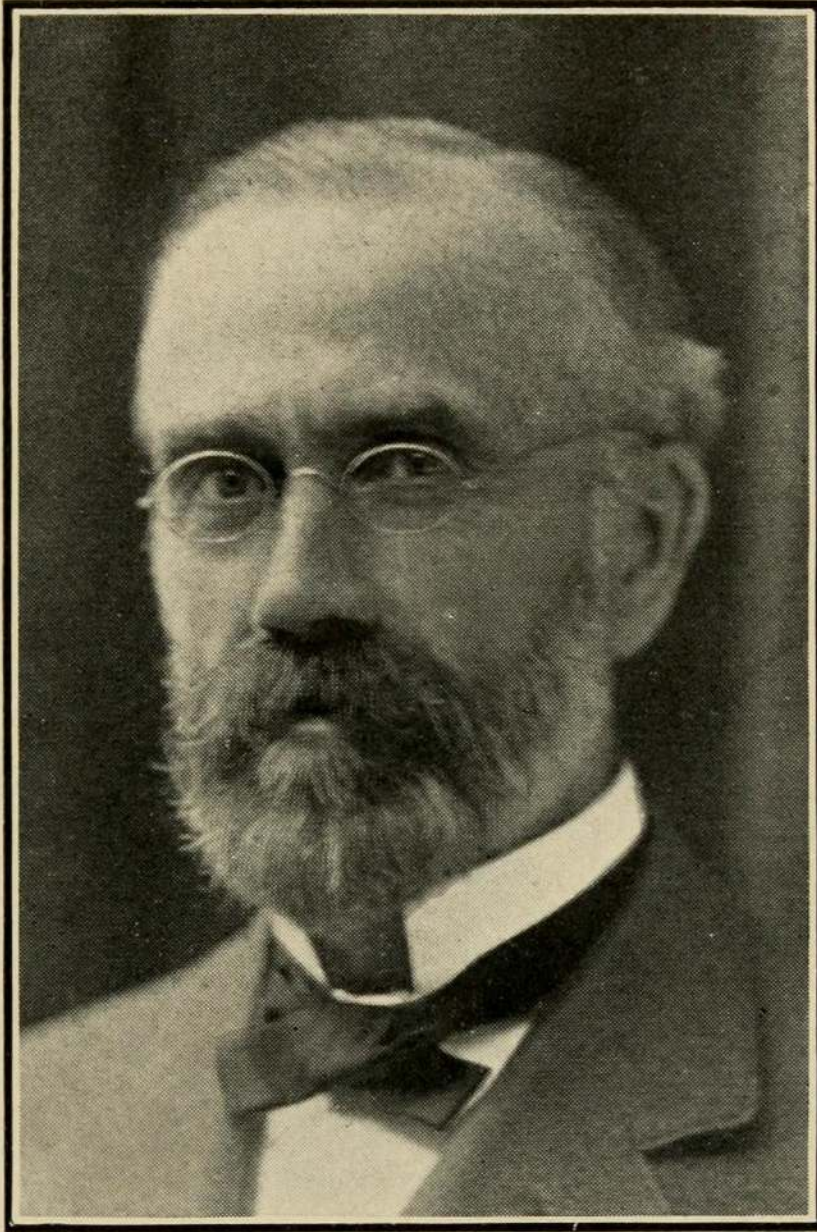
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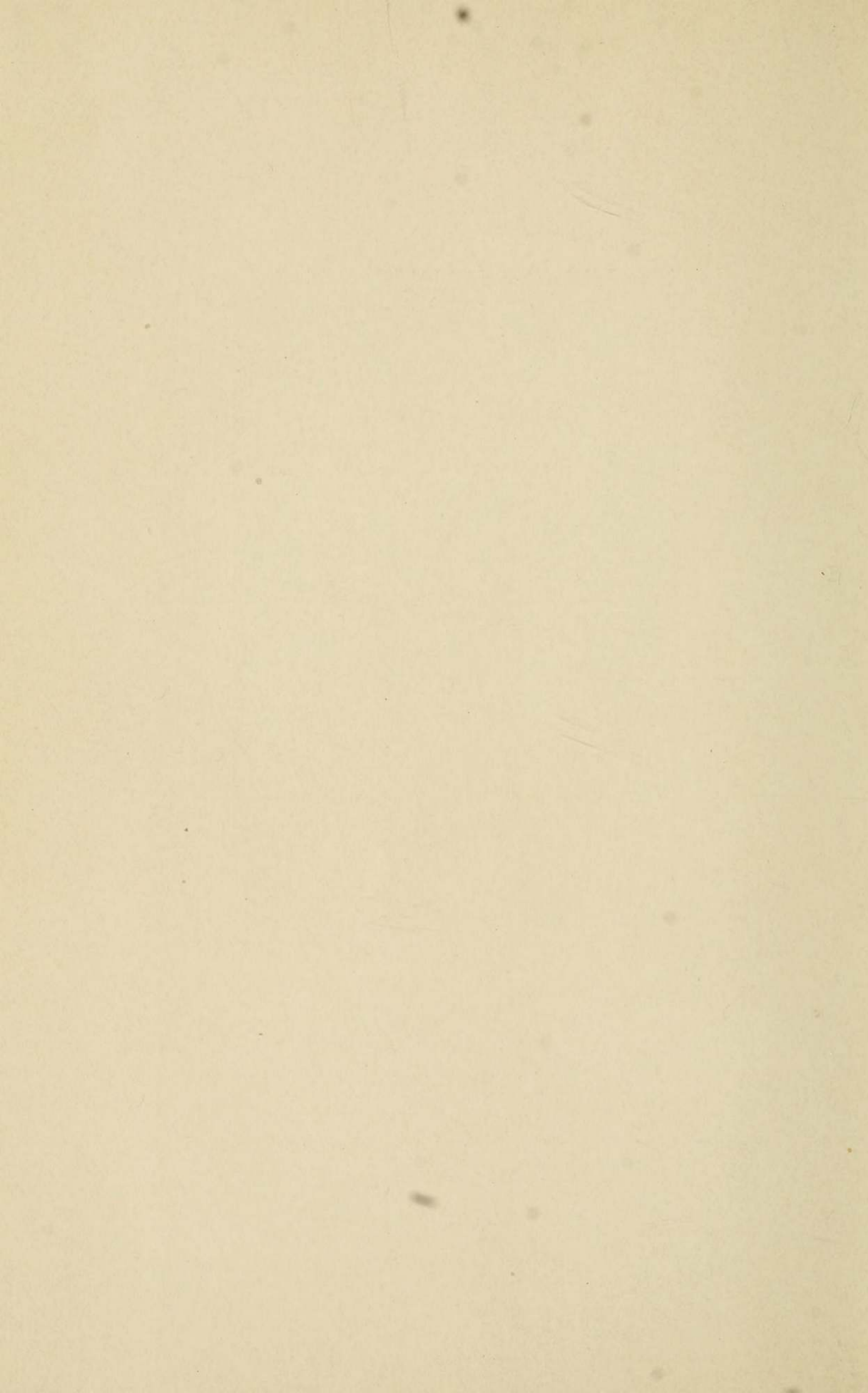


Lovingly dedicated to my Wife  
and Family.





*Yours Very truly  
W. F. Lyon.*





## PREFACE.

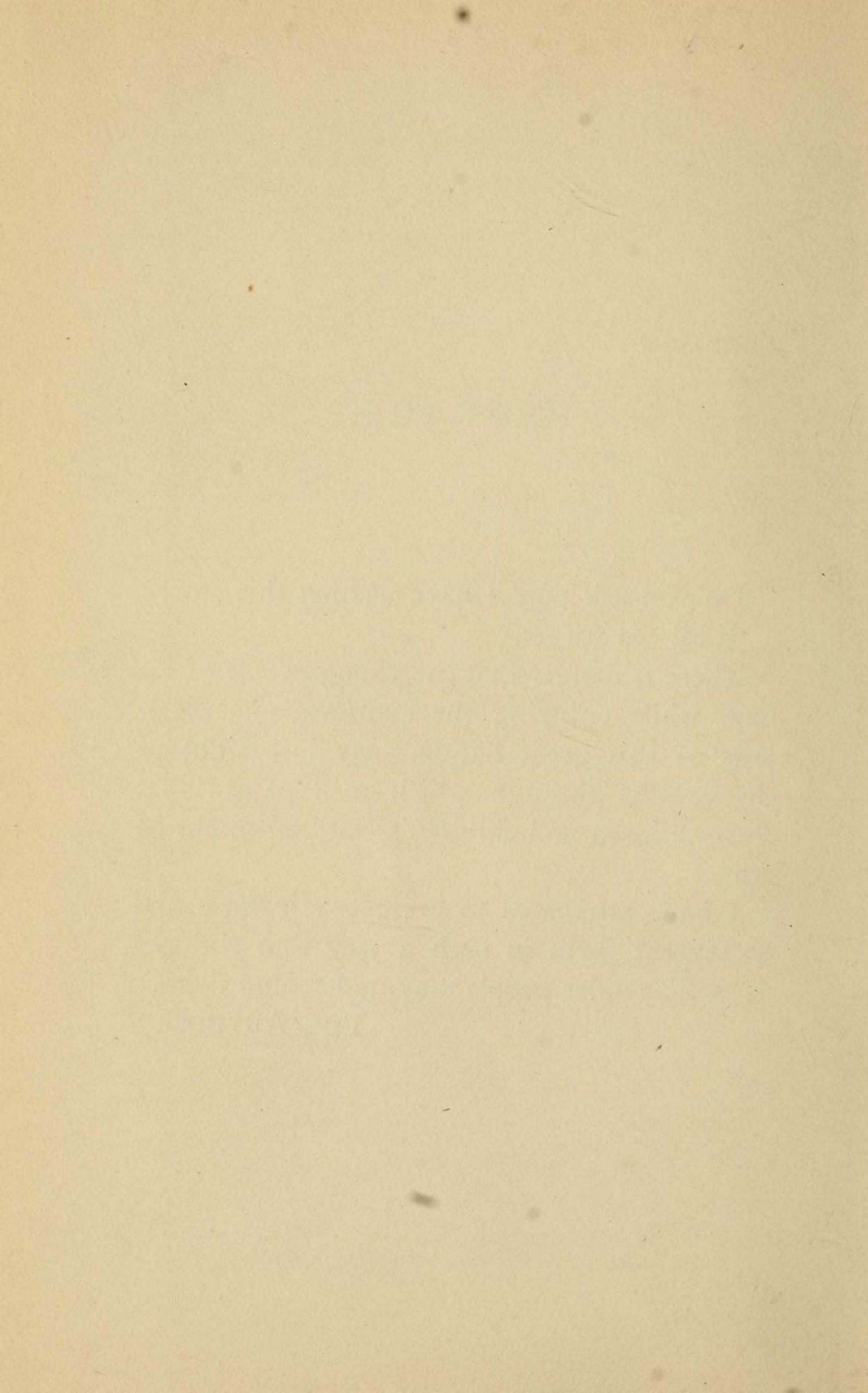
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Do you ask why I have written this story?  
"Lest we forget."

There is danger that the young people of to-day, while enjoying the comforts and blessings of this great nation, may lose sight of the conflict through which men passed that their children and children's children might be free.

I have attempted to present only facts and to present them in such a way that children as well as older people may understand them.

THE AUTHOR.



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## THE CAMP.

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On the first day of June, 1864, Major-General Sturgis left the city of Memphis, Tenn., with 10,000 men, artillery, cavalry and infantry, with orders to intercept General Forrest, who was operating in northern Mississippi. The writer was one of this company, occupying the conspicuous position of "high private" in the front rank.

We traveled twenty miles by rail to Fayette, where we left the railroad and started on our march. The first afternoon we marched about five miles and then halted for the night. Camping out as the term applies to soldiering was entirely a new experience to most of us. We carried no tents, but each man carried his own blanket, his gun, forty rounds of cartridges, three days' rations in his haversack, his cooking utensils, a canteen of water, etc.

Fires were kindled; a spring was found, and water secured; coffee ground and boiled; and supper, consisting of coffee, hardtack and bacon, was prepared. This eaten and the tin cup put away (we didn't have plates—didn't

need them), the beds were made in the following manner: Two men together found as smooth a place as possible; one spread his blanket on the ground; both put their cartridge boxes down for pillows, then lay down and covered themselves with the other blanket. If the stars were shining nothing hindered counting them until the "sandman" closed the tired eyes, and the soldier sank into that other world to dream of home and mother, wife or sweetheart, whom, alas! many of them were never to see again save in those sweet dreams.

At three in the morning we were quietly awakened and ordered to be ready to march in an hour. Fires were quickly started, coffee put on and in a very short time we were partaking of breakfast—bacon, hardtack, and coffee, a slight change in the menu of the previous evening. The bugle sounded and we were on the move. We had not proceeded far when black thunder clouds rolled up and soon the rain came down in torrents, accompanied by *southern* thunder and lightning.

This shower left us wet to the skin, and produced most affectionate results in the soil. It clung to our shoes like a country lover to his sweetheart on their first excursion. We halted beside a high rail fence, which stretched along

the road for miles. This fence was quickly put into piles, matches applied, and a long line of fires were soon burning, around which we gathered to dry our clothing and toast our bacon.

One word more about the soil. As we proceeded on the march we found that this red clay soil had assumed the slipping qualities of "Pear's Soap," so that when we attempted to move forward we seemed to move backward, and after a few days of this kind of travel many of us were inclined to go the other way.

It is a notable fact that in this particular neck o' the woods in that particular month of June, it rained twenty-one days in succession.

Nothing out of the ordinary occurred until the tenth day out. The heat was intense and the rain abundant, coming in installments. We did not halt that night until about 11 p. m. It was dark, and when we halted it was raining whole water. Some one had selected our camping ground in a small wood near a beautiful spring. We stacked our arms by fixing bayonets and sticking the bayonets in the ground to keep the guns from filling with water.

One thing we found there, which the officers may or may not have known about, was a lot of cotton in bales carefully stored in an old log house. This was soon known to "high privates," and we all made a rush for it. The bands were stripped off the bales, and the white, fluffy stuff was soon gathered up by armfuls and borne away. I had two comrades at that time. They were a little in advance of me and got their arms full first, so that when I got back to camp the bed was made and I had a surplus of cotton. The captain was not far away, but of course he had no cotton, and I stepped over and asked him if he would like some. He said he didn't mind if I had any to spare. So I handed it over to him and went back to my *downy* couch. Never had I dreamed before what the land of cotton really meant—"All things there am soon forgotten. Look away."

Yes, we were soon lost in that beautiful dreamland; but when the morning dawned, bright and clear, the first thing that we heard was this order: "Every man who had anything to do with that cotton will at once, without delay, put it back where he found it." We thought then it was a nightmare instead of a dream. But, like good little boys, we went



and put it back. I gathered up the captain's and put that back. Then a second order, "Every man who had anything to do with that cotton, will be put under guard and marched in the rear of the regiment in disgrace." We thought like the Irishman, that it was "ketchin' before hangin'," so we decided not to go until ordered.

The bugle sounded, "Fall in!" and we fell in. I stood in the front rank. I was covered with cotton from head to foot. It wouldn't come off. The captain walked slowly down the line, examining each one. When he came to me he said in an undertone, "You look pretty well." I took the compliment gracefully without a word, and he passed on. I didn't go to the rear because he didn't tell me to. Our regiment was rear-guard that day, so we were the last to leave the ground. As we moved off some one went to the spring to fill his canteen, and as he passed the house, he lighted a match, threw it into the house and hurried into his place. As we passed over the hill we saw the smoke. The speculating officers who had hoped to get that cotton to market were doubtless disappointed.

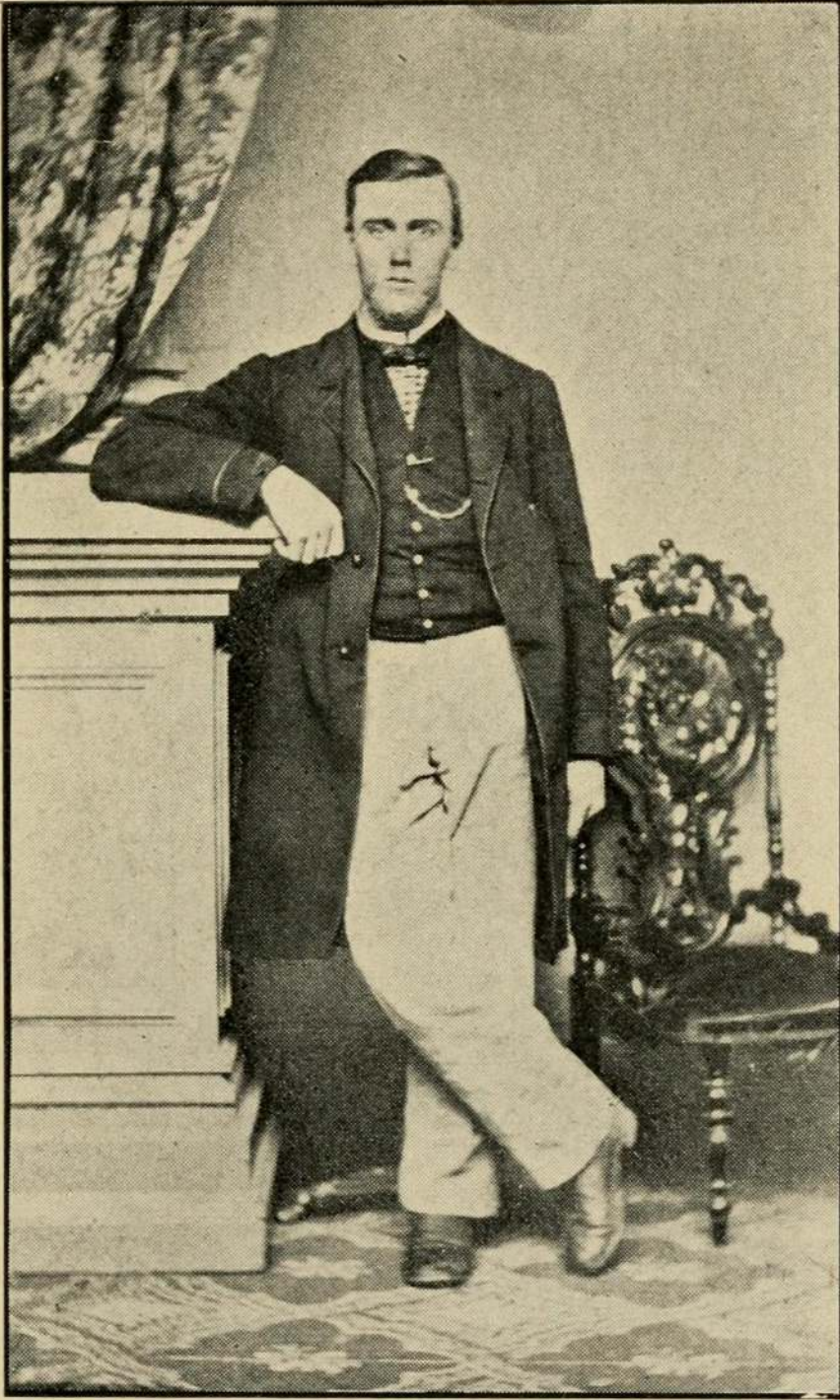
## THE RETREAT.

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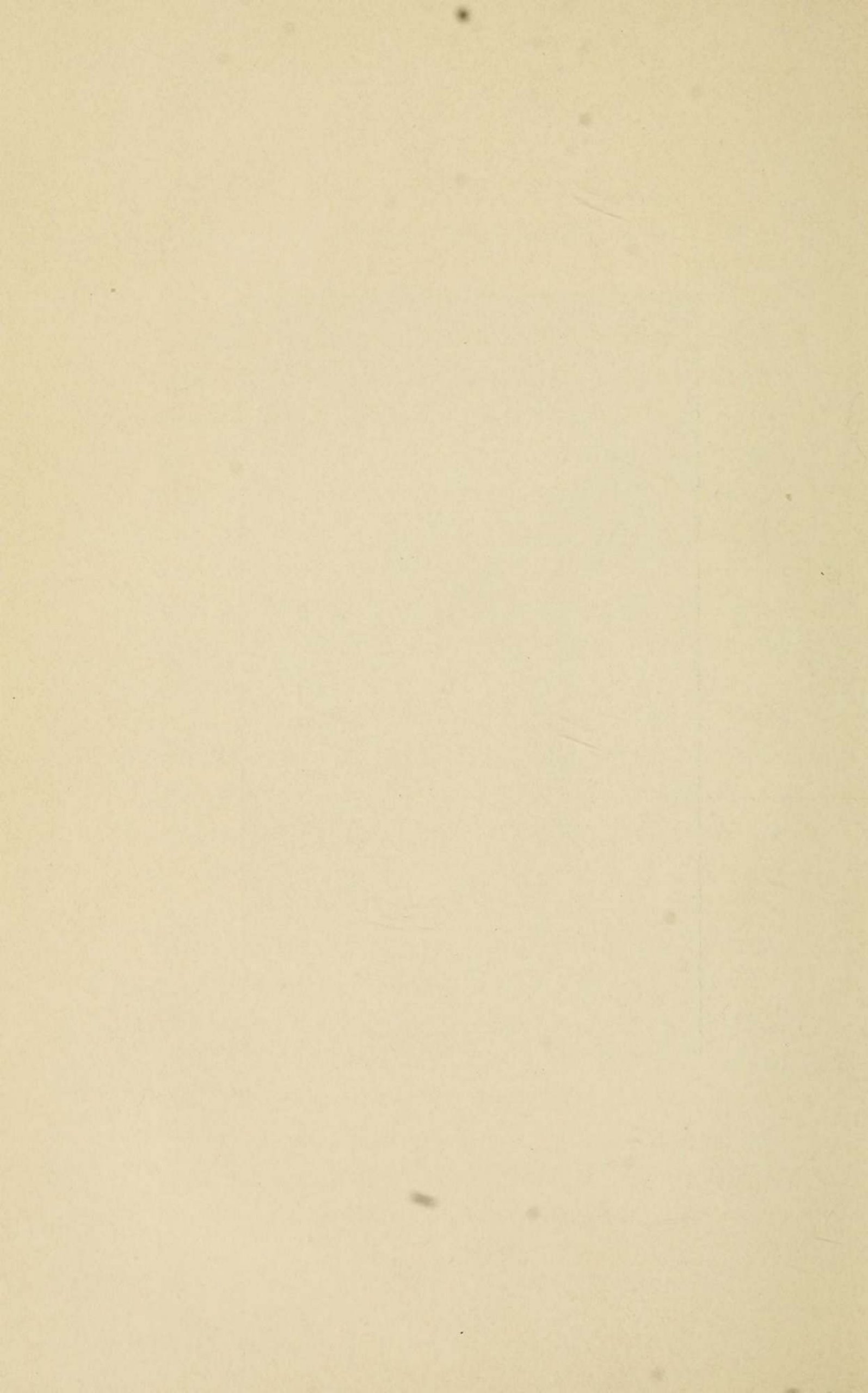
That afternoon we met the enemy and he was ours for a little while—i. e., he was our enemy, and was a little too much for us. While the fight was progressing, General Sturgis, who was said to be drunk, ordered a retreat, and we retreated. We didn't exactly run, but we walked as fast as we could. Most of us succeeded in getting back about fifty miles toward Memphis before being overtaken by the enemy.

If you have never witnessed a disorderly retreat, there is a chapter in your life which can never be filled by any three-ringed circus on earth, with the animals all let loose. Imagine if you can—and that is all you can do—10,000 men with the artillery and cavalry horses rushing about like mad and 1,200 mules cut loose from the wagon trains, all mixed in one conglomerate mass and all trying to reach Memphis, 100 miles away, and each wishing to be first to tell the tale.

To show that General Sturgis either was not in his right mind, or was exceedingly stupid, I would call attention to the position



As the author appeared on entering service.



of his train of 200 wagons drawn by about 1,200 mules. About four miles from where the engagement took place was a wide swamp which the recent rains had made almost impassable. Through this swamp the train had been taken and corralled in an open field within half a mile of the firing line. This field was enclosed by a high rail fence, with an opening of about fifty feet where the road entered the field. To retreat, this long train must pass through this narrow space, and if it succeeded in getting to the swamp it would require a long time and great effort to recross it.

Here in this open field, in plain view of the enemy, lay this prize. Of course he trained his guns to cover the retreat of the train and poured shot and shell into it.

Some one, when it was too late, saw the mistake. A group of officers rode up. One of them said to the wagonmaster, "Get these mules out of here; if you can't get them out any other way, cut them loose and let them go." Toward the gap they started. I stepped behind a tree and watched the performance. The mules came tearing and the drivers came swearing. The air was full of circus language. That is the kind of language they use when they are tearing up, and things do not go just

as everyone would like. When this was over, the artillery came down the road, then the cavalry, and lastly the mob of men. By this time night was coming on, and so were the rebels. We fell back into the woods; officers were no better than men, and men weren't so good as horses, because they couldn't go as fast.

When the darkness really settled, the confusion was like that which prevailed when the people tried to build a tower and their plans were frustrated. Every man was calling for his regiment and company, and so many were calling at the same time that a person couldn't understand himself.

In this way we traveled all that night, reaching Ripley, Miss., thirty miles from our interception performance, at ten o'clock the next morning.

We stopped a few minutes for breakfast, but didn't succeed in getting much. From what I saw of it, I should judge that Ripley was a pleasant place, or might be under other circumstances, but we did not have time to examine it, for the rebels were coming, and we hurried on. I was partially sun-struck the day before, and about noon, when the sun was pouring down upon us, my head began to hurt,

and I left the line and took to the woods. Finding a quiet ravine about one hundred feet deep, I went down into its shady depths, and spread out my rubber blanket by a little spring of water. After taking two or three good drinks from the spring, I lay down and listened to the rumble of the fleeing thousands and to the pursuing rebels. When all was over and I knew that I was cut off, I went to sleep, having first planned what I would do at night.

Just before going into the ravine a lieutenant from another company came along, and I said to him: "Lieutenant, let us take to the woods and wait until night." "No," he said, "I can't stop here; I must go on." I was captured that night, and the next morning I saw the lieutenant lying in the road, dead. He was shot from behind while going up a hill. I probably should have shared his fate if I had stayed with him.

## THE CAPTURE.

---

About nine o'clock I awoke and realized that I was alone in a strange wood in an enemy's country, and must work out my own salvation, which I proceeded to do with fear and trembling. It was black darkness all around and was raining. I rolled up my blanket and started, struck the road as I had planned, and was enabled to keep it by the tracks the horses had made. At one time my trousers had collected so much mud around the bottom that they were burdensome, and I decided to lighten them, so I took out my knife and began cutting off one leg a few inches from the bottom. I soon found that I was cutting too high, so I cut down a way, then up and then down, until the circle was completed. I proceeded with the other in like manner, with about the same result. When I looked at those legs in the morning, I smiled, and I think you would have smiled, too. But the load was gone and I could travel better. I saw a light ahead, found it was a camp fire, crept around it, and went on. I had traveled in this way about nine miles when I came to an opening in the



woods. The clouds just then seemed to separate a little, and I thought I saw something gray lying beside the road. While I was looking at it I walked up against something. Putting out my hands, I found that I had run up against a horse tied to a tree with the bridle. I quietly untied him and mounted. He was standing perfectly still, but shortly moved forward a few steps, then stopped. All my working of the reins and prodding in the ribs with my heels was of no avail. He simply wouldn't go. I could see no reason why. In fact, I could not see anything. I could not even see this horse on which I sat, which was one of the cream color sort. While I was making desperate efforts in as quiet a way as possible to make him go, I was surprised by hearing some one say, in a sort of stage whisper, "Who's dat?" Surprise is too mild a term. I was scared, but didn't say a word. The voice seemed to come from the ground and so near to my horse that if the fellow had been sitting up, I am sure I could have touched him with my hand.

While untying the horse and mounting, which didn't occupy more than a minute, I had laid my plans. I said, "I'll ride him as far as he will go before daylight, then let him go and

take to the woods." Well planned, and I did ride him as far as he would go, but what spoiled my plans was that he *wouldn't go at all*.

As soon as I heard the fellow say, "Who's dat?" I quietly slipped off the horse. As my feet touched the ground I heard the click of a rifle lock, and the command, "Halt!" from a man not more than eight feet from me. Well, I was halted all right, and I stood still. Again came the command, "Halt!" so I just stayed halted, and the third command, "Halt!" came. I knew then that I must do something. I took a couple of steps toward the man and said very coolly, "I surrender." He said, "Who are you?" "I am a Union soldier." "Have you any arms?" "No, sir." "You may come here." I walked right up.

He said, "Where is your hoss?" I said, "I let him go; guess he's out here somewhere." He said to the darkey, for he it was who surprised me, "Sam, find that hoss and bring him up here." Sam went out, got the hoss and brought him up. Pretty soon he said, "Massa, da's one of our hosses gone." The man said to me, "Where did you get that hoss?" "I found him out here." "You tryin' to ride off one of our hosses?" "I didn't

know whose it was. I found him and thought I would use him."

I felt around on the ground and found a saddle, and asked the man whether I might use it for a pillow. He said I might. So I stretched myself out and covered myself up with my rubber blanket, and was very soon sound asleep.

As nearly as I could judge it was about midnight when I was halted. I awoke at daylight and heard someone talking. On getting up I saw several guerillas talking to a man whom they had just halted. He proved to be one of my own company. They had captured two before I came up. Very soon they stood us in line and talked among themselves, then asked us if we had any money. I had about four dollars in greenbacks. They took it, took my knife, my rubber blanket—all but my testament. I showed that to the head man and said to him, "I suppose you will let me keep this." "Yes," he said, "if you will read it." Good idea, steal all a fellow has, and then advise him to read the Bible. If that fellow lived here he would be a politician.

I had on a good hat that I had purchased in St. Louis for two dollars only a short time before. A fellow came along and took it off

my head and put it on his own, and put an old one on mine that wasn't worth ten cents. Quick trade and no talking back, but I thought some things.

After getting all they could from us, they talked some more among themselves, and then put us under two men on horseback and marched us back about five miles over the road I had traveled the night before, where we found 600 of our men who had been captured that night and morning.

Just before starting out a young fellow espied my boots, a pair which my father had made for me just before I went south. They were worth fifty dollars in greenbacks down there. "Got on boots, eh?" "Yes, but they are too big for you." "What size are they?" "No, 9's." They were covered with mud so the men couldn't see what they were. Nothing more was said about them. I sold them in Andersonville for four dollars.

But as Samantha Allen says, "To resume backwards," I passed this same place the night before and must have gone within twenty feet of the guard. I heard the horses eating as I passed, but did not *run against any of them*.

Almost the first man I met that I recognized was my captain. Instead of his fine uniform

of the day before, he had on an old ragged suit such as was worn by privates, an old hat and he was barefoot. "Well," I said, "captain, where are your boots?" "I set them down by that plum tree and some fool stole them." He was a dejected looking object. I said to him, "I have on a pair of good woolen socks. They are better than nothing. You may have them." So I pulled off my boots and gave him my socks and put on my boots without them. He marched beside me all that day in his stocking feet. For once I outranked the captain.

It soon began to rain. About noon they put us in line, as I remember, in the following order (the guards were all mounted); four guards on horseback, then eight prisoners on foot, of course; then four more guards, etc., etc., to the end of the line. We made quite an imposing spectacle. We felt quite imposed upon, to say the least. We marched fifteen miles that day, which was Sunday, and thirty miles the next day, which wasn't Sunday by a long way. When we passed through Ripley, I saw General Forest, who impressed me as being a very bright officer. If he had been on our side, I think I should have been quite proud of him.

Never shall I forget that march. The road was strewn the whole length with guns, sabres, clothing of all kinds, broken wagons, dead mules, horses and men—everything that belongs to and goes with an army. The people had come out in many places and gathered up the guns, a whole wagon load in a pile. It looked like a wonderful waste. No wonder General Sherman said that “war is hell,” but we haven’t got there yet. I shall have to introduce you to that later on, if you care to visit it.

On reaching the battlefield at Guntown, known in history as Brice’s Cross Roads, we were halted and given some hardtack taken from our wagons, which they had captured—two hardtack to a man. I had been out three days and three nights, and had walked 100 miles, and in all that time had not eaten as much as a fourteen-year-old boy will eat for his dinner at a single sitting. The principal thing that I remember eating during the three days was a hardtack which I begged from one of the men who captured me. It was round and about as thick as a soda cracker, about the size of a small tea saucer, and fully as hard. I am sure I could have broken a piece out of a china saucer with my teeth easier than

I could break that hardtack. I simply could not bite it; I held it in my mouth and worked at it the greater part of the forenoon. It was the hardest tack I ever saw. It had staying qualities.

That night we were hustled into box cars and started south. What our destination was we did not know and didn't care much if they would only let us rest.

We arrived at Meridian, Miss., the next morning, where we stayed until the following morning. Then we started by rail across the state of Alabama. At Montgomery, if I remember correctly, we were put on a boat and taken up the river a few miles. While waiting at Montgomery to take the boat, the citizens came out to see the Yankees. An old man right near me said, "Look at the poor devils. I could lick any six of 'em." A guard standing near by who had seen service at the front, overheard him. He turned quickly and said to him, "Old man, if you think you can lick six of 'em, you'd better take your gun and go to the front. You'll soon find out how many you can lick."

Without further adventure, except rain and heat, and cold nights, hunger, sleeping in rain, riding on flat cars, etc., we arrived on Sunday

afternoon, June 19th, at Andersonville, where, as we were looking over into the stockade in which we were to spend so many hungry, tired, lonely, desperate days,—we took leave of our officers, who were to be taken to the officers' prison at Charleston, S. C. The captain with tears streaming down his cheeks, took us each by the hand and we said farewell.





## CAPTAIN WIRTZ.

---

Just about the time we bade our captain farewell, we were introduced to another captain, the man who was to be our ruler for an indefinite length of time. I will try to describe him: Height about five feet ten inches; stoop shouldered; complexion, dark; hair, black; mustache, black; goatee, black; eyes, black, and a heart as black as the fires of hades could burn it. It was said that he was a Prussian by birth and at one time served in the Prussian army, but for some cause was banished. He reached this country about the time of the beginning of the Civil War and in time found his way into the South, and when the prison was opened at Andersonville he was made assistant to General Winder, who was commandant of the prison. Upon the death of General Winder, Henry Wirtz (for this was the captain's name) was promoted to succeed him.

If the Southern Confederacy had searched the whole world they could not have found a man more fiendishly qualified to fill this place than this same Henry Wirtz. I doubt whether the infernal regions could furnish a person of

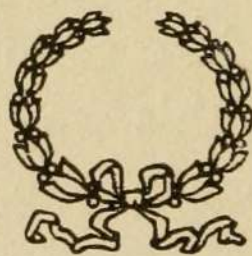
more diabolical tendencies than he, unless they sent out old Beelzebub himself, and Henry Wirtz would hold him a close second. I believe he could sit and see his own father roasted over a slow fire, or his mother eaten alive by ants and never show the tremor of a muscle. This brute said he would kill more men in prison than the army did at the front, and I am inclined to think that he did it proportionately at least. He used to ride an old white mare—what a contrast—a black soul on a white horse. He kept a pack of the largest, fiercest, Cuban blood-hounds to be found. If a man dared to cross him, he would kill him. He kicked one poor fellow to death. But enough of him for the present. I will merely say that he was hanged at Washington at the close of the war, not because he was keeper of the prison, but for his personal, brutal deeds perpetrated upon helpless prisoners.

By this brute we were formed in columns of four, numbered off into detachments of 270 men each. These detachments were subdivided into squads of ninety men each. Over each squad was placed one of our own sergeants and over the detachments a head sergeant.

These divisions were made in order that rations might be properly distributed, and also (which was the principal reason) that the rebel sergeant might more easily keep count of the men. These rebel sergeants visited the prison every morning about nine o'clock, to count the men. Each squad would stand in two ranks and the sergeant would walk in front and count off. The tricks we would play on these fellows were amusing. Suppose one or more had died during the night. As the sergeant passed down the line a man who had been counted would slip out of the rear rank, run down and be counted again without being detected. In this way we kept the dead men's rations for some time.

After the line was completed and every man's name, regiment and company had been taken by the clerks, we were marched away to the prison, which was in plain view, for the headquarters of Wirtz, before which we had been standing was located on a hill commanding a good view of a large portion of the inside of the stockade. It was raining, and as we looked we saw men by the hundreds entirely nude, and wondered why they were in that condition. We afterward learned that

they were taking a shower-bath. It was the only real clean water available for bathing purposes inside the prison.



## ENTERING THE PRISON.

---

From the headquarters to the north gate was a short quarter of a mile. As the gates swung on their heavy hinges, they looked like the jaws of some huge monster opening to gather us in. Had we known then what we learned afterward the illusion would have seemed a reality, but the good Father has kindly hidden our future from us. The motto, "All who enter here leave hope behind" might very properly have been placed over this old north gate.

We had been a week on the road since our capture, and were hungry and tired, consequently the thoughts uppermost in our minds were of rest and something to eat. We passed through the gate like "dumb driven cattle"—and we were treated by our keepers very much like cattle. No provision had been made for our reception. No place had been assigned for this body of 600 men, so each man must look out for himself.

There were fifteen men beside myself from Company C, 9th Regiment, Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. We were near the head of the column and as we passed up the street

leading directly east from the gate, across the prison grounds, we were surrounded on all sides by thousands of hungry, ragged prisoners, all eager for news, and they informed us that we should have to make ourselves at home and look out for ourselves. Consequently, when we had reached a point about half way from the gate to the east side, finding a small space apparently unoccupied, we stopped, and it became our abode for some weeks. Afterward, when the prison was enlarged we moved farther north.

I read, not long ago, that our first parents must have experienced a strange sensation, when, on that first evening they saw the sun go down out of sight, not knowing whether they should ever see it again—so on this, our first evening in Andersonville, when we saw the sun set and the night draw her sable mantle around us, and saw the stars here and there push their tiny heads through the great curtain above and around us, and we realized that this was our only covering, and the bare, hard sand our only resting place, we felt that we had passed into a new creation.

I will now attempt to describe this new world, created not by the Almighty, but by men whose sole ambition seems to have been

to stamp out gradually all courage and loyalty from the hearts of those who were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands.

Anderson, before the war, was an insignificant cross-roads in Sumpter County, Georgia. It was known as Anderson until several thousand Yankees were transported there, since which time it has been known as Andersonville.

The country surrounding it was covered with pine trees. The soil is of a reddish, sandy clay. The little stream, which rises in a swamp just east of the railroad, is about ten feet wide in the widest place, and six inches deep. This stream does not flow like most streams, but just slides along very slowly over its bed of yellow sand. It seems to partake of the spirit of the inhabitants, too tired to die and too lazy to live.

Back from this stream for a distance of 200 feet on the north side was a heavy swamp, a veritable quagmire; at the northern edge of this swamp rose abruptly a hill perhaps thirty feet in height. The swamp extended but a short distance from the south side of the stream and the southern hill was not so high nor so steep as that on the north. Around this swamp and inclosing quite a tract of land beyond the

north hill and a small portion of land south of the swamp, a high stockade was built.

Every tree within this inclosure, except two tall pines which stood in the southeast corner and which cast what little shade their meager branches afforded outside of the stockade the greater part of the day, were cut down and their branches drawn outside before the stockade was built, leaving a barren waste of stump land. These stumps were afterwards worked up to the very ends of the roots by the prisoners for fuel with which to cook their food. The bodies of the trees were used in the building of the stockade. These bodies were cut into logs twenty-five feet in length and were hewn on four sides. A trench five feet deep was dug and these logs were stood upright in it, forming a solid wooden wall twenty feet high. Not only did this wall fence in the prisoners, but it shut out the fresh air or prevented in a large measure its free circulation. The free circulation of the air was still further hindered by the pine forest which surrounded the prison on all sides. This stockade or wall enclosed about twenty acres of land; but from the inside of the stockade a strip of land twenty feet wide on all sides was marked off by what was known as the "dead line." This



“dead line” consisted of stakes three feet high with a board three or four inches wide nailed to the top, forming a continuous inner fence.

Imagine yourself in this pit when the sun is at the zenith and the mercury above the 100 mark, and you will have some warm thoughts at least.

At regular intervals of about one hundred feet were placed sentry boxes. A platform five or six feet square was built against the outside of the stockade and near enough to the top so that a boy of fourteen could stand upon it and look over the stockade and see what was going on inside. Over this platform was placed a roof of boards to shelter the sentry from the sun and rain. The sentry reached this box by a ladder.

A part of the time the sentries were from the 3000 regular troops who were stationed there. At other times, when the regular troops were called away, men too old and boys too young to go to the front, did this duty.

When the latter were on guard, we were extremely cautious about going near the dead line. They seemed to feel that it was their only opportunity for killing Yankees. They gave no warning, but let an unsuspecting prisoner place his hand on the board which marked

the dead line and the report of the old musket rang out and some one was shot, it might be the supposed trespasser and it might be an innocent person several feet away. When the old soldiers occupied the boxes it was different. The guard would often enter into conversation with the prisoners, always choosing a time when the officer of the day was on the other side of the prison.

Many a trade was made with these old soldiers. They were anxious to obtain our brass buttons and would give tobacco in exchange for them. (They used leather buttons on their homespun uniforms).

When the officer was near, the guard would not notice us, but when there was no danger he would manifest it in some way. The Yankee would step up to the dead line and strike up a bargain and arrange for a meeting later. At the appointed time the guard would tie a plug of tobacco to a string, let it down, and the Yankee would slip under the dead line with his bunch of buttons, untie the string from the tobacco and tie the buttons to it, slip back under the dead line and the trade was made. Of course the other guards were all looking the other way at the time.

There was a bond of fellowship between

these opposing armies; no matter how fiercely they fought on the battlefield, when the fight was over they could be good fellows. I have long felt that if the old soldiers had been allowed to reconstruct matters after the war instead of putting them into the hands of the politicians, things would have been much sooner and much more satisfactorily adjusted.

The swamp heretofore described covered about three acres and was absolutely unfit for camping purposes, and was used as a sink for the prison. In walking over this, men would often sink to their knees in mud and filth. Deducting from the twenty acres of the original enclosure, the land between the dead line and the stockade and that occupied by the swamp, we have about sixteen acres of land left for the prisoners to occupy.

Well, I hear some one say, "That is a large field." It would be quite a parade ground for a regiment, but when you put into it an army of 33,000 men, the number actually present at one time, it leaves very little room for even the absolute necessities of cooking and sleeping.

I have described rather carefully the location of the prison, for the reason that I have been told that within five miles of this location was

a much better place, if the health of the prisoners had been considered. There was a clear running stream of pure water for drinking and bathing purposes at the latter place.

I have said that above the stockade the little stream had its rise in a quagmire. Added to this the railroad station was so situated that all the drainage from that ran into it. On the other side of the swamp on high land which sloped down toward it, three thousand soldiers forming the guard of the prison were encamped, and all the drainage from this camp flowed into the swamp. Then on a slight elevation near the stockade was placed the cook house, where the food for one-half the prison was cooked, and all the slops from this went into the swamp, and in the course of events all these slops were mingled in the little stream which passed through the prison; and this water was all the water that was ever provided in any way by the authorities for the prisoners.

It has been said that the South did all it could for the prisoners. This water is only one example of their provision. Wood, which was an absolute necessity, was withheld from us. Wood was abundant. Thousands of cords of dry pine lay just outside the gate, but we were not permitted to gather it except in very

meager quantities; and as one-half the prisoners were obliged to cook their food, we were compelled to dig the roots out of the ground and dry them in the sun and use them for fuel. We were not even provided with cooking utensils, and as nearly all of our cups and plates had been taken from us before entering, we were ill prepared for housekeeping. Every available canteen was utilized. These were held over the fire and unsoldered, thus making two large tin saucers from each canteen.

The process of cooking was as follows: Bricks were made of the clay soil; two of these bricks were placed on the ground about five inches apart. The half canteen in which the coarse cornmeal had been placed with sufficient water to make a sort of mush, was placed on the bricks. Then the cook would take a small sliver of pine and go off and get a light, put it under the dish, add a few root shavings, get down on hands and knees and blow until it kindled, then add more shavings, then blow some more, repeating the process until he could blow no more, or until his fuel was exhausted, when he would call it done and eat it.

I have eaten many a dish of this stuff, half cooked. It was simply chicken feed warmed through. We never used salt because we could

not get it. I have used the term coarse cornmeal. This was such as we feed our horses and cattle, never sifted. The hull was all left in it, and we thought many times that the cob was ground up with it. You see, they gave us the *hull thing*.

The plan was something like this: One-half would get cooked rations for two weeks and the other half would get uncooked, then we changed about. The rations were brought in about 4 o'clock in the afternoon if it did not rain. If it rained, we would get nothing until the next morning or night. I remember that on the 4th of July we were forty-eight hours without rations. I presume that is the way they celebrated there at that time. Before describing the manner of distributing rations, I will mention another matter which has a bearing upon the subject.

The place for depositing the dead as they were carried out was in a line with Captain Wirtz's headquarters, and in full view from the hill. About ten o'clock in the morning an army wagon drawn by mules would be driven up and the dead piled into it. They were thrown in and piled on as a man piles cordwood into a wagon. When no more would stay on, the load was driven to the cemetery

and the team returned for another load. Now for the point to the ration story. In the afternoon, into this same wagon was thrown our rations, meat, bread, cornmeal, etc., and it was driven in through the north gate and was guarded by eight men with guns with bayonets fixed. This load was distributed to the detachment sergeants. These distributed to the sergeants of 90's and these to the various messes like our own, each of these having a sergeant of its own. The last would divide up so that each individual received his share.

When we drew cooked rations each man got a piece of bread six inches long and three inches square, and a piece of bacon about an inch and a half cube. Only two things. Sometimes we had beef instead of bacon, and sometimes two tablespoonfuls of molasses—but only two things at a time. When we drew uncooked rations it was cornmeal, one pint instead of bread, and raw beef or bacon. This bread was a wonder. It was baked in large cards about 15x20 inches and three inches thick. No soda or salt was ever discovered in it. They may have been of the invisible kind.

A ration of either kind must last at least twenty-four hours. One could eat it all at

once and then be hungry, but I made two meals of mine, eating my supper or perhaps it was dinner at 6 o'clock, and the other meal at 9 A. M. When I got the bread I would mark off as much as I thought I could spare for supper, and stop when I came to the mark, but it was mighty hard stopping sometimes. What was left over we had to keep in litle bags, but I had no bag, so I cut the pockets out of my pants, putting my bread in one and my meat in the other. This was my *pantry*.

A part of the time we received beans in place of one of the articles already mentioned. These beans were of a peculiar variety—small, speckled red ones—another feature was that they were infested with bugs. I think it is not exaggerating to say that one in every three beans contained a small, black bug. When we put these beans in water, some of the bugs came to the surface and we skimmed them off. Those that did not float we cooked and ate. Nothing eatable was allowed to go to waste.

If a man was sick and unable to eat his meat, a comrade would take it, stick it on a sliver and walk up and down the street crying, "Who's got bread to trade for meat?" Presently some one would call out "Here!" and then they would banter. One would say,



“Your bread is too small;” the other would say, “Your meat isn’t good!” After a wordy discussion there would either be a trade or a fight. It is surprising to see how much hungry men think of their honor and how quickly they resort to blows to defend it. Fights were the order of the day. Look in any direction at almost any time of day and you might witness from one to a dozen fistic arguments in full swing. It was a good place for a young man to learn to mind his own business.

There were places in the prison where food could be bought at exorbitant prices, as follows:

3 medium sized potatoes .....	\$1.00
3 biscuits .....	1.00
1 pint wheat flour .....	1.00

Etc., etc., etc.. When new recruits came in with money they indulged in these luxuries for a brief time.

One night I had a dream which had an aggravating effect upon me. My mother was noted in our home circle for her bread-making. I never knew anyone who excelled her in making biscuits. They were always just right. Her dinners, which were always good, were a little better on Sunday than on any other day. On this particular night I dreamed that

I was at home. It was Sunday; we were seated at the table; my brother sat opposite me, and my father opposite my mother. In the middle of the table, which was covered with a clean, white cloth, sat a plate of mother's biscuits. I couldn't wait for the blessing, but reached over and took one from the plate. Holding it up, I said, "In Andersonville, three biscuits like this would have been worth a dollar." Just as I was about to put it to my mouth I awoke. Imagine my disappointment.

When we received fresh beef every bit of it was utilized. The bones were boiled and then gnawed and the juice sucked out of them. I never knew how much pleasure the dog gets out of a bone until I followed his example for an hour at a time. I have picked one of these bones out of the dust after it had been trodden on and kicked around, and gnawed at it for half an hour to get the gristle. One boy boiled the eye from a beef's head, but he couldn't cook it so that he could eat it—the only part that I saw refused there.

It did not take many weeks for this diet to leave its mark. The languid step; the tired feeling; the drawn, sunken features; that far-away look in the eye, told that it was only a

matter of a short time when the poor fellow would follow his comrades to the cemetery.

I have said that the only water provided was in this little sluggish stream.

About twelve feet below the dead line on the west side of the prison, a small foot bridge was built over the creek. Between this bridge and the dead line was the place where we obtained water for drinking and cooking purposes. If we went there very early in the morning the water was comparatively clear, but after six o'clock there was a nasty, greasy scum on it. When 30,000 men were supplying themselves with water from that small place, it was crowded constantly. One had to crowd his way in and out. Often men would be jostled against the dead line, and if too much crowding were indulged in, the guard from the nearest sentry box at the top of the stockade would fire into the crowd, and one or more would be killed. We were told that whenever a guard killed a prisoner he was given a furlough, consequently when a shot was fired, the crowd would yell: "There goes another furlough."

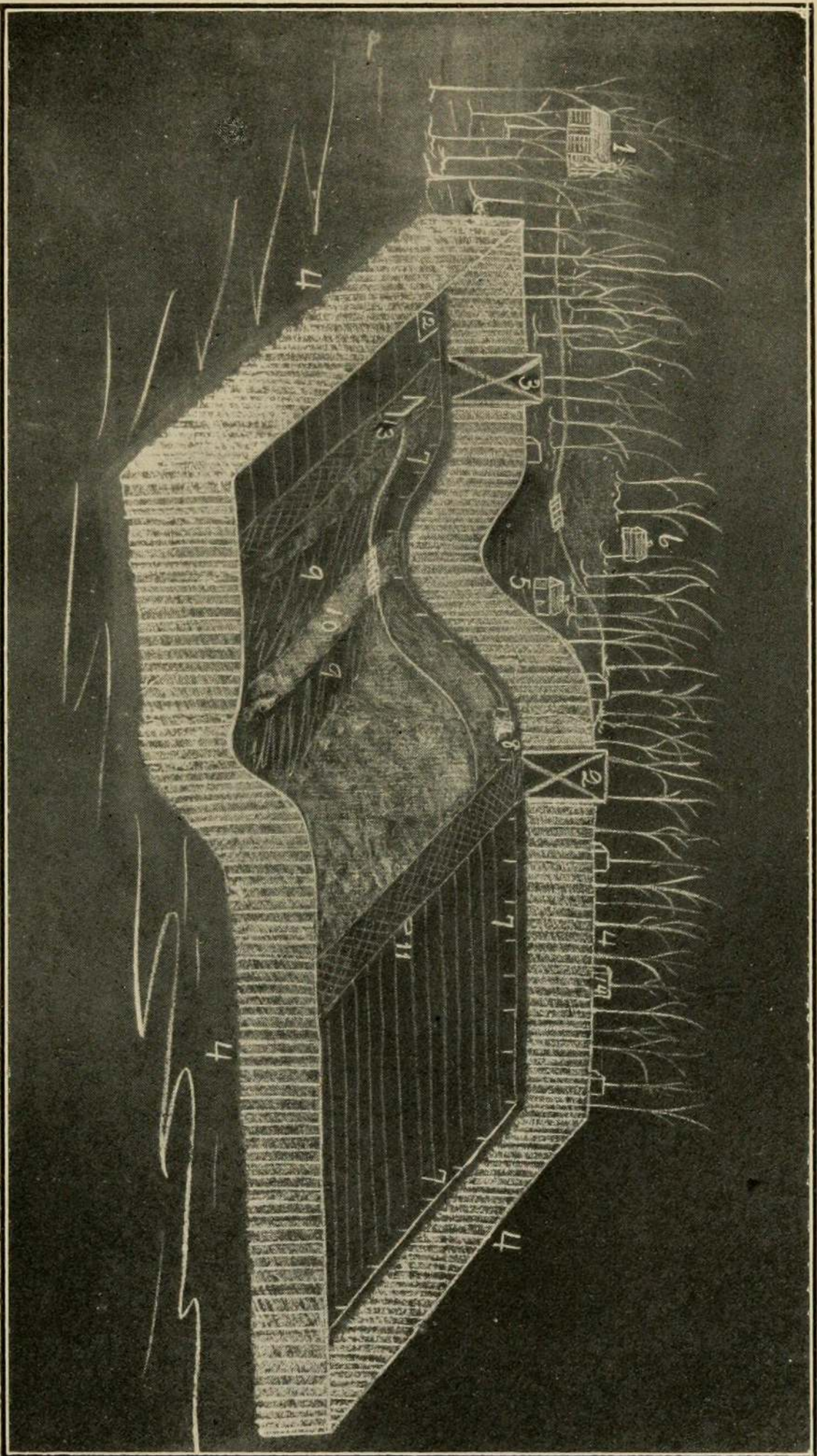
## TUNNELLING OUT.

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Many wells were dug in different parts of the grounds by the prisoners, some of them to the depth of eighty feet. These wells were about two and a half feet in diameter and were scooped out with half canteens, one man digging and others hauling up the earth in a small pail. Instead of a rope attached to the pail, several gun straps, belts, etc., were fastened together. The process was slow, but in time good water was reached, but it was the property of a few.

Owing to the peculiar construction of some of these wells, they were always dry. One of these was about forty feet from the dead line on the east side. The diggers went down some ten feet and then began digging at a right angle with the hole already dug, and in the direction of the dead line, going on under the dead line and under the stockade to a point several feet outside of the stockade. Then they dug upward gradually until near the surface.

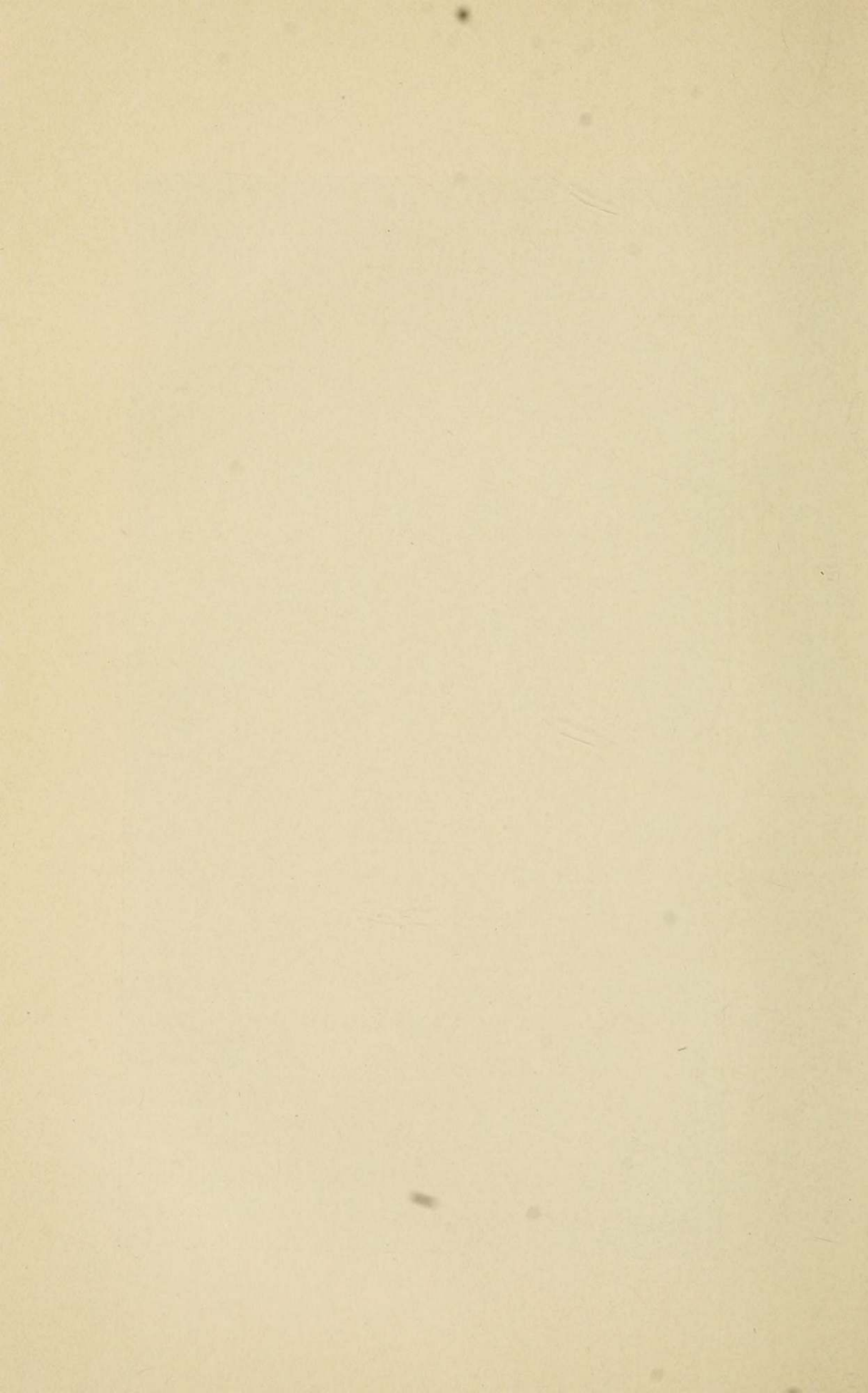
Those engaged in this enterprise formed a secret organization before beginning operations. To cover their designs no little tact



- No. 1—Captain Wirtz Headquarters.  
 " 2—North Gate.  
 " 3—South Gate.  
 " 4—Stockade.  
 " 5—Cook House.

- No. 6—R. R. Station.  
 " 7—Dead Line.  
 " 8—Stump near Providence Spring.  
 " 9—Swamp.  
 " 10—Stream.

- No. 11—Sleeping place of Author.  
 " 12—Raiders' Corner.  
 " 13—Gallows upon which six Raiders  
 were hung.



was necessary. While sinking the well the first ten feet the earth was simply thrown out on the surface and left, but when they began the horizontal movement, it was necessary to remove that earth, as it would not do to have more earth in sight than would fill the ten-foot well; so some would dig and others would take the earth in blankets or bags and carry it down to the swamp and deposit it. This horizontal part was dug in the night. During the day an old coat was hung over the opening at the bottom of the well so that a person looking into the well would not discover anything out of the ordinary.

When they came near the surface on the outside, they suspended work and waited for a dark night. When the night came and the sentries one after another called the hour announcing that the officer of the guard was making his round, the little company gathered at the mouth of the well. As soon as they were assured that the officer had passed the sentries nearest the point where they were to make their exit, they climbed down into the well, and one after another entered the horizontal passage and began crawling through it. The man at the head carefully dug through the thin crust of earth and crawled out, listening

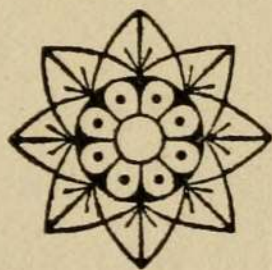
cautiously. He was quickly followed by the others, then they began their march for liberty. Going directly to the creek they waded down it for some distance to throw the bloodhounds off the scent. The next morning, soon after sunrise, Wirtz was out with his pack of hounds making his daily round of the outside of the prison. When the dogs struck the trail they set up a howl and started off with Wirtz and his men at their heels. They followed to the stream and there lost the scent, but Wirtz pushed them on until they again struck the trail. On and on they went. By pursuing, in the course of three or four days they overtook the fugitives and marched them back. Resistance was vain. They were again put in the prison, somewhat the better for their few hours of freedom and fresh air. A few were fortunate enough to reach our lines. Out of the 35,000 prisoners I understand that 25 men got through.

A gentleman whose uncle I knew in Minnesota had a well within fifty feet of the creek. It was only about ten feet deep, but the water, having filtered through the sand from the creek, was much improved. He invited me to come and get water from his well. Now,



we had a ten-quart wooden pail in our company which someone had borrowed on the way to prison and had forgotten to return, so one morning I took the pail to the well and carried home a treat for the boys. In a day or two I introduced one of my comrades, then another and another until all had been introduced. From that time on we were supplied with well water.

I will pause here to relate an incident which I feel sure led to my release.



## AN INCIDENT.

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I had one comrade named Tom Van De-grift. For some reason Tom had taken a liking to me. One morning he came to me and said: "Lyon, I am sick; I wish you would bring water for me." (I should have said that each of us had a number, and when our number was called we went for a pail of water.) "All right, Tom, I'll do it," and I went for the water. When I came back with it, the other fellows, who had been with Tom longer than I had before we were prisoners, said, "I thought it was Tom's turn." "Oh," I said, "Tom is sick." "Sick! Tom sick! He ain't any sicker than you are; he's playing off. You don't know Tom." I didn't say much. I thought he was sick and that I had a perfect right to carry water for him if I wanted to.

In a few days he was sick again, and I carried water for him. Then the other fellows were furious. They swore at me, called me a fool, etc. Farther on I will tell you how Tom paid me for it.

## PROVIDENCE SPRING.

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The water question was finally settled in August. The morning was an exceedingly hot one. Everything seemed burning up. A little after noon black clouds came up from the west and soon the sun was darkened. Then came the Southern thunder and lightning. It was terrific. All at once the clouds seemed to break open and the rain poured down in torrents. Never before or since have I seen so much rainfall in an hour in my life. Everything was flooded. It is safe to say that the water was two inches deep on the level ground. The gradual descent of the table land toward the hill caused it to flow that way, and when it came to the hill it poured over it in a great sheet. The little creek soon overflowed its banks and spread out over the swamp. In about an hour this stream, which was originally ten feet wide, had spread out until it was three hundred feet wide and six feet deep, and where there had seemed to be no current there was now a rushing flood of maddened water. Suddenly there came the report of a cannon, then another. Then the cry went up: "The

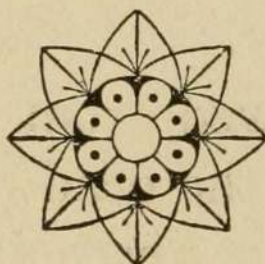
stockade is broken." Sure enough, the flood had carried away a hundred feet of the western stockade, and as the timbers rushed down they carried with them about as much of the eastern stockade. The cannon was a signal for troops, and they rushed down to protect the gaps. I believe some prisoners attempted to escape by jumping into the water and floating with the current.

The effect of the flood upon the appearance of the prison grounds was marvelous. The whole surface was washed, and the swamp, which before was almost beyond endurance, looked now as if it had been scrubbed. We were indeed in a new world. When the Almighty cleans house he puts housekeepers to shame. Now we come to the greatest marvel of all. After the rain had ceased and the creek had assumed its normal condition, out from under an old pine stump which stood near the dead line just below the north gate, we saw a stream of water as large as a man's arm pour forth and run down the hill between the deal line and the stockade. At first we thought it would stop running after a time, but that was forty years ago last August, and it is still running as clear, cold, pure, spring water as can be found anywhere. We named

it Providence Spring. Over it the Woman's Relief Corps has built a substantial stone building. Some claim it to have been a miraculous creation. I cannot agree to that. That it was purely providential cannot be questioned. Long before the spring was thus opened I saw little pools of water near the old stump and between the dead line and the stockade, and saw a man fish water out of these pockets or pools by tying a cup to a string which was attached to a pole. This showed us that there was water there, and had it been on our side of the dead line we should undoubtedly have opened the spring long before it was opened by the rush of water caused by that providential thunder shower.

The stream flowed from the old stump to the creek between the dead line and the stockade. We could not reach it, so it did us no good. In a few days, however, to our great surprise, the authorities sent men in, who nailed two boards together, forming a leader like an old-fashioned eaves trough. Then they placed it so as to lead the stream to our side of the dead line. There we could go and get the pure, sweet water. No one who has been deprived of good water for a long time

can tell how we appreciated this act of kindness from those from whom we had received so little. How we drank of that water. It revived our sinking spirits and filled us with new hope.



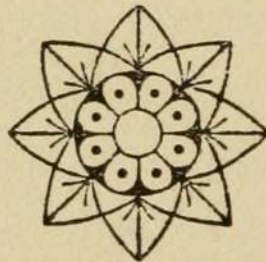
## CLOTHING AND BEDS.

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We were without clothing, without shelter, exposed to the burning sun by day and to the cold at night, for in that part of the South the nights are very cool, while the heat during the day is intense. My wardrobe consisted of a woolen shirt, a pair of cotton flannel drawers, a pair of army pantaloons, a pair of boots and the old hat which I was compelled to take in exchange for my good one when I was captured. I had no blanket, no shelter of any kind by night or day, save when I begged the privilege of sitting in my friend's mud shanty during the hottest part of the day.

When night came we would lie down together upon the ground, spoon fashion. I would take off my boots and put them under my head for a pillow. The nights were very cool, and toward morning it was chilly, even in August. The ground, which had been tramped over by thousands of feet, and baked in that torrid sun, was just about as hard as an asphalt pavement. Sometimes as many as a dozen men would spoon together, so that those in the middle could not turn over, but

when the bones next the ground ached too hard the word would be passed to flop, and the whole line flopped together. For weeks I had no regular place to sleep, but lay down wherever I could find a clear place and a bed-fellow.





## REMINISCENCE.

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Is it any wonder that men lost their reason? that they were homesick and childish? Rather is it not marvelous that any lived, or if they lived that they had mind enough left to think at all? Many a poor fellow wandered around through the grounds perfectly nude. I have stopped these men and tried to talk with them, and the only response was a vacant stare.

Men would gather in groups and talk of home. They would tell how their mothers cooked their favorite dishes; then when thoughts of home came crowding in upon them they would jump up and rush away to forget them. No pen can write it; no tongue can tell it. Even as I try to describe it, the old feeling comes over me and it seems to me that it was the power of the Almighty Father alone that kept us.

When I was released and went home, my mother would try to get me to talk about it, but it seemed such a stupendous undertaking that I could not do it. Not until quite recently have I attempted to tell the story. This is my

first attempt at writing it, and it is impossible for me to do the subject justice.

When you consider that here were 30,000 men, men right from the front, hardy, stalwart, able-bodied men—penned up and starved until they were as helpless as babes, and suffering with disease—with no medical attendance, and only such food as tended to make them worse, is it any wonder that they became desperate, that they thought at times that even the great government which they were serving had forgotten them. I have seen men suffering with scurvy (brought on simply from lack of vegetable diet) to such an extent that their limbs swelled so that they could not walk, and their teeth dropped out. I have seen others with the skin worn off the hip bones where they had lain on the ground, and others with sores on their feet as large as the palm of my hand; these sores would gangrene and then be filled with maggots, etc. If I were to place one of these men in the public square you would shun him as you would a leper.

Let me try to picture one: On a very hot day, in the northern part of the grounds, I found a man, his face so black and filthy that I couldn't distinguish his natural color, with maggots in his eyes and mouth and all over

his body. He was just whispering, "Water, water." I bent over him until I heard what he wanted. Then I borrowed a quart pail and went to a well close by and drew some water (this well was eighty feet deep), brushed the maggots out of his mouth, and gave him a drink. This is only one case. Another was down by the creek. A man who had stood over six feet, lay stretched out on the wet sand; he had crawled down there in the evening to get water. I bent over him and he whispered, "Water." I found in his hand a peculiar kind of cup. He had found an old boot leg and had cut out a piece about six inches square and tied up the corners so that it would hold about a gill. This I took, went to the creek, filled it, put it to his lips, filled it again and again until he was satisfied. He probably died before morning.

Our daily duties were simply the doing of those things which would prolong life, for no matter how miserable our surroundings may be we cling to that thing called life with great tenacity. We had within our reach the means of self-destruction if we chose to use them. All one had to do was to crawl under the board which marked the dead line, and the guard, who was ever on the alert, would quickly do

the rest. I very well remember one case—that of one of those nude men who had been wandering around the grounds in the broiling sun all day until late in the afternoon. When he came up to the dead line on the west side near the south gate, observing the shade of the stockade, he deliberately crawled under the dead line and started for the shade. When about half way, men who were trying to call the poor fellow back saw the guard raise his gun, and called out to him, “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot! The man is crazy.” He gave no heed to their entreaties, but fired. The man fell mortally wounded. There he lay for hours writhing in agony, but the authorities did nothing to relieve him, and about sunset he breathed his last. No comrade dared go to his assistance.

## MORNING DUTIES.

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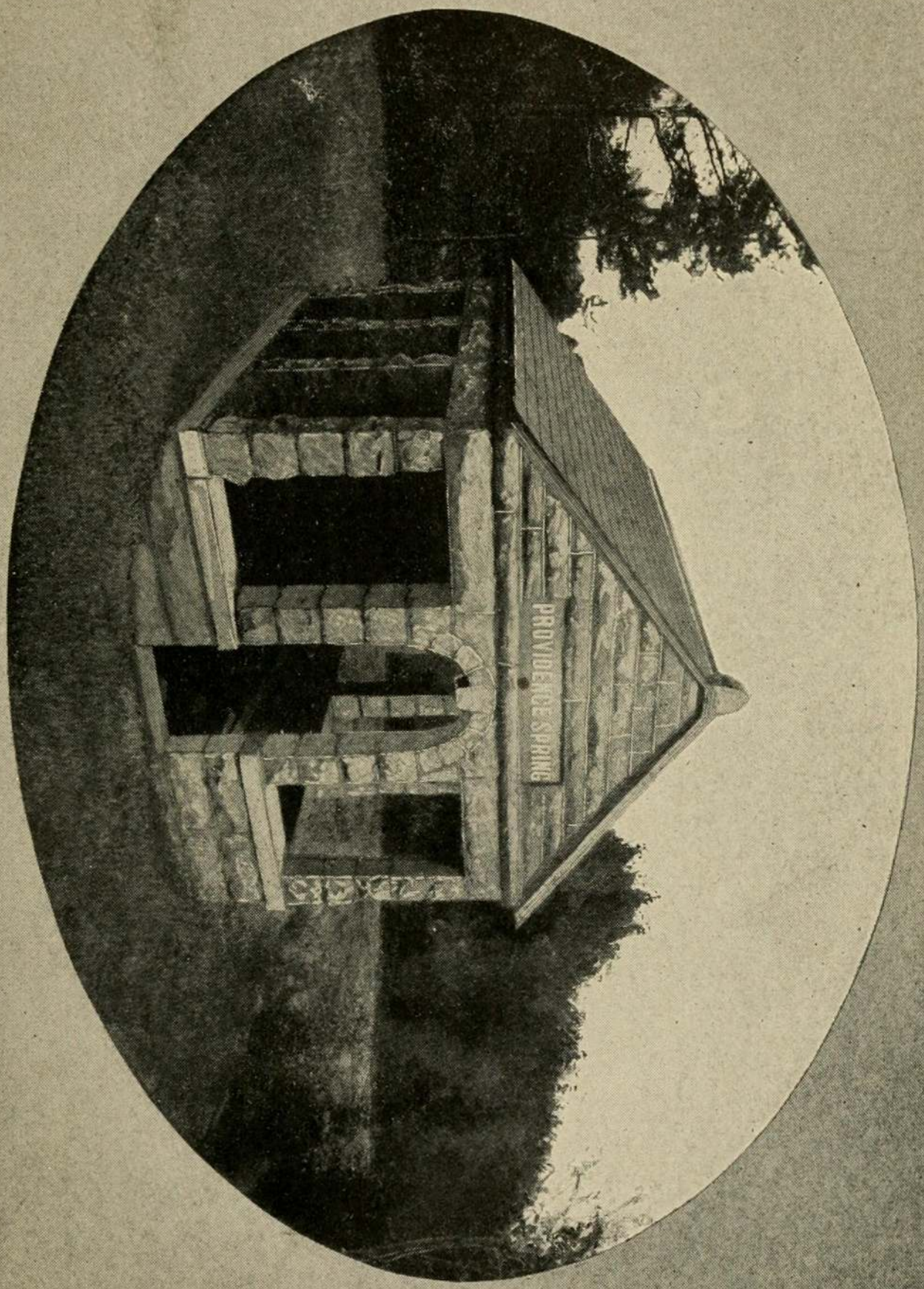
The first duty of the morning was to go to the creek and bathe the face and hands and feet, then prepare and eat breakfast. After breakfast we would select a spot where we could sit on the ground, take off our clothes and kill the lice which had been annoying us more or less through the night. Pardon the word. I might have called them vermin, but that is not expressive enough. They were just lice, great big ones with gray sides and a dark line the entire length of the back. A full-grown one was about as large as a flax seed. A good kill for a morning was fifty. They were very busy during the night, but toward morning they would secrete themselves in the seams of the garments, their preference being woolen goods. The process of killing was to take the shirt, turn it inside out, begin at one end of the seam and kill one at a time by crushing the "varmint" between the thumb nails. The killing lasted about an hour every morning, and woe be to the man who neglected it for a single day. He would pay dearly for it before the next morning. This was called

“lousing.” It may seem like exaggeration when I say that I have seen the coat of a man too lazy to “louse,” so covered with these creeping, crawling things that there wasn’t a square inch of space on the outside where there was not a louse. What the inside might have been I had no desire to see. It was considered a breach of etiquette to neglect this important duty, and he who would not do it was put out of his mess.

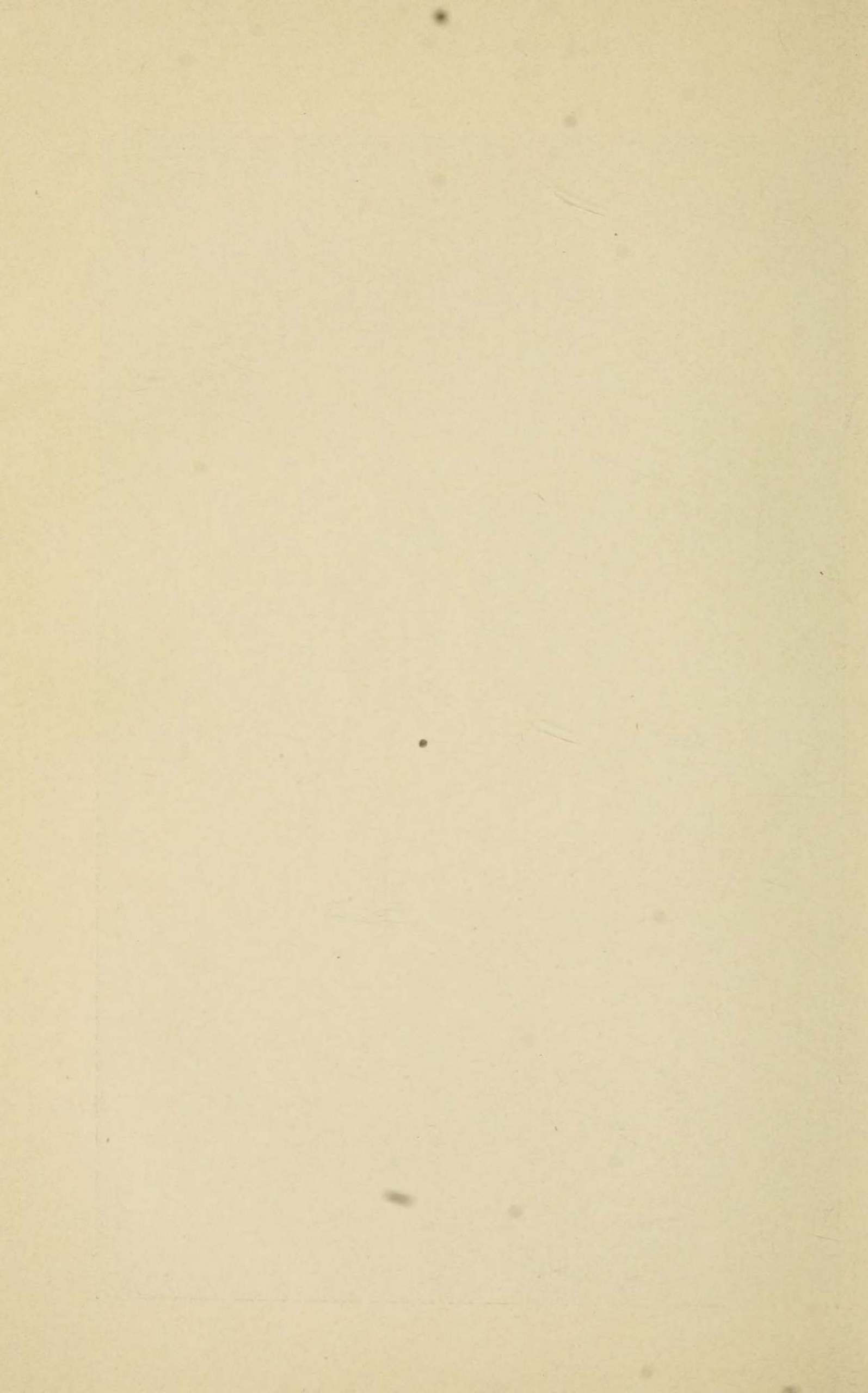
I shall always remember with gratitude a man from Pennsylvania who said to me the first day, “You will soon have a tired, languid feeling and want to lie around and sleep. Don’t do it, exercise; get up and walk and shake off your drowsiness.” I followed that advice, and walked a great deal up and down the hill, up to the north end and back to the south end.

Smoking was indulged in by those who could afford it. The tobacco used was nearly all plug. It was first chewed, then dried in the sun and afterward smoked. I don’t know as to the quality of the smoke, as I did not use the weed, but it seemed a source of comfort to those who did.

We had a great many breweries in the prison—in fact, they were a sort of brewery and saloon combined, for each one sold his

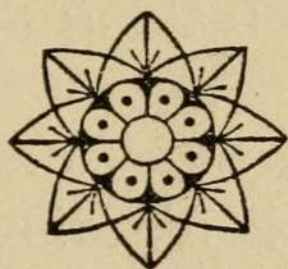


Providence Spring as it appears today.





own product. To start one of these establishments one had first to secure a pail or tub into which he would put a quantity of cornmeal, fill up the tub with water and add some sassafras bark. As soon as the meal soured and the liquid fermented the proprietor would go out on the street, find a stand, seat himself behind his tub of beer and cry, "Who wants a glass of this nice sassafras beer; only ten cents a glass?" I never knew of anyone becoming intoxicated with this beer, perhaps because he could not afford more than one glass at a time.



## MORALS.

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The feeling I had when I entered the prison was that I should be among my friends, and that as we were all in the same trouble there would be a bond of sympathy—but alas! I did not reckon with the frailties of human nature. Instead of our common trouble making us sympathetic, it tended to make us selfish, desperately so. Many who at home and in camp were cheerful and companionable, after being in prison for a time, became morose and irritable. Many who were generous at home, as prisoners were penurious. Again, men who never used an oath, especially in the company of others, became profane. Men seemed to vie with each other in making their profanity terrible.

I remember one incident. A young fellow was trying to cook his dinner. He couldn't make the fuel burn, so he gave way to a fit of swearing. The fire blazed up for a short time and then went out. Then he had another fit. He would jump up and down, pouring out oaths like water. Finally he had a desperate attack, and after dancing and swearing for a

while, he kicked over his dish and jumped on the fire. He cursed the fire, the fuel, the cornmeal, the Southern Confederacy and everything he could think of. After a while he cooled off.

Not only would men swear at trifles, but they would steal. One man shocked me by telling me he had stolen a tin cup. I had known him for years and at home he was a good Methodist. I never laid it up against him, and I think, under the circumstances, the good Lord forgave him.

If prison life had such an effect upon men of good moral character, what did it do to those who were inclined to be bad? It simply made them desperate. There were men in there who had enlisted merely to get money without working. It was as natural for them to steal as it is for a fish to swim.

After a while these men got together. The toughest of them occupied the southwest corner of the prison, a space about 100 feet square. This was known as the "raiders' corner." These men were called raiders for the reason that when the rest of the prison was asleep, they went forth under the cover of night to pillage. They would creep over the bridge, climb the hill, steal along through the

narrow walks and when they saw anything that they could get their hands upon would grab it and run. They would often awaken someone, who would jump up and cry "raider," then all who heard would jump up and run after him. If they caught him they would keep him until morning, take him and shave off one-half his hair and one-half his beard if he had any, then buck and gag him and let him sit in the sun and think about it.

Bucking is done by having the victim sit on the ground, then put a stick back of both knees and in front of both arms at the elbows, then bring the hands together over the knees and tie them securely.

To gag a person they put a stick a little larger than a lead pencil in the mouth, tie a string to each end of the stick and tie the strings together back of the head.

These punishments sufficed for a while, but in time the raiders got either too shrewd to be caught or too bold to be scared by such slight things. They finally became so bold that they pursued their vocation in broad daylight, and when a fresh lot of prisoners were brought in they were on hand in the crowd to receive them. When the unsuspecting displayed their money they would crowd around them

and in a short time money and raiders were missing. They would sometimes follow one who had money and for some pretense would knock him down, and in the scuffle they would get the money.



## VIGILANCE COMMITTEE.

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In July matters were getting into such a state that no one was safe. We then organized a vigilance committee of a hundred or more members, who began an investigation which brought to light a terrible state of affairs. Men were being murdered and buried in the tents of the raiders.

The raiders were hunted out and arrested until about a hundred of them were in the hands of the committee. They were taken outside and six of the leaders were taken from the group. A judge was appointed; attorneys selected (we had many lawyers among us); a court organized. These six were regularly tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. The authorities provided material for a gallows, which our men built and erected just inside the south gate, and upon it the six doomed men paid the penalty of their crimes. Never shall I forget the sight of those six men, standing there trembling when at the given signal the drop fell and all dropped. One man broke the rope, but the platform was again adjusted,

and he was hanged beside his fellows in spite of his entreaties.

As these men were brought in under guard, one big fellow broke away and ran to the swamp and through it, but was caught as he was coming out on the north side and hustled back to the scaffold. He was taken past where I was sitting. He had a desperate look on his face. He dreaded to die, but there was no escape.

The hanging brought about a better state of affairs than had existed before. A record of the court's proceedings was kept and was forwarded to Washington, where it was approved by the Government.



## DISEASES AND DEATH.

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The two diseases most prevalent were chronic diarrhoea and scurvy; the first caused largely by exposure, and by the diet of coarse, half-cooked cornmeal; the latter by a lack of vegetable food. No potatoes or vegetables of any kind were ever issued in Andersonville while I was there.

Tuberculosis carried off a great many. When a person was attacked with any of these diseases he was almost sure to go, or if he managed to pull through until released, in nearly all cases the disease remained with him until death came to his rescue.

It is safe to say that there were 10,000 sick men in the prison all through the months of July, August and September, so that when in September they took out most of those who could walk to the station, which was a half mile from the gate, it left thousands of men absolutely unable to care for themselves. Then the authorities brought in lumber and erected five sheds, each one about fifty feet long and twelve feet wide. These consisted of a frame eight feet high, above which was a roof. There



were two floors in each of these; the first floor eighteen inches from the ground and the second three feet above the first. Into these we carried these helpless fellows and laid them close together.

These sheds were divided into wards, each ward containing sixty men. I acted for a time as ward-master in some of these until I was taken sick and was obliged to go away and stay in a mud shanty which had been deserted. It was the duty of the ward master to direct and assist the nurses in drawing rations and distributing to the sick and to do all that he could to relieve their suffering until death came.

Every morning several dead would be taken from each ward, and others quickly filled the places made vacant. When a man was about to die, his name, company and regiment were written upon a small slip of paper—though paper was very scarce—to be tied to one of his toes when he was carried out. How many of these papers remained with the bodies I am unable to say, but I am sure that many were lost in the rough handling which the bodies received as they were thrown in and out of the wagon. Just outside the gate a clerk was stationed, whose business it was to record the

names of the unfortunates and their companies. It was after passing him that the bodies received the rough treatment. Hundreds of them must have been buried under the wrong names. How could it have been otherwise.

The bodies were buried in trenches, without coffins and many times without clothing or even a blanket to cover them. The trenches were seven feet wide, from three to four feet deep, and long enough to hold the deaths of one day. (The greatest number of deaths in one day was 137). At the head of each one was a board bearing the name, rank, regiment and company of the one supposed to be there. These boards have since been replaced by marble slabs furnished by our government.

## HOW TOM HELPED ME OUT WHEN I WAS RELEASED.

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When I was taken sick, I found that all my mess of fifteen had left the old place and had either died or gone out. As I lay in the mud shanty one evening about sunset, I was greatly surprised at seeing Tom coming toward me. He came near and spoke to me. "By George, Lyon, I am sorry to see you in this fix!" We talked a short time, and he said, "I know where I can get you a cake if you have any money." I gave him a quarter, and he went away. After a while he came back, bringing a ginger cake three or four inches square. The next day he came over again. Presently he said:

"Lyon, I'm going out tomorrow night."

"I am glad you are so fortunate, Tom." He looked at me in a peculiar way, and then said:

"I want you to go with me."

"Oh, I can't walk to the station."

"Well, I can help you. You be ready tomorrow night just after dark, and I'll be here."

True to his word, just after dark he made his appearance. He helped me to my feet, put his arm around me and together we went down

the old hill and crossed the bridge for the last time. Tom helped me over to the station. We were together in two other prisons for two months after leaving Andersonville, and Tom stood by me like a brother. When I could not cook my food, he cooked it for me. I think I owe my release to the kindness of Tom, the boy for whom I carried water when he was sick, and this is the way he paid me. It pays sometimes to be a "fool."



## A BACKWARD GLANCE.

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Let us pause here for one last look at this place where we have spent so many terrible days, days never to be forgotten, days which tried men's souls. Is it possible that, after having so many of our comrades carried out, dead, that we are going to be released? This was the hope that was held out to us, but, alas! to how many it was only a false hope.

That picture remains with me to this day. There stands the stockade with the sentries looking over the top of it. I can hear them calling in a clear, ringing voice, "Post No. 29; nine o'clock and all's well!" I see those starving thousands. I see their sunken cheeks, their staring, glassy eyes. I hear the death rattle. I hear that boy, as he catches for breath, whisper, "I wish I could see my mother. Mother! Mother! Will she not come soon?" The whisper dies away, and he sinks to rest with his last thought about his mother. I see filth and rags and vermin; that hard ground, every foot of which has been trampled and baked until it is as hard as a rock. Some are left. Will any of them get out? The one bright

spot is Providence Spring. I can hear the water as it flows trickling down the hillside to be lost in the sluggish stream of the swamp. Is it possible that we are really going out? The huge gate opens, and that motley crowd of crippled, starving, ragged men moves slowly out. Then we think of that great army buried there; how many there were we did not know at the time.

With Tom's help I was enabled to reach the station. As we were waiting for the train a boy came along selling biscuits. I asked him how he would trade his biscuits for buttons. He would give a biscuit for a button, so I gave him five buttons for five biscuits. These served me as lunch for the journey. It's a wonder they did not end my mortal existence, for they were as solid as flour and water could make them. We finally boarded the train, which was made up of box cars. This was the last day of September. We reached Savannah the next evening. As we pulled into the city I remember passing a large brick residence where I could see a gentleman sitting in a well lighted, well furnished room. I am afraid I envied him; at least it was easy to make comparisons by contrast.

## IN PRISON AT SAVANNAH.

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The authorities had told us all along that we were to be exchanged and sent home. Well, we were exchanged, and many were sent home, but it was to their long home, for we were taken from the cars and hurried into another stockade in the outer edge of the city.

We were quite well treated, compared with what we had been at Andersonville; it was a very comfortable place, clean and plenty of good water, and much better food than we had been having. It was rumored that the loyal citizens (of whom I was told there were many) used their influence in our behalf. It may have been a stroke of policy, as Sherman was at Atlanta on his march to the sea.

We were kept in Savannah but thirteen days, when we were again hustled into the cars and taken we knew not whither until we arrived at Millen, another prison, seventy miles northwest from Savannah.

## MILLEN PRISON.

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A large field was here fenced in with a stockade, but it was new and clean, and through it flowed a beautiful stream of pure water. Much timber had been left on the ground, so that we had plenty of wood for cooking our food. We also received a few sweet potatoes each day. These I ate without cooking. The scurvy had so affected my jaws that I could with difficulty open my mouth just enough to put the tip of my index finger between my front teeth.

After a few days, Tom with two other comrades made a dug-out and covered it with an old blanket which I had bought with a part of the money received for my boots. This dug-out was a square hole long enough for a man to stretch himself in and wide enough for four of us to lie side by side, and it was eighteen inches deep. We covered the bottom with pine needles.

The weather was getting cool. The nights, which in that country are cool even in August, were now cold. I remember getting up one morning in October and seeing the ground covered with a heavy white frost. I bought a

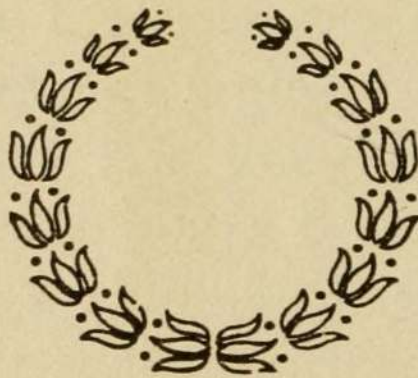


coat just before leaving Andersonville, but some one stole it from me at Savannah. I felt the need of it at this time more than during the warm weather.

We had become very much emaciated; my weight, which varies from 150 to 180, was then just about 100. I became so weak that I had to try two or three times to get on my feet, and then stand for some time to get my balance before venturing to walk. I just shut my teeth and vowed that I would not die there, but many a less fortunate comrade chilled to death in that land of the sunny South. I think the most trying experience I ever had with the weather was during a rainy day in November. My clothes were wet through. There was no fire where I could warm myself; no way to escape the wind, and I couldn't exercise enough to keep warm. Since that day I have had a great deal of sympathy for the poor dumb animals who are without shelter in stormy weather.

My clothing was very much worn. The woolen shirt which had served me so long was nearly gone, the sleeves having worn off to the elbows. My boots were gone, leaving my feet exposed to the cold. My old hat was gone; I had gotten a cap from a dead comrade, which

was too small. One comforting thought remained. My clothing harmonized with my surroundings.





As the Author looked on leaving Andersonville.

## LEAVING MILLEN PRISON.

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One Sunday morning in November a Confederate officer came into the prison and said that he would take the names of the sick and wounded preparatory to an exchange. Several of my comrades came to me and urged me to go and have my name taken, but I told them I didn't believe it would amount to anything. They had lied to us so many times that we couldn't believe them. However, after a while I consented and went out where the officer was. I waited near by, and when he came along I was standing leaning on a stick which I used as a cane. He looked at me and said, "Young man, what is the matter with you?" "Scurvy, I suppose." Turning to his clerk, he said, "Put his name down." I went back to my comrades, thinking that it was only a farce to make us feel good; but in about a week we were all called over to the gate, formed in line and marched out. They even had old wagons for some of us. I rode. We got over to the railroad about noon and waited for the train until

five o'clock. When it came in they said that there had been a storm on the ocean and our fleet had been wrecked, so they gave us something to eat and we stayed there until the morning, when we were all taken back to the prison. This had a bad effect upon many of the prisoners, and they gave up and died.

In a day or two we were called out again. The train came in as before, this time bringing a lot of their men who had been prisoners in the north. They looked well and hearty, and ready to go to the front. They filled up the cars from our ranks, but about twenty of us were unable to get in. The officers told us if we would promise to stay near the station they would not take us back to prison, and would put us on the cars the next day. We promised. There were some beautiful trees there, and we walked around and enjoyed the fresh air until dark, then lay down under the trees and slept until morning.

Just before dark a young fellow came around, and I asked him if he could get me some sweet potatoes. He said he would try. I had some fancy link buttons in my shirt which I offered him if he would bring me the potatoes. He brought me a quart of little ones, and I gave him the buttons. The next

day the train came in, bringing more of their men, and we succeeded in getting aboard.

Before we leave Millen I wish to say that as we were going from the prison to the train I saw piles of boxes filled with blankets and clothing. Upon inquiry I found that these had been sent there by our Sanitary Commission to make us comfortable, but they were not delivered to us, notwithstanding men were chilled to death while these comforts were just outside the prison stockade.

Just before dark the train moved out and the rain began to fall at the same time, and it followed us all night. We were crowded into cattle cars, open all round, with no roof, so that as we pulled into Savannah the next morning, which was Sunday, we were wet through and so chilled that we could hardly move. We were taken from the cars and marched through the city to the river. All along this route we saw baskets of rolls and sandwiches which the loyal people had sent to us, but the guards kept them from us. When we reached the river, there at the dock lay an old boat which had been used before the war for carrying cotton. Upon the dock stood a table upon which lay a large sheet of paper. We were each required to write our name upon

this paper. What the paper signified I did not know, and cared less. After signing the paper we passed on to the boat. When all were on board the old hulk swung out into the stream, the engine began its work, and we moved slowly down the stream. At intervals we passed the huge iron monsters that guarded the mouth of the river and the bay.

It was a dark, cloudy, chilly morning, and the mist was blown through the open sides of the boat. We huddled together and crowded around close to the boilers to keep warm.

The sergeant-major of our regiment was one of our number. He had been outside at Andersonville on parole of honor. The parole of honor was granted those prisoners who went out to work in the hospitals and cemetery. They took an oath that they would not go beyond a certain limit, and they were provided with extra rations and a comfortable place to sleep.

I was asked by the surgeon to go out and number the graves, but I was taking care of a sick comrade, who pleaded with me so piteously to remain with him that I refused to go.

While the sergeant-major was out on parole he managed to get some extra clothing from the sanitary commission boxes, and when he

saw me on the boat, and that I was chilled through, he gave me a new shirt, which I put on under my old one.





## FIRST SIGHT OF THE OLD FLAG.

About noon there was quite a stir forward; every one was looking out to sea; some one had made a discovery. Away in the distance was a vessel, and above the vessel floated a flag. At first we could not make it out. Soon some one said, "It's the *old flag!*" Yes, sure enough, there, like the morning star after a stormy night, stood the old flag. As we drew nearer, and could see "its broad stripes and bright stars," it was like a glorious sunburst after a storm. Never before did that emblem mean so much to us. Never did it have a more soulful greeting. Owing to our weakened condition our demonstrations were not very loud, but if we could have cheered as we felt the shout would have been heard around the world. Some shouted, some laughed, some even tried to dance. One poor fellow over six feet tall sat down and cried like a child. Some one said to him, "Sam, what are you crying for?" "Oh," he said, "they'll cheat us out of it yet." For my part, I felt a good deal as Sam did. It was too good to be true. All I could do was to stand and look at the stars

and stripes. No flag ever looked as that did. It meant everything to me. I knew if I could just get under its folds I should be safe. I could write to my mother, and perhaps I might go to see her. The thoughts that filled our minds and hearts during those three or four hours we lay there in sight of freedom would fill a large volume.

When we reached a point about a quarter of a mile from the flagship, we dropped anchor. A small boat carrying a white flag was lowered; three or four officers got in and were rowed over, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon the anchor was lifted and we pulled up alongside of that great vessel. As soon as we began to move toward the flag our hopes began to rise, and when the plank was thrown across to us, and a rope stretched to which we might cling, our hearts were full to overflowing. When it came my turn to walk that plank I stepped very cautiously, for the plank was wet and slippery, and I was barefoot. I clung to the rope with both hands, slipping one foot along and then bringing the other up to it, until both feet touched the dry plank of the deck of that vessel which carried the flag. There I stopped for an instant, and my whole soul went out in thankfulness to the great,

kind Father, who had kept me to that hour. It thrilled my whole being. I said to myself, "Thank God, we are safe!" My whole soul went out in a song of praise. My thoughts and feelings were beyond the power of the human tongue to express. If I am so unspeakably happy as to reach heaven when this life of toil and care and disappointment is past, I am sure I shall feel no greater joy than I did at that moment. Once on God's boat (for so we felt it to be), our next thought was for something to eat. We were formed in lines along the lower deck, and, though we had to sit flat on the hard deck, we were happy, for we were warm, and we knew we should get something to eat. After waiting for some time (it seemed hours), we were served with fresh hardtack and boiled pork, and great tin cups of delicious chocolate. Never was a feast more heartily enjoyed. The feeling would come over me, "I must be careful and not eat too much," and the next instant, "I'll eat what I want of it, if it kills me." I ate eleven hardtack and half a pound of pork, and drank all the chocolate I wanted. After supper we stretched ourselves on the deck and slept, lying on our sides until the aching of our bones would arouse us. When we

awoke we thought we were again in prison, but when we heard the engine and the splash of the great wheels we realized that we were free.

Then I said, "Thank God, we're safe!" and turned on the other side and went to sleep.

The next day we were taken below, where there were mattresses filled with straw and covered with blankets. There we could lie and rest. What a wonderful change—plenty to eat and good beds. Before going below we were stripped of our rags—which were thrown overboard—put into large bath-tubs with plenty of soap and scrubbed. I had my hair clipped and was shaved. Then we were given new clothes. What a transformation—from ragged, filthy, despairing creatures to well clothed men.

## HOMeward BOUND.

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The exhilarating breeze that swept over the broad old ocean was like a tonic. This, together with the all-absorbing thought that we were really homeward bound, revived us, and we felt that we might once more be men.

When I looked at the sailors and the officers of the vessel, it seemed to me that I had never before seen such noble specimens of manhood. I felt like a child beside those great, strong fellows.

In just a week from the day we left Savannah we steamed into the harbor at Annapolis, Maryland. It was a bright, beautiful Sunday morning. We were taken from the ship to the hospital. There my clothes were taken off again and I was put to bed. Everything was very clean, and to be put into a real bed with clean, white sheets was beyond my highest hopes. How restful! It seemed like a dream. I had been in bed but a short time when a lady came in carrying a tray upon which was a bowl of chicken broth and other delicacies. It almost took away what little sense I had, and I hardly knew whether to

embrace that angel or take the broth, but I did the latter. The vision of the lady remains till this day—it had been so long since I had seen one. Truly I had reached God's country.

We stayed in Annapolis but a short time, when we were put on board a boat and taken to Baltimore and put in Jarvis Hospital. From here I wrote my mother in Minnesota and my brother in Columbus, Ohio.

After remaining in Jarvis Hospital about three weeks, I secured a furlough and came on to Columbus to see my brother. I arrived at his house in the morning while he was out, but soon made myself known to his wife, whom I had never before seen. It was eight in the morning. She said, "We have had breakfast, but I'll soon have some ready for you." Such a breakfast—porterhouse steak cooked to the queen's taste, buckwheat cakes and honey, coffee with cream and sugar, etc. Well, I took everything in sight. As she put the last cake on the griddle, she said to me, "Will you have some more?" I looked up in a peculiar way, she says, and replied very slowly, "I guess this will do." This was the first meal I had eaten at a family table in about ten months. Then followed days of feasting. I could not stand the journey to Minnesota to

see my mother, but I visited her sister in northern Ohio, and spent a few days in her home. She gave me the freedom of the house, and I used the privilege to its utmost. I went to the pantry for the good things, to the cellar for apples and cider, and to the garret for hickory nuts, all of which I despatched with alacrity.

Eating occupied my waking hours and crowded my sleep with dreams. I would sit at the table and eat until my stomach could take no more; but when I stopped eating I was just as hungry as when I began. This ravenous appetite remained with me for months.

I afterward became surgeon's clerk in Seminary Hospital at Columbus, Ohio, and I remember that when released prisoners were brought to the hospital many of their cases were diagnosed as typhus hunger.

## STATISTICS.

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Andersonville prison was opened in February, 1864, and was in active operation until December, 1864. In these ten months more than 35,000 Union soldiers were confined there. The actual number present at one time was 33,114, on Aug. 8, 1864.

The total number of deaths in Andersonville according to the records of the cemetery was 13,710.

The number of deaths in five months was as follows:

June .....	1,202
July .....	1,742
August .....	3,076
September .....	2,790
October .....	1,595

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Total.....10,405

An average of nearly sixty-eight daily for 153 days. The largest number of deaths reported in one day was 137.

In the month of October one out of every two died. By comparing this last statement with the number of deaths for October, it will



be seen that there were only 3,190 prisoners in the stockade in that month, the others having died or been removed to other prisons or exchanged.

Many of those who were moved died before reaching home, and thousands more died shortly after arriving home.

A conservative estimate is that two-thirds of the 35,000 men confined in Andersonville prison died within two years from the day the prison was opened, as a result of exposure and disease consequent upon a lack of food and the very poor quality of the food furnished, and lack of fuel with which to cook what little food was received.

I do not wish to be understood as saying or intimating that one-third of this great army of men recovered from the effects of this hard life; far from it. In my opinion, no man ever stayed three months in one of those Southern prisons, especially the one at Andersonville, who afterwards ever became so good a man physically as when he went in.

It is true that homesickness was the cause of many deaths in Andersonville. Many people seem to treat this lightly, as if it were lack of courage or loyalty. If it were the latter, they could have saved themselves, for the Confederate officers came into the prison and

offered us plenty to eat, good clothes and many other good things if we would go out and enlist in the Southern army. A few, I must confess, accepted, but they were not of the homesick kind. The great majority said, "No. We will stay here and rot. We will stay until the maggots eat the flesh from our bones before we will be disloyal to the old flag."

To the representations of the Southern officers that our government had forsaken us, that our officers were making no efforts to release us, we turned a deaf ear. We knew that time would reveal the cause for the seeming slowness on the part of our government to aid us. And so thousands of men who had been reared in good homes, who had been educated in our best colleges and universities, stayed and dragged out a miserable existence until the last ray of hope left them and they lay down upon the hard ground and their spirits passed into the presence of the unerring Judge of all the earth.

I often think what a wonderfully delightful change it must have been to go out of that place of misery into the beautiful world where they never say "I am sick," and where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

## HOMESICKNESS.

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Yes, these men were homesick. Is it any wonder?

Suppose you try living as they did. If you can organize a party of twenty young men, find some place where there is no one but yourselves, dress in the worst old clothes you can find, each take a tin cup and a tin plate, allow a pint of coarse cornmeal and a piece of bacon two inches long and an inch square to each one for a day's ration, and poor wood enough to half cook this food; you must have no shelter from sun or rain, no blankets for covering at night, no chairs, no lights at night but the moon and stars, no good, clear water to drink, no coffee, tea or substitutes for these. You must not in any way communicate with others. There must not be a blade of grass or a flower. Try this for one month. Then, if you could add to these things the thought that there is no chance for release at the end of the month, don't you think you would be homesick? Why, everyone would be a raving maniac.

It was that these men had sworn to defend their country and to be loyal and true which

kept them from going mad. Had they been doing it simply to make money they could not have endured it, but it was that loyal fire burning in their souls which kept up their spirits.

At one time a Yankee deserter, who was an overseer in a shoe shop which furnished shoes for the Southern army, came into Andersonville and undertook to persuade some of the prisoners to go and work in his shop. As soon as it was generally known what he was doing he was treated to a prison hair cut and shave. Several men took him and shaved off one-half his hair and beard and kicked him outside.

Many a time I have stood on the brow of the hill overlooking the swamp, and looked down into that valley of death, and as I saw the dead and dying along the banks of that little stream, and saw the sick and the lame crawling up the hill, and heard the cries of the dying and the curses of the great crowd of starving, restless men, I said no man who has any humanity left in him could stand and see this state of things and not lift his hand to stay the ravages of death and misery. One day some men came in who I was told were doctors, and as they crossed the swamp they put their hands over their mouths and noses to keep out the stench. I thought what if they

had to live in it! I went up to one of them and asked him for medicine for a sick comrade. His answer was, "The medicine is all locked up and we can't get it." My thoughts may not always have been such as a Christian should entertain, but I thought if there is no hell there should be one for the men who might relieve this suffering and yet refuse.

To me there is no grander sight than an army of well-fed, well-uniformed, well-drilled men, and no more pitiable one than these same men starved into mere walking skeletons, with the ever accompanying hopeless, longing, yearning look, which tells more than words how they are thinking of the loved ones so far away, whom they may never see. But I can't tell it. There are no words which express it. It will never be known until the books are opened in that other world.

## THE CEMETERY.

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The cemetery was located about half a mile northeast of the stockade. Men were kept busy digging trenches in which to bury the dead. These trenches were seven feet wide, from three to four feet deep and long enough to receive those who died in a day.

At first the bodies were covered with boards, but when men were dying at the rate of a hundred or more every day the boards were dispensed with and the bodies were laid in close together and covered with earth. At the head of each body a board was driven into the ground upon which was placed the name of the person, together with his company and regiment.

After the war closed the government replaced these boards with marble slabs. Then it purchased the grounds, covering about twenty-five acres.

\*“These grounds are now surrounded by a substantial ivy-covered brick wall; the grounds

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\*I here quote from a booklet, entitled, “Andersonville and How to Reach It,” published by the Georgia Central Railroad.

are shaded with beautiful oaks and ornamental trees, transforming it into an ideal city of the dead.

“On every Memorial Day impressive ceremonies are conducted here under the auspices of the Posts of the Department of Georgia, G. A. R., attended by a large concourse of people.”

It is very fitting that those for whom these brave fellows gave up their lives under such terrible circumstances should make their last resting place beautiful.

I have often thought that I should like to be there when those graves open and the dead come forth. I should like to look into their faces and grasp their hands.

Sleep on, brave comrades, sleep,  
Where Southern pines their vigils keep  
Above your graves.  
This sacred soil which holds your clay  
Shall tremble in the judgment day  
With peans loud;  
That mighty voice which wakes the dead  
Will call you from your lowly bed,  
And say, “Well done!”

## SOME FIGURES.

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Let us look at some figures taken from the official records.

Number of Union men confined in Confederate prisons . . . . . 94,073

Number of deaths in Confederate prisons during the war . . . . . 36,401

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57,672

Number of prisoners who died shortly after being exchanged . . . . . 23,599

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Number of prisoners who finally reached home and lived . . . . . 34,073

Making a total of those who either died in these prisons or shortly after their release of 60,000.

Of the 23,599 mentioned, 11,599 died before reaching home after having been exchanged, and 12,000 soon after reaching home.

We see here that the number of men whose deaths were traceable directly to the barbarous treatment which they received in Confederate prisons reaches the appalling figures of 60,000, an army two and one-third times as large as



General Lee surrendered to General Grant at the close of the war.

Let us compare the above figures with those covering the number of deaths in Northern prisons.

Number confined in Federal or Northern prisons .....	227,570
Number of deaths in Federal or Northern prisons .....	30,152

Comparing these two sets of figures, we see that the mortality was nearly seven times as great in the Confederate as in the Federal prisons.

The universal testimony of men who saw the Confederate prisoner after his release from the Northern prison is that he was in as good condition to take his place in the army as before his capture, and in many instances better. Very few of our men who had spent any time in Confederate prisons ever went back to their regiments.

## THE CONTRAST.

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When men go into battle it is with high hopes of victory. Everything which can be done to inspire and encourage loyalty and bravery is used to the best advantage. The flag is unfurled, the bands play their most stirring music, the commanding officers speak encouraging words.

Lord Nelson, in a short speech to his men just before the battle of Trafalgar, said, "England expects every man to do his duty." And so the patriot feels, "My country is looking at me and expects me to do my best." No one but cowards and traitors will falter at such a time as this. Men often halt and tremble when going into battle, until the first volley has been fired, then they lose sight of everything but the flag and the enemy, and rush forward into the thickest of the fight.

The roar of the cannon, the rattle of the musketry and the clashing of the sabres all fire these men with the fury of demons.

To be overcome at such a time and compelled to surrender is humiliating. It is exasperating. The fury of the battle is over for

them, and the depressing sense of defeat takes possession of them. Sometimes, as they are marched away under the enemy's flag to be penned up like cattle, they hear the shouts of victory from those who a short time before were their comrades, but it is not for them.

The enemy is exultant. He laughs at these brave fellows, who cannot answer. "It is not theirs to make reply."

Many of them are like caged lions. They walk up and down their narrow quarters. They grow restive and spend their energy in berating their keepers, and in time become maniacs.

The prisoner has nothing to inspire or encourage him. The music is gone. There are no words from his officers to help him, nothing but the long, monotonous days and dreary, sleepless nights. His thoughts are of the loved ones far away. He dreams of home and its comforts only to awake to scenes of misery and hunger. He goes over and over again the scenes of his boyhood days. He thinks of his father and his mother, of his wife and his children, or of that one to whom he pledged his troth. These thoughts crowd thick and fast upon one another, until his brain is on fire; he grows faint and rushes away to other

scenes to forget. If he could only stop thinking!

I well remember one comrade who had lived in our family at home. He was married and had one child, a beautiful girl of five years. To see the anguish written on that man's face was most pathetic. It would not do for me to sympathize with him. I must divert his mind, if possible; but my efforts were vain. His poor heart was breaking, and one morning we closed his weary eyes.

Another comrade by the name of Knapp, who had been a merchant, said to me one day that he thought he could sell some stuff if he only had some money to start on. I had a little money, and I bought some beans and had them cooked, and Knapp set up his stand. It was not long before he had a customer. A young fellow came up, ordered a plate of beans, ate them, and then said he had no money to pay for them. Knapp was very much chagrined at being taken in, but we had a good laugh over it, which perhaps did us as much good as the money would have done.

I felt very sorry for Knapp. He had plenty of money at home. It was not necessary for him to enlist. He had always lived well, had always made money, and was accustomed to

having what money would buy. In September he went out with a company who the authorities said were to be taken to Savannah to be exchanged, but instead they were taken to Florence, a prison near Charleston, S. C., where he died.

Many of our fiercest battles were fought in a very short time, no one body of men being under fire more than an hour at one time. Not so with the battle at Andersonville. When once the battle opened it was on for life with many. No dropping out for rest. No flanking movements to get into better position. Every morning the sun came up blazing like a ball of fire. There was no escaping the sharp thrusts of his dagger-like rays, which penetrated every nook and corner of our prison pen. The stench from the swamp was ever present. The groans of the sick and wounded and the death rattle of the dying were to be heard on every hand.

## SOUTHERN TESTIMONY.

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I will here quote from Smith's *Knapsack*, published in Toledo, O., in 1884: "Dr. Joseph Jones, Professor of Medical Chemistry in the Medical College of Georgia, at Augusta, who made a thorough inspection of Andersonville under instructions from the Surgeon-General of the so-called Confederate States, reported that the prisoners were so affected with scurvy, caused by want of vegetables, or of nutritious food, that their limbs were ready to drop from their bodies. I have often seen maggots scooped out by the handful from the sores of those thus afflicted. Upon first attack of scurvy, an enervating weakness creeps over the body, which is followed by a disinclination to exercise; the legs become swollen and weak, and often the cords contract, drawing the legs out of shape; the color of the skin becomes black and blue, and retains pressure from the fingers as putty will. This is frequently followed by dropsical symptoms, swelling of the feet and legs. If the patient was subject to trouble with the throat, the scurvy would attack that part; if afflicted with or predisposed

to any disease, there it would seize and develop, or aggravate it in the system. In cases of this character, persons ignorant of their condition would often try to do something for a disease which in reality should have been treated as scurvy, and could have been prevented or cured by proper food. A common form of scurvy was in the mouth; this was the most horrible in its final results of any that afflicted the prisoners. The teeth would become loosened, the gums rot away, and swallowing the saliva thus tainted with the poison of scurvy would produce scurvy in the bowels, which often took the form of chronic diarrhœa. Sometimes bloating of the bowels would take place, followed by terrible suffering and death. Often scurvy sores would gangrene, and maggots would crawl from the flesh, and pass from the bowels, and, under the tortures of a slow death, the body would become, in part, putrid before death. Persons wasted to mere skeletons by starvation and disease, unable to help themselves, died by inches, the most terrible of deaths.

“There was a portion of the camp, forming a kind of swamp, on the north side of the branch, as it was termed, which ran through the center of the camp. This swamp was

used as a sink by the prisoners, and was putrid with the corruption of human offal. The stench polluted and pervaded the whole atmosphere of the prison. When the prisoner was fortunate enough to get a breath of air outside the prison, it seemed like a new development of creation, so different was it from the poisonous vapors inhaled from this cess-pool with which the prison air was reeking. During the day the sun drank up the most noxious of these vapors, but in the night the terrible miasma and stench pervaded the atmosphere almost to suffocation. In the month of July it became apparent that unless something was done to abate the nuisance the whole camp would be swept away by some terrible disease engendered by it. Impelled by apprehension for the safety of themselves and the troops stationed around the camp on guard, the authorities of the prison furnished the necessary implements to the prisoners, who filled about half an acre of the worst of the sink with earth excavated from the hillside. The space thus filled in was occupied, almost to the verge of the sink, by the prisoners, gathered here for the conveniences of the place, and for obtaining water. Men reduced by starvation and disease would drag themselves



to this locality to lie down and die uncared for, almost unnoticed. I have seen forty and fifty men in a dying condition, who, with their little remaining strength, had dragged themselves to this place for its conveniences, and, unable to get back again, were exposed in the sun, often without food, until death relieved them of the burden of life.

“Frequently, on passing them, some were reduced to idiocy, and many, unable to articulate, would stretch forth their wasted hands in piteous supplication for food or water, or point to their lips, their glazed eyes presenting that staring fixedness which immediately precedes death. On some the flesh would be dropping from their bones with scurvy; in others little of humanity remained in the wasted forms but skin drawn over bones. Nothing ever before seen in a civilized country could give one an adequate idea of the physical condition to which disease, starvation and exposure reduced these men. It was only strange that men should retain life so long as to be reduced to the skeleton condition of the great mass who died in prison.”

This from a man appointed by the Southern Confederacy to inspect the prison. Can any one doubt the truth of his statement? He

has told it so well that I can add nothing except to verify his statement in every particular. He has drawn it mildly. I have seen all these things which he described. They were common occurrences, even the worst cases described.



## THE HOSPITAL,

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The hospital—a hospital only in name—was located just outside the stockade near the southeast corner. There were a few shelters, consisting of old blankets and pieces of tent cloth stretched upon posts. Others were made by setting up posts, connecting them at the top with poles and covering the whole with the branches of trees. These served as a partial protection from the sun, but did not keep out the rain. No beds or cots were furnished, and the inmates, no matter how sick they were, were obliged to lie on the ground with a block of wood or nothing for a pillow, and no blanket for a covering. When a comrade was taken to the hospital we said farewell, as we never expected to see him again, for no one was admitted until it was a pretty sure case of death. I do not remember a single case where one came back to the prison.

I quote from Hiram Buckingham, of the Sixteenth Connecticut, who was hospital steward: "When I first went into the prison," says Mr. Buckingham, "on the first of May, 1864, the hospital was inside the stockade, half of it

on one side of the stream that ran in our midst and half on the other side. The condition of things was horrible in the extreme. A single glimpse of things was enough to make a man sick. There were comparatively few patients then, scarcely over two hundred, a circumstance accounted for in two ways. In the first place, a man never went in and came out alive. The utter want of cleanliness, the pestilential air, the improper and miserable food and scanty medicines all combined to render the swift coming of death sure. Pieces of canvas only sheltered these poor sick and dying men from the rain and sun of a climate that would have been none too favorable for them under the best of circumstances. Their emaciated, pain-racked frames had no place to rest but upon the cold, hard ground, and in numberless instances their heads were pillowed upon nothing softer than a stick of wood.

“Added to these things, the sink was dug within a single rod of these men, which, of course, did not add to the purity of the air about them. It was enough of itself to make a man sick.”

The time when we could see the doctors was from 10 to 12 o'clock a. m. Early in the morning men would crawl and some would be carried over to the south gate, where the doctors

were supposed to come. They would be laid on the ground beside the path leading up from the bridge across the stream to the south gate; there they would lie in the hot sun for hours waiting for a chance, but many, like the one at the pool of Siloam, were pushed aside when the waters were troubled; and were obliged finally to crawl back to their place on the hill.

It was a most pitiful sight to see those poor fellows stretched upon the ground for hours without food or drink.

Let one of the Confederate surgeons who was on duty at the hospital speak. Surely he will not overdraw the picture.

Surgeon Reeves reported as follows: "I find the tents in bad condition, a great many leaking, and a great many of the patients lying on the ground and getting very wet when it rains; would most respectfully recommend that straw of some kind be secured for bedding, also some arrangement to raise them from the ground. Without a change in this respect, it will be impossible for me to practice with success."

No response was made to this, and still later another, Surgeon Pelot, uttered his protest with regard to diet: "The cornbread," he says, "received from the bakery, being made up without sifting, is wholly unfit for the sick,

and often, upon examination, the inner portion is found to be perfectly raw. The beef received by the patients does not amount to over two ounces per day; and for the past three or four days no flour has been issued to the sick. The bread cannot be eaten by many, for to do so would be to increase the disease of the bowels, from which a large majority are suffering, and it is therefore thrown away."

About the middle of August, Dr. Thornburg reported his patients in a "deplorable condition," some of them being without clothing of any kind. "In the first, second and third wards," he wrote, "we have no bunks, the patients being compelled to lie on the ground, many of them without blankets or any covering whatsoever. If there are any beds in 'Dixie,' it is hoped that they will be procured. We need straw badly, especially for the fifth ward. We have men in this ward who are a living mass of putrefaction, and cannot possibly be cured of their wounds unless we can make them more comfortable."

These words from their own surgeons, who were on the ground and who were comfortably clothed and well fed, and could form their opinions better than we who were in such sad plight, must convince the most skeptical that we were in a most pitiable condition.

## AFTER-THOUGHTS.

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When I was released, and finally reached God's country, I had many strange impressions. One was that every one walked so fast and looked so very strong and robust. If I attempted to walk fast I would fall headlong. I found myself constantly contrasting these strong men with those with whom I had so recently been associated, and even now, when I see a large gathering of people, I find myself again standing on the hill in Andersonville, surrounded by that immense crowd of ragged, naked, starving, dying men. The old scenes come back to me, and when I look over the figures showing how many were buried there, and when I see so many who are unable to perform the common duties of life, I feel like quoting a line from an old Methodist hymn, "I am a miracle of grace." Some say that we should forget it. There are some scenes which we can easily forget, but when a thing is burned into the brain and into every fibre of one's being, it is impossible to forget it. When I overwork, as we all do sometimes, my head feels as it did then, and that picture comes

before me like the painting of Dante's Inferno, and I am lost in wonder. I sometimes stop and think perhaps I have been dreaming all these years. Out of this furnace, "heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated," two factions of the American people were welded together in a Union which the whole world cannot again break asunder.

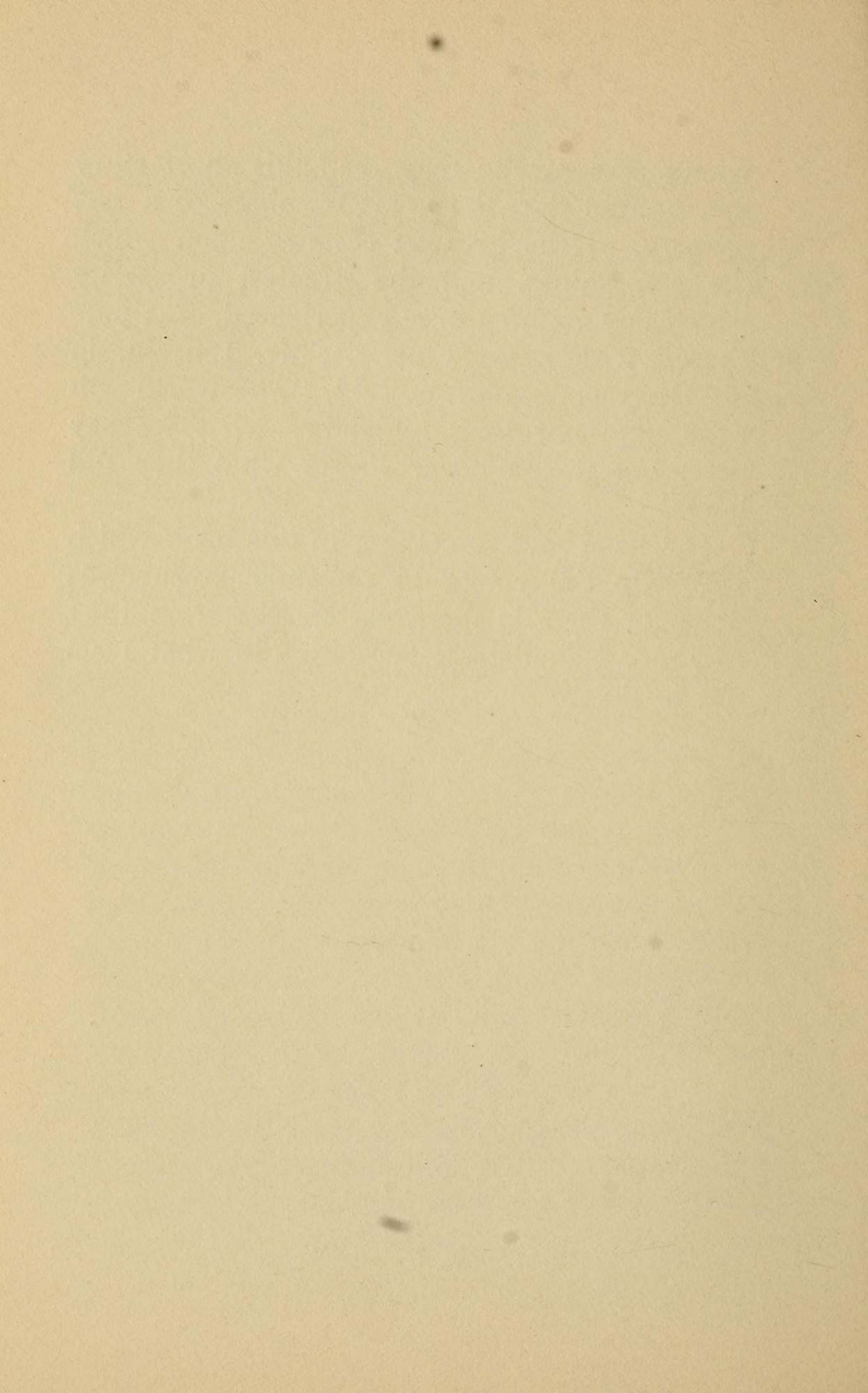
I do not cherish toward our Southern brethren any spirit of hatred. They did not know what they were doing. Their eyes were not opened. They saw men like trees walking, but they did not give the Northern men credit for having brains and nerves and sensibilities. They had all their lives been accustomed to treating the black man as if he were not human, and because the Northern man sympathized with him in his slavery and distress the leaders of the South looked upon the Northern soldiers with the same haughty contempt, and those under them partook of their spirit. Were we to go to war with the South today, there would be no Andersonville or Libby prisons. The people have seen a great light. They were simply mistaken and misguided.

In what I have written I have simply tried to show what men will do for the country they love; and to impress upon the minds of any



young person who may read this short story the thought that the great blessings of a free country, of the greatest country upon which the sun shines, and the greatest prosperity which any country ever experienced, was purchased with a great price. Mr. Lincoln, in his Gettysburg address, said, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

If I have said something in this book which will help the young to remember what was done for them in the great conflict from 1861 to 1865, I shall have succeeded in what I set out to do.







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