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Southern Military Prisons
AND Escapes
by
W.H. Mead

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SOUTHERN MILITARY PRISONS

AND ESCAPES

—BY—

WARREN HEWITT MEAD.

SOUTHERN MILITARY PRISONS

AND ESCAPES.

BY LIEUT. WARREN HEWITT MEAD, SIXTH KENTUCKY CAVALRY.

[Prepared and read by request before the Minnesota Loyal Legion, at Minneapolis, Nov. 11, 1890.]

General Sherman expressed an evident truth when he wrote to the mayor of Atlanta: "War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it;" and nowhere in the great civil war was it more forcibly illustrated than in the experiences of the Federal prisoners of war in the South. Much has been written concerning their treatment at the hands of the Confederates, and unverified accounts of many things have sometimes been given to the public by persons who obtained their information second-hand. This personal narrative relates to nearly two years of prison life in Libby Prison, Richmond, and Danville, Va.; Macon, Ga.; Charleston and Columbia, S. C., and two escapes; and it pertains chiefly to affairs within the writer's own knowledge, and to incidents of his personal experience.

The battle of Chickamauga was fought principally on the 19th and 20th days of September, 1863, and one of the results was the capture by the Confederates of over 6,000

Union prisoners. Upon the flanks of the Union army, and to protect its retreat, there was considerable cavalry fighting on Monday, the 21st. On that day, at the extreme Federal right, the Third Brigade of Col. E. M. McCook's first division of cavalry (of Mitchell's corps), composed of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Kentucky cavalry regiments, under the command of Col. Louis D. Watkins, of the 6th, to which regiment I belonged, was engaged in covering the retreat of the Union forces and guarding wagons from the battlefield to Chattanooga, when we were assailed in front and on the flank by Wheeler's division of Rebel cavalry. My immediate command, composed of two companies of my regiment, received the brunt of the attack in front, and kept the enemy at bay until the remainder of the brigade extricated itself and escaped. At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, near Pond Springs, Ga., our small force of less than one hundred men was surrounded by Terry's Texas Cavalry Rangers, and myself and the adjutant of my regiment, Lieut. Hugh B. Kelly, with sixty-two men, were taken prisoners.

After having been guarded at the place of capture until dark, the enemy compelled us to make a toilsome march that night to the railroad near Ringgold, a distance of about ten miles. We were here placed upon cars and carried southward with other prisoners to Kingston, arriving there the following afternoon, when we were locked in the court house. Here, thirty hours after our capture, we received the first food, a small cake of corn bread being given to each prisoner. On the 23d we were removed to Atlanta, and remained there three days in an open field east of the city, without shelter or blankets. From Atlanta we were taken, with many others captured at Chickamauga, by the way of Augusta, Ga., and Columbia, S. C., to Charlotte, N. C. The cars used for transporting the prisoners were ordinary freight cars, the door on one side closed and fastened; a sentinel was placed at each side of the open door on the opposite side, and several guards were upon the top of each car. We stopped at Augusta long enough to purchase a little fruit and bread from the slaves, who crowded around us, and to afford an opportunity for certain elderly slave-holders to express their opinion of us and Northern people generally in not the most flattering terms. At Charlotte we were marched from the cars to a field near the city, and remained there all night, sleeping without blankets between the rows of standing corn grown on a part of the field. The prisoners gathered a few ripe ears, which were toasted at the fires and eaten with the eagerness of half-famished men.

The next night we were ordered to form in line in order to be marched to the station for removal to Richmond. Several had planned to escape. Holes had been dug in the sandy earth, large enough to admit the body of a man below the surrounding surface; but, unfortunately, as the guards, like a line of skirmishers, were marching over the occupied grounds, one of them fell into one of these excavations upon a live Yankee! A careful examination with lights was then ordered, disclosing other holes similarly filled, and one of our number was found in the top of a tree. After sharp admonitions we were again placed in freight cars and taken to Richmond, one change having been made in going more than 1000 miles. We were crowded together in the cars, like sheep, without room to sit down and with no water or suitable accessories.

Reaching Richmond a little past midnight, September 30th, the officers and enlisted men were separated, the former, in ominous darkness, being marched to that famous bastile, Libby Prison, soon to realize that—

"War's least horror is the ensanguined field."

Libby Prison—since removed to the city of Chicago, where it now stands preserved as a war relic—was an old brick building, 135 feet long and 100 feet wide, containing nine rooms, besides the basement, three stories in front and four in the rear, and the solid stone partitions between the rooms were pierced with doorways in each story. It was situated on the Lynchburg canal, overlooking the James river, fronting on Casey street, and was guarded day and night by about twenty-five sentinels at appointed stations around the building.

On that dark morning about forty officers were conducted into the office of Major Thomas P. Turner, the commandant of the prison, who evidently had been selected for that position on account of his bitter hostility to the Northern people. One by one we were called and directed to give up our money—Turner stating that if we did so willingly, it would be returned to us when we were exchanged, but that if he was compelled to search us the money found would be confiscated. Most of the prisoners obeyed, and several thousand dollars were there given up; a few secreted their pocket-books and claimed they were penniless and thereby escaped such robbery. Turner took from me $72 in bright, crisp greenbacks, which I never saw afterwards, and I never heard that any money so taken from prisoners was ever returned. We were turned over to the prison clerk, who, with a lighted candle, conducted us by a narrow stairway to the room above; and, as soon as we entered, he locked the door and left us in the dark to find out for ourselves what the new quarters afforded. Hardly had we entered the room, the floor of which was covered with prisoners, before the cry was heard, "Fresh fish!" which was repeated many times in that and adjoining rooms. In a moment we were surrounded by prisoners, who rushed upon us first one way and then another, crying out, "Give them air!" "Dip them in water!" and like bewildering expressions. I began to think we were in a den of robbers. Afterwards I well understood that all "fresh fish," as new prisoners were termed, had to pass through a like initiation. We had no blankets or overcoats and nothing save the clothes in which we were captured.

A daylight examination of the interior of this prison revealed that six rooms of the two uppermost stories were allotted to about 1200 Federal officers, of every rank, besides one room in the first story, which was supplied with water and used during the day as a cook-room; these gave to each man a space nine by three feet to eat, wash, sleep and take exercise. No benches, stools, chairs or tables were furnished. The prisoners, after a few months, made a number of such articles from the boxes sent by Northern friends. Most of the officers captured at Chickamauga remained in the lower middle room.

Prisoners were not allowed to go within five feet of the windows, of which there were three at each end of the rooms, secured with iron bars. The guards were instructed to fire upon any prisoner seen at these windows. One officer was severely wounded, the guard having seen him through a boarded enclosure at the side of the prison where formerly there had been an outside door. The hat of another, one day, was visible from the outside, and he, being notified, moved back just in time for a ball to pass and bury itself in the beam above. Capt. Forsyth, of Toledo, Ohio, was shot and instantly killed near me by one of the guards not on duty, and he was not at the time within eight feet of the window. Across the street, in a northeasterly direction, were situated the Pemberton buildings, wherein were confined several thousand of our enlisted men, and shots fired into the windows of that building were often heard.

In December, the officers captured at Chickamauga obtained a blanket apiece from a supply sent by the U. S. Sanitary Commission, which were distributed by the Confederates. During the winter months it was bitter cold, as there were no fires save those in the cook stoves used in the room below during the day. There were no lights except the candles purchased by the prisoners for their own use, and these had to be extinguished at 9 P. M. Each had his own particular place to eat and sleep, and all slept on the floor dove-tailed together, like fish in a basket, overcrowded and with imperfect ventilation.

Libby Prison had been used as a military prison from the commencement of the war. Little attention had been given to its cleanliness and purification, and it had become infested, from top to bottom, with vermin, of the kind well known to soldiers. These parasites were on the walls and floors, and upon everything, reminding us of the third plague of Egypt. No possible mode of living, no amount of personal attention, could prevent their presence and poisonous bites. Every seam in our clothes needed daily inspection, and the clothing required boiling in water at least three times a week to prevent the greatest multiplication.

In January, 1864, a plan of escape was conceived, and for this purpose a secret company was organized. But few were admitted to the secret, for there were informers among us, willing to secure favor, by betraying any plan of escape. In the cook room already mentioned there was a large chimney running from the basement to the top of the building. In this room a hole was broken through the chimney near the floor, large enough to admit the body of a man. Crawling through that aperture, feet foremost, and dropping down ten feet would bring a person into the dark and empty basement under the adjoining room. The side opposite the chimney was the foundation of the east side of the prison, from which foundation a large stone was removed about six feet below the surface of the outside ground and a tunnel commenced. Two men would work day and night. The only implements used were the half of a tin canteen and an old trowel picked up from the tools of a workman making repairs in the prison. One, by the use of these implements, would loosen the earth in the tunnel and put it in a blanket, which the other, at night time, would convey out of the tunnel into the corner of the dark room, at the side of which the tunnel commenced. Capt. I. N. Johnson, of the 6th Kentucky Infantry, who is justly entitled to the chief credit for this wonderful and daring enterprise, labored in this tunnel more than two weeks and remained in it all day. His absence led the prison authorities to believe that one prisoner had escaped. Food was taken to him at night by another officer, who then assisted in the work. This tunnel was about sixty-five feet long; it was dug under the beat of the sentinels and came out about thirty feet beyond the guard in an old shed used for storage.

The tunnel was completed February 9th, except breaking through the further end. On that night the prisoners were notified, and all night long they were passing out. One hundred and fifteen thus escaped from the prison. It was slow work; the passage was difficult, and two large men—one of whom was Col. Streight, the noted raider—stuck in the tunnel, which delayed considerably the exodus. The prisoner, before he entered the tunnel, would nearly strip himself and tie his clothing in a compact bundle, and push it ahead of him in his passage through, which was accomplished by something like the movement of a snake through heavy grass. The tunnel was closed up at daylight and the hole in the chimney concealed. About one-half of the prisoners who thus escaped were captured before they succeeded in reaching our lines, thirty miles distant. When recaptured they were put in dungeons under the cook-room— dark cells, unfurnished and with ground floors, covered much of the time with water, in which the inmates had to sleep or remain standing. They were scantily fed and compelled to suffer inexcusable neglect. I often secretly dropped pieces of bread through a small hole made in the floor of the cook-room to these suffering officers. After remaining in these cells about ten days, they were brought out and took their former places in the prison to make room for the officers captured on Gen. Kilpatrick's raid, who were treated with still greater indignity and cruelty. Being ill, I did not attempt to go through this tunnel, but gave my only pair of boots, well worn, to my messmate, Capt. Charles E. Greble, of the 8th Michigan Cavalry, who escaped.

In February, 1864, a cavalry expedition was set on foot by our authorities for the avowed purpose of marching upon Richmond, then feebly guarded, and, as reported, to capture the city and release the Federal prisoners. One branch of this expedition was under Gen. Custer, another under Gen. Kilpatrick, and a third was under Col. Ulric Dahlgren. The expedition was not successful. Col. Dahlgren was killed near Richmond, and most of his command captured before effecting a junction with Kilpatrick, who, on the first day of March, came near the outer line of the Richmond fortifications, and, after a few hours of brisk cannonading by the Confederates, took up a line of march down the peninsula without serious loss.

This was the most memorable day of my prison life. Some of the guards who came in to drive us all into one room, so as to be counted out through a single door—which was the prison daily roll-call—disclosed to us all they knew concerning Kilpatrick's raid. The dull booming of artillery was heard at intervals during the day, which proved that our troops were already engaging the enemy in the fortifications. No language can describe the hopes and feelings of the prisoners at that time. The prison officials showed unmistakable signs of fear. There was hurrying to and fro in the streets and extra guards were visible. It was then the Confederate authorities set to work to undermine the Libby Prison. Several tons of powder were placed under the thick walls and in the basement rooms below us, with complete arrangements to fire it at a moment's notice. Such a plan for wholesale and atrocious murder is without a parallel in the history of any civilized nation. Notwithstanding this terrible situation we were undismayed, and secretly organized ourselves into companies, with chosen leaders, so as to be ready for any emergency, hoping to be supplied with arms in case our troops entered the city and to aid in the rescue. Men were selected to use the movable stairs reaching to the cook-room in battering down the doors leading to the street, upon the first appearance of the Federal uniforms. That night there was no sleep; the prisoners were prepared for action, and listened all night for the tramp of the oncoming liberators; we moved noiselessly about like specters in a cave of gloom, waiting and trusting—but, alas! our deliverers came not.

The inspector of the prison took pains to inform us that if Kilpatrick should succeed in entering Richmond it would not help us, as the prison would be blown up before he would suffer us to be rescued. Latouch, the adjutant of the prison, said, in hearing of the prisoners: "There is enough powder under the prison to send every Yankee to hell."*

The most noteworthy experience we had to undergo was the want of suitable or sufficient food. To endure the indignity of those placed over us, to be deprived of light, and to suffer from the cold during the cheerless days and nights of winter, were enough to render existence miserable; but it was a more terrible thing to be hungry from day to day, from week to week—to be always hungry.

The "chief commissary," appointed by ourselves, would distribute the rations allowed to divisions composed of 100 prisoners; an officer selected in each division would again distribute the portion assigned to it to squads of ten, and the squad would then subdivide the amount received to its messes, composed of one or more. The daily allowance, brought in every morning, was a small cake of corn bread, about the size of a man's fist, baked from unsifted meal, four ounces of beef, or, in lieu thereof, a half pint of worm-eaten peas, a gill of rice and a very little salt. With the exception of the salt, none of these articles would have been salable in any American market. One-fourth of the time no meat was issued, and at one time, for thirty consecutive days, not an ounce was sent in.

According to the usages of modern warfare, prisoners of war are entitled to the same rations that are given to soldiers; such *our* government gave to Confederate prisoners. Dr. Hammond, formerly Surgeon General of the Army, places the amount of solid food required to maintain the organism of a healthy adult American, up to the full measure of physical and mental capability, at about forty ounces daily, two-thirds vegetable and one-third animal. The French ration issued to soldiers in the Crimea was 42⅝ ounces solid food. The English ration is about 41 ounces; our government ration is about the same. The ration issued to prisoners in Libby Prison was from *ten* to *sixteen* ounces daily, and that of very inferior quality. Our greatest privilege was to do our own cooking. The rations would be quickly seized and cooked upon the three stoves in the cook-room, and all eaten at a single meal, and still our hunger was unappeased and we would have to wait twenty-four hours before anything more could be had.

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*Pollard, the Southern writer, in his history entitled "The Lost Cause," (p. 503), acknowledges that the Richmond government placed several tons of powder under Libby Prison at this time, but also says it was for the purpose of intimidating the prisoners, which conclusion may well be doubted as to the limit of the intention of the horrible purpose.

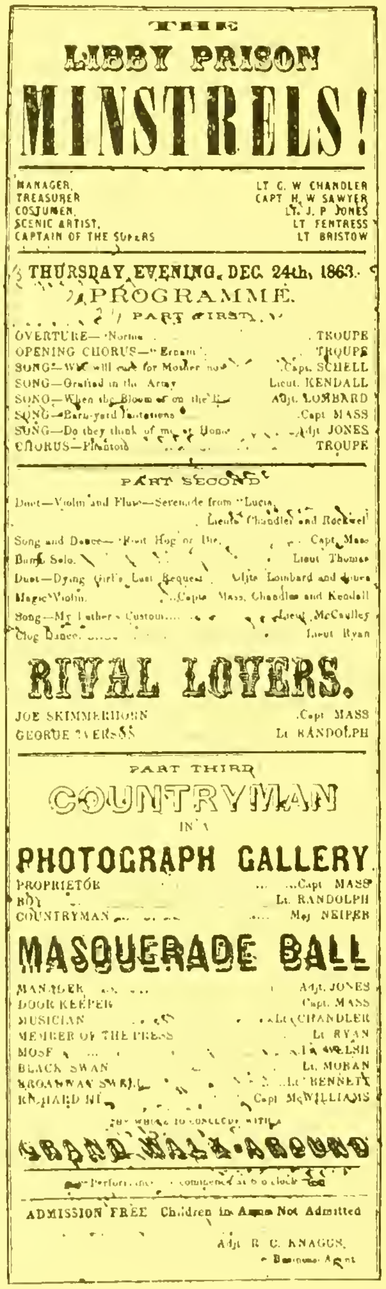
The peas—or, as they were sometimes called, "North Carolina beans"—were made the basis of a kind of soup. They were the most unpalatable food ever eaten by man; indeed they are not an article of food except for cattle. Never before or since have I seen their like. Singularly as it may appear, there was not one of these peas issued which did not contain within it a little black bug, about the size of a flax-seed. Hours of search failed to find a single pea not thus inhabited. When boiled, the top of the water or "soup," would be covered with these bugs, thoroughly cooked. At first some of the more fastidious officers would split each pea and remove the bug; but they soon learned that, in the absence of meat, the bugs gave body and substance to the soup, improved its flavor, and altogether rendered it more palatable, though, of course, eaten under the impulse of hunger.

Hunger, in captivity, signifies more than when elsewhere felt. To us it meant feeble and emaciated bodies; impairment of health and constitution; minds so oppressed with the hopelessness of our situation as to force strange and alarming conditions. Some, overcome by a consuming despair, would at times forget their own names, and were uncertain as to common facts. These were exceptions, and were evidently of those who inherited imperfections and were lacking in constitutional vigor. We were continually talking of the food formerly enjoyed, which seemed a long time ago. When we lay down at night, it was to dream of feasts and tables spread with the rarest and richest food. Few nights passed without this delusion. The prisoner would waken just as he was about to partake of a sumptuous repast, to find it vanish in a dream. It was a common thing for one prisoner to ask another what luxuries he had for supper, meaning what fare his nightly dreams had proffered. The effect of such imprisonment upon the morals of the inmates can hardly be imagined. The man who goes to bed hungry every night, for a considerable length of time is hardly good. A starving man is seldom exemplary. Many prisoners became demoralized, rank was ignored, personal encounters were of frequent occurrence; selfishness was the supreme law—the natural result of such living.

A portion of the time we were allowed to receive boxes of provisions from friends North, under flag of truce, by way of Fortress Monroe. They were all examined by the Confederates, and the clothes sometimes taken out. Often, as if to purposely taunt and exasperate us, the boxes were piled up and kept for days in plain sight of the prisoners before they were delivered. Only a part of the prisoners received boxes, and all that were sent were not delivered. A Bible was sent by some kind friend in nearly every box, and usually a greenback was found thoughtfully enclosed between leaves pasted together. This book the Rebels seldom examined carefully and never appropriated, and the prisoner was gladdened by the welcome gift thus secured. I received several boxes containing many delicacies and substantial provisions, sent by kind friends, (which of course were shared with less fortunate comrades,) and during the last few months in this prison, the want of food was not my greatest deprivation.

Every man developed a hobby. With some it was "how to escape;" with others it was "fancy cooking," and the latter were never so well satisfied as when they could catch a mouse and prepare therefrom a cup of delicious soup. With some it was to carve articles from bone and wood; with some it was chess or cards; others were silent and always alone. Major Harry White, of Pennsylvania, afterwards a Member of Congress, had an irresistible desire to make political speeches, but he was not encouraged in that house. Capt. McGee, of Kentucky, made stump speeches while voices were loudly crying out, "Dry up!" "Put him out!" but, like Demosthenes at the seashore, he would talk above the storm. Gen. Neal Dow, who was one of the special exchanges, lectured on temperance. Lieut. Col. Warren E. McMackin, of the 21st Illinois, Gen. Grant's old regiment, which lost heavily at the battle of Chickamauga, where he was captured, taught a Bible class. Several army chaplains captured at Chickamauga were, for a short time, among our number; so that frequently we had religious services in due form and regularity. Prayer meetings were also held on Sunday evenings. The meetings were conducted in one corner of the room, while all kinds of prison activities were going on around the faithful band who did not neglect their worship.

Amid all the distress we had our amusements. For a short time we had a literary society. A weekly paper, called the "Libby Chronicle," filled with prison news, was read. With musical instruments purchased from without, a few officers organized a band of minstrels, who gave several entertainments in the cook-room, and the performances afforded no little amusement. The songs and plays were original. The programmes were printed, and I preserved one of an entertainment given Christmas Eve, 1863. The following is a *fac simile:*



THE
LIBBY PRISON
MINSTRELS!

MANAGER, LT C. W CHANDLER
TREASURER CAPT H. W SAWYER
COSTUMER, LT. J. P JONES
SCENIC ARTIST, LT FENTRESS
CAPTAIN OF THE SUPERS LT BRISTOW

THURSDAY EVENING, DEC. 24th, 1863.
PROGRAMME.
PART FIRST.

OVERTURE—Norma . TROUPE
OPENING CHORUS—"Ernani" TROUPE
SONG—Who will care for Mother now Capt. SCHELL
SONG—Grafted in the Army Lieut. KENDALL
SONG—When the Bloom is on the Rye Adjt. LOMBARD
SONG—Barn-yard Imitations Capt MASS
SONG—Do they think of me at Home Adjt JONES
CHORUS—[illegible] TROUPE

PART SECOND

Duet—Violin and Flute—Serenade from "Lucia." Lieuts Chandler and Rockwell
Song and Dance—"Root Hog or Die." Capt Mass
Banjo Solo. Lieut Thomas
Duet—Dying Girl's Last Request. Adjts Lombard and Jones
Magic Violin. Capts Mass, Chandler and Kendall
Song—My Father's Custom Lieut McCaulley
Clog Dance Lieut Ryan

RIVAL LOVERS.

JOE SKIMMERHORN Capt MASS
GEORGE [illegible] Lt RANDOLPH

PART THIRD
COUNTRYMAN
IN A
PHOTOGRAPH GALLERY.

PROPRIETOR Capt MASS
BOY Lt. RANDOLPH
COUNTRYMAN Maj NEIPER

MASQUERADE BALL

MANAGER Adjt. JONES
DOOR KEEPER Capt. MASS
MUSICIAN Lt CHANDLER
MEMBER OF THE PRESS Lt RYAN
MOSE Lt WELSH
BLACK SWAN Lt. MORAN
BROADWAY SWELL Lt BENNETT
RICHARD III Capt McWILLIAMS

THE WHOLE TO CONCLUDE WITH A
GRAND WALK-AROUND

Performance to commence at 6 o'clock

ADMISSION FREE Children in Arms Not Admitted

Adjt R. C. KNAGGS,
Business Agent

After dark, when the prisoners had lain down to sleep, we had what was called the "catechism," which consisted of satirical questions with personal allusions. One would ask in a loud voice, "Who was captured up a tree?" A pertinent answer would come from another direction, naming the officer. The questions and answers were true hits, and would be kept up for hours. Every man's history, in this way, was punctured amusingly. A brigadier-general once attempted, when he had been made the point of a question, to lecture the prisoners on conduct becoming officers of the U. S. Army, and forthwith missiles were flying around his venerable head, which made him get under his blanket in great haste. Whoever assumed the least importance was sure to meet with an effectual rebuff.

Letters of six lines were allowed to be written to friends in the North, and letters were received, subject, of course, to Confederate inspection. "Letter day" was the great day. In the preparation of this address valuable aid has been obtained from letters written from various prisons to home friends, who kindly preserved and returned them to me. One of these, written in Libby Prison on coarse brown paper, and sent unsealed, is given:

> Libby Prison, Richmond, Va., Nov. 18th, 1863.
>
> *Miss F. Hughes, Camillus, N. Y.*—Dear Friend:—Sorry two months in Libby Prison have failed to bring me more than a single letter. Am well, but sorely pressed with hunger! No meat or bread furnished us to-day! I do wish for an exchange. There is no prospect for any at present. If I get away from here in one year it will be as soon as I expect. Yours, &c.,
>
> W. H. Mead, U. S. A., *via Fortress Monroe.*

Those who had money could purchase the Richmond daily papers at fifty cents a copy, and nearly anything else at the same proportionate price. There was little money in the prison.

On several occasions religious services were held in the prison, but no Protestant minister in Richmond preached, or offered to preach, to us. The Episcopal service was read once. Clergymen sometimes came into the prison and talked of politics and upbraided us on account of the war, declaring that the Yankees could never conquer the "brave Southern people." Those prisoners will never forget the able and acceptable sermons of Bishop McGill, of Richmond, and Bishop Lynch, of Charleston. Eminent for piety and scholarship, their discourses were filled with the noblest sentiments of charity and Christian counsel, and were beautifully appropriate to the occasion.

During the eight months we were led to hope, from week to week, that an exchange of prisoners would take place. There were a few special exchanges. In the spring of 1864 Gen. Butler, who commanded at Fortress Monroe, and had immediate control of the cartel, wrote over his own signature that Gen. Grant had given peremptory orders not to exchange another able-bodied Confederate. Then we no longer hoped, and the future seemed dark and perilous. We thought our government had failed in its duty; and when, on the 7th of May, 1864, at 11 o'clock at night, we were ordered to prepare to go further south to other prisons, despair settled like a pall over us, and we feared that a Southern prison would be like that cave in mythology having no outward tracks.

That night we bade farewell to Libby Prison. Daylight found us in line upon a street in Richmond, weak and hardly able to walk. After marching across the James river we were taken in freight cars to Danville, Va., 148 miles southwest from Richmond. On arriving at Danville the succeeding morning, we were confined in a tobacco warehouse on the south bank of the Dan river. The usual rations, of poor quality but increased in quantity, were issued. Many of our number became ill on account of the heat and change of water. Remaining here but a few days, we were, on May 12th, commanded to get ready for transportion to Macon, Ga., by the way of Greensborough and Augusta.

We arrived at Macon May 17th, and were placed in a stockade on the eastern side of the city, called Camp Oglethorpe, an old fair ground, in which there was a spring and a small stream of water. This stockade consisted of about three acres of land enclosed by a high plank fence, near the top of which was constructed the sentinels' walk, where they paced their beats ten feet apart day and night. On the inside of the stockade, and around the same, thirty feet from the fence, was the "dead line," across which no prisoner could pass. Low board sheds had been constructed with open sides, under which the prisoners lodged. Rations were issued to squads and the subdivisions were made by the prisoners themselves. Bacon, corn meal, and occasionally sorghum and rice—all of the poorest quality, however, and less than twenty ounces a day to each man—were given us; these were cooked, with the little wood furnished, on pieces of iron which had been picked up and in a single skillet allowed to a mess.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made at tunneling from Camp Oglethorpe. Lieut. O. Gierson, of the 45th N. Y. Infantry, on June 11th, was killed by the guard while at the spring, and without cause. The Fourth of July was celebrated in songs and speeches, against the orders of the authorities. Many officers from Gen. Grant's army captured in Virginia, were brought in during the summer, and with their good clothes and healthful appearance, they presented a marked contrast to the older prisoners. A portion of our time was spent in reading the books obtained before leaving Richmond, and a few engaged in the study of languages, or of some chosen profession; the time was employed principally in cooking, washing and repairing tattered garments.

Much sickness prevailed and several officers died. Many of the older prisoners suffered from scurvy, owing to the lack of proper food; an indenture with the finger in the fleshy parts of the body would remain for hours, and in the worst cases the teeth dropped out. Near the middle of the camp, there was an old building, which had been used for fairs before the war, where the sick mostly had their quarters on the floor. When death came to their relief, their bodies would be sadly borne to the gate by mourning comrades and given over to the foe for burial in strange ground, unblest by the tears of far-away kindred.

On July 27th, it was announced that we were to be taken from Macon to Charleston, S. C. Six hundred prisoners' names were called, including my own; the others were subsequently moved. We packed our blankets and what other articles we possessed, and upon freight cars, as formerly, were transported to the historic rebel city. One of the noticeable things in passing the several towns *en route* was the expression of the slaves, who, in most instances, could say or do nothing, but evidently had apprehended the issues of the great struggle and would have helped us if they could.

We reached Charleston the next day and were immediately marched to the jail—the worst prison I saw in the South. It was infested and foul. Situated upon an acre of land, surrounded by a high wall, it had been used for a long time for black and white criminals, deserters, and Union colored prisoners. The three uppermost stories were then filled with such persons, and only a portion of the ground floor was allotted to Federal officers brought from Macon, and there I had my quarters. To sleep within it was hazardous, and nearly all slept in the sandy yard, where the cooking was done. The weather was hot and many were ill; one emaciated prisoner, by holding his arm up to the sun, could see the light between the bones of the forearm.

Many protests were made to the authorities, and in about ten days notice was given that if the prisoners would give their paroles not to escape they could occupy Roper Hospital, a large building erected for a city hospital, adjoining the jail, and in front of which was the burnt district containing nothing but fire-blackened walls and naked chimneys. About three hundred of us gave our paroles and were transferred, being all that were confined in the jail yard. The prisoners were permitted to receive letters from home, to take exercise in the grounds surrounding the building, and to cook out in the fresh air, but were still under guard. This was the most comfortable prison I was in.

It was here where the prisoners were under fire of the Union guns of Morris Island, four miles distant. Gen. Gilmore was bombarding the city, and a large portion of the lower part had been destroyed and was uninhabited. It has been stated that these Federal officers were imprisoned at Charleston to prevent the further bombardment of the city and that was our belief at the time. The shots were usually fired at intervals of a half hour, but sometimes they came every ten minutes, and continued day and night with only occasional cessations. The shells generally burst in the air to the left of our quarters, and a solid shot was often sent far beyond us. One piece of a shell went through the roof of the building and first ceiling, and was stopped by a wooden bench in the upper story upon which an officer was seated. Another piece of over twenty pounds' weight struck and cut through the plate beam of a small building in the rear, formerly used for insane patients, and then fell in the room and struck a pan in which an officer was preparing his corn meal for baking. A few pieces of shell fell in the yard, but no one was injured. The gunners knew our location and avoided the building as much as possible.

At first, when the sharp, shrill shriek of the shot or shell was heard, we would instinctively seek shelter; but we soon became accustomed to the danger, and it was a sublime pleasure to watch the smoke of the discharged gun and listen to the peculiar noise of the shell in its passage through the air. At night the sight was thrilling; the flash of the gun could be seen, followed by the lighted fuse moving like a meteor, in its circular track from the gun, until the shell exploded and its pieces went crashing through the buildings of the city. A large building called the workhouse adjoining the jail, also contained many prisoners.

In September, yellow fever made its appearance in the prison. Many of the guards and a few of the prisoners died. The older prisoners escaped this dreaded disease, or had it only in a mild form; their exemption being imputed to their reduced condition and long freedom from excesses.

I had this fever and with others was taken to a hospital in a suburb up the Cooper river, where I was confined for nearly a month. Dr. Todd, a brother of the wife of President Lincoln, was one of the Confederate surgeons in charge and attended me. A Sister of Mercy, who had been highly educated in Ireland, and who came to this country after the commencement of the war expressly to care for the suffering, brought in grapes and delicacies, and often visited the sick and brought books for the convalescent to read. Upon recovery, still under parole, I was conveyed back to prison with two other officers, in an ambulance drawn by mules in charge of a negro driver. We directed him to drive down King street, the principal thoroughfare of the city, until ordered to stop. For many blocks leading towards Roper Hospital, along this street, there was not a person or any living creature to be seen. Truly the city "sat solitary." The grass was growing in the streets, and the elegant buildings, as far as the eye could see, had been shattered by our cannonading. Save the startling sounds from our destructive missiles, which seemed to drop from the sky, a death-like stillness pervaded the place. While we were passing down the street a cannon ball struck a dwelling house to the left, and the apprehensive negro drove on. Soon another ball came crashing through the roof of a building a short distance ahead. The driver stopped, and with fear depicted in his very looks, said, "I's not 'fraid, but the Yankees will kill dem mules, suah!" and he refused to go further. We quite agreed with him, and he turned off and by a parallel street farther to the right soon reached our old prison quarters.

Old colored men and women came often to the iron fence enclosing our quarters, bringing, in small quantities, shrimps and crabs, which they offered to sell at a reasonable price. Those who had money purchased, and thereby occasionally enjoyed a good meal. Not one in fifty of us, however, had at this time a cent in his pocket, and no credit was obtainable, so we subsisted almost entirely upon the meager rations allowed of corn meal, rice and rancid bacon.

On October 5th we were taken, in the usual way, to Columbia. I was weakened by illness and was without food from the time of leaving Charleston until the next day, when taken from the cars in a cold rain. The surgeon in charge, after much entreaty, caused my removal with six other officers, also ill, to a hospital in the old Presbyterian college buildings in Columbia, which was used for the Confederate sick and wounded. Placed in a single room, and generally not suffering from any acute disease, we were not confined to our beds. The surgeon in charge daily visited us and was attentive to our needs.

One of our number, a Tennessee captain, had the yellow fever, contracted before he left Charleston. We did all for him we could; but during the few days he continually grew worse. He was an old prisoner and longed for his home and friends in East Tennessee, where he had suffered much at the hands of the Rebels. I was at his side during the last stage when the black vomit appeared by which it was known he had but a few hours at most to live. Rational to the last, he soon became exhausted and convulsively threw himself across his cot, and there, surrounded by his few helpless companions, his spirit passed beyond all earthly prison doors. The saffron-colored corpse was soon removed and buried by the hospital authorities.

After a few weeks' treatment at this hospital, and being greatly improved in strength, in November, 1864, I was taken across the Saluda river, about two miles from the city, to an abandoned field which had been covered with second-growth pines. This prison pen the prisoners named "Camp Sorghum," by which it is generally known. Nearly all the officers in various prisons had been brought here, and the number exceeded 1,400.

About five acres of land were surrounded by a dead-line, and outside of this there was a "ring guard." No shelter was furnished, and the prisoners had to burrow in the earth and construct coverings from branches and twigs, or use for a tent the blankets needed for bodily covering during the winter nights. On arriving at this camp, Lieut. Munro B. Pulliam, of the 11th Kentucky Cavalry, and myself, prepared a lodging place by digging in the ground a cellar-like space of sufficient dimensions, and by the use of small poles we gathered, made a frame overstructure and then covered it with pine twigs. It was protection from the winter winds, but did not keep out the rain. Prisoners who had money could buy sweet potatoes and other articles. The daily rations consisted of corn meal and rice, and occasionally sorghum, about fifteen ounces in all per man.

Many made their escape by taking advantage of the privilege of going out under guard to fetch wood from an adjoining forest. A few ran by the guard at night, and started for our distant lines. Most of those who escaped were recaptured. Several alarms took place, and on these occasions the guard, being of the undisciplined State militia, would fire into and across the camp. It was a common thing to hear shots at night, and the balls would whistle through the camp, doing little injury, as every one slept behind embankments of earth thrown up around his hut. Occasionally, however, in this as in all the other prisons, deliberate murders were perpetrated by the guards. On the first day of December Lieut. Turbane, of the 66th N. Y. Infantry, was inhumanly killed by a sentinel who, without warrant or excuse, shot him in the back as he was walking quietly near his quarters. October 22d Lieut. Young, of the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry, was deliberately shot by a sentinel while he was seated in his chair in the evening. He lived but a few moments, after speaking a few words to his companions.

This isolated field prison was a little world of itself. The prisoners were mostly of the better class of Northern society, but freed so long from conventional restraints, their daily lives revealed natural dispositions and disclosed real characters. The shiftless and the heedful, the untidy and the neat, the vulgar and the refined, the profane and the devout—were all represented here, as in the outside world. Obedient to the unswerving logic of human nature, the forces which produce the proletaire and the patrician were here displayed notwithstanding the depressive conditions. Like the first settlers of a western town, and for the same reasons, the older prisoners, though the most ragged, demanded superior recognition, and were the aristocrats of the colony.

December 11th we were notified of another removal. Forlorn and wretched, many of us barefoot, we were marched through the streets of Columbia, subjected to taunting remarks from children and citizens along the way. We were placed in the eastern portion of the Insane Asylum grounds, two acres in extent, which had been enclosed from the other portion containing the asylum in that city. Strictly guarded from sentinel boxes upon a high fence, we again set up housekeeping. Some lumber was furnished, so that after awhile about one-half of the officers built for themselves quarters, others making low tents from blankets. My tent consisted of a single blanket stretched over a horizontal pole about three feet high, with the edges of the blanket on each side fastened to the ground, in which, near the prison entrance, I slept and was protected from the rain.

Rev. Dr. Palmer, the celebrated Presbyterian divine, who taught before the war that it was the duty of the Southern people to conserve the institution of slavery, even by secession and arms, preached to us two able sermons. At the close of his last discourse upon Providence in battles, he gave out that impressive hymn of Cowper, commencing:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps on the sea
And rides upon the storm.

This hymn was sung with the deepest feeling by his audience of destitute prisoners, whose faith in the final triumph of the government and its perpetuity under God's watchful care had never wavered. The opinions of this learned and sincere man were afterwards radically changed.

In a tent near the one I occupied, Lieut. S. H. M. Byers, of the 5th Iowa Infantry, composed that commemorative song, "Sherman's March to the Sea," and it was sung in this prison before it was heard of outside. A fine glee club often cheered the place with this and other patriotic songs.

The prisoners suffered much from insufficient food and from want of fuel to cook with and keep warm. They were each allowed a piece of wood, about the size of an ordinary stick of stove wood, daily. Those who had money could purchase food. If gold or greenbacks were sent by Northern friends, after much delay, their equivalent in Confederate money, as reckoned by the authorities, would be received. Later on, money could be obtained by giving gold drafts on Northern friends living in the East, at the rate of a dollar in gold for eight dollars in Confederate money; at the same time one dollar in gold was worth fifty dollars in Confederate notes. The drafts of Western prisoners, who had no relatives or friends East, would not be accepted. I made a draft on my father, in Cayuga County, N. Y., for fifty dollars in gold. Several days after the draft had been sent, a blue slip of paper, still preserved, was received, upon which was written, "Good for $399.99" — of course, in Confederate money. On its presentation to a camp sutler, provisions could be drawn and the amount endorsed thereon. I used it fifteen days, and drew $222.25 worth of meat and sweet potatoes. A piece of poor fresh beef, the size of a man's hand, ranged in price from $14 to $17.50.

February 14th, 1865, Gen. Sherman had entered South Carolina and was marching towards Columbia, and his cannonading was heard near the city. After a hasty summons to prepare for another move the prisoners were hurriedly marched through a misty rain and again crowded in freight cars, and about dark the train started northward. We had taken our blankets and trinkets, but the removal was so sudden that only a few were furnished with provisions. There were about forty in the car I was in.

After leaving the city we considered the possibility of escape. Guards were placed, as usual, two on the inside at the only open door, and two or three on the top of the car. It was decided to cut a hole in the bottom of the car. Several of the prisoners had a few useful tools, and among them was a small saw which had been made from an ordinary case knife, and had been used in prison in sawing bone and wood to fashion articles to present to friends when released. After a small hole had been cut through the floor of the car with a knife, this saw was inserted and a piece about twenty inches square sawed out. When the hole was finished the boards were replaced to await the stoppage of the train, when all who could were to pass through the hole. While the sawing was being done officers stood up and sang "Sherman's March to the Sea," and some engaged in conversation with the inside guards. In this way the attention of the guards was diverted, and they did not discover what was going on.

The train stopped at Winnsborough, S. C., thirty-four miles north of Columbia, and after waiting until the whistle blew signalling that it was soon to start, about half a dozen in turn, myself among the number, slipped through the hole and remained under the car until the train started, for if we came out while it was standing there was danger of our being seen. Several guards in charge of the train passed alongside and uncomfortably near us while we lay crouching beneath the car. As soon as the train commenced to move we crawled out between the trucks and lay down just outside of the rail, so as not to be seen by the guards on the top of the car. When the train had passed we arose. The guards discovered us, and fired at us and others who had escaped from some of the other cars. Luckily, no one was hurt, and about a dozen escaped. Our exit through the bottom of the car was so difficult and hurried, no one being permitted to speak, that I lost my hat, which had been made from a piece of old cloth; also, an oilcloth sack which contained my letters, diary, an address delivered in Libby Prison and many articles manufactured from bone and wood of inestimable value to me. It was ten o'clock and we separated, no more than two going together. Myself and a New York officer silently walked across a field in a westerly direction until we came to the road leading to Columbia.

It was a bleak, stormy night; sleet and ice covered the fences and roads, wounding the bare feet. Cautiously passing along the way we came to a stream, deep and cold, which had to be forded. We traveled all that night, and towards morning a blustering snow storm came on. At daylight, fatigued and hungry, we sought shelter in an old abandoned house which stood beside the road, and was without a floor and had no foundation, except at its corners. It had numerous openings, through which the cold north wind blew the snow against our shivering forms as we lay down to rest. While we lay here two Confederate troopers went by, evidently looking for escaped prisoners.

Remaining in this building until the middle of the afternoon, we determined to cross the road and take to the woods. In crossing, we espied a house and an elderly man at a distance. Leaving the road we were soon in the woods, which were full of swamps. Wending our way southward as best we could, treading the fallen trees and wading in water until night, we found ourselves near a railroad wood station, which was in charge of some negroes. We were hungry and went to their solitary cabin in rear of the wood supply just as they were ready for supper. We told them who we were and what we wanted. They spoke in whispers, and willingly gave us their only loaf of corn bread, fresh from the skillet. Leaving them with many thanks, we returned to the woods and ate a grateful meal, after which we traveled along the railroad track a few miles and selected a place for a night's rest under a tree. Soon, several trains passed to the north, and from our concealment could be seen in the lighted cars well-dressed women and children and household goods, which convinced us that families were fleeing from Columbia and that Sherman's army was near.

Early the next morning heavy cannonading was heard to the southwest, and in that direction we journeyed all day in one unending swamp, filled with shallow water, trunks of trees, and small islands of morass. Among these we picked our way guided by the welcome sound of Sherman's artillery beyond the river. The barking of dogs was heard at the settlements, which skirted the woods, but no human being had been seen. Before the sun descended behind the western trees, we came to the main road running north of Columbia at a point with woods on both sides. Venturing to cross the road, the officer who had been my only companion since escaping from the cars, reached the opposite side as I was in the middle of the road, when suddenly a Confederate trooper came dashing toward us. I told my companion to escape and that my capture would save him. He did so; and I never heard of him afterwards, although I presume he reached our lines. "Surrender," was demanded with the flourish of a pistol and in imperative tones and violent language, and being clothed in ragged blue, with my head and feet bare, I submitted to the inevitable. My captor had all the calico and Confederate uniforms he could carry on the back of his horse, and in like manner other troopers, who were guarding quartermaster stores in advance of their retreating army, appeared. Columbia had been evacuated, and every Southern soldier had carried away what he could. One of my captors proved to be a Kentuckian and a brother of Chief Justice Duvall of that state. He gave me a suit of Confederate gray, with a cap and a pair of shoes. All that night I was guarded and learned much of Gen. Sherman's advance. The next day I was taken along with the Rebel army, a large cavalry force retreating and somewhat disorganized. The rations issued to the Southern soldiers in the field here, were about the same in quality as those issued to the prisoners with whom I had been; but the Southern soldier was accustomed to a diet of corn meal and bacon and could supplement his rations by contributions from a friendly people among whom he served. The second night I was guarded a few rods in the rear of Gen. Wheeler's headquarters, with several prisoners recently captured from Sherman's army and a few officers who, like myself, had escaped upon removal from Columbia and had been recaptured. Among the latter was Lieut. H. Bader, of the 29th Missouri Infantry.

The Confederate soldiers in the field were always ready to talk or trade with a captive, and this knot of prisoners was beset by their captors, who wished for pins and knives and many other things which they could not easily obtain in the Confederacy, and who came to the guards and talked with the prisoners. Lieut. Bader and myself, being dressed in full Rebel uniform, resolved upon another escape. While many cavalrymen around the place where we were guarded were caring for their horses and getting their suppers, we boldly passed the guard, and each of us seized a saddle, in imitation of many about us, and walked through the Rebel camp. When we reached its limit, we put down the saddles and were soon safe in a thick underbrush, a few miles north of Columbia. That night Columbia was burned. Its fires lit up the skies, and the tall trees cast their shadows across our silent pathway as we walked in the still forests between the contending armies, now hushed in night's repose; and over friend and foe the light of that burning city, where recently I had been imprisoned, glared in mockery of treason's earliest crimes.

That night we entered a farm house as Confederate soldiers, and were given a late supper by the mistress, who was attended by her slaves, but no white men were seen. Our hostess had been informed by retreating Confederates that afternoon that the Yankees would be along the next day, and she confided to us the whereabouts of her secreted stores, which were not afterwards revealed.

After we had finished our meal, which was plain and even homely, but which is remembered as having been eaten with great satisfaction, we went into an adjoining field, and beneath a hawthorne slept a peaceful sleep. Early the next morning, as the sun ushered in a bright day, our hearts were gladdened by hearing the *reveille* of Sherman's army to the southward, and we concealed ourselves near a road, believing our soldiers would soon come. Before noon the detailed foragers of the advance division of our army, came along with their rattling sabers, making music such as I had not heard for a long time. We were concealed in a thicket by the roadside, and made our appearance as soon as we were certain of the identity of the approaching force. It was after much scrutiny, however, that they were convinced we were not rebels, as they presented their loaded carbines at us and demanded our surrender when we emerged from the bushes.

Of course we were given hearty welcome and congratulation as soon as our identity was established.

That evening we arrived at Gen. Sherman's headquarters and were again warmly greeted. We accompanied the army to Fayetteville, N. C., where I took the first returning steamer to Wilmington, and from thence, by the way of Beaufort, N.C., and New York City, I went to Annapolis, Md., where a leave of absence was granted. Afterwards I returned to my regiment at Nashville, Tenn., and was mustered out of the service the following July, the war being ended.

The transportation train belonging to the regiment, to save which a long and stubborn resistance had been made in vain, was captured at the time I was made a prisoner, and all my papers and personal effects, consisting of the usual furnishings of a line officer in the field, fell into the hands of the enemy. Among other articles which I valued was an album containing pictures of friends and relatives—pictures highly prized, and always fondly gazed upon (as for the last time) before going into battle. On the fly-leaf of this album I had taken the precaution to write a request that if it should fall into the hands of friend or enemy it might be sent to my father, whose address was given. Several months after Lee's surrender, and more than two years after its loss, it was gratefully received by express at home in the same condition as when captured, having been kindly forwarded by Rev. R. F. Bunting, chaplain of Terry's Texas Rangers, who wrote that it had been captured September 21st, 1863, near Pond Springs, Ga., by Jesse A. Kirkland, private Company "E," Terry's Texas Rangers, 8th Texas Cavalry.

From a military standpoint the policy of the government of non-exchange of prisoners was right. It was less costly to feed a Rebel than to let him return and fight. Assuming that the soldiers on both sides were equally efficient in battle, the North had to conduct military operations in unfriendly States and guard a long line of supplies, and every step advanced required many men to protect the rear, which the South, in the main, did not have to do. Hence, to preserve that equality in the field, superior numbers were required on the part of the North, and every captive gave a proportionate advantage, so that the thousands of Northern soldiers in Southern prisons during the period of their captivity were not inactive, and really held an army at bay; but at the same time the officers were deprived of promotion and all were compelled to undergo unexampled privations.

Prison life at ten different places in the South, covering the greater part of the controlling period of the war, abounded in many incidents not easily to be forgotten. Our misguided enemies, overmastered by evil lessons and false theories, were at times hateful and severe; but the hardships and trials, wherever endured in our civil war, were not aimless or futile, but made possible and enduring a government whose permanence and unity the conflict secured.

These recollections, and many more which cannot here be related, flit across my memory like shadowy pictures, whose dark shades are lit up by the reflection that by such and greater sacrifices this nation was restored to a higher and grander life. Companions whose fortitude and heroism sustained them in many distressful hours, cannot now be mentioned. Most of them have gone to untimely but hallowed graves; those who remain carry about them the sure evidence of their patriotic sufferings, and they are content with that reward which is found in the consciousness of having served their country in the hour of its greatest need.

No lapse of time can remove from the pages of history the painful proofs of the infamy which the brief Confederate rule fastened upon itself, by permitting the cruelest and most inexcusable wrongs to be inflicted upon defenseless prisoners. I know of no valid apology for the innumerable inhumanities that were perpetrated in many Southern prisons during the war, and yet it could hardly be otherwise than that an unrighteous cause, in the unholy endeavor to establish a government whose chief corner-stone was human slavery, would call to its aid every possible form of desperate power.

Twenty-five years have passed since the memorable events of the war, and with the greatest charity let us remember not always these things; but rather let us glory in a restored flag that proudly waves over increasing States, the symbol of freedom and progress, and may it through all the years to come, shelter and protect a peaceful and united people.

St. Paul, Minn., Nov., 1890.

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