

CHAPTER XVII.

Prison Life-----The Cruelty Of Rebels To Prisoners-----
Barbarities Of Prison Keepers-----The Experiences
Of Several Of Our Officers And Men-----The Death
Roll.

ELMER ARMSTRONG.

Sutler of the Regiment.

It was on the morning of June 15th, 1863, after holding Lee's whole army at bay for three whole days, that Milroy had at last given the order to retreat, and his little command, that had done such gallant service, started along the Winchester and Martinsburg turnpike for Martinsburg. Our guns had been spiked and with our wagons and ambulances left behind. Thus unencumbered, we had gone about five miles, when we came across the enemy in strong force, just where the road to Harper's Ferry branched off from the turnpike. While our first line was engaging the enemy, the second line, consisting of the larger part of the command, filed to the right and escaped to Harper's Ferry. The order had been given the night before, that if we were attacked on the retreat, those having horses in charge were to make their escape as best they could. I had my horses with me, and attempted to escape to the left with the troops that afterward struck the railroad at "Sir John's Run, but was captured before leaving the pike. In obedience to orders, I had left my wagon at Winchester with about \$6,000 worth of goods. The regiment had been paid off a few days before, and I had considerable money about me, some two thousand dollars. I also had two hundred dollars of Adjutant Ballard's money, which he had given me before he went into battle, saying, "I may never come out of this; if I don't, send this to my wife if you get out." Well, that money I put in a place that I had ripped in my shoe and then stitched up again, and I carried it safely through all my prison experience.

The first thing I thought of when I found that we were cornered, was to hide the rest of the money. I stuck it around in different places. I remember I put \$750 between the lining and seat of my pants, where it escaped the three searchings I got at Libby. I was placed under guard until morning, when I was sent to General Gordon's headquarters, where I was given breakfast in his tent. I was then sent back to our old fort at Winchester. About a thousand of our fellows were there. I was in Winchester about two weeks before being sent south. Dr. Brown, our assistant surgeon, and I got leave to go on our parole to Staunton, so I hired a man to take us over in a stage, and paid him \$50 in rebel money. We were not guarded, and when we arrived at Staunton we hunted lodgings where we could and registered our names as if we were not prisoners. Next day, right after breakfast, we reported and were sent down to Richmond. Dr. Sweet's wife, Colonel Washburn's wife and Chaplain Brady were on the same train, but in another car. On our way down, we heard of the capture, just ahead of us, of Fitzhugh Lee and a son of General Winder. This made them cautious, and we were run back on a siding until dark and then run into Richmond. We were treated well on our journey, except that nothing was given us to eat.

On our arrival at Richmond, Dr. Brown and I were put into the union cell down in the basement of Castle Thunder. The first person I saw there was a man named Parker, who had been an engineer on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and whom I had known when I was shipping stock to Baltimore. There was with him a brakeman from the same road. Both these men remembered me and were very kind to me. Till now I had kept my spirits up, but meeting these acquaintances in such a place, and the kindness they showed me, completely broke me up. I tell you I felt pretty sick. Brown and I laid down, but Parker came to us and said if we stayed there the lice would drop down on us from the rebels above. He also offered to get us something to eat, but I had no appetite in that place, though I had not tasted food since morning. The only person in the cell beside these I have mentioned was a crazy southerner, whom the rebels had picked up and taken for a Yankee spy playing off. The fellow was, however, as much a rebel at heart as his captors. He had evidently been a preacher, for he wandered on, telling us if Jeff Davis and General Winder would humble themselves before God they would get their independence. The fellow stammered when he spoke. Said he to Parker: "These f-f-friends of yours s-s-seem to be n-n-nice men, I should l-l-like to p-p-pray with them." So he went on, while Parker paced up and down the cell. The surroundings were so

terrible, and the earnestness of the poor man so impressed me, that I felt very much humbled, and especially when he began to pray very devoutly. But when he began to pray for the success of the Southern Confederacy, it fired Parker, who, though used to his insane chatter, would not listen to anything like that, even from a crazy man, but began to pelt the old fellow on the head with some bullets he had in his pocket, saying, "I will teach you better than to pray for the Southern Confederacy in the presence of Union prisoners, you d__d old reprobate." That prayer was cut off pretty short, I can tell you.

After a couple of days, they moved us up into the third story, part of which was a temporary hospital. Brown was taken away from me here, and I supposed that he had gone home. In the third story we could buy a few things to eat of the hospital steward. I thus became acquainted with Bullock, the hospital steward. He told me that Captain Alexander, who was in command of Castle Thunder, was from Baltimore and was a Union man at heart. I knew Baltimore pretty well, and determined to make the most of this to get into his good graces, so whenever the Captain was about I talked loud about Baltimore. I had kept this up about two months, and was beginning to think that it was no go, when, one day, he came up to me and said: "Mr. Armstrong, didn't I hear you say you were raised in Baltimore?" "No, sir," I said, "I am a native of Ohio, but I own property in Baltimore. Were you ever there?" "Oh, yes," he answered, "I was born and raised there. I came down here before the war and married here, and so, you see, am a Southerner." A few days after this, he came in and gave me a peach; he also gave me the privilege of walking through some of the halls because I was sick. I knew I had made a point. One day, as I was taking my walk through the halls, I came to the Captain's room. A guard stood at the door and halted me. I told him who I was, and asked to see the Captain. He went in and told what I wanted. Captain Alexander came out, took me into his room, and introduced me to his wife, and then asked me what I wanted. I told him that I had come to beg a favor. "I want you to send a guard out with me and let me get some fresh air and buy something to eat." He said he wouldn't send an armed guard, but took me down stairs to the outer door, and ordered the guard there to let me go out every day and buy what I wanted, and said I was not to be molested. He sent a young boy with me to show me the way. Almost the first man I met when I got out was old Kephardt, a rebel detective. "Where are you from, and what are you doing?" he asked. I told him as politely as I could, that Captain Alexander had kindly permitted me to go out and get some refreshments. This seemed to anger the old fellow, and he said: "They had no right to do it; G_d d__n you; they ought to make breastworks of all such Yankees as your are." By making good use of my guide, and spending a good deal of rebel money, I managed to get everything I wanted. Whenever I wanted any money for these trips, I would take a five dollar bill and buy rebel currency. I could get forty of their dollars for five of ours. But I was always careful never to appear to have more than five dollars at a time.

After the news came of the battle of Gettysburg, and the fall of Vicksburg, a hundred of the prisoners were taken from the third story, where I was, and held as hostages. They were kept by themselves in a room above ours, and we could hear them every night praying for the safety of the Government, and for a blessing on their families. Parker was one of the hundred, and he sent down to see if Bullock, the steward, couldn't get something for them to eat. Bullock said that he did not dare to, but that Armstrong could, as he was free to go in and out, and that he would be careful not to be looking when these things were going on. We punched a pine knot out of the floor above, and at night they let down a large bandana handkerchief through the hole, into which I would put such things as I had for them, and then they would let down a string from the window above and draw up the bundle. Bullock would draw rations and give them to me, which were sent to the men above in the same way. They would then draw up the string and put the knot back in its place. Bullock was very kind to me all the time. I remember that when a brother of his was sick, his wife would send him wine and other delicacies for him, and a good share of these fell to my lot.

I was afraid that I could not be exchanged regularly, as I was not a soldier, and when I saw some of our boys go, and I was left, I tell you my heart sank. The way I was finally exchanged was this: I had written home of my sorry plight and ill-health, and had said that I never expected to live through it. My wife wrote me how she and the children felt, and on the back of one letter she wrote to the officers, asking if she might come and care for me, or, if I was already dead, take back my remains. When the officers got this letter, I was sent for, and went down to Major Carrington's room. He was an officer of Castle Thunder. He handed me the letter, and said to me: "You have not disobeyed us in any particular, you are away from your family, and Captain Alexander and I have determined to send you home." When Bullock found that I was

going to be sent away, he came to me and asked whether, if he could get into our lines, our officers would give him back to the rebels if he came as a deserter. I told him if he could get to our lines and show himself with a white flag, he would be well treated. He seemed much pleased to know this. Before I was sent away, I went around to bid Major Carrington and Captain Alexander good-bye. They had done everything they could for me. I thanked them from the bottom of my heart, and told them that, although I trusted they would never be so unfortunate as to be captured, yet if they were, I could wish them nothing better than that they should fall in with friends as kind and helping as they had been to me. Captain Alexander said, "don't speak of kindness, I would have done a great deal more if I had dared." I then told them that I belonged to the military committee, and gave them my address, and told them to write to me if they were ever taken prisoners. Mrs. Alexander said: "If you and he both live, you will see him in your lines a prisoner, and have a chance to do something for him, for I am sure he will be captured."

On the 12th of September I was transferred to "Libby," and there I saw some of the men of our own regiment. Dr. Brown, Dr. Smith, Lieutenant Sibley, Lieutenant Knowles, the Chaplain of the 87th Pennsylvania, and others of different regiments of our command. Castle Thunder was truly a palace compared to this place, and the treatment we received in the two places was altogether different. Here I was searched three times for money. Once they found twelve dollars and eighty-seven cents, which was taken from me. They also took my account books, but gave them all back but one. They promised to give back the money, but as I did not believe them, I was not disappointed. I found some acquaintances among the prisoners on the lower floor, but most of the men that I knew were up stairs. The first man I saw from our regiment was Dr. Smith. He cut a little hole through the floor, and sent a note down to ask if there wasn't a man there named Armstrong, and if there was, to tell him Dr. Smith wanted to see him. I went and showed myself, and he slipped down another note asking if I had any money, or whether they had taken it. I told him I had plenty, and sent him, I think, twenty-five dollars. Then I went up to the head of the stairs, to another room, and looked through the key-hole, and saw Lieutenant Sibley. He was nearly starved to death. I told him I had plenty of money. He said if I would let him have some he would give me his note for it. I put one hundred dollars through the key-hole to him. I also let Lieutenant R. O. Knowles have one hundred dollars, and they sent back their notes. I was afraid the notes would be found on me, and their names would let the rebels know that they had the money, so I told them I would tear their names off the notes, and if they ever got out, and could pay me, all well and good, and if not, all right. So I tore off the names. I also sent Eberhardt, Chaplain of the 87th Pennsylvania, and Dr. Brown fifty dollars. We were all in one box, and didn't care much for money. Now, I want to say right here that every dollar I lent these men in "Libby" was paid back to me. After being there twelve days, I was ordered to be exchanged. We had been nearly starved, for we had but little to eat. Sibley and Knowles, in the other room, had bribed the guard and got a little food in that way. The treatment we received here was brutal. Turner, who was said to be a nephew of General Winder, made us stand up to be counted every day, and, when I would lean against a post, because I was so sick and weak, he would swear at me and tell me to stand up straight. I didn't expect to live to get away from there. I found out afterwards that Captain Alexander had protested when they sent me to Libby, and said I was too old and sick, and that he would keep me in the Castle till I could be exchanged, and then put me on the boat, but Winder would hear nothing of it, and had me sent to Libby with the rest. The time for my release came at last. With others I was sent to City Point, where we were put on a boat and taken to Fortress Monroe and exchanged, after which I was not long in getting home.

One more little incident will end my story. Bullock, the steward who had been so kind to me, was taken prisoner. I wrote to some one at Washington about how kindly he had treated me and others, but before my letter arrived, he was put on the exchange list and sent south. He got a thirty days' furlough, and after visiting his family, made his way into our lines and showed himself with a white flag. He got the soldiers to give him a certificate that he had surrendered voluntarily, so that he would not again be sent back. He wrote to me and I went to Judge Morris for advice. He wrote out a statement of the facts I gave him, and sent it to Postmaster General Dennison, who secured his release, gave him a pass and sent him to Ohio. He hunted me up, and remained with me till the close of the war, when he returned to his family.

CAPTAIN R. O. KNOWLES,

Who was captured at Winchester, June 15th, 1863, was confined in various Rebel prisons before he finally found himself at Columbia, South Carolina. After a confinement of twenty days there, he and others began to lay plans for escape. How they did it and how they fared afterwards is told by the Captain in a letter from him to Captain A. B. Frame, under the date of Deland, Florida, September 10th, 1882. We let the Captain tell the story himself:

"I escaped from Columbia Rebel Prison October 26th, 1864. After being there about twenty days we began to watch for a chance to escape. We finally approached a guard whom we found willing to aid us in case some greenbacks were forthcoming. We soon arranged with him to let three or four of us pass his post the next time he came on duty, which was the 26th of October. We had prepared for it by cooking every thing we could find and making maps of the route we would take.

The night arriving, we went to the spot our man was to occupy, about nine o'clock in the evening. There were three other Ohio officers besides myself, and two Wisconsin officers in our crowd, all of whom had bribed the same guard. We found our man after some difficulty. I walked up to the guard, and he let me pass. One of the others officers had the greenbacks. I called to the other officers to come on, when a guard close by fired his gun. I jumped pretty high at this and ran as fast as I could; the other officers started with me. The guards fired six or seven shots at us, and of course alarmed everybody. We ran as hard as we could, falling several times over stumps and into holes. Two officers were ahead of me, they thinking I was a Johnny, ran for dear life. After eighteen months of captivity, you may well imagine that we ran well. We soon got into a swamp, with mud and water up to our knees. Getting out of this after awhile, we took our planned route, as near as we could guess. After about an hour, we came near a house, where we were seen by some persons who started after us with some dogs. We took the back track for about two hundred yards, when we climbed a fence and took across a field, the dogs keeping on our old tracks, and passing where we crossed the fence. We heard their barking all night. Striking a piece of woods, we lay by all the rest of the night and next day. When night came again, we started on our journey, keeping our eye on the North Star. Some time in the night we struck a road, and concluded to follow it, although it was not our direct course. When morning came, we took to the woods, and lay by all day, taking turns in keeping watch. This we did every day and night. I think it was our third night and about three o'clock in the morning, that I gave out, and lay down by the roadside, saying I could go no further. I was sick and weak, and had been so for some days past. We were out of provisions, hungry and exhausted, and something had to be done, so we dragged ourselves into the edge of a woods, and watched for a colored man to pass. During the day we hailed one, who, after seeing our conditions and leaning who we were, left us to return at dark in company with his wife, with a good supply of victuals. They put us on the right road and gave us directions for several days travel, telling us, at the same time, that whenever we got out of provisions, to let the 'cullud people know it.' After this if we missed our way or got out of provisions, we applied to the Negroes, who never failed to help us or to be true to us. We had many narrow escapes from capture, often meeting parties on the roads, but fortunately were never molested. After travelling together nearly across North Carolina, our party separated. I going in a squad by myself. The next night I went to a house, and telling the man who I was, he gave me half a loaf of corn bread and started me on the right way over the mountains. That night I waded a wide, cold river. I was two nights crossing the mountains into Tennessee. I called at a house about two o'clock in the morning of the second day, and asked an old lady the way. She told me, but had to tell me too, what a pity it was to send so many souls to Hell in this war. She was firmly of the conviction that there was where all engaged in it were going. After getting into East Tennessee, I traveled in the day time, and after twenty-one days, or rather nights, I reached Knoxville, and was within the Union lines once more, thank God! I tell you I was never happier in my life! I went to a paymaster there, who paid me two months' pay, and in a few days I was at home, sweet home in Coolville."

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER COCHRAN,

Who was so badly wounded at Bunker Hill, June 13th, 1863, and there made a prisoner, often spoke of the great kindness of J. B. T. Reed, of Winchester, a brother Mason. This man deserved the gratitude of every

Union soldier for his kindness to them when in hospital and prisoners. When Captain Cochran was well enough to move, Mr. Reed secured his escape.

JOSEPH PURKEY,
First Sergeant, Company H.,

Was captured at Winchester, June 14th, 1863, and escaped to the Union lines at New Creek, Virginia, June 30th, 1863. He was afterwards severely wounded at Piedmont, Virginia, and promoted to Second and First Lieutenant.

CORPORAL HARRISON COCHRANE,
Corporal of Company E.,

Was severely wounded in the right foot at Piedmont, Virginia, June 5th, 1864, and taken prisoner at Staunton upon our army advancing from that place. He was taken to Andersonville, Georgia. He escaped from there January 27th, 1865, and reached Cedar Keys, Florida, April 27th, 1865, being just three months a wanderer within the rebel lines. During all this time he never saw the face of a white man, but was taken care of and guided by colored people. An account of his experience would be exceedingly interesting, but we have been unable to obtain it.

LIEUTENANT JOHN S. HEALD,

Who was wounded, as all thought fatally, through the body, at Piedmont, and captured at Staunton the same time with Corporal Chchrane, had kindly given me some of his experience, from which I make liberal quotations. Lieutenant Heald says: "The next day after our troops left Staunton for Lynchburg, we who were left there in hospital were prisoners under the rebel, Colonel Lee. He promised us that as soon as we could be moved we would be sent through the lines to our own friends. I occupied a cot from which I could see the operating table and the spice of life with me for several days was to watch the process of amputating legs and arms, which would in itself, be quite a history, had I the heart to write it. On the 28th of June, orders were given for all who were able to get into line to go to our own hospitals, to do so. I was on hand, but was told that the trip would be likely to kill me, and that I couldn't go; but my anxiety to get within our lines was so great, that I begged to go and they let me. We were marched four miles out of town to where the railroad had not been torn up. Here sixty-four wounded men were put into each box-car, and the train moved on. After a day of weary plodding along and suffering, we were landed at Lynchburg. We were unloaded and marched part way through town and halted in front of what was called the Commandant's headquarters, where we were ordered to throw away the sticks with which many had helped themselves to hobble along. Then they tried to form us in ranks. I, with others, could not stand without help. Explanations were of no avail, and the brutes in charge took clubs and went along the line, beating, kicking and calling us 'd____d lousy Yanks,' and pushing us here and there. All this time these ruffians were cheered by the citizens. We were finally put into a small, dirty slave pen in the rear of headquarters, for the night, and each given a small piece of bread and fat pork. As mean as the diet was, we ate it with a relish, for we were very hungry. That was a hard night for most of us. Next morning we were taken a short distance out of town and placed in a deep ravine, where we were kept for two days with a strong guard around us. It was very warm weather, but we had access to a small stream of water, which was a great relief to us in washing and dressing our wounds. I can never forget Edward Yockey and James Preshaw, of my company, who, though suffering from wounds themselves, were so kind to me. On July 1st, all who could walk were placed in ranks again, along with about 1200 able bodied men, recently captured from our armies, and we were started on the march for Danville, Virginia, distant seventy or eighty miles. The suffering endured on this march by the wounded it is impossible to describe. A great many died on the way from sun-stroke and exhaustion. Not as much as one day's rations was issued to us on the whole trip, and we suffered terribly for water to drink and to dress our wounds with. As we passed along the road, old men and boys would come out with shot guns, and go a certain distance as guards when they would be relieved by others. All believed that General Lee was going to 'take Pennsylvania.' 'Let's see, that's in Maryland,

isn't it?' inquired an old citizen one day. We begged, time and again, to rest, and for water to drink and to bathe our wounds, but the only answer we got was, 'Keep up, you d____d Yanks, or I'll run my sword through you and leave you by the roadside for the hogs to eat.' We arrived at Danville about sun down, the fourth day, and were quartered in the upper stories of two ware houses. The floors were covered with filth and vermin. About ten o'clock they distributed rations, consisting only of corn bread. The stock provided for us went only about two-thirds around. I was in the last third and got nothing. It was the first time in my life that I was brought to tears from hunger. Next morning we received rations for two days, most of which was eaten by some of us for breakfast. We inquired if there was not some mistake, as there was not enough left for another meal. Our answer was, 'No, that's all that was intended for you, and it is better than you deserve.' In the morning we were loaded, sixty or seventy in box stock cars, for Andersonville, to be bumped and jolted for four days in the most inhuman manner, over terrible roads. I cannot describe our sufferings from hunger, thirst and every ill-treatment that could be heaped upon us. Among the many inhuman wretches who had charge of us, there were a few who were as kind to us as they dare be. Some of our guards fairly shuddered at the cruel way in which we were treated, but they were powerless to relieve our suffering. For miles the very bad condition of the railroad prevented us going faster than a man could walk, but every time a stop or a start was made, it was done with such bumps and jerks as to almost kill the sore and wounded men on the train; the seeming purpose being to punish us as much as possible. A number died on the way in the cars. At places we stopped, our men traded their shoes, knives, combs and blouses for something to eat. I think it was at Charlotte, North Carolina, that we had information that we were to remain on the side track for about two hours. I had almost given up being able to live through the journey. I beckoned a Lieutenant to the car door, and showing him my wound as politely as I knew how, asked to be let out on the ground for a short time. He picked up a stick, and striking me with it, told me to 'get back there, or I'll wound you a d____d sight worse than you are.' The blow he gave me, which was on the head, rendered me insensible for awhile. One of the guards finally, for a two dollar confederate note, obtained me a cup of water and a sweet potato. I learned the name of the officer who struck me, and tried to remember it, but have long since forgotten it. Many of our men had similar experiences of cruel treatment. On the 10th of July, all but the dead and dying were marched into Andersonville, and past the demon Wirz' headquarters. We were then divided into detachments of 270, and grouped into squads of ninety. One of our men who stepped from ranks to place a blouse under a dying man's head, was struck by an officer with his sword, and sent reeling back into ranks. Finally we were started off for the south gate of the stockade, which resembled butchers driving hogs into the slaughter pens more than anything else. This was the most awful hell-hole ever seen on earth. Men were not only starved to death, but they were inhumanly shot down and tortured to death in a hundred untold ways. Here were once strong men in every stage of idiocy and imbecility, the result of cruelty, the most barbarous ever witnessed. When weak, sickly men would vomit up the filthy food furnished them; others would struggle with each other to get and eat it, and even quarrel over it. The villain Wirz deserved not only one, but a thousand deaths. He was a cruel monster, such as only could be bred in the red fires of that hellish rebellion. Andersonville under his charge was worse than any picture ever yet written of hell. But the horrors of Andersonville, as often as they have been described, have never been half told, because no human power can do it. About the middle of September, Yockey and myself were taken out of the pen, as we were told, for exchange, but instead were sent off to Florence, Alabama. Preshaw was sick and soon after died. (Preshaw died November 3d, 1864, at Andersonville, and is buried there in grave No. 11779). Barrett, the keeper at Florence, we found to be as great a brute as Wirz. Indeed, the results of neglect and cruelty were here seen in more horrible shapes than at Andersonville. Men's limbs rotted off with gangrene, men died by inches of starvation; fell victims to that dread disease, scurvy; great numbers were insane from hardship, privation, exposure and starvation. Seasoned and hardened soldiers wandered restlessly about the camp in despair, and utterly, hopelessly insane from melancholy and privation. The sight was terribly distressing and painful. The guards were anxious, and sought excuses to shoot down men at the 'dead line,' and many men in their desperation, rushed upon death and begged to be shot as a relief from their unendurable misery. Escaping prisoners were chased by blood-hounds. The 'stockade' at Florence was not completed, and a strong guard was placed around the field in which the prisoners were placed. Soon after our arrival, between four and five hundred prisoners made their escape in open daylight, by breaking through the guard; some were killed, others wounded, others were recaptured, but a great many made their escape and reached our lines at different points. A soldier of an Illinois regiment, one from a Maine regiment, and myself had got about seventeen miles from Florence, when we were overtaken by blood-hounds in the night, and we climbed trees. Horsemen came up to the hounds very soon and ordered us down. We came down, and contrary to

our expectations, they treated us kindly. We spent most of the next day, Sunday, in the jail at Darlington, South Carolina, with about fifteen others who had been re-captured. Men, women and children came to see us. Some kind Samaritans, pitying our conditions, brought us provisions, and we really had a feast. After getting a good meal and washing up well, we started back for Florence, which we reached that night. We expected rough treatment for our attempt to escape, but to our surprise, we received no punishment. About the middle of December we were told that the sick would that day be taken out for exchange. I managed to be pretty sick, and went out, leaving my trusty friend Yockey behind, who could not even play sick, and so had to remain for several weeks longer. We were taken to Charleston and delivered aboard our transports, and, I think, on the 17th of December, landed at Annapolis, Md. I would like to describe our feelings and actions on the first getting sight of the old flag, but I have not the power to do it. Oh, how we cheered, yelled and cried! At Annapolis we were again in God's country, and were washed, clothed, fed, and taken the kindest possible care of. I spent Christmas at my home in Malaga, Ohio, and soon after went to Columbus to await exchange, which occurred the latter part of February, 1865. I rejoined my regiment near Appomattox in time to see the surrender, and afterwards went with it to Lynchburg, and looked for that rebel commander of the post and some of the citizens who cruelly cheered when the brutes beat and insulted us there, but they were all 'out of town.'"

HORACE McNEIL,
Of Company B,

Was captured at Lynchburg, Virginia, July 18, 1864, and was confined at Andersonville, Georgia, and Blackshire, Georgia; escaped from the latter place, December 14, 1864, and reached the coast and was rescued by a blockading ship, December 18, 1864. I have been unable to obtain the particulars of his escape.

LIEUTENANT MANNING,

Was a prisoner from June 14, 1863, to March 5, 1865, and during this time made the tour of nearly all the rebel prison pens of the South. But he returned in time to witness the final surrender at Appomattox.

LIEUTENANT SIBLEY

Remained a prisoner from June 15, 1863, to December 10, 1864, when he was exchanged at Charleston Harbor. In response to my request for his experience as a prisoner of war, he sends me an article published in the Cleveland Herald, June 2, 1881. It is so important, and at the same time develops so interesting and startling a feature of his prison life, that I give it here entire. It is befitting, also, that so important a fact as it relates be placed in some more enduring form than in the files of a newspaper, and as it so nearly concerned several of our own officers, at the time confined in Libby Prison, it is entirely appropriate that it appear in the history of the regiment:

"When all the unpublished records of the war are brought forth to the light of day, a much worse showing will be made for the slave-driving prosecutors of the secession war than even now is thought possible. We know of some of the horrors of Andersonville and Libby prisons, but those who could have told the worst were not permitted to speak. They were "dismissed" from their horrible places of confinement even as the Nihilists of to-day dismiss their recreant members...through the gateway of death. Nothing more fully demonstrates the condition of a people than the treatment they bestow upon helpless prisoners of war. The North, with its fuller and better civilization and broader culture, cared for the Southern prisoners as though they were brothers in captivity. In return, the barbarous Southerners devised all the horrors of an inquisition, and placed the volunteers of the Northern army into the midst of them. Hunger and starvation were hastened on in their ghastly work by the lack of proper clothing and constant exposure to a climate which was new to the victims. Men were shot and bayoneted for trivial offences, and there was a constant failure to exchange at the proper time. In short, the Southern heart, brutalized by generations of human slavery, contemplated, with a coolness that we can scarcely understand, the proposition of starving to death

thousands of regular prisoners of war. Much of this has already been known, and the apologists of this inhumanity have urged that it was done by irresponsible parties largely, and by those who were far removed from the seat of the secession Government. This cannot be said of the atrocities of Libby prison, which were enacted right in the shadow of the secession capital, and there is little doubt but the soured old man, who should have been hanged at the close of the war, but has lived and now has the effrontery to write his recollections of the time and justify in a dull dogged way the actions for which he should have been executed, was the man who planned them.

But of all that has been said, it would seem to me that the manuscript given below, and published now for the first time, betrays the most damnable and cold-blooded plan of all. It was nothing less than a plan to blow up the prison in case of a contingency by which the prisoners were likely to escape or by which they might be rescued by their friends.

I have been permitted to copy this from a manuscript in possession of H. L. Sibley, Esq., a prominent attorney of the city, who was a lieutenant in company B, 116th O. V. I. and was confined in Libby prison at the time this manuscript was written, and himself made a copy of it from the manuscript of Colonel Nichols, of Connecticut, the author. The paper was written and the copy made, of course, in Libby prison:

(copy)
"LIBBY PRISON, RICHMOND, VA.,
FRIDAY, March 4th, 1864.

"This morning the rebel sergeant called me to the office of Major Turner. There I met Dr. William A. Smith, president of Randolph Macon College. Under a mistaken idea as to who he was. I had asked his assistance in procuring for me a special exchange. I knew by the papers that he was a man of large influence...a champion upon the rostrum of the Confederate cause. I thought it was another Smith...a graduate of the Wesleyan University of Connecticut, a man of the same college lodge as myself, and though personally unknown to me, I felt justified in addressing him. Last _____ he called, apologizing for delaying so long to see me, saying it was the first time he had visited the city since receiving my note. I perceived I had mistaken the man, and duly excused my error. But he seemed rather pleased to meet me, although a stranger, and we conversed about noted Methodists of the North, with whom we were both acquainted. He was an old man, seventy-five, perhaps, and had been president of Macon College seventeen years. He spoke of the divisions of the M. E. church, of Dr. Olin, the first president of R. and M. College, and various other topics. I stated why I was desirous of an exchange, and he thought without a doubt he could bring it about, and would be pleased to do so. He referred to the war, its causes, its purposes, etc., eulogizing Southern bravery, determination, and declaring that a conquest would not bring peace, that he himself 'would never live again under the common flag.' 'Old as I am,' said he, 'and a cripple, I will leave forever my native land.' The South would, however, never yield. He left, after various incidental remarks having passed between us, saying he would write to me, or call and see me soon.

"This evening at sunset he sent for me. Had seen, in a long interview, Judge Ould, and learned from him that through the *cartel*, and that alone, would he consent to make exchanges. They only deferred a general exchange, and if our Government wanted me, or all, it could have us by living up to its sworn treaty, as by the *cartel*, and not otherwise.

"Various remarks passed between us. I said I thought that to be the Judge's idea, but still he had varied the rule in some instances, and thought he continued to occasionally. He had urged my case strongly, he said, and was sorry he could not obtain my release. I thanked him warmly, for I felt that he had acted kindly in so interesting himself in a stranger. I perceived that he desired to talk upon general matters, and he even said that Judge Ould requested him to say to me that the officers here owed it to themselves that they express some dissent to the action of the United States Government in thus leaving us here, by violating its own pledges in the *cartel*, which stipulated for a paroling and exchanging of all, or words to that effect. The doctor thought I ought to write to my Government, and that the officers generally should, in their letters to their friends, express their disappointment at such a course and such neglect. He also said that the late *raid* had been characterized by much brutality and atrocity...private property destroyed and general plundering permitted. That on the body of Colonel Dahlgren were found instructions from our

Government, saying that three columns were to advance upon the city, which was to be taken, plundered, sacked and burnt, the prisoners rescued and the place abandoned. Accordingly, he said, the authorities (Mr. Davis and Cabinet.) were now in session, deliberating on the course to be taken in view of this state of affairs; this was upon private rights, so ruthless and so contrary to legal warfare. He said, moreover...and here I make a record of it, that I may make no mistake hereafter through lack of memory...*that the prison was to be undermined, and powder placed beneath, so that in case of an attempt that was likely to be successful by an expedition thus carried on, the prisoners in Libby would be blown to atoms.* This he stated as though he had been asked to, that the prisoners, through me, might know how dangerous would be an effort on their part, or on the part of their friends, to rescue us. To all his remarks I made, as I thought, moderate but fitting replies. But to my direct question, whether or not he approved of such a resort, he made no definite answer. I asked him if any parallel in the annals of war would justify it, or to that effect. He remarked generally that only as a retaliatory measure could anything of the kind be justified. He asked me if the officers were aware of it. I told him we had sufficient evidence to believe it so, and had had for two days. But the proceeding was so horrible to think of that we rejected all evidence, and said it could not be that the authorities here would resort to a measure so murderous, and even so impolitic. I remarked that I regarded such proceeding as a high crime, not against the United States Government only, but against humanity. I told him that the officers, as a body, had shown themselves reasonable men. They had never in a single instance resorted to desperate measures, nor had they proposed to. They would respect, and had respected, a sufficient guard. Such a guard the Confederate authorities were bound to furnish, and not a guard sufficient only holding *intersorum* certain destruction *en masse*, as well in case our friends were able to release us, as in case we rise up ourselves for our liberty. In any event I pronounced it unjustifiable, barbarous and murderous. The old gentleman was full of anxiety, and expressed what I supposed to be the fact, that this raid had greatly exasperated the people. He thought we might all soon leave for a more interior place of confinement. He shuddered to forecast the probabilities of severe measures that would yet be necessary; said Mr. Davis held back public sentiment, for he was a wise and God-fearing man...so unlike President Lincoln, who had violated the Constitution, and diverted the war from its originally proposed objects, etc., etc.; said that Mr. Davis was a praying man. I asked him if he did not think it a significant circumstance that in the last Presidential election not a word did the bitterest opponent utter against the honesty and general character of Mr. Lincoln.

“Other remarks were passed between us. But mainly I write this to put freshly on record what no one of these thousand officers but myself knows...that we are moving, sleeping, living over a torpedo, a magazine ...which is designed to ‘blow them to atoms,’ to use Dr. Smith’s own words.

“MONROE NICHOLS,
Lieut. Col. 18th Conn. V. I.”

Note,---I copied the original of the above in Libby Prison the day following. Colonel N. was then my messmate, and read it to me immediately it was written by him. I sat by him as he wrote, seeing that something of importance was in hand.

HIRAM L. SIBLEY,
Lieut. Co. “B,” 116th O. V. I.

Monday morning, March 7th, 1864, the Richmond Daily Enquirer of that date had the following editorial remarks, viz:

“LIBBY PRISON,---The commandant of this prison, we learn, has made very satisfactory arrangements to secure the Yankee officers now under his charge, in case of a successful inroad into Richmond by the Yankee raiders. The nature of these arrangements need not be mentioned.”

The following is an extract from a work entitled “A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary at the Confederate States Capital, by J. B. Jones, clerk in the War Department of the Confederate States Government, author of ‘Wild Western Scenes,’ etc., etc.” Published by J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1866. Under date of “March 2d, 1864,” on page 164 the Diary says:

“Last night, when it was supposed probable that the prisoners of war at the Libby might make an attempt to break out, General Winder ordered that a large amount of powder *be placed under the building*, with instructions to *blow them up* if the attempt were made. He was persuaded, however, to consult the Secretary of War first, and get his approbation. The Secretary would give no such order, but said the *prisoners must not be permitted to escape under any circumstances, which was considered sanction enough*. Captain _____ obtained an order for, and procured several hundred pounds of powder, which were *placed in readiness*. Whether the prisoners were advised of this, I know not.”

What Colonel Nichols refers to in his statement to Dr. Smith, that the prisoners had evidence of this “gunpowder plot,” is the hints and finally the open assertions of the colored men who “policed” our quarters. They were our friends, and were evidently horrified at the thought of what had been done. In hasty sentences, given when not watched by the rebel who had them in charge, they had, for a couple of days before Colonel Nichols saw Dr. Smith in the conversation he reports, given us warning, at first vaguely, as of some terrible impending calamity, and at last the *fact* that powder was under the prison to blow us up.

HIRAM L. SIBLEY.

In a private note to your correspondent Mr. Sibley says: “I hand you a copy of the document you desire, and also an extract from a book published by an ex-rebel (Jones) since the war, corroborating all that Colonel Nichols states as to the atrocious schemes to ‘blow us to atoms,’ rather than suffer our rescue.

“The whole affair comes very vividly to my memory in going over the paper. Besides, the night following, we could at times hear the boom of cannon which told that the raiders were in the vicinity of Richmond, and it they got in, I with the three others who alone knew the facts which Dr. Smith gave Colonel N. (being Generals Neal Dow and Scammouth, *four*) expected the springing of the mine. A more uneasy night I never yet have passed.

“Colonel N., after reading the paper to me, went to these two Generals, they being the only general officers then in prison, and privately read the statement to them, asking their judgment as to keeping it secret, or letting the prisoners generally know the facts. The former was deemed the wiser course, lest in a frenzy the attempt be made by some to force the guard, and we all thereby become involved in destruction by setting off the mine.

“Colonel Nichols was a Christian scholar and gentleman. He was educated at the Wesleyan University of Middletown, Conn. Later he was specially exchanged, but not until he had contracted a disease from which he died in 1867, I believe. No nobler or truer man perished from the wounds or hardships of the war.

“I was a lieutenant in Company ‘B’ 116th O. V. I. Resigned the County Common Pleas clerk’s office, in Meigs County, O., to go into service, under the second call for 300,000 men in 1862. Was captured with part of General R. H. Milroy’s command, near Winchester, Va., June 15th, 1863, by the advance (Ewell’s corps) of Lee’s army. June 22d I went to Libby. May 7, 1864, I went out, going to Danville, Va., about a week, and thence to Moscow, Ga., where I stayed till July 30th, when I was taken to Savannah. There I was kept till September 13th, when I was carried to Charleston, S. C., and put ‘under fire’ (from our bombardment of the city) until October 5th, when I was taken to what came to be known as ‘Camp Sorghum,’ about three miles from Columbia, S. C. There I stayed until December 9th, 1864, when, as one of the “sick or wounded,” I was taken back to Charleston and the next day (the 10th) was exchanged, being a prisoner eighteen months, lacking five days.”

But what account shall we give of the poor fellows who entered the prison pens of the South, never again to come out alive? Their story of prison life is briefly told in their death! The rolls tell the end of ??? and many a gallant boy and man who “died at Andersonville,” “died at Salsbury,” and so on. No pen can ever print black enough the horrible treatment given our prisoners by rebel prisonkeepers. Humanity through all time will shudder at the story of the wrongs they inflicted upon the men who, through the fortunes of war, fell into their hands.

In his report to the War Department, dated October 31, 1865, on the findings of the court which tried the inhuman monster Wirz, Judge Advocate General Holt says:

“Language fails in an attempt to denounce even in faint terms the _____ for the destruction and death by _____ ingenious processes, of helpless prisoners _____ their hands, which this _____ deliberately entered upon, and, as far as time permitted, accomplished by the rebel authorities and their brutal underlings at Andersonville prison. Criminal history presents no parallel to this monstrous conspiracy, and from the whole catalogue of infamous devices within reach of human hands, a system for the murder of men more revolting in its details could not have been planned. Upon the heads of those named by the court in its findings, the guilt of this immeasurable crime is fixed, a guilt so fearfully black and horrible that the civilized world must be appalled by the spectacle.”

* * * * *

“The annals of our race present nowhere and at no time a darker field of crime than that of Andersonville, and it is fortunate for the interests, alike of public justice and of historic truth, that from this field the veil has been so faithfully and so completely lifted. All the horrors of this pandemonium of the rebellion are laid bare to us in the broad, steady light of the testimony of some 150 witnesses, who spoke what they had seen and heard and suffered, and whose evidence, given under oath and subjected to cross-examination, and to every other test which human experience has devised for the ascertainment of truth, must be accepted as affording and immovable foundation for the sentence pronounced.”

“The proof under the second charge shows that some of our soldiers, for mere attempts to escape from their oppressors, were given to ferocious dogs to be torn in pieces; that others were confined in stocks and chains till life yielded to the torture, and that others were wantonly shot down at Wirz’s bidding or by his own hand. Here in the presence of these pitiless murders of unarmed and helpless men, so distinctly alleged and proved, justice might well claim the prisoner’s life. There remain, however, to be contemplated, crimes yet more revolting, for which he and his co-conspirators must be held responsible. The Andersonville prison records (made exhibits in this case) contain a roster of over thirteen thousand (13,000) dead, buried naked, maimed and putrid, in one vast sepulchre. Of these, a surgeon of the rebel army who was on duty at this prison, testifies that at least three-fourths died of the treatment inflicted on them while in confinement, and a surgeon of our own army who was a prisoner there, states that four-fifths died from this cause. Under this proof, which has not been assailed, nearly 10,000, if not more of these deaths must be charged directly to the account of Wirz and his associates. This widespread sacrifice of life was not made suddenly or under the influence of wild, ungovernable passion, but was accomplished slowly and deliberately, by packing upwards of 30,000 men, like cattle, into a fetid pen, a mere cesspool, there to die for need of air to breathe; for want of ground on which to lie; from lack of shelter from sun and rain, and from the slow, agonizing process of starvation; when air and space and shelter and food were all within the ready gift of their tormentors. This work of death seems to have been a saturnalia of enjoyment for the prisoner, who, among these savage orgies evidenced such exultation, and mingled with them such nameless blasphemy and ribald jests, as at times to exhibit him rather as a demon than a man. It was his continual boast that by these barbarities he was destroying more Union soldiers than rebel generals were butchering on the battle-field. He claimed to be doing the work of the rebellion, and faithfully, in all his murderous cruelty and baseness, did he represent its spirit. It is by looking upon the cemeteries which have been filled from Libby, Belle Isle, Salisbury, Florence and Andersonville, and other rebel prisons, and recalling the prolonged sufferings of the patriots who are sleeping there, that we can best understand the inner and real life of the rebellion, and the hellish criminality and brutality of the traitors who maintained it. For such crimes human power is absolutely impotent to enforce any adequate atonement.”

This is the horrible story of Andersonville, one of the many hellish prison pens of the South, while of those less notorious prisons, such as Libby, Belle Isle, Cahawha, Blackshire, Millen, Tyler, Florence, Salisbury, Macon and Charleston, almost nothing is known, save the reports given by those escaping from them with their lives. These reports make them but a little more humane than Andersonville.

We have endeavored to obtain a full list of our men who died in rebel prisons. We have succeeded in making it more complete than we dared to hope, and here give the result of our efforts. It will be a consolation, though a sad one, to many, to know where lie the remains of their dead hero friends. The following list also contains the burial places of many who were killed in battle, many who died of wounds and of disease. I have taken great pains to make it as complete and accurate as possible, yet there may be some errors in it, and some names may be omitted which ought to be included in it. But it is as correct as I could make it after a great deal of care and searching of records, together with the kind assistance of the Quartermaster General of the Army and the Adjutant General of Ohio.

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