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THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS DURING THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES.

[Compiled by the Secretary of the Southern Historical Society.]

We stated in our last issue that we should resume this subject in this number. But instead of finishing at this point the discussion of the *Exchange* question, we will first dispose of

THE TREATMENT OF CONFEDERATE PRISONERS BY THE FEDERAL AUTHORITIES.

The *ex parte* reports of the Federal Congress, the reports of the United States officials, the reports of the Sanitary Commission, various books that partisan writers at the North have published, and the Radical press generally, have represented that while the Confederate authorities deliberately, wilfully, and persistently, starved, tortured, and murdered Union prisoners, the Federal authorities always treated their captives in the most considerate and humane manner. Indeed the impression sought to be made is that Confederates fared so much better in Federal prisons than they did in the Confederate army, that their capture was really a blessing to them—that they came to prison emaciated skeletons, and were sent back (except those who “died of diseases they brought with them”) sleek, hale, healthy men.

We might quote largely on this point from the writings alluded to, but we will only give an extract from the speech of Hon. James G. Blaine, uttered deliberately on the floor of the United States House of Representatives *eleven years after the close of the war*:

“Now I undertake here to say that there is not a Confederate soldier now living who has any credit as a man in his community, and who ever was a prisoner in the hands of the Union forces, who will say that he ever was cruelly treated; that he ever was deprived of the same rations that the Union soldiers had—the same food and the same clothing.

Others found in the barrels of refuse fat, which were accumulated at the cook-house, and in the pickings of the bones, which were cut out of the meat and thrown out in a dirty heap back of the kitchen, to be removed once a week, the means of satisfying the craving for meat, which rations would not satisfy. I have seen a mob of hungry "rebs" besiege the bone-cart, and beg from the driver fragments on which an August sun had been burning for several days, until the impenetrable nose of a Congo could hardly have endured them.

Twice a day the camp poured its thousands into the mess-rooms, where each man's ration was assigned him; and twice a day the aforesaid rations were characterized by disappointed "rebs" in language not to be found in a prayer-book. Those whose appetite was stronger than their apprehensions frequently contrived to supply their wants by "flanking"—a performance which consisted in joining two or more companies as they successively went to the mess-rooms, or in quietly sweeping up a ration as the company filed down the table. As every ration so flanked was, however, obtained at the expense of some helpless fellow-prisoner, who must lose that meal, the practice was almost universally frowned upon; and the criminal, when discovered, as was frequently the case, was subjected to instant punishment.

This was either confinement in the guard-house, solitary confinement on bread and water, the "sweat-box" or the barrel-shirt. The war has made all these terms familiar, except the third, perhaps; by it I mean a wooden box, about seven feet high, twenty inches wide and twelve deep, which was placed on end in front of the major's tent. Few could stand in this without elevating the shoulders considerably; and when the door was fastened all motion was out of the question. The prisoner had to stand with his limbs rigid and immovable until the jailer opened the door, and it was far the most dreaded of the *peines fortes et dures* of the pen. In midsummer, I can fancy that a couple of hours in such a coffin would inspire Tártuffe himself with virtuous thoughts, especially if his avoirdupois was at all respectable.

Rev. Dr. I. W. K. Handy, of the Presbyterian Church of Virginia, who was arrested on an utterly frivolous charge and made a prisoner at Fort Delaware, and whose evangelical labors among the prisoners were so greatly blessed, has published a volume of 670 pages, entitled "United States Bonds," in which he gives a vivid account of the indignities, cruelties and sufferings to which the prisoners there were subjected. We regret that we have only space for a brief extract. Under date of November the 6th, 1863, Dr. Handy thus writes in his diary:

A letter is found in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* of to-day, giving a terrible account of the sufferings of the Yankee prisoners at Rich-

mond. The statement is, palpably, exaggerated and highly colored, and bears the impress of prejudice and great effort for effect. Almost every illustration adduced in the article will apply to Fort Delaware, and to these may be added instances of individual cruelty and oppression, which would put to shame the unscrupulous statements of this writer, who claims to have been a Federal chaplain.

It has not been uncommon here for our half-clothed, half-fed Confederates at the barracks to be ordered about in the coarsest and roughest manner by their inferiors, and to be knocked on the head with sticks, or to be stuck with bayonets, for the slightest offences; and, sometimes (for no crime whatever), men have been shot at or cruelly murdered by sentinels, who bore malice, and justified themselves upon the plea that they were trying to prevent escapes. Sick men have been kept at the barracks until perfectly emaciated from diarrhœa, without the necessary sick vessels, and have been obliged to stagger, through the quarters, to the out-house on the bank of the river, with filth streaming upon their legs; and then, unable to help themselves, they have fallen upon the pathway, and have been found dead in the morning—victims of cruel neglect. Barefooted, bareheaded and ragged men, tottering with disease, have been left to suffer long for the necessary clothing or medicines, which might have been abundantly supplied; men scarcely convalescent have been made to *walk* from one end of the Island to the other in changing hospitals, thus bringing on a relapse in almost every case, and have died in a few days thereafter. Physicians, in contract service, have gone daily into the hospitals, saturated with liquor, and without looking at the tongue or feeling the pulse, have tantalized the poor sufferers with the prescription, "Oh, you must eat! You must eat!" and without either furnishing them with medicine or meat, have left them to die. Sick men, on entering the hospitals, have been denuded of their clothing, and when getting a little better, have been forced to walk over damp floors in their stocking-feet and drawers to the water closet, at a remote end of the building—thus exposing themselves to cold and the danger of a relapse. Men have been dismissed from the hospitals to go to Point Lookout without hat, shoes or blanket; hundreds have been exposed to the danger of contracting the small-pox from coffins filled with loathsome bodies, left for hours together on the wharf, whilst prisoners have been embarking for exchange; the dispensary has remained not only for days, but for weeks together, without some of the most important and common medicines; prisoners have been "bucked and gagged" for the most trivial offences; and the very dead have been robbed of their last shirts, placed in rough coffins, perfectly naked, and then hurried into shallow, unmarked graves.

Much of all this cruelty and inhumanity may not have been designed by those highest in authority, and had they known it, might not have received their sanction, but it has occurred under their administration, and they are, to a greater or less extent, accountable for it all. Were full details given in relation to these matters, they

would be astounding and perhaps incredible. In this place they are referred to with no disposition to exaggerate, nor to prejudice. Some of them could not, perhaps, have been well avoided, but are recorded simply as an offset to the "Chaplain's" details.

The murder of Colonel E. P. Jones by a sentinel is thus described by Dr. Hardy in his diary, under date of July 3d, 1864:

A lamentable affair occurred at "the rear," about dusk, this evening. Many persons are now suffering with diarrhœa, and crowds are frequenting that neighborhood. The orders are to go by one path and return by the other. Two lines of men, going and coming, are in continual movement. I was returning from the frequented spot and, in much weakness, making my way back, when, suddenly, I heard the sentinel challenge from the top of the water-house. I had no idea he was speaking to me, until some friends called my attention to the order. I suppose my pace was too slow for him. I passed on; and as frequent inquiries were made in regard to my health, I was obliged to say to friends, "we have no time to talk; the sentinel is evidently restless or alarmed, and we are in danger."

I had scarcely reached my quarters, before a musket fired; and it was, immediately, reported that Colonel E. P. Jones had been shot.

The murder of Colonel Jones is the meanest, and most inexcusable affair that has occurred in the officers' quarters; or that has come under my own observation since my imprisonment at Fort Delaware. I did not see him fall; but have learned from Captain J. B. Cole, who was an eye-witness to the whole scene, that although he was standing within ten steps of the man that killed him, he heard no challenge, nor any order to move on. The first intimation he had of the sentinel's displeasure was the discharge of the musket, and the simultaneous exclamation of the Colonel—"Oh, God! Oh, God! My God, what did you shoot me for? Why didn't you tell me to go on? I never heard you say anything to me!"—and with a few such exclamations, he sank upon the ground; and then fell, or rather rolled, down the embankment.

Colonel Jones has been in the barracks so short a time, that I have not had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. I have only learned that he is an intelligent physician, of considerable property and influence, and that he is from Middlesex county, Virginia. Since he came to Fort Delaware, he has been, constantly, suffering with some affection of the feet, causing lameness.

At the time he was shot, he was hobbling along, with one shoe, and was carefully stepping down a rough place, near the water-house, buttoning his pants. He could not have been more than twenty steps from the point of the musket. It is said that the murderer seemed, all day, to be seeking an opportunity to shoot some one. It is also reported that Captain Ahl was seen on the top of the shanty, giving some orders, only a few moments before

the catastrophe. These are all the facts that I can learn, concerning this melancholy affair, except that Colonel Jones has been taken to the hospital, and that there is no prospect of his recovery.

Friday, 8th.—The boy who shot Colonel Jones is again on guard, this morning; and it is reported that he has been promoted to a corporalecy. He belongs, I think, to an Ohio regiment, is about eighteen years old, and is known as "Bill Douglas."

Unusual watchfulness prevailed during the night. New sentinels were on guard, in every direction. A noisy fellow tramped under my window until daylight. Guards have been posted inside of "the pen," and everything indicates apprehension, on the part of the Yankees, and danger to the prisoners.

General Schœpf visited "the pen," accompanied by Captain Ahl, and other officers. They were evidently excited, and moved quickly from place to place. Some of the officers were anxious to have an interview, and pressed upon them for a word. I succeeded in halting the General, and spoke to him myself, about the recklessness of the sentinels, and the great danger to which I was personally exposed just before the shooting last night. He referred to the repeated attempts which had, lately, been made to effect escape; spoke decidedly of his purpose to put a stop to the whole thing; and excused the guards. "They shoot down any man," said he, "who tries to get away."

Captain Ahl averred that Colonel Jones had been challenged; and justified the sentinel. Several bystanders insisted, that he was quietly returning from "the rear," and that there was no cause for the murder. Ahl affirmed that he was near by when the shooting took place, and that he had ordered the sentinel to fire at the first man that stopped on the thoroughfare.

I appealed to General Schœpf, to hear a statement of the case; and told him that I had always supposed him to be a humane officer, and disposed to do what was right. He was evidently embarrassed by the presence of Ahl; and nervously moved off towards the gate, followed by his attendants. He was there surrounded by another company of prisoners, who tried to get an audience. He refused to hear them; and referred them to "Dr. Handy," urging as he went out—"He knows I want to do right."

Colonel Jones lingered a few hours, and died in great agony.

Dr. Handy has kindly placed in our hands his private letter-book containing a large number of statements of prison experience by his fellow-prisoners. We can only extract one of these.

STATEMENT OF REV. GEORGE HARRIS, OF UPPERVILLE, VIRGINIA.

On the morning of the 30th of August our quiet village was thrown into excitement by a report of the approach of Yankees. From the fact that private citizens had recently been arrested and carried from their homes by raiding parties, nearly every male inhabitant of the village felt it to be unsafe to remain at home;