

# **Memoirs of Andersonville**

**by William N. Tyler,**  
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**Published: 1887**  
**Second Edition: 1892**

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## **Preface**

Books, as a general thing, have prefaces. I write a preface to this book, not because I think it is necessary, but because it is customary. I did not keep a diary while at Andersonville. I did not have time. My time was exclusively engaged in getting something to eat and fighting graybacks. In the latter work I was much more successful than in the former. I enlisted in 1861, in the 9th Illinois Cavalry, Co. I. I served two years, got wounded, was discharged and sent home. I got well and re-enlisted September 28, 1863, in Co. B, 95th Illinois Infantry. I went up on the Red River expedition, and got back to Memphis just in time for that ill-fated expedition under General Sturges, which early in June set out from that point to meet Gen. Forrest, who was then operating extensively in Northern Mississippi.

The Author.

Belvidere, ILL., 1887.

## **Chapter I**

### **The Battle-Field.**

It is said that we should forgive and forget; but the man who invented that saying was never in Andersonville prison.

No, my readers, I purpose to tell you just as nearly as one man can tell another, how the Union soldiers were treated at Andersonville. I shall begin with my capture, and then take you right along with me through the prison.

About the first of June, 1864, we were ordered out from Memphis to fight the Rebel General Forrest, then operating near Guntown, Miss. We met him near that place on the tenth day of June, and here occurred one of the most desperate battles I ever witnessed.

A great many think to this day that we were sold to the Johnnies; and I must say that it looked very much like it indeed.

Our horses, our ambulances, and our wagons were run up to the front. The field lay in the form of a horseshoe with heavy timber and dense brushwood on all sides. The Rebels were ambushed on three sides of our regiment; consequently they had a cross-fire on us.

Our colonel was killed in the first fire. I thought for awhile that the whole line of battle would fall. One after another of our captains fell, until all were dead or so severely wounded as to incapacitate them for duty.

Finally one of our lieutenants took command of the regiment. He had no sooner done so than he was shot through the foot. As he went hobbling off he gave the command to fall back. Well, now, you can bet that we did fall back, and in double-quick time, too.

Now, right here occurred an incident that was laughable, notwithstanding the serious position we were all in. We had a large negro to do our cooking. For some reason or other he had got up toward the front. In his hand he held a camp-kettle, and when the Johnnies first fired he stood paralyzed with fear. Finally he got his right mind, and then you ought to have seen him run. He turned, and giving an unearthly yell, skipped across the battle field. He did not let go of his kettle; and at every jump he yelled, "I'se going home!"

We all gave leg-bail for security, and got across the field in a lively manner, I tell you.

I made a stright line for the creek, and when I got there, I saw a tree that had fallen across it, and twelve or fourteen of our men crossed on it. In the meantime the Rebels had captured one of our guns, and turned it on our men who were crossing, and swept every man off into the creek. About this time I made a big jump and landed in the stream up to my cartridge-box in the water. Again, another shot came booming along and cut a nice path through the canebreak. It did not take me long to take advantage of these paths made by the cannon, and get out of that. The first men that I met were of my own company. We formed a line and held the Rebels in check until our cartridges gave out; then commenced one of the most shameful stampedes I ever saw. We set fire to the wagons that were near us, and retreated. By this time the sun was very near down, so we did not get far before dark.

We traveled all night, and in the morning came to a little town called Ripley. Here we made a halt to allow the stragglers to catch up; and while waiting here the Rebel cavalry got ahead of us.

The little squad that I was with stood right in front of a large white house with a bay window in front. A woman stepped to the window with a revolver in her hand and fired into our crowd, killing one of our lieutenants. Some of our men still having their guns loaded, turned, and without orders, fired and killed the woman.

Just as we got through the town we found the Rebel cavalry waiting for us. We formed and charged. The cavalry opened and let us through, we only losing three men.

By this time I was getting tired. I told my brother that I could not stand it any longer. He told me to try and keep up, but I knew that I could not go much farther.

About the middle of the afternoon we stopped to rest. We had been resting only for a few minutes when bang! bang! went the Rebel guns. My brother and I jumped to our feet, took hold of hands, and started down a steep hill. Now, said I; go on, for I cannot go any farther; I am played out, you go and try to get through to Memphis, and I will hide here and get away if I can. So he went on and I went down the hill and crawled under a large tree that had probably blown down. It was not five minutes before the Johnnies were jumping over the very tree I was under. While lying there I saw a big black negro jump up out of the brush with a navy revolver in his hand. He saw that the Johnnies were all around him, and that his only chance was to fight. So he jumped upon a large rock; the Rebels told him to

surrender, and at the same time began to fire at him. The negro was plucky; he raised his revolver, took steady aim, and fired. He killed a Johnnie, and fetched three more before they fetched him. Having killed the poor fellow they went up to him and ran him through, time and again, with their bayonets.

While this was going on you had better believe I was hugging the ground. I laid so flat and close that had I been a case knife I could not have been much thinner. Well, I laid there till it was getting dark, then crawled from under the tree and went back up the hill. Right in the middle of the road I found a gun, which upon examination, proved to be loaded. I bent my own gun around a tree, took up the loaded gun and left the road. I made up my mind that I would go about four miles south and then strike west; by doing this I was bound to strike the Mississippi somewhere south of Memphis. The country between Guntown and Memphis is all timber land. Well, I went stumbling over logs, tearing through briar bushes, and finally I struck a swamp. Yes, I struck it suddenly and unexpectedly. I struck my toe against a log and went headfore-most, casouse into the mud and water. I floundered around in there till I got completely covered with mud and filth. I finally got clear of the swamp and came to a densely wooded place upon ground a little higher. Here I curled up under a tree and went to sleep. The first thing I heard in the morning was the whip-poor-will. I saw by the light in the east that it was getting well on towards daylight. Knowing which direction was east I knew that the opposite direction would take me to the Mississippi, and in that direction I took my course. I hadn't gone more than a mile when I struck one of our men. He belonged to the cavalry. As he came up to me I asked him which way he was going. He told me he was going to Memphis. "No," says I; "you are going directly east." After talking the matter over we started off together. We had not gone fifty yards when we heard the click of guns and "Halt! you Yanks; throw down them guns!" "Come up here!" "Give me that hat!" "Here, I want them boots!" I had a pocket knife and seven dollars and thirty cents in money in my pocket. My boots were new, and I made up my mind to wear them if anybody wore them. So when I took them off I stuck the point of my knife into the toe and ripped them up to the top of the leg. "Now, you d—d Yank, I'll fix you for that." He dropped on his knee, took deliberate aim, and just as his finger pressed the trigger, the Rebel captain raised the muzzle of his gun and it went off over my head. The captain said, "That man is a prisoner, and whatever you do, don't shoot him."

Well, the Johnnies did not want my boots then, but they took my pocket knife and money. I told them that I had been in quite a number of battles, and seen a great many men captured, but that I had never known one of our men to take a single thing from them; that if their men were captured without blankets we gave them blankets. "Keep your damn mouth shut, or I will plug you yet," said the Johnnie. So I kept it shut, you bet.

The Rebel captain had his son with him, a boy about sixteen years old. He came up to me and said, "I'se sorry for you." Well, to tell the truth, I was a sorrowful looking object, I suppose. I was covered with mud from head to foot; I was hungry; I was tired, and I was in the hands of what I knew to be a cruel enemy. You will perhaps say I was not much of a soldier when I tell you I cried. I could not help it. The captain's boy said, "Don't cry, and I will give you a piece of corn bread." I could not help laughing at the simplicity of the child, and it made me feel better.

Well, they started us for the main road, and you can imagine my astonishment when we came at last to the road, and found that the Rebels had 1,800 of our men prisoners. They then started us back toward the battle ground. We marched till sundown and then went into camp.

## Chapter II

I thought about my brother, but was too tired and worn out to hunt him up, so I laid down on the ground, without blanket or covering of any kind, for the Rebels had taken everything and anything that they could make use of, and went to sleep, and I did not waken till I was awakened by the call to fall in. I had had nothing to eat since I left the battle field, excepting the piece of corn bread the captain's boy gave me, and this was the third day.

I was so sore and stiff that it was hard for me to move, and in the march, if I did not go fast enough, the Johnnies would prod me with their bayonets. We finally reached the battle field, and when we got there, the Rebels gave each of us a hard tack. They then got us on a train of cars and started us for Meriden, Miss. Arriving at Meriden, we got off the cars for the evening. You can bet I was glad to stop. When we got finally fixed for what I supposed the evening, we were ordered to form in line, and then the Johnnies went through us again; and what they did not take the first time, you can bet they did not leave this time. When they got through with us I went and laid down. I will never forget how good it did feel to stretch out at full length on the ground and rest. The next morning one of our men asked the guard if he was going to get any rations. "Yes," he answered, "I will give you your rations, you -----Yank," and deliberately shot the man dead on the spot. In a short time they gave us some hard tack, and put us on the cars and took us down to the Tombigbee river. From there we went straight through to Andersonville.

When we got within a short distance of that place, we smelt something rather strong. I asked one of the guards what it was. He said, "You will soon find out what it is," and you bet we did.

We were, as I said before, in flat-cars. As we came up to the little station, we could look right over the stockade into the pen. The pen looked then as if it would hold no more. I looked back over the whole train, which carried 1,800 men, and wondered how in the world we could all get in there. At this time there were only sixteen acres inclosed by the pen, and it contained about 35,000 men. I little thought that I would get out of Andersonville alive; and Oh! how many that marched through the prison gates that day came out on the dead-cart.

The stockade was in the form of a square, and made by placing logs in the ground and forming a fence eighteen feet high. Inside of the main fence was a line of posts set twelve feet from the stockade proper, and joined together with slats about as wide as the hand, thus forming a second fence four feet high, which ran parallel to the stockade and all around the pen. This was the dead-line. A prisoner that came anywhere near the line was shot by the guards. The guards had little sentry boxes built to the outside, and well up to the side of the stockade. They

went just high enough to allow the guard's head and shoulders to come above the stockade. These were reached from the outside by-means of a ladder.

They took us from the cars and marched us up before Captain Wirz's headquarters. We were formed into line and counted off; were divided into hundreds, and again into squads of twenty-five.

A sergeant was appointed over each department. Captain Wirz came out in front of us and said: "You are a fine looking lot of men. I will fix you so you won't fight any more."

I will leave the readers to say whether he kept his word.

The big gates were now swung back and we marched in. The old prisoners crowded around us and were eager to find out what was going on on the outside, and if there was any chance for an exchange.

On the day that I was captured I was a hard looking sight, but it was nothing to what I saw on first going into Andersonville. The ground was white with maggots, and as the men crowded up to me the smell was sickening.

Some of the men had great sores on them that were full of maggots. They had lost all the spirit and energy that makes the man. They were filthy, and the lice could be seen crawling all over them. There were men with their feet, and others with their hands rotting off with the scurvy. Men were lying on all sides dying, while others were dead.

Was this some horrible dream, or was it real? I asked myself. I could hardly believe my own eyes at first. Such a terrible sight but few men in the world have ever seen. I looked around for some place to sit down, but there was nothing but the ground, and even that was out of the question, we were so crowded. So thickly were we packed that I found it difficult to do anything but stand or move as the crowd moved. I felt my head grow light. Finally everything became dark, and I was gone. Yes, I had fainted. How long I laid there I do not know, but when I came to again it was night. It was sometime before I could realize where I was, but the groans of my dying comrades brought me to my senses. The air had become chilly. I went a short distance and fell in with my crowd. We all laid down spoon-fashion. One could not turn unless we all turned. The man at the head of the rank would give the command "right spoon," or "left spoon;" and then we would all turn together. The next morning I got up and looked upon one of the most horrible sights I ever saw. Within twenty yards of us three men had died during the night. Some of the men were engaged in carrying the dead to the gate entrance. I saw, without moving from the place where we slept, the bodies of fifty-three men that had died during the night. I brushed the maggots from my clothes, and walked down to the creek to wash. When I got there and took a good look at it, it was hard to tell whether it would make one clean or dirty. The Rebel Guard was camped above on the creek; and they made it a point, it seems, to throw all their filth into it, and at this time it was all the water we had to drink. I asked one of the prisoners if they ever gave the men soap. He laughed and wanted to know if he looked like a man that had ever seen soap. Just the looks of him would have convinced the most skeptical mind on that point. I went in, however, rubbed some dirty water on my face, and called it a wash. At 12 o'clock the wagon with the meal came in. When I saw them giving it out I thought we were about to get a good ration, but when they came to divide, I found my share to consist of two-thirds of

a pint. The meal had been ground with the cob, the same way in which farmers grind it for their hogs today. I drew mine in my two hands, for I had no dish to put it in. After two hours I got a tin bucket from one of the prisoners; but then I had no wood to cook it with. One of the old prisoners came to my relief with a few shavings, and showed me how to use them. He dug a little hole in the ground and set fire to the shavings. After placing the shavings in the hole, he set the bucket over the fire, stirred in the meal and made a mush of it. I did not get mine more than half cooked, but I tell you it was good. I had been without anything to eat for three days. I found that the old prisoners made but one meal a day of their rations. For my part it was hard to see how they could make more. After I had been there about two months, they began to make the mush outside and bring it in to us in barrels.

Before I go any farther, I shall give a more complete description of the stockade. When I went in first, there were about sixteen acres enclosed. The gates were on the west side, one on each side of the creek, which ran from the east to the west through the middle of the pen. The land rose abruptly on each side of the creek, forming steep rills. About the center of the stockade was a regular quagmire, which covered about two acres, and this was one reason why we were so crowded. About this time the weather began to get very hot, and the death-rate began to increase. The suffering among the prisoners was such as I hope never to witness again. The water was fearful, and we begged the Rebels to give us tools to dig wells with. We dug wells all over the stockade, but could get no water. About this time they enlarged the stockade, and took in eight more acres. I tell you it was a great relief. In and around Andersonville was a forest of pitch pine: so in enlarging the stockade, they took in part of this timber land, which had been cleared, but then contained a great many stumps and roots, which were made use of for firewood. Still the well digging went on, but no water was found. We were exposed to the heat of the sun during the day, and at night suffered from the cold, for we had no shelter or covering of any kind. Starved for the want of food and water, hundreds died daily.

For a long time our men had been trying to get up some plan to make their escape from prison.

We had dug a number of tunnels, but old Wirz had always found us out. We finally concluded to start in one of our old wells, which we had dug about sixty feet without getting water. This well was about seventy-five feet from the stockade; so we went down in the well about eighteen feet and commenced digging a tunnel in under the stockade. Night after night we worked, and threw the dirt into the well until we filled it up to the place we started from. Then we handed the dirt up in a part of a blanket and carried it down and threw it into the creek. This work had to be done at night, for the Rebel guards were on the watch, and the least thing that looked suspicious was investigated immediately. So we worked away, night after night, till we were sure we had passed the stockade, and then we commenced to dig up toward the surface.

We finally got so near the surface that we could hear the Rebels talk and walk; so we concluded to wait until some dark night, and then make the attempt. In three or four days after we had our tunnel finished (I shall never forget it), it was a dark, rainy night, and we commenced to drop down into the well, one by one, until

there were thirteen of us in the tunnel. I was the second. Having got to the end of the tunnel, we lay there and listened. All being still, my comrade began to remove the soil. "Hark!" he said; "the Rebels are changing guard." We remained still for half an hour. Everything having become quiet, our leader stuck his head out of the hole. He crawled out, and I, being behind him, gave him a boost. The next man boosted me, and so on until we were all out except the last man. He was the largest man in the crowd, and in trying to get up through the hole, got fast in some way. While we were trying to pull him out, he hollered. I tell you there was a great commotion among the Johnnies then. They commenced firing, and you could hear them running in every direction. The only thing we could do was to leave him and take care of ourselves. Three of us stuck together and made for the woods. Oh, how we did run! Every stump and bush we saw we thought a Rebel. I said, "Boys, hold up; I can't stand this any longer." No wonder, for we were starved so that there was nothing left but skin and bones. Being in such a weak condition, I was surprised that we had got so far in such a short time. In a few minutes we struck a swamp, and started to wade along the edge. At the same time we could hear a fearful uproar back among the Rebel guards. The noise got fainter and fainter, and at last ceased. It was so dark that you could scarcely see your hand in front of your face. Where the rest of the men were we didn't know. We kept along the edge of the swamp. Sometimes we were up to our knees in water, and sometimes up to our armpits. We kept steadily on until about daylight. Just about this time we heard the bloodhounds way off to our rear. We pushed on with increased vigor. The sounds came nearer and nearer. When it became broad daylight, we could see, out in the middle of the swamp, a small island. If we could only get to it, we thought we would be safe, for a time at least. The water was covered with slime, and full of all kinds of reptiles. The deadly water moccasin predominated. Our only chance was to get to the island; so in we went. Some of the time we could wade, but had to swim most of the way.

We finally got on to the island, and found it covered with a dense growth of laurel. We crawled up under the brush and lay down. We could easily see the side from which we came. In a few minutes two very large bloodhounds came out of the timber to the edge of the swamp. They stood as if undecided what to do, but finally set up a kind of howl peculiar to them when disappointed or off the scent. In a few minutes five Rebs rode up. The head man turned to the others and said, "Them damned Yanks are over on that island." The other said, "If they are there, I don't see how we will get them." One of the Rebs then yelled to us: "Hey, you Yanks! if you don't come over here, I will send the dogs after you, and they will tear you to pieces!" We kept perfectly still. Another of the Rebs said, "I know them Yanks are over there. Don't you see how that cane is parted where they waded or swam over?"

"I tell you what," said another; "I will get astraddle of a log and take the dogs over there." As he was getting off his horse, we heard firing in the distance and the howls of more dogs. The Rebels mounted their horses and started for the place where the noise seemed to be. We then jumped up and went around on the other side of the island, where we found a small shanty that had been built by some runaway negro before the war. One of the men, who had been looking around, came running up and said that there was a dugout hidden in the brush. To get it



into the water was the work of a minute. It was badly sun-cracked, and leaked, but held us all. Two of us pushed with sticks, while the third baled her out with a gourd which we found in the boat. We pushed her along in this manner the rest of the day, and always managed to keep her under the overhanging trees, where we would not likely be discovered. It was now getting dark, and the swamp was narrowing down and the banks were getting higher. It looked more like a river than a swamp. "Hark! what is that? Don't you think that it is someone chopping?" "You bet it am. Pull in and I will see."

We pulled in, and climbing out as carefully as I could, so as not to make any noise, I stepped along from tree to tree, until I got close up to the chopper. It was a negro chopping wood in front of a cabin. A large negro woman stood in the door and said to him, "Now, Jake, if you want some supper, you want to hurry up and chop dat wood."

I looked around, and seeing no other house, I stepped out and said, "Good evening."

"Hello," said Jake; "who is you?"

"It don't make any difference who I am," said I, "but, Aunty, can I get anything to eat?"

"Why, ob course you can, if dat blamed niggah ever gets dat wood chopped."

"Is there any white folks around here, Aunty?"

"No, honey; dere is no white folks in four miles ob us. What is the matter, honey? Is you afraid ob de white folks?"

"You bet I am afraid of the white folks. The reason is because I've just got out of prison."

"You has ? Oh, good Lord! Is you a Yank?"

"You bet I am."

Jake spoke up at this point and said, "Dat is just what dem sojers was looking for to-day wid all dem dogs, down by de cane-brake. Dey said dey had catched four, and de dogs tore dem all to pieces. Is you all alone, honey?"

"No, ma'am; there are three of us."

"Well, well! bress de Lord! Fetch 'em here."

I then went back to where the boys were, and told them to pull the boat up and come on. When we got to the shanty, the old woman gave us one look, and clasping her hands in front of her, said, "Fo' de Lawd's sake! I never seed such hard looking men in my whole life!" No wonder. Each of us had on a part of a shirt. Our pants were in rags. No shoes. No hat. And old Aunty was not much blacker. She gave us something to eat and then we went up into the loft, and lying down were soon asleep. We did not wake up until long after daylight. Hearing old Aunty bustling about I put my head down through the trap door to speak to her. "I'se been all around and don't see nobody at all." The old woman then told us that we had better stay three or four days, and then Jake would guide us around the swamp, and by that time they would have given up their search for us. We concluded to accept the kind old Aunty's invitation, for we could not possibly find a more secluded spot if we looked a year for it.

## Chapter III

Jake was the old woman's son. Before the war they had been sent to the swamp to make cypress shingles, and had cleared an acre of ground and built the little cabin, living there ever since. They were very ignorant but were true to the Northern principles and the Union soldiers. Many was the time that our soldiers were taken in and cared for when they knew that death would be the penalty if they were found harboring Northern men. They were the friends of the Union soldiers, and he knew that he could put his life in their hands and be safe. Jake kept watch for us, but we did not venture out. We stayed in the loft most of the time.

On the fourth day of our stay, just about noon, Jake came in very much excited. "Oh!" said he ; "de sojers is coming! de sojers is coming! What is we to do?" "Shut up, you niggah," said old Aunty, "I will talk to dem sojers myself. You niggah, does you hear? You go and chop wood." Jake went to chopping wood. In a few minutes three Rebs rode up.

"Hello! you nig. Seen any Yanks pass this way?"

"Fo the Lord's sake, massa! Is de Yanks got loose?"

Old Aunty goes to the door and said: "Wot's de matter, massa?"

"Have you seen any Yanks?"

"Is dem Yanks got away? Fo' de Lord's sake ; what will come of dis pore niggah! Dem Yanks will kill us all. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Shut up, you old black cuss, and if you see any Yanks send Jake over to his master's and let them know there. They will send word to us."

"Now you jest depent I will, massa."

At this the Rebs rode off. Aunty had saved us. She said she never was so scared in all her born days, and Jake's eyes looked like saucers. I went down from the loft and told Aunty that we had better be going.

"May the good Lord bress you, honey. I does hope dat you may get back to your own folks, but I'se awful 'fraid you won't, 'cause I seed an old cullud woman to-day who said dat de kentry is jist full of sojers looking for dem Yanks wot's runned away from prison. I have baked some corn bread and bacon for you and Jake will take you around de swamp."

We started about 12 o'clock that night. Our Aunty came to the door, took each one of us by the hand and said: "Good-bye, and may de good Lord bress you and keep you." We all thanked her for her kindness to us and started out into the night. Jake went ahead and we followed along the edge of the swamp till daylight, when we came on the main road. "Now, massa," said Jake; "I'se gone as far as I can go with you. I hope you will git through all right, but if I was you I would lay over till night and then take de main road for de North."

We shook hands all around with Jake and he was gone. We then went a mile from the road and went into a lot of brush and laid there all day. When it became dark we struck for the North. It was a beautiful starlight night, and the road stretching straight ahead as far as the eye could reach. We passed a number of plantation houses. While passing one in particular the dogs set up a terrible

howling. A man stood out in the middle of the road He said: "Good evening. Who is youse?"

"We are friends."

"Youans look like Yanks."

"Suppose we are. What of that?"

"Well, I supposed you was. My master and a lot of soldiers are in the house now, and they have got seven dogs. They have been looking for youans all day. I hope you will get away, but I'se 'fraid you will not, for the soldiers are all over the country looking for youans."

We then asked him if he would guide us to the big swamp he told us of. He said he would go a ways with us, and he did go two or three miles, bringing us out near a large swamp. We traveled along the edge of this swamp until daybreak, finding ourselves on a large cotton field, when we made for the woods as fast as we could. When we got to the timber I told the boys that I was played out, so we made for a big brush pile, and crawling under the brush ate our breakfast. We then went to sleep and slept way into the next night. At daylight we again started North. We went through the woods and came out into a cornfield. Our bread and bacon had given out the night before and we were talking about something to eat, when Jesse said, "Hark!" We stopped and listened. Away off over the fields in the direction we had come we could hear the faint sound of the bloodhounds. We looked at each other for a moment and then started for the timber. When we got there each climbed a tree. We had been in the trees only five minutes when seven large and wonderful ferocious looking bloodhounds cleared the fence and made straight for our trees. I never will forget what fearful looking brutes they were. The froth was coming from their mouths and their eyes shone like candles in the dark. They came right under the trees and looked up as much as to say, we have got you. They would back off a few yards and then come at the tree with a bound, snapping on the jump; then they would chew the bark of the trees. In half an hour the Rebs came riding up. One of them jumped off his horse and threw the fence down. Then they rode in. There were fifteen in all, and their Captain was an old gray-headed man. They rode under our trees, pointed their guns at us and said: "Come down, you damned Yanks, or we will fill your carcasses with cold lead."

"Gentlemen," said I, "if you want to shoot, shoot; for I would rather be shot than to be chewed by them dogs."

One of the Rebs spoke to the Captain and said: "Let's make them Yanks come down and see how quick the dogs will get away with them." "No," replied the Captain; "they look as if they had had trouble enough."

Then they quarreled among themselves. Some wanted to let the dogs at us and others wanted to take us back to prison. Finally the Captain came out ahead. They muzzled the dogs and tied them together. Then we surrendered. The Captain lived only four miles from where we were captured. So they took us back to his house. We got there about 4 o'clock that afternoon. The old gent treated us kindly, giving us something to eat and also presented each with a quilt. We stopped here over night. We had been gone from Andersonville seven days and only got twenty-five miles away. The Rebs told us that the man who was caught in the hole had been shot where he stuck. All the others had been torn to pieces by the dogs except one and he had his arm tore off and died a few days later. We started next day for the

prison. We traveled all day and camped that evening by the road. At noon the next day we got back to prison. Wirz told the guards that they were d— fools for bringing us back and told us we should be thankful to get back alive. After relieving us of our quilts the gates were opened, and we were marched into Andersonville again.

We had some praying men at Andersonville. They held nightly prayer meetings, and they prayed for water. They prayed like men that meant business, for we were all dying for the want of it. One day after one of these meetings there occurred one of the most fearful rains I ever saw. It washed out the stockade as clean as a hound's tooth. Right between the dead line and the stockade it washed a ditch about two feet deep and a spring of cold water broke out in a stream large enough to fill a four-inch pipe. The spring is there yet, I am told, and to this day is called Providence spring. It broke out in the very best place it could for our benefit. The stockade protected it on one side from the Rebels, and the dead-line on the other side protected it from the prisoners. The fountain head was thus protected. We had good water from that on.

As I said before the Johnnies brought in our mush in barrels. After it was distributed, the prisoners would tip the barrels over and go in head first trying to get what was not scraped out. They fought like cats and dogs about who would get in first. All sense of manhood had left them. Starvation had made them little better than brutes. I had often tried to keep my mind off of anything to eat but it was impossible. I would dream at night that I was setting up to a table loaded with good things: but would always wake up before I got it. About this time there was a band formed, probably of the off-scourings of the city of New York. They called themselves the New York bummers. They made up their minds to live, even if all the rest died by starvation. They were armed with clubs and would take the mush away from the weaker ones. If the unfortunate ones were strong enough to resist they knocked them down at once: and even went so far as to kill several that refused to give up to them. We were unable to stand by and permit such outrages, for to a man that lost one ration there, it meant almost death. So the Western prisoners pitched into these "New York bummers" and had a regular free fight, the former coming out ahead. We then took six of the leaders, and holding a drumhead court martial, sentenced them to be hanged. We first sent a report through to Gen. Sherman, explaining the matter. He sent back word to string them up. The Rebels furnished the necessary timber, we built a scaffold and hung them. From that time on, every man ate his own rations.

## **Chapter IV**

There was one very large man, who was the only fat man in the pen, among the six that was to be hanged. When they were swung off, the big man broke his rope, and then you should have seen him jump to his feet, strike out with his right and left fists, and lay out fifteen or twenty men, and finally fought his way through the crowd, to the creek, but the poor fellow got mired in the mud, and was captured

and brought back. He looked up and saw the five swinging to and fro, and said, "I will soon be with you." Then they adjusted the rope around his neck and swung him off.

O, how sad it makes me feel when I get to thinking about the poor fellows that had to die in that horrible slaughter pen. I speak that which I know and testify to that which I have seen and nothing more. I have seen men go down to the privy and pick up beans after they had passed through a man, and eat them. I have seen men lying on the ground calling for mothers, sisters, and brothers. No one to soothe the aching brow, or whisper words of comfort, but had to die alone in that dirt and filth.

Captain Wirz got it into his head that we had arms, and were going to make a break for liberty, and on the other hand we heard that the Rebels intended to take some of us out to shoot, for the Yankees had been shooting some of the Rebel prisoners, and the Rebels were going to retaliate, so one day a Rebel sergeant came in and commanded about one hundred of us to fall in to go for wood. You may depend we were not long in doing so, for if there was a happy time at Andersonville, it was when we were let out to get wood.

Why, dear readers, I cannot describe to you the happiness which I felt to get out of that prison pen for the space of one hour. We formed a line and marched out. After they had marched us about half a mile from the prison, they formed us in a line, with one Reb in front of each Yank, then old Wirz gave the command to ready, aim. You may be sure my heart came up into my mouth, for a fact I thought the Rebels were going to retaliate, but instead of shooting, they searched us, to see if we had any arms concealed. Finding nothing of the kind, they put us back into the prison.

The next day the same sergeant came in, and inquired for men by the names of Root and Tyler. Tyler being my name, I knew it was me he was after, but having the retaliation in my head, you may be sure I kept still; but one of our own men pointed me out. The Johnny came up to me and said, you are wanted outside, and looking around he found Root, and told us both to follow him. Our comrades supposing we were to be shot, escorted us down to the gate and bid us good-bye for the last time, as they thought. The truth of the matter was we were taken out to help bury the dead. As far as I was concerned it did not make much difference what I did, for at that time I had the scurvy so bad I could have pulled most any tooth with my fingers, while some of them fell out themselves. Well, we were taken before Wirz, "now," said he, "if youans will swear youans wont run away, you can stay out here and help bury the dead." We took the oath, and we were told to go to a small log cabin, where we found twenty of our men who had all ready been taken out for the same business.

## Chapter V

It did seem nice to get into a house which contained a fire-place and crane where kettles were hung. One of the men swung the crane out and hung a kettle of

beans over the fire. You bet I looked on with interest. One of my comrades noticing me watching the cook, said, "you had better be very careful how you eat or you will kill yourself." That night I laid as near the fire-place as possible. The bubble of the bean pot was music in my ear. I kept quiet until I thought my comrades were asleep, then raising myself in a sitting posture, swung the crane back and took the pot of beans off. With much difficulty I succeeded in finding a spoon, I then sat as close to the kettle as possible, with one leg on each side of it, and went in for dear life. "Hold on there," said one of my comrades, "do you want to kill yourself? I have been watching you all this time." For a truth I thought I was badly used.

The next day the men concluded to leave me to take care of the cabin, being too weak to be of much service. The provisions were locked up in a big box, and the men went to work. I swept out the cabin and walked out to see what could be seen. Walking along I saw an old colored woman hanging out clothes, and her little boy. He was very dirty and ragged. He sat on the bank of the creek throwing crumbs from a good sized piece of corn bread to the fish. I went up to him and snatched the bread from his hands. He jumped up and went crying to his mother and said, "that man has got my bread." "Never mind honey," she said, "that man must be hungry."

The following day three more men were brought out to bury the dead. Our cook as usual hung up a kettle of beans to cook for breakfast.

Some time in the night one of the new hands got up and helped himself to beans, and before twelve o'clock the next day he was a dead man. You may be sure after that I was more careful how I ate.

The next day the men took me out to help bury the dead. Upon arriving at the place of burial I was yet so weak that I was of no service. So they set me to bringing water for the men to drink. The way the graves were dug was to dig a ditch six feet wide, and about one hundred yards long, and three feet deep. They then laid them as close as possible, without box, coffin, or clothes, for the men inside stripped the dead as fast as they died. Most of the prisoners were destitute of clothes, but it looked hard to see from three to five hundred buried in one day without any clothes on.

The prisoners at Andersonville were dying off a terrible rate, especially those who had been longest in Rebel hands. The Rebels had deliberately planned the murder of Union prisoners, by the slow process of starvation and disease. It was at first slow but sure, and then it was sure and rapid. I have counted three hundred and sixty lifeless skeletons of our boys that had died in one day. You might walk around the prison any hour in the day and see men closing their eyes in death. Diarrhea and scurvy appeared to be the most fatal diseases.

None can know the horrors of scurvy except those who have had it. Sometimes the cords of the victim would be contracted and the limbs drawn up so that the patient could neither walk, stand, or lie still. Sometimes it would be confined to the bones, and not make any appearance on the outside. At other times it would be confined to the mouth, and the gums would separate from the teeth and the teeth would drop out. I have seen hundreds of cases of this disease in Andersonville. I have seen many of our prisoners suffering with this disease, actually starving to death, because they could not eat the coarse corn meal furnished by the rebels for the Yankee prisoners.

In the month of June it rained continually for twenty-one days, and it was not strange diseases multiplied and assumed every horrible form; there were thirty-five thousand prisoners during all that rainy time, without shelter, lying out in the storm, day and night.

## Chapter VI

As I was going to the well for water, the third or fourth day of my stay outside, I met Wirz and two more confederate officers. Wirz said, "What are you doing here?" I told him I was carrying water for the men who were then digging graves. "Well," said he, "If you don't get inside of that gate, double quick, I will have a grave dug for you and prepare you to fill it, you may be sure." I went in and was a prisoner inside again.

About this time Mrs. Wirz took a great liking to one of our little drummer-boys. She took him out and dressed him in a nice fitting suit of gray. The boy was only eleven years old, and very handsome. The little fellow put on his suit of gray, and Mrs. Wirz said, "How do you like your clothes?" "I do not like them at all," replied the boy. "Why, what is the matter?" "I do not like the color." Mrs. Wirz liked him all the better for the bold spirit he manifested. She then made him a suit of blue, and also a nice red cap, and thenceforth he went by the name of Red Cap.

Red Cap would come in every day or two and tell us what was going on outside. He told us Mrs. Wirz quarreled with Wirz every day because he did not try to prepare some kind of a shelter for the prisoners. She wished him to let a few of us out at a time to cut timber to make our own shelters with. No, he would not do that. Finally Mrs. Wirz told him if he did not do something for the relief of the prisoners, she would poison him; "for," said she, "I cannot sleep nights; my dreams are one continued nightmare, and I will stand it no longer." Mrs. Wirz was a true Southron, of the kind called Creole; but for all that she had a great deal of humanity about her. She continued her threats and pleadings, but they were of no avail. She finally did give him a dose of poison. He had been threatened so much that when he did get it he knew what was the matter, and took something to counteract it. After that "Old Wirz" let us out oftener after wood.

Dr. John C. Bates, who was a kind hearted and humane rebel sergeant, testified as follows: When I went there, there were twenty-five hundred sick in the hospital. I judge twenty-five thousand prisoners were crowded together in the stockade. Some had made holes and burrows in the earth. Those under the sheds in the hospital were doing comparatively well. I saw but little shelter excepting what the prisoners' ingenuity had devised. I found them suffering with scurvy, dropsy, diarrhea, gangrene, pneumonia, and other diseases. When prisoners died they were laid in wagons head foremost to be carried off. The effluvia from the hospital was very offensive. If by accident my hands were affected I would not go into the hospital without putting a plaster over the affected part. If persons whose systems were reduced by inanition should perchance stump a toe or scratch a hand, the next report to me was gangrene, so potent was the hospital gangrene. The

prisoners were more thickly confined in the stockade than ants and bees. Dogs were kept for the purpose of hunting the prisoners who escaped.

Fifty per cent. of those who died might have been saved. I feel safe in saying seventy-five per cent might have been saved, if the patients had been properly cared for. The effect of the treatment of prisoners was morally as well as physically injurious. Each lived but for himself, which I suppose was entirely superinduced by their starving condition. Seeing the starving condition of some of them, I remarked to my student, "I cannot resurrect them." I found persons lying dead among the living. Thinking they merely slept, I went to wake them up, but found they were taking their everlasting sleep. This was in the hospital, and I judge it was worse in the stockade. There being no deadhouse, I erected a tent for that purpose. But I soon found that a blanket or quilt had been cut off from the canvas, and as the material readily served for repairs, the deadhouse had to be abandoned. The daily ration was much less in September, October, November and December, than it was from the first of January till the twenty-sixth of March, 1865. The men never had over ten ounces of food every twenty-four hours. The scurvy there was next to rottenness. Some of the patients could not eat on account of the scurvy; their teeth were loose; they frequently asked him to give them something to eat which would not cause pain. While Doctor Stevenson was medical director he did not manifest any interest in the relief of their necessities; the rations were less than ten ounces in twenty-four hours ; some men did actually starve to death on it. There was plenty of wood in the neighborhood, which might have been cut to answer all demands for shelter and fuel."

This concluded the testimony of Dr. Bates, and considering that he lives in Georgia, it need not be said that he testified reluctantly to the truth.

## Chapter VII

Charles V. Reynolds, of Company B, 9th Illinois calvary, writes his experience: "We reached Andersonville about 2 o'clock P. M. on the first of April, 1864. We got off the cars in a timbered country with a dry sandy soil. About three-quarters of a mile off we could see a large inclosure composed of timber set on end in the ground, with sentry boxes set along the top; and that was the Andersonville prison-pen. The old Dutchman, as he was called, Captain Wirz, riding a white horse, came along and escorted us to the prison-gate. Here he left us with the guards, and himself went in to learn what part of the prison to assign us to. While we were waiting outside of the prison gates, a lot of Yankee prisoners came from the woods, with arms full of fagots that they had been gathering for fuel. At first we thought they were a lot of negroes; but as they came nearer we saw that they were Yankee prisoners. They were as black as negroes; and such downcast, hopeless, haggard and woe-begone looking human beings I never saw before. They said they were glad to see us, but would to God it was under better circumstances.

After awhile the prison gates were opened for us to pass through. As we entered a sight of horror met our eyes that almost froze our blood and made our hearts



stop beating. Before us were skeleton forms that once had been stalwart men, covered with rags and filth and vermin, with hollow cheeks and glowing eyes. Some of the men, in the heat and intensity of their feelings exclaimed "Is this hell?" Well might Wirz, the old fiend who presided over that rebel slaughter-pen, have written over its gates, "Let him that enters here leave all hope behind." It may be that some of the readers of this little book may think there is a good deal of exaggeration; but I want to say right here, that it is impossible to write or tell the horrors of Andersonville prison so that anybody can understand or appreciate them.

It was setting along toward fall, and the rebels told us that there was going to be an exchange. Oh how my heart did jump. Could it be possible that I was to get back to see my kind old mother, and my wife and little ones, who had mourned for me as dead. If I could only write the feelings that overcame me, I know you would feel happy for me. It, however, turned out to be false. We also heard that General Sherman was getting close to us, and the rebels began to move us out of the way.

The greatest portion was taken to Charlestown, North Carolina. There were seven thousand of us left. In a few days they marched the rest of us out and shipped us to Savannah. We arrived there the next day, the hardest looking set of men you ever set eyes on. They marched us from the cars to a new stockade they had prepared for us. As we marched through the city the citizens gathered on each side of the street to see the Yankee prisoners pass. As we marched along, some [sic] of the citizens said they felt sorry for us, and others said that we were treated too well. They finally got us to the gate and we marched in. We were then in hearing of our own guns. This stockade consisted of about ten acres. But after all, the citizens gave us more to eat than they did around Andersonville, for they sent in beef and other things that we never got at any other prison. We did not stay long at Savannah. They took us from there to Thomasville, one hundred miles south of Savannah. On our way from Savannah, two of our men made their escape. The guards were stationed on top of the cars and the prisoners were inside. Two of our men made a desperate jump for liberty. We were going at the rate of twenty miles per hour, when they made the jump. When they struck the ground they tumbled end over end. The guards blazed away at them. I could see the dirt flying up all around where the bullets struck, and we were gone and so were they, and I have found out since that they got through to our lines all right.

When we arrived at Thomasville, our guards marched us back in the woods about three miles. They did not have any stockade built at this point, so in order to keep us from making our escape they had a ditch dug all around us. Four more of our men made a break for liberty at this place, three of them got away, the fourth was shot and died in two days afterwards. We stayed at Thomasville two weeks and then our guards marched us across the country to a small town called Blacksheon. As we were marching through the country, the colored people came out on the road to see the Yankees go by. We were in a deplorable condition, the largest part of the prisoners were almost destitute of clothes, and as we was forced to march along in the cold biting wind; there were a good many of the prisoners died on the road.

## Chapter VIII

Most of the men were without shoes. Their feet looked more like a big piece of bloody meat than like human feet. They could easily be tracked by their poor, bleeding feet.

As I said before, the colored people gathered on each side of the road to see the Yankees go by. Seeing an old lady standing close by the road, I spoke to her and said, "Auntie, what do you think of us, any way?" "Well, mas'er, I's very sorry for you." Well, to state the fact, the tears forced themselves to my eyes in spite of all I could do, to hear one sympathizing word, even if it was from an old colored woman.

When we first started from Thomasville, one of the guards came up to me and said, "Yank, I want you to carry this knapsack." I told him I was not able to carry myself. "It don't make no difference whether you can carry yourself or not; but you will carry this knapsack as far as you go, or I will blow your brains out." So I was forced to carry his knapsack, which weighed about forty pounds. Some of the time I thought I would fall; but I managed to keep along until the first day noon when we made a halt, and the rebel gave me a small piece of meat. "Now," said the Johnnie, "I have given you a good ration, and I hope you will carry my knapsack without grumbling." We started on, but had not gone over five miles when I gave out; I could not go any further; so down I went my full length in the road. "Get up, you d—d Yank, or I will run you through with this bayonet." If he had done so it could not have made any difference with me, for I had fainted. A confederate officer made him take the knapsack, and he put it on another prisoner. I staggered to my feet and went on and on. O, would this thing never end? But finally we did get through to Blackshire, more dead than alive. That was the terminus of the railroad that went through Andersonville. I was glad to get where I could rest; to lie down on the ground and stretch out at full length was more delightful than I can describe. Ah, would this thing never end, or was I doomed to die in rebel hands, after going through so much? It did seem hard to die there, after seeing so many of my comrades die in rebel hands. I want to say right here that there were seventeen thousand, eight hundred and ninety-six deaths of Union prisoners at Andersonville.

We went into camp about a half mile from the town. For our rations that night we got two ears of corn each. The next morning they marched us through the town. The colored folks came from all sides to see the prisoners and their guards go by, all dressed in their holiday clothes, for this was the day before New Year's. One old colored woman had a piece of sugar cane. She was some distance ahead, standing close to the road, watching us go by. Many of the guards made a grab for the piece of cane but she avoided them every time. Just as I got opposite her she darted forward and handed me the cane. The rebel guard raised his gun and brought it down over the poor old woman's head, and she fell like one dead in the road. The last I saw of her, her colored friends were carrying her off. However I heard the next morning that the old woman had died during the night, of the blow she received from the rebel guard. You may be sure I was pleased to get the sugar

cane, and it was a big thing. The cane was very refreshing and nourishing, and I felt very grateful to the poor old colored woman who lost her life in trying to give us something to eat.

They marched us up to the cars. We were put in box cars. Just as the guards had got us loaded, a handsome lady came riding up on horseback and began talking very earnestly to one of the Confederate officers. Our guards told us she was pleading with the officer to make us a New Year's present. She finally got the officer's consent, and two large wagons drove up to the cars, and each prisoner got a good half-pound of pork; and it was good pork too. Oh! how thankful we did feel to that good lady, for making us that nice present. It is a singular fact, that always in our despondent times there is sure to break through the black clouds a ray of bright sunshine.

We laid in box-cars all night, and next morning we went through to Andersonville. We arrived there about ten o'clock the same day. On New Year's day, 1865, we were ordered out of the cars. It was a very unpleasant day; the wind was blowing cold from the north; we huddled up close to keep warm. The rebels were all around us and had fires. We were not then in the pen, but just outside.

## Chapter IX

One of our little drummer boys stepped up to the fire to warm, when old Wirz came along and ordered him back. The boy started back, but seeing Wirz going away went back to the fire again. Wirz turned, and seeing the boy, drew his revolver and shot him dead. The little fellow fell in the fire. I could not hear what the rebel guards said to Wirz, for the wind was blowing the other way, but this I do know, he took their arms away and put them in irons. They then counted us off and opened the gates, and we marched in. We were prisoners in Andersonville once more. Well, I must say my hope of getting out was very small; for even if I had been permitted my liberty I could not have walked five miles. There was only about seven thousand of us, altogether; so you see we had plenty of room; in fact it looked almost deserted. I had been used to seeing it crowded.

We had no shelter of any kind, so four of us clubbed together and dug a hole seven feet deep, and then widened it out at the bottom, so as to accommodate four of us. It was all open at the top, but it kept the cold winds from us.

It finally came my turn to go for wood. There were six of us picked out to go. One of the six was a very sickly man, and could hardly walk without carrying a load. He could not be persuaded to let some stronger man take his place. So out we went, sick man and all. We went about a mile from the pen, and every man went to work picking up his wood. Finally, we started for the stockade; but the sick man could not keep up; he had more wood than he could carry. We went as slow as our guards would let us, in order to give him a chance. Just then Wirz came riding along on his old white horse, and seeing the sick man some twenty yards behind, said, "Close up there, close up there, you d—d Yankee." The sick man tried to hurry up, but stubbed his toe and down he went, wood and all. Wirz

sprang from his horse and ran up to the poor sick soldier, and kicked him in the stomach with the heel of his big riding-boot, and left him a dead man. "That is the way I serve you d—d Yanks when you don't do as I tell you." The rest of us went back to the prison-pen, sick at heart, you bet.

How was it our government left us there to die? We knew the rebels were anxious for an exchange and we could not understand why our government would not make the exchange. I know this much about it: If our government had made the exchange the rebels would have had about forty thousand able-bodied men to put in the field, while on the other hand our government would have had that many to put in hospital. The rebel sergeant came in every day and said, "All you men that will come out and join our army, we will give you good clothes and rations." There were a few that went out, but they went out simply to make their escape. As far as I was concerned, I would have died before I would have put on their gray uniform.

We had no snow, but had cold and heavy rains. One night, just as the guard called out "Twelve o'clock and all is well," our hole in the ground caved in, and we had a terrible time struggling to get out; but we finally got out, and there we sat on the ground, the cold rain beating down on our poor naked bodies. When it did come daylight we could hardly stand on our feet. One of my four comrades died before noon, and another in the afternoon, from the effects of that cold storm; so there was only two of us left.

In about a week from the time that our place caved in, we were taken out to get wood again. As our little squad marched out, about fifty yards from the stockade I saw a good sized pine log lying there. It was about eight feet long and two feet in diameter. I saw that the rebel guard was a kind-looking old man, and asked him if he would be so kind as to help me get the log inside of the stockade. "Now," said he, "if you'ns won't try to run away, I will help you." I gave him the desired promise, and he laid down his gun and helped me to roll the log in. That was the second time I had received a kind act from one of the rebel guards. The other time was when the rebel captain gave us the three quilts. I got a couple of railroad spikes from one of my comrades, and split the log all up in small strips, and then we fixed our cave up with a good roof, and I must say it was really comfortable.

## **Chapter X**

One day, when the rebs brought in our meal, an old prisoner managed to steal one of the meal-sacks. He stole the sack to make him a shirt. He cut a hole in the bottom for his head, and one on each side for his arms; and it made the old gentleman quite a shirt. Wirz missed the sack, and refused to issue any more rations till the sack and man was found. He found the man and took him out, and put him in the stocks, and left him there all night. In the morning when he went to let him out the man was dead.

In the middle of February the guards told us they didn't think that we would have to stay much longer, as the South was about played out. Could it be possible

that we were about to get home again, or were they about to move us to another prison, and simply telling us this to keep us from running away? Finally we were ordered out and put on flat cars, and sent through to Selma, Alabama. There we were ordered off the cars. As we stepped out on the platform, a rebel citizen came up with a stovepipe hat in his hand. He had it full of Confederate money; and as we passed him he gave each one of us a bill. I got a fifty-dollar bill for mine, and I traded my bill off to an old woman for a sweet potatoe pie, and thought I had made a big bargain at that.

The guards marched us to a pen that they had prepared for us. They opened the gates, and we marched in. Now you could see a big change in the guards and rebel officers. We were used better in every respect. That night the rebel band came up and serenaded us, and finally passed their instruments through to the Yankees, who played Yankee Doodle, Hail Columbia, the Star Spangled Banner, and a good many other pieces. They then passed the instruments out, and the Johnnies played the Bonnie Blue Flag, and Dixie, and a good many more rebel pieces.

The next morning they marched us out to the depot, and we got on to flat cars again, and were sent through to Jackson, Mississippi, where we were ordered off the cars and formed in line. The rebel officers said, "You will have to march on foot to Vicksburg," and we had to take an oath not to molest anything on our way. Then the guards were taken off, and only a few rebel officers sent to guide us through to Vicksburg. We were three days in marching through, if I remember right. Finally we came in sight of our old flag, on the other side of Black river from us. What a shout went up from our men. I never shall forget it. It did seem as if I could fly. I was going home for sure; there was no doubt now. As we came up we found a good many ladies that had come down from the North to meet us. They brought us towels, soap, shears, razors, paper and envelopes, and even postage stamps; and our government had sent out new clothes, blankets and tents. Oh, this was a perfect heaven. We washed, and cut our hair, and put on our new clothes. The clothing was not issued just as it should have been, but every man helped himself. I got one number seven and one number twelve shoe. By trading around a little, however, I got a pair of twelves; so I was solid. Then I looked around for my comrade, who had slept with me for the past six months, but I could not find him. I saw a man standing close by me, laughing, but I did not know it was my comrade I had slept with, until he spoke to me. It is impossible for me to make you understand the immense change made in us. From dirt and filth and rags, we stepped out clean and well dressed.

When I came through to our lines I weighed just one hundred pounds. My average weight is one hundred and ninety. Some of the men were worse off than I. You may be sure, my dear readers, I did feel thankful to my God for my deliverance. I had a praying mother away up North, and do feel it was through her prayers that I got through to our lines once more.

We got some coffee and hardtack, and pitched our tents about five miles in the rear of Vicksburg. Well, my dear readers, it did seem nice to go into camp in our own lines. I was almost rotten with the scurvy, and so weak that I could hardly walk, and my skin was drawn down over my bones, and it was of a dark blue color.

Our men died off very rapid for the first few days. Finally, our doctor had our rations cut down, and the men began to gain. My mind at this time was almost as badly shattered as my body; and finally my mind didn't become sound till I had been home two years; and the fact of the matter is, I never have got sound in body. I have the scurvy yet; so bad at times that my family can not sit up and eat at the same table with me; and as far as manual labor is concerned, I am not able to do any. The government allows me four dollars per month pension, which I am very thankful for.

Our camp was on the west side of Black river. After we got in the rear of Vicksburg, we were put on what was called neutral ground, and the rebels had their officers over us. We were not exchanged, but our government made this bargain with the rebels: that if they would send us through to our lines, our government would hold us as prisoners of war until they could come to some kind of an understanding. The fact was, the seven thousand that I came through with never were exchanged, but were discharged as prisoners of war. It has been now twenty-two years since the war, and there may be some things that are not correct, but you may depend that everything is as nigh true as I can remember, in my story.

## Chapter XI

After we had all drawn our clothes and tents and got our tents pitched, and drawn our rations, the first thing done was to write up to Belvidere, Illinois, to my wife and mother, to let them know that I was through to our lines. Oh, what rejoicing there was away up in my northern home. When they first got my letter my wife exclaimed, "Will is alive! Will is alive!"

As I have said, ladies from all over the northern states brought to us books, papers, writing-paper and envelopes. So it seemed like a perfect paradise to what we had seen for a long time. Finally I got a letter from home. I can not describe to you how happy I did feel to hear from my wife and little ones once more, and from my dear old mother. She wrote they were all well, and so anxious for me to come home. My brother who had left me on the side hill, had been captured, but made his escape. He had died shortly after getting to our lines; and my other brother had died at Nashville hospital. So out of three brothers I was the only one that was likely to get home.

Every time that we wanted to go outside of our camp, we had to go to the rebel colonel and get a pass. One morning I went up to the headquarters to get a pass. I wanted to go down to Vicksburg, but could not find a rebel officer in camp. It was the day that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Our officers had let the rebel officers know it the moment they had received the news of the assassination. The rebel officers had made a general stampede during the night. They were afraid that when the prisoners of war heard of it they would want to retaliate. I do think that the rebel officers were wise in getting out of camp.

When the news came that Uncle Abraham was killed, there was silence in the camp. Every man you met looked as if he had lost all the friends he ever had. It was days before the men acted like themselves again.

We finally received orders to embark for St. Louis, and at the same time received news that the rebel armies were surrendering on all sides; so we were sure the war was over. We marched down to Vicksburg to take a steamer to St. Louis. When we got on the levee we found only one boat ready to leave. Our officers then divided us up and put three thousand of us on board the "Henry Ames," and the balance had to wait for another boat. It was my luck to get on the first boat. I never will forget how happy I did feel when the big wheels began to revolve, and she made out into the broad Mississippi. I was on my way home, sweet home, where I would have a good bed, and sit up to the table and eat with my family once more. Oh, happy thought! It seemed to me as if the boat only crept along; I wanted to fly; I was sick of war and rumors of war; I did not want any more of it in mine. It was all the officers of the boat could do to keep their prisoners in subjection. They were running from one side of the boat to the other for every little trifling thing they saw on the banks of the river. They were free men once more, and were going home; no wonder they were wild.

We finally got to St. Louis. We were then marched up to Benton barracks. When we arrived there we heard that the other prisoners we had left at Vicksburg had embarked on board the steamer "Sultana," and when just off from Fort Pillow her boilers had exploded, and out of three thousand five hundred prisoners only three hundred were saved. How hard it did seem for those poor men, after going through the hardships of Andersonville, and almost in sight of their homes, to have to die. I knew that my folks did not know which boat I was on. So I hastened to let them know.

We stayed in Camp Benton about three weeks, and got paid for rations that we did not eat while prisoners of war, and three months extra pay. My pay altogether amounted to seventy-six dollars. Then they sent us across the Mississippi, and we took the cars for Chicago. The citizens all through Illinois heard of our coming, and out of every door and window we saw the welcome waves of handkerchiefs and flags; and they had tables set in the open air, with everything good you could think of, to eat, upon them, for the prisoners of war. We finally got to Chicago, and then there was a grand scattering of the prisoners. They went in all directions to their homes.

From Chicago I went to Belvidere. My father, mother, wife and little ones, live about four miles south of town. There were ten or twelve who belonged in and around Belvidere, and when we got off the train there was a large crowd of citizens there to meet us; and such a cheer as they set up I never shall forget. There was a carriage waiting to take me out home.

As I came within sight of the old farmhouse, the feelings that came over me I never shall forget. The carriage stopped; I got out and stepped to the gate; my kind old mother stood in the door; we gave one another a look, and I was in her arms. "Oh, this is my son, who was lost and is found; who was dead and is alive again." And surely, if ever the fatted calf was killed, it was killed for me.

Then, oh how good it did seem to have my wife and little ones around me once more; and to set up to the table and eat like a Christian.

Now, my kind readers, I will bid you good-bye, and some time in the near future I will give you the remainder of my recollections of the war.

