

PRISON-LIFE.

By B.S.Calef.

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RUINS OF THE CATHEDRAL AT CHARLESTON.

B. S. Calif.

PRISON-LIFE.

IT was during the fight of May 6, in the Virginia Wilderness, while taking an order to General Owen, whose command held an advanced position, immediately after the Second Corps had been flanked by Longstreet and compelled to fall back to the ground it occupied in the morning, that I was made a prisoner. Pushing as rapidly through the dense woods as it was possible to do on foot—for to ride was almost

out of the question—directed principally by the sound of musketry, which was rapidly increasing, upon rising a slight knoll I was greeted by the whiz of half a dozen musket-balls, all of which, most fortunately, passed overhead, and the requests to “Surrender,” “Come in here, Yank,” and others, the meaning of which could not be mistaken, some couched in terms more expressive than elegant. A look revealed a line of battle scarcely a rod from me, and that any attempt to retreat was certain death. My sword

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Scary! Sep 22 - .35

was taken from me, and I was hurried to the rear. The firing momentarily increased, and almost immediately afterward was continuous along the whole line through which I had just passed. After finding the provost marshal the guard turned me over to him. My name, rank, and position were noted down, after which a series of questions were asked as to the movements of our troops, etc., but finding me rather taciturn, I was soon left to my own reflections, which were not of the pleasantest. Stretched at the foot of a tree, under guard for the first time in my life, I tried to realize my position. It matters not under what circumstances a man is captured, he can but feel immensely disgusted with the prospect before him; and while consoling himself with the thought that it is one of the misfortunes of war, will immediately look around for an opportunity to "slope." None presented itself to me; but an individual did, as I lay cogitating the chances, with the query, "How much for them spurs, Mister, you won't want 'em no more?" I turned and saw a surly-looking officer, to whom—feeling the sarcasm of his remark and the necessity of having as much money as possible—I replied, "Ten dollars." He offered five, and, much as it was against my nature to compromise with a rebel, the bargain was closed. Here, in connection with my first sale, let me say that these men excel any Connecticut Yankee I ever met in driving a sharp bargain, and every prisoner is haunted from his entrance into until his exit from the Confederacy to know if he has not this or that article to sell or to trade. Knowing their peculiarity in this respect, I determined to make the most of it, and afterward, at Lynchburg, sold my watch, a common silver one, which would not run, for one hundred and fifty dollars. Staff officers could sell their buttons at the price of two dol-



JUST CAPTURED.

ars and a half each, and the gold lace from their trowers at corresponding rates. Fortunate are those who fall into such hands as permit them to sell, instead of robbing them of every thing they possess, as is most frequently the case.

Prisoners, both officers and men, continued to be brought in, until a sufficient number were collected, when we were ordered to fall in, and were marched further to the rear under a strong guard. Never shall I forget that short march of four miles. Tired and exhausted from the continued exertions of the three previous days, by excitement and hunger, with clothes torn and face scratched, I plodded along the dusty road, under a scorching sun, subjected every where to the abuse and remarks of lines of rebels, past which we marched. On arriving at Carter's store, where were the head-quarters of General Lee and General Stuart, we were added to the number of those previously captured, and I was accosted by a Confederate officer, who desired to hear of some acquaintances in our army. I knew several of them, which led to further conversation, and an acquaintance which never will be forgotten. This officer was Major Fitzhugh, of General Stuart's staff, and he was shortly joined by Major Richardson. They kindly invited me to their quarters, and shared with me their soldiers' fare and their blankets; and that night, on the bosom of mother earth, I was oblivious of friends and of foes. I was furnished with breakfast on the following morning by these gentlemen, and remained with them until noon; but among all those with whom I was that morning brought in contact I heard no discourteous word, no remark designed to give or at which I could take offense.

At noon of that day (the 7th) we started for Orange Court House. Major Fitzhugh gave me a lunch, and placed a horse at my disposal, sending an orderly to bring him back; introduced me to Captain Brown, who was to have charge of us; and, as if all this was not enough, inquired if I needed money, and offered to loan me whatever I might require. Fortunately this latter proof of his generosity it was not necessary for me to accept; but the horse was most thankfully taken; for a march of five-and-twenty miles on such a day would have been for me an impossibility, especially as I found that I had received a severe bruise on the thigh on the previous day, and was quite lame.

Major Fitzhugh had himself been a prisoner in our hands, had been kindly treated, and was desirous to reciprocate. Certainly nothing which I can say can express my gratitude to him for his hospitality and kindness. All

were offered as only a true gentleman can offer them, with such tact as to cause me to forget for the time being the relations between us; and I can only hope that it may be in my power, after this war is over, to reciprocate, or at least to meet with him and express my appreciation of his acts.

Captain Brown was disposed to make the march to Orange Court House as comfortable as possible, halting often to give the prisoners rest and allow them to get water. At a house where we stopped a lady brought out to the Captain a pitcher of ice-water. I heard the pleasant sound of the ice rattling against the vessel, and longed to place my lips and draw a draught therefrom, looking with envy at him as he drank. Perhaps the lady saw the longing in my eyes; at any rate she said, "We must be kind to the Yankees when they are prisoners. Ask some of the officers to have some." That cup of cold water will not grow cold in my memory. May it bring its reward!

We reached our destination at ten o'clock that night, and upon entering the office of Major Bridgeford I met General Shaler, and by him was introduced to General Seymour. Both had been made prisoners during the day. This meeting was for me a most fortunate one, as from that time until June 10 we were companions in misery, and to them I am indebted for much which rendered my captivity more endurable. That night we shared one blanket in a corner of the old court-house.

The next morning, the 8th, rations of bacon and hand-tack were issued to us, but through the courtesy of Surgeon Claggit, of the Confederate army, we had a breakfast of "soft" bread and coffee. On the morning of the 9th we were ordered once more to "fall in," and were marched to the dépôt, where occurred an incident worthy of note. Around the building many poor fellows were lying wounded, one wearing a cap which bore the badge of one of our corps. An officer, taking him for one of our men, stooped and spoke to him, whereat one of the "relief committee" present, seizing the cap, threw it from him, and hurled such a volley of invective at the wounded man as utterly amazed us, telling him he would kick him out of the house if he had any thing Yankee about him.

We were packed in cattle-cars, and after waiting two long hours started on our rough trip to Gordonsville, and, arriving there, were placed in a barn. A handful of meal and two small fish were furnished each of us, which, without facilities for cooking, were rather inappropriate rations. So instead of supper we consoled ourselves by making the old rafters ring with "Rally round the Flag" and the national airs, much to the disgust of the "Johnnies," whose orders to "dry up" we did not see fit to regard. At 9.30 p.m. we were turned out and marched to the dépôt, put into very comfortable passenger-cars, and arrived at Lynchburg about ten o'clock the following morning, where, in a warehouse on the principal street, we found

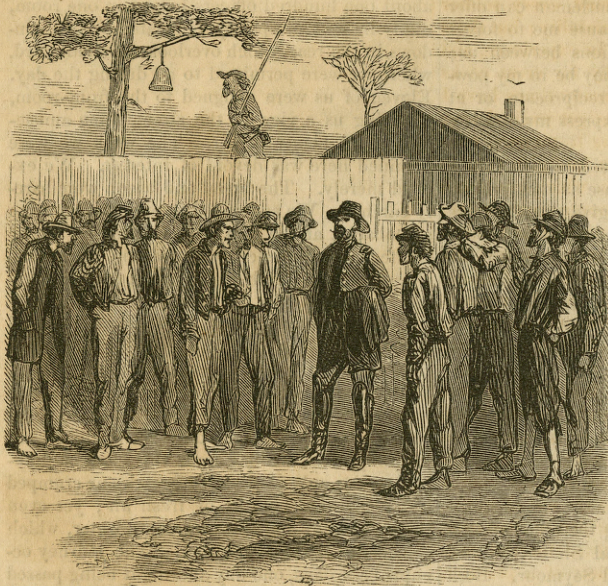
about one hundred officers lodged in one room, dimly lighted and poorly ventilated by two windows in the rear, which overlooked a small yard, where we were permitted to go during the day. Eleven of us were assigned to the front-room, affording us a view of the street, some amusement, and plenty of air. The week we were detained here was devoid of interest. We existed merely. The bread and bacon were barely eatable. We succeeded in exchanging some greenbacks, at the rate of one dollar for ten of Confederate currency, and making some purchases, among which were a towel for eight dollars and a comb for five.

On the evening of the 17th we were started for Macon. The trip was made in passenger, box, and cattle cars, packed to their utmost, and those who could not be jammed inside were put on the top. The time occupied in changing cars and waiting at the different stations were the only relief we had from this close confinement—the only chances to stretch our cramped limbs and get breaths of fresh air; yet even then we could not always procure water, which we needed more than either. The journey occupied six days, one day and night being passed in the Danville prison, and one night in Charlotte, where we were turned into a vacant lot, ten feet below the level of the street, all over which the water stood in pools.

In the morning I was refreshed both in body and in spirit by the gift of fresh bread, with a cup of milk, from a lady, who remarked, "I wish I had enough for all." The little kindnesses, trifling though they may seem, are the bright spots in the prisoner's life, the oasis in his desert, showing him the sun through the black cloud over his head. As a companion picture, let the reader imagine the lady—for such she doubtless was considered, judging by her surroundings—who stood upon the piazza of her house, and testified to her love by shaking both her fists at us as we were marched through the town.

We made a short stay at Augusta, and through the kindness of Captain Bradford, Provost Marshal—a son of the Governor of Maryland—a few of us were permitted to go into the city, where we made a few purchases, besides indulging in the luxury of green peas, fresh bread and butter, and a taste of the "ardent," for which we paid seventy dollars. At the dépôt a number of gentlemen, former acquaintances of the Generals, hearing of their presence, called; among them was ex-Governor Cummings of Utah.

Arriving at Macon we were taken to the office of Captain Tabb, commandant of the prison, where the date of our capture was registered, with our names, and our pockets gone through with in a very unceremonious manner. Our self-constituted banker permitted us to draw on him once a week to the amount of ninety dollars (Confederate), taking our greenbacks at the rate of one dollar for four and a half Confederate scrip. On entering the prison, which is situated on the old fair grounds, we were surrounded by



FRESH FISH.

its inmates, who were anxious to see if they had any friends in the new arrivals, and to hear the news. As my eyes roved over the motley crew, hatless, coatless, shoeless, in every stage of shabbiness, and heard the cry of "Fresh fish!" as they surged around us, I could scarcely believe that they were officers, and that we, who were now comparatively well clothed, might become like unto them. The cry of "Fresh fish," which is raised upon the entrance of every new lot of prisoners, originated, I believe, in Libby, and is probably a Shaksperian quotation from Henry the Eighth, and occurs in the dialogue between the old lady and Anne Bullen. "And you (O fate!) a very fresh fish here."

The prison grounds comprise about three acres, surrounded by a high fence, outside of which a platform runs around, upon which the sentinels are posted every ten feet. Inside, about three yards from the fence, is another, called the "dead line," which prisoners are not allowed to approach or to touch under penalty of being shot. There is but little shade; but excellent water was supplied by pumps, and a spring filled sunken tubs, at the lower end of the grounds,

where we bathed and did our washing. Our shelter consisted of sheds, or rather roofs of boards, from fifty to a hundred feet in length by twenty wide, which had been built by the prisoners, who were provided with the requisite tools, nails, and lumber. One structure, a little better than the rest, was used, when necessary, for a hospital, and one end partitioned off for general officers. To facilitate the drawing of rations, the getting of wood and water and our letters, the prisoners divided themselves into squads of one hundred each, under charge of the senior officer, who was assisted by an adjutant and commissary. These squads were subdivided into messes, each having a commissary, the cooking being done by the members in turn. The ration here consisted of bacon and corn meal, or for these were substituted a little rice, or a few brown beans, with occasional issues of salt, molasses, and vinegar in homeopathic doses. From the sutler we could purchase a few articles, berries, and vegetables at exorbitant prices. For cooking utensils the following were given each squad of a hundred men: eight skillets (or Dutch ovens with covers), thirteen mess-pans, four wooden buckets, and four camp-kettles; and much ingenuity was displayed in the building of chimneys and ovens. Corn ponies and cakes were the standard dishes; and if practice makes perfect, every officer there can ring all the changes on corn meal, from hasty-pudding down, and put Parker to the blush. Cooking out of doors in the



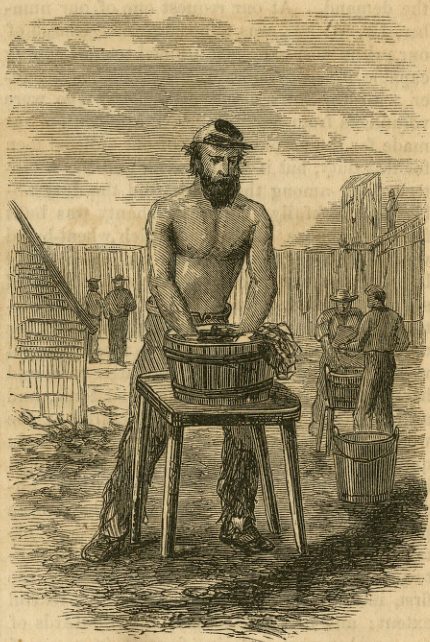
INSIDE THE STOCKADE, MACON.

hot sun, the rain, or the wind, every soldier knows is not conducive to amiability; but there for the first time I learned it by experience, and henceforth have no sympathy for cross cooks with home facilities. How many times have I laughed to see my mess-mate get excited over the dinner he was endeavoring to prepare, wipe the perspiration from his face, and give vent to his opinion of green wood, rice which would not boil, and meat which would never grow tender; and how often has he had his revenge as I poked over fires which would not burn, scorched my fingers, or smouched my only shirt! If an occasional pan was kicked over, and the remains of yesterday's dinner was produced for to-day, the mess understood it, and sympathized with instead of scolding the cook.

The number of prisoners increased while I was in Macon, but unfortunately the accommodations did not; consequently many were compelled to go without any shelter. The commandant, Captain Tabb, had neither energy nor principle, was addicted to the use of spirits, at which times he was more arbitrary than ever, and was, in fact, utterly unfitted for the position. He once, at the request of a prisoner, took a watch and chain to sell for four hundred dollars—not less. After a considerable time, when questioned as to the matter, he said he had sold them for two hundred dollars; and upon being asked how he came by the chain, which he was then wearing, said the purchaser gave it to him. After such an explanation the officer demanded the return of his property, or the four hundred dollars, threatening to expose the affair unless it was complied with; upon which Captain Tabb abused him most shamefully, and then had him "bucked" for several hours, after which the articles were restored. We were all very glad when we were relieved from the petty annoyances to which he subjected us, by his being superseded by Captain Gibbs, a gentleman, who, although very strict, made us no promises he did not intend to fulfill.

An incident occurred shortly after Captain Gibbs assumed command which did not encourage us to hope we had fallen into better hands. Just at dark of the 11th of June an officer of the Forty-fifth New York Volunteers, returning from the spring where he had been bathing, was shot by one of the guards and lived but a few hours. Those who were near could assign no reason for the act but the intention to commit a deliberate murder, as he was not near the "dead line." The senior officer in camp wrote Captain Gibbs, requesting an investigation of the circumstances, and the communication was returned with the following indorsement, "Such investigation as may by me be deemed proper will be made in this case; and it shall be more complete than in the cases of Confederate officers murdered by negro troops at Fort M'Henry and elsewhere."

Cooking, eating, washing, and mending occupying but a comparatively small portion of the day one seeks in every direction for amuse-



WASHING.

ment or occupation, and Macon was in these respects like the other places in which I was subsequently confined. The papers were soon read; and filled, as all Southern papers are, with stupid invective, pompous bombast, or garbled accounts of battles, they were not very amusing. Later in the year, while Sherman was on his way to Savannah, and we were eager for every word of news good or bad, the papers were withheld from us. Books, whether strangers or old friends, were always welcome. Some took up the study of the languages, some tried to rub up mathematics, some sketched or gave lessons to others, some practiced music, formed glee clubs, or bought violins and flutes with which to accompany the singers. All the games of cards, chess, etc., were the quiet pastimes, while the more active were cricket, wicket, quoit-pitching, gymnastics, and wood-splitting, which, owing to the crowded condition of the ground, were more rarely indulged in. There were three chaplains among us, and services were held on Sunday and once at least during the week, which were well attended. Captain Tabb was once so impudent as to request that the prayer for the President of the United States would be omitted; but no notice was taken of the insult.

Our surgeons, of whom there were a number, examined and prescribed for those who answered the "sick call," and the medicines were sent in from the hospital outside the stockade, or the seriously ill were sent there. The scarcity of surgeons and of physicians is very much felt in the South, and the supply of medicines, even among their own soldiers, entirely unequal to

the demand. At our request one of our number, Dr. W—, was allowed to take charge of our prison hospital—just alluded to—a building capable of accommodating forty patients, together with the nurses and attendants, who were volunteers from our number. Application was made for the parole of some of our enlisted men for this duty, but it was refused, and the volunteers from among the officers did the duty nobly and faithfully. A small shanty was built for a cook-house, an oven in which wheat-bread was baked every day, and such supplies as could be obtained were procured through the rebel surgeon, who was nominally in charge. Sometimes for a week there would not be medicines of any kind in the hospital. The most plentiful was a sort of bitters, made from native roots and barks, which was considered a good tonic, and a kind of opium was also manufactured by the women. Whisky was occasionally to be had; quinine, worth \$400 the ounce, very seldom; in short, many a life was lost there, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been prolonged could proper drugs have been obtained. The prevailing diseases were dysentery, malarial fever, typhoid, and scurvy; the first, in all its varied forms, existed to a fearful extent; and it is safe to say that two-thirds of our number were suffering from it, in many of whom it assumed a chronic form, which only change of air and diet can cure. It was always a matter of surprise to me that we escaped contagious sickness; for our low diet, want of vegetables, and the bad air consequent upon our crowded condition, seemed to supply all the requirements and make that type of disease inevitable. Unsupplied as the hospital was with the necessities which the ills of the flesh demand, it was quiet, neat, and clean, with cotton beds raised from the ground, and for these reasons a haven of rest for the sufferers. I speak from experience, for an attack of fever compelled me to become an inmate during the month of July.

Before entirely recovering from my indisposition I left the hospital in company with many others, some of whom were scarcely able to bear the change, in order to make room for some twenty of our enlisted men who were suffering from wounds, and had been brought from some other hospital and laid in the open space before ours. Only a few days previous a lot had been sent off to Andersonville, of whom Dr. Parker remarked at the time that it would be the means of their death. And yet he sent them away.

I must not forget the Fourth of July which we spent in the Macon prison. We welcomed it with hearty cheers and the national airs, and at ten o'clock A.M. assembled in and around the main building—sung the Star-Spangled Banner, after which prayer was offered and speeches made by different officers. While we were singing a tiny American flag, which some one had evidently carried as a keepsake, was raised over the crowd, and, after the chorus, was greeted with nine cheers as hearty as ever came from the throats of those who have fought under its stars

and stripes. While Colonel — was in the midst of his remarks he was interrupted by the officer of the day with orders from Captain Gibbs for us to disperse. Immediately he was seen some one cried, "Put that flag out of sight!" To which Colonel — replied, "Don't touch that flag!" In response to which remark a murmur of approbation rose from every one present, as they glanced from the flag to the officer, who, after delivering his order, looked up at it for an instant, hesitated, then turned about and retired to his quarters. I do not think it would have been safe for him to have attempted to take it down, and he certainly had good sense not even to suggest its removal. I wish that every Northern Copperhead could have heard the remarks of loyal men there that day. Many of them had been for more than a year in Southern prisons and dungeons—some for a part of the time in close confinement and irons; yet they uttered no words against the integrity of the Government, spoke not of compromise, breathed no complaint; but counseled the same patriotism which led them into the field, the same submission, even unto death if necessary, in the full assurance that, whether death came to them there, or in the thickest of the fight, they would be remembered among those who laid their lives on Freedom's altar.

Toward the latter part of July it was rumored that we were to be removed to Charleston and Savannah, and soon a lot was sent away. About this time Stoneman made his famous raid, and another lot were started on the 29th inst., but brought back for fear he would recapture them. Great was the excitement among us about this time, which was brought to a climax on the 1st of August, when General Stoneman and his staff were added to our number. On the 11th of August, in company with about six hundred others, I was started for Charleston. Packed in box cars, fifty officers and five guards in each, we suffered intensely from heat and thirst.

One of the best plans that was perhaps ever matured by a company of prisoners was arranged to be carried into operation on a train that went a few days before ours. A secret society was organized, with initiation oaths, pass-words, and grips; the members divided into companies and squads, with proper officers, and maps of the country were obtained, to be ready when opportunity offered for escape. Such an opportunity, it was decided, was to be found while being taken to Charleston, and the work of each squad was determined upon and matured. At a preconcerted signal, to be given at some way-station, the guards inside and outside the cars were to be seized, their arms and ammunition secured; while another party, familiar with the working of an engine, were to secure the engineer, fireman, and guard on the locomotive, and another look out for the artillery, in case there should be a gun on a platform car in rear of the train, as was customary. The overpowering of the sentinels in and upon the cars was a very easy matter, for they were

Georgia militia, many of whom would not even have made a show of resistance, and some of them did that night lie down and sleep, leaving their muskets at the disposal of any one; and I am informed that, in several instances, their cartridges were emptied from their boxes in anticipation of the work. The train, in event of success, was to have been stopped near Pocatigo Bridge, from which General Foster's lines might easily have been reached, being then only ten or twelve miles distant. But the signal never was given. Why it was not I have never heard explained; but it is said that some word or act put the officer in charge on his guard, and that he ran the train at the top of its speed, without a stoppage, directly to the city.

The thoughts which are always uppermost in a prisoner's mind are of exchange and escape; and could the many projects which are discussed or put in train be successful, the Confederacy would have few besides the sick prisoners to guard. At Lynchburg two, to my knowledge, procured rebel uniforms, walked out past the guard, and safely reached our own lines. While *en route* to Macon several escaped by cutting holes through the bottom of the car and jumping out. At Macon one blacked his face and passed out as a negro workman; another bribed the colored driver of the sutler's wagon, and was taken out in a box; while a third clung under the body of the same wagon, and succeeded in getting away. It was quite safe to bribe any of the guards and procure a gray uniform, and quite as easy to get outside the prison grounds, but the trouble only then commenced, the distance to be traveled before reaching a place of safety being very great. Men were compelled to seek somewhere for food; and unless they could meet some of the slaves—who were almost invariably friendly, and ready to lend all the assistance in their power—were liable to be betrayed; besides which, the news of all escapes were spread throughout all the region round, and men turned out with blood-hounds to hunt the game, delighting in the sport; so that of all who started but a very few succeeded in accomplishing their object.

Tunneling was tried to a great extent. In all I presume eight or ten were commenced, and three were projected at one time—all to come out at different points. The work, of course, was only carried on at night, and as the tools used around camp in the day were carefully removed at dark, the only implements were knives, spoons, tin cups, and the hands. Only one could work at a time; and it may be imagined that, in a hole two feet square or thereabouts and six feet underground, it was any thing but light work. The mouth of the tunnel was in some one of the sheds, and easily covered during the day, while the dirt taken out was scattered about in the various dirt-heaps, or where the wells were then being dug, or thrown into the brook. Two of these tunnels were brought to completion, so that they might have been used any night; but it was deemed

safe to wait until the third and largest was finished, and we confidently expected that in a few mornings some seven hundred of us would be running at large, when some one, to obtain favor with the commandant of the prison, revealed the plot, and we were all suddenly called off to one end of the camp, a guard thrown across, and search was made which unmasked our work, and dashed our hopes of weeks to the earth. The traitor did his work well; we hope his reward was all he asked.

Of exchange I may as well say something here. It was a perpetual theme of conversation, and rumor with her thousand tongues was ever busy among us. Even the wildest and most improbable of stories were not unworthy of discussion, and even the breathing of the word, if it was but to ask some one to exchange a pair of trowsers for a pair of shoes, would bring the cry—which would be taken up far and near—"Louder on exchange!" In Charleston the excitement was greatly increased by the exchange of fifty general and field officers in August—that of the surgeons and naval officers in September, as well as the arrangement between General Sherman and Hood. Once at Macon, and again at Charleston, attempts were made by certain men to get up petitions, asking Mr. Davis to allow a committee to be paroled and sent North, to represent to our Government the "fearful condition of our enlisted men" confined in Southern prisons. I am proud to record that both were failures; that the majority refused to petition on the ground that their faith in our Government was sufficient for them to believe it was doing all for the best; and although that at Macon was forwarded on a minority—a very small minority—of names, it was never heard from. At Charleston the second attempt originated with an officer whose term of service had expired; but at a meeting called he and his friends had some home truths thrust upon them, and were informed, if they were previously ignorant, of certain duties which, as officers of the army, they owed to their country—the result of which was that no more petitions were heard of. Here the majority testified in something more weighty than words to their loyalty, to their willingness to remain, to end their lives in captivity, if those who were at the head of affairs thought it best for the cause that there should be no general exchange, or if one could not be arranged without conceding a point to the enemy. On "special exchanges" the feeling was almost universal in their condemnation. Not that any of us were not glad to get away under that rule, but we could not but pity those who have been there eighteen months, and had seen tens, twenties, and thirties leave them—men who had not been there perhaps thirty days. The same principle is involved in the exchange of fifty as of fifty thousand; and why then should not those who have been so long sufferers be taken in preference to those just arrived?

We reached Charleston on the morning of



JAIL-YARD, CHARLESTON.

August 13, and were kept waiting a long time in the street, when I procured some fresh figs, bread, and milk, and, seated on the curb-stone, made an excellent breakfast. We were marched to the work-house, "counted in," and as the heavy grated doors closed behind us, I realized for the first time what it was to be in durance vile. The work-house (from the *outside*) is a fine-looking building, built on three sides of a square, with two towers which give it quite an imposing appearance. It is built entirely of brick. My curiosity never prompted me to wander through its labyrinth of corridors, staircases, and halls, for knowing it was all cells above and dungeons below ground, a little of that style was sufficient. Turn with me from the main entrance, ascend a dark, narrow, spiral staircase—admitting the passage of but one at a time—to the second-floor, and into the cell with heavily grated windows, which is the space allotted to four Yankee officers, constituting "one mess." There is neither chair nor table, the floor is both our seat by day and our bed by night. Here we passed seventeen days, and wretched days they were. Our only cooking utensils were a small tin pail, which one of our number fortunately brought with him, and an old hoe which we picked up, and fried both cakes and meat upon. The water was scarce and bad, with poor facilities for washing and bathing, while the yard was so filthy that we cared not to avail ourselves of the permission to enter it.

The sutler charged exorbitant prices for every

article, and little chance for purchasing outside was afforded. Books we had not, nor could any be had, amusement of all kinds seemed denied, and I was always glad when night came that I might seek oblivion in sleep, although to seek was not always to find, for myriads of mosquitoes and oppressive heat generally kept me tossing until, worn out, I slept from exhaustion. Well remembered are the nights passed upon that floor, with the beautiful harvest moon pouring her light through the gratings, shining ever quietly, no matter whether I smoked and thought, tossed and fretted, or slept and dreamed. Near by the work-house is the jail, into the yard of which we could look, from the left wing, and the sight of the three hundred and odd prisoners there assured us that our lot was not the hardest, and afforded a trifle of consolation. They were associated with characters of all descriptions, thieves, assassins, prostitutes—both black and white; many living in tents in the yard, many without any shelter, and those with whom we communicated complained of short rations, which we were not subjected to, for ours were what might be called sufficient, and of fair quality, including frequent issues of meat.

Three hundred of our officers were in the Marine Hospital, on the same square, which rumor proclaimed to be a very nice place, and as many more were at the Roper Hospital, where I was anxious to go that I might meet and be with my friends. Not receiving any reply to numerous applications for my removal, I had about given up the hope of change, when the welcome order



WORK-HOUSE, CHARLESTON.

came, and the evening of September 4 found me within its walls.

The Roper Hospital is a brick structure, finished in mastic, on the corner of Queen and Marych streets, is three stories in height, with a tower at each end, and one on either side of the centre door. A garden extends the entire front of the building, is inclosed by an iron fence, and gave evidence of former care and cultivation; but weeds and plebeian shrubs were fast crowding upon the rare trees and plants it contains. In the rear is the Insane Asylum, where some officers were quartered, and of which we had full range; and on the right is the Medical College. We were permitted to burn the gas until nine o'clock p.m., which luxury we fully enjoyed and appreciated, serving as it did to make the evening pass quickly and pleasantly. I should not omit to speak of the long piazza at the front, on which I have spent so many hours with my pipe for my companion.



ROPER HOSPITAL, CHARLESTON.

The burned district was the foreground of the picture which there became so familiar to me; and on the moonlight nights the weird shadows which fell around the smoked ruins were, in the dead quiet of midnight, enough to carry me in dreams to the cities whose foundations were beyond the reach of history, and in whose streets the foot of the traveler alone resounds. Dimly rising on the left hand were the ruins of the Cathedral.

"A crumbling tower now remains
With scars of fire and water stains,
To show where stood the house of God."

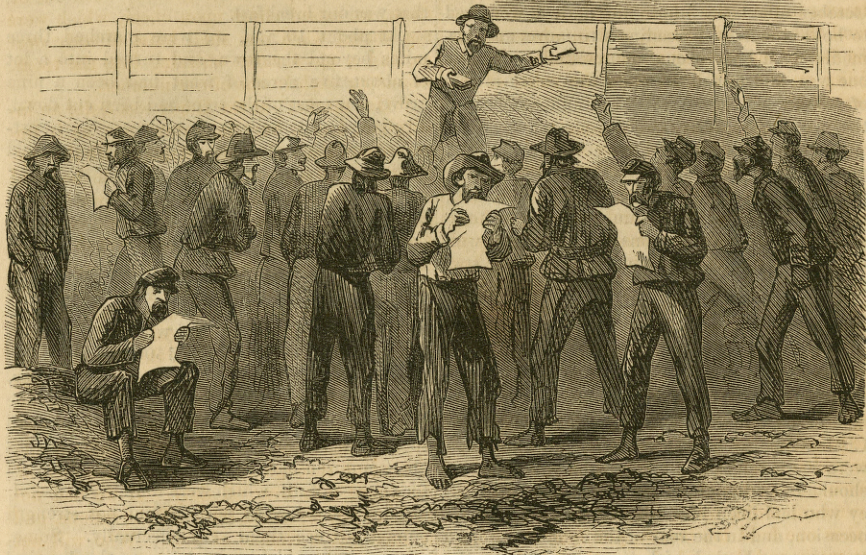
Beyond, the Ashley flowed calmly to the sea, shining as a silver sheet; and gazing now here and now there, into the shadow or far away to the light, I sat and thought, with nothing but the footfall of the sentinel or his cry "All's well!" to break the stillness. But no, there was sometimes an interruption, and a not unpleasant one, coming as a flash far off in the horizon, and soon as a heavy, dull rumble to the ear. It was a gun; perhaps the Swamp Angel, perhaps from Wagner. Away up among the stars the practiced eye may discover the iron messenger which it sends, and follow it as you would a meteor, in its ascent, its graceful curve, and its downward flight, until, coming so near that it makes one hold his breath, you hear the whiz, the crash, and the explosion. Yet I bade these fearful visitors welcome, for they are just from "our guns," from under the old flag, and even the smell of the powder has a refreshing tendency. One day a fire broke out close by the hospital, which was no sooner perceived by Gen-

eral Foster than he opened all his guns. The prisoners crowded to the windows, and as shell after shell came crashing down in close proximity, frightening the darkey firemen so that it was almost impossible to get any work out of them, we raised cheer upon cheer, which were not abated when one shell burst directly over us, and a piece came whizzing into the room, wounding slightly one of our number.

"Our market" at the Roper was quite an institution, and a very important one, as it improved our diet and preserved our health thereby. Prisoners, as a general thing, "go to bed and rise with the lark," and from early dawn flocked to the front gate to buy the morning papers—the *Courier* or *Mercury*—price twenty-five cents. After the news-boys came the milk-women, who for one dollar and a half per quart would sell any quantity, watered to the taste (of the seller), with which the bread at one dollar a loaf could be washed down. Later in the morning the women and children begin to collect on the opposite curb-stone with eggs, butter, potatoes, fruits, yams, ground-nuts, dumplings, and pastry, and there until night a brisk traffic would be kept up through the medium of the men of the guard who were off duty. If we had not funds to buy we could trade off our rations, and at least get a change of diet. Who will not long remember "old Aunty" sitting behind her waiter of shrimps, or basket of potatoes, her pleasant "good-morn, massa," and her genial smile inviting your custom; or neat, tidy Sarah at her table covered with pies, cakes, etc.; the black-eyed little Mary and her companion Vir-



MARKET OPPOSITE ROPEE HOSPITAL.



DELIVERING THE MAIL.

ginia ready to run to the store, or take the clothes of those who reveled in more than one suit out to the washer-woman; and "see me quick and le'me go," as the old thin-faced black wench, who was always cross and in a hurry was called, because of her frequent exclamation?

We were "on 'Change" there—not dabbling in stocks, and little interested in the price of gold, but getting the gossip from the women and the guards, enjoying our pipes, or eating pies, fruit, or nuts. At Charleston our money was not taken from us—those who had a balance in "the bank" at Macon when they left have it there yet—their banker not having remitted as he promised to do. Greenbacks we exchanged for five and six to one, gold at nineteen and twenty. Some prisoners, to increase their income, took up the trades: and there was a tinman, who stripped all the gutters off the building to make tin pails; a tailor, who sowed tares and reaped wheat in the form of bread; a shoemaker, who cared for our soles—for a consideration; and a barber, who beautified our other extremity—all of whom were very useful and valuable members of the community. We received our mails more regularly, another inexpressible comfort. When I went there no letters had reached me from home since my capture, and others had been many months in anxious expectation and suspense, knowing there must be letters lying somewhere in the Confederacy for them. Ah, those letters! Can any one ever tell what they are to a prisoner, those short pages of love, of consolation, of condolence? One little page!

but to him it contains more than is written thereon with the pen. It brings the touch of the father, the voice of the mother, the breath of the beloved, perhaps the prattle of children, or it may bring volumes of sadness. In answer, the little you are permitted to write seems of no use; and when you remember that there can be no privacy about it, no respected seal, one great charm is removed, and confining yourself to plain matter of fact you feel it scarcely worth while to send it when finished. The cry, "Fall in for the mail!" was the first intimation we ever had of their arrival, and then came a rush. Books, games, mending, cooking, and eating were left unfinished and uncared for; drowsy sleepers are aroused by their companions; and all clustered around the door where stood the man with the precious documents in his hands. As soon as quiet ensued he commenced to call the names, to which every fortunate man there present cried Here! and in response to others some one would answer "in work-house," "the hospital," or "the jail," and not unfrequently came the reply—half-stifled—"dead." The letters all distributed, the happy men turn away to find some quiet place in which to read theirs, and to talk over the news with some friend, and the disappointed ones to book, work, or sleep, to chew the bitter cud and nurse a hope for better luck next time.

About the first of October the yellow-fever made itself known in our midst. That we should be instantly moved not humanity alone but the sanitary condition of the city demanded, and

immediate steps were taken toward that end. The order was to me unwelcome, for I knew another place could not be found where so much comfort could be had, so much kindness shown us, as in the Roper Hospital. On the 5th of October about six hundred of us were ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to move, and immediately a busy scene commenced, for every one was determined to take away every article of property he possessed. Fortunate it proved that we did so. The market-women turned out *en masse* when they got wind of the proceeding, and, as we made our last bargains, we were greeted with, "I'se right sorry you'se gwine, massa," or "Old aunty done used up now, massa," and similar expressions of regret; and well they might regret our departure, for our stay had been no small profit to them.

Certainly no such motley crew as ours ever passed through King Street before. Moving-day in New York is not to be spoken of in comparison. Every thing we had purchased, or that had been given us, in the line of furniture and of cooking utensils, were brought along. Chairs, stools, tables, kettles, pans, and pots, were strung upon poles, or thrown over our shoulders, while here and there appeared a darky who had been impressed and loaded for the occasion, and in the rear of the column followed two wagons loaded with "sundries." At the *dépôt* we were packed in box-cars after the usual manner—the whistle shrieked, and we were "off from Charleston." Many made their escape that night by jumping out the doors, or knocking the boards off from the ends of the cars.

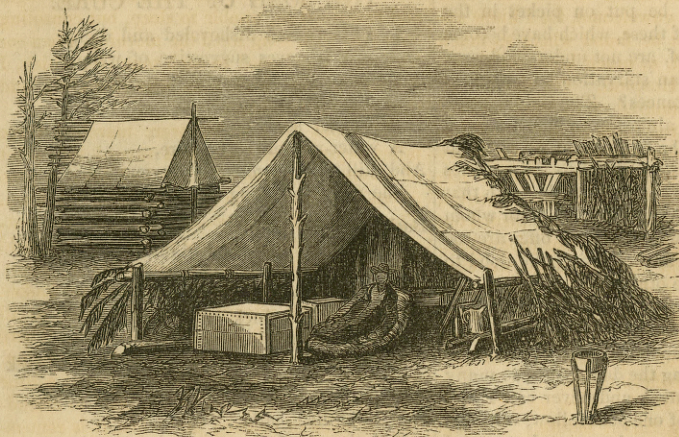
Early the next morning we arrived in Columbia, and were corralled near the *dépôt*, exposed to a scorching sun, from which we could find no shade. Most of us had no rations, and naturally were quite hungry, rushing eagerly after every lot of bread brought for sale. One young lady, who was looking at us from a house near by, seeing our desire for something to eat, burst out crying, exclaiming, "Poor fellows, they are so hungry!" God bless her for a kind, sympathizing heart!

I saw in a box-car near by a family of refugees from Tennessee living, consisting of father, mother, five children (two of them young ladies), and an aged grandmother. The furniture and neatness of their poor shelter, as well as their conversation and manners, gave evidence that they were people of refinement who had seen happier days. I afterward found that theirs was no unusual case, and saw a train of thirty cars occupied by the same class of unfortunates. In the afternoon we were moved a short distance, and placed under the guard of the cadets from the military school, who, although boys, were well-drilled soldiers, reminding me more of our own men than any I had seen in the South. One of our number received a severe illustration of their discipline in the shape of a bayonet wound in the back, for passing outside the line to get a melon. At night a severe rain

storm came up, and we were soon soaked through, and remained so, unable to sleep, but consoling ourselves with song until the morning, when *one* hard-tack was issued to each man (for which, I venture to say, each man was thankful), and that was our breakfast.

At about 10 A.M. we were marched three miles beyond the town, and turned into a lot of about five acres of what had been a pine grove, but most of the trees had been cut down. The guard and artillery—two pieces—were posted, and we were in our new camp—an open field without shelter or means of providing it; many without coats or blankets, and here we looked forward to the winter—especially those in ill health—as a cheerless, hopeless prospect. There was neither wood nor water to be had in camp, and only six were permitted to go out at a time for either, and the same rule applied to attending the calls of nature; and when it is remembered that there were some 1500 prisoners, the harshness of this rule will be evident. Later, the guard was thrown out so as to take in the brook and wood. At first we had to pick up all the wood we burned; but after some weeks about a dozen hatchets and axes were furnished for the use of all, which were found very useful, although the largest portion had not strength enough to use them very effectually. Some, who were very sick, were taken to the hospital in the town, where for a time they were well cared for; but one afternoon they were turned out to make room for some of their own wounded, marched the three miles to the camp, and turned in among us to endure or to die; which, I think, our captors little cared.

To provide shelter was naturally the desire and work of every one, bringing into play Yankee ingenuity, and what in the army surpasses even that in the architectural line—soldier's ingenuity, which resulted in the erection of shanties above ground and shanties below ground, of boughs, of limbs, of bark, of blankets—if men were lucky enough to have them to spare—and of old bedticks from the Roper, all thrown together promiscuously, presenting a singular although not unpicturesque appearance, and forming a labyrinth through which, I learned by experience, it was not easy for a man to find his way after dark. I should not omit to say that there were a few huts, built substantially of logs, by men able to use and understanding how to use the axe, in which were fire-places and chimneys built of mud and sticks, but they were few—the palaces of the city of poverty. The shanty of "my mess" was a bedtick arranged over a pole in the form of a tent, the sides and back thatched with pine boughs. It was a well-ventilated chateau, and would leak when it rained; when we would rob our bodies of blankets to protect ourselves from the droppings—thinking cold alone was preferable to cold and wet together—turn in, and lie close to keep up the warmth, and, as we "let it rain," ponder the remark of Mrs. Partington, "This is a checker-berry life."



SHANTIES, COLUMBIA.

We saw but little of people from the outer world, or heard but little from it. Never were we more isolated. Even "exchange stock" fell far below par, and only the freshest "fish" invested. "Escape stock" was lively, and up to November 5, 301 officers realized on it. Many more had tried their fortunes, but had been recaptured; in fact, they were escaping and being brought back every day. The chances of reaching our lines were very small, for the distance was very great and the people on the alert with blood-hounds ever ready for the scent; and for a man in poor health it was an undertaking not lightly to be entered upon, even though the prize sought was freedom, escape from the jaws of death. Yet almost every one pondered it more or less, and had sketches and maps, more or less finished, of the surrounding country. All the old dodges heretofore alluded to were tried; and many ran the guard at night, so that it was no uncommon thing to hear sharp firing at some part of the line for a few moments any dark night. Two officers were killed, and several wounded in their attempts, and one night they wounded two of their own men. Our favorite method of escape was for men, who had not taken parole, to go for wood, to mix in with those who had done so, and after getting in the woods, their friends would cover them with boughs or with leaves, and there secreted they would remain until after dark. I have known a hundred officers to go out in one day in that way, provided with rations and blankets, their parties and plans all made up. This led to the strengthening of the guard and the extension of their beats, making their distance from the "dead line" so great that to run the gauntlet was next to impossible. The following order was also communicated to us:

"HEAD-QUARTERS, S. C., GEORGIA, AND FLORIDA,
CHARLESTON, November 17, 1864.

"Colonel Means, commanding Federal prisoners at Columbia.

"The Lieutenant-General directs that you report to these

head-quarters the name of every officer and man who escapes from your custody. Also, that you notify the Federal officers that they *must give their parole* not to attempt to escape, or they will be confined in a *pen*, in the same manner the privates now are.

"Very respectfully,
your obedient servant,
"R. C. GILCHRIST,
"Actg. Asst. Adjt.-Gen'l."

No attention was paid by the officers to this remarkable order, for we knew that although their power to abuse, as well as their disposition so to do, was limitless, they could not compel us to take

such a parole, and we did not, although we knew nothing but the want of a "pen" would prevent the execution of the threat.

Our rations consisted of three pints of meal, half a pint of rice, one pint of bran or grits, one table-spoonful of salt, and a pint of sorghum for five days, and while ostensibly for five days it had to last into the sixth, and sometimes the seventh, or we went hungry. Went hungry! that will convey no idea to the reader; for we went hungry all the time. I should say, we had to do without. Of meat I saw not an ounce during my stay. They gave us two ounces of soap for twenty days, and as I have lately seen a communication from a Confederate officer in our hands who complained of not being furnished with candles, I desire to throw some light on Southern customs, and say that, except when burning the gas at Roper, we knew no light save that which the common Father gives alike to the prisoner and the free.

For a steady diet, day after day, for breakfast, dinner, and supper, corn meal and sorghum is not the most palatable of food. It was enough to make the well sick, for the sick it was almost sure death. Imagine a man sick with fever or diarrhea eating a piece of corn bread, or a dish of mush and molasses! And yet it was this or nothing, for although, as elsewhere, there was a sutler, we never had any money delivered to us if it was sent us from home, and of course could not patronize him for any luxuries.

The treatment received by our prisoners at the hands of our enemies, although presented to the public in the papers of the day, has never been portrayed in colors sufficiently vivid, and the fiendish natures of those men who are set to kill them by inches, to torture them to death, have never been set forth in words. In fact, I doubt if language is capable of conveying the horrors of the sufferings of many. Our soldiers in the field say, and say truly, that those at home can never comprehend their hardships;

what it is to march all day, to lie down at night wet and hungry, or be put on picket in the howling storm; and if these, which have become so familiarly talked of, are not understood, save by experience, how can starvation be portrayed in comprehensive sentences? The sight of some poor wretch, shrunk almost to a skeleton, and weak as a child, as he is brought on shore at Annapolis, may rouse the mind to the realities of what thousands are bearing; to the truth that day after day scores of our brave men, for whom no thanks and no rewards we can offer are too hearty and generous, are "passing the flood to join the host upon the other side."

On the 8th of December the welcome news was communicated to a number of us that we were to be paroled; news we scarcely dared believe, even after signing the documents, so many had we seen disappointed, and never can I forget the despondency of one poor fellow, who had been eighteen months a prisoner and expected to accompany us, when he found his name erased from the list. At noon of the 9th we bade adieu to our companions and to "Camp Sorghum," not without feelings of sadness while thinking of the wretchedness they were left to endure. The very sick ones were put in mule-teams, the rest trudged joyfully to the dépôt, where we packed ourselves in the box-cars with a good grace and were started for Charleston. On the 10th we were taken on board the steamer *Laura*, a boat which had run the blockade the previous week, and was intended (so a Confederate officer told me), as a companion for the *Tallahassee*, and was to bear the name of the *Fly-by-Night*.

Never will any of us forget the moment when steaming down the harbor we came in sight of our fleet. We cared not for the rebel rag over our heads then, for we already felt that Freedom's banner was floating o'er us. We commenced to sing the Star-Spangled Banner, interlarding verses and chorus with cheer upon cheer, until the whole vessel was a scene of the wildest excitement, in which the invalids joined with superhuman strength, as if with the sight of the flag virtue had been inhaled, and their diseases had gone out of them. The excitement reached its height when Colonel Mulford appeared; and soon the exchange was completed and we were treading the deck of the *George Leary*, from which some of us were next day transferred to the propeller *United States*, and weighing anchor put to sea. To Captain Shear, and Mr. Hanning the purser, and to their wives who were with them, the entire number of passengers are indebted for the kindest attention. To the sick they were unremitting, supplying them from their own private stores, making them teas, soups, etc., and doing every thing in their power to render them comfortable until we arrived in Annapolis, on the evening of the 14th, and felt ourselves again in "God's Country."

THE SONG OF THE CURE.

WITH tresses disheveled and damp,
With eyes suggestive of weep,
A woman lay in her morning pack
Trying in vain to sleep.

Soak! soak! soak!

A water-nymph to be sure,
And still with a voice of mermaidian pitch
She sang this song of the Cure.

Bathe! bathe! bathe!

From morn till dewy night,
And bathe! bathe! bathe!
Till life is diluted quite!

It's O! to be a duck

With very amphibious taste,
To float through life, and to drown all pluck
In a wide and watery waste.

Bathe! bathe! bathe!

Till the starch is out of us gone;
Bathe! bathe! bathe!

Till our hopes sink one by one;
Sitz, and shallow, and sponge,
Sponge, and shallow, and sitz,
Till our senses make a plunge
And our brain dissolves by bits.

O men, with sisters dear!

O men, with mothers and wives!
It is not linen you're washing out,
But the color from our lives.

Soak! soak! soak!

At a fearful rate each day;
Could Noah look in, he'd think
The deluge was to pay!

Bathe! bathe! bathe!

Till our dispositions "*rile*,"
And bathe! bathe! bathe!

Till some of us strike "*ile*."

Flow, galvanic, and sitz,
Sitz, galvanic, and flow,
Till our brain is ready to swim,
And "half-seas over" we go!

O to be water-proof,

To drip and drizzle no more—
To find our feet one day

Set firmly on the shore!

But no! this can not be;

We're melting in floods too fast;
No hope is left for you and me,
But becoming Naiads at last.

With tresses disheveled and damp,

With eyes suggestive of weep,
A woman lay in her morning pack
Trying in vain to sleep.

Soak! soak! soak!

A water-nymph to be sure;
And still with a voice of mermaidian pitch,
In tones so low, and soft, and rich
She sang the song of the Cure.

CLIFTON SPRINGS, 1865.

