FLOATING TO THE GULF.

AN ECHO OF THE ANDREWS RAILROAD RAID IN 1862.

How Wood and Wilson, Two of the Doomed Raiders, Broke Jail in Atlanta and Escaped to the Union Lines Off the Florida Coast.

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THE escape of eight Union soldiers of the Andrews railroad raiding party, Oct. 16, 1862, from the jail at Atlanta, where they were held to await execution as spies, was of a piece with the daring adventure that got them into the scrape—the capture of a locomotive in the center of a Confederate camp in April of that year.

They had effected the seizure of the engine by stealing from the Union lines near the enemy's territory disguised as citizens, and having been taken in their borrowed plunder were condemned as spies. Eight died on the scaffold June 18, 1862, and while the remainder, fourteen in number, lay in jail under military guard awaiting the same dismal fate, the telegraph whispered that means were pending for them. As they looked for no mercy at the hands of their captors they were not at all worried about obeying the order of officials, for they were in the heart of the Confederacy, footmen against the million in arms between them and their own lines.

No one afternoon while they were lounging far under the personal direction of the jailer—Fulton now at home—they stood and gazed at the sentinels who paced back and forth keep away and unlocked all the apartments, freeing another batch of unfortunates, then, one to the military guards, unarmed, and last and nearest them, then with their own weapons, vaulted a 10-foot fence and took to their heels in the open country. The rescuers acted promptly turned out, each of the railroad soldiers who had managed the affair slight got some of the neighborhood on the hunt.

The subsequent experiences of two of the men in reaching some spot where the star spangled banner still waved, is told in this chapter substantially as given in the published narrative of one of the pair—"The Adventures of Alf Wilson" (National Tribune, Washington, published). The story will prove good reading for both "Yank" and "Johnny," and one hurt the feelings of none at the late day, not even those of the fellows who were captured by the runaways on their independent journey from Atlanta to the sea.

Wilson's companion adventurer was Mark Wood, a comrade of the same company, C, Twenty-first Ohio. They had joined in chains before breaking jail, and keeped the same together until fled to the woods. The connection had not a bitter experience after the raid fallow in April, in trying to escape south through the mountains of Tennessee, and this time resolved to try something new and make for the gulf. In their former attempt at escape they had nearly succeeded by floating on the Tennessee river, and with the persuasion of adventurers clung to the hope that they would do better if luck gave them a second chance. They would find a river flowing south and seek the gulf.

After some narrow escapes from recapture by Confederate cavalry that swept the country in pursuit, they took the north star—that old time friend of lost wanderers—for a guide and started southward, hoping to reach the Chattahoochee. They knew but little of the course of that river or of its destination, but would trust to to lead them to Union waters somewhere under the shining canopy. The first thing to do was to reach it. Safety demanded that they travel by night. They were ragged and unkempt and would be objects of suspicion wherever seen.

The second night out they crossed a railroad, which construed their height. In the route chosen, and in severalfolds they saw down and ate up all their supplies.

The third night they passed through a swamp and pocked a few raw turnips for food. The next night Wood, who was no better than an invalid, was obliged to crawl on his hands and knees. Wilson was discouraged by this, but mentally resolved not to desert his friend. At daybreak when he found that they could not make another mile he hauled the unfortunate to a rising water. It was an inspiration to both, and they pressed on and were soon on the track of a broad ocean flowing in the direction of the gulf.

Wilson says their joy was unbounded and compares their sensations to those of the discoverers of the Pacific ocean and the Mississippi. It was a pathway to bring the wanderers home; it led to the sea where the old flag floated in undisputed triumph. They could have shouted from little strength away, but fortunately held in for fear of exposure. They followed Wood counsel frantically that they not come to "the end of the river," but they passed second until the end of was found. Next they encountered a sentinel and resolved to shoot it with the weapon confiscated and kept on until they reached rapids, and the hour was drawn into a gorge from which they could not extricate it.

They hastily abandoned their faithful friend, and for three days wandered over dismal mountains, chased only by the howling rain of the night. Wood was at a rate that his companion had to lead him. Their feet were bruised and cut on the stones and their sufferings altogether so cruel as to be unspeakable. Again they were about to give up the struggle when they saw in the distance a town that they supposed to be Gainesville. Then that point on they hoped to find the river free to the gulf.

A wide rather took them past the city, and on reaching the river on this they stumbled upon a party of workmen constructing a Confederate raft. In the military they found an old "hoss" which they confiscated, only to find it badly worn. Run in floated down stream into a lot of good cattle scores along shore, and they quickly swapped for a better one. Just as they pushed off again the owner of the beats came in sight and began to expose his opinions in a loud language. Thinking that his angle was too lofty for such a little thing as a boat they determined to give the beggar some for a lick, so, as all the boats adrift, and while he followed them down stream they rowed up against the current. The angry man got days, caught the boats and started in pursuit of the unfortunate soldiers. Fortunate, it so stood in the middle of the river so aroad that runaways to dodge pursuit and turn back unseen, and go their way as before.

The river state were conditions of reaching the gulf if they should stick to the boat. Escape This was becoming a serious thing. With strength to use the paddles they could make fifty miles a day. They would find no sleep over country worth. The river becomes contested of swamps and swampy forests, and in these snakes and alligators were abundant. The latter followed them like hounds and sold at in the foot. Finally, overcome by hunger, they left their boat and started in search of food. They secured a little and returned to find their boat had been carried off by others. "Now," says Wilson, "we found out ourselves the evils of boat stealing."

THE LAST FULL.

To add to their distress they saw that they were on the northern bank of an arbor river flowing into the Chattahoochee—probably the Flint, and so could get no farther without a boat. They found a dry hummock and passed a wretched night. Hunger, with all its terrors, was predominate to being stranded in a swamp without means to continue their journey.

A day was passed wandering about the swamp, and at nightfall they saw a boat across the Chattahoochee. Some boxes and driftwood were spliced together with grapevine, to serve as a raft, and while this Wilson, half sunk in the water, managed to get across. To his joy the new boat was the boat of all, and without a single qualm of conscience, now that the place was no more one also, he unfastened it, took Wood on board and started full speed down the river.

When hunger pressed again Wood remained behind to guard the boat while Wilson foraged the shore. He didn't get much that was edible, but finally found some fish lines and hooks, and the problem of living was solved. Fish was abundant and easily caught, and to devise a trap, tie to large quantities, and doubtless the end of fishing tackle saved their lives. Further down stream they secured medicine, and done on a quantity of sweet potatoes. They kindled a fire in a spot of primeval wildness and roasted and broiled and ate. Wilson says the only drawback to hospitality was the fear that the hospitals might be too much for them. He determined to drive the fish when they had seen enough, for sight and smell proved worse than hunger. Wood was not so good that they fell to and ate some more. Then they kept, and after that resumed the oars.

Finally they reached Apalachicola bay. A long search for a stretch sea vessel was fruitless, for finding snacks and sick craft are not left lying about as carelessly as swimming, and they set out in their slight skiff upon a voyage that would have appalled them, but for the fact that they courted death on the ocean in preference to the doom that lay behind them. Should the sea swallow them it would be a fate worthy of brave men and their success would be accidental. The worst was so weak that the skiff sank out of view of passing vessels, and after rowing beyond sight of land they reached the long, low island that shelters the harbor late in the afternoon. They made for dist and fell upon an oyster bed, which absorbed all attention for a time.

Shortly they noticed, beyond the island, what appeared to be a sloop of hale crew, and a little later, to their joy, sails and masthead appeared among the trees. Next the flag fully swung into view and the happy Yankees stood hardly restrain the impulse to jump into the water and try to swim to the fleet. They moved swiftly to the nearest gunboat and were soon drawn up the ship's ladder, nearly baked, except for a water covering of swamp mud that had hardened in the sun and blistered their faces. They were taken aboard the gunboat. Wood was so weak that he had to be carried to bed, but the very daring of their voyage was so well appreciated that their marvelous story and their welcome by the first officers was as hearty as the occasion demanded. Grover S. Richards.

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