FRIDAY, MAY 15th.—The weather is cool and fine. Our
division was ordered to move early this morning. When
the dismounted and unserviceable of our company were
placed upon the left hand, and the others upon the right, I
was much disappointed, for I had been among the former
for more than two months; I had missed going on General
Stoneman’s raid into the heart of the Rebel country, and
now was about to be left behind again. But fortunately,
as I then thought, my captain called for a dismounted man
to report at General G.’s headquarters. I answered that
call.

A little later in the day I found myself in rather angry
mood, picking the best of half a dozen military roads,
which, like the lines of a vibrating harp string, all lead to
the same point. I should have been in better mood, but
instead of the common duty of a cavalry soldier, I was left
with another man to help drive the mule train belonging to
headquarters. I was, however, very glad of a horse to
ride, and I preferred almost any part to the dullness and
servility of guard and fatigue duty in the rear, and I did
the best I could with the ugly animals. The corporal in
charge of us made unnecessary talk about guerillas, and
finally rode on and left us.
We had driven nearly all day; we had eaten nothing, and were considering the matter of camping by the way, when Austin’s captain rode up with us and urged us to go through and report tonight. He left an officer and two men with us, saying: “Lieutenant will see you safe through.”

We drove on; but Austin, knowing the road well, bid the troo ride on, if they wished, and seeing our pickets posted along the road they apprehended no danger, and rode on out of our sight, leaving us alone.

It was about the hour of sunset; we had just passed Morrisville, and were upon a section of road closely bounded by dense wood; we had forgotten our sharp lookout for Rebs, and were feeling secure as we rode in silence, when suddenly four Rebel soldiers sprang from behind the trees and got within four feet of us, with leveled carbines and revolvers, before I noticed them. This was done with so little noise that the low, hoarse order, “surrender,” was the first I heard of them.

I was surprised; and who would not have been so? In an instant of time thoughts had flashed through my mind like these:—If we surrender, the enemy will have us and the train too; if we do not, why they will get just the same, for they have two men to one, and their arms are ready at our first motion of resistance. In the first case we could save our lives; in the last probably lose them. We surrendered.

Then followed rapid skedaddling, in strict silence, through the woods. They were Rebel scouts, and knew their proximity to our pickets, which made them move very quick. As for Austin and I, a few hours rest would have met our highest hopes that night; but we depaired of the sweet restorer when our austere captors told us we had twenty-five miles to travel to-night.

I asked them who they were, and they seemed delighted in the delivery of:—“We belong to the Second South Carolina cavalry. We are some of the hot-headed boys—South Carolina hot-heads. Wasn’t that a right bold trick? Have you got any boys that would do that? Why don’t you fellows scout like we do?”

I replied that we had plenty of men that would like no sport better than scouting, but they are not allowed to leave their companies.

After a few miles travel into retired country we halted, unpacked the mules, and made a supper on the General’s rations. While captors were choosing what to take along, and disputing about the division of plunder, which, indeed, seemed of all things to lie nearest their hearts, we lay down for a little rest, which was all we got for the night.

After an hour we packed up and went on, captors riding our horses and we the mules, with pack saddles, rope bridles and rope stirrups. It was very fatiguing to ride in this manner and lead two stubborn mules a-piece, through woods and fields, after a hard day’s march; but our strongly armed guards held us to it.

Saturday, May 16th—The day is very fair. Daylight found us quickening our pace for security from the Yankees. A little after sun-rise we went among the pines near the Kettle Run and the railroad, where we lay hidden till near night. Here we got food and sleep. In the course of the day several other Rebel soldiers came among us. We were well treated, but closely watched.

Near night we left our hiding-place and pursued our way around in rear of the Yankees toward the Rebel lines. At midnight we halted at a plantation, and after eating what the host called “a little snack,” we lay our weary bodies down upon the floor to rest, while our tired captors crucified themselves with guard duty on our account.

Sunday, May 17th—The day surpasses yesterday in beauty, being fair with a few fresh drops of a shower.

We left the planter’s much refreshed. Our march to-day is so monotonous that I will not give it in detail. Captors sold the poorest of their mule property for nearly two hundred dollars per head. They kept the best mules for their own use. They made all plunder their own property. Late at night we halted, and stayed at the house of Mr. Green, near Hazel River.

Monday, May 18th.—Fair. The mules were all disposed of, and we were left to perform the rest of our journey on
foot. The last one did us his parting service by carrying us upon his bare back across Hazel River. In the course of the day we reached Culpeper Court House, which was thronging with the Rebel army. Here Gen. Hampton questioned us, and probably concluded that we were not well posted with the affairs of our own army, for we disposed of most of his inquiries with a "don't know." When he was done with us the guard delivered us to jail, where we lay till next day.

*Tuesday, May 19th.* — Fair. At an early hour we were taken from jail and sent by rail to Gordensville. Here we passed the day in an old building used for a prison. Rebel soldiers often came in to talk with us, and we learned the feelings of many of them in regard to the present war. We did not allow ourselves to get into an argument on the great subject of dispute, for all of us were sensible that words had utterly failed to settle it, and that a more powerful argument was going on with arms. And whenever we touched a point it was done lightly, for the prisoner and guard, if both are good soldiers, will be to each other gentlemen.

But I learned they are persuaded that we are not fighting for the old Constitution, because, as they say, we have broken it. They pretend to believe that our sole object in this war is the abolition of slavery. I learned that peace is the chief desire of their hearts, but they pretend to be confident of the last blow in the fight. I assured them that the restoration of our former Government was all I came to fight for, and that I believed this to be the case with the majority of our army.

*Wednesday, May 20th.* — Another fair day. We are sent to Richmond by rail, and confined in Libby Prison.

*Thursday, May 21st.* — The day is fair to all appearances, but we do not enjoy it. We have almost nothing to eat, and are getting weak. If I were doomed to bear so long confinement here as some of our poor fellows have done before us, the guard might possibly catch me dangling from the prison window some night, or in some other romantic act that would poise on a possibility of escape.

*Friday, May 22d.* — Fair, as usual. Our spirits are elevated "right smart" at the prospect of being released to-morrow. We sign our parole papers.

*Saturday, May 23d.* — Fair. Released early and went by rail to City Point, where our boat lay waiting for us, and where we seemed to feel the eagle hovering over us. I will venture that our company of prisoners felt as I did — that the Stars and Stripes of the Union never appeared so dear to us before.

*Sunday, May 24th.* — Fair, with some wind at night. We passed Fortress Monroe and made good progress toward our destination. At sea there seemed to be but little material for diaries. All I saw during the day that disturbed monotony was the rough handling of deserters by the gun-boat boys.

*Monday, May 25th.* — Some clouds and wind. We arrived early at Annapolis, Md., and were quartered in College Green barracks.

I have now done with dates, and will proceed with my story.

Our captors told me that they, four in number, had, at different times, captured forty-three men and a good many horses at the same place where we were taken. Among these men were several officers. They said they made more account of plunder than prisoners. They made their brags that our army just furnished them with arms and a good many other things. Must we allow this? The greater part of the country through which we were taken had never been visited by either army, and appeared in a thriving condition.

My ears were filled with tales of woe, suffered by the citizens of this country at the hands of the Yankees, but I was left to observe for myself that none of these citizens were neutral, as they pretended, but every one a spy. The rebel scout can travel in Virginia almost with security, for the citizen is posted with the whereabouts of the Yankees, and will direct him by a safe route from his plantation to his neighbor's house, where he can get direction still further, and so on to the rebel lines. The citizen is ever ready with
a word, a "snack," and a shelter for the Rebel soldier, in spite of all oaths of allegiance to our Government which they may have taken. And still our lenient Generals will give a guard for the safety of their property. Is this a just return?

Almost everybody was anxious to exchange their Confederate money for ours. Nearly the first question would be, "Have you got any green-backs?" They were willing to give two dollars for one, and in case this inducement failed, they would give five for one. The cause is plain, when we know that they can steal through our lines and buy more goods for five dollars of green-backs than they could obtain anywhere else for twenty-five dollars of their scrip.

I expected to meet with much unreason and abuse, but being in the hands of men who counted themselves good soldiers, we found but little; "for a good soldier," said they, "will never mistreat a prisoner." There was, indeed, at one plantation, a young man of aristocratic turn, whose sense might have been better, who came down upon us with "What do yours all want of our niggers? You going to internarry?" Well, go on, keep all you've got; we's don't want 'em back again. You may internarry and raise up a kind o' mulatto race, and then we'll make use of ye." He made more words than these, but no more meaning. At another place, where we called for direction, a young lady addressed me thus:—"Say, Mr. Yankee, what did you all come down here to fight us for? You all going to kill us all and get our homes?" A gentleman was standing near me, and I affected to be busily talking with him, and in this way eluded her volley of unreason. At Culpeper jail a Rebel orderly sergeant came to our cell and asked me what I was fighting for? I told him he knew that as well as I, if he knew what he was fighting for. He pressed the question, and I answered to support the Constitution. Then he used such abusive language that I would not talk with him any more. Other soldiers came to talk with us, and though they seemed more earnestly patriotic, yet they avoided the great dispute and treated us kindly.

At Richmond our fare was hard. From all causes we felt, on our release from prison, very much as a man would be likely to feel if he should die and by some mistake get into the infernal regions, and then, like Alcide, be rescued and restored to life again.

I have to blame them at the prison for stripping us of blankets, canteens, dippers, &c., while I noticed the prisoners we returned to them were fitted out with a full rig for the field, except arms. I was much disgusted with the Richmond papers. The editor deals largely in absurd lies favorable to the Rebel army, which is part of their policy in war. I could overlook this, but when I came to his notice of our tribute of respect to Stonewall Jackson, in which he said the Yankees had profaned the name of Jackson, it came into my mind what a rich target such an editor would make.

Frequent reference was made to Stoneman's raid, and the Rebs boasted that it was very tame compared with Stuart's raid into Pennsylvania. They say he did them no damage of any account.

When we were received into College Green barracks our sorry plight was soon improved by a scrubbing and a suit of new clothes. Our hearts were cheered by a plenty to eat, and a fine prospect so long as we behave like men. One word for the major in command. We believe he has a peculiar fitness for his charge, for he knows the wants of men in our condition, and can do as well as to know. Men who will not cheerfully comply with all requirements here ought to be deprived of our fine privileges.

There is a saying somewhere to the amount, that "idleness is the parent of mischief," and after I had run over the quiet little town of Annapolis to my partial satisfaction, I began to wish myself at home, and half concluded to take a "French furlough," as I understand no other can be obtained here. While the remnants of my conscience was struggling with this unfavorable scheme, a scrap of newspaper, with the following rhyme, caught my eye, and helped me conclude to stay a little while longer and "hoe out my row."
"One day a lazy farmer's boy
Was hoeing out the corn,
And moodily had listened long
To hear the dinner horn.
The welcome blast was heard at last,
And down he dropped his hoe;
But the good man shouted in his ear,
"My boy, hoe out your row!"

Although a 'hard one' was the row,
To use a plowman's phrase;
And the lad, as sailors have it,
Beginning well to 'haze;'
"I can,' said he, and manfully
He seized again his hoe;
And the good man smiled to see
The boy hoe out his row.

"The lad the text remembered,
And proved the moral well,
That perseverance to the end
At last will nobly tell
Take courage, men, resolve you can,
And strike a vigorous blow;
In life's great field of toil,
Always hoe out your row."