



PLAIN LIVING AT JOHNSON'S ISLAND.

DESCRIBED BY A CONFEDERATE OFFICER.



IN giving my experience as a prisoner of war for eighteen months, sixteen of which were spent in the military prison on Johnson's Island, in Lake Erie, I shall confine myself strictly to an individual experience, or to such events as came under my immediate observation. As I kept no diary during my imprisonment, I must necessarily trust entirely to my memory, giving such facts as are indelibly impressed there and which are susceptible of proof. When the least doubt as to the correctness of a statement has arisen in my mind I have omitted it entirely. I shall endeavor to tell my story fairly and truthfully, without comment or criticism, assisted by the feeling that a quarter of a century has removed all vestige of bitterness.

I enlisted from St. Helena Parish, Louisiana, in a company commanded by Captain James H. Wingfield, which, on its arrival in New Orleans, was assigned to the 4th Louisiana Regiment, commanded by Colonel Henry W. Allen, afterward brigadier-general, and later governor of Louisiana. He died self-exiled in the city of Mexico. During the first year of service our regiment was distributed along the Mississippi Sound, and we despaired of active participation, fearing that the war would close before we could contribute our share towards a successful result; but this idea was dispelled at Shiloh. There

were several firmly rooted ideas rudely shaken up before we got through.

From Shiloh to Vicksburg, thence with Breckinridge to Baton Rouge, it was in May, 1863, that I found myself as lieutenant in the 9th Louisiana Battalion doing duty in the trenches at Port Hudson.

For nearly two months we successfully resisted all efforts of the Federal troops to effect an entrance. But the end was near. Short rations and constant and fatiguing duty in the trenches were doing their work, and the fall of Vicksburg simply hastened the inevitable. We were constantly on duty, and our food was neither savory nor plentiful. And right here I wish to be placed on record by stating that the patient mule as an edible is a pronounced failure, and no addition even to an army bill of fare.

I think that it was on the morning of July 7 that an unusual commotion in the enemy's camp excited our curiosity and sharpened our vigilance. Shouting, yelling, band-playing, and the wildest hurrahs showed that good news had come to them, which, if true, meant the reverse to us. It was good news,—too good to keep,—and we soon learned that Vicksburg had fallen. There was not a man in camp that did not realize the meaning of this, and we were anxious to know what surrender meant for us.

When the white flags went up on the works the space between the lines was soon filled by the men from both armies, and "Yanks" and "Rebs" fraternized in so friendly and amicable a spirit that it required some little effort to realize that these men had, only the day previous, been shooting at one another on purpose.

They now became our hosts, and invitations to supper were freely extended by the "Boys in Blue" and as freely accepted by the "Boys in Rags." I do not think that a single invitation was declined. I did full justice to the first "square meal" that had fallen to my lot in many days. They were invited into our lines with many courteous inquiries as to why they had not come over sooner, with the equally courteous reply that they had started to do so on several occasions.

In a day or two the Union forces took formal possession of the place, and as, drawn up in line, we faced each other, the difference in the personal appearance of the men was strongly marked, and most decidedly in favor of the "Yanks." As our men were not dressed with any degree of uniformity, they presented none of the pomp of war in their appearance, no two being dressed exactly alike, and strongly suggesting the nursery-rhyme beggars that caused the dogs to bark, "for some were

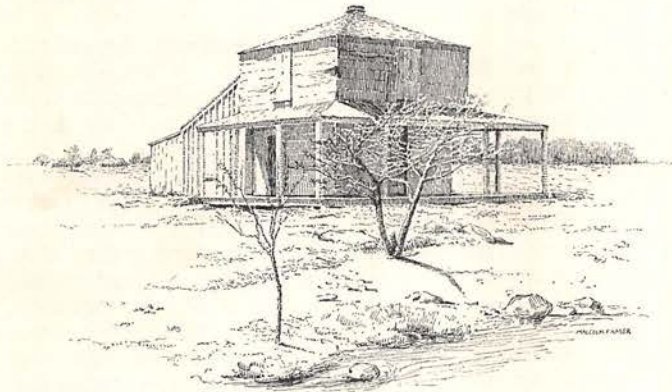
stances. Besides, we felt that we had well earned a short vacation and were entitled to some rest and recreation after our arduous labors.

During the latter part of the siege I was in the habit of visiting the hospital where some members of my company lay wounded or sick, and carried with me some of the corn beer brewed in the camp and much relished by the convalescents. On a cot near one of these lay a young Union soldier, badly wounded in the hip. He was a mere boy and much too young to follow the fortunes of an army. I became interested in the little fellow; he soon drew his rations of beer with the rest, and we became fast friends. Standing on the transport which was to convey us to New Orleans, a Federal officer mentioned that a Union soldier wished to see me in the cabin. Going to him I found my little hospital friend, and at his request I assisted in removing him from a stretcher to his berth. Asking me to sit with him a while, he told me that in all probability we

would be sent North, and should I at any time find myself free, either by escape or by parole, by all means to make my way to his home and be assured of any help he or his could give me. He gave me his address, and at the time I thought but little of the matter. But many times before I reached Dixie this slighted invitation weighed as heavy as a crime, for the opportunity came later on and I let it pass.

On our arrival in New Orleans we were assigned quarters in different parts of the city; the larger portion,

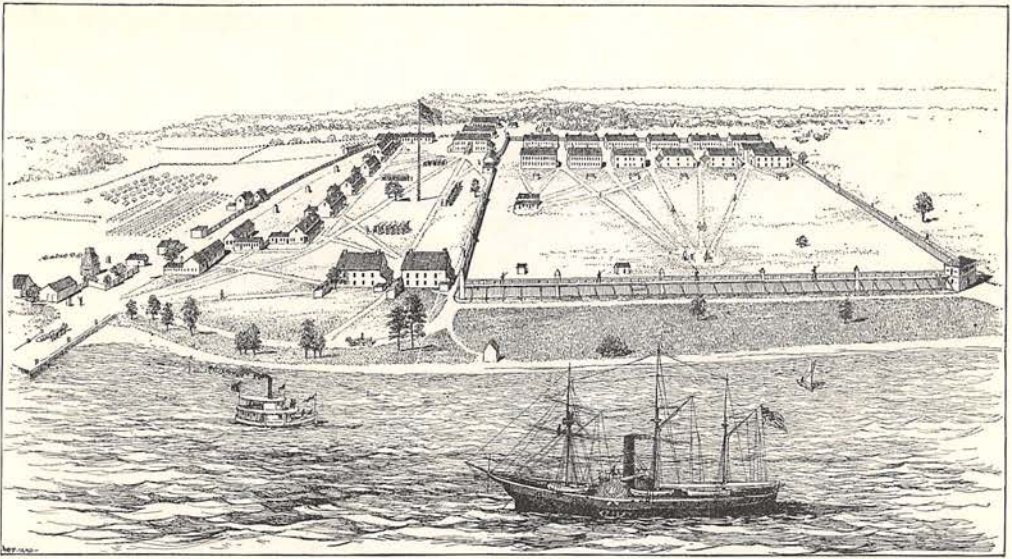
myself among the number, being quartered in the custom-house building, where our treatment, rations, and bestowal were all that could be desired. We shook off the mud of the trenches with the clothes that held it, and, thanks to our friends in the city, were well clad, and dainty food was the order of the day. If such was to be the existence of a prisoner of war, it seemed strange that whole armies did not allow themselves to be captured. Visitors were admitted to the reception room, and giving the name of the officer they wished to see, he was immediately sent for. No restrictions nor limit seemed to be placed on the number or value of the presents given us, and even the confinement was broken by frequent leaves of absence from the building. Visits were paid in the city, though we never remained out all night unless "chaperoned" by some Federal officer, and it was pleasant asso-



ONCE A BLOCKHOUSE. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1890.)

in rags and some in tags"; but the velvet gowns were conspicuous by their absence. In common with many others who followed the fortunes of the Confederacy, it has been my fate at times to find my wardrobe in a most unsatisfactory condition; so much so that on several occasions, prompted by my innate modesty, I have backed up against some friendly fence or wall whenever a lady came in sight.

The terms of surrender paroled the non-commissioned officers and the privates. The officers were allowed to retain their side-arms and were to be held as prisoners of war. This was a gloomy outlook, but we were much relieved by the assurance that an early exchange was only a degree or so removed from a certainty—not too early, you know, but early. We philosophically accepted the situation, which, as there was no other course left open, was much the best thing to do under the circum-



VIEW OF THE JOHNSON'S ISLAND PRISON.

(FROM A LITHOGRAPH AFTER A WAR-TIME SKETCH MADE BY EDWARD GOULD, COMPANY B, 128TH OHIO.)

In the foreground is the United States guard steamer *Michigan*. The long paths in the inclosure lead from two pumps to the prison blocks.

ciation with some of these that opened our eyes to the fact that, when not engaged in trying to kill you, a Yankee was a first-rate fellow. You see, we knew so little of each other before the war.

So pleasant were our surroundings, and so changed our mode of life, as compared with the discomforts of camp and trench, that we rather hoped that the exchange might be delayed yet a little longer and leave us in our fools' paradise. I do not think our wishes carried any weight in the matter, but we had our will — the exchange was delayed.

We had been occupants of the custom-house about two months when we were informed that we were to be sent North for exchange. By this time most of us were in full citizen's regalia, and uniforms were the exception. Side-arms were disposed of, — few carrying them North, — being distributed as souvenirs, or left for safe keeping, and in some instances given

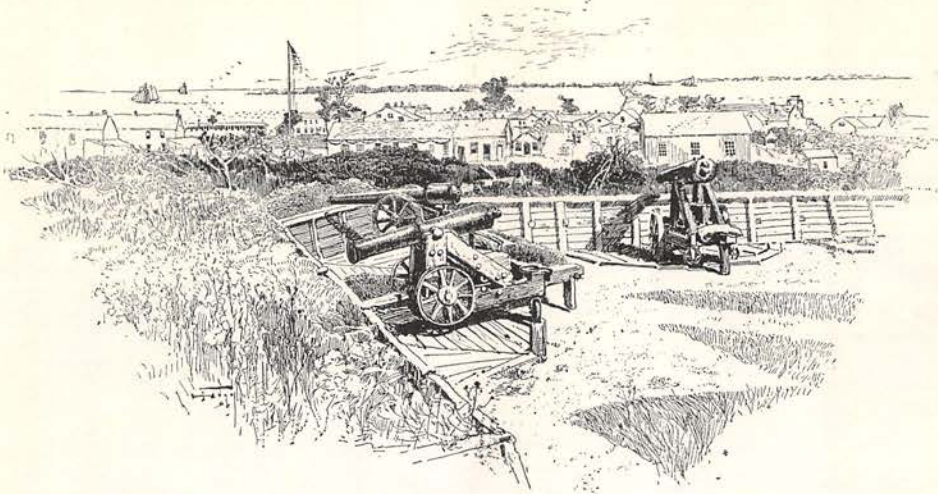
as presents to Federal officers. Preparations were made for departure, adieus exchanged, and in some cases simply "*au revoir*" — as we expected to return by way of New Orleans; and one day about the middle of September some three hundred well-dressed Confederates took passage on the steamship *Evening Star*, bound for New York City, as different outwardly from the "Rebs" who left Port Hudson as the butterfly from the grub. Many, many times in the near future, how we missed the grub days and wished them back again.

Nothing of importance occurred on the voyage save a seven days' fight with seasickness. We found waiting our arrival two lines of guards extending from the gangway; and after an hour or two I started ashore, — certainly not expecting that I would be allowed to pass beyond the limits, — with no other desire than to be on shore once more. I most certainly did not dream of escape. As I passed quietly along, dressed in civilian garb, I was roughly ordered by a voice shod in a rich Milesian brogue to "Get out of that"; the owner of the voice stepping aside at the same time to allow me to pass. I could scarcely think the man in earnest and looked at him to see if he meant it, and was fully convinced of his sincerity by the manner in which he emphasized his request with his bayonet. Passing to the rear, I got out of that, and walking into the streets of New York I found myself a free man. But now that I was free, of what use was my freedom? I was entirely without friends, not even an acquaintance, in a strange city. I was too well dressed to play the rôle of beggar with-



STILL A BLOCKHOUSE.

(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH MADE IN 1890.)



JOHNSON'S ISLAND PRISON, AS SEEN FROM FORT HILL.
(FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY L. S. JOHNSON, SANDUSKY, OHIO.)

out exciting suspicion, all the more that my absence would be noted. My funds were painfully limited, so much so that my last dollar deserted me at Sandusky. I had not the least idea of what the future had in store for me, and could judge nothing save by the past, which carried with it only pleasant recollections. The invitation of my little hospital friend was duly considered and dismissed. We were brought here to be exchanged. In a few weeks I would be once more in Dixie. Why escape at all? I hurried back, and had to explain that I belonged on board of the steamer before I was allowed to pass. On rejoining my comrades I mentioned the incident, and two of them tried the experiment. One reached home in safety, as I afterward learned. The fate of the other I do not know. During the long, weary months of confinement that followed I had ample leisure to curse my mistake, and, though hungry, cold, and sick, I cannot remember the time when I had not vitality enough left to improve the opportunity. Even at this late date, when thinking it over I feel that I am fairly entitled to share the reputation of "Thompson's colt." After a few days on Governor's Island we were informed as to our final destination: this we were given to understand was merely preliminary to an exchange. We were to be sent to Johnson's Island, Lake Erie.

Our route lay over the Erie Railroad, and we made the trip on parole. The guards placed at each door of our coach were for our comfort only, as we were objects of marked curiosity during the trip and would have been overrun with visitors had not admittance been refused. At the different stations we mingled freely with the people on the platform and found them, with few exceptions, courteous but inquisitive.

We were, no doubt, a disappointing lot. There was nothing in our apparel to mark the Rebel soldier, and as we mingled with the crowd surprise was freely expressed that we were not as their fancy painted us, though just what shape that fancy took I never learned. The ladies, as was the case both North and South, were intensely patriotic, and read us severe and no doubt salutary lectures on the evil of our ways, which were submissively and courteously received and duly pondered.

There was one question that you could safely wager would be asked by five out of ten, and that was, "Do you honestly think you are right?" This conundrum was offered to me so often that where time allowed, being in President Lincoln's country, I answered in President Lincoln's style by stating that it "reminded me," and told them of the couple who took their bridal trip on an ocean steamer with the usual result. As the husband would return from sundry trips to the rail of the vessel his young wife would inquire, "Reginald, darling, are you sick?" To which he at last replied, "Good heavens! Rebecca, do you think I am doing this for fun?"

Sandusky reached, just across the bay we caught the first glimpse of our future quarters, the military prison on Johnson's Island.

Up to this time we had been kindly treated in many respects—far better than we had hoped for or expected. Our intercourse with the Union soldiers so far had been confined to men who had served in the field, and was uniformly of a pleasant nature. I am sure that the men both North and South will bear me out in the assertion that as soon as your enemy captured you he became your friend as far as consistent with his duty. We were soon to learn the distinction between front and rear. In or-

der to know how to treat prisoners you should have a hand in capturing them.

Leaving the ferry, which brought us across the bay, we walked into the office, where we were registered and searched, all money being surrendered and receipted for. Its equivalent in the prison was represented by sutlers' checks, a form of currency answering all purposes until, owing to the restrictions imposed upon us, it ceased to be of service.

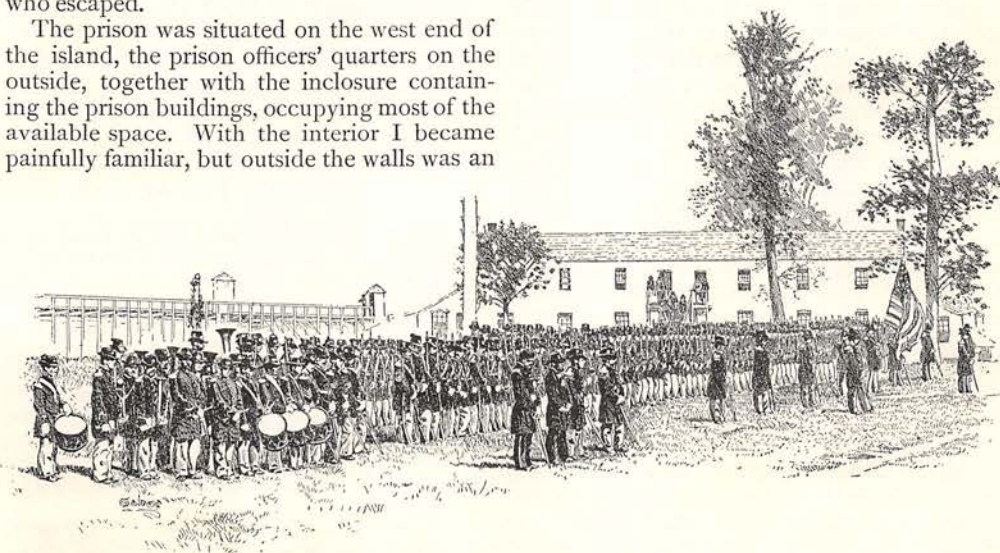
All formalities completed, the big gate swung open to admit us, and greeted on all sides with cries of "Fresh fish!" "Fresh fish!" we entered and joined our comrades "not lost, but gone before." And so sometime in October, 1863, the writer took what at that time he supposed to be but temporary quarters in a Northern prison. His stay was prolonged far beyond what he expected, and it is the story of a sixteen months' forced visit that he tells as best he can without embellishment, assuring the reader that, while some few may have fared better, his experience is that of the majority and does not represent the worst.

Curiosity has never prompted me to revisit the island, and I have been told that there now remains nothing by which it could be recognized by its former occupants. In view of this fact it may not be amiss to give a description of the place as I remember it towards the close of the war.

Johnson's Island is situated about three miles north of Sandusky, Ohio, in Lake Erie, and was the place selected by the United States Government for the custody and storage of Confederate officers, and it was well adapted to its purpose. Notwithstanding frequent attempts, I cannot remember a single instance of a prisoner who escaped.

The prison was situated on the west end of the island, the prison officers' quarters on the outside, together with the inclosure containing the prison buildings, occupying most of the available space. With the interior I became painfully familiar, but outside the walls was an

unknown country, as my outings were extremely limited as to frequency. As a matter of fact few of us went out—such as did go staid out. The buildings for the use of the prisoners were 13 in number (an unlucky number), forming two rows facing each other and separated by a street about 150 feet in width, which formed a campus or parade ground. The first winter of our stay it served as a baseball park, and was also the battlefield for snowball fights in which every private engaged was an officer. These buildings were called "blocks" and were numbered from west to east, the odd numbers being on the south side. They stood six in each row, Block 13 occupying the middle space between Nos. 11 and 12. Block 8 was in use as the prison hospital. The blocks were two stories in height, and there was no marked difference in their construction except that about four of the upper blocks were subdivided into smaller rooms which afforded greater privacy to their occupants. It seems that when the prison was first opened it was used as a mixed or general prison, and these upper blocks were assigned to the officers, who were not allowed to mingle with the enlisted men, the line of separation being marked by stakes, but latterly it was used as an officers' prison only. With this exception each block contained three rooms on the upper and two on the lower floor, the middle room upstairs being much the smallest. They were the ordinary frame houses, weather-boarded but unsealed on the inside, and it can be readily noted that while they were well enough in summer,—except towards the last, when overcrowded,—they offered but slight protection against the



PARADE OF THE HOFFMAN BATTALION AT JOHNSON'S ISLAND. (FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH LENT BY L. S. JOHNSON.)



A WARNING.

rigors of a Northern winter. They were better, however, than outdoors, as they protected us from wind and rain. The sinks were situated in the rear of the buildings, one for each block, and but two or at most three men were allowed to visit them at one and the same time, and this notwithstanding that the blocks contained on an average over two hundred and fifty men each.

It was the severity of the winters that told so heavily on us. Many were from the extreme South, and some had never seen a fall of snow. Coming from New Orleans, and wearing such clothing as was adapted to its climate in the month of September, the first day of January, 1864, was a revelation. On that day the thermometer marked twenty-five degrees below zero, and the writer was not more warmly clad than when now on a summer's night in that same city he writes these lines. So intense was the cold that the sentries were taken from the walls and the ice king kept watch and ward for Uncle Sam. The big gate could have been left open and few of the prisoners would have taken the chance of escape in view of almost certain death. The entire winters were bitter cold, and from our exposed position I am satisfied that the cold was much more intense than on the mainland.

Occasional gales would now and then sweep across the island, testing the strength of our buildings, and it was during one of these that two officers took refuge in a dry well as affording the greatest protection against the storm. One of these, on being asked by the other to offer up a prayer for their preservation,

replied that he was acquainted only with the Lord's Prayer, and there was nothing in that to cover the emergency.

Around and forming the inclosure was a board fence about twelve feet high, lighted at night by lanterns which told tales on such prowling "Rebs" as violated the prison regulations. On the south the lower portion of this fence was formed of upright stakes with narrow spaces between, which permitted a view of the bay; the rest was planked solid, while on the outside ran a gallery on which the sentinels walked their rounds, showing hip high above the parapet. The whole inclosure was technically called the "Bull Pen," and was invariably spoken of as such. A guard-house, sutler's shop, and some few other buildings were scattered here and there on the grounds. The south fence lay within a few yards of the bay, from which source we drew our supply of water in winter, cutting a hole in the thick ice for that purpose.

The bay was guarded by the United States steamer *Michigan*, which, when the season permitted, lay within a few hundred yards of the shore. Other steamers, loaded with excursionists, would occasionally run close in, prompted by curiosity, and taunt us with their shouts and jeers. Their favorite pastime was, or seemed to be, the singing of patriotic songs, which was admissible, and I could find no reasonable cause of complaint as to the sopranos and contraltos, but when basso-profondos and barytones musically expressed their intention to "rally round the flag," I thought of thousands of Northern men already engaged in that occupation far to the front, who, if not so vocalistic, were at least equally patriotic.

I was assigned to Block 11, Room 3, and was advised at once to study "Pierson's Ten Commandments." The first eight of this decalogue, with the exception of No. 6, referred to matters of police and fatigue duty only, but the rest were of a different character and were well worth committing to memory in order to avoid serious accidents. They were as follows:

Order No. 6.—All persons will be required to remain in their own quarters after retreat (sundown), except when they have occasion to visit the sinks; lights will be extinguished at "taps" (10 P. M.), and no fires will be allowed after that time.

Order No. 9.—No prisoner will be allowed to loiter between the buildings and the north and west fences, and they will be permitted north of the buildings only when passing to and from the sinks; nor will they approach the fences anywhere else nearer than thirty feet, as the line is marked out by the stakes.

Order No. 10.—Guards and sentinels will be required to fire on all who violate the above orders. Prisoners will therefore bear them carefully in mind

and be governed by them; to forget under such circumstances is inexcusable, and may prove fatal.

By order of LIEUT.-COL. WILLIAM S. PIERSON.

B. W. WELLS, *Lieut. and Post Adjutant.*

Thirty feet from the fence was the "dead-line" referred to in Order No. 9. It consisted of stakes driven into the ground, about twenty-five or thirty feet apart, and as they stood unconnected by either rope or railing it will be readily understood that the intervening space was necessarily an imaginary line. On the north side the sinks were situated in the rear of the buildings, about ten feet from the fence, and consequently they lay twenty feet within the dead-line. It was on this side of the inclosure that Captain J. D. Meadows of the 1st Alabama Regiment was shot by the guard on Post 13 and severely wounded.

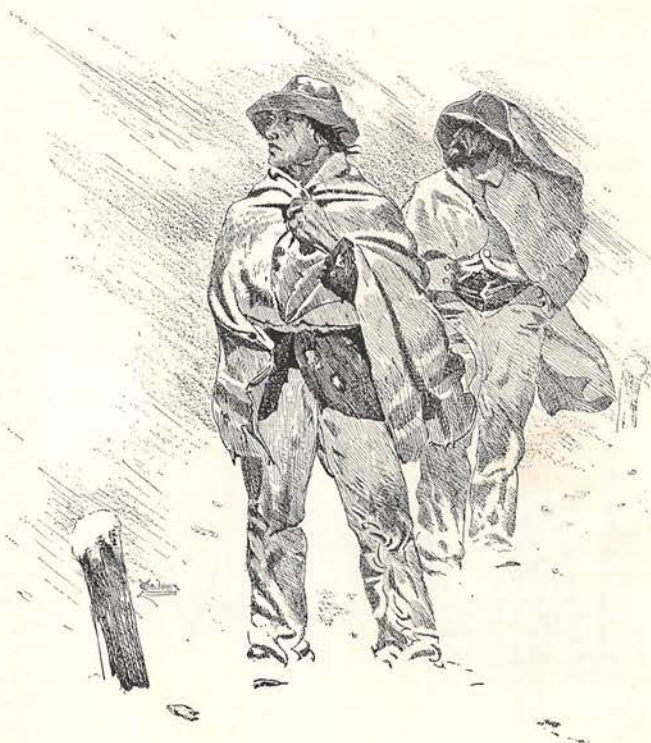
I have read articles in which the terrible dead-line was held up and denounced as brutal and inhuman, but I doubt if there existed an inclosed military prison North or South that did not possess this distinctive feature. Its use was to prevent prisoners crowding against the fence, and I do not remember that we regarded it in any other light than a very necessary precaution. We knew that the sentinel was required to shoot without warning the prisoner who crossed that line, and we felt that most of them were willing to do so; hence, if we violated Order No. 9 we were liable to be killed under Order No. 10. The matter rested entirely with ourselves. We had to bear evils of a far more serious nature over which we had no control, and such trifles as dead-lines worried us but little.

At the time I was at Johnson's Island there were about 2500 officers in confinement, and the quarters were well crowded. The sleeping arrangements consisted of bunks in tiers of three, each furnished with the usual army bedtick stuffed with straw, and far superior to the earth and ditch which had been our beds for months previous to our capture. The crowded condition of the prison necessitated that two men should occupy each bunk, which had the redeeming feature in winter that the

occupants were sheltered by two blankets instead of one.

It was an evil genius that selected my bunk, for it lay just under the roof, and sometimes the snow, finding its way in, would cover me with a wet blanket. I have a vivid recollection of the result in the form of an attack of lumbago that sent my forehead to my knees and put it beyond my power to assume the position of a soldier for many days. With the thermometer well down in the tube, scantiest of bedclothing, and no fire, you can well imagine what portion of "tired nature's sweet restorer" fell to our lot. Under the circumstances it is not strange that pulmonary and rheumatic complaints should have prevailed to a great extent. I know one man who is now, after the lapse of twenty-five years, chained to his chair hopelessly crippled, a souvenir of his imprisonment.

Rations of wood were brought in daily, and to each mess was delivered an ax and a buck-saw. These were collected and taken out each night, and should any mess fail to return them no wood was brought in until the missing tools were given up. This happened once during my stay, but private enterprise, looking to the escape of a few, had to give way to the public weal, and the ax and saw "showed up." Details from the mess were made each



day for police and fatigue duty, and the most fatiguing duty, as I remember it, was sawing wood; not that there was so much to saw, but the most of us were not used to it. Shortly after reveille a non-commissioned officer and guard entered the room and we were mustered for roll-call. Sometimes the guard would bring us the newspaper, giving double-leaded information, oft-times revised and corrected in subsequent issues. After roll-call we were free to kill the monotony of confinement as best we could, all parts of the inclosure being for our use except the north side and beyond the dead-line. "Retreat" sent us to our quarters, and, knowing the penalty, we were strict observers of this rule. It was for an alleged violation of this rule that Lieutenant Gibson of the 11th Arkansas lost his life. He was visiting some friends in a neighboring block, and hearing "retreat" sounded he started to his room, and was about to enter when the sentinel ordered him back to his quarters. He endeavored to explain that he was then going into his room, but the explanation was evidently unsatisfactory. The sentinel fired and killed him.

The only antidote to the terrible ennui of prison life was occupation, and very few were without employment of some kind. In fact, during the latter part of our stay it was an infallible sign of surrender when the men became listless and no longer cared for the things which had heretofore been either their work or their recreation. Work-benches sprang up in every available spot; rings were made of gutta-percha buttons; rulers and oyster shells were transformed into charms, rings, and breast-pins, equal in artistic design and execution to the best specimens of professional handiwork. In one instance, with nothing better than the wood-pile on which to draw for material, one of the men fashioned a violin; and a four-bladed penknife, complete in all its parts, attested the skill of one of my messmates. Articles manufactured by the prisoners were in demand and found a ready sale, the medium of traffic being

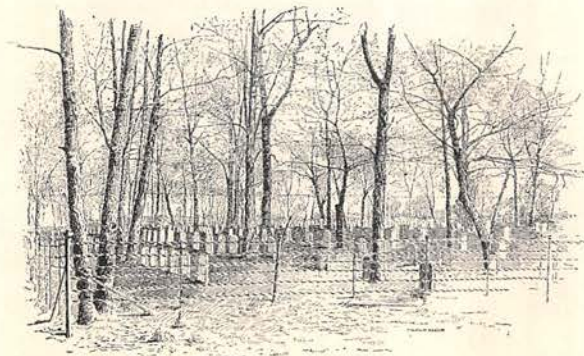


THE POWDER MAGAZINE.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1890.)

the prison officials, who sold them on the outside, returning the proceeds to the manufacturer, who was enabled to better his condition until such time as money lost its purchasing power. I do not remember that a visitor was ever allowed inside the prison walls, but I do recall that a wife once obtained permission to visit the island, and, standing on the outside of the "pen," was allowed to look at her husband as he stood on the landing of the stairs of Block 2. I do not think the termination of the war would have been delayed five seconds had they taken him under guard to the wife or allowed her to enter the prison.

Books and newspapers were admitted after due examination, and with many of us formed our sole refuge. Classes were opened, old studies resumed or new ones begun. A first-class minstrel band known as the "Rebelionians" gave entertainments from time to time and played to crowded houses. All the popular airs of the day were conscripted and the words rewritten to express our peculiar views of the situation. The dramatic element had its innings, and I think that Peeler's "Battle of Gettysburg" had the unprecedented run of three weeks, at one performance per week. We never succeeded in putting on a first-class ballet. These performances took place in the afternoon, for, as before stated, the guards had very pronounced views as to our being absent from quarters after retreat.

All letters to and from the prisoners were opened and examined by our jailers, and, if found in order, were stamped with "Examined" and the initials of the man who had read the letter and passed it. Our correspondence was limited only as to the number per diem, space, expression of political sentiment, and ability to pay postage. With these exceptions there were no restrictions. We were allowed to write on one side of a half-sheet of paper, and our correspondents were subjected to the same rule. I have received notifi-



THE CONFEDERATE CEMETERY. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1890.)

cations that letters addressed to me were held because they violated this rule, and have been instructed to inform the writers accordingly. To be placed on the black-list meant stoppage of our mail, and in order to realize the severity of the punishment you must put yourself in the position of a prisoner with letters your only communication with the outside world. It must have been from this cause that I acquired a terse, jerky style that has clung to me ever since. Sentimentally, "cleanliness is indeed next to godliness"; practically, it is conducive to health and comfort, and we tried to enforce its unwritten laws. When a "fresh fish" was assigned to our room he was initiated by being required to take a bath and to boil his clothes, long experience in army matters having proven that this was the only way of getting rid of that energetic little pest known as the *Pediculus vestimenti*—it was one of the species crawling on a lady's bonnet-string that suggested an ode to the poet Burns.

As our clothing gradually grew worse, soap and water seemed to lose their powers, and we resorted to dyeing such garments as needed renovation, using for that purpose a liquid dye. You simply emptied the vial into a pot of boiling water, immersed the garment to be operated on, and *voilà!* One of my mess was a Lieutenant Blank, who knew some things very well, and he, wishing to improve the appearance of an old flannel shirt, sought out the hospital steward who sold the liquid and put the question, "What is it you fellows dye with here?" The steward, supposing that he had some inquisitive statistician on his hands, answered that they died of different things, but thought that pneumonia had the call just then. "Well," said B., "give me a two-bit bottle." Of course the story leaked out, and the lieutenant ran the gantlet. Some mornings afterward B. mounted a chair and made a speech. In crude but unmistakable words, and with a depth of meaning in their utterance, he announced that the next man who said "pneumonia" in his hearing would have him to whip. Most of us, knowing the difficulty of the undertaking, were so much on our guard that we did not dare to cough or to give in any manner the least suggestion of a pulmonary complaint, lest we should have cause to regret our indiscretion.

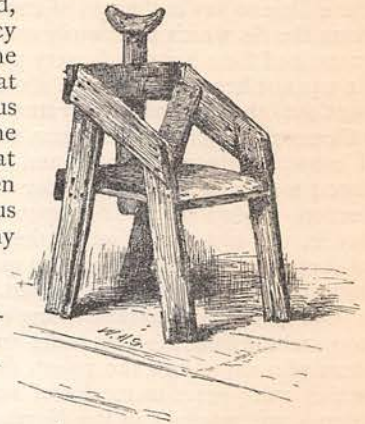
Retreat found us in our quarters, and at 10 P. M. "taps" extinguished our lights. I have heard that for a violation of this rule the guards would often fire into the block. Believing this to be true, I can vouch for its having happened at least once during my stay. It was during the evening that we gathered around the stove or the long table and discussed matters of interest,—the war, the absorbing question of exchange,

—swapped yarns, some of the number being exceptionally good *raconteurs*, or listened while some "Truthful James" taxed our credulity to the verge of courtesy. And here, lest I forget it, I desire to apologize in behalf of our stove. I have known it, when doing its best, fail to melt the frost on the window-panes less than eight feet distant.

"Taps" sent us to our bunks, except such night-owls as grouped together and conversed in undertones. Sometimes a voice would start in song, another and another would join, and though neither voices nor execution were of a high order, the wet eyelids of many a homesick "Reb" would pay tribute to "Home, Sweet Home," or "Only Waiting." It was at night, alone with our thoughts, that we carried the heaviestload, when fancy bridged the distance that separated us from the homes that had been silent to us for many months.

I do not know how nostalgia ranks as a separate and specific disease, but I do know that it handicaps a man terribly in his struggle for life. Later on, during my convalescence in the hospital, one of my command lay near me, and I could hear him murmur to himself, "I shall never see home again"; and, steadily sinking, Lieutenant Starns turned his face to the wall and died.

During the earlier portion of our stay we constantly looked forward to exchange, and it was this hope that served in a great measure to mitigate the ills of our prison life. The "grape-vine" spoke to us of little else. The main feature of this prison telegraph was its complete unreliability. As I remember, it was never correct, even by accident; but it sang songs of exchange and release, and, while feeling the notes to be false, we yet liked the music and hoped it true. It was towards the fall of 1864 that I began to give up all hope of exchange, and could see no prospect of release save the close of the war, or death. I looked the matter squarely in the face, and could see no rational reason why the North should either desire or consent to an exchange. The South-



BARBER'S CHAIR USED BY THE PRISONERS.
(SKETCHED FROM THE ORIGINAL, IN THE POSSESSION OF C. H. JENKINS, JOHNSON'S ISLAND.)

ern army, unable to recruit its losses, was being depleted; for every man killed, wounded, or missing made a permanent vacancy. With grim humor it was said that our conscript officers had been ordered to take every man not over two weeks dead. Why, then, should the North make the mistake of recruiting the Southern army with fifty thousand veteran soldiers, and they with experience enough of prison life to justify extra exertions in avoiding a second visit? I could then see no reason for it; and though I have since read much concerning the reasons for a non-exchange, I am satisfied that the above is about the correct solution of the problem.¹

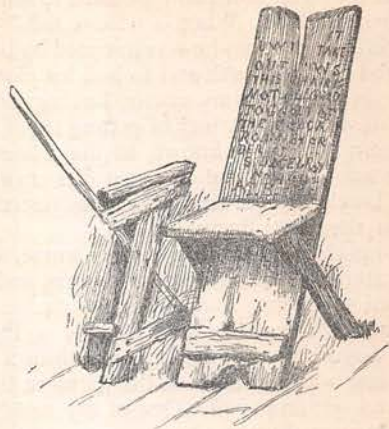
Were I to write only the experience of the first four months of our imprisonment, I could have little to say in the way of complaint aside from the ills which necessarily attend confinement and form a part of every prisoner's lot. It was not heaven, but as yet it did not represent the other extreme. Our treatment by the officers of Hoffman's Battalion was, as far as I know, courteous enough; and as to the enlisted men who guarded us, my principal objection, aside from their propensity to shoot, lay in the fact that most of them could not address us as "Rebels" without qualifying the term with the adjective "damned."

Our food was abundant, owing to our ability to purchase from the post sutler and the hucksters who came into the prison daily, besides which many were in receipt of supplies from friends and relatives in the North, and hence were entirely independent of the prison rations and fed on dainties not found on the prison *menu*. The men looked well and strong, and

¹ In 1863-64 the exchange of prisoners was interrupted by disagreements growing out of the claims of the Union authorities that the Confederates who had been paroled at Vicksburg and Port Hudson (and afterward ordered again to the front by the Richmond authorities) must be credited to the United States on the balance-sheet of the officers of exchange; that the exchange must be officer for officer and man for man, and not proportioned to the number of prisoners held by each side; and finally, that colored soldiers, when captured by the Confederates, must receive the same protection as white prisoners of war, and not be excepted from the terms of exchange. The communications received from the Confederate authorities were regarded as evasions of the real issues, particularly as to the colored prisoners. It was believed by the Union authorities that colored prisoners (under an order of the Confederate War Department of November 30, 1862) were given no quarter, and it was known that white officers and men captured with them were turned over to the authorities of States to be treated according to local laws for "exciting servile insurrection," and it is a matter of record that the Confederate commissioner, Mr. Ould, in writing to the Confederate Secretary of War on May 2, 1864, said:

As yet the Federals do not appear to have found any well-authenticated case of the retention of a negro prisoner. They have made several specific inquiries, but in each case there was no record of any such party, and I so

in marked contrast with their appearance later on. Just when the change took place I do not remember, but it came suddenly. I connect it in some way with the spring of 1864. We bade a final adieu to sutler and purveyors of every kind, and realized that a limited ration would hereafter be our only supply; that we must content ourselves as best we could with such quantity as the Government saw fit to give. Money could buy nothing in the way of food; and speaking for myself I reached at last that stage when, were it in my power, I



THE COOK'S CHAIR. (SKETCHED FROM THE ORIGINAL, IN THE POSSESSION OF C. H. JENKINS, JOHNSON'S ISLAND.)

would have bartered gold for bread, ounce for ounce. We were forbidden to write for food, and it was only by strategy that, if written, such letters reached their destination. It sometimes happened that the post surgeon

responded. Having no especial desire to find any such case, it is more than probable that the same answer will be returned to every such inquiry.

Reprisals were mingled with the disputes, which also involved other minor questions. General Grant would yield no point that had been insisted upon, as above. That he thought the failure to obtain what he regarded as an equitable exchange was not without military compensations is shown by the following letter, which he wrote to General Butler from City Point on August 18, 1864:

I am satisfied that the object of your interview had the proper sanction, and therefore meets with my entire approval. I have seen, from Southern papers, that a system of retaliation is going on in the South, which they keep from us and which we should stop in some way.

On the subject of exchange, however, I differ with General Hitchcock. 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 our battles. Every man we hold, when released on parole or otherwise, becomes an active soldier against us at once, either directly or indirectly. If we commence a system of exchange which liberates all prisoners taken, we will have to fight on until the whole South is exterminated. If we hold those caught, they amount to no more than dead men. At this particular time, to release all rebel prisoners North would insure Sherman's defeat and would compromise our safety here.

— EDITOR.

would allow such packages as reached the island to be delivered to their owners. He evidently had a professional dislike to sickness and suffering. The vital question with us was the victuals question. As to the daily ration, I remember that it consisted of a loaf of bread and a small piece of fresh meat. Its actual weight I do not remember, if I ever knew; I do know that it was insufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger, and left us each day with a little less life and strength with which to fight the battle of the day to follow. I heard that our surgeons (Confederate) formulated a protest in which they asserted that the quantity of food furnished each man was not more than sufficient to sustain life. Coffee was unknown, and I remember on several occasions far apart receiving two potatoes and an onion. If these were given medicinally the dose was homeopathic, and it was certainly scurvy treatment. As the months passed on a marked change was noticeable in the appearance of the men. They became depressed and listless, and unsuspected traits of disposition cropped to the surface. The parade-ground was dotted with gaunt, cadaverous men, with a far-away look in their eyes and with hunger and privation showing in every line of their emaciated bodies. It was believed by many among us that this mode of treatment was enforced as a retaliatory measure, and this belief certainly received strong support when, looking across the bay, we saw a city whose waste alone would have supplied our wants. I have seen a hungry "Reb" plunge his hand into the swill-barrel of some mess, and, letting the water drain through his fingers, greedily devour what chance had given him—if anything. Speaking for myself, and well aware of what I state, I assert that for months I was not free from the cravings of hunger. One-half of my loaf and the meat portion of my ration was eaten for dinner. I supped on the remaining piece of bread, and breakfasted with "Duke Humphrey." I sometimes dreamed of food, but cannot remember in my dreams ever to have eaten it, becoming, as it were, a sort of Johnson's Island Tantalus.

When we arrived on the island the rats were so numerous that they were common sights on the parade-ground. Later on they disappeared. Many of the prisoners ate them. If asked if I myself have ever eaten one I answer no, because to cook a rat properly (like Mrs. Glasse's hare) you must first catch him. I have sat half frozen in our mess kitchen armed with a stick, spiked with a nail, but was never fortunate enough to secure the game. A dog would have served the purpose better, but the chances were that some hungry "Reb" would have eaten the dog.

One of the Northern illustrated papers published a picture of one of the Belle Isle prisoners which certainly showed an extreme state of emaciation. Some of the mess suggested that I compete with him, kindly offering to back the Confederate entry. I think they would have won their bets; for, though regretting that I must acknowledge the fact, I am confident that I was the worse-looking specimen of the two. I had entered the prison weighing over 140 pounds, and then weighed less than 100. To a demonstrator of anatomy I would have been invaluable as a living osteological text-book. The prolonged confinement had told severely on us, and the men could not but yield to its depressing influence. There was little to vary the dreary monotony that made each day the repetition of the day before and the type of the day to follow. This alone would have been sufficient, but when scant food and cold were thrown into the scale it is little wonder that both mind and body should yield under the constant strain. Many of us were far into the second winter of our confinement, and with all hope of release gone we had nothing left—only to wait for the end, whatever that end might be; and it was weary waiting. It was generally known among us that some mitigation of our condition would be afforded such as took the oath of allegiance, and as this meant increased food and better clothing some few availed themselves of the offer. But one case came under my notice—that of a member of the mess; he, I presume, could not help it, as it was with him simply a question of endurance, and he gave up. It was said of him that he froze up early in the first November and did not thaw out until the following June. The prospect of a repetition was too much for him.

It is small wonder, then, that many found their way into the prison hospital (then managed by Confederate physicians, prisoners like ourselves), and thence to the prison graveyard. Thanks to the generosity of a Louisiana officer (Colonel J. O. Nixon, I think), who furnished the lumber, headboards were placed at the graves of our dead, and as very many of these were carved in our room I have some personal knowledge as to their being numerous, though I cannot speak with certainty as to the actual number of deaths or the percentage of mortality. I would here state incidentally that the only occasion on which I passed beyond the limits of the inclosure was when, with two or three others, I assisted in placing these boards in the graveyard. I met and conversed with a couple of ladies, the first with whom I had spoken for more than a year. Our appearance roused their womanly sympathy, and being Rebel prisoners we excited their feminine curiosity. I waited, and at last it came: "Do you

REBELLONIAN.

LESSEE AND MANAGER,..... Lieut. THOS. D. HOUSTON.
STAGE MANAGER,..... Capt. O. S. SHERWIN.
MUSICAL DIRECTOR,..... Lieut. A. E. NEWTON.

THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 1864,

2½ P. M. AT BLOCK 11.

COMPANY :

CAPT. C. S. SHERWIN, of Tennessee.
CAPT. G. H. HENCHY, of Louisiana.
CAPT. G. F. OTEY, of Arkansas.
CAPT. J. W. YOUNGBLOOD, of Tennessee.
CAPT. J. O. WARD, of Virginia.
CAPT. B. PALMER, of Tennessee.
CAPT. J. B. WITHERS, of Virginia.
CAPT. W. E. PENN, of Tennessee.
LIEUT. A. E. NEWTON, of Mississippi.
LIEUT. HORACE CARPENTER, of Louisiana.
LIEUT. S. G. COOKE, of Mississippi.
LIEUT. D. DUNHAM, of Florida.
LIEUT. D. E. MAHER, of Alabama.
LIEUT. J. J. LOUGHLIN, of N. Carolina.
CHARLES CRANDEL, of Maryland.

Price of Admission, 25 Cents. - - Reserved Seats 50 Cents.

* Tickets for Reserved Seats to be obtained from the Manager, on the day preceding the performance, at Block 11, middle room, up stairs.

PROGRAMME.

PART FIRST.

1. Overture..... Band
2. Opening Chorus..... Company
3. Her bright smile haunts me still..... Withers
4. Gentle Jennie Gray..... Henchy
5. Unhappy Jeremiah..... Carpenter
6. My Own Native Land..... Maher
7. Dolly Day..... Sherwin
8. Fante, (Instrumental)..... Band

PART SECOND.

1. Irish Comic Song, (original)..... Sherwin
2. Banjo Solo..... Otey
3. Lecture, (original)..... Herr Von Youngblood
4. Song—Our Flag, (original)..... Henchy
5. Bob Ridley..... Sherwin

PART THIRD.

The highly colored Extravaganza of

THE BLACK PRINCE!

With a plagiarized plot and an original score, written expressly for the Rebellonians.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- Julius Snow—type of his class..... Sherwin
Ginger—an adventurer of varied experiences..... Palmer
Pessum—a philosopher of the epicurean school..... Otey
Bug-a-boo—the great King of Dahomey..... Loughlin
Jak-kas—his Prime Minister..... Youngblood
Prince Tchad—rightful heir to the crown of Dahomey..... Maher
Li-li-write—Princess of Dahomey..... Dooley
Royal Messenger, Guards, &c., &c.....

BILL OF THE PLAY OF THE "REBELLONIAN" (REDUCED FACSIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL COPY, IN THE POSSESSION OF LIEUTENANT HORACE CARPENTER).

think you are right?" Seated on a grave I told of Reginald and Rebecca for the last time, the application all the more apropos for the extra year of imprisonment and what it brought.

It was early in January, 1865, that the writer fortunately found himself occupying a cot in the hospital and slowly recovering from an attack of fever. I use the term "fortunately" advisedly, since convalescence brought with it comforts in the way of food to which we had long since been strangers. Like Little Dorrit's protégé, Maggy, I have pleasant recollections of the hospital. Not "such d'licious broth and wine," perhaps, nor yet "chicking"; but I renewed my acquaintance with the almost forgotten taste of coffee, and while a slice of fat pork would scarcely rank now as a sick-room dainty, the surroundings then were different, and I regretted the improvement that sent me back to the old life.

Sickness proved a blessing in disguise, for orders came that the sick should parade for inspection, the worst cases to be sent South on parole. Many succeeded in passing muster, and one day in February the big gate swung open and a number of us took up our line of march across the frozen bay—homeward

bound—and bid a final adieu to a spot unmarked by a single pleasant recollection.

We left Sandusky knowing nothing, caring nothing, of our route so long as our course pointed towards "Dixie." The passenger-coaches which brought some of us sixteen months before were replaced by box-cars which we warmed by packing the floors with earth, on which we built a fire which afforded a minimum of heat with a maximum of smoke. It was at Grafton, West Virginia, that we sidetracked long enough to enable us to sit regularly at table and indulge in the novelty of a first-class meal. It was *table d'hôte*, and I fear the landlord realized but scant profit at so much a stomach, and they such chronic cases of vacuum. One of "ours" stated that he felt the first mouthful of food swallowed by him strike on the sole of his foot; but as this statement has its foundation on an anatomical impossibility, I give it no credence.

It was here or at some neighboring station that we met a batch of Federal soldiers returning from the South. We learned that they were from Andersonville, and as usual we mingled together, comparing notes, and indulging in the usual chaff which was generally a fea-

ture of such meetings. As we separated they expressed their intention of again visiting us, and in turn were solicited to bring their guns with them. This practice of poking fun, in spite of its frequency, was rarely carried beyond the bounds of good temper.

In this connection I would mention an incident which occurred on the island in which the "Reb" came out second-best.

A regiment of hundred days' men was in camp outside the "pen," and when Morgan was on one of his raids this regiment was sent out to meet him. As they marched by, one of their number sang out, "Boys, we're going to bring John Morgan to keep you company." In due time they returned. They had met Morgan, and had exchanged their accoutrements for a parole. As they went by, one of our number shouted, "Boys, where's your guns?" and quickly came back the retort, "Morgan's got them; where's yours?" No reply was made to this. Under the circumstances there was none to make, and the rest of us wished the fellow had kept quiet.

A slow, fatiguing, and uncomfortable trip brought us *via* the outskirts of Baltimore to Fort McHenry, and thence to Point Lookout, where we were turned loose in that "pen." Thinking that we had exhausted the capacity of prison life for harm, we were little prepared for the sight which met our eyes as we entered this place, but seeing these unfortunates we felt that we stood in the presence of men who had touched depths of suffering that we had not reached. All along the route we were fearful lest some evil chance should turn us back again to the old life; but that fear became secondary to the dread lest we should call a permanent halt at this point, and we drew a long breath of relief when we marched out of the place.

There was little need to ask questions. It was entirely unnecessary to mine for information—the nuggets of misery lay scattered on the surface and told the pitiful story without assistance from human tongue. Since that time I have conversed and compared notes with men who had a story of imprisonment to tell, and am satisfied that, as compared with the enlisted men at Point Lookout, Elmira, Rock Island, Camps Morton, Chase, and Douglas, the officers at Johnson's Island merely tasted purgatory; the men went beyond that.

A few hours too many and we were checked off and counted and loaded on the steamer that was to carry us to City Point—the last stage of our journey, and for that reason the most satisfactory portion of our trip.

As we came alongside the vessel a voice hailed us with, "Have you fellers ever had the small-pox?" and then gave the cheering information that there was plenty of it aboard.

He was correct in his statement; but in view of what had already fallen to our share I think we looked upon small-pox as one of the lesser evils and scarce gave the matter a thought. It remembered me, however.

We were placed in the lower hold of the vessel, the space between the decks being occupied by the sick, and it required skillful manœuvering to mount by the ladders up the hatchway and avoid the filth that trickled down. The contrast between this steamer and the *Evening Star* was much more marked than the distance between the passenger-coach and the box-car; but our journey was so near an end that a few extra discomforts scarce added to the already heavy load which was to drop from our shoulders in a few days.

After the James River, City Point, the flag of truce, the usual formalities, and the march to Richmond, the late inmate of Block 11, Mess 3 drew his forced accumulations of pay and registered at the Spottswood Hotel, paying sixty dollars per diem—not an exorbitant price when we consider that at the time a cord of wood on the lower Mississippi might without much exaggeration have been said to be the equivalent of a cord of Confederate money. Still the pay of a modest lieutenant would not justify a prolonged stay at these figures, and finding myself seriously ill without in the least suspecting the cause, I left by rail, going as far as Charlotte, N. C., where that mode of transportation came to an abrupt termination.

Blazing with fever and dazed from its effects, in company with several who were bound for the extreme South I took up the tedious walk which slowly carried me through the State of South Carolina, and it was when nearing Milledgeville, Ga., that I thought for the first time that the eruption which had made its appearance on my body was in some manner connected with the small-pox on the steamer; and all doubts, if any existed, were dispelled when, on reaching Montgomery, Ala., I was ordered to the pest-house.

It was in April, 1865, that General Wilson captured the place; but thanks to the pest-house, backed by a parole, I was unmolested, and once more started for home. I was indeed a veritable tramp—walking, or having an occasional lift on a wagon, and wholly dependent for food on the bounty of such as lived on my line of march; often scanty, for the South had been raided until it seemed as though all had been swept away. It was when nearing Jackson, Miss., that I learned of Appomattox and that our service had been in vain; that the voluntary contribution of death and suffering had been given to a "Lost Cause." We were all prisoners of war.

Two years to the month had passed since I

was locked up in Port Hudson, and during that period I had heard actually nothing from my home. I opened the gate, and, walking up the lane that led to the house, I could see the female portion of the family sitting on the gallery, none missing. In fact, there was a little niece that had put in an appearance since my departure. Soldiers were too common a sight to excite curiosity, but a half-look of recog-

nition swept over their faces, and as they rose from their seats to get a better view I dropped my valise and sung out, "Come on; it's me!" I know I should have said "It is I," but I did n't. Then followed a rush and a hugging match, in which the odds were four to one against me.

This happened over twenty-five years ago, and I am not yet exchanged.

H. Carpenter.

A MYSTERY OF THE SEA.

A TRUE STORY.



IN the summer of 1884 I was coming across the Indian Ocean in the steamship *Gleam*, homeward-bound from Shanghai with a cargo of tea. We had passed Ceylon, catching a glimpse of the distant island and a whiff of the spicy breeze

offshore, and were nearing the treacherous chain of coral reefs known as the Maldivé Islands, when I came up from the cabin after dinner for a stroll on deck. The evening sky glowed with the beauty of a rich sunset such as is rarely seen outside the tropics. The good ship rocked easily upon a long, smooth swell, and plowed her way into a sea of molten gold, turning it, as by the touch of a magician's rod, into blue depths of water beneath her keel. The vessel's wake, churned into foam and shot through with countless flashes of phosphorescence, stretched far astern like a silvery path leading to the very edge of the full moon which hung just above the horizon.

I found the chief engineer leaning against the rail and enjoying the glorious beauty of the evening. For some time neither of us spoke. At length he remarked in a meditative way:

"It was just here that we met the Portuguese brig when we were coming out."

Now Nesbitt was a clear-headed Scot who had studied in one of the English universities and taken his degree; then, giving way to his passion for a roving life, he had gone to sea and spent twenty years afloat. He had doubled more than once the Horn and the Cape, made a dozen voyages to China and Japan, and, as an engineer in the Portuguese navy, had visited the whole coast of Africa, and once crossed the Dark Continent on foot just below the

equator. In short, he had seen much of the world, and taken good note of what he saw.

The chief engineer, therefore, was a man who had in his head much material for a good story; and it was in the hope of getting a story now that I asked:

"Well, what about the Portuguese brig?"

He looked up in surprise.

"What! Have n't you heard of the adventure we had on the last trip out? No? 'Bout as curious a thing as I ever came within hail of. But it's a long yarn; so let's find some seats first, and then I'll spin it for you."

We took possession of a couple of steamer chairs on the after-deck, and forthwith the chief spun his yarn as follows:

"We came out in February loaded mostly with iron; had a rough time of it in the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean, but when we had gotten past those cussed Frenchmen on the Suez Canal our troubles for that voyage were over. Those canal pilots make an engineer swear more than a storm at sea.

"Well, just in this place, one day about noon, we passed a brig about four miles north of us. The sun was hot, there was not a breath of wind, and the brig lay rocking on the swell with all sail set and flapping. She showed no colors, and failed to answer the signals which we made to her. The captain swore a little at her want of manners and we went on; but when we had passed her some distance, perhaps a couple of miles, I went on the bridge and found him still leveling his glass at her. As I came up he said, 'I don't like the looks of that craft at all. She is n't ship-shape, and I am going to run over to her and find out what's wrong.'

"He put the steamer's head for the brig, and soon we were as close as the swell would allow. We hailed her, but got no reply. Then the old man began to get excited, and ordered the mate to call away the crew of the cutter