

HORRORS OF MILITARY PRISONS OF THE NORTH

In the celebrated debate between Senators Benjamin H. Hill and James G. Blaine, the former contended that the south, considering her resources, accorded better treatment to prisoners of war than the north, and quoted from the records to sustain the position and show that the mortality was greater among Confederates in northern prisons than it was in Andersonville with all its horrors.

The article was read before Camp Wheeler several months ago, and by resolution requested made of The Journal to publish. Its earlier appearance has been prevented by the manuscript having been accidentally mislaid.

Camp A. Wheeler's Confederate Cavalry, Commander and Comrades. This record of the sufferings of prisoners forms the darkest chapter of our civil war, and is a reflection upon the humanity of both sides; but if a true and impartial history of the great conflict is ever written, it will show that the south was more sinned against than sinning.

I have long since outlived any feelings of animosity towards our true enemies, and have learned to respect the brave men who from conviction fought on the other side. But it is hard to recall my sufferings and the sufferings of thousands of others, remembering that they were largely the result of wanton cruelty, and revenge for life sufferings of federal prisoners, for which we were in no way responsible, and which the Confederate authorities were powerless to relieve.

In going over the record of this period it seems so malevolently inconsistent for the federal authorities to have demanded that the Confederates should ameliorate the condition of northern prisoners in their hands and to have inaugurated systematic punishment of southern prisoners as a penalty for failing to do so, when they knew that they themselves had made medicines and covered the Confederates with material resource, and every material resource, and this latter was admittedly the basis for their hope of putting down the so-called "rebellion." This inconsistency is all the more flagrant in view of the fact that the Confederates had actually released their men from the horrors about which so much has been said and written, by simply agreeing to the exchange of prisoners. But it was a part of their policy to hold all men captured. This policy was inaugurated by the less noted General Grant, commander in chief of their armies.

"It is hard on our men held in southern prisons not to exchange them, but it is humanity to those left in the ranks to fight the battle. Every man we hold, when released on parole or otherwise, becomes an active soldier against us at home, either directly or indirectly. If we commence a system of exchange which liberates all prisoners taken we will have to fight against the whole south as exterminated. If we hold those caught they amount to no more than dead men. At this particular time (August, 1864), to release all prisoners north would insure Sherman's defeat, and would compromise our safety here" (in front of Richmond).

But little has ever been said or written about the horrors of federal prisons. The reasons for this are obvious: The southern soldiers who survived the northern invasions were glad to have escaped, and their families were glad to have since for the most part kept silent, knowing that for them there was no compensation for injuries and no redress for wrongs.

With the soldiers of the north the conditions were reversed, for the prospect of Alabama-Panama and public sympathy made the northern ex-prisoners eager to testify to the bad treatment he had received at the hands of the Confederates. The horrors of Andersonville have been recounted over and over again in northern newspapers, and pages of official records are devoted to the hardships of Union soldiers incarcerated in this and other Confederate prisons. It is a historical fact, though, that we gave them the same ration that was issued to our army in the field, and even General Grant, Butler is on record as saying that the south was, according to her resources, kinder to prisoners than was the north, mentioning that he frequently examined the haversacks of our men captured by his command, and found that their three day rations were scarcely sufficient for one day. So, if the federal soldier was starving in a southern prison, he had at least the poor consolation of knowing that the men who guarded him were hungry. The Confederates in a northern prison had no such solace, for he was starving in a land of plenty.

Now, lest we forget, and lest our children should in time come to think their fathers were guilty of wanton cruelty to defenseless captives, I think it time that those who are qualified to speak should put on record the other side of the story. It is only with this view that I can get my consent to relate my experience of nearly eighteen months in federal prisons. The story is a sad one, and I tell it here in detail for the first time.

While my imprisonment constituted the saddest part of my war career, the events immediately preceding my capture were the happiest and most thrilling. I therefore trust that I may be pardoned for giving a brief account of the latter. I do so without any affectation of modesty, and not without some feeling of pride; but disclaimer, any desire to pose as a hero, for I wasn't. I was only a wild eighteenth-year-old boy, with a boy's fondness for adventure and indifference to danger. There were many braver and better who were less fortunate in weathering the storm.

August, 1862. Lieutenant Charlie Pelham of company C, of our regiment (first Alabama-Panama Rangers) was instructed by General Martin, commanding our division of Wheeler's cavalry, to select fifty or sixty men and go on a scout to observe the enemy advancing toward Lookout Mountain. I was known to be fond of such service, and was overjoyed at being selected as one of the party. I had been in many scouting expeditions before, but never ones so wild and hazardous as this.

A HAPPY HOME

Is one where health abounds. With impure blood there cannot be good health. With a disordered LIVER there cannot be good blood.

Tutt's Pills

revivify the torpid LIVER and restore its natural action.

A healthy LIVER means pure blood. Pure blood means health. Health means happiness. Take no Substitute. All Druggists.

Many were the arguments the Yanks and I had, but they were always good-natured and no offense taken on either side. I was respected and called "pet rebel," while the deserter was treated with but little consideration and accorded no favors. I declined to hold any communication with him, after trying to provoke him into a fight and failing. I thought I was able to lick him, and was anxious to try.

When the time came to draw rations, he issued the army ration, no more and no less, while to me the ration was, "Come here, Johnny, and let me fill your bag. When you eat that up come back and get some more."

I had left my blanket under my saddle, and when night came on I prepared to sit up by the fire. A teamster asked me why I did not lie down, to which I replied that I had no blanket and would not sleep with that "junk" (the word I used wouldn't look well in print). After nearly forty years I can scarcely keep back the tears when I remember his reply, "Johnny, damn him, you needn't sleep with him if you don't want to—come here to my wagon and I will lend you a blanket."

Some of the acquaintances I made while with Negley's boys were very pleasant ones, and men I met one day would frequently call on me at the house. Among them was a rather eccentric old surgeon, who took great pains to explain to me that when I was captured I was not engaged in legitimate warfare, and that a man dodging along ahead of an army and firing on it from ambush was bushwhacking, and not a soldier. He naturally an enemy was remembered to him for righteousness.

During the time I was with this command a part of it went into action, and when I heard the familiar boom of musketry, I secretly prayed that I might be carried into the thick of it, so as to have opportunity for escape. But no such good luck happened, and after a few stretchers had wound passed to the rear, we were sent back to camp.

No particular indignities were offered us till we reached Nashville, where we spent the night in the penitentiary, and our custodians were changed to home guards. At Louisville I got into an argument with one of these, which he brought to a sudden close by thrusting his bayonet at my bosom. In passing through Cincinnati we were jeered at by the spectators, and one of them became so enthusiastically insulting that I suggested to him that the place for such a patriot as him was at the front, and not skulking in the rear.

From Cincinnati we were carried to Columbus, Ohio, and landed in Camp Chase. At this prison our rations were usually sufficient and of fairly good quality, but we were frequently without bread, and when it came necessary to furnish us with some additional clothing to prevent us from freezing. This was done by issuing us condemned or discarded army uniforms, with the tails of the coats and legs of the pants cut off. The reception was very friendly, and the commandant of the post, calling his attention to the indignities and neglect of duty of his subordinates. We did not repeat the experiment for the only reply received was a ball and chain and handcuffs for those who signed the petition. With one exception the boys made a laughing matter of this, one of them telling the guard who handcuffed him that he was "used to them things," as he had worn out two or three pairs while with Walker in Nicaragua.

One of our preachers was a good man, but was not smart, and his sermons were like Indian "mighty poor preach." The other was smart, but not very good. He would play cards all day and preach a beautiful sermon at night.

After remaining about five months in Camp Chase we were removed to Rock Island, Ill., where I stayed on this trip, as I came nearer freezing than ever before. It was in the dead of winter, and we were in boxcars which had at first a diminutive stove in each, but the home guards who had the charge soon kicked these out. During the night some of our boys sawed out and made their escape. When the hole in the car was discovered we were all made to lie down side by side, the guards swearing they would kill the first man that raised his head. We made the balance of the journey in this position.

We had thought Camp Chase a hard place, but it was a paradise compared to Rock Island. Smallpox was raging when I arrived, and after a few weeks I contracted it and was sent to the hospital, which was virtually a hell. I was put into a bunk with another patient in the most loathsome stage of this loathsome disease. His head seemed to be swelled beyond its normal size, and the eruptions on his face had made it almost as solid as a scab. His hands and feet were infested with things that creep and things that crawl, and I remember making a mental estimate that there was a pint of them divided between us.

In this dungeon of horrors I remained several weeks, amid shrieks of the delirious and groans of the dying. For ten days I did not drink a drop of water, quenching my thirst as best I could with teas, sometimes hot and sometimes cold. I had been told if I drank cold water it would kill me, and I didn't intend to die. If I displayed a particle of heroism during the war, it was here, for by all rules I ought to have died, but lived from sheer force of will, when others died who were not as ill as I. I had never heard of mental or Christian science, but I guess it was something of the kind that saved my life.

In the early spring of 1864 I was returned to barracks, only to be attacked by chronic diarrhoea. Our bunks were built on tiers of three, one above the other. I first occupied a top berth, then took the middle one, and becoming too weak to crawl up to it, took the one at the bottom. I suffered no pain, except the pangs of never-ceasing hunger, but am convinced now that had I been in the middle one, there was a game of town ball in progress among the stronger ones, and I asked the man at the top to let me run around for him. I ran half a dozen steps and ended with about the hardest fall I have ever experienced. I did not stumble, but my knees dropped from under me from sheer weakness. I have never tried to play ball since.

In the summer the visiting physician concluded I had consumption as well as the other diseases I have mentioned, and sent me again to the hospital. Here I remained several months and fared much better than before. It wasn't consumption or diarrhoea that was killing me, and at night I dreamed of having enough to eat than of mother or home. The rations I did not savor as scum in prison. I thought of better quality, but I was able to supplement them by waiting on men too sick to eat all that was given them, and there was a better chance of foraging than inside the prison proper. Nightly I would prowl around the stables for scraps thrown out, just as the lean dogs now prowl around my kitchen at home, and sometimes I would fish down into the swill tub at the kitchen door in the hope of finding a morsel of food thrown in with the slop. Sometimes I was fortunate enough to find in the ash heap a lot of bones with considerable meat on them. I would carefully hide them until morning, and then steal out behind the hospital building and gnaw them, while the sentinel on the roof would whistle to me and call me like I was a dog.

From the above it will be seen that I was reduced by starvation almost to the level of an animal, and no one can wonder that I have never told this story before, and am reluctant to tell it now.

This hospital was well managed, and we were fairly well treated, barring the fact that we were experimented on with different kinds of medicines to test their effect, and nearly every man who died was dissected. For the latter purpose, there was no lack of subjects, as the mortality was greater than from smallpox.

The occupants of the cots each side of mine died, the one in front, and so on through the ward, and each night as I went to sleep I knew there would be one or more vacant places in the morning. Strange how calous we become with familiarity with death. I do not remember that the passing of my comrades particularly saddened me, though being of a reflective turn of mind, I often watched their dissolution, and I can not help but regret that I have never dreaded it greatly since, for none seemed to fear it, and to many it was a welcome release.

In the fall of 1864 I was sent from the hospital to the prison again, and I then entered the gates with a day or two's rations on my back, and a woe-begone expression on the faces of my comrades. Up to the time I had left completely we were guarded by negroes, insolent and eager for excuse to kill a white man. I saw at different times four men lying dead who were killed by negroes during the night. I afterwards read the proceedings of an investigation by the federal authorities and though the evidence of the negroes themselves showed deliberate murder—one of them admitting that he had taken off his shoes in order to slip on his victim—they were acquitted, without even a reprimand.

Many of the prisoners carried balls and chains and were handcuffed, and tying up the thumbs was common for the slightest infraction of discipline, and sometimes when the men were released it was necessary to send them to the surgeon to restore circulation in their arms. How much longer I could have stood these horrors I do not know. I believe I had about reached the limit of my endurance when word came that I was to be exchanged with a lot of sick and wounded men. I was glad to hear of it, and as heavily as the bugle call to fall in on February 28, 1865. When I walked it seemed like I was treading on air. I had kept a little diary, and the last entry made in it was, "Kind fate thou hast blessed me—I ask for no more."

them, some months before, they had been able to keep up some semblance of spirit; but starvation had at last reduced them almost to despair. The nation had been cut away, and it was barely sufficient to sustain life. Each morning we drew one loaf of bread, weighing about half or pound or less, and about one-quarter to one-third of a pound of beef. The majority ate it all at once and fasted till next morning, and when on Saturday we drew two days' rations, many followed the same rule of making one meal and going without till Monday morning.

I cannot better describe the horrors of this prison than by quoting from a private letter from a northern writer, which I find on page 1284, of War of Rebellion Records, Series II, Vol. VIII:

"Read the enclosed. Do you believe in a just righteous God, who has said, 'vengeance is mine, I will repay.' You then think of dying and appearing in the presence of this God. Think of the groans and sighs that continually go up to Him calling for vengeance on your cruel and guilty soul, and remember that, though death and prison punishment are coming" (Signed) A SUFFERER. (Chicago, Ill., Dec. 27, 1864. (From a Private Letter.)

The condition and suffering of the rebel prisoners at Rock Island is a source of agony to every heart from humanity and the feelings of common humanity and the scathing Christian mercy. There are from 6,000 to 8,000 confined there. Many have taken "the oath" any oath, to save themselves from actual starvation. These released prisoners, though liberated at different intervals of time, all tell the same story. The allowance to each man has been one small loaf of bread (it takes three to make a pound) and a piece of meat, two inches square, per day. This was the ration lately it has been reduced. Some say that no man can live on the rations given, and that there are men who would do anything to get enough to eat. Such is the wretched, ravenous condition of these poor starving men that several dogs which have come to the barracks with teams have fallen victims to their hunger, and they are trapping rats and mice for food, actually to save life. Many of them are nearly naked, barefooted; exposed to ceaseless torture from the chill andiless winds of the upper Mississippi. Thus, naked and hungry, and in prison, enduring a wretchedness which no tongue can describe, no language tell, they suffer from day to day, each day their number growing less by death, death, their only comfort, their only merciful visitor.

"God in heaven, shall these things continue? Can we hope for success in our cause? Will a merciful and just God bless and prosper it if such cruel inhumanity is practiced by our rulers? May we not provoke a terrible and unchristian heart, knowing the facts, can feel otherwise. Many charitable persons, influenced by no other motives than humanity and Christian duty, have sent supplies of clothing to these prisoners, but they have not been permitted to reach them. I have heard of sales of such clothing having been made across the river at Davenport at very low prices. Is it possible that the authorities at Washington know of and approve these things? If so, good many have taken the oath, stating afterward to citizens here that they did so really to save them from starvation. I learn that there are about 5,000 confined here who have resolved to die rather than do so. Although they are wrong, is there not a sublime heroism in such a determination? Can men, amid such trials, to a cause which they believe to be right?" (INDORSEMENT.)

January 11, 1865. "This slip is believed to have been a pure fabrication by some northern rebel. It cannot have had any true foundation. Nevertheless, I am of opinion that the paper and slip should be sent to Brigadier General Wessells for such inquiries as he may think it necessary to make. Approved by the secretary of war.

"E. A. HITCHCOCK, Major General of Volunteers." Will Comrade McCauley please stand up. "Comrade, is the description I have just read of the horrors of our prison life a true one? "It is—I helped eat the dogs." "Is it true, so help you God." "It is true, so help you God." I am a living witness that the picture is not overdrawn and that what the writer says is true, so help me God. And that I kept the faith and was one of the 5,000 to which he referred, refusing to take the oath of allegiance, will always be one of the proudest recollections of my life.

The indorsement by the secretary of war says there could be no foundation for the letter. Did he deliberately lie, or had he forgotten that May 1864 he refused to take the oath of allegiance, will always be one of the proudest recollections of my life.

To make the horror of our situation complete we were guarded by negroes, insolent and eager for excuse to kill a white man. I saw at different times four men lying dead who were killed by negroes during the night. I afterwards read the proceedings of an investigation by the federal authorities and though the evidence of the negroes themselves showed deliberate murder—one of them admitting that he had taken off his shoes in order to slip on his victim—they were acquitted, without even a reprimand.

Many of the prisoners carried balls and chains and were handcuffed, and tying up the thumbs was common for the slightest infraction of discipline, and sometimes when the men were released it was necessary to send them to the surgeon to restore circulation in their arms. How much longer I could have stood these horrors I do not know. I believe I had about reached the limit of my endurance when word came that I was to be exchanged with a lot of sick and wounded men. I was glad to hear of it, and as heavily as the bugle call to fall in on February 28, 1865. When I walked it seemed like I was treading on air. I had kept a little diary, and the last entry made in it was, "Kind fate thou hast blessed me—I ask for no more."

case was hunger, I improved in health every day after my release, and shortly after I reached home I weighed about as much as I have ever done since.

My hardships and sufferings had not cured me of my infatuation for the wild life I had led with the cavalry, but had rather intensified it, for now I had a personal grievance to redress.

While at home, near what is now Anniston, Alabama, Wilson, had come through, and I had the pleasure of hearing the minutes, which were more. I captured a Yank and a mule, was in turn captured myself, but escaped in a few minutes, losing my Yank, but saving the mule. There was nothing in connection with this much to my credit unless it was that, in the language of the immortal Forrest, "I foch on the fight." But that, as Kipling would say is another story. —Private W. C. Dodson, in Atlanta Journal.

Confessions of a Priest. Rev. John S. Cox, of Wake, Ark., writes: "For 12 years I suffered from Yellow Jaundice. I consulted a number of physicians and tried all sorts of medicines, but got no relief. Then I began the use of Electric Bitters and feel that I am now cured of a disease that had me in its grasp for twelve years." If you want a reliable medicine for Liver and Kidney trouble, stomach disorder or general debility, get Electric Bitters. It's guaranteed by R. R. Bellamy.

COAST LINE AND SOUTHERN. Corporation Commission Seeks to Have These Roads Make Better Connection at Selma. (Special to The Messenger.) Raleigh, N. C., October 29.—There was a conference here today between General Manager Ackert, General Traffic Manager Turk and Division Superintendent Collins, of the Southern Railway; E. Jordan, of the Coast Line, and corporation commission. The latter requested the conference to see if some amicable arrangement could not be made to secure the proper connection of the Coast Line and Southern trains at Selma. There is no end of complaint about the failure to make this connection.

The Atlantic Coast Line says it is now making all the time it can between Washington and Selma, yet is missing the connection at the latter place half the time, but that November 6th, it is to have a meeting at Washington to consider the schedules and will endeavor to have the trains leave Washington thirty minutes earlier, so as to make Selma in time. General Manager Ackert says the Southern would like to have more time between Selma and Greensboro, as its trains now have to run too fast, dangerously so in fact, over fifty miles an hour.

The Selma connection affects very materially passengers for Goldsboro, Raleigh, Weldon and other points. A Cure for Dyspepsia. I had Dyspepsia in its worst form and felt miserable most all the time. Did not enjoy eating until after I used Kodol Dyspepsia Cure which has completely cured me.—Mrs. W. W. Saylor, Hilliard, Pa. No appetite, loss of strength, nervousness, headaches, constipation, bad breath, sour risings, indigestion, dyspepsia, and all stomach troubles are quickly cured by the use of Kodol. Kodol represents the natural juices of digestion combined with the greatest known tonic and reconstructive properties. It cleanses, purifies and sweetens the stomach. Sold by R. R. Bellamy.

FOUR LARGE CHARTERS. Biz Corporations, all of Salisbury. Are Given Life. (Special to The Messenger.) Raleigh, N. C., October 29.—The largest charters granted by the state this year were issued today for four corporations, all of Salisbury and all owned by The Whitney Company of that place. They are: The Yadkin Mines Consolidated Company, with a capital of one million dollars, to develop mines and mining properties; the Yadkin Land Company, with a capital of one million dollars, to deal in land and city lots; The Yadkin River Electric Power Company, with a capital of five million dollars, to develop the water power of the Yadkin River in Montgomery, Rowan and Davidson and perhaps other counties; and to deal in real estate and operate mills; The Yadkin and Virginia Copper and Land Company, to develop copper mines in Granville and Person and other counties, also to develop other mineral properties, with a capital of \$750,000.

A charter is granted also to the Morganton Water Works Company, with a capital of \$100,000. Ran a Ten Penny Nail Through His Hand. While opening a box, J. C. Meant, of Three Mile Bay, N. Y., ran a ten penny nail through the fleshy part of his hand. "I thought at once of all the pain and soreness this would cause me," he says, and immediately applied Chamberlain's Pain Balm and occasionally afterwards. To my surprise it removed all pain and soreness and the injured parts were soon healed." For sale by all druggists.

Loss by Fire at Bluefields, Nicaragua. New Orleans, October 29.—Private cables reaching the city today brings advices of a great fire at Bluefields, Nicaragua, exceeding the damage done in the fire a year ago. The losses are roughly estimated at nearly \$200,000. Brown and Harris, the Orleans and Central American Trading Company, John Q. Allen, and A. Peterson and the Bluefields Steamship Company, all having large interests at Bluefields, are said to have been heavy sufferers. Saves Two from Death. "Our little daughter had an almost fatal attack of whooping cough and bronchitis," writes Mrs. W. K. Halvland, of Armonk, N. Y., "but, when all other remedies failed, we saved her life with Dr. King's New-Discovery. Our niece, who had Consumption in an advanced stage, also used this wonderful medicine and today she is perfectly well." Desperate throat and lung diseases yield to Dr. King's New-Discovery as to no other medicine on earth. Infallible for Coughs and Colds. 50c and \$1.00 bottles guaranteed by R. R. Bellamy. Trial bottles free.

ABSOLUTE SECURITY. Genuine Carter's Little Liver Pills. Must Bear Signature of Brewster. Very small and as easy to take as sugar. CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS. FOR HEADACHE. FOR DIZZINESS. FOR BILIOUSNESS. FOR TORPID LIVER. FOR CONSTIPATION. FOR SALLOW SKIN. FOR THE COMPLEXION. Price 25 Cents. Purely Vegetable. Cure SICK HEADACHE.