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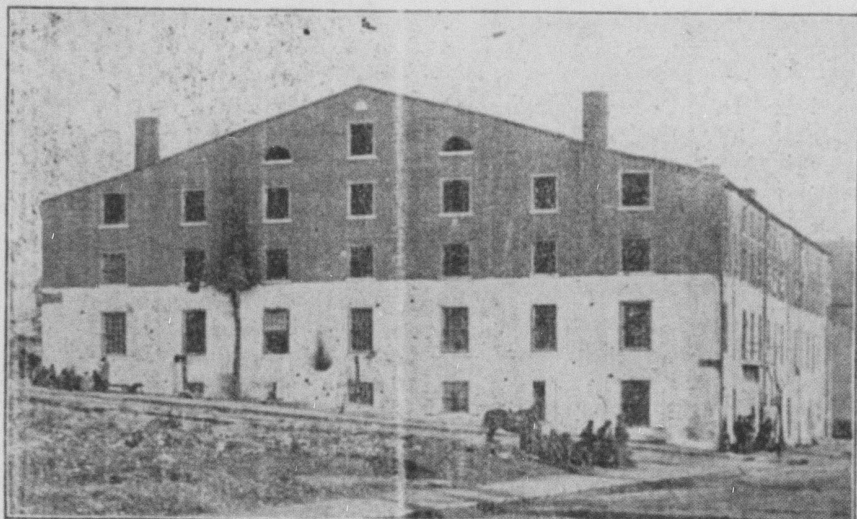
CENTRE COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR.

148th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers.

By T. P. Meyer, Sergeant Co. A., 148th Regiment, P. V.

(To be Continued.)

CHAPTER V. THE PRISONER'S STORY.



LIBBY PRISON.

So far as furnishing wood to the prisoners was concerned, it must be admitted that it was impossible for the Confederate authorities to supply the twelve thousand prisoners, in and around Richmond, with the wood required to keep fires going. Wood, in cities is a great and costly item; one hundred cords a day would not have sufficed. Wood was worth fifty to seventy-five dollars a cord. My chum and I once bought two sticks of dry, pine cordwood, for two dollars and a half.

One day a team, with a detail of prisoners, and a guard, were sent out to some timber for a load of wood for the bake house, but, as soon as they got into the woods the prisoners ran away; the guard shot off his gun; no body was hurt, the wagon came back empty, but the choppers had fled.

The great depreciation of the Confederate Currency was one of the most remarkable phenomena of this extraordinary war.

During the winter of 1863-4, at Richmond, the Confederate Currency, the only money in circulation, was at a discount of 90 per cent, and steadily falling; the leaders of their government were constantly thrashing around for some scheme by which they might raise the credit of their tottering government, but all plans failed. It is difficult to imagine how they held out so long. Certainly their efforts and sacrifices were beyond belief.

When we first reached the Island it was stated that the Confederate soldiers were not allowed to accept "Greenbacks," our National Money. But they were glad to take all they could get. Later, the officers of the camp sent men in with immense amounts of Confederate money, to sell for Greenbacks. They would go up and down through camp, and shout, "who has Greenbacks to sell? Ten dollars Confed for one dollar Greenback." Confederate money at the time, was as quoted above, while "Greenbacks" were worth about forty-five cents on a dollar in "sound money."

Our bed, and this was much compared with most of them, consisted of three blankets and an oil cloth. First, the oil cloth was spread on the ground; on this was spread a blanket. This was the bed for three of us, and two blankets covered us, "over head and ears," as before described, all winter.

"Spooned" tightly together, we always lay on our sides; there could be no change for rest. Lying on the hard ground, corns, often the size of half dollars, would form on hips, shoulders, knees and ankles, and be excessively sore. When one could not possibly stand it any longer on the "down side" on account of the pain in these bed sores, he would say over! All three would immediately begin to wobble and turn till the spoon arrangement would be reversed. In the morning of very cold nights, there would be a spikey frost half an inch thick on our upper blankets, caused by the escaping moisture of our breaths from underneath; this we would thrash off as much as we could; if allowed to thaw thereon the blanket would be quite wet.

The winter was a severe one. The deepest snow we had was five inches, and lasted a week, during which we had zero weather. We had many lighter snows, much cold rain, and many great, sudden changes.

The thickest ice was about six inches. Many prisoners froze to death, mostly, or wholly, by reason of their own improvidence. When the weather was mild, as it often was, they sold blankets, overcoats, and other clothing to the Confederate Guards, and

when cold snaps came, they suffered and froze. The National Government apprised of the condition of the prisoners here, sent a great supply of clothing by the "flag of truce boat" route, up the James River.

It reached Belle Island Nov. 5th, and was fairly distributed by the Confederate officers here, to the most destitute of the prisoners, and charged up to them on their U. S. Clothing account. Many of the prisoners gave fictitious names and regiments, to escape the payment of this uniform clothing.

The distribution continued several days, and was well done. The selling of clothing to the Confederates now became a great business and it was not long till nearly all of the Confederate guards were partly, or wholly, in new blue uniforms, with new Union overcoats on their backs, and the erstwhile ragged Union prisoners, were as ragged as before, shivering in the cold.

On Dec. 12th, 1863, and Jan. 18th, 1864, further shipments of uniform clothing from Washington reached our Island Prison Encampment, and fairly issued to the "destitute prisoners." But, no sooner were these issues made than the improvident spirit of the prisoners again manifested itself, and the same men who sold their clothing before sold it again, and were just as ragged as before. Many traded their entire uniforms of all wool, heavy goods, for an entire gray, ragged and filthy Confederate suit of variegated colors, and a trifling amount in Confederate "boot" money. There was no reason for being barefooted or desperately ragged, and all such were themselves to blame; they bartered away their clothing and shoes and went into rags voluntarily.

The uniforms issued by the National Government to its soldiers, were made of the best, heavy, all wool cloth, of the most durable character, and should have lasted a prisoner several years without becoming "desperately ragged."

As before intimated, we were dirty and lousy; there was no escape. The seams of our uniforms were white, crusted streaks of dirt and "creepers;" there was no rest day or night. Every mild day hundreds of the prisoners could be seen sitting on the ground throughout the camp, in the sun, bare backed, for hours, with their shirts turned inside out, and spread on their knees, killing the pestiferous "gray-backs" between the thumb nails. This was such a common and general occupation that the prisoners so engaged did not attract the least attention of other prisoners standing round or passing by.

Whew! We can feel them yet, as they trooped across our breasts and up and down our backs and legs, when we wanted to sleep.

Among the Union prisoners captured by the Confederates during the Bristol campaign, were a great many of the recruits who had joined the Army shortly before the campaign opened; men who took big bounties and never intended to do any service.

In N. Y. City bounties ranging from one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars were paid for a three years' recruit at this time. This brought in a lot of depraved, New York City toughs. Among them were a banded gang of Irish villains, who halted not at any crime; they were cruel, heartless, stout and powerful men.

They soon had followers and became a powerful and greatly feared gang of bold desperadoes, whose ill will we had abundant reason to fear. They started their robberies at Orange Court House, where we boarded the train for Richmond.

It was my misfortune to be shut in with them in the same freight car. They would light a candle, then locate a soldier who they thought had money, pack round him then put out the light; at that instant one of them would throw his arm around the victim's neck from behind and choke him, while the rest would rife his pockets. If, on being released he said a word, he would be knocked down, and unmercifully kicked. In Libby they practiced the same system of robbery.

When the New England expert said of the great Philadelphia filtration plant, with its probable cost of \$25,000,000, that "somebody has stolen half your money," he was not aware of the methods of municipal jobbery in this city or he would doubtless have used plain language. He had no knowledge of the honest processes by which all important municipal jobs have fallen to one and the same gang of contractors in the absence of a legitimate competition.

The will of William Colyer was probated Saturday without protest.

OUR FARMER YOUTH and the PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

By Prof. Willet M. Hays, University of Minnesota.

The collegiate agricultural course in the University of Minnesota, with which the agricultural high-school course articulates, is, in turn, made up of about one-third general and humanizing studies, one-third sciences related to agriculture, and one-third technical agricultural subjects. Graduates of college courses are in great demand as teachers of specialties or for research work in experiment stations or in the United States Department of Agriculture. Graduate courses are also provided for graduates waiting for a position, for graduates of other agricultural colleges, or for graduates who, after some years, wish to return and further pursue a specialty. The organization of the State experiment stations as a part of the agricultural colleges in most States gives added facilities for instruction. Positions as assistant investigators in experiment stations, and in the National Department of Agriculture, serve as excellent post-graduate training for many.

AN ARTICULATED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

The proposed plan of articulating consolidated rural schools, each of which will cover an area from three to five miles square; agricultural high schools, each to cover nearly a dozen counties; and the agricultural college course in the State university or State college of agriculture and mechanic arts, will meet the needs of four factors,—namely, the pupils, the teachers, the courses of practical instruction, and the subject matter to be taught. The fact that nearly every farm boy and girl who has had the advantage of a course of study in the Minnesota Agricultural High School is not only enthusiastic in its praise but desires to live on a farm, is proof that the school has a faculty of instructors peculiarly adapted to its work, and that the plan of the school and the available subject matter are such that agricultural high-school education succeeds and meets the need. While the home, the consolidated rural school, and the agricultural high school train for the farm and the farm home, there is large need for teachers, experimenters, writers, and other specialists with higher training, such as is supplied in the college course in agriculture. The proposed system of three articulated classes of schools needs all along the line teachers broadly and technically trained. No doubt many of these teachers must be educated in existing high schools, academies, and normal schools, which more or less closely articulate with agricultural colleges.

A large class of farmers, educated in their specialty under a common system, where each student gains a wide acquaintance with his fellows in primary. On the second night of our stay in Libby Prison, at midnight, in a raid by this gang on several prisoners, a general fight broke out, in which about four hundred men took a hand. Friends and comrades choked and knocked each other down in the deep darkness. It was the worst row in which I ever took a hand, and it only ended when about forty Confederate Guards, with fixed bayonets rushed in, guided by a dozen lanterns held high on bayonets, shouting, order! order! Meanwhile clubbing and prodding the fighters with bayonets, as they charged through the center of the room. During this row, probably half a hundred were more or less seriously hurt, and a sick man trampled to death.

"What shall we do with our ex-presidents?" asks an exchange. Why the best thing to do right now would be to double their number.

William L. Elkins, in his will recently probated, provided \$250,000 to be applied to a female orphanage under the direction of the Masonic order.

The Panama transaction may make necessary a complete change in the Republican Presidential program. It will be taking a great risk to go into the next campaign with this Panamanian Administration, with its violation of the dearest principles of this Government political issue. Panama already threatens to rival if not overshadow the issue of the tariff.

Should money at interest, bonds, mortgages, banking and trust companies, printing and publishing houses, mercantile property, salaries, transportation and transmission companies, building and loan associations and all private corporations doing business for profit, be taxed locally at the same mill rate farms and homes are taxed, for school and road purposes?

What is the average mill rate for taxation on this class of property for all governmental purposes compared with the average mill rate of taxation on real estate? Should the farmers approve the adoption of the new road law until personal and corporate property holders agree to be taxed locally at the same rate that real estate would be taxed for road construction? Miscellaneous; closing.

Piano Lessons Free. See offer of The Pittsburg Sunday Dispatch on another page.

Colt sale Saturday.

WABASH NEWS.

The Route of the New Road from Pittsburg to New York.

For the past five weeks the Centre Reporter has weekly been giving information regarding the work of a corps of engineers located at Coburn, and pushing eastward through the mountains. Their line from Sober has been south of the L. and T. R. R.

The following taken from the Pittsburg Post further proves that this paper's bearings are practically correct. The Post says President Joseph Ramsey of the Wabash road disclaims that the work is being done for that company, but that assertion does not necessarily say that Wabash trains will not pass over the line if built.

The Pittsburg Post says:

From the energy with which surveying engineering corps are pushing the route of a new railway through portions of Armstrong, Indiana, Clearfield, Cambria, Blair and Centre counties in this state, it is plainly evident that more than a "paper" railroad is to be built between Pittsburg and New York on a near a bee-line as can be had. The Post has learned that this project is no more a contemplated move, but it has been absolutely impossible to ascertain the backers of the gigantic proposition. It is known that the promoters of the new line have driven over the route twice during the past summer.

The proposed line is to be 73 miles shorter than the Pennsylvania between Pittsburg and New York, and through the mountains is to be constructed on an average level seventy-five feet higher than the Pennsylvania line. The surveying corps are now at work in the southern part of Centre county, in the vicinity of Ingleby and Coburn. The same corps of engineers were recently engaged in surveying the line through the southern part of Clearfield and the northern part of Cambria counties. Along the outlined route the trees are cut and a distinct beginning made for the new road. It will pierce through ridges and span valleys through the mountain region.

In view of the objects understood to be in view, aside from the main object of forcing through the Pennsylvania mountains a bee-line route between Pittsburg and New York, is that of reaching comparatively undeveloped sections of the State. Thus the north end of Westmoreland, the south end of Armstrong, the north end of Indiana, the line of Clearfield and Cambria, the southern portion of Centre, the north end of Blair, Union, Snyder and part of Columbia counties will be reached according to the proposition now being worked out. Leechburg, and Hyde Park, Armstrong county, have been wrought up over the proposed line. While the smaller towns of Clearfield and Centre counties are certain that the line is a Wabash project, President Joseph Ramsey, Jr., of the Wabash, when asked about the matter while he was here recently, said that it was not a Wabash venture.

The new road will leave the route of the Lewisburg & Tyrone at or near Pardee, Union county, following Penns creek eastwardly and reaching Saubery. It will pass north of Shamokin, thence through Columbia county, touching Newkirk, Schuylkill county, passing the Black mountain ridge at Lehigh Gap, on the line between Carbon and Lehigh counties, thence going through Northampton county to the Delaware river opposite Belvidere, N. J., it will cross Warren, Morris and Essex counties, N. J.

Natural Gas in Juniata County.

The Union Oil and Gas Company, with headquarters at Millintown has struck an apparently large pocket of natural gas at its drilling near East Waterford, Juniata county. Ferdinand Meyers, its vice president, says that the company hopes to supply Harrisburg and Lewistown.

When the well was sunk the company hoped to strike oil, but the drillers reported that they were wasting their energy and quit their jobs. Six weeks afterward Columbus Sarvis, of East Waterford, visited the shaft and thought he saw fumes coming out of it. He touched a match to the pipe and the flames jumped up twenty feet in the air. Then the company started to bore for gas and discovered that the shaft had been plugged with iron.

Wednesday last week the shaft was shot with 150 pounds of dynamite, and when the drill was inserted again it dropped down to 1417 feet, 130 feet lower than it had been before. When an attempt was made to plug the opening the wooden stopper was blown out, and an iron plug will be put in.

Altoona capitalists are organizing a fire insurance company, which will be capitalized at \$300,000.

TOWN AND COUNTY NEWS.

HAPPENINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST FROM ALL PARTS.

Buy a mule Saturday. Come to the colt sale Saturday afternoon.

Jacob Lee and John Carper, both of Linden Hall, were in town Saturday.

H. G. Strohmeier was in Union county on business the latter part of last week.

Adam Hoover renewed his contract with the Milwaukee harvester company and will be ready for business next year.

The colts to be sold Saturday are selected from the best Kentucky stock farms. They have action, style, durability.

S. G. Long, of Potters Mills, is the proud papa of a baby girl since Thursday of last week.

Mrs. L. Rhone, of this place, is on her way to Wichita, Kansas, where she will visit her brother, Robert Sankey.

Merchant George O. and Mrs. Benner, of Centre Hall, will spend next Sunday at the home of Mrs. Benner's parents at Martha.

Among the young men who called on the Reporter Saturday were Messrs. J. D. Rossman and D. P. Ream, of near Farmers Mills.

Mrs. Nancy Benner recently went to Philadelphia where she will remain with her daughters, Misses Bess and Breeze and son John, who for some time have been in that city.

Rev. J. F. Shultz is conducting a series of meetings in the United Evangelical church at Egg Hill. The meetings are being well attended and are accomplishing much good.

Among the callers Saturday was J. P. Grove, east of Centre Hall. Mr. Grove is one of the intense farmers in his section, who strives to make soil yield beyond an ordinary crop.

P. W. Anthony shot a 'coon Saturday that was chased into Renovo by dogs. The animal crawled to the top of an electric light pole, when it was promptly dispatched by Mr. Anthony.

The one and two year old Kentucky colts to be sold at Centre Hall Saturday will give an opportunity to purchase a first-class driving horse for a small amount of money. It is much cheaper to grow a driver than to buy one at five or six years.

J. H. Leitzel, of Lewsburg, foreman of the roundhouse connected with the Pennsylvania railroad at that place, in company with his daughters, Mrs. William C. Saxon and Miss Lulu, attended the funeral of Mrs. Feidler which took place Saturday.

Thomas Palmer, of Potters Mills, last week happened to meet a man in the Seven Mountains leading his (Palmer's) valuable bird dog. There was considerable growling, other than dog growling, in which the owner led off, before the dog's ownership was settled.

The Lancaster county school teachers adopted a resolution asking that suitable houses be erected near every school house in that county for the accommodation of school teachers. Lancaster county employs only the best teachers, and each year is improving its schools.

The widow of John Wolf, of Rebersburg, had a handsome monument erected recently to mark the resting place of her husband. The work was executed by H. G. Strohmeier, of this place. Mr. Strohmeier also put up a stone over the grave of Nathan Bowersox, in Rebersburg.

The Reporter is indebted to the Bradford hunting party for a portion of venison killed on their recent hunting expedition in the Seven Mountains. The hunters have decided that next year they will go to the Allegheny Mountains for their annual meet. Their record this year was three deer.

Let us be thankful that a President's daughter cannot dictate a fashion as does royalty, if it be true as reported, which heaven forbid, that Alice Roosevelt rides horseback astride. The only American women who can do that sort of thing gracefully are the female aborigines. It will be time enough for our women to ride like squaws when they dress like them.

The Reporter was pleased to have a call from Messrs. Elmer W. Leitzel and William C. Saxon who came to Centre Hall to attend the funeral of Mrs. Feidler. Mr. Leitzel is a machinist in the Pennsylvania railroad shops at Sunbury and lives at that place. Mr. Saxon is a resident of Lewsburg, and for a number of years has been with the hardware firm of C. Dreisbach & Son, of that town, as a salesman. Both are energetic and reliable young men, and the Reporter will always be ready to welcome them back.