A Confederate Sergeant's Adventures.


I was first sergeant in McGowan's Battalion of Sharpshooters.* My brother Blackwood --- called Bob for short, --- was a corporal in the same battalion.

* --- McGowan's South Carolina brigade. To each brigade in Jackson's corps, --- and also, I believe, in all the corps of Lee's army, --- was attached a body of sharpshooters, men picked from their regiments, not merely for skill in marksmanship, but also as best fitted for the most arduous and dangerous service. About one man in twenty was chosen. The sharpshooters were held in honor; somewhat, I imagine, as was the Old Guard of Napoleon. Each battalion wore its own badge on the arm; ours was a green stripe, --- over it a red star.

The following extract from my diary was written in winterquarters at Petersburg, in the winter of 1864.

"Under command of Capt. Dunlop, McGowan's Sharps, a battalion consisting originally of 160 men, but continually depleted by losses in battle, took, in the campaign of 1864, by actual count, 830 prisoners."

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(**) Lives now in New Orleans, agent for J. B. Lippincott Co.

*** Now Auditor of State, Little Rock, Arkansas.
On the fifth and sixth of May we fought in the Wilderness; five days after we lay in line of battle at Spotsylvania.

I was just twenty-one. My brother was nineteen. I had but newly made acquaintance with my first moustache. Marching through the Valley, after fighting Antietam, the grey dust, stirred by thousands of feet settled thick over all. The men forced each other about their old grey beards. "Look!" says Billy Stokes, "even Benson's little mustache!"

Now, in 1864, we had been soldiers three years, and more. Except for a wound received at Chancellorsville I was in perfect physical condition. Bob was wounded at Cold Harbor, being then seventeen.

Of the scouting done by the battalion a large part fell to me. On the eleventh of May Gen. Wilcox* ordered me on a scout upon the enemy's left flank. I took with me Powell, with his telescope rifle. We were out all day, wet by rain. At dusk we lay under a low-spaying cedar, and listened to the talk.

of the enemy’s pickets hard by. Said one, "They told us a damned lie about Butler taking Richmond." We rested our rifles on the fence, and took aim at the groups, wet, crowding around the fires. Just for fun. When it was dark, I stole between the pickets and entered the camp. Powell was to wait for me; we agreed upon a signal. Clad in grey, I dared not go close to the fires, but, standing off a little, and pretending to be lost from my command, I would ask: "Where is the 79th New York?" Being answered, I would ask, "What regiment is this?" and other things I wished to know. At a farm-house artillery was parked. I leaned on the fence and talked with the men in the yard. Had I been suspected, I should have hung.

Turning back, and keeping to the more open spaces, I came to a fly-tent pitched
by itself. A man stood outside, talking with one inside. I hid behind a bush. The outside called the other Colonel. The Colonel was giving orders as to the disposition of the regiments. He seemed to be commanding a brigade. I heard all the orders. The man, who wore a sword, went away. The colonel lay down. Thirty feet in front of their tent, which was open, stood a horse. Could I steal him? Getting the horse betwixt me and the tent, I walked up softly. The animal was gentle, and remained quiet. Keeping my legs behind the horse's forelegs, I felt along the halter, which was leather, to the knot. I tried to untie the knot. But it was awkward with my left hand, so I cut the halter with my knife. The colonel had not stirred. Moving slowly and softly, I led the horse away. Gaining a little distance, I went quickly. I was now in open ground,
— no tents. But, at the stream below, on the picket line, I heard men. Swerving a little to pass these, I crossed the stream at a run, the horse leaping it with me. The ground was turf, and the pickets on either side did not hear, or did not understand. In a few minutes I was with Powell. I had captured a fine black mare, wearing a colonel’s saddle-cloth. *

There was yet a cavalry picket to pass. As we drew near the post, I suggested the capture of another horse. So, tying the mare in the woods, we crept up to the house;* lying on the ground against the yard fence, we watched the men walking about in the yard, and heard their talk. There were twenty or more,— too many to attack; and after waiting some time, and finding no chance to lift a

* When I was in prison, Bob sold the mare to Major Ham Hammond for $2,500. I saw her after the war, in the streets at home, (Augusta, Ga.)
† The Anderson house, as I remember.
horse, we gave up the enterprise.

It was broad day when we reached our lines. I could not find Gen. Wilcox, to make report. Tired, wet, hungry, sleepy, I threw myself on the ground, saying, "Boys, wake me up when you get something to eat." Immediately,—I had not closed my eyes,—the long roll beat. "Fall in! Fall in!" Quickly we move to the left,—some musketry there,—not much, there is most always a little. Now we double-quick; heavier musketry. "Faster, men, faster! Hurry!" Now faster still,—it is almost a run. Something must have happened. Indeed, something had happened. Johnson’s division had been surprised at daylight, and captured with all his artillery; and the Horse-Shoe Bend was in possession of the enemy! Faster—faster—

not in line of battle but now we run. Changing into the works by the flank, Carolinians, Georgians, Louisianians,
all mixed together, we are met by showers of bullets from our own breastworks. Trampling over our own dead, jostling aside our own wounded, bending low, we push along the entrenchments. A battle-flag is just behind me,—it seems to move so slowly.

"Forward with the flag!" I cry. Then I run back and seize the staff: "Give me the flag!" The colorbearer looks at me coolly, scornfully: "I can carry the flag!" and tramps steadily forward. Bullets rain.

Still advancing, we creep from traverse to traverse; these are our sole protection. The breastworks are none.

Now the right of our line overlaps the enemy; only the earthwork between. Men on both sides kneel, reach up, rest their guns on the works, and fire downward, pulling the trigger with the thumb. There is no artillery,—it is too close,—there is no room. A tree, twenty inches diameter, is cut down by
bullets. Limbs from other trees fall, and upon the fighters. All day raged the fearful struggle, broken only by intervals of truce, when each argued, even pleaded, with the other, demanding surrender. Once, in a hot place, some men of ours raised a white flag. "Shoot those men! Shoot those men!" ran along our lines, and the flag came down.

At some time, I do not know when, utterly worn out, lying down, I fell asleep. When I woke, it was night. A dead man lay by my side. The firing had ceased, but I heard the tramp of many feet. "What troops?" I asked. "—Louisiana Battalion." "Where are you going?" "We are evacuating the works; you'd better get up out of there." We fell back to an inner line, and the enemy did not follow. It was a bloody, murderous battle, the more hateful for being utterly fruitless to either side."
On the night of the 16th, while I lay on a heap of pine-boughs, — the ground being wet, — an orderly came from Gen. McCowar, wanting a scout. I rose, chose two men, and reported.

"You are to learn if the enemy are moving on the Telegraph Road; the order is from Gen. Lee."

"We are near the centre of the army," I said, "I could hardly return before noon tomorrow."

"He must know tonight."

"I could creep up close to their pickets and listen, but I do not think I could learn anything."

"Then you must go inside."

"But I cannot get through their pickets," I said, "it is a strong skirmish-line. I know; I have been fighting them all day."

"You must go inside."
"What time is it now?" I asked.

"Eleven O'clock."

"I will be back by one," I said, "if I come back."

Outside our pickets, I ordered one man behind me, just keeping me in sight, in the dark; the other, to keep the first in sight. When they heard me talking with the enemy, they must listen, then go back and report. But what should I do? What part should I play? Deserter? I would be held under guard. Confederate scout? I would be guarded closely. Union scout? They would hardly let me pass; it would be foolish, un-military, -- but it is my only chance; they might. And if held under guard? I must learn what I came for, and escape.

Slowly advancing, and with much caution, I listened close for the movement of troops. I heard nothing. Just before me lay a
low earthwork. I stopped and listened. No sound, only the low voices of the pickets. I must go inside.

"Who comes there?"

"A scout."

"Union or rebel?"

"Union!"

"Advance, and give the countersign!"

"I have no countersign; I have been all day between the lines, and am just coming in."

"Come in!"

I climbed over amongst them, and they gathered around me. In the darkness the color of my uniform was not noted. They might have made a light, but they did not. Perhaps they were afraid of our pickets.

"What regiment?"

"New York."

"What brigade? — division? — corps?"

*To these questions I gave proper answers, being posted.
"I have been scouting along the rebel lines; I came in here to go back with my news."

"To whom?"

"Gen. Hancock."

"Who sent you out?"

"Gen. Hancock."

A short consultation, and one said: "We will keep you till morning."

"Gen. Hancock will want me," I said, "if you distrust me, send a guard with me to him." (I wanted to get out by the Telegraph Road.) But the officer said, "I'll send you to brigade headquarters."

Two men were detailed, who conducted me through the camps. Stopping at a large tent, my guards announced that they had one in charge calling himself a Union scout. The officer, lying inside, in the dark, addressed me:

"What regiment do you belong to?"
"— New York."
"You are a Southern soldier!"
"You are quite mistaken, sir."
"You are a Southern soldier!"
"What made you think so?"
"I know it by your voice."

I felt that I was now discovered, but, hop-
ing he might be sleepy, and would send me away, I replied:
"You are wrong, sir; you may keep me till morning and send me to Gen. Hancock, then you will know."

I heard him move. A match was struck, and a candle lit.
"Come in here!"

It was all up. I pulled back the flap of the tent, and stepped inside, grey clothes, rifle and all.
"Aha!" he exclaimed. "What state are you from?"
"South Carolina!"

"Ah!" Then he broke into a laugh. I laughed also.

"I knew you were a Southerner, as soon as you spoke; I have lived in the South. What is your name?"

"Burry Benson. And your name, General?"

"I am Col. Sweitzer, commanding a brigade." Mighty clever he was, talking kindly, even familiarly; asking how we fared, and when I showed him some camp-baked bread I had with me, he ate a piece, declaring it better than his own hard-tack.

Then he told me to leave my rifle, bade me good-night, and wished me a speedy exchange. For which I thanked him, intending to exchange myself before daylight if I could.

I was then delivered to a rearguard of the camp-guards, who gave a receipt for me, and I was conducted to a clump of pines,
where a dozen tents were pitched, and an armed guard sat by a fire. The camp, were all about, thousands of tents. Over there lay the Telegraph Road; I listened, but heard nothing. I stood by the fire. My guard sat, staring in the coals. Presently a thought came to me. Can I get him to tell me? But how? By making him boast. So I began to talk of the war, and to boast of this and of that. My plan worked; he quickly followed my lead. I learned that the enemy was being reinforced from Washington; the Corcoran Legion would be up tomorrow, and the Heavy Artillery, changed now into infantry. This was not what I came for; still, it was news; might it not be news for Gen. Lee? And, from the silence, I believed no troops were moving to-night.

It was now so late in the night, I must be quick as what I would do. Should I both
from my guard? Was his gun loaded? I could not tell; I thought the hammer was down. But could I find that out? I thought that I could.

Within reach, leaning against a pine, was one of the guards' guns. If that gun is loaded, I argued, his is; if not, his isn't.

"Why, we are better drilled than you," I said; "I dare say, now, I can go through the manual better than you."

At this, I catch up the gun; I shoulder and — present arms! — come back to the shoulder, — I give the order, "Load in nine times, Tread!"

The butt drops to the ground; I bite an imaginary cartridge; draw the ramrod; I push it down the barrel; — the gun is empty!

Putting it back in its place, I was about to say "Goodbye, John," when a corporal came, and, leaning his gun by the other, stood by his piece was loaded; the cap gleamed in the firelight. The fire a moment. Then, taking his rifle again, he ordered me with him. We had gone but a little way when we passed near the
edge of a wood. In it I saw no tents. Its shades invited me. Day was beginning to break. I could wait no longer. One step back, then with a sudden blow I struck the guard’s gun from his shoulder, and dashed to the wood. I heard the piece fall upon the ground, and the corporal’s voice rang out, “Stop that man! Stop that man!” Then a cap snapped behind me,—his gun had missed fire. In a moment more I had reached the woods, and was speeding through the trees. But my pursuer followed close, calling incessantly “Stop that man! Stop that man!” He was swift of foot, and held his own in the race. How great, then, my surprise and alarm, when the woods suddenly end, and I spring into the open field! Down the hill I fly, I leap a stream, and turn my course to a wood beyond. Still my pursuer follows,—still rings his cry: “Stop that man! Stop that man!” But I
gain the wood,—I am climbing the hill,—I will yet escape,—when suddenly down upon me come charging a half-score of men who take me and hold me fast.

The corporal came up, out of breath like myself. At first he was angry, and called me bad names. Then he said I had struck him, and out of revenge he prodded me once with his bayonet. It did not hurt very much but it made me angry, and I gave him my tongue. The others, too, interfered; I feel grateful yet to the one who said: "He had a right to escape, corporal, if he could,—I like him for trying." The corporal really was not such a bad fellow; what really made him angry was that he had nearly lost me.*

* Two months after this Sergeant Hood, of my regiment, who was captured by these same men; they told him of the adventure, and the corporal was loud in his praise of me. He showed Hood also a dirty-knife with my name cut on the handle, which had fallen from my belt as I ran, and which had afterward been found.
I was taken back to the camp; they tied my hands behind my back, and tied me to a tree. "Guess you won't run now!" said the corporal. Then my pockets were searched, and my pocketbook, testament and diary taken. The purse and testament were returned, but the diary was kept.

One of the names that the corporal called me was "spy"; and when now I overheard "the damned spy", — "I thought it strange his asking such questions," — "What did you let him pump you that way for?" — then I felt uneasy. What if I should be tried as a spy! There was much against me; indeed, all there was in my favor was my gray uniform. And what was in my diary? Had I written of being in their camps before? I was not sure.

The corporal, turning his abuse from me to his rifle, swore it had never served him
such a trick before, as to miss fire. "But this is not my gun," he cried, "this other is nine," taking up the one he had left behind when he took me away. The gun he had taken was the one I had "loaded in nine times" and upon which I had actually placed a cap from my vest pocket. "That saved your bacon," he said, "I had dead aim on the back of your head!"

Whatever the marines intended in taking me away, my attempt at escape had broken it up; perhaps they thought I was safer tied to a tree. The rope hurt my wrists, and at length became so painful, I asked for a change. Then they tied my hands to a limb over my head. This soon became even more painful, and it was a great relief when new guards came and took me away.

I was first taken to the headquarters
of Gen. Patrick, provost-marshal. This was the house where I had leaned on the fence and talked with the artillery, five nights before. Thence I was taken through the camps quite a distance. As I passed along the men called out, "Hello, Johnny Reb! How are you Johnny?" I did not mind that, but what I did mind was the strange oaths, and the cursing and black-guarding of one another (in mere sport) that I heard. I was astonished. To call such vile names in our camp would make twenty fights in an hour.

Being brought to Gen. Meade's headquarters, I recognized it as the house* where Powell and I had lain in wait to capture a horse and failed. Does fate mock me? I thought. An officer wearing a colonel's shoulder-straps came from the house and

* If I remember right, it was the Anderson house.
addressed me. He accused me of being a spy. "No, sir," I said, "I am no spy; why do you make this charge?" For answer he produced my diary. "Is this yours?" "Yes, sir." "Is this your writing?" (showing the roll of the sharpshooters). "It is." "Are you detached from your command?" "I am." "As what?" "I am in a corps of sharpshooters." "Are these sharpshooters mounted?" At once it flashed through my mind he had read a note I had made of lending the mare to Capt. Hewetson, quartermaster, so I replied, "Not as a rule; I have a horse myself, now in charge of my quartermaster." "What were you doing with this in your book?" He handed me then a slip of paper. I took it and read:
In the Field, May 10, 1864.
Received of Corporal John White
one rebel prisoner.
Thomas Black
Sergt of Provost Guard.

"This paper", I said, "was not found in my book."

"But it was found in your book, and sent to me in it, as your property."

"Someone else put it there then; I never saw it before." I could see that he did not believe me

"Colonel," I said, "you call me a rebel; now what sense is there in a rebel receiving a rebel prisoner?"

"That's just what we don't understand."

"And no wonder you don't; I don't understand it either; it's nonsense." He stood, looking at the paper. But, all at once, a new light dawned on me. I remembered that the picket guard, the night before, when he gave me over to the provost guard, asked for

*These names fictitious; I do not remember the true names.
a receipt, which was written by the light of a candle. This I related to the officer, and suggested that this paper was that receipt.

"But how did it come in your book?"

"It must be, Colonel, that in sending you all the papers relating to me, this was placed in the book to accompany it."

"But this is dated the tenth, 10th, a week ago today." I replied,

"The figures seem to be 10, that is true; but I think they are meant for 16, being written hurriedly, perhaps carelessly." This was doubtless the true solution, but he was still incredulous. I think he had in mind that I was acting spy for both sides, and a traitor to one, most likely his own. He then asked, "What were you doing when Captain__ Scouting."

"But why did you say, when hailed, that you were a Union scout?"

"I thought it possible the pickets might not..."
"But you told Col. Sweitzer you were a Union scout?"

"That is true; but I had to be consistent; and I did not know but he might let me go. There was no wrong in that. And do you not see, Colonel, how unjust it is to accuse me as a spy? For I was taken outside your lines; I was armed with my regular arms; I was in full grey uniform." Thus I pleaded with him for some at some length, hoping to win his sympathy, for I felt that I was in a sore strait. He listened patiently, but told me I would be tried by drumhead court-martial that day as a spy; but I would not be condemned without a hearing; and while all the events of the night were greatly against me, yet he felt kindly toward me, and would do all he could to bring me out safe. Then he dismissed me.
I now felt really alarmed. I imagined myself brought under the halter; and in that moment I made a resolve that if it came to the worst, I would snatch a gun if I could and shoot the highest officer there.

And I kept a watchful eye for escape. If the trial would only be put off till tomorrow! Tonight I would break for the woods. Big woods those; I knew them; just over yonder we tied up the mare. How slowly moved the sun, if it were only night!

Other prisoners were brought up. We lay along the fence, (where Powell and I had lain), under close guard. One looked at his watch. "What is the time?" I asked.

And from that time (so slowly moved the sun) I was continually asking the hour. Then, to explain my anxiety, I told him my predicament. His name was Ferrynough.* He lived near Fredericksburg, and belonged to the Fredericksburg Artillery. 

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Still other prisoners came. Amongst them I noticed a young man, bright-looking, and better dressed than common. He sat apart from the rest. But presently he was talking with Ferneyough, who, it seems, told him of me. For, turning to me suddenly, he asked, "Is your name Benson?" "Yes." "Well, you needn't feel any alarm; you will be held as a prisoner-of-war." My heart jumped to my throat. "How do you know?" He replied, "I am myself a scout. I was captured to-day and brought up and questioned. When through with me they asked if I knew a scout named Benson. I said No. Then they told me about you, and asked why you should have said you were a Union scout. I said, "Oh, I suppose he is some greenhorn who got scared when he was hailed, and didn't know what he was saying.' Then they talked a little together, and agreed to let you go as a prisoner-of-war."
I was rejoiced. I knew it must be true, for he was an utter stranger and could only have known the facts as he said. For, although I had told Deserteur what I feared, I had not told him the details of capture; nor had we yet learned each other’s name.

The scout’s name was Ellison. He was a sergeant in Co. E, 3rd Ala. Inf. He was a scout for Gen. Ewell. We became fast friends at once, and began to plot escape. He slyly showed me his purse, which held greenbacks, silver and gold.

In the afternoon we were marched away under cavalry guard, Ellison and I keeping together. On the road we met, sure enough, the Corcoran Legion and the Heavy Artillery coming to the front, as infantry. These had been manning the works at Washington, and had seen no service. Their uniforms were bright and new, — they even wore white cotton gloves. So they hailed us: “How are you John—"
nies?" we answered back with scorn; even our guards joined in and jeered: "Oh, yes! Johnny 'll get them fat knapsacks! Johnny 'll have them white gloves!" *

Arrived at Fredericksburg, we camped on a bare hillside at the edge of the town. We stayed here two or three days, Ellison advising to postpone escape, on account of the openness of the country, the trees having been felled for fuel in '63 by the camping armies. The weather was bad, and, having no blanket, I slept in the rain on the bare ground, with only the clouds for cover, and my arm for a pillow.

From thence we were taken, twenty-five of us, to Belle Plain, on the Potomac. Here we

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* That winter, sitting around the camp fires, the boys told me how they fought with the Washington Heavy Artillery, and captured no end of fat knapsacks. "And in every knapsack a pair o' white gloves!" says 'Gator. "When I see them white gloves I look for a dace22-baby, but I were disappointed!"
were confined in a barn. Amongst us was a backwoods fellow, who, being easily teased, became the butt of the company. He was accused of Union sentiments, and of intention to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. He was told we intended to try him for this contemplated treason, and had already decided to find him guilty. I never liked practical jokes, and I took no part in this, but Ellison did, and he said to the man, "You'd better break and run; the guard might miss you; if you stay you'll be hung." Now these remarks reached one of the sentries outside heard scraps of this, — "break and run," — "the guard might miss," — and thought it a plot to escape; and presently came the sergeant.

* Confederate prisoners looked on the "oath-taker" as a villain blacker than tongue could speak.

** He wore a black, not a blue, uniform. He had been kind to us, giving us his own rations when hungry.
very angry, and gave us warning. We protested, and told him the truth, but he did not credit us. "That captain* is at the head of it," said the sentry, pointing out Ellison. Shortly after, an officer came, handcuffed Ellison and took him away.

Next morning some new prisoners came in. One told how, the night before, he had overheard his guards say that a Confederate captain had been taken handcuffed into the woods and hung. This cast a gloom over us all.

**May 23.** This afternoon we were taken by steamer down the river; and about 4 o'clock we arrived at Point Lookout prison. Point Lookout is in Maryland; it is the cape that is made where the Potomac flows into the

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* Ellison had given his rank as captain instead of sergeant. "I will fare better," he said to me. "But a captain must be given up for you in exchange," I said.

"I shall not be exchanged!"
Chesapeake. There the river is eight miles wide, the Chesapeake thirty.

The prison was a large pen with plank walls ten feet high. An elevated walk outside brought the top of the wall waist-high to the guards. The place was full of tents. I was told there were 10,000 prisoners. I was assigned to a sliver tent in which were fifteen others, all strangers to me, and I slept with them that night.

Next day, walking about to see how things looked, and what chance for escape, suddenly I heard my name called. Turning, I was grasped by the hand by one of my regiment. Mike Duffy had been here some time, and I learned that others of my regiment were here. But I did not stay long with him; I must explore the prison. One side of the prison was but thirty feet from the Chesapeake, and in
that wall were three small gates. These were kept open in the day, giving free access to the beach. A guard on the beach at each corner of the pen prevented escape. Opposite each gate a plank walk led up to a large open box that rested on piles in the water. These were the privies. They looked much like railway water tanks.

I went outside. On the sand men walked or rested; some had tubs (half-barrels) and washed clothes; some were bathing and swimming. If my attempt to escape was to be made by the sea (and this seemed the most hopeful) I Should exercise in swimming. So I stripped, and swam out farther than the farthest. Then the thought came to me, Why not be out in the water at sunset, when the men are called in for the closing of the gates, and, instead of returning, strike boldly out to sea?
brought to retake me? Then, in the darkness I could regain land. I thought well of it, and I determined to exercise much in the water till I could undertake a swim of four or five hours.

On the beach, resting, I made acquaintance with a Louisianian who had lived in this prison the past winter and spring; he had been exchanged just before the battle of Spottsylvania; there he was captured again and brought back. He told me of escapes and of attempts that had been foiled. Pointing out a stake in the water, near the upper end of the prison, he said a wire ran from that to the guards' quarters, where it was tied to a bell, so if a prisoner escaped and passed that way he would strike the wire and ring the bell.

In the streets of the camp I saw small stands, with crackers on them and little squares of tobacco. This was shop-keeping.
Some men, slaves of tobacco, would part even with bread when hungry, to obtain it; and this was the trade, — a hard-tack for a chew of tobacco. So well known were the terms of the trade that men passed by, made the exchange, and not a word was spoken. Sometimes the merchant left his stand for a while to do its own trading. One industrious tradesman sat by his stall, deftly knitting a stocking. — For myself, I had no use for tobacco, and I ate all my hard tacks.

That night one of my tent-mates wished to a certain friend of his could tent with him. At once I offered to exchange. For this I was thanked, but was told we would have to exchange names also; I would must answer for him at roll call, and he would for me. So next morning I moved my duds, what little I had, and became William Patterson, or somebody else; I forget who.
May 25. — I did not see Mike Duffy today, nor the others of my regiment. I spent a good part of the day in the water, and was hungry at dinner. We had two meals a day; breakfast at eight, dinner at two. It was little we got, but we had no right to complain. It was little we got before.

This day white guards were on, they having relieved the blacks in the morning. (We had one day white guards, two days black.) But near sundown we were surprised to see black sentries again relieve the whites. This caused us to speculate. "The whites are ordered to the front," we said.

As the sun sank low I waited on the beach for the sergeant to come, to order us in and close the gates. But he turned, and I remained on the beach with others; though most went in. The sun set. Still he had not come. It would soon be dusk. Had the sergeant gone off to
the front with the keys in his pocket? Has my chance come already? Fastening to my tent, I put on my jacket and buttoned it up, with my hat under it. My shoes, being thick-soled and heavy, I left in the tent. I kept on my stockings.

Daylight was fading. I walked to the middle gate and stopped. Occasionally a man passed in or out. One said to me, "You'd better not stand here; you'll get shot." Over the gate stood three guards. It was beginning to grow dusk. A little too light yet,—but wait a minute. A group of men come walking out, some six or seven. Why so many? this means something. They pass me standing in the gate, and walk up in the privy. I wait for their return. As they come down the walk, still in a group, I watch, and, as they reach the end of it, one suddenly drops in their midst and slips under the planks. The others pass on, without
stopping. A clever trick! I said.

Then I passed out, over the man in hiding, saying in a low voice "Good luck to you!" In the privy I turned my head and saw the three guards, over the gate. It was now good dusk. So use to wait longer. I caught hold of one of the piles and let myself down into the water. It was breast deep. Then, keeping the structure between me and the guards, I backed away. As I did so, I heard footsteps above. Looking up, I saw a man leaning over and watching me. He said nothing. But I said, "Pray for me tonight!" Then he turned and went back into the prison. It was I should have prayed for him.

I continued backing till the water covered my chin. I could barely see the guards on the fence. So chance them of their seeing my head in the water. Keeping the water up to my neck, I waded up the bay. It was slow progress, and dark came
fast. I passed the limit of the prison. Then a dog barked. Slowly, silently, I moved on. I came to the stake "connected by wires with a bell." I moved cautiously to it and felt all round. There was no wire.

My stockings, full of water, dragged on my feet. I took them off and put them in my pocket. The bottom was smooth, and pleasant to walk on. But suddenly sharp pains wrenched my feet; I almost cried out. I knew what it was. I was stumbling over a raccoon-oyster bed. I struggled forward, the upturned edges of the shells, sharp as diamonds, glass, cutting my bare feet like knives. A few steps took me past, but in a little while I was reel- ing over another. Again I set my teeth and passed on.

Half a mile beyond the prison, seeing no lights, I came nearer to the shore. But my legs splashing the water and making a
Too close to shore, in the picture. Should be wading parallel with the shore.

Should be more tents above the prison.

Prison should be farther in the distance, and more obscure. — Night.

Hair parted on the right side is correct.
noise, I settled back to hip depth, half a mile further or a mile. Then, the water beginning to deepen, I turned more to shore. But it grew deeper, — waist deep. I turned still more to shore. Still deeper, — up to my breast, I turned square in to land. Deeper — deeper — up to my neck, — over my head. I was swimming. A few strong strokes with my arms, and I let down my feet. No bottom. I struck out again manfully, and swam quite long enough to regain composure. Still no bottom. I began to be afraid. Was the tide taking me out to sea? Should I drift about on the waves, till, wearies out I should sink, and none ever know what became of me? In some experiences of life the moment impresses itself upon us for all time. I never shall forget that lone light of a steamer far off on the edge of the sea, and think low moon drifting through dark and watery clouds. But again
My captured horse galloping off with me back toward prison.
Not being an artist, my sketch is very rough.

The morning after escaping from Point Lookout prison, I found a horse grazing among the trees—galloped back toward prison.

Note—

I am holding the mane (no bridle)

Breeches rolled up.

White shirt showing between jacket and trousers.

Bare legs, feet smoothed in sago.

In a lane—tall fences.
I put forth my strength and swam mightily. And when at length I let down my feet, my toes just touched the bottom. I stood so a minute, resting, then swam into shallow water. It seems I had followed a bar which ran out to a point, deep water on both sides.

I now quit the sea. The prison lay more than a mile, perhaps two miles, behind me. I had made my escape. But what of him I had left behind, hid under the platform? Would he be successful? That I would never know. An unknown man, coming from anywhere in the Confederacy, I should never see or hear of him again.

* Strange as it may seem, I afterward knew this man. In 1880 I was buying cotton in Troy, Ala. While there I was told that a farmer living two miles north, Frank Champion by name, had escaped from Port Fly. Lookout. At my request he called to see me.

"I hear you were in Point Lookout," I said.
"Yes, I was there."
"And escaped?"
"Yes."
"When did you escape?"
"The 25th of May—the night the gates were left open."
"At which gate did you go out?" "Middle one." (Could this be the man?)
"I went out at dusk."
"Wait; let me tell you something. I also escaped that night. Just at dusk I stood in the middle gate. Some half dozen men passed out. As they came back one dropped and hid under the platform."

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Once on the land, I took to the fields. My feet were terribly lacerated, and the rough ground, strewn with broken shells, made every step painful. I was in my bare feet, for my stockings had been lost out of my pockets in the sea. Presently I came to a sheet of water too wide to swim, tired as I was. I turned to the left, and at length came to a narrower place and swam across. (I have thought this might be St. Mary's river.) I was now in woods, and the sticks and twigs were as painful to my feet as the shells. But I felt safer in the woods. I walked a long time; then I came into a field. Near a house I found an old pair of shoes, worn out, and long since thrown away. I put them on and tried to walk in them, but they were so hard and stiff, through lying in sun and rain, I had to take them off. Then I found some old rags, and wrapped them around my wound-ed feet.
Near daybreak, I was walking in a lane, I came upon a horse feeding. Approaching cautiously, I caught him by the forelock and mounted. But immediately he turned about and galloped back the way I had come. Having no bridle, I tugged at his mane, calling Whoa! Whoa! but he only ran faster. I dared not jump off. What should I do? Ha! a thought! Reaching forward I caught one of his ears and gave a hard twist. He stopped quite suddenly. So did I. I also dismounted, but in what manner I decline to state. I walked back, and at length I saw before me the masts of a schooner. This must be the Potomac, so I turned to the right.

May 26.—Daylight had come when I made my first halt. I was resting in a fence-corner, some cows close by, when a negro boy and girl came to milk. Seeing me, they stopped and stared. No wonder, - I was readjusting the rags on my feet. But
could I manage to learn from these where to find a friend? For in Maryland were many friends of the South.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"Up to de house, wid mahster."

"He has a son that's a soldier, hasn't he?"

"No sir, not him."

"Whose son was it went off to the war?"

"Mr. — got two sons off in de army."

"Which army?"

"De rebel army."

"But he is for the North, isn't he?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know?"

"I hears him talkin' wid mahster."

"Is your master in favor of the South, too?"

"To, sir; him high up for de South."

"Where does Mr. — live?"

"You keeps dis lane till you comes to de big road; den it's — les' see — it's de third house; great big large house."
"Is he rich?"

"Yes, sir; him heap more richer dan mahster."

I drank some warm milk from the pails, and set out for the "great big large house." I was afraid to follow the lane, lest I run up against "mahster, him high up for de Roof." So I beat around through the fields and the bushes, till I gained the road. Reaching the third house, I saw in it an old building by no means suit ing the description. There was some mistake. I feared to commit myself to an enemy's hands, and I passed by, disappointed. It now began to rain. I did not mind that, for I was already wet through; and it was good for my feet, making the road soft. For the rags kept slipping from my feet, and I had taken them off. I walked on, keeping the woods all I could, avoiding roads and fields. Once I got into
such a dense thickets of calico-bushes (Kal-mia) that I had to crawl on my hands and knees, and at last on my belly.

About noon the sky cleared. Stopping in a sunny place, I pulled off my jacket to dry, and lay down and slept. I waked in the afternoon, hungry. In a field I saw two boys. I went to them and asked had they seen a stray horse. They had not. Then, shifting the talk to the war, I learned that some of the people about were friends to the South; they pointed out the house of one in the distance. I went from them another way, but out of their sight I turned to the house. I had hoped to find the man alone, but his wife sat with him; and her politics might not be his. So I inquired about my lost horse; said I was tired and hungry, and would they kindly give me a bite to eat? The wife went out for it, and at once I hurriedly told the man who I was,
and begged him to help me. He turned upon me, declaring himself a Union man, and that he would give me no aid; he even refused to give me food. I entreated him not to inform on me and put pursuers on my track. He replied there was none to inform nearer than the Point, and he was too unwell to go there. I went off in alarm lest I might be pursued. I walked very fast for a long time, to get clear of the neighborhood. And I made a firm resolve not to betray myself to any one again. This resolve I kept, though sometimes sorely tempted to break it.

All that day and night I continued to walk, only stopping at long intervals to rest and nap a little. In the night it rained,—a long drizzling rain. Tramping along the wet road, the trees dripping, tired and sleepy, I continually cast eyes to one side, coveting this or that sudden spot as a place to rest or sleep. One such, under a
tree with low-hanging branches, tempted me. Oh, to lie down and sleep here! Then I thought, What if I were home, in clean dry night-clothes, with white sheets and soft pillows! It seems strange now, but I felt then that it would be greater comfort to lie down on those wet leaves, under those dripping branches. Was it that one was so near, and the other so far away?

Some time in the night I came again to the Potomac. I looked for a boat, but found none. To row myself across to Virginia, but I found none. In a garden I pulled some onions and put them in my pocket, against starvation. As a last resource, for (as A. Ward says) "I disgust them."

May 27. As day was breaking I entered a town, which I afterward knew to be Leonard town. I passed through the main street, meeting no one. Just outside the town I met a negro man riding. He seemed
to regard me with curiosity. So doubt my appearance, barefoot, with grey jacket, was striking. I did not feel easy in keeping the road, but the woods were so painful to my feet I yielded to the temptation. Perhaps half a mile further, a negro came riding behind me, the same one, I thought, whom I had just before met. After passing he turned several times and eyed me. I did not like this, and as it was now getting quite light, I stepped out in the woods some ten paces, and lay down behind a log to rest. Presently I heard a horse coming from the town. Cautiously I looked up. There he rode,—the man I had all along been expecting,—a Federal soldier fully armed and equipped. I lay low and watched him pass. At a little distance behind rode four more; and then four more,—nine in all. I felt that I was being pursued, and that I must avoid roads, especially high-
ways. So I struck out through the woods.

I had now been forty hours without
food except two small oysters I had eaten
in the bay, (small compensation for the ruin
to my feet), and the drink of milk. I was
exceedingly hungry. I forced myself to eat
two of the small onions I had, but could
eat no more. About noon I came to a
field, where a negro woman and her two chil-
dren were hoeing near a cabin. It seemed
a lonesome place. I went up, and asked
about my horse. It had not been seen.

"Could you give me something to eat? I am
tired, and mighty hungry." Yes, she
said, and went with me to the cabin. She
fried some bacon and placed it before me,
with cold cornbread and coffee. I ate
greedily, but I had been so long without
food the sense of taste seemed lost. By the
feel in my mouth I could tell bread or meat,
but not by the taste. Only, at last, having
eaten all the meat, and soaping the grease I perceived the taste of bacon.

I had no sooner finished than I began to grow sick. Thanking my black hostess I hurried to the woods, where I threw up all I had eaten. Then I grew faint, and lay helpless. I do not know whether I slept or not. I do not know whether I saw, or imagined I saw, a long snake crawl slowly by my feet. But I had not the will to move. After awhile, asleep or awake, I saw three men approach me, along the path. Frightened, I jumped up,—there was the path, but no men! I felt very queer. I thought I had fever. I grew better, though, and walked on,—very slowly, for I was weak. I was not hungry now, but I knew if I ate I would gain strength. So when I came to another cabin, I asked about my horse, and begged food. The good lady set bread, butter and milk before me, and I ate with a relish.
While eating, an old man came in and questioned me. I gave evasive answers, as best I could. At last he said: "I guess you're a deserter from Lee's army, ain't you?"

Now, having so suspected me, I thought best to confirm his belief lest he suspect the truth, so I replied: "Some people might call it deserting; I don't." Then, strangely, he became frightened, and declared if the military knew I had been seen there, he would be taken to jail, citing a like instance. I assured him I did not wish to cause him trouble, and, as evidence of my goodwill, I offered if he would say nothing of my visit I would keep perfectly still about it. To this he eagerly agreed. But he insisted I must go straight to Leonardtown, deliver myself up, and take the oath of allegiance. "Good plan," I said, "how do I reach Leonardtown?" "Keep this straight road," says he, "till it forks; then the left hand takes you to the
big road." But in reaching the fork I seemed to forget, for I took the right hand; and from that day to this I have never seen Leonardtown or the man who administered the oath. (But if that official was in any way put out by my blunder, why, if he will send me the document now I will sign it with pleasure).

This was a well-wooded country, and I clung to the woods. I suffered much with my feet, continually hurting them. Near sundown I came to a field, a man in it plowing. Creeping into a fence-corner, sheltered by bushes, I lay down till he went home. Then I crossed the field and entered woods again. I found a road, and as it was now dark, I kept it. In the middle of the night, being very tired and sleepy, I lay down at the foot of a big tree. While there I heard horses' feet and presently a rider went galloping by. In the dark I could just
make out his dim form as he fell past. Fear of pursuit took hold of me again, and I quit the road.

May 28. This day I travelled a long way through a forest; for miles I saw no field or habitation. I found a mushroom, and tried to eat it raw, but could not. I ate a few green huckleberries. So wild fruits were ripe. At length I came to a field, and saw a man plowing toward me. I was very hungry and I determined to ask him for food. When he came up I asked the road to Washington. He told me, and asked if I were not a Confederate. I said "Yes; perhaps you'd call me a deserter." "I thought so, by your clothes." I said I wanted to go to Washington, but I did not wish to meet soldiers on the way, as they might arrest me and put me in prison. Half a mile up the road, he said, I would come to a squadron of cavalry. He said I was now near the Patuxent
river. "Wouldn't you like to stop here and go to work? A good many deserters are working about here." "No, I want to get on toward Washington." He said he had been drafted three times for the Union army, "but I haven't gone yet." I felt tempted to tell him the truth, but my former repulse deterred me. He sent me to his house to get something to eat. His wife, while I ate, added spice to my dinner by saying she was an abolitionist! Aviding the squadron of cavalry, my way now led through fields, by farm roads. Late in the day I again got food; I also begged some matches "to light my pipe." (I never lit a pipe in my life). I was now somewhere near the "Three-Notch Road." I also heard of a place called Charlotte-Hall.

Sunday, May 29. Some time before day I entered a chestnut wood. In the dark I could not avoid the fallen burs, and as the sharp spines pierced my wounds I almost cried
with the pain. So I stopped, made a little fire (the first I had had), and lay down to sleep. I lay there till after sunrise, being so tired. Then a man came walking through the wood, followed by a little girl. He passed very near, but did not see me. Nor did she see me until close by, then she stood still and stared at me. I kept quiet, hoping she would pass on, but she stood staring till the man was out of sight. Then she edged slowly behind a tree. The man, missing her, began to call, but she made no answer. Knowing now that the man would come back, I got up and walked quickly away. Plainly the child was frightened; thought me a robber, maybe; or maybe an ogre.

Coming to a house, I again played deserter. Being asked my regiment, I said 23rd Virginia. (Forgive me, Twenty-Third!) "Why, there is a man of that regiment working near by; better stop and see him." "So;
I want to get on."

"Why did you desert?" And now my loyalty to the South would not let me deny her cause, even in my peril; I said, "My captain and I quarreled, and I struck him. I was court-martialed and sentenced to wear ball and chain; then I deserted."

"How is it you are barefoot?"

"When I came to the Potomac I had no money; so I gave a man my shoes to boat me across." Could they give me an old pair? They had none, but they gave me a pair of stout stockings, saying some one else might give me shoes. They gave me to eat, and the good lady wrapped some bread and bacon in a cloth to take with me. The man went with me to put me in the Washington road. On the road I passed some darkies, who watched me closely; one began to sing "Dixie." Once before I had heard some one singing "The
Bonny Blue Flag."

Jogging along, I met a carriage. In it were two ladies, on the way to church I thought. As I came in near view they regarded me with attention, which seemed to deepen into marked interest; and then, as I lifted my limp weatherbeaten hat, — they bowed. To me, a poor, ragged, dirty devil, whose only claim to recognition from them was, I well know, the grey jacket that I wore. And why did I not stop, does one ask, and say, "Ladies, I am in trouble; I belong to Lee, and I am trying to get to him; will you help me?"

Besides, the driver was a negro, and he might betray me and them; and rather bring them into trouble I would willingly have gone back to prison.

Again, I met a carriage in which were two men. They had passed me a little way when I looked out and called back, "Soldiers are stationed on the hill ahead of you," and drove quickly on. At once I took to the fields. The country was hilly, with stones
and gravel, very painful to my feet. I think it was in this part of the country I heard of places called Beantown, and Horsehead, and Scuffletown.

Coming to a house, a man gave me an old pair of shoes, muddy and worn, but still serviceable. Then, at a stream, I bathed my feet well, picking the gravel from the wounds, and greasing them with fat bacon. I also washed and greased my shoes, and put them on. They fitted nicely. So proud I felt! So comfortable! Then I washed my face, and combed my hair with my fingers. Then I cocked my hat to one side, stuck my thumbs under my armpits, planted one foot out at an angle, and winked one eye, — such a high and mighty swell! I traveled the telegraph road a great part of that night. Toward morning I went into the woods and slept.
May 30. I awoke after sunrise. I learned now that I was in twenty miles of Washington. I had not yet determined whether to try to cross the river below Washington, or to pass between Washington and Baltimore, and cross near Leesburg, where the river was narrower, and where I knew friends that I had made in '62, in the Maryland campaign. The latter was a long journey, it was an enemy's country, and I was tired. Here, the river was wide, and I would get into a still more dangerous country, — the rear of the Federal army. But I would go to the river and look.

I struck out toward the west. Reaching a hill I climbed a high tree and made a survey. Before me lay the Potomac, a mile wide; vessels passing up and down up the river, on the far side, lay a city; that must be Alexandria. To the right, and seeming to rise out of the water, a
monument. Further to the right, looming above the trees, a great white dome, the dome of the Capitol. I had a good seat, and stood in the tree a long time, till I caught myself nodding and risking a fall. Coming down, I made my way up the river. At length I heard drums, and music, and presently I came in view of a stone fort, Fort Washington. Afraid of being seen I crept into a gully and made my way through a field. Then I came to a marsh, full of weeds, baring my way. But I went in and waded across, the mud being knee deep. I was now above the fort, a wide creek between me and it. The country was so open I thought best to keep still till dark, so I lay down in the field. Presently came a man for some horses feeding near, and he saw me. He seemed surprised, and continued to look at me without speaking. I saw that I'd better speak, so I asked:
"How can I get over to the fort?" (I wanted him to tell me how to get away from him).

"What do you want to go over there for?"

"To get work."

"Why don't you get work over here?"

"I've been trying."

"Where are you from?"

"Washington."

"Could you get work there?"

"Yes, but I got tired living in the city."

"Well, come up to the house; I'll see about work for you." Reluctant though I was, I could not help going. While he was stabling the horses, I asked for some water, thinking to slip away.

"There's a pump in the yard."

I went in the yard. Two men sat in chairs, near the pump, talking. As I drew near, I overheard "Belle Plain", "rebel prisoners." My heart jumped to my throat. Trapped a—
gain. "What will you have?" (this to me). "I came to get some water, sir."
"You are not hired here, are you?"
"No, sir; but I am talking with your head man about it now, sir."
"Oh, very well," he said.

I went back to the stable and had offer of $18 a month. I wanted more, which was refused. Then I said, "I will try at that house over there," and moved off. I feared he would stop me, but he did not. It was now getting dusk, so I worked round to the river again, and lay down on the bank, debating. Shall I swim here? It must be a mile, the trees on the other side look so little. Shall I go on up to Leesburg? It is a long journey. I concluded to swim.

Had I been naked, and in good strength, the swim would have been sporty,

* The actual width is one mile and one-sixteenth.
but I was weak with fatigue, and I must carry my clothes. So I looked about and found two pieces of fence-rail. With narrow strips of cloth I tied these together at each end, my body's width apart,

and placed them in the water. My hat I folded up and put under my jacket, which I buttoned tight. My shoes and other clothes I kept on. But, landing on the other side, I would be wet and cold; I would want a fire. I had five matches. Tying these in the middle of a hemp string, I laid them on the crown of my head and tied the ends under my chin. If anything landed dry it would be the matches.

Now, taking a rail under each arm, I shoved off. They were not large enough
to float me, but they were quite a help. I aimed for a low point of woods on the Virginia shore, but I expected the current to drift me far below it. I had got far out in the river when one of the bands broke, and the sticks slipped away from me. By a few strokes in swimming I regained them; only now I had to hold them with my hands and propel myself only with my feet. Once I took cramp in my leg, but by vigorous kicking I drove it away.

And now, just below me I saw a vessel, up the river, all sails set. Swiftly and silently it came, — it will surely ride over me! But it passed behind me, though very close by.

Then, again, came a steamer — I could see her colored lights — hear the jar of her machinery, — she came so close I was afraid I would be struck by her paddles. But she, too, passed behind, and I rode up and down
on the waves. I found now that I was not drifting down stream, but making straight for the point of woods. Perhaps, the tide was coming up, counteracting the current.

I was not far from the Virginia shore when I heard the dip of oars, and saw a boat moving straight up toward me. I heard voices, which presently I recognised as the voices of negroes. As they drew near they caught sight of me, and held up their oars, the boat gliding silently on. I sank low on my seat, motionless, treading water with my feet. As the boat approached they regarded me closely, talking low, so that I could not understand. But in my last moment of hope I caught the word "log"; and they resumed their oars and passed on. That was the narrowest escape I had had, since I left prison.

At length my feet touched the bottom and I waded out and climbed up into the
woods. I rejoiced that I had made the
adventurous passage, and that my feet once
more trod the soil of my own country. In a
secluded spot I made a fire, lay down and
slept a little, often waking with cold.

May 31. At dawn I marched. Walking
through fields and woods I came at length
to what seemed a lagoon of long extent. But
I found a boat, which I borrowed from the
owner, who was plowing with his back to me
some distance off, and paddled across. Coming
to a highway I passed a country mansion,*
where, in the yard, I saw an elderly lady
talking with a man who seemed to be the
overseer. She appeared to be girls in instruction,
I passed unobserved, but soon heard horse's
hoofs behind me. I jumped over the fence
and lay down. The man passed, the same
one I had just seen. Then I felt sorely
tempted to go back and reveal myself to
the lady. But I thought of my pledge and

*This house is probably very near Mount Vernon.
went on.

I was now in the border country, where every stranger was under suspicion. I must keep on my guard. So I went into the woods, intending to wait till dark to travel. I lay down in sight of the highway (myself concealed) and saw a number of people pass. Late in the afternoon I started off through the woods. I had not gone far when I came into a little road. I walked down it a little way, when suddenly two young men came into the road ahead of me. I called "Halt! Where are you going?" I said I was looking for work. After some further questions they told me to go with them to the miller; he wanted hands. Now their questions had been so searching, and I felt so suspicious of their good intentions, that if I had been strong enough to fight or to out-run I should have refused; but I knew I could do neither. So I went reluctantly,
fearing a trap. My hope was that the miller would be some old codger whom I could easily fool.

It was a large stone mill, and I was introduced to the miller. "An old codger!" He was a strapping big fellow of thirty-five, that miller, as bright as a bank, and a pistol buckled at his side. He asked me clear as a bell:

"Where are you from?"

"Alexandria."

"What did you work at there?"

"Carpentering."

"Your hands don't look like it; who is Provost Marshal in Alexandria?"

"I don't know."

"I thought so; let me see what you've got in your pockets!"

Other men had come up; they went through my pockets, but found nothing suspicious.

"Now tell me who you are." I saw plainly I was in the hands of enemies, not of
friends, and I replied:

"I am a deserter from Lee's army."

"What makes your clothes so wet?"

"Swimming a creek."

"What creek?"

"I don't know."

"When did you swim it?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Why did you swim?"

"I couldn't find any other way to cross."

"When did you leave Lee's army?"

"This is the tenth day."

"How did you avoid Grant's army?"

"I flanked it; I flanked both armies."

"When did you cross the Occoquan?"

"I don't know where it is."

"Well, when did you cross the largest stream since crossing the Rappahannock?"

"Day before yesterday."

"Why, it is only seven miles from here."

"That may be; I may have crossed some
distance above, and come down stream since, I don't know the country. Yesterday I travelled but little, and today scarcely any."
(I was doing my best to fit the Occoquan to day before yesterday).

"Did this stream have rocky banks?" I felt sure this was a catch.

"No", I said, "I didn't see any rocks."

"Well, the Occoquan is very rocky."

"The place I crossed was not rocky; maybe it wasn't the Occoquan."

"How did the place look?"

"Well, I tell you just how it was; I came down a road, not much traveled, a sloping hill through the pines. I found an old boat, half full of water, with a piece of plank for a paddle. I bailed out the water with my hat and paddled across. This side was like the other side; I saw no rocks." I entered thus into detail to give an air of truth to my story; I dared not be suspected of having
swum the Potomac, an escaped prisoner, lest I be taken back to be punished* and kept in close confinement. One, whom I afterward knew as the blacksmith, now spoke up, "Captain, there are some crossings would answer pretty well to that; he might have struck one of them."

The miller again asked: "Was anybody with you here in the woods?"

"Nobody."

"Are you sure?"

"I ought to be; I don't think anybody could be with me and I not know it."

"Because we are expecting now an attack by Kincheloe; maybe you are one of his men."

"I don't know who Kincheloe is."

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* At Point Lookout it was told me men were punished for attempt at escape by hanging them up by the thumbs. I do not believe this was true. The only punishment for this that I ever knew was close confinement.
"He's a rebel guerrilla, and he's only three miles off," My heart jumped, and fell like lead. Recaptured in three miles of my own flag, after six days of such pain and privation! Was all that to go for nothing?

"No," I said, "I have heard of Mosby often, but never of Kincheloe."

Then Captain Troth took me to his house where, in company with his good wife, we ate supper under the watchful eye of a big dog who (so the captain said) could tell a rebel at sight, disguised or undisguised. "A remarkable dog," I said. Bread, tea, chipped beef, a light repast that amply sufficed my host and hostess, but I had not tasted food all day, and
I rose from the table hungry. Then I was turned over to the blacksmith and others. They gathered around me, sitting in front of the shop, and the question was raised was I really a Southerner.

"He looks like me, and he talks like one," said the blacksmith. "Say Do!"

"Do!" said I.

"He's from down South; you never hear that soft, rich pronunciation anywhere else." And he kept saying to himself, "Do, — do, — do."

"Would you have some milk?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you." He brought a big bowl of milk and a lot of bread, and I ate it all.

It was now my turn to ask questions. I learned that this place was Accotink; that Capt. Troth was a New Jersey man, who had raised a company of "home guards" to defend themselves from raiders like Kincheloe; and that if I had gone on I would have run down into "the neck."
My special guard, (the man who had captured me), was now called to supper, and he took me with him. And on his invitation I sat down and ate a third and hearty supper of stewed catfish. Just as it was growing dark there came running by a number of men, white and black, all armed. Capt. Froth rushed up to the house, "Where is that man?"

"Here I am, sir."

"Look here, didn't you tell me nobody was with you?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, it better prove so." And off he ran.

His voice was threatening. I began to feel choky about the neck. But my anxiety was relieved by the return of the party, laughing at having captured one of their own men who had been mistaken in the dusk for a stranger.

I was now taken to the mill and locked
in an upper room. "Don't jump out," said the captain. I looked; it was fifty feet to the rocks below. A soldier's overcoat was spread on the floor for me, and my two guards, one white, one black, stuck a candle in a bottle, shuffled a pack of cards, and prepared to stay awake. I went to sleep. In the middle of the night I was wakened by the Captain Trott, who came in with three Federal officers.

"Sit up; let's have a look at you. — — — Do you know him?"

"No, — no," they all said.

"Well, gentlemen," I said, "if you are satisfied, I'll go to sleep again."

"All right; go to sleep."

About one o'clock, I was wakened again. I was taken out and turned over to a body of the 8th Illinois Cavalry, going to Alexandria. As I mounted, captain Trott said: "Keep a close watch on him; he's sharp." For which I thanked him not a bit; for the guard who rode by my side kept his pistol
in hand the whole way, and left me no chance to escape.

June 1. At daybreak the column entered Alexandria. My guard conducted me to the office of the provost-marshal. Raps at the door, and a sleepy head at a window.

"What is it?"

"A rebel prisoner."

"Be down in a minute." In his office, the provost-marshal asked:

"What is your name?"

"Berry Benson."

"What regiment?"

"First South Carolina."

"What are you doing up here?"

"I left Lee's army without a furlough."

"No, you didn't."

"I did."

"See here; it's no use to tell me that tale."

"I'm not going to tell you any other; I can't gain anything by telling you what is not true."
After a pause, — "Come, tell me who you are."
I made no reply. A half minute's silence
followed. Then I spoke:

"Well, what are you going to do with me?"

"I want you to tell me who you are; you
might as well do it; I knew all about you
before you were brought in." Then I knew
there were two of us fibbing; and as he
only knew there was one, I stuck to my tale.
He then took paper and wrote, (I reading it
upside down),

Provost Marshal's Office,
Alexandria, Va., June 1, 1864.

Capt. T. Nelson *
You will confine Berry Benson, a guerrilla,
in the Tower Jail till further orders.

Wm. Harris *
Provost Marshal.

This was the regular city jail, iron bars
at the windows. I was put in a room with
some twenty others, Confederate soldiers, Fed-
eral soldiers†, negroes, and citizens of Vir-
ginia who had been arrested on suspicion.

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* Names fictitious; I have forgotten the true ones.
† Thieves and criminals, otherwise.
At breakfast, hard tack, salt pork and coffee were given us, much more than could be eaten; and, after eating, a rough-and-tumble battle ensued, every man for himself, and each against all. Crackers and pork flew through the air. The fight, though rough, was in play; and when all the ammunition was spent, all fell to and swept the scattered mess into a corner. As I witnessed this wanton waste by overfed criminals and looked at the heap of sweepings, I thought with a sigh how many of my brave comrades, who had never yet flinched in battle, would be glad to gather them carefully up. Alas, that it was not so!

Having no blanket, I slept that night on the bare brick floor,—a hard bed enough. But the next night one of the Yankees shared his blanket with me, and the thief and the "deserter" slumbered sweetly together.
June 5. This day I and four others were removed to the Old Capitol prison in Washington. As we passed through the streets we were frequently hailed: "These go your Johnny's! How are you, Johnny!"

Anxious to know if I was still held as a prisoner guerrilla, I watched the clerk at the provost-marshal's office making a roll of the prisoners, with the charge against each. Against my name he wrote "prisoner of war." So I now dropped the deserter story, which up to that time I had stuck to, even with my own men lest I might be betrayed.

We were taken to the Old Capitol, used them as a prison. I was put in a large room facing the new Capitol. It was full of prisoners, not one of whom I knew. Among them was a bright, active young fellow of my own age, and we took to each other from the first. His name was Wm. L. Royall. He was from Richmond.

*Now, or recently, of the law firm of Johnson & Royall, Richmond, Va.
I told him my story; and he told me of his adventures in Wyckham's cavalry, of his capture, and of two attempts he had made to escape. Once, in the hospital, (having played sick to get into it), he had partly picked his way through the brick wall with a pair of shears, when he was discovered, and locked up in the dungeon, a close dark room on the ground floor. He was offered release from the dungeon if he would promise not to attempt to escape again. This he refused until at last it became unbearable, and he promised. Now he thought to retract his promise, go back to the dungeon with a knife hid in his boot, and try to escape from there.

At night we lay on the floor, and only by careful disposing could all lie down. There was no spare room. And the sporting bedbugs gambolled over all. Bedbugs in squads, bedbugs in battalions, bedbugs in grand army corps. It was a third army of the war, and
fighting under the black flag.

We were allowed, each day, an hour out of the rooms, for exercise in the yard. And the next day whom should I meet in the yard but my lost friend Ellison! Ellison, whom I had seen taken from the barn hand-cuffed, and heard afterward was hanged! In the same room was an old schoolmate, Capt. Wm. B. Young, of Augusta. As officers they were better fed, and they helped me along. Shortly after, they were removed to Fort Delaware. From that prison Ellison was taken to Charleston harbor, and put under fire of Confederate guns, as retaliation for some act of ours. But one night he jumped off the ship and swam to the shore, and regained his command in Virginia. But he was captured again while scouting, and was in prison the last I heard of him.

In the Old Capitol were some of Mosby's guerrillas, mostly fine-looking men, and well-dress-
ed. They seemed to fancy corduroy.
member Woodhouse, Ben Crowley, and Sam Underwood. They called their leader "Old Moss." I heard from them their adventures and escapes. One, when carpenters were at work in the prison, had picked up a saw and a plane and walked out with the workmen. Another, in citizen's clothes, (as some of them were), had coolly walked out of the building, without bestowing a look on the guards; his effrontery passing him without question. He made good his escape.

The cooks for the prison were negroes, who came in and went out, apparently at will. One of Mosby's men thought to play cook and escape. So he blacked his face, and in the dusk he passed all the guards but the last. "Halt! show me your pass!" for he had not known that the cooks used passes, but, quick-witted, at once came reply: "Darn! fo' de Lawd I forgot it an' lef' it in de kitchen!" He went quick to his room and washed his face; and presently the guards were looking
for the man who "played nigger."

How could I escape? This thought was ever with me. I planned many schemes. Should I mount the outside stairs of the kitchen, run the length of its flat roof, taking the shot of the sentry posted there, jump down into the alley and run for it? — Should I bolt past the sentries, and out at the front door, running as much of the guards in the street? — Should I hide under the long table in the eating room, and at night, when vacated, pick a hole through the bricks into the adjoining dwelling? But Clark would miss me at roll call and search for me. — I thought of stirring up revolution, to make a rush en masse for the street, taking the chances of some being killed and of some getting away.
In this prison we fared as well as we had a right to expect. We were not ill-treated, and our food, while not plentiful, was as much as inactive men needed. True, we were hungry all the time, but that had grown to be constitutional, an inheritance from Confederate camps, where we seldom had enough.
The fare was bread, bean soup, and a little meat, - beef or pork, - two meals a day. Coffee until the 4th of July; on that day it was stopped. By a little trickery two men would sometimes get three rations. Filing in to place at table, they would so range themselves on the bench as to seem to sit each to a plate, but really so as to leave an unclaimed plate between them. If the trick escaped the eyes of the guards, (as sometimes it did, and sometimes it didn't), they two would share the booty. Also I have often seen a sick man, after eating a little, pass his plate to a friend, who, heartier, was glad to take it. Sometimes one would leave his plate unfinished, when others near him would take it and divide what he left.

Our room had a very large window overlooking the street on the west. One day, one of our mates, an obstinate man, was standing looking out, when the guard
on the pavement ordered below ordered him to stand back. The man gave no heed, but stood still, looking coolly down on the guard while he aimed his piece and fired. The ball missed, tearing a hole in the ceiling. Then the man turned away with a contemptuous word. We were all much alarmed at the sudden shot, and the guards came running up to see if the man was killed. It would have been his fault had he been, for we were forbidden to stand at the window.

After that we were moved to a room on the ground floor. And here I conceived, a, I think, the most ingenious of all my plans for escape. It was a corner room, two windows on the north side, two on the west. The bars were iron rods let into a heavy wooden strip nailed to the window-sill. Being fine, a sharp knife would quickly cut a groove in this strip through which the lower end of the rod could be withdrawn, leaving a gap
then wide enough for a man to pass through. Two guards walked each pavement, their beato connecting and covering the two fronts.

Now my plan was this: The rod being loosed at confederates watch from windows on both sides, and when all four guards walked with their backs to the corner, slip quickly out and step softly to the corner. Once there I was safe. For the guards on the north side would think me a citizen come by the west street; and those on the west think I came by the north street. Many might thus escape in one night. This plan, though well received by my few confidentials, was not tried, as I had conceived another which was thought to promise greater safety, and, if successful, the release of a greater number.

Passing to meals through the yard, I had observed there was a cellar under the building, and now I set to work beneath my bunk to cut a hole through the floor.
Once in the cellar we could cut through the wall into the cellar of the house adjoining and escape. My knife was dull, and made much noise. To drown the noise those in the plot would start a good old Methodist hymn and sing it through with great zeal. More than once the guards came to put a stop to our demonstrative religious fervor. Or perhaps all joined in with some camp song, like "John Brown's Body," or "De Year o' Jubilo." Songs which we had borrowed from the enemy, but which, for the music that was in them, were favorites in our camps as well as theirs.

"I bleeb in my soul dat de kingdom am a comin';
An' de year ob Jubilo!"

Sometimes, at the end of a song, the harsh rasp of the knife would grate across the sudden silence; then one of our boys would suggest "Rats!"
We could not work by day, as for the guard would see from the windows; nor after bedtime, for all must then be quiet. So what with short time, and dull cutlery, progress was slow. And we had done but little when we were moved again.

And now the prison was thrown into wild, but subdued, excitement. From smuggled newspapers we learned that Early, with his army, was marching upon Washington. He had already crossed the Potomac, and was in Maryland. We talked of nothing else. Day by day we followed his march, till, at last, one day, we heard the faint boom of cannon. How we talked, and whispered, and shook hands together! Their thunderers grew louder, and nearer, until, from our northern windows, we could catch the puffs of smoke where Early's shells were bursting. From our windows, too, we saw march by motley companies of men, whites and negroes together,
in all kinds of dress, the plug hat and broadcloth coat by the side of the soldier's cap and the mechanic's blouse, all moving out to defend the city, — men whom the first charge of old Confederates would have swept shell-melt from the breastworks. And we knew it. The enemy were in straits; we could see it. We felt that Early could take Washington. Our guards (the Invalid Corps) were reduced; one set of guards, stood on duty three days and nights without relief. Some of the guards that went to the front never came back. Prisoners began to come in. They were in high spirits; Early would surely take Washington, and we would all be rescued. But Early skirmished around, waited too long, and went away. If it had been Jackson! If it had been Gordon!

July 23. A large number of us were taken on freight-cars, via Baltimore, to Elmira prison, New York. As we marched
through the streets of Baltimore, strongly
guarded, I watched eagerly for an opportunity
to escape, but none came. Each car carried
guards, inside and on top. I stayed awake all
night, hoping to catch the guards asleep, or
to have a chance to jump from the car, but I
was disappointed.

Elmira prison was a square pen, perhaps
forty acres, a high plank stockade with ele-
vated walk for the guards outside, as at Point
Lookout. It was divided across the middle
by a pool, which (so said) was once the bed
of the Chemung river. The river now ran
outside the walls. On the north side of the
pool the ground was high and clayey; on
the south side low and sandy. There were
then no tents on the south side, only bare open
ground; later, it was occupied. On the north
side were rows of rough, whitewashed houses,
(one long room), also tents in camps. The priso-
ers some thousands, gradually increased to
ten thousand.

At once I fixed on the pool as an avenue of escape. Its west end did not quite reach the stockade, but its east end passed under it, the planks coming down into the water. A bridge was there; used only by the guards, being beyond the dead-line. If I could crawl under water to the stockade I would then be under the bridge, and would not be seen while I cut a plank in two with a knife, making a hole by which I could pass out. I could load my pockets with stones to hold me down under water, but how breathe? I rived from a plank a straight piece of pine an inch wide. This I split carefully in two, and cut grooves in each half the entire length. Now, putting the grooves together, and wrapping all tightly with cord I had a sort of a tube through which I could breathe under water. I hid my tube in my bunk, my thoughts
having taken a turn.

I had found an old schoolmate, John Perin, who was quartered in a building near one corner of the pen. I talked escape to him and he was willing. I suggested a tunnel from under his house, some eighty feet. But any slipping under the house, by day or night, would be seen by the guards on the wall close by, and our purpose divined.

For night in the prison was nearly as light as day, locomotive headlamps being fixed to the walls inside. How it happened this house sat close to another, the space between being boarded up at each end, making a long narrow enclosure surrounded by dead walls. "John," said I, "cut a little window in the wall at your bunk (say to spit out of) and hang it with leather hinges at the top." "Good," said John, and he did. That night he and I slipped through the window, crawled under the house and started
the tunnel. We had taken Bohler, Kenna-
ghan, and a few other friends into confidence.
In a day or two one of these told me his friend,
Joe Womack, desired to know me. So we
called. He was a bright, manly fellow, from
Charleston, a sergeant-major, and now sergeant
of one of the wards into which the prison was
divided. There were then some fifty wards.
The sergeants and corporals amongst the
guards had been put in command, as far
as they would go, their Confederate sergeant
were used. The sergeant of my ward was one
of the guards. With his weight and his craft they
would usually add weight.

It now came out that Womack, with
others, had started a tunnel under one of the
three hospitals on the other side of the pen.
It would be only eleven feet. I had rejected
this building on account of exposure, there
being no way to get under without great
risk of detection. But Womack's party
had already begun, and they asked me to abandon my tunnel for the present, and join forces. So we agreed upon plans, and that night we worked together.

The next night we detected men slipping under the next building. Another tunnel! So the next night, quite early, we made examination, and found that a tunnel was in progress under each of the three hospitals! We found out the leaders, and held a council of war. It was agreed to push the tunnel nearest completion. I did not like so many aware of it; I feared discovery or betrayal. By the numbers that hung around through the day, I could see that the project was widely known. One young man in particular drew my attention. He stood about a good deal. He was barefoot, and he wore a long coat of grey jeans. I noticed that one of his little-finger nails was extremely long.
Some days of work, then through the prison ran the message: "We go out tonight!" Night came, and with it, about the hospitals, groups of men, ten times as many as I imagined were aware, all talking about the tunnel. My heart sank. The guards will surely notice and suspect. Many went under the building. Baxter, Kibler, and I remained outside, awaiting developments.

Ten o'clock came; eleven; the tunnel was not finished. Some grew tired, and went to quarters. About midnight men began to crawl hurriedly out, and ran away.

"What is the matter?" I asked, catching at one.

"The Yanks have found it out, and driven stakes into the tunnel!" and off he ran. Some others, who had been waiting outside, also ran off.

"Jack," said I to Kibler, "that's not so. They wouldn't do a foolish thing like that. The tunnel is nearly finished; and those
now at work till this tale to frighten the crowd away."

"You are right," said Jack, "let's go under."
The numbers we had found under the hospital early in the night had fed; only at the mouth of the tunnel were a few men lying down.

"Is any one working?" I asked.

"Not right now." Down I went. I dug till I could dig no longer, in the foul air, then another took my place. So the work went on by reliefs till after three o'clock. For I heard the sentry on the fence, but eleven feet away, call out:

"Thre-e-e o'clock,—and a-l-l's well!"

Then I heard a sick man mutter overhead: "That's a lie; I'm not well!" And I thought if the sentry knew what I know, he wouldn't feel well.

Lying at the mouth of the tunnel, I dozed off a little, and was presently wakened by voices:

"I've opened the tunnel!" "Good!"
"But it came up inside the fence."
"Inside!"
"Yes; but it's a very little hole; get me a tuft of grass to stick in it; we'll go out next night certain." I heard the few remaining men scrambling out. But I remained. Even this might be a trick, and if anybody escaped that night, I would also. It was so dark I could see nothing, but I lay by the mouth of the tunnel and listened. The man came back out of the tunnel and said, "The turf wouldn't hold, so I pulled the grass over the hole so it won't be discovered." Some one lying by me replied, and the two conversed in low tones. It was so dark they could not see me, hard by them, and undoubtedly they thought they were alone. They seemed to be strangers, but both from Alabama. The man in the tunnel said, "They wouldn't have came tonight if they hadn't been taken."

"It's most day now; and we can't
do any more; but we'll go out tonight if the hole isn't discovered. If it is, why, I've got we'd finish the work, sick close by me tonight, Patte, another tunnel under way was begun before. it was thought of. Here! you'll know me by this!" They crawled out, and I followed. The day was dawning.

"Baxter, I said to my bunkmate, "I must sleep some; be ready to tramp with me tonight."

That day a friend said to me, "Have you heard the news?" "No." "The tunnel is betrayed! The guards are breaking it in with pickaxes!"

Who betrayed it none ever knew.

Who betrayed it none ever knew. M.M. Conkling, if the guards, a man among us. He knew of the tunnel all the time. Major Colhoun had let them finish. All four guards with it have been worth the toss of a penny. The officials made active search for the tunnelers, discovered some, and put them in close confinement.
"Here! you'll know me by this!"

That was a key that I held in my hand. The key to that other tunnel, whose location I did not know; of the existence even of which I was ignorant until last night. I did not know who it was in the tunnel, (it was dark as pitch), but when he said, "Here, you'll know me by this," I divined what he did. He reached out his hand and let his new-found friend feel that long finger-nail! I was as sure of it as though I had seen it. So now I must look for the barefoot man in the long jeans coat.

In the prison were now ten thousand men, quite a city, and I watched in vain for some days. But one morning, being near the pool, I spied my man coming. He walked to the edge of the pool and sat down. Then, glancing cautiously round, he reached his hand back to his coat pocket, took out something and dropped it gently.
into the water. (A stone, said I). Again he repeated the motion. I walked down to him. He folded his arms across his knees, and gazed at the water.

"Mind," said I, "some oath-taker will see you and blow on you."

"About what?" says he, with innocent surprise.

"Putting stones in the water," said I.

"I'm not putting stones in the water."

"Not now; but you were; I saw you."

"Well, even if I was, what harm in it?"

"No harm at all, if they were not stones from a tunnel. Here; I'll stand between you and the crowd; now empty your pockets." Which he did, without another word. Then, rising, "Come with me." As we walked, he said "Yes, I'm digging a tunnel; been at it some time; we are all sworn to secrecy, but you've found me out, and I can't keep it; the boys'll take you in; we want another good man." Then I told
him I had worked in the other tunnel.

This man was the leader. His name was Wash. Frawick* (Rw). He was of the Jeff Davis Artillery, of Alabama. Taking me to his tent, I found there four men lounging, apparently as little concerned in tunneling as the guards themselves. A few words from Frawick explained the situation. Somewhat taken aback at first, the boys presently reflected that a discoverer was apt to be a zealous workman; and after I had related all my adventures they were enthusiastic over their new friend.

"He must take the oath; send for Baptiste and the Testament!" Sergeant Baudruche came, his arm in a sling, wounded.

"Kneel down. Take off your hat. Kiss the book.

"You do solemnly swear that by faithful labor, and by all means in your power you will aid in carrying to com-

* Frawick. Lives now at Cold Spring, San Jacinto Co., Texas.
pletion the tunnel upon which we are engaged? (I do.) And that you will never divulge to any one its existence, or by word or hint convey the slightest hint to any one, even your dearest friend or brother?" (I do.) Thus was I admitted. The making of the oaths had grown out of the failure of the other tunnel. It would not do to have that failure repeated. Then I was shown the roll of the tunneled. There were nine; I made ten.

"When will you take me to the tunnel?"

"You don't know where it is?"

"No."

Putegnat* stooped, rolled back the spread blankets, lifted two short boards—a hole in the ground! I looked in. From the bottom of the shaft, some four feet deep, I could see the tunnel leading off toward the fence. "How far to the fence?" "Sixty feet, we reckon." "How far have you gone?"

"Fifteen feet." The tent was the second.

*J.P. Putegnat died in Brownsville, Texas.
tent from the end, in the second line from the fence, and the tunnel had already run under one tent.

I set to work now in good earnest, both in the tunnel and carrying away dirt and stones. We took turns in the tunnel. The digging was done with broad kitchen knives stolen from the cooks. As the tunnel was made no larger than would pass the body lying flat, the one working at the far end suffered greatly from lack of air, his body shutting it off behind him. A candle, taken in, burned feebly half a minute, sank, and went out. A match, struck, left a bright streak, but would not flame. In such air, mouth wide open, tongue out, panting like a dog, one worked,
in the dark, a violent headache racking the brain, often sick at stomach. One of our best workmen, Dauell*, was for a time kept from digging by the mere entering the tunnel bringing on severe retching.

What did you do with the dirt? is the question I am always asked. Well, we made little sacks that could be put in a coat pocket; these we carried off, two, three, four, at a time, and emptied the contents into the sink, unobserved;—sometimes we took them to the low side of the prison, and sitting down in a group as though to talk, we slyly buried the clay in the sand in our midst. This was extremely slow work, for it would take half an hour to get rid of two or three pockets each. Once or twice, when drains were being dug, we got rid of a good deal by the haversackful, dropping it by night on the fresh-dug

*John Fox Mullig lives at Strasburg, Ala.
earth where it would not show. One night, in a rain, we strewed it along in the camp street, hoping the rain to wash out its fresh look. But in the morning it still showed, and although it escaped notice by others, we dared not do it again.

But the stones that came out were a great help. Loading my pockets with these, I would sit with my back against the end of a building, raised a foot or so from the ground, pretending to read, and, by a quick jerk of the hand, toss them back, one at a time, far under. A sentinel, it might be, staring at me from the fence all the time. Being unloaded, I went back to the tent a roundabout way, and loaded up again, to seek a different place of deposit. There was one building, near by, I used so much, that at last, when I threw a stone I always heard it clink against some other, gone before. A favorite place of
deposit was the rat-holes. Some buildings had walls that came to the ground; and rats lived under the floors, burrowing holes in the earth at to pass under the walls. Book in hand, I would sit by one of these holes, and when no eyes were on me drop the stones in till nearly full, then move to another. At night, to get out, the rats pulled the stones back, under the house, and in the morning the holes were ready for use again.

The rats furnished us another mode of disposing of stones. They came out every evening at dusk, and ran about, especially near the pool. At that hour, then, we filled our pockets with stones, and took our stand on the high ground by the pool, and if a rat ventured to run by, a shower of stones were hurled at him that all managed somehow to roll in the water. The expenditure of ammunition was
something lavish. Nor did we need even to see a real rat. Often and again have we chased an imaginary rat along the edge of the pool, crying, "Here he goes! Kill him! Kill him! Here he goes!" throwing stones like marbles the while.

"The big rock." If any of my comrades read this account they will remember the great stone that only one of us was strong enough to carry away,—faithful Fox Maull.

Could we have worked regularly, day and night, we would have made good progress. But we could not work during the day, except at great risk of discovery, either from a sudden inspection of quarters by the officers, or by a pop-call from some neighbor. To prevent intrusion when at work in the day, one had always to stand at the tent door. More than once, in the tunnel, have I heard the doorkeeper's voice, "Don't come in now; Fox is a-washin' all over." Such a reputation for modesty Maull must have earned! Another reason but little work could be done by day, was that constant passing in and out of the tent would be apt to draw the notice both of prisoners and of
the gate, on the wall, and excite suspicion. And the same reason prevented working late at night. Indeed, although we did work in the day sometimes, our main efforts were confined to late afternoon, and up to bedtime. There was then most stirring about the camps, and we worked like beavers. As it would not do to be seen with clothes soiled all over with clay, some of the diggers worked in shirt and drawers kept for that purpose. But I, having no drawers, and but one shirt, was forced to the expedient of turning shirt and trousers wrong side out when I went in the tunnel; righting them again when I came out.

As to the methods of digging. Our tools were broad-bladed knives stolen from the kitchen. Entering the tunnel, the digger crawled on his belly to the end, by resting
his weight on his elbows and propelling himself with his toes. This slight lift often caused the back to touch the roof of the tunnel. Lying on his side, he struck forward past his head with his knife, loosening the earth. In a minute began a racking, distressful headache. Mouth open, chest heaving, he panted for air, breathing over and over his poisonous breath. It seemed now a wonder none died in the tunnel. Having loosened a little quantity of earth, he crawled backward, dragging the dirt with his hands and arms, to the tent, where the carriers took it. Then he crawled back, or another relieved him. When the tunnel had gained some length, the long crawl back took up too much of the digger’s time, upon whose work all else depended; so a second man followed the first and lay at his feet, to take back the dirt. This made the breathing yet worse.

As the tunnel grew longer, progress
Footnotes to page 100.

* I had been tenth, but Sadirne, being wounded, had abandoned intention of going, having good hope of exchange.

† Jack Kibler Lives now in Waco, Texas.
grew slower, by reason of the long haul of the dirt from the end. And I said to myself, 'The work will grow more and more slow, and every day adds to the risk of discovery; besides, I am ninth on the list, and it is hardly possible eight men at a time, without being seen and the alarm being given. My chance is but small. I looked up Jack Kibler. 'Jack,' said I, 'we must escape.' 'How?' said he. I said, 'Let us make a ladder, run with it at night to the wall, and climb over quick, taking the shots of the guards.' "Good," said Jack.

Now a small building over one of the sinks had just been pulled down, and the old stuff lay on the ground. An armed guard walked by it in his beat, but I watched when his back was turned, and made off with two pieces of plank. By dint of hard labor we fashioned these
Continuation of note on page 113

Major Colt bore the name with us of being very kind. I heard this story:

A prisoner having died who was held in esteem by his fellows, they made request of the Commandant to be allowed to contribute from their meagre pay to give him a more decent burial than in the rough pine boxes always used. To this the Major consented, and contributed to the fund from his own pocket.

I do not know whether the story is true or not.
into a ladder which could be taken apart and put together. Jack kept the pieces concealed under his bed, and we waited a favorable night. The tunnel dragged so slowly, and my chance seemed so small, often I was on the point of saying, "Jack, we'll try the fence tonight!"

Entering the tent one day, I found long faces. "What's up?"

"Trawick has been arrested!"

"What! Is the tunnel discovered?"

"We don't know."

"Where is Trawick?"

"In the guard-house."

Later he was in great suspense till we learned that Trawick had been reciting too carelessly his share in the old tunnel; and, soon after, he was arrested. Brought before the Commandant, Major Colt had

* Maj. Henry V. Colt, brother to Colt of pistol fame. (See continuation above).
asked, "Were you in that tunnel?"
"Yes, sir."
"Who else?"
"I didn't know the rest."
"Didn't know them! Who told you?"
"A Louisianian."
"What is his name?"
"Jim."
"Jim what?"
"I don't know his other name."
"Don't know!"
"So, sir."
"Which ward does he stay in?"
"I don't know sir."

The Major burst out laughing. "You don't want to know. Well, Trawick, I'll just lock you up till you find Jim."

So Trawick was lodged in a dark cell. There were other hospital tunnelers in the guard house; our chivalrous guards dubbed them "the engineer corps", and
would not let them do any dirty work, such as scrubbing and sweeping, that others in the calaboose had to do. That afternoon the major demanded of Frawick had he found Jim. He had not. The next day the same question, and the next. Was your leader doomed to be pining in a cell when we had finished the tunnel? But by Scruggs* who took him his meals, Frawick sent us word to push ahead with the tunnel; that he had loosened a plank in the ceiling of his cell, and when we were ready he could get up in the loft, jump out the back window and come.

Finally the major told Frawick he would release him if he would promise on honor not to attempt escape again.

"Can't promise," said Frawick.

"Why not?"

"Because if I were to see a chance I would go."

* J. P. Scruggs, Timestone Springs, Spartanburg Co., S.C.
"Yes, and if I hadn't got wind of that tunnel the day I did, you'd have been safe in Dixie now."

"You are right, I wond," said Trawick.

"Well," said the major laughing, "you are a plucky fellow; I'll release you anyhow; I don't know of any more tunnels, and you'll hardly break down the fence."

At that very moment our tunnel was nearing completion; and there was also a plot to storm the fence by night in three columns, — the middle one under Sergeant Wilder of Alabama to break down with pickaxes, taken from the tool-house, twenty feet of the fence; the left under Sergeant Johnson of Texas, and the right under myself, to beat off the guards with stones while the breach was being made.

Trawick released, we worked harder than ever. Before long we were asking, How near to the fence? A string was
taken to the end of the tunnel. Measured, it was fifty-four feet. Outside, we could not measure, but we separately judged of the distance, and the verdict was sixty feet. Are we then in six feet of the fence? But no; if so we would hear the carts rumbling overhead. The carts we heard, but they seemed further on. Then it was suggested to beat on the ground, while one inside directed the movement of the beater till the sound was overhead. There would be the end of the tunnel.

In the grass between the tents and the wall we sat down, near the dead-line. On a stone Malone* laid a piece of tin and hammered with another stone. The Sentry on the wall stopped and looked on. "It won't be a silver spoon," said Malone, "but it'll be a spoon." One strolled out from the tent, looked on, and said in a low voice,

*Cecrops Malone. Lives now at Waldron, Ark.
"Too far to the left." When the sentry’s back was turned, we moved the stone, and hammered again. Another came from the tent: "Still too far to the left." Again we moved. Then came the report: "Just overhead." But how could this be? The course was far to the right; the man in the tunnel was surely wrong. "No mistake," he insisted, the sound was exactly overhead. How could we be sure?

I had seen a man with a ramrod. He was heating it and burning a hole in the head of a stick.

"Sending a letter home?" I asked. He looked up, surprised.

"No; why do you think so?"

"I don’t think so; I know it. You will put a letter in that hole, peg it up, and give the stick to a friend who is going home in the batch of sick and wounded about to be exchanged." He looked astonished
and said nothing.

"Bore the hole," I said, "don't mind me; I'm no oath-taker."

"You're a fortune-teller, though," he said.

I found this man again, borrowed his ramrod, and we ran it up through the roof of the tunnel. As it peeped through the grass a foot came down on it. It was at the spot of the last hammering. We were twelve feet from the fence.

How came we so to diverge from our course? Various reasons were given, but finally we agreed: 'We are all right-handed. We lie on our left sides and dig with our right hands, as we can't well reach to the back of our heads, our digging is too much in the front; so the tunnel gradually curves to the right.'

Here we made the "ventilator." We enlarged the tunnel at this point, in width and height, made a dome-like roof,
and made a hole, as large as three fingers, through a foot of clay to the surface. Bending the head down, and locking the arms around the knees, one could sit up in it. The fresh air was a great relief. A stone covered the hole in the day, removed at dusk.

The ventilator also enabled us to improve our methods and quicken the work. It had been tedious labor, dragging the dirt back with the hands so far, so little at a time. Now we rigged up a box with a strong cord at each end, and the digger loaded the loose earth into it, rapped on the box as a signal, and it was drawn to the tent. At the sound of raps he drew it back empty. Sometimes the box caught against some stone in the side of the tunnel. For that there was a special rap, meaning: "The box is caught; pull back a little."
The digger forged ahead, beyond the ventilator; then his helper remained in the ventilator to load the box. When the digger could endure the lack of air no longer he came to the ventilator to breathe, the other moving back in the tunnel to make room. We worked more by day now than before; we could hear the loaded carts pass overhead. We were nearing the fence. Our hopes ran high.

I could give no hint to Kibler, but I resolved, when the time came, to wait till all were gone,—even giving up my place to two who were admitted after me, then go to him, and say, "Jack, come with me."

It was now October. On the fifth we knew, by measurement, we were close to the fence. We could hear the feet of the guards, as they walked the outside rounds. We worked steadily on the 5th and 6th and fixed

* They occupied the tent under which we tunneled, and had overheard us.
ten o'clock on the night of the 6th as the hour of escape. Would we succeed? Guards walked the rounds inside the fence; guards walked on top; guards stood outside. What chance, for eight men—may, ten—before me to get away unobserved? My chance is little. Truwick's only is good.

At dusk on the 6th, the tent-door was made fast. No more passing out that night. The dirt would be piled in the tent. Truwick and I were to finish the tunnel. He went first; I followed. I was half-way to the ventilator, when the roof caved, and a quantity of earth fell on my legs. If I felt alarm for myself, it was little; my fear was, had the entire roof fallen in? Is the tunnel a failure? But I felt no fresh air. I called to the man at the shaft. He came and released me. The removal of this earth delayed us.

Truwick was at work with the knife.
I dragged back the dirt and loaded the box at the ventilator. At ten o'clock came black clouds, and a thunderstorm. We had not yet reached the fence. Had fate made an appointment with us that we had failed to keep?

We must not fail tonight. Never did we work so hard. Even at the ventilator the air is close, hot, stifling. I make the hole bigger.

Ah, that is better.

"Benson!"

"Well!"

"I'm most dead; go back to the tent and change with me."

"Let's try to pass at the ventilator."

"Too narrow; we can't do it."

"Try it."

I lay on my side, pressed close, — now his feet are in my face — lower — we squeeze tight — now we are face to face — wedged fast! We strain, — neither can move a limb!
This is horrible! One more effort,—there! we are free! I crawl up and take the knife.
The air at the ventilator was oppressive; but this—this is torture. Mouth wide open, tongue out, chest laboring, not my lungs only but my whole body suffocating, and a brain that throbs, throbs, in utter agony. Oh, let me get back into prison! Any life rather than this ceaseless dying!

Still the knife pegs away; the earth is pulled back and loaded,—rap, rap!—the box slides to the tent,—rap, rap,—back it slides to the ventilator.

The hours pass. When I give up from exhaustion, Traviick takes my place; when he surrenders, I renew the digging. We have learned how to pass at the ventilator.

It draws toward morning; how could we have mistaken our distance? Are we making another circuit? Must we wait till another night?
"Pennon!"
"Well!"
"I've struck a post in the fence!"
"Good! Which side of the tunnel?"
"Middle; I'll work round to the right."

Again I relieved him; sure enough, a post! I worked harder than ever, and forged past the post; I knew I was beyond the fence, for the posts are set outside. But oh, this sickening headache! this death for air! I will have it! I lie on my back, my head against the end of the tunnel, and work my hand up through the soil. The dirt and pebbles fall in my face. Oh! is this water? Down pours the cold air upon my face like a stream of cold water — I lie still and drink, and drink. It is delicious. I creep back to the ventilator.

"Frankick, go get some fresh air."
"Fresh air!"
"Yes, I have opened the tunnel!"
It was now close on to daybreak. He must hurry. Consulting together, we agreed to send no more dirt to the tent, but deposit all in the ventilator. This would speed the work. It was not long till all was ready,—only a crust left on top outside. Then a hole was dug below it, into which this crust should fall when broken by Hewick, the first going out. Then we crawled back to the tent and announced the tunnel complete. The guards on the walls were calling, one after another: "Four o'clock, and a-l-l's well!" Hasty preparations were made, while I lay in the tent, half in sleep, half in stupor, my head still racked with the horrible throbbing, my whole body sick. In this half-conscious state I did not know when any passed in to the tunnel. I might have lain there till midday, but I was roused by voices. Shelton was saying, "They are still in the tunnel; I heard them."
"Go in again, and see," said Glenn. I sprung up. "Have they gone?"

"No; they are in the tunnel yet."

"You are mistaken," I said, "go on."

Shelton hesitated. Then he said; "Benson, you know we have never worked inside the tunnel; you go first, and if they are gone call back to us." With daylight coming I could not parley with hesitation. I went down in the tunnel, the seventh man. Midway, I found nobody, heard nobody, and called back. Glenn came. Tempchin* and Jackson* followed. But Shelton never came.**

Lifting my head cautiously out at the opening, I saw three guards standing at a fire across the street, some fifty feet away. Flat on my belly I crawled along, under the platform, the guards walking overhead. After a little I rose to my hands and knees, and

* G. G. Jackson, Wetumpka, Ala.  
* Mrs. Tempchin, Faunsdale, Ala.

** So I afterward heard from fellow prisoners. Yet he was one of the best workmen we had outside the tunnel.
Coming out of the Tunnel.

The tips of some of the tents might be shown above the fence; though, as a matter of fact, I believe they would not be high enough. The posts to might be made to cast shadows from the guards' fire across the streets (in the unseen foreground).
crawled further. Then I rose to my feet and walked quickly, still under the guards' platform. At the corner of the prison I stop. If I step out I may be shot. But I must step out somewhere, and this is Water Street, a highway; I may be taken for a passer-by; — this is the safest. I stepped out, nor turned my head to look, my back feeling all in spots where the bullet might hit. I crossed the street to the sidewalk, still not halted, and began to walk fast. I did not wait to reach a cross-street, but, springing over a fence, into a yard, I ran past the house and into the garden.

I ran through the yard, past the house. A dog chased me through the garden, but I beat him to the back fence, and over it. I was now in vacant ground, and I continued to run, aiming for the hills toward the north.

On the hillside, in the fields, plain to be seen from the prison, was a junction of
fences. This point we had agreed on as a rendezvous. Reaching it, I looked around; I saw nobody. I called. No answer. I waited. A while. No one came. So, setting my face Aimes toward the west, I ran awhile, and walked awhile, through fields, and over fences, aiming to cross the river some miles up and turn south. I feared to try any bridge near by, lest it be guarded. Passing through an orchard, I filled my pockets with apples. It was the first fruit I had tasted in a year. It made me laugh, and I saw a man in the yard. To avoid him I climbed the mountain side, through the bushes, and hid myself at the foot of a high rock. It was now broad day, revealing a valley, with stretch of field, forest and river. In the road below me people were passing. I could not see the prison. But I listened for the sunrise gun, and laughed to imagine the sergeant
at reveille calling the roll, "Berry Benson! — Berry Benson!"—then, looking up through his spectacles, "Where is Berry Benson?"

Then I thought with a sad heart of the many friends and comrades whom I would have taken out with me if I could, who must now linger on in captivity, guarded all the more closely, and their chance of escape lessened by our success.*

* At least one escape was made after ours.

Sergeant Womack was on very friendly terms with some of the officers, who lent him books. In one of these books, one day, he found a printed permit to pass the guards at the gate. It was in blank, and had to be filled and signed. Womack told me about it, (if my memory is good he showed me the pass), and said he was strongly tempted to get Miller to fill it out, and sign it with Major Colt's name, and try to escape. Miller was an engraver by trade, who could forge any handwriting. His signature Henry V. Colt was perfect. But Womack's heart failed him, and he returned the book and the pass.

After our escape, however, he could not rest. He kept thinking of the pass. One day he borrowed the book again. There was the pass still. That night, at dusk, in a long blue overcoat, collar turned up, and hat drawn over his eyes, he presented the pass at the gate, and walked out, a free man. He went to New York, and thence came South. I saw him once after the war, and we had a long talk together.
On the fifth and sixth of May we fought in the Wilderness.
At terrible looking little hovel, "Frenzy Hall! Frenzy Hall! Frenzy Hall!" After shouting Frenzy Hall, Frenzy Hall, "Where is Frenzy Hall?"

I tried to sleep, that I might travel all night, but the joy of escape kept sleep from my eyes. In the afternoon, being thirsty, I moved along the mountain side, and came to a brook, full of tumbled rocks, where I drank and washed my face and hands. Such delightful water! After that from the prison wells, often foul with the stench of dead rats that had fallen in. This was fresh from heaven.

The ground was too steep and rocky to travel by night, so at dark I went down to the road through an orchard. I filled my pockets with apples again. Soon I came to a church or school-house, a flag-staff by. I raised a match and climbed in. Lighting a match, I saw desks and blackboards. I rummaged round in the desks, hoping to find some scraps of lunch that the girls had had,
but they had left me nothing. I took up the chalk; shall I write it? The spirit of adventure was strong upon me; shall I write:

"Bert Benson, 1st South Carolina Regiment, 1st South Carolina Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia, escaped from Elmira Prison, October 7th, 1864."

But prudence got the better of bravado; it might lead to my capture, or to the capture of my comrades.

Soon after, I crossed a bridge, over a creek, and still traveled west. The night was dark and cloudy. I hoped it would rain, as I wished to meet nobody. About nine o'clock I passed a small village.* Turning south, I came to the river, but I could find no crossing place, and it was too cold to swim. Rain coming on, I got into a barn, where tobacco was hanging, and slept awhile. Then I went on, westward, my road running between the river and a railroad.

Sometime in the night I crossed the river.

* Probably Big Flats; I do not know. Very probably.
on a railroad bridge, and entered a town or city, brick houses and sidewalks, and well-kept streets, with gaslights. This must have been Corning.

I now turned south, my aim being Baltimore. One of my friends in prison was named Addison. His father, who lived in Richmond, had found, in one of our hospitals, a young soldier wounded, who had come south from Baltimore, and joined a North Carolina regiment. He befriended the young fellow, who wrote of it to his mother. And when Addison was a prisoner this lady found him out and kept him supplied with money, clothes, and good food. From him I knew her address in Baltimore, No. — North East 24 St. and I now determined to go there and find her, and make myself known.

Plodding along in a lane, I heard a chicken in a tree in an orchard. It was near dawn of the 8th, and since two p.m. of the 6th I had tasted no food but apples.
The hope of broiler fowl took me over the fence, and I soon felt his feathers. But as the touch he flew, and I in full chase. Up and down we had it, a good ten minutes, when just as I had him cornered he slipped through the fence, and I lost him.

Oct. 8. At daylight I made a fire in the woods and parched some corn. A pheasant flew up close by and lit in a tree. I threw a stone at him, but it brought no bird. Then I lay down and slept.

At dark I marched, continuing south. It was getting very cold, and my coat was thin, a light summer sack that was thickness of brown cotton.* At length it came on to snow. I trudged on, taking the snow and the cold wind, eating apples. But the storm became so fierce I had to seek shelter. I found a way into a barn and lay down in the straw. The snow ceased, and I plodded on.

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*I had swapped my much better jacket for this citizen’s coat to one of Hinchebloc’s men in the Old Capitol.
How bitter cold it was in my thin clothes! Once I crept under a house, to shelter me from the freezing wind. (Toward dawn I passed a little village, and entering a back yard I found some chickens roosting, and made off with one.)

Was not this the singer after leaving Fall Brook?

Oct. 9. Stopping at daylight, on a hillside, hid from view, I cooked and ate my chicken, and rested till dark.

That night I struck a railroad crossing in the mountains, and I followed it. At length it branches, and I did not know which branch to take. At a venture I took the left. Presently the road began to climb the mountain, a stream on my right hand dropping further and further below me as I climbed. Then the road began to curve to the left, and so continued till my compass showed I was travelling due north. I turned and walked back to the fork, more than a mile, and took the other branch. This also wound ever to the north.
At daybreak I was brought to a halt, just as the railway running this railway terminated abruptly in a swamp. I got out on the hillside, and found there a village,* and I met men going to work whom I knew must be coal-miners by their black clothes, and a candle in every hat. I feel afraid I should be questioned, but none gave any heed. But I got out of the village quickly and went off in the woods, where I camped for the day.

It was a queer place. Although high upon the hills it was wet and swampy. It looked strange to see masses of rock lying amongst moss and mud. I could find no dry place to lie down, and I had only a little parched corn to eat that day (Oct 10.)

At dark I went down to the village. I was tired of the tangle of mountains, and determined to ask my way to Canton, a town I remembered passing on the way to Elmira. I walked through the village,

*I feel satisfied this was Fall Brook, Penna.
and knocked at the last house. Should I be suspected I could run to the woods hard by. A lady opened the door.

"How far is it to Canton, please?"

"Nine miles."

"By what road?" (So-and-so.) A man's voice inside: "Where are you going?"

"To Canton."

"Not tonight!"

"Yes, sir."

"No; not tonight!"

"Yes; I must get back."

"What are you doing here?"

"Looking for a strayed horse."

"You must be tired; come in and have a cup of tea."

A cup of tea! Shades of China! when did I taste tea last? I was at least three years. I was suspicious, but I was hungry; I went in. The man lay in bed. He welcomed me heartily, and plied me with questions. I
answered, fitting my fictions together the best I could.

Not only tea, but supper, was put before me, and I destroyed everything but the crockery. While I ate, spoke my host,

“If you’d come a little sooner, you’d have got something better than tea!”

“But I don’t drink anything better than tea; that’s good enough for me,” I protested. Still, now and then, from under the bedclothes came his reminder, “If you’d come a little sooner you’d have got something better than tea!” He had plainly had my share of it, and was in a good humor with himself, and with me, and everything else. So much so, indeed, that had I told him I was an escaped prisoner, I am sure he would have insisted on my hiding under his bed. The was a Scotchman, named Adam. My name was Jefferson.

When we two ex-presidents parted, he
was saying, "It's just nine o'clock, and it's nine miles to Canton; if you'd come a little sooner" — then I closed the door.

Passing a house, I prowled around, hoping to find something useful. On the back balustrade hung a pair of trousers. I crept softly up the steps and made off with them. These I put on under my others, (having no drawers), but when I next took them off I found my legs as black as any African's. They were miners' clothes and were filled with coal dust.

Nine miles! I walked steadily over the mountains all that night, and at daylight found myself on the railroad three miles north of Canton. I was four days out, and just thirty-five miles from Elmira. To much for the mountains.

Oct. 11. I camped in the woods that day, in a hollow in a field, overgrown with bushes on the road, started out with nothing to eat, and started at dark down the railroad. I soon passed Canton, my first recognised land-
mark. It was forty miles to Williamsport, which I would also remember, two nights' travel. Seven miles from Canton I came to a railroad cabin, of rough boards. Outside the door was a barrel. I examined it. The examination was satisfactory. I filled my pockets with potatoes. In a square hole, which served for a window, I saw something dark. I went up and felt of it; it was some rough cloth; what if it were a thick coat! I did so need one. I began to pull at it. Somebody was snoring just under the window. Gently pulling, it kept coming — I believe it is a coat! Then it hung. Softly slipping my hand inside, I unhooked two buttonholes off from nails, and I had it. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," but at length I stopped and tried on my prize. It was a famous warm overcoat I had captured, ragged and worn it is true, but mighty comfortable that cold night. "Now let her blow," I said; "over—
evah and double breeches!" Four pockets, — good! — No pocket-book, — bad! Here comes a man with a lantern. Off the road, and hide in the bushes.

It is moonlight, and the scenery is fine. On my right, far below, a cultivated valley, dotted with farmhouses. Beyond the valley other mountains, dark and wooded. Hard on my left, the mountain. Down its side falls a brook, tumbling in cascades, white in the moonlight.

That night I got a chicken — a fine fat hen. Ah! At daylight, I had just left the road to make camp, when I came to a tree, alone in a field, black with chestnuts, — the first I had found. There was a house close by, but the folk were not stirring. Doubtless they called the chestnuts theirs, but I was first at the mill. I climbed the tree and shook it, and the nuts pattered on the ground like twenty
Drumbeats. I filled nine pockets.

Just then I heard the rumble of cars, and, waiting, I saw a train roll by loaded with soldiers going south. I was in plain sight close by, and seeing me they raised a cheer. I cheered back, waving my hat above my head, and pointing south, as though to cry, "On to Richmond!"; adding to myself, I'll be there soon to meet you.

Oct. 12. At the sun rose, I went off to a rocky hillside, cooked my hen and roasted chestnuts, and slept. This camp was not far from Ralston.

At dusk I took up the march. (I think it was this night) that I passed a large house, like a country inn, full of lights and music and dancing. I stopped and listened. Presently the band struck up "The Bonnie Blue Flag." I did not understand it; as that was a Confederate song; but I thought maybe they sang our songs, as we used to sing: -
"John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave; John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave; John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave; But his soul goes marching on!"

Oct. 13. At daybreak, being near Williamsport, with the country very open, and no secluded camping place, I thought best to risk passing the city and find woods beyond. It was quite light when I reached the town, but I saw very few people, and those I avoided. And, indeed, it would not have done for me to be questioned and searched, having two chickens under my big coat. In the depot grounds I picked up scraps of hard-tack where soldiers had been eating, and there were very grateful to me, for I had tasted bread but once since the 6th. Crossing the Susquehanna on the railroad bridge, I was again in the fields, and I felt as though I had made an escape. I soon came to a mountain side covered thick with chestnut trees; the nuts lying thick on the ground. The ground was so rough, I with difficulty found a spot roomy enough,
amongst the rocks, to lie down. I slept nearly all day. When I woke I cooked my two chickens. I ate one, and took the other in my hand; but I had not walked far before I had finished that also.

The railway now wound along the foot of the mountain, skirted closely by the river on the left. There was no footpath, and my shoes being worn through, it was painful walking on the rock ballast. Seeing a cabin by the river's side, I went down to it in hope of finding a boat. And I did. Jumping in, and casting off, I went down rowing down the Susquehanna. Not that I did much rowing. Mostly, I lay back in the boat at my ease, eating chestnuts, and letting the boat drift. It was a lovely night. The clear Susquehanna, shut in by dark wooded mountains that showed a hundred shapes and shadows; - overhead, a full moon, softly lighting up the picture. Just such a moon (I thought) as lit up the Plank Road that night in May, when we lost our leader, Stonewall Jackson.
I passed a large hotel on the east bank whose name I read, but have now forgotten.

At length, drifting near to falls or shoals, I abandoned the boat. I came ashore at a distillery. There, lying upon a pile of lumber, I found another coat, — a nice clean business coat, fit for town wear. But what could I do with it? I already had two coats. Should I throw away my overcoat? Then I would look odd indeed, — a nice clean coat, and all else ragged and dirty. I "compromised" the matter; I put it on under the big coat. So now I wore three coats and two pairs of breeches. There was no money in the pockets, — only a license to distill. I tore that into bits, as a temperance measure.

Some time in the night I crossed, on a railroad bridge, to the eastern side of the river.

Oct. 14. When day came, I did not stop as usual, but kept on. I walked, rested, and slept, at intervals. This day I passed the town of Milton.
At dark, I was traveling a country road that ran with the railroad. As I entered a town the clock from a steeple struck seven. It sounded so sweet. This was Northumberland. Contrary to my custom I ventured into the town instead of skirting its edge. I looked into windows as I passed and saw families grouped around fires, or at supper, all so comfortable. I envied the happy people. At one house I knocked and begged for food. It was given me. Yet this good woman who now befriended me perhaps had son or brother whom I would shortly meet and strive to kill. So utterly vile and hateful is war! Would that every Laborers' Union, every Farmers' Alliance, every Brotherhood of men — (and it is from their ranks is drawn all the life, the material of war) — might say to their rulers: We will not go to war! You must and shall arbitrate your disputes!

And now, having walked a hundred and seventy miles, I ventured to steal a ride. A
train stood on the track, the engine puffing. I stowed myself on an open car, under projecting ends of lumber, and soon was moving. But the ride was short. At Sunbury, three miles distant, the train was stopped. Near by was a new house being built. Exploring it, I found a plasterer’s hat well spotted with mortar. I thought it would suit my general looks better than the black cavalry hat I wore (which I had captured in the Wilderness) so I took it. Nor, again, I heard a train coming. Eager to ride, I ran back to the station. It was an express, south-bound. The train stopped. Passengers got off and on. I hesitated. Shall I venture, amongst so many people? — All aboard!

Fifty miles an hour, and I on the platform. I stand, watching through the window for the conductor. Now he comes, collecting fares. As he nears the door I run down the steps. With one foot planted on the step, and one hand grasping the rail, I swing my body out, flat against the car. I hear the door
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In the tent — the men are too well dressed. There shone the camp furniture such as a haversack or two, a canteen or two hanging up — a shirt maybe — no stool — spread blanket with a knapsack or two on pillars. Some dried grass shining under the edge of the spread blankets. About some of the men, barefoot. Most in shirtsleeves. One reads the paper, — the candidate holding the Testament up toward his lips.
open, I catch the flash of the lantern, I hear the next door slam, and I swing back and sit on the steps. Presently he returns, and, seeing me sitting there, he holds the lantern over me, surveying me. I feel that it is all up. But I keep quiet, and do not turn my head. And then, without speaking, he is gone. He was looking at me but a few moments, but it seemed to me an hour.

Fifty-three miles I rode; into Harrisburg. The Baltimore train would leave in a few minutes. I boarded that. When the conductor came I swung outside, as before, and then — I felt a touch on my arm! I drew back on the steps.

"What are you doing out there?" — And then (may I be forgiven for it!), I told him the most pitiful story; how I lived in Harrisburg and my aunt in York; how she had been taken very ill, and telegraphed to me to come quickly; how I had no money, being out of work; and how, consequently, I had tried
this plan to get there; and ended by beseeching him not to put me off lest I should not see my aunt before she died. Then he talked a little rough, (rougher than he looked with his eyes); said I ought to be ashamed to “steal” a ride,—why didn’t I come to him? I might have had my brains knocked out against the rocks. Get you a seat now, and be sure you get off at the first station; mind that! I crowded in by the side of a fat old respectable, who growled as he woke up and scowled at my line-sprinkled hat and shabby overcoat. Could he have only guessed with whom he was riding!

The warmth of the ear and the comfort of the seat conspired against me, and in a minute I was fast asleep. For I had not slept the day before, but continued walking. I was waked by the conductor’s cry of “York! York!” I roused up. Should I get off? I didn’t want to; but the kind-hearted conductor had let me ride on, and now if I passed York
He would suspect; possibly he had heard of our escape; I'd better get off.

What a lift I had had that night! Eighty-four miles. So I struck out manfully, whistling "Dixie." I marched the rest of the night and part of the next day, crossing the Maryland line, which was marked by a post.

Sunday Oct. 16. At daylight I reached Cockeysville, forty-two miles from York, fifteen from Baltimore. There I gave ear to a garrulous man, who pointed out various misdeeds of "the rebels" when Early came that way.

"You see that bridge? The rebels burnt it—that's a new one; you see that wheat field? the rebels rode through that." Here they did this,—these they did that.

Here comes a train,—it is a freight. Loaded with cattle for Grant's army; armed Federal soldiers on top the cars, as guards. If I attempt to walk into Baltimore I may be captured—the roads are probably picketed—
but if I ride in—

My heart beat a tattoo, but I did it. I climbed to the top of a car and sat down by a soldier! He made room for me. Did I live about there? (I did). Was I there when the rebels came? (I was). Were there many of them? (They swarmed like ants.) Wasn’t I scared? (Pretty badly, she said). Did they do any damage? (They burnt that bridge, — they trampled that wheat field, — they did this, — they did that; — let me see your gun!) I praised it as a good gun, and thought I might join the army myself some time.

The train was slow and there were many stops. When we entered the city, the church bells were ringing. On the streets I met people going to church. Most did not regard me, but now and then a couple turned their heads, doubtless thinking that I looked uncommon like a good Johnny Reb. I passed policemen, too, my heart in my throat, but I never winced,
and not one accosted me.

Now to find the lady who was to be my friend. I asked the way to North Eaton St. Following the numbers till I came to the one, I rang the bell. A negro girl came to the door.

"Is Mrs. ——— at home?"

"Who?"

"Mrs. ———."

"She don't live here."

"She does not?"

"No, sir."

"She did live here, didn't she?"

"No, sir; not lately."

"Perhaps she lives next door?"

"No, sir; she don't live there."

"And you don't know where she lives?"

"No, sir; I never heard her name before."

Then I went away. Had I forgotten the right number? It looked like it. The fact was I had not, before escaping, intended going to Baltimore, and had not impressed the number on my mind. My intention had been to take Kibler and make for the upper Potomac.
It was now afternoon, and I was hungry. Passing a small house where sat a handsome couple, both blue-eyed and fair-haired, a newly married pair I thought, I asked for food. The lady brought me some bread and mutton. They looked so handsome and so happy I felt tempted to reveal myself; but then, (I thought), not all the handsome couples are on our side in this war; they are about evenly divided, I reckon. And I remembered, too, reading of a prisoner who had escaped, and reached this same Baltimore, and then confided in a stranger who said "Come with me," and decoyed him into the hands of his enemies.

A little while after, a boy, in a boy's candor way, hailed me: "Mister, you look like a rebel!" I was startled. And, while I laughed, and said "No, I don't think I'm a rebel" I determined to leave Baltimore at once.

As I passed out of the city, heading west for Leesburg, the sun was setting. I kept a sharp eye for pickets, but saw none. I marched that night, and the next, passing by
Ellicott's Mills the first night, and by Unity the second. Apples abounded, the best I had yet had; and I repeatedly emptied my pockets to fill with still better. I lived on apples and chestnuts. Being on the border, where every stranger was suspected, I was afraid to ask for food. The second night I "cracked a crib," a spring-house it was, and helped myself to the butter (which I ate with chestnuts), and skimmed the cream from the crocks of milk. I found a crock of apple-butter, too, and I "partook thereof." In the garden hung some clean white linen, and I made from the well-stocked line a careful selection. And now, full of milk, rigged out in clean shirt and drawers and stockings, I felt right comfortable.

Oct. 18. At daylight, seeing no good covert, I ventured to walk on; but presently was not thin late in afternoon, just before coming on this camp? I came upon a horse, saddled and bridled, standing alone on a low open hill that overlooked the road. I saw no man, but it was plain soldiers were near, for the equipments were those of cavalry. It was clearly a picket. I felt sure the vidette was close by,—lying upon the ground, watching...
perhaps. I dared not turn back; that would excite suspicion; so I walked boldly past, and was not hailed. Then I quickly found hiding. That was the greatest mistake I made in the war. I should have taken the under violets, as they gravely directed back to a good hiding place till that night I pushed on; I must be near the Potomac. It was still early when I saw a light ahead, as though from fires in the open air. I felt sure it was a camp. I went cautiously. It was quite dark, and before I knew it I had come up on a man in the road. "A pickle!" I gasped. But the man seemed afraid also, and said, "How do?" Then he told me he was a razor-grinder, and I saw it was not a gun, but his wheel on his back. He had just come from the soldiers' camp (he said) where they had given him a good supper. I might get a supper there myself if I were so inclined. To be sure; why not? I said. Good night! Then I jumped the fence and made off through the fields. A dog objected to this and I had to use my choice pickings as stones, to keep him at bay.

But presently I reached another road, which also led to the camp. The camp is at
cross-roads, I said. Whilst I stood looking, I heard horses’ feet. I jumped quickly over the fence and lay down. No horsemen rode by, going to the camp; I thought they were officers. Then I became possessed of desire to see the camp. I crept cautiously back till I came to the crossing, and there, from behind a rock I satisfied my curiosity. Tents, fires, soldiers cooking, - I viewed the whole scene, and I heard what the soldiers said talked. I could have tossed an apple in their midst.

Leaving the camp, I had not gone far when I saw in the road before me a low fire, and a vidette standing by it, rifle in hand. Over the fence again I went and on through the fields.

It was toward morning when I heard, across the fields, falling water. Shaals of the Potomac! I said. Elated, I hurried toward it, and soon from a hilltop I caught sight of the river, and the Virginia hills beyond. My heart beat high. That was my country, and naught between me and it but a narrow thread. I could not tell just where I was, but I felt satisfied I was not far from
Leesburg.
At the foot of the hill ran the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. While standing on its bank a mounted patrol rode by on the further side. I happened to be in the bushes until he had passed. Near by, in the field, two horses grazed,—could I ride into Virginia? By coaxing I managed to take one by the forelock, and to slip over his head a bridle of strong cord, with a bit made of wire, which I had kept ready for just such a capture. Mounting, I rode down to the canal. But there, as at the water’s edge, he stood still; nor could I by force or by any art I knew, induce him to enter the water. I tried a long time, but at last I gave it up. Day was coming in the east.

And now I feared to attempt the crossing, lest I be seen in the river by the pickets; the south bank even might be guarded, and I might swim right into their hands. I dreaded to run this risk, and determined to wait the next fortnight. So I went up through the field, to a wood, and crept into some thick bushes. There I remained all day, having nothing to eat but a few wild grapes.
This was now the 19th of October. It may have been about noon that I first heard guns. They were a long way off, in the west; then they grew louder and more rapid. I knew what it meant — I had heard it often — it was battle. I stood up and listened. I was in a fever of excitement, and of humiliation. There my flags were waving; my men facing the guns. And I here skulking in the bushes! — I cried.

Long lasted the roar of the battle, but at length it died away, and all was still again; I knowing naught of the result, — not knowing how a splendid victory had been turned, through vile plunder, into shameful defeat. For that was the battle of Cedar Creek.

At dusk I went down to the canal. Luckily I came to a lock, and crossed, passing thro' the yard of the keeper's house, unseen. By the towpath I found a shad plank, and took it down to the river. I pulled off my clothes and did them into a bundle, my underclothes in the middle, my big coat as a wrapper outside. Then I tied the bundle to one end of the plank. My shirt and trousers I kept on, so that, should I lose my clothes, I would still be partly dressed, and would not need to go to a
house stark naked, as I had once done on a scout, when I swam the Rapidan in a snowstorm.

The bed of the river was rocky and rough, deep in places, and the water was swift and cold. Sometimes wading, sometimes swimming, I made the trip safely, landing unchallenged on the Virginia shore. My clothes, split my case, were wet. I felt for my compass. It was gone! The case being wood, it had come out of my pocket while I swam, and floated away.

shivering with cold,

Traveling through the fields, I at length reached a house. I had little fear of knocking at any house in this part of the country; the people were all loyal to the South. In answer to my knock, a window was opened, and a woman's voice asked what I wanted. I wanted to find Mr. Gray's, near Leesburg. She did not know, but if I would go on, to Mr. Ball's, he would tell me. Following directions, I found Mr. Ball's, and knocked. No reply. All was dark. I knocked again. Then a stir inside, and base footsteps.

"Who is that?"

"A soldier."
"Union or Confederate?"

"A Confederate soldier." Then the door was opened just a little, and a survey made of me by a man with a light. I explained that I was an escaped prisoner, and wanted to find my old friend, Mr. Gray. Mr. Ball said Mr. Gray had moved into Leesburg. I'd better stay with him that night. He took me in, made a good fire, and spread some blankets on the floor. I was soon sound asleep.

But the next day Mr. Ball and his good wife and daughters insisted I should stay one day and rest. One of the sons was in prison at Washington. At night a fire was made in an outhouse (used as a schoolhouse by one of the daughters), and a pallet spread for my bed. I would be safer from capture there than in the house; "and if you hear cavalry in the night jump out of the window and run to the woods." But I was not disturbed, and I went next day to Leesburg, and was kindly welcomed by Mr. Gray and his family. With them I stayed two days.

Sunday, 23rd, I left Leesburg, keeping the highway, but also keeping a lookout for any chance body of the enemy's cavalry. But I had little fear, for Mosby and his guerrillas ruled
this region, and the enemy dared not travel through it except in force. From a well-to-do farmer I got a good dinner.

At dark I asked at a house for a place to sleep, but they had no room; some of Morby's men were stopping there that night. At the next house it was the same; and the next.

"But I don't need a bed; let me sleep in the barn."
"Morby's men have the barn, too."
"Well, let me sleep on the floor."

"Wait; I'll ask the men; if they don't object you may come in."

The man said, "Let him come in," said the men.

By the fire sat two young men, waiting for supper; others outside were busy with their horses. As I sat down the young men eyed me somewhat curiously; I thought, and they began asking me questions about myself. My replies shortly made it necessary for me to tell my whole story. Whilst doing so, others came in, listened awhile, and went out. They seemed to listen with incredulity. Somehow, there was an air of distrust of me. I did not feel comfortable. But when I came to speak of the Old Capitol and told the names of Morby's men, prisoners there, then their
manner changed. "Boys, he's all right," they cried out, "he was in the Old Capitol with Sam Underwood, and Ben Crowley, and Woodhouse." And directly, in spite of my protests, a hat was passing round and its contents emptied into mine. I insisted I would not need any money, my own people would give me food and shelter, but no, they said, "we owe it to you; we thought you were a spy and were talking of hanging you. This makes us even." We ate supper together, and at bedtime one gave me his bed; under pretense that he wanted to sleep by his horse anyhow.

Next morning, Mosby's men came riding by all the roads to meet at Jack's Shop, to go on a foray. And I saw as fine-looking a body of cavalry as ever I saw. I was presented to Col. Mosby, who gave me directions as to my course, and how best to avoid the enemy's pickets. "Stick to the Blue Ridge," he said, "keep mountain roads, and paths; and be very cautious in crossing the gaps; they are patrolled by the enemy." I was very anxious to go on this raid, but a horse could not be had.

*On this raid they captured a train of wagons loaded with supplies; $18,000 in money, and a number of prisoners, including a brigadier general.
Near a country-seat called Llangollen I stopped that night at an old Virginia man-
sion, and asked leave to sleep in the barn. I
was taken into the house, where, by the fire,
sat three young women, all bright and hand-
some, sewing and knitting. Ill-clad as I was,
dusty with the road, and sunburnt, I felt
mighty ashamed of myself in such nice com-
pany. But they would have me to tell my
story, and while they drew up around me,
listening, with bewitching interjections of
"Oh!" and "poor fellow!" I mightly near
lost my heart.

Their name was Gibbons. Their negroes had
all run away, leaving the corn ungathered;
and their brother, a lieutenant in the army,
was now in the fields, having been granted
a few days' furlough, to save what he could
of the crop. On asking for a bit to eat, they
made excuse, saying they were unprepared;
but I, fearing they thought I expected a tooth-
some supper, said a piece of cold bread
would do. With faces suffused as though
with shame, they told me they had not even
that; that the negroes, in going, had taken
all that they had. But the eldest rose, and
bringing some milk and chestnuts placed
them on the table before me, saying theirs and their brother's supper had been the same. Then I felt more than ever ashamed.

10/25
I rose early from my bed of straw in the barn, but not early enough to see Lieut. Gibson; he was already at work in the fields. I bade the sisters goodbye, taking a letter for a kineman in Early's army.

10/28
That night I got lost in the mountains and slept in the woods. The next night I slept in a barn; and the next day, October 28th, late in the afternoon, I was halted by a Confederate picket.

At the headquarters of Gen. Bradley Johnson I was called to account. The general examined me himself, his aids standing by. Question followed question, till at length he was satisfied, but by then he was so interested that he exclaimed: "Sergeant, begin at the beginning, and tell me the whole story."

"General," I said, "first give me my supper; I'm desperately hungry." He laughed.

"Here, you, Sam, get out that hoecake and cold mutton, - a cup of coffee too, - spy, now!" And while I sat across his camp-chest, my attention all on my supper, a group of officers collected, who watched me with amused interest, not altogether heedful of the general's
protests to "let him alone, boyo, till he
gets through his supper."

When the story was told there was a mo-
moment of silence; then the general looked up,
saying: "The sergeant talks mighty well, don't
he? — and I say, sergeant, you'll have to
sleep with me tonight!"

"With you!"

"Yes, with me; right under my blanket."

"General, call the guard; I can't obey that order."

Finally the compromise was made that I should
sleep in his tent, under another blanket; and,
ylying at his feet that night, his saddle for
my pillow, whilst a storm beat without, I
dreamed of a pair of blue eyes.

At Newmarket, Gen. Early asked me some
questions, and gave me a pass to Richmond.
He told me my command was at Petersburg.

Arrived at Petersburg, a few hours' walk
took me to the camp of the brigade. As I passed
among the tents I did not stop, being anx-
iuous to see my brother (if he were yet alive),
but I felt hurt that none came forward to
stop me, seeing me pass. I noted in their
eyes recognition and surprise; yet why
did they not run out to greet me?

But when I reached the tents of my
company, one ran out and caught hold of
but they had left me nothing. I took up the chalk; shall I write it? The spirit of adventure was strong upon me, and I came near writing it:

"Berry Benson, 1st S. C. Regiment, escaped from Elmira Prison October 7th, 1864."
me, at the same time calling out: "Corporal Benson, here's your brother!"

Bob was standing at the farther end of the street, with his back to me, cooking. Hearing the cry, he turned, and ran to me. He seized me round the neck, pulled my head down, and began pounding me heavily on the back with his fists, saying never a word. I broke from him, gasping "What's the matter with you?" "Matter!" he cried, "matter! Why, you've been dead five months,—that's what's the matter! You were killed on the 25th of May, escaping from Point Lookout! Mike Duffy saw your body lying on the beach!"

Then he fell to pounding me again.

Beverly Benson.
Augusta, Ga.