



ANDERSONVILLE STOCKADE AFTER THE WAR. FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN 1868.

## ON THE ANDERSONVILLE CIRCUIT.



HE flank advance on Chattanooga and the battle of Chickamauga covered a month of forced marches, skirmishing, and fighting over mountains and through thickets of timber and brush, in rain and mud,

by night and day.

*Crack! crack!* "Surrender, you Yanks! Halt, there! Halt, or you are a dead man!" *Crack! crack! crack!* "Now surrender, you Yankee son of Yankee Doodle!"

Seated on the top of a staked and rider fence I looked along a rifle barrel into the pupil of the right eye of a Confederate as he hissed the words through his teeth. My companion had fallen dead at the first fire, and I saw that this fellow meant to shoot. My answer was conciliating.

"Have you pistol, watch, or greenbacks?"

"No — no, sir."

"Well, give me that hat." "Here, I'll take that ring." "That knife is mine." Our pockets went inside out, and I was more surprised when they began to exchange clothing with us. Some of our party who were better clothed than myself were forced to give up their blue coats and take butternut instead; also to give boots in exchange for dilapidated shoes. When the dressing and undressing had been completed, but for the arms in the hands of our captors you could n't tell Yank from Confed. They forced us at the point of the bayonet to repair the railroad about Chickamauga, which had been burned during the battle. During these three days they gave us once daily a few ounces of meat with a pint and a half of meal. This latter we mixed with water and baked on a chip before a fire. The men who guarded us to Richmond had been in the thick of the fight, and their humane treatment in

contrast with that of the authorities at Richmond and the stockades was not forgotten. We were very hungry, and when the train stopped for wood they allowed us, after giving our parole, to break for the woods, where we found wild grapes and muscadines. At Atlanta we were searched by officers and relieved of such trifles as we had not previously given up, or such as by sleight of hand we were unable to secrete. They did not spare us our canteens, tin cups, and spoons. At Weldon we were surrounded by many persons of both sexes, who evinced much curiosity to learn what battles we had been engaged in and the circumstances of our capture. One elderly gentleman remarked: "Yankees can't stand up against our Southern soldiers. We whip you on every battle-field. Why, one of our boys—"

"Look-a-heah, old man," said one of our guards, "I can't have you talking to these men like that; you never saw a Yank with a gun in his hands; and — you! I tell you they were hard to ketch. Now you stand back!"

Passing under one of the wagon bridges that formed a railway crossing and which was covered with people, we were assailed with a shower of sticks and stones. On our arrival in Richmond, October 10, 1863, we were placed on the second floor of a tobacco building overlooking the river. Extending from the corner across the sidewalk was this sign: "Libby and Son, Ship Chandlers and Grocers."

To inhale some fresh air, I immediately seated myself in an open window and was drawn in by a fellow-prisoner or I should have been shot by an outside guard. A little later we were drawn up in line and counted, and then listened to a speech from a man whom I learned later was "young Ross." He stated that for fear we might bribe our guards it would be necessary for us to give up what

money, watches, jewelry, and pocket knives we possessed. We might, he said, keep what Confederate money we had, "but greenbacks and coin must be turned over, all of which will be receipted for and returned when you are exchanged. And now, gentlemen, step up to this desk and get your receipts; after which you will all be carefully searched, and anything that you have not turned over will be confiscated." It was surprising to see the amount of property that thus passed under Confederate control. I could not understand how so much had escaped previous seizure, but the sagacity of Mr. Ross brought it to light. It was never seen by the Yankees again.

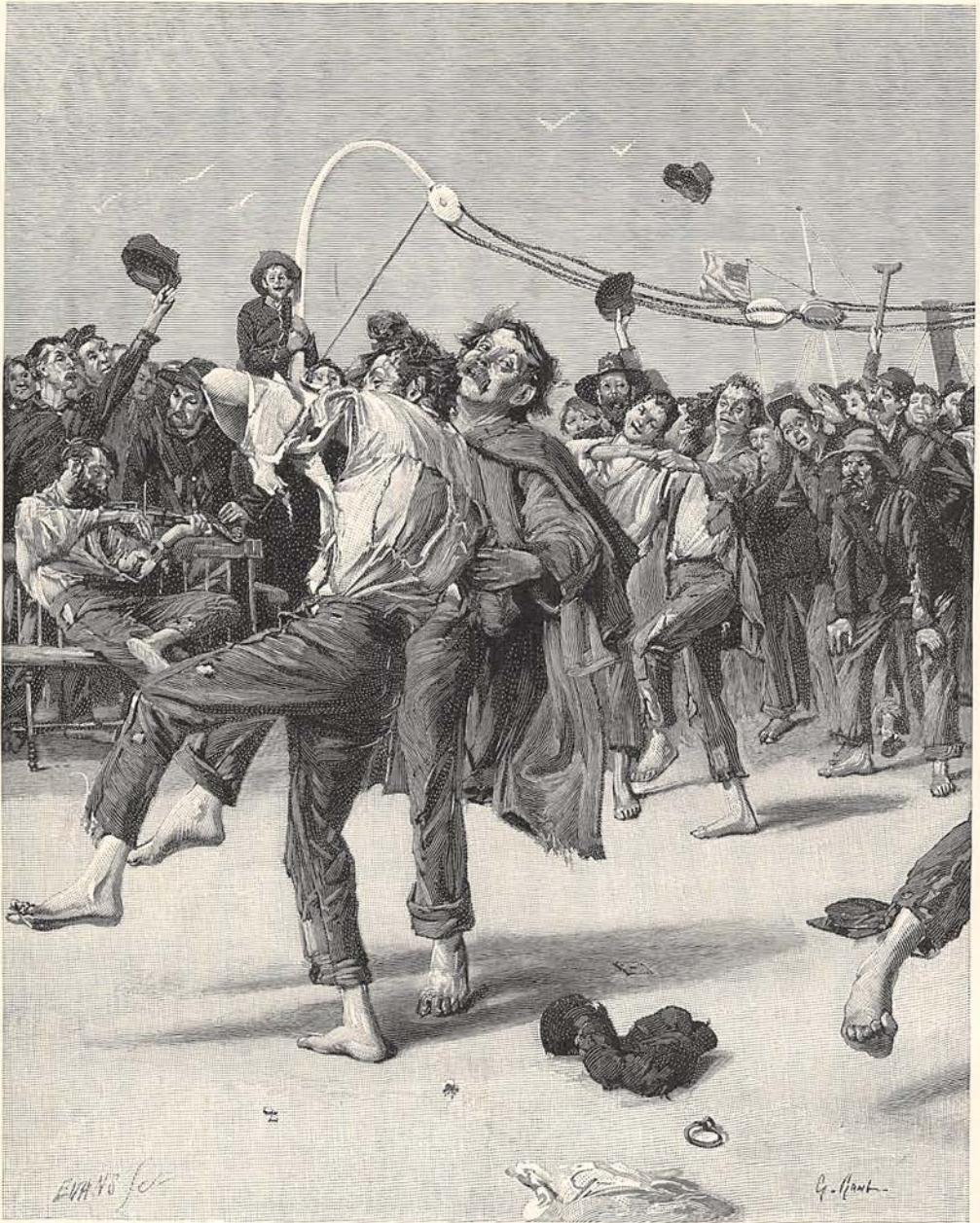
We were soon removed to the "Smiths' Building," another tobacco factory. Here we were searched as before, but the game was now hardly worth the hunt. Our rations while in Richmond we estimated at two to four ounces of beef and six to eight ounces of good wheat bread. To supplement this we made counterfeit greenbacks, which we were sometimes able to pass on unsuspecting guards. Once by cutting out the figures from a ten cent scrip, and with a little blood gluing this over the figure one in a dollar greenback, myself and three comrades bought with this bogus ten-dollar bill ninety loaves of good bread, and it was the only time while I was in the Confederacy that I made a full meal.

The morning after this we were loaded into box-cars for "exchange"; but the train moved towards Danville, which, we learned later, was our destination. As we approached the Roanoke River it was dark and raining. I had succeeded in removing the cap from the gun of one of our guards, and attempting to do the same for the other found that his was not capped. So when the river was crossed and we had cleared the houses, three of us jumped from the moving train and escaped to the woods. After five days and nights of almost superhuman effort and intense suffering we were all recaptured and taken to Danville. While here our Government sent, under flag of truce, clothing, a blanket and an overcoat, for each of us. We learned of their arrival, and there was great rejoicing; but on looking out next morning we saw our guards pacing their beats wearing blue overcoats and carrying new United States blankets. They gave us a portion, however, and our condition was much improved; but Danville looked like a Union camp. I saw here a number of recaptured prisoners undergoing the torture of buck and gag; and once, when we had dug a large tunnel from the cellar, our rations were cut off for forty-eight hours, and we were all driven to an upper room, thus crowding four hundred men into space formerly occupied by two hundred. We

were herded thus for two days, one person being permitted to descend to the yard below, and not until his return could another go. Entreaties, threats, and curses were met with bayonets, and a scene of horror ensued not to be described. About a half-dozen who lay on the opposite side of the room from me forced a window and leaped to the ground below; but they were riddled with buck-shot and not one escaped. They brought in those who were not killed outright, and we dug out some of the shot the best we could; but our remnants of knives were poorly adapted to such work, and the operation was critical. A man near me held a can of soup through an opening in the window to pour off some of the bugs. He fell, with a bullet through him. He was not killed, but he had learned his lesson.

We reached Andersonville May 20, 1864. As I passed inside, the ground seemed entirely occupied. The stockade then contained eighteen acres and eight thousand men. On all sides I heard cries of "Fresh fish!" "Look out for the dead-line!" "You can't stop here; pass on: plenty of room down the hill." I walked down the slope to unoccupied ground. My feet sank into the yielding sand, and as I retraced my steps my footprints had filled with the slimy ooze from the hillside. I would not lie on such ground except as a last resort. On the farther side of the stockade, near the dead-line, I found a smooth-faced boy named Reese. He was from Ohio, and he was slow in his speech. He always smiled when he spoke, and his smile was as sweet as a girl's, but sad as tears. He was sheltered under an old blanket stretched on three small sticks. I had secured an overcoat from the supplies sent us at Danville, and this I had traded to a guard for two United States blankets. I had stolen a sheet-iron tobacco plate from the cellar there which I had transformed into a dish. I had an old knife that I had managed to save from the searchers, and a haversack that had been carried through the Chattanooga campaign. I proposed a partnership with Reese, which, when I had shown my property, was speedily accomplished, and comparing our condition with that of thousands around us we were a pair of millionaires. He died in the pen at Florence. The three comrades with whom I escaped from the train died at Andersonville. One friend, with whom I slept, died at Charleston, and another was killed by a guard.

Prisoners kept pouring in until the number reached 23,000. The entire ground was covered until there was scarce room to move, and then the stockade was enlarged to thirty-three acres, and later the number of prisoners reached 35,000. The soft hillside by the tramping of so many feet became more solid,



RELEASED PRISONERS DANCING ON THE "STAR OF THE SOUTH." (FROM A WAR-TIME SKETCH BY WILLIAM WAUD.)

and thousands who had no vestige of a blanket burrowed holes to escape the heat and dew. When it rained these holes filled with water, and the occupants had to sit outside. The ration for the earlier months consisted of about four ounces of meat and a section of corn-bread four inches square by three inches thick. The bread, of unbolted meal, was baked very hard to the depth of one-half inch, while the center was raw. The bread would often be as

full of flies as a plum pudding is of fruit. As a large portion of our number drew rations after dark, the ingredients were not wasted. During the later months yams, rice, or pease were issued in lieu of meat, and meal or grits instead of bread. We had no vessels to receive these, and the steaming rice was shoveled from the wagon-box into blankets; or a man would take off his trousers, knot one of the legs, and thus receive the portion for his mess. The

same method was used in the distribution of the yams and pease, except sometimes the receptacle was a piece of underclothing.

Reese and I, with some half-dozen others, with the aid of sticks and half-canteens, dug a well something over twenty feet deep, which yielded only drops of water, but it was a great improvement over the sluggish stream which carried to us the sewage of the cook-house and the camps above. When rations were issued raw a feeble attempt was made to furnish wood. A few loads came in, so that once a week a mess of fifteen would receive two cord-wood sticks. These were so inadequate that we dug in the sand for the roots from the forest that had once covered the ground. This was done so long as a piece the size of a lead pencil remained. The heat of July and August caused Reese, and hundreds of others, to become blind after the sun went down, nor could they see until the sun rose again. We called them moon-eyed men.

All of the old prisoners had scurvy. Nine or ten months of prison life did not fail to produce it. While small-pox was epidemic in Danville the authorities caused a general vaccination. Many hundreds of these men were now attacked with a virulent gangrene. These, with the wounded, the scurvy cases, and the imbeciles, used to gather daily at the south gate to solicit medical aid. The dead were also carried there to await the opening at nine o'clock. Then Confederate doctors came in, and applied some substance to the wounds that caused them to emit smoke. This did not stop the work of the gangrene, but it killed the parasites. While the dead were accumulating I used to count thirty, forty, sixty, and more coming from all quarters of the stockade. Death came slowly. It seemed a gradual wearing out. I had noticed what I supposed was a dead soldier lying for some days near my place. He had comrades there, and at last one of us ventured to ask, "Why don't you carry that man out?" "You had better wait until he is dead." "Well, he will never be any deader than he is," was the retort. "You watch him and see." I noted him carefully for some minutes, when at last the breast heaved slightly, and emitted a faint sigh.

Passing down the hill one day a packed mass of men attracted my attention. As I pushed my way in, making inquiries, I was answered, "The hounds! The hounds!" A man sat naked on the sand. His comrades were pouring water over him. He was covered with scratches and bites from his head to his feet. His face, his breast, his back and limbs were torn and bruised. "I could have fought off the dogs," he said, "but the men cocked their revolvers and made me come down from

the tree, and then they set on the dogs until they were tired."

It was in June that a small portion of the prisoners were transformed into beasts, and began to prey upon the others. They snatched and ate the rations of the weaker ones, and they grew strong. We called them "raiders," and they grew in numbers and boldness until murder was added to theft and no one was safe. They made raids within a few steps of where I lay, and cut and bruised some men in a horrible manner. The prisoners began to organize as regulators, and armed themselves with the sticks that had supported their little shelters. The raiders, anticipating trouble, also began to organize, and called themselves regulators. The law and order men began the arrest of the raider crowd, and *they* began the arrest of the others, and even of non-combatants, that they might turn attention from themselves. The stockade was pandemonium those few days. Hundreds of half-naked men here, and hundreds there, surged to and fro, with sticks and fists for weapons. No one can say what was done. The dense crowds hid the acts of individuals, but order was victorious. A court was organized; as is well known six of the raiders were found guilty of murder and were hanged. The others, with the innocent men that had been arrested in the turmoil, were all compelled to run the gantlet, where fearful vengeance was visited upon the unfortunates.

Towards the last of August we were sent to Charleston, and later to Florence, South Carolina. There was no shelter. The weather was cold, ice forming on the little stream nightly. The rations were uncooked and more scant. There was no meat issued, and we were very weak. The punishments, as at Andersonville, involved the hounds, the buck and gag, and the chain gang. I did not see any stocks at Florence, but the commandant used to hang up by the thumbs men who had escaped and been retaken. I heard their shrieks in the long nights. Things got shadowy then. I was burning with fever and shaking to pieces. I could not eat the grits. Comrades brought me water from the swamp. I had lain so long that a depression was formed in the sand, and it was difficult to turn. I heard shots, and they said men were killed. I saw dead men carried by. Men stopped to look at me as I had looked upon others, and passed on. One said, "See how he shakes"; another, "How white that fellow is: *he* won't last long." Then there was talk of parole, and I was outside, a comrade under each shoulder. To the box-cars again — a Confederate steamer — ironclads — Fort Sumter — a transport of the United States, from the masthead of which floated the Stars and Stripes.



RELEASED—A CHEER FOR THE OLD FLAG. (FROM A SKETCH MADE ON THE UNION DESPATCH-BOAT "ELIZA HANCOCK," BY WILLIAM WAUD.)

Sailors in natty uniforms leaned over the rail, and looking down upon the deck of our rusty old cockle-shell they gave us a welcome cheer. Officers on board, and others passing to and fro in small boats over the choppy sea, waved us a salute. This was the sixth time we had left prison or stockade for exchange, and it now seemed that our guards had for once told us the truth. We had often said, during the weary months from Libby to Florence, that when we should again see the old flag we would shout until we woke the echoes for miles around. But it was a feeble cheer that went up from the wrecks of men squatting on the open deck. Here and there some of the stronger ones formed knots of five or six and broke into such a wild dance or walk around, cheering, yelling, and singing the while, that they might have been regarded as maniacs loosed from their cells. Some knelt in silent prayer, and tear-drops cut faint furrows down grimy cheeks where they had long been strangers. Others swore and cursed. They cursed everybody related to the Confederacy and the things that had contributed to the hardships of their prison experience; and as if there were not material enough to curse on that side, they crossed the lines and cursed Lincoln and Grant because of the broken cartel. I hugged to my side the little bag of grits I had accumulated. The bag was made of remnants of clothing and held about a quart. I could not eat the grits, but dared not let them go until I knew we were surely free. I had starved so long that these broken kernels of corn were very precious. I was constantly hoping to barter them for something that I could eat, or possibly for a dose of quinine or some peppers. But now a gang plank was run out from an opening in the side of the transport. It was lined on each side with sailors, who pushed us rapidly along and aboard the big vessel. In the hold before us was a great stack of blue uniforms and clean underclothing complete from cap to shoes. Kind attendants too were there to assist us, and they said, "Strip now, quick: take everything off"; and then, "Throw your rags overboard," and out they went through a port-hole just overhead. They were very filthy; for they were the remnants of what we had worn a year and a half before in the Chattanooga campaign, remnants of what we had gained in traffic with our guards, remnants of what we had taken from the bodies of our dead. They had been held together by threads raveled from the stronger parts and sewed with

needles made from splinters of Georgia pine. We thought Charleston harbor a fit burying-ground for them all. As fast as dressed we were marched in two ranks to an upper deck, where we passed a small window from which was handed a loaf of bread to each of us—a pound loaf of wheat bread. At another window each received a great piece of raw fat pork—a half-pound, and the sweetest morsel I ever tasted. At still another window each got a pint cup full of steaming United States coffee.<sup>1</sup> It was then, when our digestive organs had something on which to work, when we were decently clothed and were at last free from the torture of vermin, that lost manhood began to return. Each did not now look upon his fellow as something to be watched and feared. We did not watch that night lest our bread should be stolen. In fact it was reported that we would receive rations again in the morning, which was hard to believe. Some after being rationed once fell into line the second and even a third time and hoarded their bread and meat. When their actions were noted they were told to take all they wanted.

Rounding Cape Hatteras much of this bread and meat was brought to light again, and for forty-eight hours the ship presented anything but the neat and trim appearance we noticed when we first went aboard. The ship's surgeon, the officers and their wives, vied with the sailors in attentions to their passengers. Five only of our number died on the trip to Annapolis, and here, after we had been again stripped, and washed, and our hair clipped close, we were put to bed between white sheets. Women came to my cot with oysters fresh from the bay, with bread and butter, jellies and pickles, with shining glass and snow-white napkins, and when I had eaten they said, "Now you just rest and sleep, and dream of home." When I was able to read the card at the head of my cot, I found, "Phthisis pulmonalis, fever, general debility; diet, —; treatment, —." I cannot remember the diet nor the treatment, but I remember well the ministrations of these women; how they hovered round my cot, touching up my pillow, and how their cool hands rested on my hot forehead. I do not know whether they were army nurses, residents of Annapolis, or members of Christian and sanitary commissions: I never knew; but the soldiers have not forgotten their ministrations, and give to woman's loyalty and patriotism a "royal three times three."

*J. T. King.*

<sup>1</sup> We called real coffee "United States coffee" to distinguish it from burnt corn, burnt corn bread or meal,

burnt sweet potatoes, etc., which we had used as substitutes and had called "Confederate coffee."