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FROM SPOTTSYLVANIA TO WILMINGTON, N. C., BY WAY
OF ANDERSONVILLE AND FLORENCE

By

Sidney S. Williams



PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

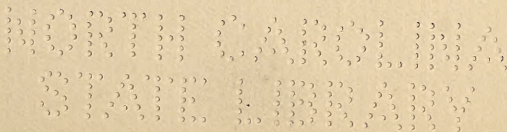
WAR OF THE REBELLION,

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SIDNEY S. WILLIAMS,

[Late First Sergeant Company C, Tenth Massachusetts Volunteers.]

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[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

FROM SPOTTSYLVANIA TO WILMINGTON,
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AND FLORENCE.

ON the 12th of May, 1864, occurred the battle of Spottsylvania, considered by some to be the hardest fought battle of the war. It would certainly rank among the first. At an early hour in the morning Hancock, with his superb Second Corps, broke through the centre of the rebel line, capturing a large number of prisoners. Our corps, the Sixth, was hurried up to the scene of fighting. Arriving on the ground, we were soon engaged. By nine o'clock or before, we had exhausted our ammunition, and were obliged to seek such shelter as we could get without returning the fire. A portion of our regiment were on a knoll much more exposed than the rest, so we went up to the captured rifle-pits which were two or three rods in advance of where we had been staying. This was a very unfortunate move. Although we escaped the

bullets from the front, they came in thicker than ever from the right. I am inclined to think that we had got into about the central part of the hornet's nest. While lying up against the rifle-pits my Enfield rifle was struck twice by Minié balls within a short time. There is an oak stump at the National Museum in Washington, the tree of which was cut completely off by Minié balls at this place.

There were four of us members of Company C, Tenth Massachusetts, who bunked together at Brandy Station the winter previous, John C. Clark, James H. Abbott, J. Hervey Howard and myself. Clark was killed trying to get back to the regiment. Abbott was lying by my side on the rifle-pit, when he was struck in the heart by a bullet and killed instantly. He died without a struggle, like a child going to sleep. A little later on I was captured, and Howard who was with the rest of the regiment was the sole survivor. He is still living at Hatfield, Mass., a member of William L. Baker Post, Grand Army of the Republic, Northampton. It was not long before the rebel line came up over the rifle-pits, and those of us that were left were sent to the rear. Howard tells me

that the dead were four or five deep at these pits the next morning. The only one of my company captured with me was a man named George C. Phillips. We were sent to Lee's headquarters with the rest of the prisoners. Phillips and myself put up our shelter tent that night, and putting our haversacks under our heads for pillows slept through the night. I must have slept sound, for the next morning my haversack with all its precious contents had disappeared, and I never saw it again. There were five days full rations, hard bread, sugar, coffee, cooking utensils, including a ration of fresh meat that I had drawn the day before and was waiting to get a chance to cook. Phillips very kindly shared the contents of his haversack with me. We stayed here a day or two, when we were sent south, marching a couple of days when we took cars, passed through Lynchburg where we stayed a day or two, and then on again for Andersonville.

At one of the stops on the way the prisoners were marched through a shed where an inspection of some kind was being held. Looking ahead in the line we could see the rebels taking out shelter tents from the

knapsacks. On seeing this Phillips opened his knapsack, took out his piece of tent and threw it away.

When it came our turn they did not open our knapsacks at all, so I saved mine. We arrived at the famous prison in due time, and halted on a knoll outside; had a good view of the delectable spot where we were destined to spend the summer. The aspect was not very encouraging. It was not long before the gates were opened, and we were ushered in.

The site of the place had been a dense pine forest, the trees having been cut down to form the stockade. This consisted of logs fifteen or twenty feet long, standing up side by side, and stuck in the ground enough to hold them secure and braced on the other side at regular intervals. The inclosure contained over twenty acres I think. There was a small stream or brook running through from west to east. Where it entered the stockade the water was tolerably pure, and was used for drinking purposes and also for cooking. Below that was a space boarded off for washing and bathing purposes, and below that were the sinks, extending nearly to the further side. The original settlers had not found Andersonville quite so bad

as it had become since it became more densely inhabited. They had found plenty of wood, and had constructed quite comfortable barracks. Many of them had been captured at Little Washington at an earlier period of the war. They had just received six months' pay and consequently had plenty of money. They formed the solid men or landed proprietors, so to speak, of the place, and doubtless looked down with a feeling of superiority on the new comers. They had seen the place grow from a small hamlet to a large densely populated city; I cannot truthfully say a flourishing or prosperous one. The camp was laid out with two main streets, leading from as many gates. On these main streets many of the men who had the trading instinct largely developed had established shops, where such of the prisoners as were fortunate enough to have money, could exchange the same for tobacco and other luxuries. Some of these fellows waxed fat both in purse and in person. After awhile when we were at Florence, the rebels began to get on to these men, and extend a gentle pressure, so that in a majority of cases they went out of the Confederacy as poor, or poorer than

they went in. The prisoners were divided into detachments of ninety, which were sub-divided again into three of thirty each for convenience of drawing rations. Once inside they were left to their own resources so far as providing shelter was concerned. Such of them as had shelter tents or rubber blankets used them for protection against sun or rain, while those not so fortunate got along as best they could without shelter. The place was very much crowded when our party arrived, and we were obliged to take up our quarters in a low, swampy section near the brook. It was not long, however, before an addition was opened at the northern end. We then secured a much better location near the dead line. After getting settled in the new place, it occurred to us that we might, under cover of digging a well for water, have a tunnel by which we might escape. Wells had been dug in various parts of the prison, and formed quite an item in the water supply of the place, so that our starting one would not excite suspicion. I have forgotten how we procured the tools for digging, but somehow or other we had them. The well was started openly in daylight, and in a day or two

we had it down through the clay some fifteen or twenty feet to a layer of sand, and some four or five feet deeper. At night we entered the well, and started the tunnel just under the clay. Some men, belonging to the Sixth Maine, were engaged with us in the undertaking. We had a box with two barrel staves tacked on the bottom, and a rope at each end. The man in the hole would draw the box in and fill it, when another man stationed in the well would draw it out and empty it. It was rather dangerous work for the man in the tunnel. I tried it one night, but could not get enough oxygen to keep my lungs in working order, and was lucky in being able to get out again to the well in the morning. The sand taken out of the tunnel was drawn up, and dumped near by. Somehow it got to be known that there was a tunnel going on, although only those in the secret knew where it was located. Every night lots of poor devils might be seen standing around with their haversacks on, waiting for something to turn up they knew not what, nor where to look for it, but somehow they hoped there was going to be a chance to get outside of the hated enclosure. We had our

tunnel dug some thirty or forty feet, and were about to bring it up toward the surface, which would bring it well outside the stockade, when one fine morning the rebel quartermaster, who by the way was said to be a "galvanized Yank," though it hardly seems probable to me that they would put one of this class of men into so responsible a position; at any rate he was quite a smart kind of a fellow; he came in, and, counting the sentry posts so as to get the right location, came direct to our well and inquired who was digging it. There did not seem to be any one around there that knew anything about it. He then looked down, but could discover nothing, as we had the opening plastered up. At last he got a ladder and went down, and, taking a stick, commenced jabbing around and soon found the tunnel. He very kindly offered us picks and shovels if we wanted to start another. The well was filled up, and that ended our attempts at escaping by the underground route.

The term "galvanized Yanks" was given to those who took the oath of allegiance to the Southern Confederacy, and enlisted in the rebel armies. We must not judge these men too harshly for taking this step.

Probably nearly all did so with the intention of deserting at the first opportunity, and thinking they would have a better chance to get away than if they stayed in prison. In all probability they were sent to garrisons where their opportunities to desert would be few and far between.

It would be difficult for a person who had not been there to understand how indifferent one can become to scenes of suffering and death. In passing from our tent to the brook for water, you would pass perhaps a dozen men who were in the various stages of disease, some of them perhaps in the last gasp. Emaciated men whose flesh had wasted away, leaving nothing but skin and bone, the top part of their hands looking full and natural, in striking contrast to the remainder of their frames. Men in rags and without shelter of any kind. One or two men were roaming around camp without a particle of clothing upon their bodies. One man in particular had a great penchant for bathing. He never missed a forenoon without taking his regular bath. Now there was nothing very remarkable in his feeling inclined to bathe. The queer thing about it was the place he

chose for cleaning himself. Instead of going above the sinks, he chose to go below. The condition of a small stream after receiving the sewage of twenty-five hundred men can better be imagined than described, especially at certain hours in the morning.

For amusements we had about every day an amateur prize fight near the lower end of the sinks, in which one or both of the contestants were pretty sure to have on one of the red caps of the Brooklyn Fourteenth.

ACROSS THE PEDEE.

Toward the last of August 1864, there began to be evidences of a change at Andersonville. New prisoners brought in told about Sherman's army rapidly approaching. The long hoped for exchange had never come, and the only hope of the prisoners was in being rescued by Sherman. Consequently, when the time came for abandoning the place, the change was not looked upon with a great deal of favor by the prisoners. However, our feelings were not consulted to any great extent in the matter, and about the first of September the place was abandoned, or at least the

larger part of the prisoners were sent away. Among the rest, some four or five hundred of us were shipped to Florence, S. C. The transportation was effected by means of box freight cars, which were used as parlor, sleeping and dining cars combined. The guard's station was on top of the car. At every stop we made after dark, and, on starting up again, before the train acquired full headway, numbers of the men would drop out of the doors, and lie motionless at full length until the train had got away, when they would strike out on their own hook to enjoy a few days freedom, and then, in a majority of cases, would be recaptured. In due course of time we arrived at Florence, which is a small town, a railroad centre on a small scale, situated in the northeastern part of South Carolina, some thirty or forty miles from the North Carolina line. We found on arriving that the stockade destined for our accommodation had not been completed, and consequently we were encamped in an open field with nothing but an ordinary camp guard to hold us. The guard consisted of boys and men too young or too old for active service in the field; also some home guards from Charleston, Wil-

mington and other places. The guard duty was performed in a manner similar to what I have seen at the old militia musters in Massachusetts before the war. Two sentinels would pace their beat facing each other until just in time to avoid a collision, when they would halt, about face, and march back. Old soldiers would have known better. The proper way would have been for all the sentries on the line to march one way, and then turn at the same time and march back. In that way no portion of the line is left unguarded.

One night, soon after our arrival, a party of half a dozen or so happened to meet near the guard line, and fell to discussing the chances of making a break. There were, as might have been expected, a great variety of views expressed. At last we settled on a plan that was probably as impracticable as any that had been broached. It was agreed upon that we should meet at the same place the following evening, and make a rush, overpowering one or more of the guards, and escaping in the confusion that would ensue. On the following evening for some reason, only one beside myself was at the appointed place,

probably owing to a misapprehension of the time or locality. My companion was a young fellow named Peter Mercury, belonging to one of the regular regiments, the Thirteenth I think. He was only about nineteen years old, but quite a stalwart fellow. He had been brought up in the woods in Northern New York, and was quite skillful in all kinds of woodcraft, so we concluded we would try and run the guard then and there. It was now about seven o'clock, and, as the moon, nearly full, would rise about eight, there was no time to lose. So Mercury took one beat and I the next; watching my opportunity, when the guards had turned their backs, I ran across the line, and threw myself in some tall grass a short distance from the line. Looking back I saw Mercury's head bobbing up and down as he was crawling along, having crossed his beat safely. I crept along and fell in behind him. Although we had got so far, we were not out of danger by any means. We had not gone far before three or four men, off duty, accompanied by a dog, came along the path close to us. Our hearts sank, as we expected nothing but what the dog would expose us, but to our great

delight they all passed by, dog and all, without discovering us. Our way led directly past a battery camp. We passed so near that we could hear the voices of the men in their tents. We soon came to a ploughed field where we ventured to get upon our hands and knees and creep. We had been crawling before. After crossing the field we came to some woods, where we once more ventured to stand upon our feet. The question now arose, what are we to do with ourselves now that we had gained our freedom. We were absolutely destitute of everything in the shape of provisions or clothing except what we had on our backs, and very scant at that. We were equally destitute of any information with regard to the locality, beyond a general knowledge that we were somewhere in the State of South Carolina. However, I had an idea that by taking a northeasterly direction we should eventually strike somewhere near New Berne, N. C., which was the nearest point we knew of in possession of the Union troops. Accordingly we determined on taking that course. By this time the moon had risen, and we plunged into the pine forest, soon leaving the lights of

the camp far behind us. We walked all night. For the most of the way it was like walking on a parlor carpet, the pine needles had fallen and killed the undergrowth, so that we had very little to obstruct our way most of the time. The next day we lay hid in a ravine, going out only to a cornfield near by, where we procured some corn on the ear with which we stayed our hunger, eating it raw. At night we started on again, and soon came to a river which we tried to ford, but it was too deep. Went down stream a little way, and came to a bridge over which we passed safely. The next night they had a guard posted on the bridge, as we heard subsequently. We kept on during the night without any serious mishaps. Once while passing a mill pond we were startled by a succession of splashes in the water that sounded like a row of boys diving off a log one after another. We had this experience two or three times, and as we could see nothing were at a loss to account for it. Afterwards we were told it was done by young alligators. If we had known what it was at the time, it is doubtful which would have been the worse scared, ourselves or the alligators.

After awhile we got bolder, and traveled daytimes, and rested at night. One morning we encountered an old gentleman with a gun. However he was after birds, and did not molest us, nor we him. This was the first human being we had met since leaving Florence. That afternoon we reached the big Pedee River. This is a large stream, perhaps larger than the Connecticut at Hartford. We were lucky enough to find a boat sunk near the shore, with a pair of oars hid near by. During the afternoon one of us bailed out the boat with an old tin kettle we found, while the other kept watch on the bank. After dark we started for the other shore. The current was quite strong and carried us down stream quite a piece. We landed on a sand bar, and struck out for high land, but soon found ourselves in a dense briar thicket that reached a foot or two over our heads. Thinking we could soon push through we kept on, but at last after having tried two or three hours were obliged to give it up, and managed to get back to the sand bar very much demoralized and minus a good part of our clothing. We slept on the bar the rest of the night. In the morning

found we could escape the briars entirely by going down stream a little ways. Soon we reached solid ground and pushed on again. So far we had found very good traveling. The woods were open, as a rule, and the swamps not so bad but what we could go through or round them without going much out of the way. Our food consisted mainly of raw corn on the ear; now and then a few wild grapes, and occasionally we would find some small watermelons in the cornfields. At night we would make up our bed of the pine needles without fear of being disturbed during the night. We kept on in this manner for several days without meeting any serious mishaps. One day we reached a stream, I think it is called Lumber River. The problem was, how to cross it. There was no bridge or boat, and it was too deep to ford. We solved it by swimming, putting our clothes on a plank, and pushing it ahead of us. Arriving on the other side we dressed and started on, but soon found our troubles but just begun, as a deep and very dangerous swamp lay between us and the high ground. However, by climbing on trees, and wading in the treacherous

mire, we at last succeeded in getting on solid ground again. At length this kind of life began to tell on us, and we determined to stop at the first black man's house we came to and get rest and some cooked food, which we began to feel the need of very much. So one afternoon we reached a house that looked as if it might afford the needed accommodations. Leaving Mercury in the woods, as he was the worst off, I went up towards the house. There was a grape arbor in front. Going up one side I saw an old man and a woman, white people, picking grapes. I had got quite close to them, and almost in front of them, but they did not see me, so I stole back and reported to Mercury. We were under the impression at that time that all the white people were enemies. After a brief consultation we determined to advance in force and demand food and shelter. When we got there the man and woman had disappeared. We then went to the front door and knocked two or three times, but failed to rouse any one. We then went to the rear door and finding it unlocked, went in. The place was unoccupied and was used as a barn and was half

full of cornstalks. We bunked down on the cornstalks and stayed that night and the following day, helping ourselves to some apples we found on a small tree. Towards night we heard voices of some persons approaching the barn. Looking out through some crevices of the logs, we saw two men approaching. One of them was the old man I had seen the day before, and the other a younger man. One of them said: "I wouldn't have taken twenty-five dollars for those apples." (Considering that Confederacy currency was about twenty-five for one at that time, the price was not exorbitant.) The other man said: "Perhaps they are in the barn now, I see their tracks around, let us go in and see." So they came, and we jumped down and confronted them. They wanted to know who we were. We told them Yankees, upon which they came up and shook hands, and we found we had fallen into the hands of friends. We sat down and talked awhile, and it was settled that we should go to the old man's house and get supper, and then spend the night with the other, and accordingly after a long and friendly conversation, which consisted mainly of questions on their

part and answers on ours, we accompanied the old man, whose name was Abram Moore, to his house only a short distance away. He was living with his daughter, a widow with several children. The supper consisted of bacon boiled with some kind of greens and corn-bread. It would not be considered a very elaborate banquet, perhaps, but certain it is that it tasted better, it seemed to me, than any meal I ever sat down to, which is not to be wondered at when it is considered that we had been for weeks without any cooked food. We got up from the table as hungry as we sat down, not wishing to deprive the family of their meal. After dark the other man came around for us and we went home with him, going a mile or two to get there. Arrived at the place about nine o'clock perhaps, and sat up half the night answering questions from our host and his wife, for these good people were very inquisitive and wanted to know about everything at the North. About midnight a dog outside suddenly commenced barking, and in a moment four or five armed men sprang into the cabin through the rear door. It flashed through my mind in an instant that

we had been trapped, and I jumped for the front door. However, they called out to me to stop as they were friends. It seems that our host had sent word to some rebel deserters who were lying out, as they called it, in the vicinity, and they had called to make us a visit.

The swamps of North and South Carolina at this time were full of these men, who were lying out to avoid the conscription, and some of them had left their commands after being defeated. The word deserter, as we understand it, is rather too hard to use in connection with them, as they were almost to a man earnest Union men. The party that called on us were very cordial and friendly. One of their number, and the only one unarmed, was a Confederate soldier home on a furlough. However, he was as friendly as the rest. We fraternized with our new found friends, and had to go through a second course of questions. We were, so to speak, appropriated by one of them named James, or Jeems as he insisted on being called. He told us that himself and four others were lying out in a swamp some twenty miles away, and it was agreed upon that we

should accompany him there the next day, and stay awhile and recuperate. After awhile our friends left and we bunked down on the floor and got a few hours sleep. Next morning after breakfast Jeems came around and we started, our guide leading the way at a tremendous pace, and we keeping up as well as we could. We traveled all day, now and then going out of our way to avoid a settlement or dangerous spots. Towards night we came to the vicinity of the swamp, but as it would not be safe to go in at night, we went into a barn where we slept that night. In the morning we followed Jeems beside a brook a long way, some of the time wading and some of the time on the bank.

After awhile we left the brook and went some distance further, when Jeems told us to wait where we were until he went ahead and notified his companions. We heard him give a peculiar whistle, and after awhile he came back, and we all went in together. We found three men here who got up and gave us a cordial welcome. They had just been cooking breakfast, and invited us to join them. We did not require a second invitation you may be sure.

The meal consisted of fresh beef, fried with plenty of corn-bread. The way we pitched into that repast was a caution. We ate until long after our host had got through, and then stopped only from shame and fear they would think we were hogs. It took us over a week before we got filled up. I tell you, comrades, there is no beef like that corned-beef; at least I never came across any that I relished so well. Perhaps hunger had something to do with this.

After breakfast we had a chance to inspect our new quarters. Our hosts had resumed their occupations; one was cleaning his firearms; another knitting a pair of stockings, for although they had lady friends that doubtless would have been happy to have relieved them of this duty, yet I presume they were glad to have anything to do to occupy their time, which must have hung heavily on their hands. They had built a log cabin with bunks to accommodate five or six. The situation was well calculated for defence if their enemy could have found them, of which there was little danger.

We must have presented a striking appearance when we landed there. Both legs of my pants from

the knee down were gone, and the rest of my clothing was in rags, the result of our encounter with the briar thicket on the banks of the Pedee, and one shoe had been left in some of the swamps we had encountered. Mercury was probably about as bad off. Our new friends were very kind and thoughtful. They brought us each a suit of clothes and stockings, and made us each a pair of shoes.

It will, perhaps, be a mystery to some how they could make shoes in the midst of a Southern swamp. I will tell you. One night they started off to make a visit to a tanner, whose place was some eight or ten miles off. When they arrived there the proprietor happened to be away, so they helped themselves to four or five sides of leather, taking it out of the vats half tanned. In the morning the leather was in camp. One of the men then went out and cut some sticks of hard wood, and, taking off the bark, threw them into the hot ashes where they seasoned awhile, then with a hatchet and drawknife he fitted them to each of our feet. He made the shoes on these lasts. I wore mine until I got to Annapolis, and they were solid then and as hard as sheet iron. But as they

fitted the feet, I never experienced any trouble wearing them.

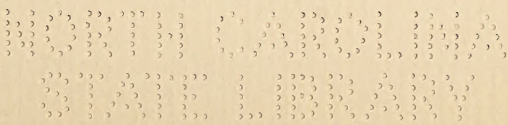
With regard to the food question, we always had enough. The cattle there ran wild in the swamps, the owners knowing them by the brands or earmarks. When we ran short of meat, one of the men, who was a fine shot, would go out and soon run across a cow or steer, which he would shoot, and then the rest of the men would cut it up and bring it into camp. They would then cut it up into strips, trying out the fat. We would hang the pieces out in the sun where we would leave them, taking the precaution to keep a little fire of chips going under them, the smoke of which would keep the flies off, and possibly help to preserve the meat. Prepared in this way it would keep sweet for weeks, or until it was used up. They would trade some of it and the hides with the darkies for meal and salt. We stayed in the swamp some five or six weeks, but the season was getting late, and we wished to get through before cold weather set in, so we made arrangements to start. One of the men had also concluded to go with us to try his luck at the North.

The night before we were to leave he went off to call on his girl. The next day he didn't show up. We waited twenty-four hours for him, but for some reason he did not come. Either he had been picked up by the Confederate authorities, or else the attractions of his sweetheart proved too much for him, and we had to start without him. This was a great misfortune, as he was familiar with the country, and would doubtless have seen us safely through.

We left the swamp by another path from that by which we had entered it. Our friends accompanied us to the edge of the swamp, and we parted from them with their best wishes, and a good supply of fresh pork, as a rebel pig had been unfortunate enough to wander within reach and had been promptly dispatched. This swamp, or the portion of it we had been staying in, is situated in Robeson County, some six or eight miles from Lumberton. A few miles walk brought us to the Cape Fear River. We struck it at a place called Lyons Landing, found a disabled Confederate soldier, who ferried us across and asked no questions. We went on for a couple of days or so without meeting any

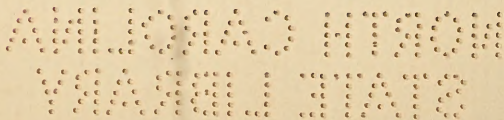
adventures. One morning we started in a cold storm, lost our bearings and found ourselves at noon in the vicinity of the place we started from in the morning. We took a fresh start and after awhile came to a small settlement; went into a house and got a woman to build a fire, and partially dried our clothes; after awhile we started on again.

Late in the afternoon we came to a mill down in a hollow from the road. The miller, an old man, was standing in the doorway and spied us as soon as we saw him. He said: "Hello, boys, come down and get a dram." We went down, and, going around the building into a shed, saw there were three or four young men whom we had not seen before. It was too late to back out, so we put a bold face on and went up to them. The old miller now commenced putting the questions to us, which we answered as truthfully as we possibly could under the circumstances. He wanted to know who we were, and where we belonged. We told him we were Confederate soldiers who had been home on a furlough, and we were now returning to our regiment. He wanted to know where we lived. We



told him in Robeson County. He then questioned us as to localities and names. We had stopped in the swamps long enough to become somewhat familiar with the names of prominent citizens and localities in the vicinity, and accordingly gave him the names. Still the old fellow did not seem quite satisfied. Just at this time Mercury (very little passed within the range of his vision that escaped his notice) saw the old fellow hand a key or something else to one of the young men, who on receiving it immediately went out. Upon this he gave me the wink, and I said, "Guess we had better be going, as it was getting late," and started out, the old fellow making no effort to detain us, somewhat to our surprise.

We went up the bank, and as long as we were in sight kept a moderate gait; but as soon as we got out of sight, we let out at our very best speed. About a mile from the mill we came to a bridge, which we crossed, and, looking back, saw the old miller coming on horseback at full speed, with a gun in his hands. On the side of the road we were on was a small thicket, on the other side quite an ex-



tensive swamp and forest. We had no time to cross the road, but just stepped into the thicket out of sight as he went by, his horse on the jump. He stopped a colored man who was coming down the road and questioned him, but learning nothing, kept on, and as soon as he was out of sight we crossed the road and plunged into the woods, where we were comparatively safe. We lay still until dark, when we started again and tried to find the road, but were unable to do so. After wandering around we spied a light at a distance and succeeded in getting up to it. We found a colored man splitting shingles by the light of a pitch-pine fire, and we went up and made ourselves known to him, but he was a surly fellow and would not say anything, not even to tell us how we could reach the road. He did, however, make out to say his master was not far away ; so we took the hint and left, managed to find the road, and went on some further. The rain, which had held up for awhile, now commenced falling again harder than ever. After awhile we came to a wayside church or schoolhouse, which we broke into and stayed there the rest of the night. I can't say slept, as it was cold and our clothes were wet through.

Early next morning we pushed on again, and, after going a few miles, came to the conclusion that we were on the wrong road, so we went back a piece and took another road, followed this road for awhile when we came to a planter's residence, which stood back a little way from the road. We saw half a dozen men with horses in the yard. They saw us as soon as we saw them and started for us. We broke for the woods, but as there was no fence and the woods were open, they soon came up with us and the jig was up. They had a pack of hunting dogs, which, however, they took pains to inform us were harmless. We did not observe our old friend, the miller, among the captors, although I have no doubt that it was through his kind offices that we were taken. They were well-to-do citizens, who managed to keep out of the army by such service as this. We were taken to the house of one of the men, a Mr. Robinson, where we got a good dinner and supper and a good bed to lie on, something we had not seen before in a long time. Next morning after breakfast we started in the following order: first, two men in a buggy in advance, next came Mercury in a buggy

with a man, next myself and man, and two in another buggy, and bringing up the rear were two men in a team. All of the escort were well armed. We were taken to some place, the name of which has escaped me, and reported to some one who ordered us taken to Wilmington. The procession started again for Magnolia, a small station on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Here we took the train and in due time arrived at Wilmington.

Arriving there our escort handed us over to the provost marshal whose headquarters were in a warehouse near the river. After a brief stay here, we were sent to the jail. They divided their jails on the color line it seems, and we were sent to the prison, formerly used for the detention of colored people, but now used as a military prison. The other jail, I presume, was used for civil offenders. We found here some fifty prisoners, mostly Confederates, from the garrisons around Wilmington, who were in for various offences, such as staying over furloughs and other misdemeanors. There were also a few citizens who had been arrested on suspicion that they were going to skip the Confederacy,

and among the rest four Yanks. These four had experienced worse luck, if possible, than we had. They had escaped from Florence, about the time we did, and made their way to the coast. They saw a vessel off shore, and, getting a boat, succeeded in getting aboard of her, when they found to their great dismay, that they had got aboard of a blockade runner. The captain carried them to Wilmington, and delivered them to the authorities. They were sent under guard overland to Florence. On the way they succeeded in getting on the soft side of the guard by talking as though they were tired of the service, and intended to enlist in the Confederate service as soon as they got back to Florence. This step was taken by a great many prisoners, who did so thinking they would have a better chance to escape. These fellows were known as "galvanized Yanks." One night, the guard having perfect confidence in the good faith of the new converts, went to sleep. As soon as everything was quiet the boys took their guns and ammunition, and started off on another tack. However, they were recaptured by citizens at about the same locality where we had

been, and through the instrumentality of the same old miller. While on board the blockade runner they found some of John Morgan's men who were returning home after being captured and escaping in Ohio. These fellows were friendly and gave them blankets, etc.

The jailor was named Sam. I suppose he had another name, but if he had it was never used. He was quite an easy, good-natured fellow, but with an eye to the main chance if there was any money to be made. He would button-hole every fresh prisoner who came in, and endeavor to exchange Confederate currency for greenbacks at the rate of twenty for one. He was very solicitous about the health of the men under his charge; at least he did not mean to destroy our health by over-feeding. However, we fared as well as our fellow sufferers of the Confederate persuasion. The jail was a brick structure, on a street corner. The yard was about twenty-five or thirty feet square, and surrounded by a high, brick wall, with broken glass on the top.

While in the swamp I had sold an old brass watch, which I had been carrying, for sixty dollars Confed-

erate currency. I was quite a capitalist. I bought one day a pint of peanuts, for which I paid one dollar. This will give you an idea of the purchasing power of Confederate money at this time.

We stayed here two or three weeks, and began to think we were booked for the winter. The other prisoners were coming and going all the time, so we soon began to feel like old settlers. We had just made arrangements with Sam to get one of our men into the cook-house, when orders came to send the six of us back to Florence.

Accordingly we started for that place under guard on a passenger train, arrived in due time, and were turned over by the guard to the prison authorities. The lieutenant who took charge of us, in answer to an inquiry of mine, replied very cheerfully that we were to be shot the next day. However, we did not take much stock in the yarn. They handcuffed us together by twos and shoved us into the guard-house, a log building adjoining the stockade. Here we were very much surprised at each receiving a big loaf of white bread, the first time anything of that kind had happened while we were in the Confederacy.

We began to think there might be something in the shooting story after all. However, next morning they took off our handcuffs, and put us into the enclosure with the rest of the prisoners. I soon found my regimental comrades, who were very much surprised at seeing me, as they had given us up for dead, or had got through to our lines long before.

The stockade at Florence was similar to that at Andersonville, only smaller. It was an enclosure surrounded by pine logs. The logs were perhaps fifteen or twenty feet long, and sunk in the ground side by side sufficiently to hold them secure. They were also braced on the outside. The sentry posts or boxes were built up on the outside at regular intervals and accessible only from the outside. All around the inside, and at ten feet distance, ran the dead line; in many places an imaginary line only, as the light railing had been carried off and burned.

I took up my quarters with my regimental comrades at first, but, as the place was crowded, soon found a place with a party of Indiana soldiers who had spare room in another quarter of the camp. They had been prisoners a long time, and had

accumulated plenty of blankets and other articles necessary for camp life, and had quite comfortable quarters. During the winter most of them were taken sick and several died, and as we drew rations for them as long as they lived, and they ate little or nothing while sick, we had, with my extra rations as a member of the police force, enough to eat and to spare. The rations consisted of meal and pea-beans, perhaps every other day cornbread instead of meal, and occasionally a ration of molasses. The rations were doubtless sufficient in quantity to sustain life, but being issued as a rule uncooked, and the prisoners generally having no facilities for cooking, they might as well have had none at all, as far as deriving any nourishment from them was concerned. During the winter we had an exchange of sick prisoners. I don't know as I ever before really wanted or tried so hard to be sick, but it was no go, I could not impress upon the rebel surgeon the idea that I needed a change of climate. I went out near the gate and watched the line as they filed out. I soon spied Mercury among them waving his hand at me in a most triumphant manner. Somehow or other

he had smuggled himself into the line, though I doubt if there was a sounder man in the whole camp.

There was a large number of men who, as the saying goes, had lost their grip, either through sickness or other causes. There were several poorhouses, so called, constructed, which were filled with these fellows. These poorhouses were constructed by digging a hole in the ground, like the cellar to a house, and covered by logs coming to a peak like a roof. This was covered by earth, and afforded some sort of protection from the cold and rain. These places were filled with men who had no other place to go to, and who were destitute of blankets and clothing. During the first warm days of February these places were overhauled, men were taken out alive, but whose clothes were covered with white mould from head to foot.

I had succeeded in getting an appointment on the police force. This was gotten up by the prisoners for the sake of enforcing order among themselves, as among so large a body of men there will always be found some turbulent ones. Our uniform consisted

of shirt and pants and a coat if the roundsman was lucky enough to have one. We were armed with a short club suspended from the wrist, and a small whistle to summon assistance if things got too warm. The pay consisted of an extra ration. We had our regular beats, and so many hours on and off, and I think we were as expeditious in hunting for shelter on a rainy night as any of Chief Baker's men. I remember one night while patrolling my beat I saw a small fire at a distance from where I was, and accordingly went over to see what it was. There was a poor fellow half clothed, and without shelter, hovering over a small fire of half a dozen chips that he had collected, endeavoring to get a little warmth from a fire that was hardly more than the blaze from a tallow candle. I spoke to him, and he looked at me with a vacant stare. He was wandering in his mind, and all I could make out was the word "mother." I could not help thinking that the chances of his mother ever seeing him again were very slim. I went around that way again in about half an hour, thinking I would try and get him in under shelter, but the fire was out and he had disappeared.

About the 20th of February we were started from Florence for Wilmington, for the purpose of exchange. Arriving in the city from the south we were conducted through the streets to the northern end. On the way through, the ladies of Wilmington came out with bread, cookies, and other eatables, which were very acceptable. We were marched in squads or car loads, each car load being kept separate. At this time our forces under Schofield were about to take the city, and we could hear the musketry firing, at times quite distinctly. The negotiations for exchange were apparently broken off, and they commenced running the prisoners on the cars again, to take them up in the country. I made up my mind that I had had enough of it, and determined I would run the guard again if I could find some one I knew to go with me. I was in the last detachment, or the first to go back. I worked my way through each detachment, till I came to the last, but could find no one whom I knew. It was now about night time, and they were apparently making arrangements to stay all night, as they were allowed to send out parties under guard to get wood and

water. I took position near the guard line, and presently a party came along going out after wood and water. They had two or three guards with them. I immediately fell in behind them. The camp guard thought I belonged with the party, and the guard with the party did not see me at all. I gradually fell behind, and, after getting out of sight of the camp guard, turned away in a different direction and soon was clear of the whole of them. This was quite easy of accomplishment, as it was about dark. After wandering around for awhile, I struck a path and was following it, when I heard voices of men in the rear. I stepped out of the path into the brush, and they came along and passed me. As they went by I learned from their talk that they were escaped prisoners, so I came out, made myself known, and was invited to join them, which I was happy to do. They had tried in every direction, but were unable to get out of the camp. We concluded to stay where we were, as it was a dry place, bunk down and wait until daylight. We stayed there that night and the following day and night.

The second morning we heard the sound of cheer-

ing from the direction of the city. One of the men went out and found a colored man who told him that the streets of Wilmington were full of Yankee soldiers. We started immediately, and, taking the railroad track, were soon in Wilmington, and looking at a line of bluecoats with guns on their shoulders and the old flag with them. This was the 22d of February, 1865, Washington's birthday. I also celebrated my own birthday at the same time.

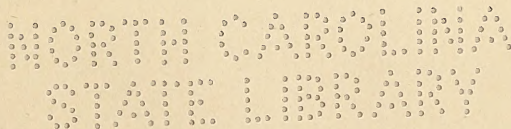
The citizens were not all mourners at this time. There was one citizen who felt so good that he was giving away silver coins to any one who would come and get them. I succeeded in getting one silver quarter dollar in the rush.

We reported to the provost marshal who furnished us rations and quarters. There were some fifty or seventy-five escaped prisoners here. We stayed here four or five days, and were shipped to Annapolis in a leaky old schooner, leaving Wilmington before the rest of the prisoners got in; arrived at Annapolis safely, after a long and disagreeable voyage. The balance of the prisoners came in on steamers the next day. The second day I was taken sick with

typhoid fever and went to the hospital. Phillips was brought in about the same time with the same disease.

Before closing, I would like to give you a slight sketch of George C. Phillips, and the somewhat remarkable manner in which our lives coincided. Although a native of Fitchburg, Mass., he happened to be at Northampton and enlisted in the same company at the same time with myself. We were together nearly all through the war, and part of the time bunk-mates. As I have shown, we went over the rebel breastworks at the same time, arrived together at Andersonville, got back into our lines about the same time, were both (after about nine months of captivity without a sick day) taken sick at the same time with the same disease, recovered at the same time, went to Boston together, and were discharged at the same time. After that he went with me and stayed a couple of weeks at my home in Northampton. After that our lives diverged. He went to Boston and was a traveling salesman; from there joined Post No. 113, of which he was a member as long as he lived. He had business in

Providence occasionally and called to see me once in a while, stopping at my house one night. Afterwards he went to New York where he carried on business. One day, some seven or eight years ago, I had a call on the telephone at my place of business. A man called up and wanted to know if it was Mr. Williams? I said yes. He then told me that a man named George Phillips had just died at his house, who had been acquainted with me. I went over at once, and saw that it was my old friend and comrade. It seemed that he was here on business, and had been stopping at the Narragansett Hotel. He was taken slightly ill, and Mr. Berry, who had called me up, very kindly invited him to his home, as the hotel would be a poor place for a sick man. He grew worse very fast and died. His wife was with him at the time. He was buried at Mt. Vernon, just out from New York, where he resided.



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N. C., by way of Andersonville
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Williams

From Spottsylvania to Wilmington, N. C.,
by way of Andersonville and Florence

